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SHIFTING BORDERS:
**Canadian Attitudes
Towards Immigration**

Shifting Borders: Canadian Attitudes Towards Immigration is a joint research project between the Broadbent Institute and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Canada. The survey was conducted in the field by Viewpoints Research.

About the Author

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The author would also like to thank the following for their instrumental support in this analysis.

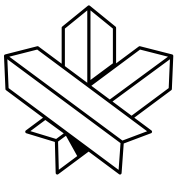
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About the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is the oldest political foundation in Germany with a rich tradition in social democracy dating back to its foundation in 1925. The foundation owes its formation and its mission to the political legacy of its namesake Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected German President. FES is mandated to strengthen, protect and promote democracy in over 100 countries around the world.



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About the Broadbent Institute

The Broadbent Institute is Canada's preeminent social democratic think-tank. Founded in 2011 by Ed Broadbent, and guided by the [Broadbent Principles for Canadian Social Democracy](#), the Institute produces original research, convenes progressive dialogues, and trains organizers and leaders to equip social movements working to advance justice and equality.

Key Findings

Canada's long-standing consensus on immigration, with decades of relatively open immigration policy, has built a multicultural society, with Canadians coming to the country from around the world. But in recent years, opinions on Canada's immigration policy have shifted.

The consensus appears to be under threat. While Canadians still view immigration more positively than negatively, the ground is shifting under our feet. Understanding the nature of Canadians' changing attitudes, the nuances behind them, and the causes behind the shift is critical to reversing the trend and bolstering confidence in Canada's immigration system.

Canadians are more likely to view immigration positively than negatively, but opinion is divided. 45% of Canadians believe immigration has had a positive impact on Canada, while 32% believe the impact has been negative. 22% of Canadians were neutral.

Opinion on immigration is shifting rapidly. Over the past year, 38% of Canadians have felt that their opinion on immigration has shifted towards preferring less immigration. Still, 45% of Canadians feel their opinions on immigration over the past year have not changed.

Views on the benefits and drawbacks of immigration are divided. Most Canadians believe that immigration has contributed to pressure on the housing market (69%) and social programs like healthcare and education (64%). However, 50% also say that immigration helps to grow Canada's workforce and keep our social programs sustainable.

Housing and healthcare strain are dominant concerns – and immigration is seen by many as exacerbating shortages of housing and healthcare workers. However, a sizable portion of respondents sees immigrants as unfairly scapegoated.

Canadians support immigration policies that prioritize high-skill, in-demand sectors such as healthcare and construction. There is skepticism about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and concern that it harms both Canadians and foreign workers.

There's clear support for immigration's contributions to culture and the economy. Canadians value cultural and social diversity, and the skills that immigrants bring help fill labour shortages in key industries.

Canadians remain open to arguments that immigration is important for the economy and to enrich Canada's cultural and social diversity. Canadians are also open to the argument that certain immigration programs need reform, especially if they contribute to housing and healthcare crises.

Introduction

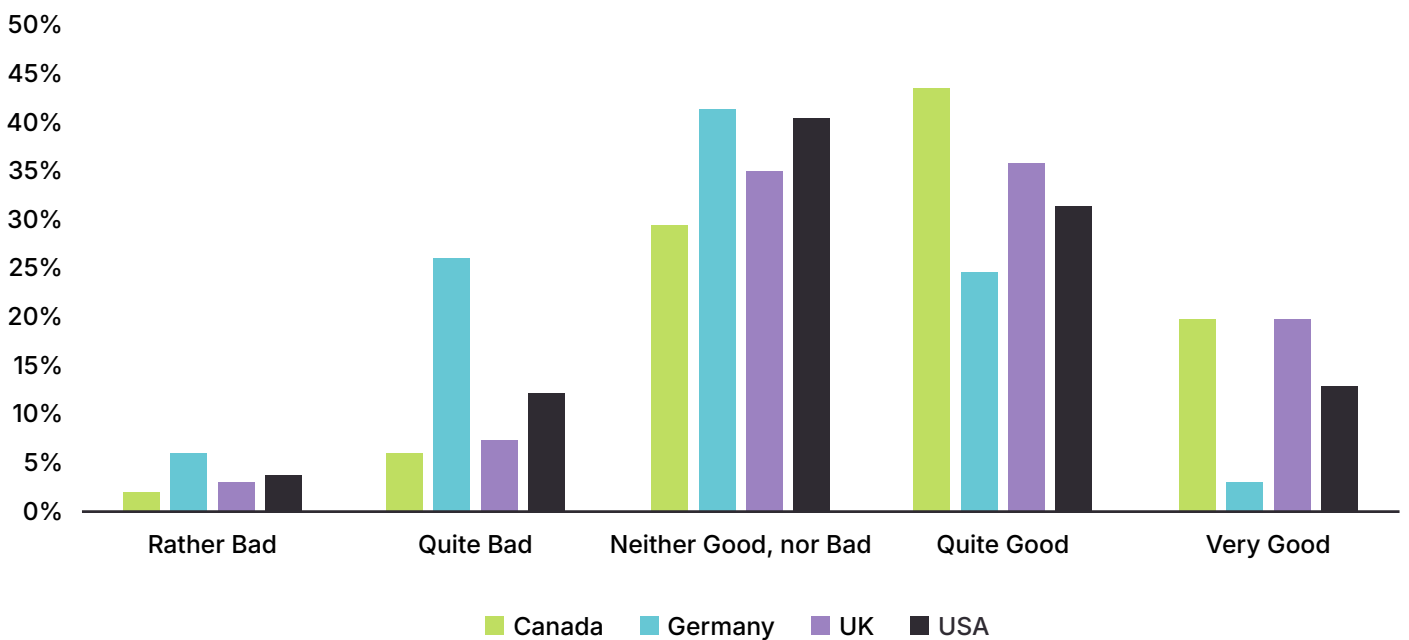
Opinions on Canada's long-standing approach to immigration policy appear to be changing. Canada's cultural diversity, created by immigration policies that brought people from all over the world to Canada, has long been celebrated. But in recent years, Canada's approach to immigration has been the subject of social and political tensions. Alongside — and perhaps thanks to — growing economic pressures, opposition to immigration is returning after decades of growing public acceptance and support.

The 1976 Immigration Act established the economic objectives of Canada's immigration policy, in an environment where European immigration was slowing while demand for labour rose. The new policy under the Pierre Trudeau government opened up the immigration system, allowing for family reunification to complement the points system assessing contribution to Canadian economic activity, and defining the refugee classification meeting international obligations.

Canada's immigration policy was followed by multicultural policy, embedded in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by 1982, and the 1988 *Canadian Multicultural Act*. These complementary sets of legislation are unique to Canada. They have promoted economic growth through increased labour supply, facilitated by fairly strong human rights guarantees for newcomers of diverse backgrounds.

These fundamental pieces of legislation have contributed to the shape and size of Canadian society and the economy we have today. In 2021, immigrants comprised 23% of the Canadian population, while 27% was considered members of racialized communities.¹ Canadians overall have been much more receptive to immigrants than other similar countries.

Chart 1 - Comparison of National Attitudes towards Immigration²



²

However, in recent decades Canada's immigration system has grown to focus more and more on temporary, cheap labour, rather than regular permanent immigration pathways.

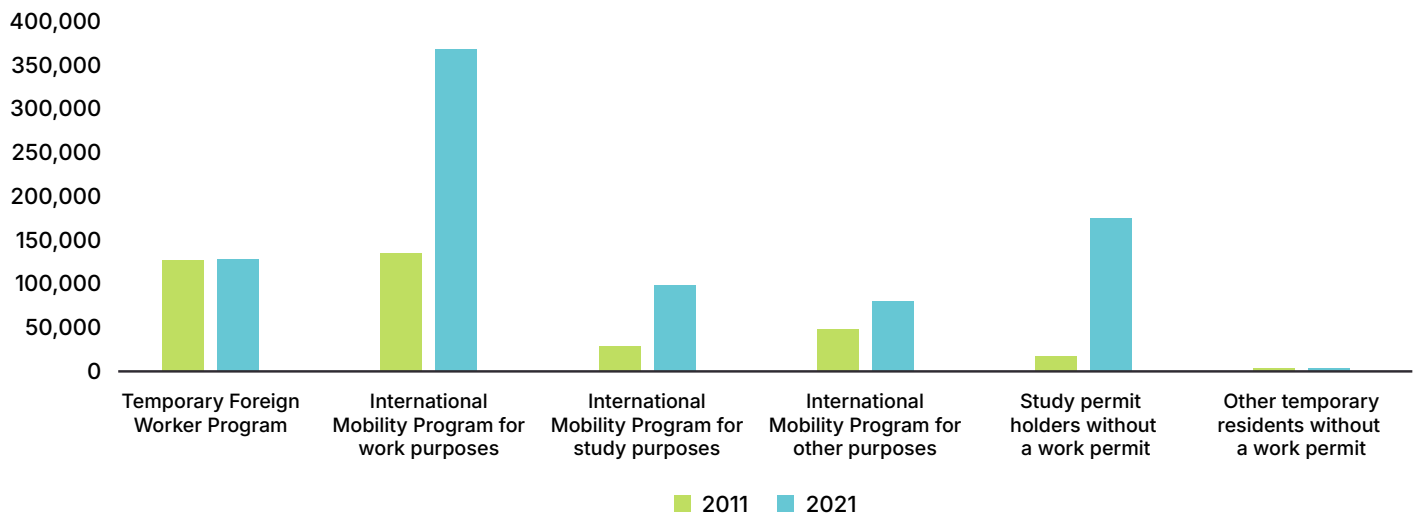
Backlogs on the processing of immigration applications for permanent resident status, along with stringent requirements for economic class immigrant selection, led to acute labour shortages in some industries. With Canada experiencing relatively low unemployment through the 2010s, demand for Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) grew and employers began to build their business models around this migration pathway. According to economist Richard Gilbert:

“The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) was created in 2002 with the introduction of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). It established the TFWP and indentured labour as a permanent feature of the Canadian labour market. The federal government recruits TFWs to work for a prespecified period of time, after which they are replaced by other people. In the same year, the federal Liberal government introduced the Low Skill Pilot Project, which allowed companies to bring in TFWs to perform unskilled labour. Previously, the immigration system was focused on high skilled management and professional occupations.”³

The TFWP was further restructured under the Stephen Harper government with an additional “International Mobility Program” (IMP) that allows foreign nationals to enter Canada with a work permit where no Labour Market Impact Assessment (needed for the TFWP) is required. With no incentive or regulations for employers to find domestic workers to fill vacancies (i.e. through higher wages, providing benefits, etc.) the use of TFWs grew and the program has become the faster and preferred way for employers to use immigration to Canada to meet long-term labour shortages.

Successive governments have done little to reform this program, despite mounting human rights abuses through the program, wage depression, and declining public support for immigration - due, in part, to a rapid increase in immigration through this program.

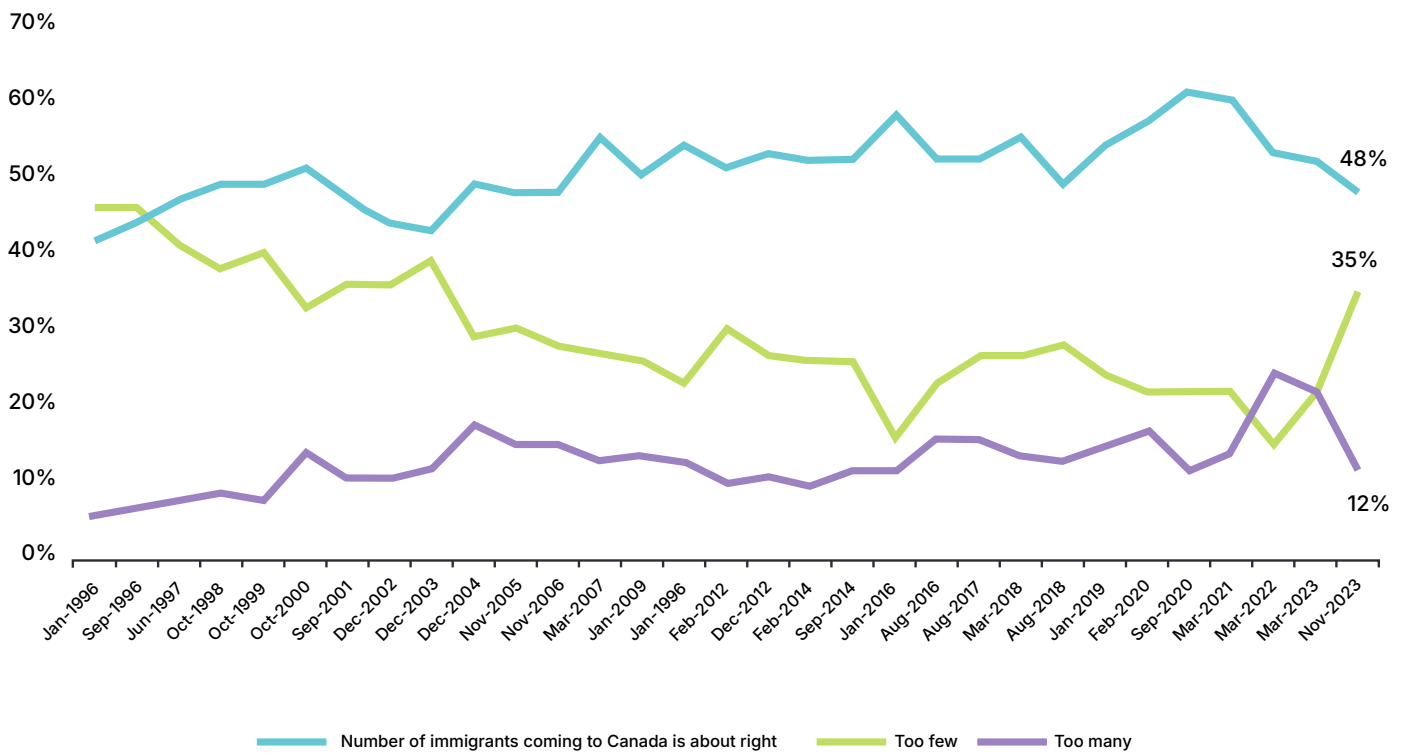
Chart 2 – A Dramatic Increase in Temporary Foreign Workers over the Last Decade⁴



Between 2011 and 2021, IMP migrants and international students increased dramatically, as employers, declining to raise wages to hire domestic workers, sought out migrants to fill in low-wage. The post-2008 financial crisis also saw the deepening of other economic crises such as the rise in the financialization of housing, and cuts to funding for social services such as healthcare. These economic issues were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than addressing the real culprits of these economic failures, such as profiteering in housing, lagging healthcare funding, and poor economic performance, some policy and influential opinion makers attempted to shift blame from empowered economic actors and chose newcomers as scapegoats for these issues. Demands from certain business sectors, such as the service industry, called for a loosening of TFWP rules to access cheap labour, using the post-COVID recovery as the reason.⁵

Though symptomatic of economic deficiencies that have led to the labour shortages and business practices that have led to the growth of the TFWP, newcomers themselves have taken the brunt of the blame, reversing trends in public opinion towards Canada's celebrated immigration policies.

Chart 3 – Trends in Public Opinion on Canada's Immigration Policy⁶



While immigration in Canada was built to patch up holes in the economy, Canada is currently experiencing a shift in views over how well this approach is working. Inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, housing shortages, strain on public services, and the external threat presented by the United States government in 2025 have created a sense of overall economic uncertainty for Canadians.

There are legitimate concerns and worries that are tied up in the issue of immigration, but Canadians generally remain welcoming to newcomers, especially those with specialized skills who can work in high-demand sectors. Investigating these divergent trends could inform policymakers about ways to address the decline in public support for immigration, and ways to craft policy to address the issue and reverse the trend.

However, an additional factor fuelling concern about both immigration and jobs is the loosening of Temporary Foreign Worker Program rules at the behest of big business, which has fueled a blowback over the rest of Canada's immigration policy.

Methodology

This survey was conducted by Viewpoints Research with respondents who live across Canada.

The survey included weighting to ensure responses reflect the actual distribution of the population by age, gender and region using Statistics Canada Census 2021 data. It was conducted online using a web survey with 1000 responses participating between March 5th to 13th, 2025. The margin of error for an equivalent random sample of the same size is +/- 3%. Numbers presented have been rounded up, and sums presented used raw before rounding.

To see the complete list of survey questions, please contact info@viewpoints.ca.

Sample Demographics	Weighted %	Weighted Count	Unweighted Count
Gender			
Woman	51%	509	543
Man	48%	484	450
Non-binary and other identities	1%	5	5
Age Group			
18–29	18%	184	195
30–39	17%	169	236
40–59	33%	327	420
60 and older	32%	320	149
Region			
Atlantic Canada (NL, PEI, NS, NB)	7%	68	80
Central (ON, QC)	62%	618	623
Prairie Provinces (MB, SK, AB)	18%	175	183
West Coast (BC)	14%	138	112
Northern Canada (YK, NWT, NU)	0.1%	1	2

Divisions on Immigration?

Overall, sentiment on immigration skews positive, but opinion is divided. While more Canadians are likely to view immigration as having a positive impact than a negative one, nearly a quarter of Canadians today feel neutral about immigration.

Table 1 – Generally, what kind of impact do you think immigration has on Canada?

	(+2) Very good	(+1) Somewhat good	(0) Neutral	(-1) Somewhat bad	(-2) Very bad	Prefer not to answer
TOTAL	15.3%	30.1%	22.4%	18.2%	13.3%	0.8%
Age						
18–29	20.6%	28.2%	23.8%	14.3%	12.6%	0.4%
30–39	21.1%	25.2%	25.5%	15.0%	11.5%	1.8%
40–59	12.7%	29.7%	22.3%	19.7%	14.3%	1.3%
60 and older	11.7%	34.1%	20.1%	20.5%	13.6%	0.0%
Gender						
Woman	12.5%	30.1%	23.5%	17.7%	15.6%	0.6%
Man	18.2%	29.8%	21.2%	18.9%	11.0%	0.8%
Education						
Education: Less than high school	8.2%	38.1%	27.4%	11.8%	9.1%	5.4%
Education: High School	5.1%	23.0%	24.7%	26.9%	19.3%	1.0%
College, CEGEP, Trades, or BA	17.3%	29.7%	22.1%	17.5%	12.8%	0.6%
Graduate or professional degree	24.3%	41.4%	19.6%	8.6%	6.1%	0.0%
Union Membership						
Union Member	25.0%	31.3%	19.0%	13.0%	11.7%	0.0%
Not a Union Member	11.8%	29.6%	23.6%	20.2%	13.7%	1.1%
Birthplace						
Canada	12.6%	27.8%	23.0%	19.9%	16.0%	0.8%
Abroad	24.0%	37.5%	20.4%	13.0%	4.8%	0.4%
How many years ago did you first move to Canada?						
Years in Canada < 5 years	30.8%	36.9%	18.8%	10.0%	3.6%	0.0%
Years in Canada 5-10 years	36.4%	27.9%	18.0%	12.4%	5.3%	0.0%
Years in Canada 10+ years	19.4%	39.2%	21.7%	14.1%	5.1%	0.5%

Parents' Birthplace						
Both in Canada	12.3%	27.5%	22.5%	20.1%	16.7%	0.9%
Both Abroad	21.2%	32.6%	23.5%	14.4%	7.8%	0.5%
One in Canada, One Abroad	10.6%	40.9%	13.6%	22.4%	12.5%	0.0%
How familiar are you with Canada's immigration system and the experiences of newcomers to Canada? This might include application processes, visa requirements, and pathways to citizenship.						
Very familiar w/ immigration	33.6%	32.8%	14.6%	10.5%	7.8%	0.7%
Somewhat familiar w/ immigration	13.8%	34.0%	18.6%	22.1%	11.2%	0.3%
Not very or not at all familiar w/ immigration	7.4%	26.3%	28.7%	19.6%	17.2%	0.8%
Future Federal Vote Intent						
New Democratic Party of Canada	17.6%	25.7%	27.9%	16.5%	12.4%	0.0%
Liberal Party of Canada	23.3%	43.0%	16.3%	13.8%	3.6%	0.0%
Conservative Party of Canada	10.0%	21.7%	19.0%	22.2%	26.9%	0.3%
Unsure	5.0%	25.7%	40.4%	19.2%	6.9%	2.8%

Bold % = significance at or above 98% level. Statistical testing not performed when n < 30 since statistical assumptions are not met

Younger Canadian adults up to age 39, having grown up with Canada's immigration and multiculturalism policies since their implementation through the 1980s, view immigration positively at significantly higher rates compared to older Canadians. Those with higher educational attainment have a much more positive perception than those with a high school level of education.

However, these divisions and the fact that fairly large segments of the population feel neutral about the impact of immigration indicate an important shift in public attitudes towards Canada's immigration system.

Despite narratives that immigrants have a negative effect on jobs and wages, union members are much more aware of the positive impact of immigration than non-union members. Not surprisingly, those born abroad and those familiar with immigration have a more positive view of immigration. Furthermore, Canadians who intend to vote for the Liberal Party of Canada or the NDP are much more likely to express positive views towards the impact of immigration, versus those who intend to vote for the Conservative Party or Green Party. Those who are unsure of their vote intention are more likely to be ambivalent to the impact of immigration policy.

Table 2 – In the past year, has your opinion on immigration changed?

	Yes, I think we should allow more immigration	No, my opinion has stayed the same	Yes, I think we should allow less immigration	I'm not sure
TOTAL	12.8%	44.5%	38.4%	4.2%
Age				
18–29	20.2%	42.2%	33.9%	38%
30–39	19.6%	38.5%	35.3%	6.7%
40–59	13.3%	42.1%	40.9%	3.7%
60 and older	4.9%	51.4%	40.0%	3.6%
Gender				
Woman	9.9%	44.5%	40.2%	5.4%
Man	16.2%	44.5%	36.8%	2.5%
Education				
Education: Less than high school	10.1%	32.0%	38.3%	19.6%
Education: High School	7.7%	44.1%	44.1%	4.2%
College, CEGEP, Trades, or BA	13.2%	45.2%	38.7%	2.9%
Graduate or professional degree	21.7%	44.4%	27.2%	6.7%
Union Membership				
Union Member	19.1%	46.0%	31.9%	3.0%
Not a Union Member	10.7%	44.2%	40.7%	4.4%
Birthplace				
Canada	11.1%	44.6%	40.2%	4.1%
Abroad	19.4%	43.6%	32.8%	4.2%
How many years ago did you first move to Canada?				
Years in Canada < 5 years	46.2%	23.2%	27.6%	3.0%
Years in Canada 5-10 years	19.1%	48.5%	25.9%	6.5%
Years in Canada 10+ years	13.1%	46.4%	36.5%	4.0%
Parents' Birthplace				
Both in Canada	10.2%	47.0%	38.7%	4.0%
Both Abroad	18.0%	40.4%	37.6%	4.0%
One in Canada, One Abroad	11.2%	41.7%	41.1%	5.9%

How familiar are you with Canada's immigration system and the experiences of newcomers to Canada? This might include application processes, visa requirements, and pathways to citizenship.				
Very familiar w/ immigration	31.2%	35.0%	30.8%	3.0%
Somewhat familiar w/ immigration	12.7%	42.7%	42.0%	2.6%
Not very or not at all familiar w/ immigration	4.4%	49.8%	40.4%	5.3%
Future Federal Vote Intent				
New Democratic Party of Canada	11.9%	52.5%	30.6%	4.9%
Liberal Party of Canada	18.8%	47.0%	31.2%	3.1%
Conservative Party of Canada	9.1%	38.4%	51.0%	1.5%
Unsure	7.2%	42.9%	36.6%	13.3%

Bold % = significance at or above 98% level. Statistical testing not performed when n < 30 since statistical assumptions are not met

There has been a significant shift in favour of reducing immigration over the last year (38%), though nearly half of Canadians (45%) have maintained their opinions and a smaller proportion (13%) have shifted towards supporting higher immigration. Higher levels of immigration are more likely to be supported by younger generations, the highly educated, recent immigrants, and those familiar with immigration. Those with lower educational attainment and those unfamiliar with immigration are more likely to support less immigration.

With respect to federal vote intention, those intending to vote NDP are more likely to have unchanged views on immigration policy, while those who intend to vote for the Liberal Party are more likely to have changed their views to favour more immigration. Among half of those intending to vote Conservative, views have changed to allow less immigration. Among all vote intentions, there is a notable shift of roughly one-third, with the exception of Conservative voters, to the view that Canada should allow less immigration.

Overall, Canadians have indicated a shift in support towards an immigration system that allows for fewer newcomers than the system does today. However, deeper analysis provides more details on the rather positive view overall towards immigration that superficially appears to contradict this trend. Recognizing Canada's economic weakness and the need for immigration to improve these economic indicators helps to explain this inconsistency in attitudes towards Canada's immigration policies.

Immigration as Both Problem and Solution

Chart 4 – Economic Perspectives on Canada’s Immigration Policy

Immigration makes housing harder to find and more expensive

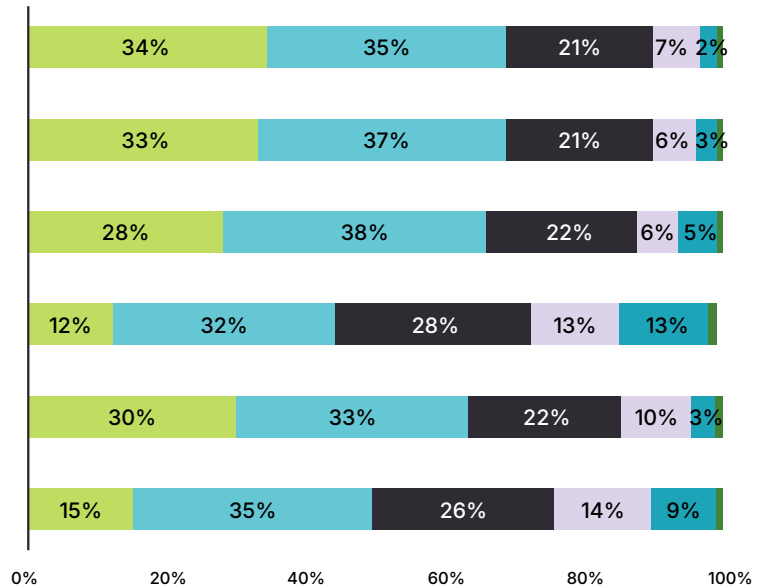
Canada is proud of being a nation of immigrants, but until we can build more housing and hire more family doctors, we need to pause some types of immigration

Canada needs more doctors, home building professional and nurses. We need the country to welcome as many immigrants form those professions as possible

Immigrants and refugees are being scapegoated for Canada’s housing shortages, and that’s nor right. Canada should continue to welcome newcomers, and get to work building homes and fixing healthcare

Immigration puts a strain on services like healthcare, education, and social programs

Immigration grows Canada’s workforce and keeps our social programs sustainable



As indicated in the Broadbent Institute’s 2024 report, *Dreams and Realities on the Home Front: Canadians’ Call for Government Action on Housing Affordability*,⁷ attitudes towards immigration are currently impacted by the housing affordability crisis. Most Canadians (69%) agree with the idea that more immigrants increase demand and create more competition for Canada’s unaffordable housing supply. Most also agree (70%) that pausing some types of immigration is necessary until more housing supply is added and the family doctor shortage is resolved.

At the same time, most Canadians (66%) are cognizant of the fact that immigration of skilled professionals is needed to address shortages of healthcare professionals and of the skilled workers needed to build housing.

According to advocacy groups, for instance, thousands of internationally trained immigrant doctors already residing in Canada pass exams and meet requirements, but are unable to practice medicine due to a lack of medical residency placements.⁸ Recognizing this labour misallocation, Canadians remain supportive of immigrants needed for highly skilled work where there are shortages of workers. Almost half of Canadians (45%) have the view that immigrants and refugees are being unfairly scapegoated for Canada’s housing and health problems.

Lastly, while most Canadians (64%) see immigration as putting a strain on social programs, half (50%) also see immigration as necessary for keeping healthcare, education and other social services sustainable.

Attitudes towards the relationship between economic conditions and immigration are also divergent. Those 60 years old and older are significantly much more likely to support putting a pause on immigration until we can build more housing and hire more doctors. Meanwhile, younger people (ages 18-29), those having immigrant family or who have experienced immigration, and those with graduate and professional degrees are significantly more likely to recognize immigrants and refugees are being scapegoated for the housing crisis. Non-union members are also significantly more likely to disagree with the idea that immigrants are inappropriately scapegoated for the housing crisis.

Taken together, Canadians have a nuanced view of immigration. They see the roots of economic dysfunctions made worse by the expansion of the TFWP.

They see the need for immigration to support our social services and fill gaps in high-skilled labour, but see the need for change to immigration policy while these gaps remain unfilled and services are strained.

Some do see immigrants as being unfairly scapegoated, such as those that come as temporary foreign workers, and believe that we should continue to welcome newcomers while fixing housing and healthcare shortfalls. However there is a wide desire for change from today’s immigration policies alongside a desire for solutions to fix the economic problems associated with immigration.

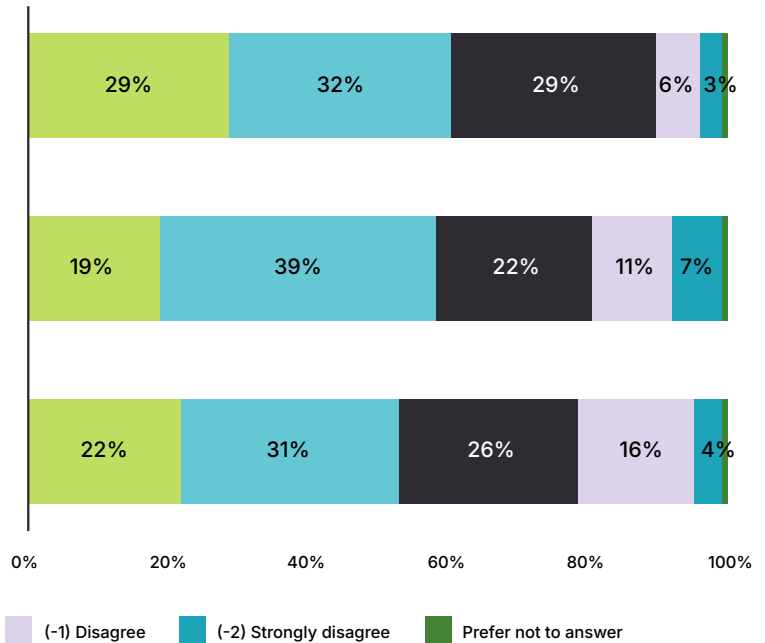
Labour: Exploitation, Necessity and Wages

Chart 5 – Labour Perspectives on Canada’s Immigration Policy

Successive governments have allowed fast food and coffee chains to use Temporary Foreign Workers as cheap labour they can exploit. It’s not fair to workers, and it’s not fair to Canadians looking for a home. We should stop that type of temporary immigration

Immigration supports economic growth by filling labour shortages in key industries

Immigration pushes wages lower and creates more competition for Canadian jobs



When it comes to jobs, Canadians recognize the need for immigration to ensure Canada’s economic sustainability. Canadians are acutely aware of the exploitation taking place through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and agree that its continuation is unjust (61%). At the same time, Most Canadians (58%) agree with the view that immigration is necessary to fill labour shortages in key industries, such as healthcare and home construction, as distinct from some of the industries that are staffed through the TFWP.

A little over half (53%) of Canadians agree that immigration pushes wages lower and creates more competition for jobs, but interestingly, 1 in 5 (21%) of Canadians disagree with this statement.

As many immigrants are streamed into low-paying work that Canadian workers traditionally avoid given relatively stable demand in higher-paid sectors of the economy, Canadians may observe a race-to-the-bottom on wages that largely affects foreign workers. The residual effect of this wage suppression may be felt in the struggles Canadian workers face in calling for increased wages as they catch up to the rapid inflationary episodes after the COVID-19 economic shock. Workers in general have a significantly more sympathetic view of immigration policy, suggesting that they do not view immigration and wage gains as a zero sum game.

Table 3 – Unionized Workers Are More Sympathetic to Immigrants and Recognize Issues

	(+2) Strongly agree	(+1) Agree	(0) Neutral	(-1) Disagree	(-2) Strongly disagree	Prefer not to answer
Immigration supports economic growth by filling labour shortages in key industries						
Total	18.6%	39.4%	22.3%	11.4%	7.2%	1.1%
Unionized	24.4%	42.8%	17.8%	8.7%	5.5%	0.7%
Non-Union	16.6%	38.3%	23.8%	12.1%	7.9%	1.3%
Immigration grows Canada's workforce and keeps our social programs sustainable						
Total	15.2%	34.5%	26.3%	13.9%	9.3%	0.8%
Unionized	21.5%	38.7%	19.0%	12.4%	7.9%	0.4%
Non-Union	13.1%	33.1%	28.6%	14.4%	9.8%	1.0%
Immigration pushes wages lower and creates more competition for Canadian jobs						
Total	21.8%	31.0%	25.5%	16.4%	4.4%	0.9%
Unionized	23.1%	31.3%	23.0%	17.3%	4.3%	1.1%
Non-Union	21.5%	30.7%	26.1%	16.3%	4.5%	0.9%
Previous federal governments have allowed fast food and coffee chains to use Temporary Foreign Workers as cheap labour they can exploit. It's not fair to workers, and it's not fair to Canadians looking for a home. We should stop that type of temporary immigration.						
Total	21.8%	31.0%	25.5%	16.4%	4.4%	0.9%
Unionized	23.1%	31.3%	23.0%	17.3%	4.3%	1.1%
Non-Union	21.5%	30.7%	26.1%	16.3%	4.5%	0.9%

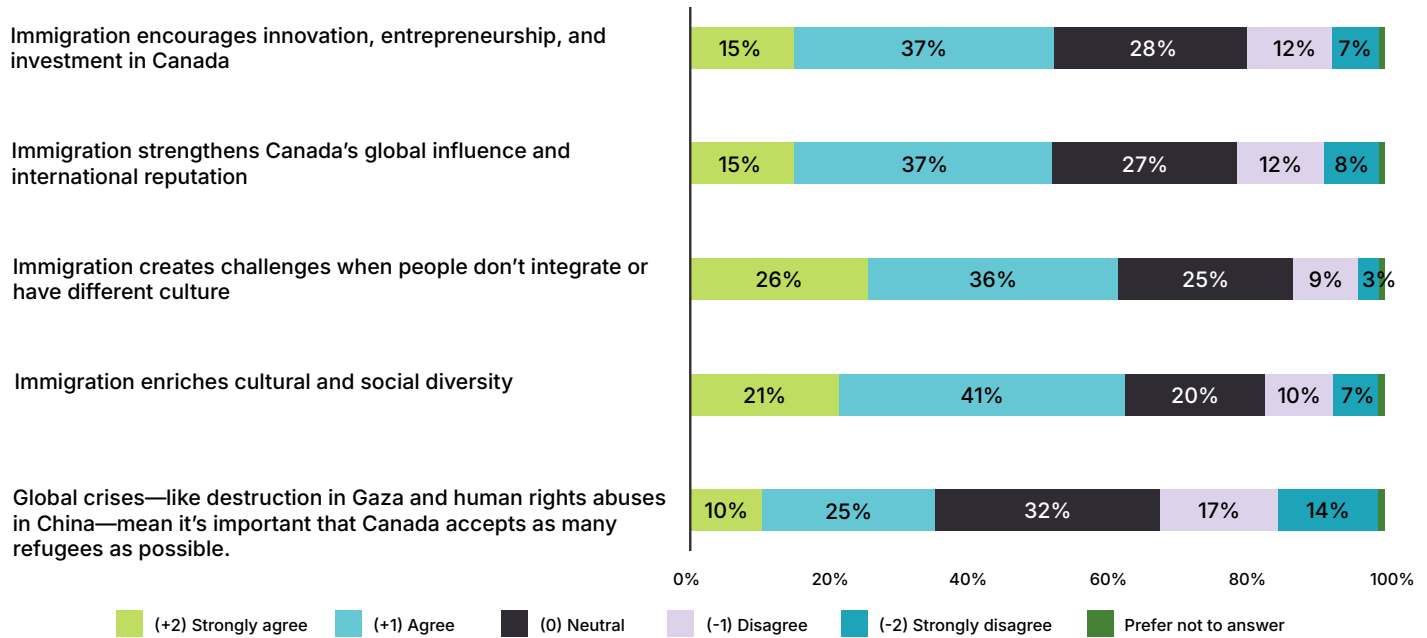
Bold % = significance at or above 98% level. Statistical testing not performed when n < 30 since statistical assumptions are not met.

Significantly, unionized workers (67%) are much more likely to see immigrants as important for filling labour shortages in key industries, compared to Canadians who do not belong to a union (55%). Unionized workers (60%) are also much more likely to see the value of immigration in growing Canada's workforce to keep social programs sustainable than non-unionized Canadians (46%).

While union workers follow other trends in opinion on wage suppression and ending the Temporary Foreign Workers Program, they do see the necessity of immigration more than other groups of Canadians. Given this nuance, any appeal to labour unions on the issue of immigration should consider the majority view among members that immigration is necessary, and focus on the economic issues leading to injustice and inefficiencies in the Canadian labour market's allocation of workers and skills.

Global Leadership and Multiculturalism at Home

Chart 6 – Views on Canada’s Immigration Policy and Global Leadership, Business, and Multiculturalism



Despite changing opinions on immigration policy, Canadians are still generally positive on how Canada’s immigration and multicultural policy have contributed to Canada’s economy and global leadership. More than half of Canadians (52%) agree that immigration has contributed positively to business activity as well as Canada’s global influence and international reputation (52%). On the contribution of immigration to Canada’s multiculturalism, while most Canadians (62%) do agree that cultural diversity can be a challenging issue, a similar proportion (62%) also believe that immigration enriches cultural and social diversity.

Among Canadians, there are also slight social divisions aligned with positive and negative views of Canada’s immigration policy with regards to global leadership and multiculturalism. There is strong agreement that immigration has contributed positively to Canada’s global leadership, business, and cultural enrichment among younger people, highly educated respondents, union members, and among those familiar with immigration. Interestingly, there is some nuance to consider in attitudes towards immigration and multicultural integration among newcomers.

Table 4 - Immigration creates challenges when people don't integrate or have different cultures

	(+2) Strongly agree	(+1) Agree	(0) Neutral	(-1) Disagree	(-2) Strongly disagree	Prefer not to answer
How many years ago did you first move to Canada?						
Total	25.6%	35.8%	25.3%	9.4%	3.3%	0.6%
Years in Canada < 5 years	30.6%	36.2%	17.5%	13.7%	2.1%	0.0%
Years in Canada 5-10 years	19.4%	49.5%	14.6%	14.3%	2.1%	0.0%
Years in Canada 10+ years	27.5%	40.1%	28.7%	2.7%	0.5%	0.5%
Parents' Birthplace						
Total	25.6%	35.8%	25.3%	9.4%	3.3%	0.6%
Both in Canada	26.0%	32.9%	26.4%	10.2%	4.0%	0.5%
Both Abroad	24.9%	40.6%	22.7%	8.7%	2.5%	0.5%
One in Canada, One Abroad	28.0%	36.0%	28.2%	6.6%	1.2%	0.0%
How familiar are you with Canada's immigration system and the experiences of newcomers to Canada? This might include application processes, visa requirements, and pathways to citizenship.						
Total	25.6%	35.8%	25.3%	9.4%	3.3%	0.6%
Very familiar w/ immigration	34.5%	39.7%	17.8%	4.6%	3.3%	0.0%
Somewhat familiar w/ immigration	24.9%	33.9%	22.9%	13.9%	3.7%	0.6%
Not very or not at all familiar w/ immigration	22.0%	35.3%	30.2%	8.7%	3.1%	0.7%

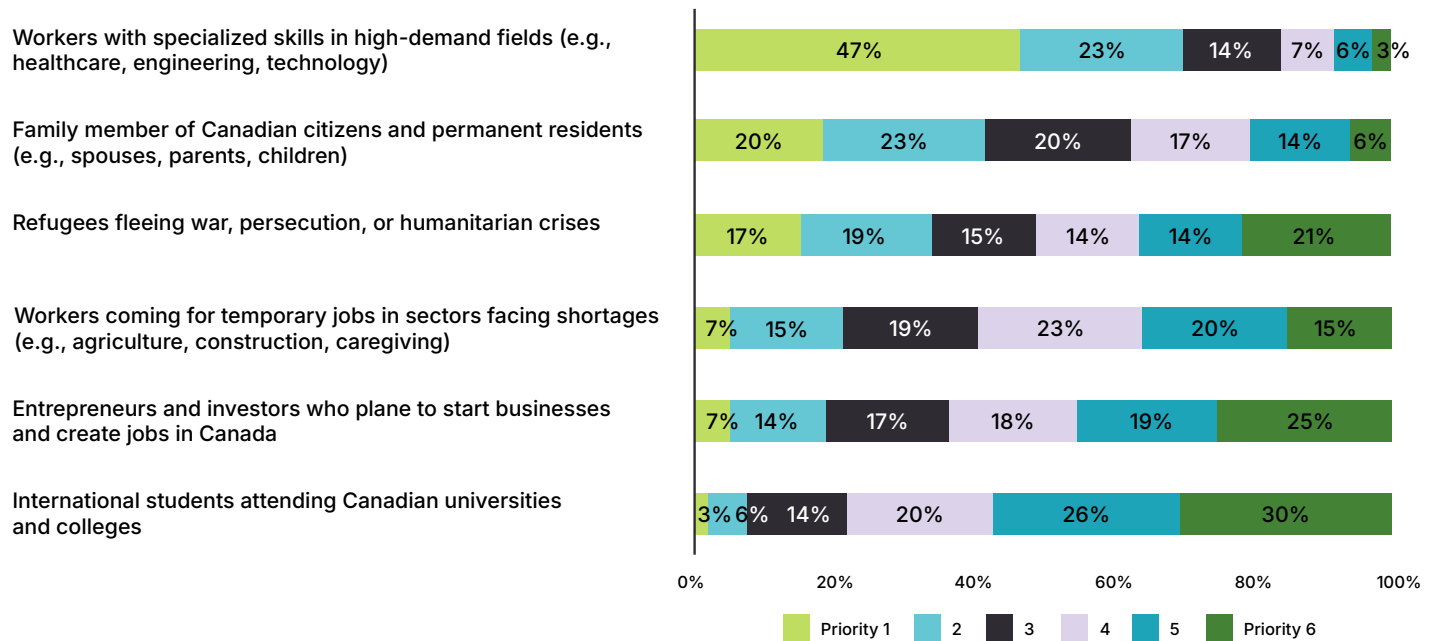
Bold % = significance at or above 98% level. Statistical testing not performed when n < 30 since statistical assumptions are not met

While there is general agreement on the view that “immigration creates challenges when people don’t integrate or have different cultures,” there are also some significant correlations in support for this statement among those familiar with immigration. Interestingly, this may be indicative of the integration challenges newcomers face in coming to Canada, and a self-awareness of those challenges faced.

Lastly, despite general agreement over immigration’s contribution to Canada’s global leadership and multiculturalism, there is more ambivalence towards Canada’s global leadership role and immigration policy regarding refugees. Only 35% of Canadians agree that, amid global crises, that it is “important that Canada accepts as many refugees as possible.” While economic contributions are highly regarded in Canada’s immigration policy, humanitarian purposes are not prioritized. This is further reflected in the priority preferences for immigrants among Canadians.

Economic Priorities in Canada's Immigration Policy

Chart 7 - How much priority should governments place on different types of immigrants when making decisions around immigration policy?



Among respondents, there is a very strong preference for immigrants who possess skills that are highly in demand, like healthcare, engineering and technology. Nearly half of Canadians (47%) would prioritize workers with high-skill economic contributions. Family reunification is a second priority for Canadians, but falls far short as a first priority (20%) compared to highly-skilled workers. Refugees (17%) are also less of a priority, despite positive reflections on immigration's role in Canada's global influence.

Least prioritized for Canadians are temporary foreign workers, business investors, and international students. Given the social issues exacerbated by employers seeking to exploit the Temporary Foreign Workers Program to access low-wage labour, it is unsurprising that respondents do not see this immigration stream as a priority.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Canadians support immigration. However, they want Canada's immigration system to fulfill the economic objectives it was designed for: "to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy, in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions of Canada."⁹

Party Preferences and Immigration Views

What is clear is that Canadians want to prioritize highly-skilled immigration, something that Canada's immigration policy used to prioritize, to fill in the gaps in our economic sectors and social services. As demonstrated in Table 1, there are demographic and political fault lines on whether immigration has had a positive impact on Canada. As this research was conducted on the eve of the 2025 federal election, it is notable that correlations can also be found in political party preferences and views on immigration, even where there is strong agreement among Canadians.

	(+2) Strongly agree	(+1) Agree	(0) Neutral	(-1) Disagree	(-2) Strongly disagree	Prefer not to answer
Immigration supports economic growth by filling labour shortages in key industries.						
Total	18.6%	39.4%	22.3%	11.4%	7.2%	1.1%
New Democratic Party of Canada	23.9%	44.4%	15.6%	9.3%	6.0%	0.8%
Liberal Party of Canada	25.3%	49.4%	16.6%	7.3%	1.1%	0.2%
Conservative Party of Canada	11.9%	32.5%	26.2%	15.7%	13.4%	0.3%
Unsure	8.9%	33.1%	32.3%	16.5%	5.3%	3.9%
Immigration enriches cultural and social diversity.						
Total	21.4%	41.3%	19.9%	9.9%	6.9%	0.6%
New Democratic Party of Canada	30.9%	42.8%	17.0%	3.2%	6.1%	0.0%
Liberal Party of Canada	29.4%	50.3%	11.5%	6.9%	2.0%	0.0%
Conservative Party of Canada	11.3%	33.5%	25.2%	17.1%	12.1%	0.9%
Unsure	17.0%	37.9%	30.6%	7.6%	5.4%	1.5%
Canada is proud of being a nation of immigrants, but until we can build more housing and hire more family doctors, we need to pause some types of Immigration.						
Total	32.6%	37.2%	20.7%	6.1%	2.7%	0.7%
New Democratic Party of Canada	37.8%	30.7%	23.4%	6.4%	1.6%	0.0%
Liberal Party of Canada	25.7%	45.1%	17.8%	8.8%	2.0%	0.7%
Conservative Party of Canada	44.4%	33.5%	13.2%	4.2%	4.6%	0.0%
Unsure	24.2%	37.7%	33.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.9%

Previous federal governments have allowed fast food and coffee chains to use Temporary Foreign Workers as cheap labour they can exploit. It's not fair to workers, and it's not fair to Canadians looking for a home. We should stop that type of temporary immigration.						
Total	28.6%	31.9%	29.2%	6.3%	2.9%	1.1%
New Democratic Party of Canada	30.3%	28.9%	35.9%	3.3%	0.7%	0.9%
Liberal Party of Canada	23.3%	35.6%	27.2%	9.1%	4.1%	0.6%
Conservative Party of Canada	36.7%	30.0%	24.7%	5.6%	2.4%	0.6%
Unsure	19.5%	33.8%	38.5%	4.5%	0.3%	3.3%

Bold % = significance at or above 98% level. Statistical testing not performed when n < 30 since statistical assumptions are not met

On a number of perspectives related to immigration policy where there is strong agreement among Canadians, there are political divides. The view that “immigration supports economic growth by filling labour shortages in key industries,” is widely supported by NDP and Liberal vote intentions. However, over a quarter of Conservative voters (26%) are neutral on this view, and are much more likely to disagree with this view than other voters. There are also similar trends reflected in the view that “immigration enriches cultural and social diversity”: NDP and Liberal voters strongly agree with this idea, while most who intend to vote Conservative are neutral or disagree with the statements.

Where Conservative voters do find more alignment with other parties is on the proposal that “we need to pause some types of immigration” until housing and healthcare crises are fixed. However, Conservative voters agree with this statement much more strongly when compared to other voters. Conservative voters also much more strongly agree compared to other voters with the notion that Temporary Foreign Workers are being exploited in the service sector while exacerbating the housing crisis, and that this type of temporary immigration program should end.

Canadians still largely agree that immigration has helped Canada’s economy and enriched cultural diversity, and any pitch for immigration policy change to NDP and Liberal voters needs to support closing labour gaps in sectors such as health-care and the housing sector. Further steps to reform the Temporary Foreign Workers Program due to its abuse by employers may also find support among Conservative voters as well.

Conclusion

The findings of this report complicate the narrative that Canada is becoming uniformly less welcoming to immigrants, while immigrants are feeling the same economic pressures that ordinary Canadian citizens are also facing. Familiarity with the immigrant experience tends to correlate with more support for immigrants themselves, as well as informed criticism of Canada's current immigration system for its role in exacerbating social and economic inequality. The labour market shortages that immigration is supposed to fix are not being addressed by the current immigration system, which focuses on increasing Temporary Foreign Workers, while leaving economic pathways for migrants with needed skills in fields like care work backlogged.¹⁰ Today, the share of temporary foreign workers among all new economic migrants has risen from 8% in 2000 to 49% in 2022.¹¹

Given these issues, Canadians should understand that reform to the immigration system does not mean completely closing Canada off from migrants. Immigration is still celebrated as a part of Canada's multicultural society while acknowledging its challenges, and Canadians continue to support welcoming highly-skilled immigrants to fulfill acute labour shortages.

In addition to housing decommodification, restoring and maintaining healthcare workforce levels, and pushing back against wage suppression, policymakers should reform the TFWP to ensure Canadian jobs are filled through the permanent immigration system. According to Gilbert, this policy reform should aim to stimulate economic growth, create employment and generate tax revenue that sustains our social services, and generate public investment through a workforce able to take on tough challenges like building infrastructure and expanding our healthcare system.¹²

Through the leadership of labour unions alongside migrant rights advocates, Canadians desire a fix to the contradictions of the immigration system. Hurried immigration changes by the Liberal government came late in 2024 after a report by the UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery called out the TFWP for abuses.¹³ Rather than listen exclusively to service industry business interests on their demands for TFWs,¹⁴ the next federal government must consult with labour, priority economic sectors, and migrants rights activists for a real path forward on immigration that respects human rights while fixing Canada's labour market gaps and inefficiencies. Changing Canada's TFW programming and creating pathways to regularization would also help to move this economic framework of the immigration system towards a broader human rights framework that ensures equality and justice for all that choose to make Canada their home.

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