FOCUS CANADA

2026 SERIES

Public Opinion on Immigration and Refugees: 2026



Environics Institute
For Survey Research

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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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Based in TMU's Ted Rogers School of Management, the Diversity Institute (DI) has a research staff of over 50 in 10 regional hubs across Canada, and works with more than 200 partners and a global network of experts. The Diversity Institute leads research on skills and employment trends, technology adoption, inclusive ecosystems (with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship), as well as related innovation pilot design and evaluation. Our action oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups, informing policies and practices to effect change, and producing concrete results.

DI is the academic research lead for the Future Skills Centre (FSC). DI leads research on responsible AI adoption in Canada and internationally to inform policies, strategies, and programs. As part of its commitment to advancing inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship, DI founded the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) and the Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Network (IIE-Net) and offers a range of training programs and advisory services.

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The Environics Institute, in partnership with the Diversity Institute at TMU, updated its research on Canadians' opinions on immigration and refugees.

This latest survey was based on telephone interviews conducted (via landline and cellphones) with a representative sample of 2,000 Canadians (ages 18 and over) between September 8 and 21, 2026. 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.

View the Focus Canada series on our website

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Background

Public discussion and public policy relating to immigration in Canada have evolved significantly over the past five years. In the wake of the constraints on the cross-border movement of people during the pandemic, the focus in the early 2020s was on the shortage of labour facing many employers. That shifted quickly as the number of new immigrants rose from 1.3 million in 2021 to 2.1 million in 2023, in part to offset reduced levels during the pandemic (0.8 million in 2020).[1] Increasingly, critics of the government's immigration policies expressed concerns both about the quality of many of these new immigrants (in terms of skills and qualifications) and the country's capacity to build the infrastructure – particularly housing – needed to properly accommodate them (though naturally, aspects of these criticisms were contested). This was accompanied by a stark shift in public opinion: between 2022 and 2024, the Environics Institute's Focus Canada surveys tracked a doubling in the proportion of Canadians who agree that there is too much immigration (from 27% to 58%).

Beginning in 2024, the federal government made a number of policy changes, including significant reductions to the numbers of new immigrants across all categories that the country would welcome each year. These changes appeared to have an immediate impact, as Statistics Canada initially reported that a small drop in the total population had occurred in 2025 – the first ever decline in the country's history. While the agency's revised figures subsequently showed that there had been a small increase in 2025 after all, it still documented a reduced rate of population growth as the government's policy changes took effect.

In the wake of these developments, the latest Focus Canada survey, conducted this past September finds that – after a year of little change in 2025 – public opinion has begun to swing back toward more openness on immigration. While the extent of the opinion shift varies from question to question, the direction of the trend across all questions is consistent: the public is somewhat less concerned this year about the overall level of immigration, and the possible negative impact of immigration on the economy and jobs. Despite these changes, opinions on the whole remain more negative than they were prior to the shift that began in 2023.

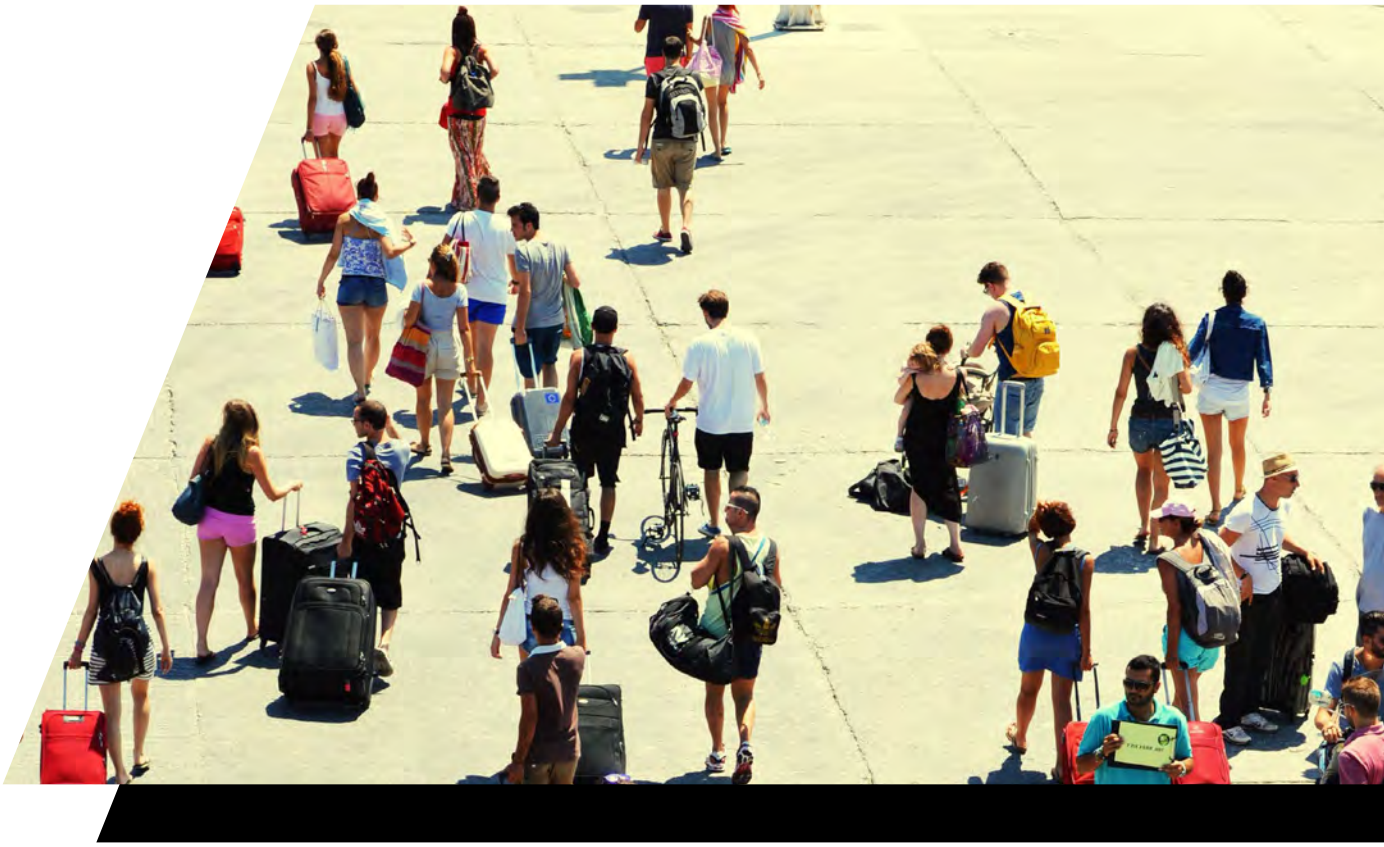
1 Figures courtesy of Andrew Griffith; available at https://multiculturalmeanderings.com/2026/06/17/annual-summary-of-total-immigration-2019-25/

Key findings

- In 2026, Canadians are evenly split on the question of whether, overall, there is too much immigration to Canada: 48 percent agree and 48 percent disagree. This represents a significant shift compared to last year toward more openness on immigration.
- A large majority of Canadians continue to agree that immigration has a positive impact on the economy. Most Canadians also reject the proposition that immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians.
- The proportion agreeing that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values, and that Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups, have both seen modest declines since last year.
- In the case of these two questions – on immigrants adopting Canadian values, and on racial minority immigrants – the opinions of immigrants and non-immigrants, and of white and racialized Canadians, are very similar.
- There has been no significant change since last year in the proportion agreeing that many refugees are not legitimate (a decline of only 2 points), although the direction of change is consistent with that for the other questions in this year's survey.
- A significant difference of opinion between supporters of the Conservative Party, on the one hand, and supporters of the Liberal Party and the NDP, on the other, is evident on most of these questions. For instance, Conservative Party supporters are currently twice as likely as Liberal Party supporters and four times as likely as NDP supporters to agree that there is too much immigration. And, while large majorities of Liberal Party and NDP supporters agree that the economic impact of immigration is positive, Conservative Party supporters are divided.

The latest Focus Canada survey finds that public opinion has begun to swing back toward more openness on immigration.

- In 2026, more than twice as many Canadians say that immigrants settling in their local community makes it a better place, rather than a worse place.
- Among those who believe that immigration makes their communities a better place, the top reason given is that they value what immigrants bring in terms of multiculturalism and diversity.
- The top reason given by those who say that immigrants make their communities a worse place pertains to concerns about weakening local culture or identity. A much smaller, and declining, proportion mention the impact of immigration in their community on housing affordability and availability. This proportion has fallen by seven percentage points since 2025.



Is there too much immigration to Canada?

Between 2022 and 2024, the proportion of Canadians agreeing that there is too much immigration to Canada doubled, from 27 to 58 percent. There was little change the following year, with the proportion agreeing in 2025 declining by only two points, to 56 percent.

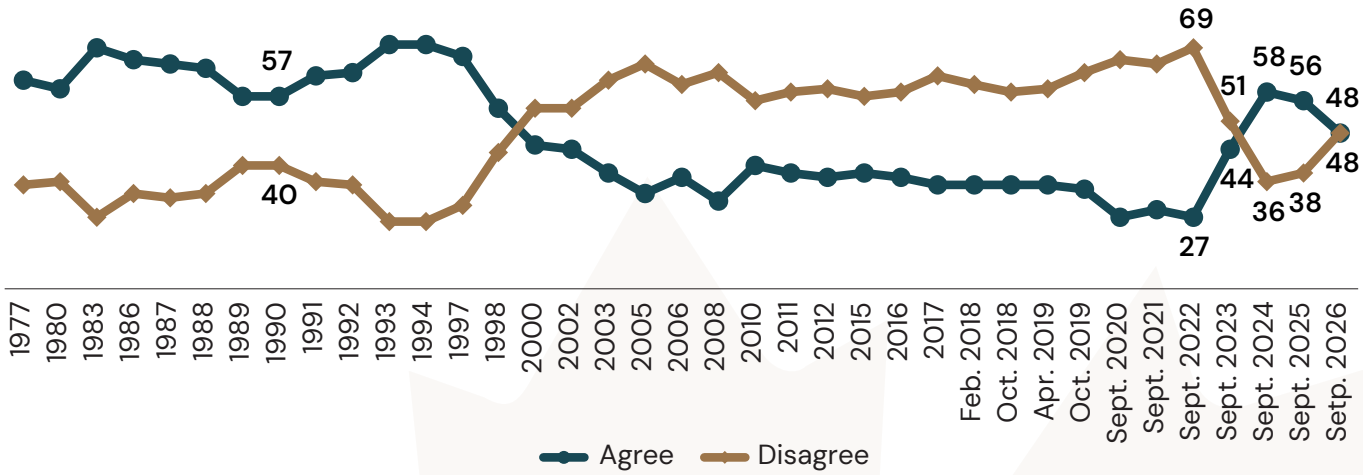
In 2026, Canadians are evenly split on the question of whether, overall, there is too much immigration to Canada: 48 percent agree and 48 percent disagree. This represents a significant shift toward more openness on immigration. The proportion agreeing that there is too much immigration is now eight percentage points lower than last year, and 10 points lower than in 2024.

Figure 1

Is there too much immigration to Canada?

1977 – 2026

Q: Agree or disagree: "Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada"

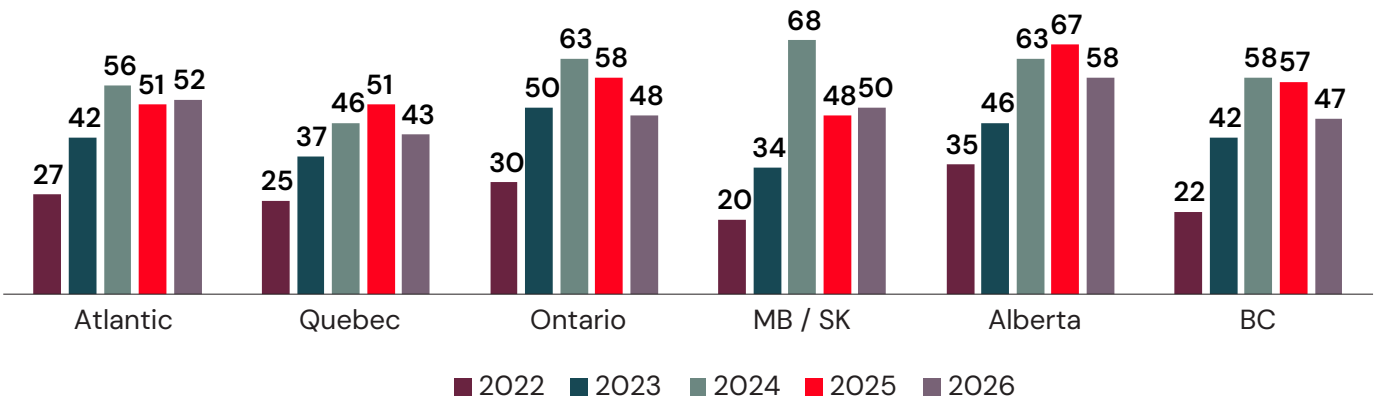


Regionally, agreement that there is too much immigration is highest in Alberta (58%) and lowest in Quebec (43%) – as has typically been the case in recent years. Over the past year, agreement has fallen in several regions, including by 10 points in Ontario and British Columbia, by nine points in Alberta and by eight points in Quebec.

Figure 2

Agree: overall, there is too much immigration to Canada

2022 – 2026, by region



Agreement that there is too much immigration fell by equal amounts between 2025 and 2026 both for first-generation immigrants and for third-generation-plus Canadians (down by 10 points in each case).[2] Currently, there is no significant difference between the proportions of first-generation immigrants (46%), second-generation immigrants (52%), and third-generation-plus Canadians (47%) who agree. The proportions of white (47%) and racialized (51%) Canadians who agree that there is too much immigration are also broadly similar.

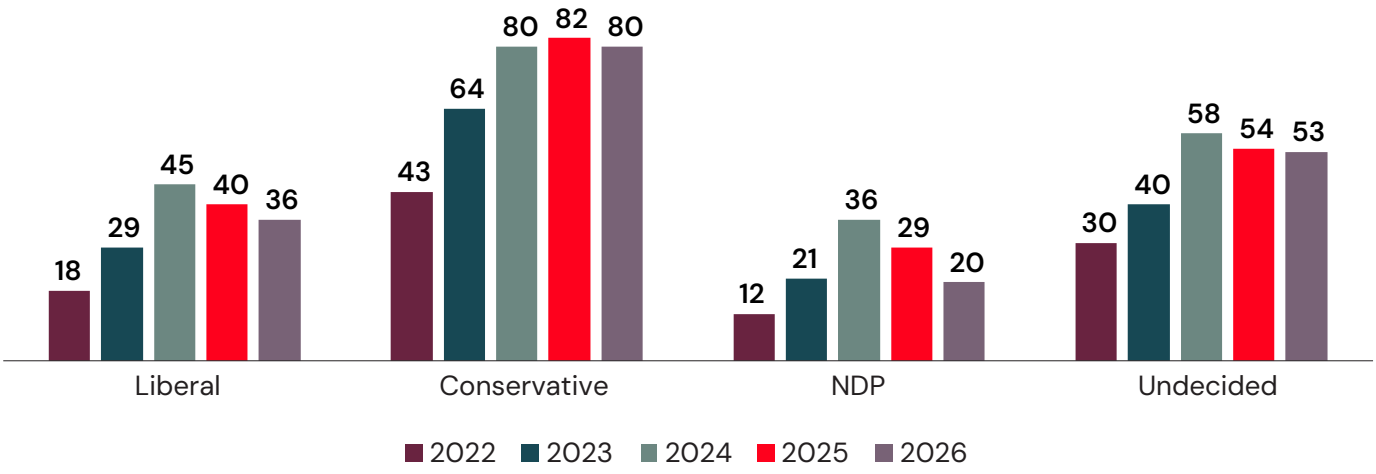
There continues to be a divergence of opinion on this question, however, based on political partisanship. Over the past two years, agreement that there is too much immigration to Canada has edged downward among supporters of the Liberal Party and the NDP, as well among undecided voters. However, it has remained constant and comparatively high among supporters of the Conservative Party. As a result, Conservative Party supporters (80%) are currently twice as likely as Liberal Party supporters (36%) and four times as likely as NDP supporters (20%) to agree.

2 Third-generation-plus Canadians are those born in Canada to Canadian-born parents.

Figure 3

Agree: Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada

2022 – 2026, by federal vote intention



Those who currently agree that there is too much immigration were asked a follow-up question to say why they feel this way (this was an open-ended question, meaning that people respond in their own words rather than selecting from a list of options). The top reasons mentioned are:

- Immigration is poorly managed by government (28%);
- Immigration is bad for the economy or causes unemployment (28%);
- Immigrants drive up housing prices (26%);
- Immigrants are a drain on public finances (22%);
- There are too many people in Canada already (19%);
- Immigration poses a threat to Canadian (or Quebec) culture or identity (18%).

Over the past several years, the proportion mentioning the first reason – that the immigration system is poorly managed – has increased, from 10 percent in 2023 to 28 percent in 2026 (though this proportion is down from a high of 33% in 2025). The proportion mentioning the impact of immigration on housing prices has fallen, from 38 percent in 2023 to 26 percent today. The proportion concerned that immigration threatens Canada's or Quebec's identity has increased from eight percent in 2023 to 18 percent today; however, this proportion is lower than in 2022, when it stood at 24 percent.

Table 1

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

2022 - 2026

Reason	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Immigration is poorly managed by gov't / lack of screening / levels too high	13	10	21	33	28
Bad for the economy / cause unemployment / take jobs from other Canadians	21	25	29	31	28
Immigrants drive up housing prices / leads to lack of housing for other Canadians	15	38	33	27	26
Immigrants are a drain on public finances / cost gov't too much / drain on welfare system	23	25	20	20	22
Over-population – there are too many people in Canada already	19	19	25	22	19
Threat to Canadian / Quebec culture / identity / values / language / too many people coming here who are not like "us"	24	8	10	13	18

Note: Asked to those who agree "overall, there is too much immigration to Canada"

Canadians' views on the top issues facing the county

These changes in opinions on whether, and why, there is too much immigration have occurred alongside shifts in Canadians' views on the top issues facing the county. A growing proportion are focusing on the **trade dispute with the United States**, while the proportion mentioning **housing affordability** specifically as the most important problem facing the country has declined.

Only three percent of Canadians currently believe that immigration is the most important problem facing the country.



For more, see the first report in this series: *Free Trade, the Economy & Relations with the United States*

The economic impact of immigration

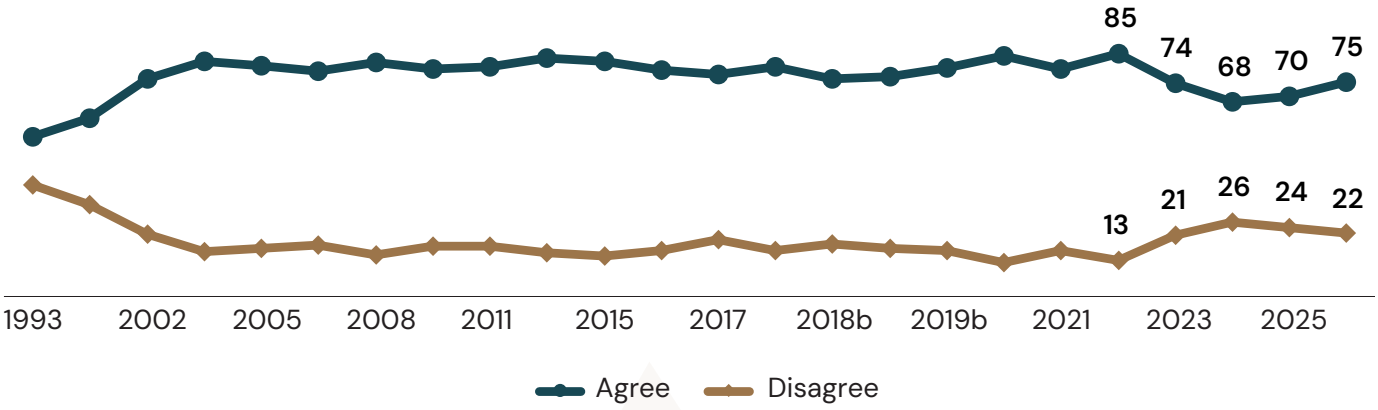
A large majority of Canadians continue to agree that "overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada": 75 percent agree, compared to 22 who disagree. The level of agreement fell from 85 percent in 2022 to 68 percent in 2024, but has now partially rebounded, increasing by five points (from 70% to 75%) over the past year.

Figure 4

Is immigration good for the Canadian economy?

1993 – 2026

Q: Agree or disagree: "Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada"



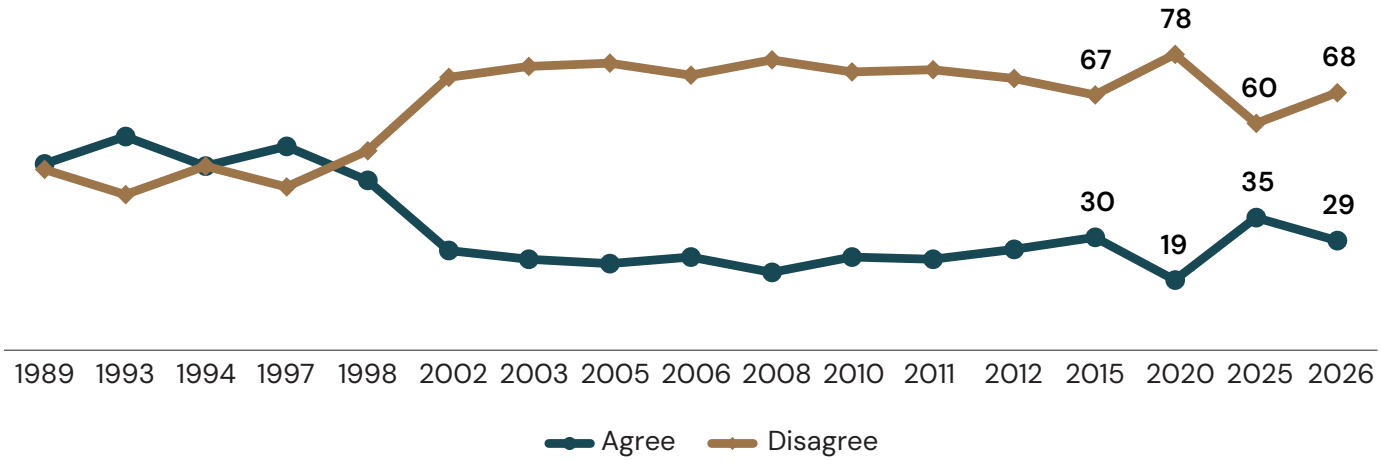
At the same time, most Canadians reject the proposition that "immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians": 29 percent agree, but more than twice as many (68%) disagree. Disagreement has increased by eight points (up from 60%) over the past year.

Figure 5

Do immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians?

1993 – 2026

Q: Agree or disagree: "Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians"



The view that immigration poses an economic threat increases as the level of formal education decreases. Those without a post-secondary education are twice as likely as those with a university degree to agree that immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians (40%, compared to 21%). Similarly, those without a post-secondary education are twice as likely as those with a university degree to *disagree* that immigrants have a positive impact on the economy (31%, compared to 15%).

Regional differences are somewhat more modest. Disagreement that immigration has a positive impact on the economy is slightly higher than average in the Prairie provinces (30%). Agreement that that immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians is higher than average in the Prairies (36%) and Ontario (34%), and lower than average in Quebec (15%).

Since 2024, agreement about the positive economic impact of immigration has increased more among younger than among older Canadians; whereas younger Canadians were slightly less likely to agree than their older counterparts in 2024, they are now slightly more likely to agree.

Differences in opinion between supporters of the different federal political parties on these questions are discussed in a separate section (see p.15).

A large majority of Canadians continue to agree that immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada. The level of agreement has partially rebounded.

Finally, most Canadians are receptive to the idea that "the government should encourage more entrepreneurs to immigrate to Canada and start new businesses here": 73 percent agree, compared to 22 percent who disagree. Agreement is only slightly lower (by 4 percentage points) than in 2021, when this question was first asked – prior to the wider overall shift in opinions on immigration that occurred between 2022 and 2023.



The integration of immigrants

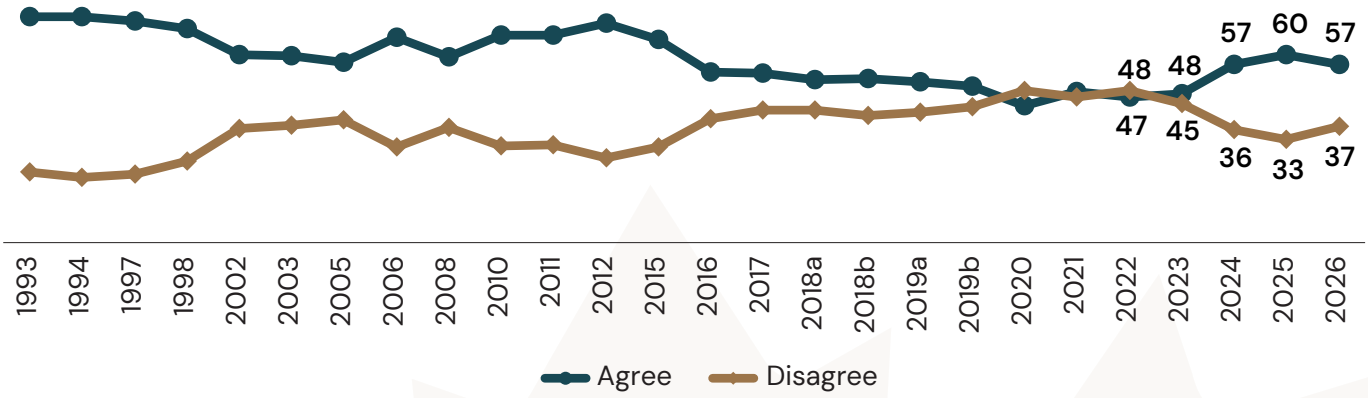
Since the question was first asked in the early 1990s, a majority of Canadians have tended to agree that "there are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values." By the early 2020s, however, opinions were more evenly divided between those who agreed or disagreed. This changed after 2022. The proportion agreeing that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values increased from 47 percent in 2022 to 60 percent in 2025. It has now ebbed very slightly, to 57 percent.

Figure 6

Too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values: agree or disagree?

1993 – 2026

Q: Agree or disagree: "There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values"



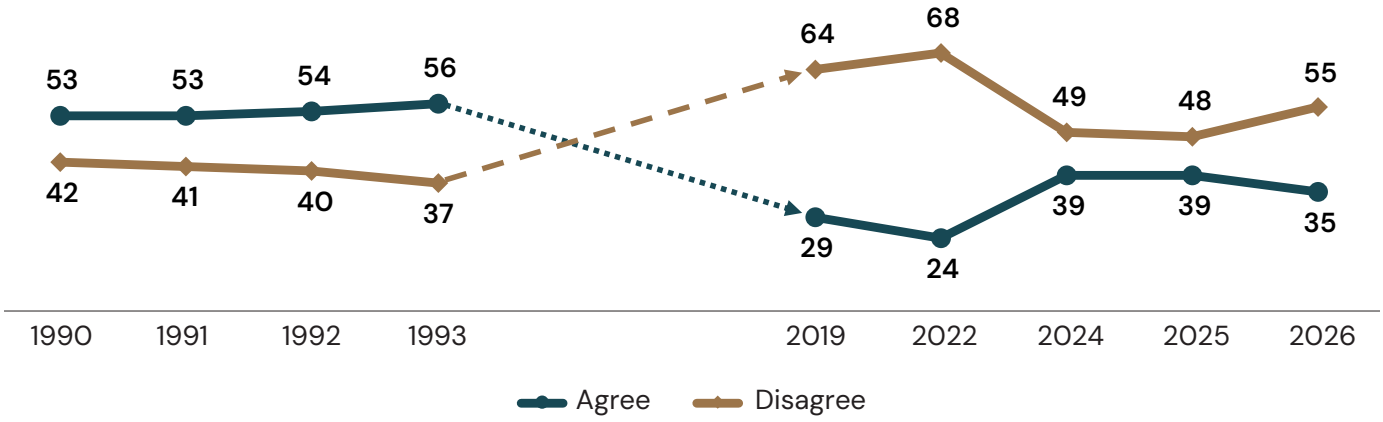
There has been a similar modest change in the proportion of Canadians agreeing that "Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups." After increasing from 24 to 39 percent between 2022 and 2024, the proportion agreeing held steady at 39 percent in 2025, and has now fallen by four percentage points, to 35 percent. A majority (55%) now disagrees that the country accepts too many immigrants who are racial minorities.

Figure 7

Too many immigrants from racial minority groups: agree or disagree?

1990 – 2026

Q: Agree or disagree: "Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups"



In the case of both of these questions – on immigrants adopting Canadian values, and on racial minority immigrants – the opinions of immigrants and non-immigrants, and of white and racialized Canadians, are very similar. First-generation immigrants (63%) are actually slightly more likely than second-generation immigrants (52%) or third-generation-plus Canadians (57%) to agree that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values.

The proportion agreeing that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values has now ebbed very slightly. There has been a similar modest change in the proportion of Canadians agreeing that Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups.

Figure 8A

Opinions on immigration

2026, by immigration generation

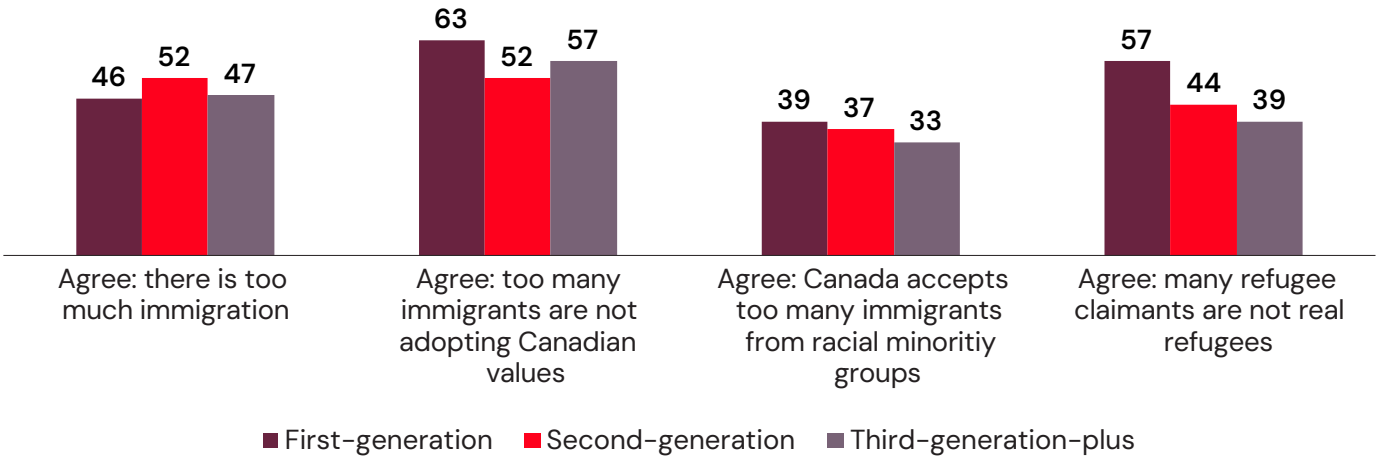
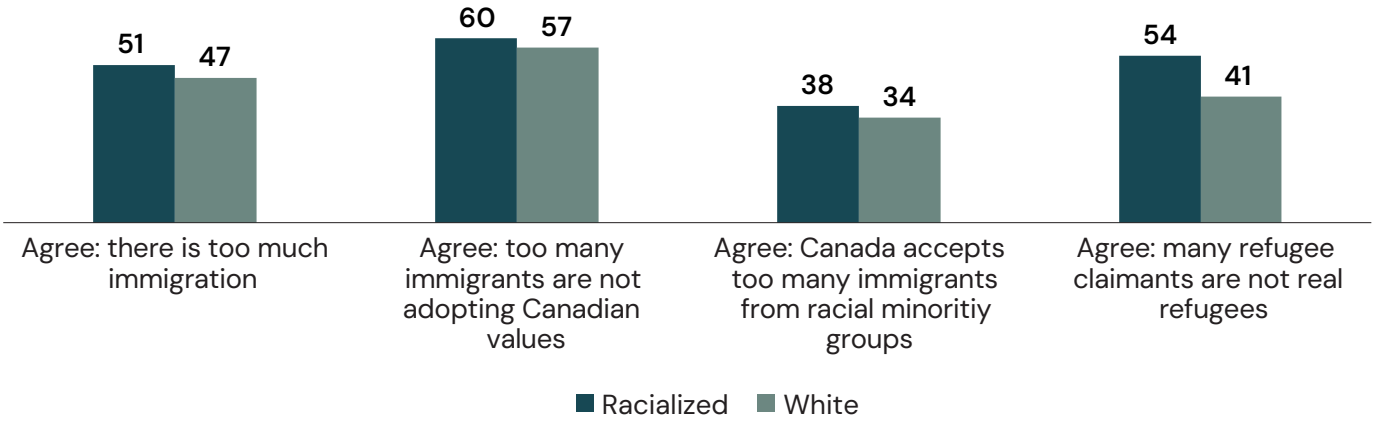


Figure 8B

Opinions on immigration

2026, by racial identity



The legitimacy of refugees

For several decades up until the early 2010s, a majority of Canadians agreed with the statement that "many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees." By the mid-2010s, however, opinions had become more evenly divided, with roughly equal proportions agreeing and disagreeing (with an additional proportion – about one in five – being unsure).

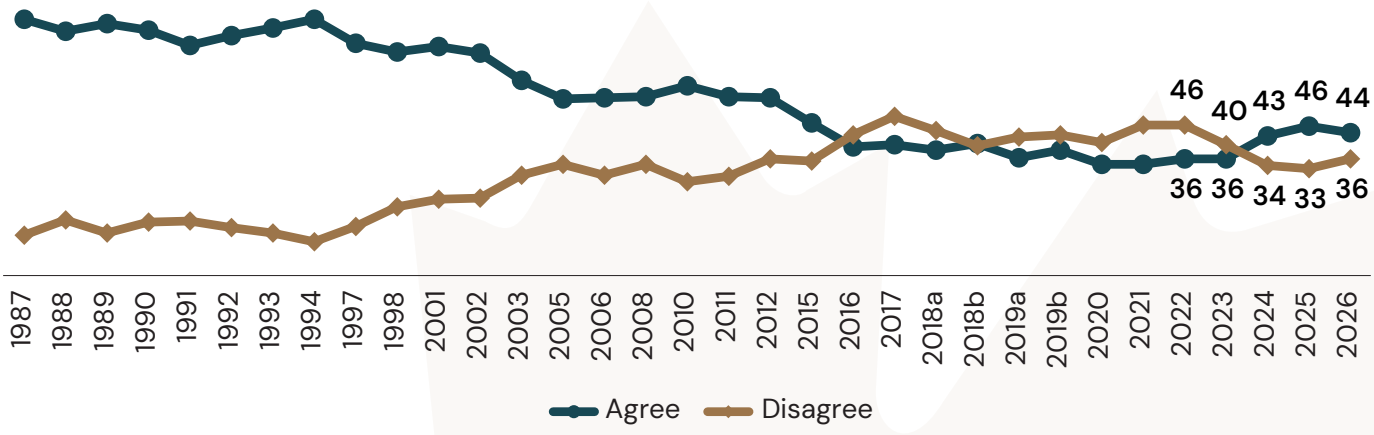
Between 2023 and 2025, agreement that many refugees are not legitimate increased by 10 percentage points, from 36 to 46 percent. There has been no significant change since then (a decline of 2 points, to 44%), although the direction of change is consistent with the other questions in this year's survey – that is, somewhat more open to immigrants and refugees. Disagreement currently stands at 36 percent (similar to where it stood in 2015, at 35%); an additional 19 percent do not take a position either way.

Figure 9

Many refugees are not real refugees: agree or disagree?

1987 – 2026

Q: Agree or disagree: "Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees"



Skepticism about the legitimacy of refugees is somewhat higher than average in the Prairie provinces (52%), particularly in Alberta (54%). Agreement is also higher than average among first-generation immigrants (57%) and racialized Canadians (54%).

Partisan differences in opinions on immigration

Earlier, it was noted that there is a significant difference of opinion between supporters of the Conservative Party, on the one hand, and supporters of the Liberal Party and the NDP, on the other, on the question of whether there is too much immigration. This divide is evident on many of the other survey questions as well.[3]

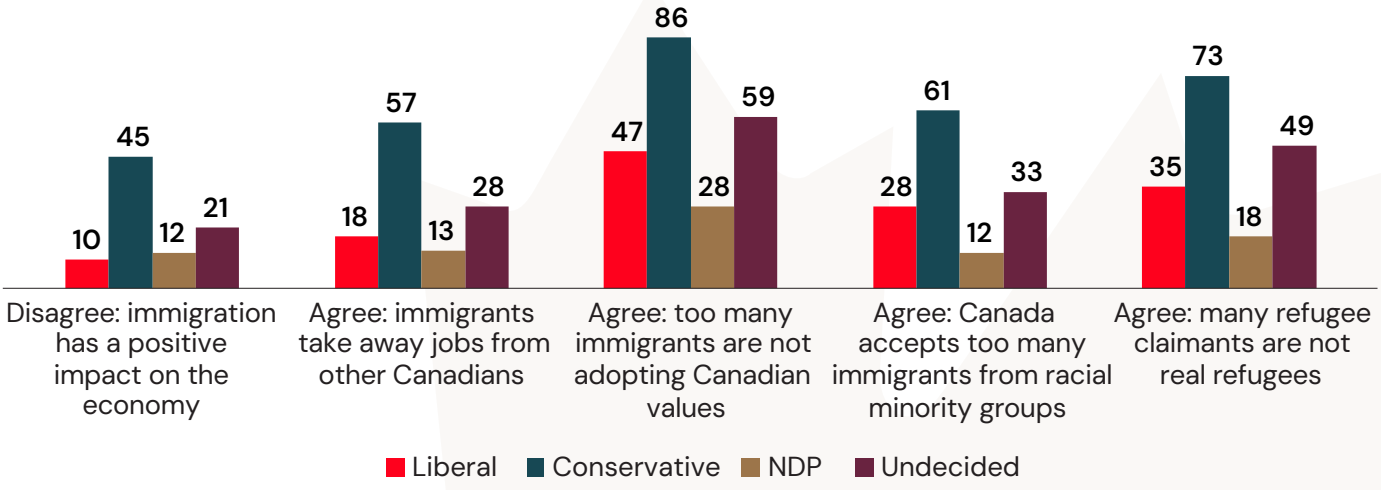
For instance, large majorities of Liberal Party (87%) and NDP (86%) supporters agree that the economic impact of immigration is positive, while Conservative Party supporters are divided – with 50 percent agreeing and 45 percent disagreeing. Similarly, a majority of Conservative Party supporters (57%) are concerned that immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians, compared to relatively few Liberal Party (18%) and NDP (13%) supporters.

On the question of whether Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups, Conservative Party supporters (61%) are twice as likely as Liberal Party supporters (28%) to agree.

Figure 10

Opinions on immigration

2026, by federal vote intention



3 A partial exception is the question on whether the government should encourage more entrepreneurs to immigrate to Canada and start new businesses. In this case, a majority of Conservative Party supporters (69%) agree; the same proportion as among NDP supporters, though 10 percentage points lower than among Liberal Party supporters (79%).



These gaps in opinion between Conservative and Liberal party supporters are typically larger today than in previous years. For instance, on the question of whether there is too much immigration, a 25-percentage-point gap in agreement in 2022 first widened to 35 points by 2024 and has now reached 44 points. When it comes to disagreement about the positive economic impact of immigration, the gap widened from 15 points in 2022 to 27 points in 2024, and now stands at 35 points.

Large majorities of Liberal Party and NDP supporters agree that the economic impact of immigration is positive, while Conservative Party supporters are divided.

The impact of immigration on the local community

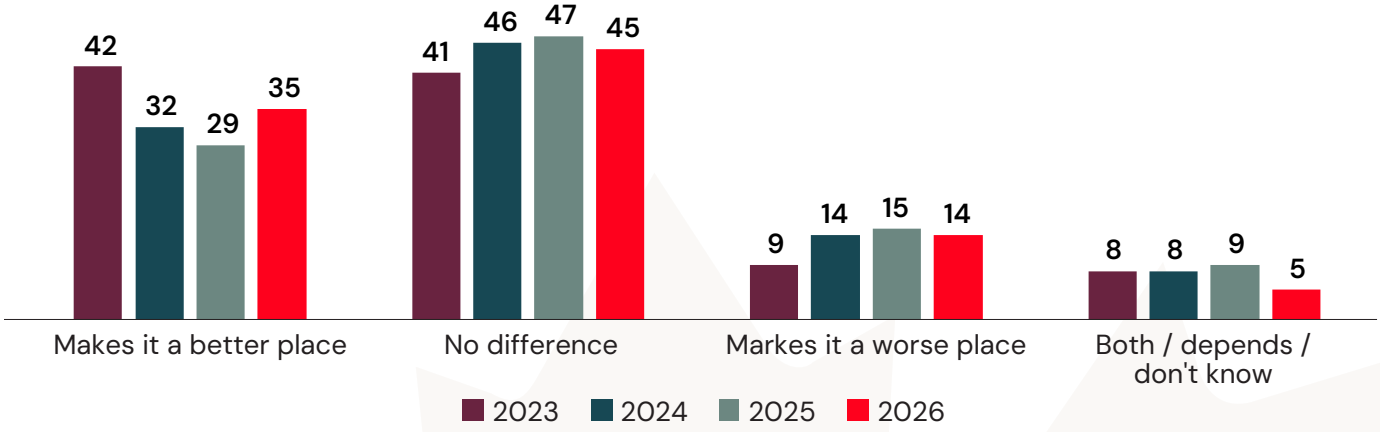
Since 2023, the Focus Canada survey has included a question on the impact of immigration on one's local community. Each year, relatively few Canadians indicate that immigrants settling in their local community makes it a worse place. In 2026, only 14 percent express this opinion, similar to the previous two years, though a slightly higher proportion than in 2023 (9%). In 2026, more than twice as many (35%) say that immigrants settling in their local community makes it a better place – a six-percentage-point increase since the previous year. A plurality (45%) say that immigration makes no difference to their local community.

Figure 11

The impact of immigration on the local community

2023 – 2026

Q: Do you think immigrants settling in your local community makes it a better place, a worse place, or doesn't really make a difference?



The proportion saying that immigrants settling in their local community makes it a better place is a bit above average in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (41%), the Atlantic provinces (40%) and B.C. (39%); it is below average in Alberta (29%). It is also almost twice as high among those with a university degree (42%), compared to those without a post-secondary education (23%).

In general, there is little variation across population groups in the proportion that believes that the arrival of immigrants makes their communities worse. This means that those who are less likely to feel this makes their communities better are more likely to say it makes no difference. This also means that, across almost all population groups, the proportion saying that immigrants make their communities better outweighs that saying it makes them worse.

There is one notable exception to this pattern, however. Among supporters of the federal Conservative Party, 30 percent say that immigrants settling in their local community makes it a worse place; this compares to only 13 percent of these supporters who say it makes their communities a better place (50% say it makes no difference). These results contrast with those for both Liberal Party supporters (46% of whom say immigration makes their communities better, compared to 8% who say it makes them worse) and NDP supporters (49% and 2%, respectively).

In 2026, more than twice as many Canadians say that immigrants settling in their local community makes it a better place, rather than a worse place.

Those who say that immigrants make their community either better or worse were asked why they think so (this is as open-ended question, meaning that people answer in their own words without prompting, rather than selecting an issue from a list).

Among those who believe that immigrants make their communities a better place (35% of the total), the reasons given for holding this view are largely the same as those given in previous years. A large majority (71%) say they value what immigrants bring in terms of multiculturalism and diversity. Others emphasize the positive impact on the economy (39%) and helping the local population grow (11%). Some focus on more intangible benefits of newcomers in terms of immigrants appreciating being in Canada (14%) or showing that people in their community are caring (8%).

Table 2

Why do you say that new immigrants make your local community a better / a worse place?

2023 - 2026

Those who say immigrants make their community a **better** place (35% of the total; n=730)					Those who say immigrants make their community a **worse** place (14% of the total; n=319)				
	2023	2024	2025	2026		2023	2024	2025	2026
Adds to diversity / multiculturalism	75	70	72	71	Immigrants weaken local identity / culture / values / language	41	46	50	57
Helps economy grow / immigrants bring skills we need	33	27	35	39	Immigrants are not screened well enough / criminals	8	15	20	22
Immigrants appreciate Canada	4	14	14	14	Immigrants hurt the economy / take jobs from others	21	22	25	20
Helps local population grow	12	14	9	11	Immigrants are a drain on public finances	17	14	20	17
Shows people in my community are caring or open	11	9	6	8	Immigrants are a security risk / risk of terrorism	6	11	10	12
					Over-population / too many here already	13	11	11	12
					Immigrants drive up housing prices	15	14	17	10

Note: Figures are the percentages of the subsample responding to each question, not of the total sample.

Among those who believe that immigrants make their communities a better place, a large majority say it is because they value what immigrants bring in terms of multiculturalism and diversity.

The top reasons given by those who say that immigrants make their communities a worse place (a group that constitutes 14% of the population) are also broadly unchanged from previous years, though there is some shift in emphasis. The top reason mentioned pertains to concerns about weakening local culture or identity (57%, up 7 points from 2025 and 11 points from 2024). About one in five express concerns about whether immigrants are screened properly (22%); about the negative impact of immigration on the economy or jobs (20%); or about the drain placed on public finances (17%). Concerns about security and over-population are mentioned by 12 percent each. One in ten (10%) mention the impact of immigration in their community on housing affordability and availability; this proportion has fallen by seven percentage points since 2025.



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