Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

2022-23 IRCC Annual Tracking Survey

Final Report

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a 15-minute telephone survey of 3,400 Canadians conducted by Phoenix SPI on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada between January 31 and March 17, 2023.

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Political Neutrality Statement

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix SPI that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.

Alethea Woods, President, Phoenix SPI

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Executive Summary

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) commissioned Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) to conduct a telephone survey of Canadians to assess the public's perceptions of immigration and related issues. Phoenix SPI is pleased to present this report to IRCC.

Background and Objectives

IRCC is the department of the Government of Canada with responsibility for matters dealing with immigration to Canada, refugees, and Canadian citizenship. IRCC conducts an ongoing research program to help the Department develop a better understanding of Canadian attitudes toward the issues surrounding citizenship and immigration. As part of this research program, IRCC has been conducting annual telephone tracking surveys since 1996.

The Annual Tracking Survey provides the Department with comparable tracking data about public attitudes toward immigration and related issues, which is of key importance to IRCC's policies, programs, and services. The specific objectives of this year's survey are to assess Canadians' perceptions of the following:

- Immigration levels.
- The impact of immigration on Canada generally.
- Canada's immigration system and priorities.
- The settlement and integration of newcomers.

By gauging Canadian attitudes about key elements of the Department's mandate, this research supported IRCC by:

- ensuring high quality policy options, program design and advice;
- encouraging and effectively managing citizen-focused services;
- managing organizational and strategic risks proactively; and
- gathering and using relevant information on program results.

Methodology

A 15-minute random digit dialling (RDD) telephone survey was conducted with a sample of 3,400 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between January 31 and March 17, 2023. An overlapping dual-frame (cellphone and landline) probability sample was used to minimize coverage error: 65 percent of the sample frame was cellphone numbers and 35 percent was landline telephone numbers. The sample frame was geographically disproportionate to improve the accuracy of specific regional results. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results can be considered accurate within ±1.7%, 19 times out of 20 (adjusted to reflect the geographically disproportionate sampling). The margins of error are greater for results pertaining to subgroups of the total sample. The full technical specifications can be found in the Appendix: 1. Technical Specifications.

Key Findings

- Approximately half (52%) of surveyed Canadians feel that the right number of immigrants are coming to Canada. In contrast, roughly two in 10 each said there are too many (22%) or too few (22%) immigrants coming to Canada. Seven in 10 (71%) said that immigration is having a somewhat or very positive effect on Canada.
- More than four in 10 said that about the right number of immigrants are coming into their town or city (45%), as well as to their province or territory (43%), and approximately two-thirds each (64% and 66%, respectively) feel that immigration is having at least a somewhat positive effect on these areas. Seventy-two percent of Canadians feel that it is important for new immigrants to be encouraged to settle outside of Canada's largest municipalities.
- More than seven in 10 (73%) agreed that immigration is necessary to sustain economic growth in the face of Canada's aging population. Following this, 69% agreed that Canada's competitiveness depends on recruiting immigrants to meet the country's evolving labour needs and exactly two-thirds (66%) agreed that immigration is necessary to fill skill and labour gaps in local economies.
- Almost eight in 10 Canadians are proud of Canada's reputation as an opening and welcoming society (78%) and believe that most immigrants come to Canada to contribute to society (77%). In addition, seven in 10 (70%) believe that accepting immigrants from different cultures makes Canadian culture stronger and few (21%) think that immigration is causing Canada to change in ways that they don't like.
- Approximately four in 10 (43%) Canadians feel that about the right number of refugees are coming to Canada and just over half (56%) support the Government of Canada bringing a number of Afghan refugees to Canada.
- Nearly in eight in 10 (78%) Canadians agreed that accepting refugees is part of Canada's humanitarian traditions, while slightly smaller majorities agreed that Canada has a responsibility to do its part in accepting refugees (73%) and that most refugees that come to Canada want to contribute to society (70%).

Notes to the Reader

- All results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted
- Percentages may not always add to 100 due to rounding
- All questions, and all reported percentages, are base: all respondents (n=3,400)
- The tabulated data is available under separate cover
- The contract value was $138,128.38 (including HST)

Detailed Findings

Immigration

Canadians were asked their opinions on current immigration levels and their perspectives about the effects immigration has on Canada. Below are the compiled results.

Half of Canadians are generally content with immigration levels at the national level.

Approximately half of surveyed Canadians (52%) feel that the right number of immigrants are coming to Canada. Those who do not were evenly split between those who said there are too many immigrants coming to Canada (22%) and those who said there are too few immigrants coming to Canada (22%).

Table 1: Views on immigration at the national level

	Too many	About the right number	Too few	Don't know
Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?	22%	52%	22%	4%
Currently, Canada plans to admit 465,000 immigrants in 2023. Do you feel that this would be…	35%	51%	10%	4%
465,000 immigrants is roughly 1% of Canada's current population. Knowing this, do you feel that this would be…	27%	50%	20%	2%

When told that Canada plans to admit 465,000 immigrants in 2023, opinions shifted slightly. While half (51%) said that this is about the right number, approximately one-third (35%) of Canadians felt that this would be too many immigrants (up from the 22% who said that current immigration levels are too high when not provided with the actual number). Ten percent said that 465,000 immigrants is too few to admit to Canada (down from the 22% who said that there are too few immigrants coming to Canada when not provided with the actual number).

Opinions shifted again when respondents were told that 465,000 immigrants accounts for roughly one percent of Canada's total population. Fewer surveyed Canadians felt that 465,000 immigrants is too many (27% compared to 35% when the additional context was not provided) and more said it is too few (20% compared to 10%) when they learned that 465,000 immigrants is about one percent of the country's current population.

Canadians hold similar views about immigration levels at the local and provincial/territorial level.

Canadians were asked about their feelings regarding the number of immigrants coming to their town or city as well as to their province or territory.

At the local level, more than four in 10 (45%) surveyed Canadians said that about the right number of immigrants are coming to their town or city, while 27% said there are too few and 20% said too many people are immigrating to their town or city (8% did not know).

When asked about their province or territory, almost as many Canadians (43%) said about the right number of immigrants are coming while 20% said there are too few (compared to 27% who felt this way about their town or city) and 26% said too many (compared to 20% when the focus was on their town or city) people immigrating to their province or territory. Ten percent did not know.

Table 2: Views on immigration at the local and regional levels

	Too many	About the right number	Too few	Don't know
Do you feel that there are too many, too few, or about the right number of immigrants coming to your city or town?	20%	45%	27%	8%
Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to your province or territory?	26%	43%	20%	10%

Canadians view the effect of immigration as mostly positive.

Canadians were asked about the effects of immigration from different perspectives, ranging from Canada as a whole to them personally. Overall, the majority of Canadians said that immigration is having a somewhat or very positive effect.

Seven in 10 Canadians said that immigration is having a somewhat (36%) or very (35%) positive effect on Canada. Similar proportions said that immigration to the country is having a somewhat or very positive effect on their province or territory (66%) and on their city or town (64%). In both areas, respondents were more likely to say the effect is somewhat rather than very positive.

Looking at the impact on their neighbourhood, almost six in 10 Canadians said that immigration is having a somewhat (32%) or very (27%) positive effect. At the personal level, just over six in 10 respondents said that immigration to Canada is having a somewhat (30%) or very (32%) positive effect on them personally. Those who did not assess the impact on their neighbourhood or on themselves positively were more likely to hold neutral views (26%) than to say the effects are negative (11%).

Relatively few respondents (from 11% to 15%) feel that immigration is having a negative effect in any of these areas.

Table 3: Perceptions of: the effect of immigration to this country on…

	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither	Somewhat negative	Very negative
Canada	35%	36%	12%	9%	5%
Your Province/Territory	29%	37%	15%	10%	5%
Your city/town	28%	36%	19%	9%	5%
Your neighbourhood	27%	32%	26%	7%	4%

You personally	32%	30%	26%	7%	4%

Canadians are generally supportive of immigration in the context of economic growth.

Canadians were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements about immigration and economic growth using a 10-point scale, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 10 means 'strongly agree'.

In response, more than seven in 10 respondents agreed (scores of 7 to 10) that immigration is necessary to sustain economic growth in the face of Canada's aging population (73%) and that it is important for new immigrants to be encouraged to settle outside of Canada's largest municipalities (72%). Following this, 69% agreed that Canada's competitiveness depends on recruiting immigrants to meet the country's evolving labour needs and exactly two-thirds (66%) agreed that immigration is necessary to fill skill and labour gaps in local economies. Those who did not express agreement with these statements were more likely to place themselves at the neutral point of the scale (scores of 5 to 6) than to disagree (scores of 1 to 4).

The one area where there was less consensus was prioritizing unemployed Canadians. Four in 10 (40%) Canadians agreed that Canada should focus on helping unemployed Canadians rather than looking for skilled immigrants for the workforce. Conversely, nearly three in 10 (28%) disagreed with this statement (the rest, 30%, were neutral).

Table 4: Attitudes towards immigration and the economy (agree or disagree with each of the following statements, using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 10 means "strongly agree")

	Agree (7-10)	Neutral (5-6)	Disagree (1-4)
"Immigration is necessary if Canada is to sustain its economic growth in the face of an aging population."	73%	16%	10%
"It is important that Canada encourages new immigrants to settle in areas outside of Canada's largest municipalities."	72%	17%	9%
"Canada's competitiveness depends on our ability to recruit immigrants who meet our country's evolving labour needs."	69%	18%	12%
"Immigration is necessary to help fill skill and labour shortages in my local economy."	66%	19%	13%
"Canada should focus on helping unemployed Canadians rather than looking for skilled immigrants for our workforce."	40%	30%	28%

Canadians think that welcoming immigrants improves Canadian society.

Canadians were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements about immigration and society using a 10-point scale, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 10 means 'strongly agree'.

Almost eight in 10 Canadians are proud of Canada's reputation as an open and welcoming society (78%) and believe that most immigrants come to Canada to contribute to society (77%). In addition, seven in 10 (70%) believe that accepting immigrants from different cultures makes Canadian culture stronger and few (21%) agree that immigration is causing Canada to change in ways that they don't like.

When asked if immigrants need to do more to integrate into Canadian society, Canadians' views were more divided: 47% agreed that immigrants need to do more and 51% were neutral or disagreed. Views were split when asked if immigration has placed too much pressure on public services in Canada: 35% agreed that immigration has put too much pressure on public services, 27% were neutral, and 35% disagreed that immigration has placed pressure on public services.

Figure 5: Attitudes towards immigration and society (agree or disagree with each of the following statements, using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 10 means "strongly agree")

	Agree (7-10)	Neutral (5-6)	Disagree (1-4)
"I am proud of Canada's reputation as an open and welcoming society."	78%	13%	8%
"Most immigrants who come here want to contribute to society."	77%	15%	7%
"Accepting immigrants from many different cultures makes Canadian culture stronger."	70%	16%	13%
"Immigrants need to do more to integrate into Canadian society."	47%	27%	24%
"Immigration has placed too much pressure on public services in Canada."	35%	27%	35%
"Immigration is causing Canada to change in ways that I don't like."	21%	18%	60%

Refugees

Canadians were asked their opinions on refugees and their perspectives about the effects refugees have on Canada. Below are the compiled results.

At least 4 in 10 Canadians are generally content with the number of refugees being resettled.

Approximately four in 10 Canadians (43%) feel that about the right number of refugees are coming to Canada. Conversely, 21% feel there are too many refugees and 24% said there are too few coming into Canada (11% did not know).

Looking specifically at refugees selected to be resettled to Canada from abroad, opinions shifted slightly. Fifteen percent of Canadians (down from 21% when the focus was refugees in general) said there are too many refugees while 29% said there are too few refugees resettling in Canada (up from 24% when the focus was refugees in general). The plurality (44%) felt that Canada is resettling the right number of refugees selected to be resettled from abroad (11% did not know).

When asked about people who come to Canada and claim asylum, the plurality, again, felt that Canada is receiving the right number of claimants (41%). Fourteen percent did not know enough to respond, and the rest were split between those who said that there are too many people coming to Canada and claiming asylum (21%) and those who said there are too few asylum claimants (23%).

Table 6: Views on the number of refugees coming to Canada

	Too many	About the right number	Too few	Don't know
Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of refugees coming to Canada?	21%	43%	24%	11%
Refugees selected to be resettled to Canada from abroad	15%	44%	29%	11%
People who come to Canada and claim asylum	21%	41%	23%	14%

Most Canadians are welcoming of refugees.

Canadians were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements about refugees using a 10-point scale, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 10 means 'strongly agree'.

Nearly eight in 10 (78%) Canadians agreed (scores of 7 to 10) that accepting refugees is part of Canada's humanitarian tradition. Seven in 10 agreed that Canada has a responsibility to do its part in accepting refugees (73%) and that most refugees who come to Canada want to contribute to society (70%). Very few (from 7% to 10%) disagreed (scores of 1 to 4) with these statements.

Two-thirds (66%) disagreed with the view that refugees take jobs away from other Canadians and almost as many (57%) disagreed that accepting refugees poses a risk to safety and security of Canadians. In addition, almost six in 10 (57%) agreed that refugees have a positive impact on Canada's economy.

When asked if accepting refugees places too much pressure on public services in Canada, almost four in 10 (38%) Canadians disagreed that this is the case. One-third (32%) agreed, while the rest (27%) were neutral.

Views were split when asked if the federal government should focus on helping Canadians rather than welcoming refugees: 34% of Canadians disagreed with this statement, 32% agreed, and a further 32% were neutral.

Table 7: Attitudes towards refugees (agree or disagree with each of the following statements, using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 10 means "strongly agree")

	Agree (7-10)	Neutral (5-6)	Disagree (1-4)
"Accepting refugees is part of Canada's humanitarian tradition."	78%	14%	7%
"Canada has a responsibility to do its part in accepting refugees."	73%	16%	10%
"Most refugees who come here want to contribute to society."	70%	19%	8%
"Refugees have a positive impact on Canada's economy."	57%	26%	14%
"The federal government should focus on helping Canadians rather than welcoming refugees."	32%	32%	34%
"Accepting refugees places too much pressure on public services in Canada."	32%	27%	38%
"Accepting refugees poses a risk to the safety and security of Canadians."	19%	22%	57%

"Refugees take away jobs from other Canadians."	14%	19%	66%

Canadians see the effects of refugees coming to Canada as mostly positive.

Canadians were asked about the effects of accepting refugees on Canada and on their town or city. Two-thirds (67%) feel that the effects of refugees coming to Canada is somewhat (42%) or very (25%) positive. When asked about their town or city, fewer, but still a majority (57%) of Canadians, said that the effects are somewhat (36%) or very (21%) positive.

Table 8: Perceptions of the effect of accepting refugees on…

	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither	Somewhat negative	Very negative
Canada	25%	42%	19%	10%	2%
Your city/town	21%	36%	27%	9%	3%

The majority of Canadians support bringing Afghan refugees to Canada.

More than half of surveyed Canadians (56%) support the Government of Canada bringing a number of Afghan refugees to Canada. Relatively few (15%) oppose this, with another one-quarter (26%) of Canadians remaining neutral.

Table 9: Support for and opposition to the Government of Canada bringing a number of Afghan refugees to Canada (using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means you "strongly oppose" and 10 means you "strongly support")

Support (7-10)	56%
Neutral (5-6)	26%
Oppose (1-4)	15%

Appendix 1: Technical Specifications

Overview

The following specifications applied to this research:

- A 15-minute random digit dialling (RDD) telephone survey was conducted with a sample of 3,400 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between January 31 and March 17, 2023.
- To facilitate comparisons over time, survey questions were the same or similar to the ones used for previous iterations of this study.
- The questionnaire was programmed using a computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system and pre-tested in advance of the fieldwork to ensure that it measured what it intended to measure and that respondents understood the questions.
    - The pre-test included 11 English interviews and 10 French interviews. No changes were made after the pre-test; therefore, the pre-test data were included in the final survey dataset.
- An overlapping dual-frame (landline and cell phone) sample was used to minimize coverage error.[1] The sample source was ASDE Survey Sampler.
    - Sixty-five percent of the sample frame contained cell phone numbers and the remainder landline telephone numbers.
    - This was a probability sample; therefore, the results can be generalized to the full population of Canadians.
    - The same random selection process was used for both the landline and cell phone sample, thereby ensuring the integrity of the probability sample.
- The sample frame was geographically disproportionate to improve the accuracy of regional results.
- Based on the sample size for this study, the overall results can be considered accurate to within ±2.7%, 19 times out of 20 (adjusted for sample stratification). The margins of error are greater for results pertaining to subgroups of the total sample.
- All steps of this public opinion research (POR) study complied with *The Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Telephone Surveys* and all applicable industry standards.

[1] Coverage error occurs when not all segments of the target population are included in the sample frame. If only landlines were included in the sample frame for this survey, Canadians who only have a cell phone would not have an opportunity to participate in the survey. The survey results, therefore, would only reflect the views of Canadians who have a landline in their household.

Sampling

The following table presents the sample distribution and the associated margins of error for each province and/or region (at the 95% confidence level):

Table 10: Number of interviews by province and/or region and the margin of error

	No. of Interviews	Margin of Error
Total	**3,400**	**±1.7%**
Atlantic Canada	400	±4.9%
Newfoundland and Labrador	100	±9.8%
Nova Scotia	100	±9.8%
Prince Edward Island	100	±9.8%
New Brunswick	100	±9.8%
Quebec	700	±3.7%
Ontario	1,150	±2.9%
Manitoba	150	±8.0%
Saskatchewan	150	±8.0%
Alberta	340	±5.3%
British Columbia	410	±4.8%
Territories	100	±9.8%

The sample was stratified by region, with quotas used to ensure appropriate representation. During the fieldwork, the regional sampling was managed to ensure that each successive quartile of responses contained roughly the same proportion of responses per region.

Weighting

The tables below provide the unweighted and weighted distributions of the telephone sample for key socio-demographic characteristics. Weights were applied to the survey sample to ensure that the final data reflects the adult population of Canada by region, age, and gender according to Statistics Canada's 2021 census data.

Table 11: Weighted and unweighted totals by Region

	Unweighted Total	Weighted Total
British Columbia	410	472
Alberta	340	377
Saskatchewan	150	99
Manitoba	150	119
Ontario	1,150	1,313
Quebec	700	782
New Brunswick	100	73
Prince Edward Island	100	14
Nova Scotia	100	92
Newfoundland and Labrador	100	49
Territories	100	10

Table 12: Weighted and unweighted totals by Age

	Unweighted Total	Weighted Total
18-24	199	343
25-34	411	564
35-44	489	561
45-54	543	534
55-64	643	596
65+	1115	802

Table 13: Weighted and unweighted totals by Gender

	Unweighted Total	Weighted Total

Woman	1,678	1,679
Man	1,692	1,687

Table 14: Weighted and unweighted totals by Education

	Unweighted Total	Weighted Total
High school diploma or less	809	801
College, CEGEP, Registered Apprenticeship or Trades	930	917
University	1,629	1,648

Table 15: Weighted and unweighted totals by Household Income

	Unweighted Total	Weighted Total
Under $20,000	192	202
$20,000 to $39,999	403	389
$40,000 to $59,999	458	446
$60,000 to $79,999	381	383
$80,000 to $99,999	367	356
$100,000 to under $149,999	502	522
$150,000 or more	638	652

Table 16: Weighted and unweighted totals by Country of Birth

	Unweighted Total	Weighted Total
Born outside Canada	823	928
Born in Canada	2,570	2,464

Call Dispositions

The following table presents information about the final call dispositions for this survey and calculation of the response rate:

Table 17: Final call dispositions

	Total	Landline	Cell
Total Numbers Attempted	254,209	56,703	197,506
Out-of-scope - Invalid	175,675	37,664	138,011
Unresolved (U)	30,537	5,097	25,440
No answer/Answering machine	30,537	5,097	25,440
In-scope - Non-responding (IS)	44,342	12,688	31,654
Language barrier	814	227	587
Incapable of completing (ill/deceased)	254	130	124
Callback (Respondent not available)	2,687	402	2,285
Refusal	39,438	11,670	27,768
Termination	1,149	259	890
In-scope - Responding units (R)	3,655	1,254	2,401
Completed Interview	3,400	1,190	2,210
Not Qualified – Age	119	11	108
Quota full	136	53	83

The overall response rate was 5% (7% for the landline sample and 4% for the cell phone sample). Using the numbers from the final call dispositions table, the survey response rate is calculated as follows: [R=R/(U+IS+R)]. This means that the response rate is calculated as the number of responding units [R] divided by the number of unresolved [U] numbers plus in-scope [IS] non-responding households and individuals plus responding units [R].

Non-response analysis

A non-response analysis was conducted to assess the potential for non-response bias. Survey non-response can bias results when there are systematic differences between survey respondents and non-respondents. As displayed in the tables above (see 'Weighting'), the survey sample differs from the population in terms of age (as is often the case with telephone surveys of the general population). Canadians under 55 were under-represented in the survey sample and those aged 55 and older were over-represented in the survey sample. Weights were applied to adjust for the discrepancy between the survey sample and the population.

Appendix 2: Quantitative Instruments

English and French quantitative instruments are provided under separate cover.