



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

2022–2023 IRCC Annual Tracking Qualitative Research

Final Report

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a series of 18 online focus groups conducted by Quorus Consulting Group Inc. on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada between January 23 and February 6, 2023.

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Executive summary

Background and study objectives

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) conducts an ongoing research program to ensure that it has a good understanding of Canadian attitudes towards the issues surrounding immigration, refugees and citizenship.

The research objectives of this study included assessing Canadians' perceptions of

- immigration levels
- the impact of immigration on Canada
- service provided by IRCC to clients and to the general public
- Canada's immigration system and priorities
- the settlement and integration of newcomers

IRCC will use the research to explore underlying sentiments on a wide variety of immigration-related perceptions, mitigating potential risks associated with maintaining inadequate information on Canadians' attitudes.

Methodology

This research project included 18 online focus groups that Quorus ran between January 23 and February 6, 2023. Each session lasted approximately 105 minutes. The participants were recruited from across the country and from both urban areas and smaller communities, including communities participating in the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) program and the Welcoming Francophone Communities initiative. In addition to general population groups (Canadian adults 18 and older), the target audiences consisted of newcomers to Canada who had arrived since 2012 and Indigenous peoples of Canada. Fifteen groups were held in English and three in French. A total of 122 people participated.

Summary of research findings

Top-of-mind awareness

While immigration news was not top-of-mind for most participants, some topics were mentioned, including

- the Government of Canada's announcement about new immigration levels, including the target of 500,000 per year and the link with Canada's labour shortage
- the influx of Ukrainian people in the past year since the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Afghan refugees
- immigration backlogs and wait times for applicants
- asylum seekers at Roxham Road (in Quebec)

Immigration levels

The participants were shown how many permanent residents Canada is planning on admitting over the coming years, along with the percentage of the Canadian population that those numbers represent. Most respondents did not have any issues with the numbers and generally said they made sense.

As to why they thought Canada is increasing its targets, the main theories suggested were

- to fill labour shortages
- to help address issues caused by Canada's aging population
- to increase Canada's declining tax base
- to counter a low birth rate and naturally declining population

Participants said that their communities need to plan for accommodating more immigration and more permanent residents. They pointed to a variety of things that they saw around them today that they felt were not working well and would need to be addressed, including

- housing shortages and affordability
- the rising cost of living
- infrastructure and transportation (including public transit)
- the health care system (access, and shortages in staff and funding in all areas)

- the education system (more support for newcomers)

As well, participants noted that there should be a plan to encourage new immigrants to settle throughout the country and to ensure better recognition of foreign credentials.

During discussions on particular skills, education or experience that Canada should focus on when attracting and admitting new permanent residents, the responses were often linked to the issues brought up in the previous discussion, with the two main sectors raised being health care and skilled trades.

There was also broad support for including those who do not have specialized skills or education, to address labour shortages in industries like farming, unskilled labour, fast food and retail. However, some participants mentioned that the cost of living was too high for people to support themselves and their families on those types of jobs and that it would not be fair or right to believe new immigrants would want or be able to do those jobs and build a successful future in Canada.

The Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot, which helps refugees overseas who have skills and qualifications find jobs in Canada and immigrate permanently to Canada as skilled workers, was generally seen as a good program. It was mostly seen as a “win-win” situation because it helped both foreign refugees and Canada. Since the program was not something many were familiar with, there were many questions for clarification, mainly about whether Canada was cherry-picking skilled refugees over others who may also be in dire straits.

Francophone immigration

The participants were provided with information about Canada’s Francophone Immigration Strategy, which was not something anyone was familiar with or had given previous thought to. The idea that it would help restore or maintain the demographic weight of Francophones outside Quebec was understood and generally appreciated, given Canada’s bilingual nature.

However, some commented that language should not be the only criterion for selection, while others felt that even though these new immigrants speak French, their language (or accent) and culture would still be quite different from those of the Francophones currently living in these communities. Among participants from Quebec, there was some sense that many non-

Francophones were currently settling in Quebec and that there should also be a focus on settling Francophones in Quebec.

Welcoming communities

Most participants felt that new immigrants make their community a better place to live, expressing an appreciation for cultural diversity, for learning from and about new cultures, and for the fact that this was “the Canadian way.”

For the most part, the participants generally felt that they live in welcoming cities, towns or communities. This generally meant that efforts are made to get to know and to support newcomers—whether at an individual or community level. Proof of this was often seen in the fact that their community was diverse and that there was an absence of general intolerance.

However, there was a sense that larger cities are generally more welcoming and open to newcomers than smaller centres.

Participants see the Government of Canada’s role in welcoming newcomers mainly as an administrative one that should involve supporting local, community-led efforts. More specifically, the Government of Canada was seen as the right player to provide initial support—such as help with documentation, administrative matters and finding a job and housing—and then to ensure a transition or introduction to local or community support systems, which it would fund but not run. The “welcoming” part was said to be best left to people and organizations in the community, since they know their own people, services and resources the best.

Newcomer experiences

The newcomers were asked to share their experiences with any newcomer services they may have accessed following their arrival. Those who had used these services were generally pleased and said they were helpful. Many had not accessed these services, often because they had support from family and friends who had already gone through the immigration process.

That being said, the gaps identified included

- more support finding housing
- more support finding a job, including for recognition of foreign credentials and experience
- help with finances, such as understanding the tax system, pay slips or government programs such as RRSPs
- help navigating the medical system

The main reason why new immigrants settled where they did was because they already had a connection there, mostly family or friends who already lived there who supported them as they settled. Their other reasons included

- already having a job or a place to go to school
- a provincial program
- the assumption that it would be an area where finding a job would be relatively easy
- the weather

Supporting the people of Ukraine and the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel

The final topic discussed was the fact that Ukrainians had come to Canada since the Russian invasion in February 2022. While all the participants were aware of that fact, only a few had heard any recent news or developments on that topic.

There was broad support for Canada accepting Ukrainians and their families, including for the fact that more than 100,000 Ukrainians and their families had come to Canada since the invasion. It was seen as the “right thing to do” to help those in need. Participants explained that Canada has a lot of room and that there already is a large Ukrainian diaspora who could support their compatriots.

Awareness of the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET) was very low. Once explained, this approach was generally supported and seen as a good way to help those in need quickly while ensuring they could “hit the ground running” once here. The following are some questions that were raised about the program:

- How would it be determined, or who would determine, when it would be safe to return?

- Will Ukrainians who benefited from the initiative be allowed to stay in Canada if they want to? What if the war were to continue and Ukrainian refugees successfully settled in and integrated into Canada? What if rebuilding after the war is too difficult?

In response to the question about whether the Government of Canada should introduce a special program to allow Ukrainians who came as extended visitors to stay permanently, the feedback was mixed and many participants were not sure what the best way forward was. Some said that since they came under a special program, there should also be a special follow-up program for those who want to stay. Others said that they should fall under the usual pathways for temporary residents if they want to apply for permanent residency or citizenship and that it would not be fair to others who have applied and are also waiting—that “jumping the queue” should not be allowed.

Moving forward, most participants said that the extended visitor visa program should also be applied to others who live in armed conflict areas elsewhere in the world. Again, it was seen as the fair thing to do. While there was general support for doing so, some said that it should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Others said that the program should be evaluated first and that better plans should be in place before applying it in the same way again.

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Qualitative research disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate “statistics” but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.


Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

Political neutrality certification

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Quorus Consulting Group Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the [Policy on Communications and Federal Identity](#) and the [Directive on the Management of Communications – Appendix C](#).

Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Nadeau", is written over a light gray grid background.

March 2, 2023

Rick Nadeau, President

Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

Detailed research findings

Top-of-mind awareness

As an opening exercise, the participants were asked whether they had seen, read or heard anything about immigration lately. While it was not a topic many had heard of, in most groups, one or more recalled news regarding an announcement about new immigration levels. Those who described details often remembered the number of 500,000 and the message that Canada is trying to address labour shortages through immigration. Some also mentioned an aging population in relation to the news they had heard about the recently announced targets.

“I heard earlier this month that the federal government wants to set targets of allowing half a million immigrants into the country each year.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“The last thing I’ve heard in the news was the plan to bring 500,000...is it extra or total...each year over the next three years and increasing our immigrant-taking capacity.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

“...immigration to Canada is rampant. It has increased compared to previous years because the shortage in manpower, so I know the government is looking to welcome more, you know, foreigners into Canada for work-related purposes.” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

“I’ve heard a lot about how Canada needs more immigrants to come to this country to help with our labour shortage.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

Others mentioned the influx of Ukrainian people in the past year since the Russian invasion. The news related to this topic was often about how Ukrainian families were settling into their communities or what people could do to help. The topic of Afghan immigration was also brought up, particularly in relation to Canada promising to bring in people from Afghanistan, which had its challenges.

“...struggles to bring in folks from Afghanistan...that we promised, but there seem to be a lot of silly red tape road roadblocks actually getting people safe.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

Another topic some had heard of in the news was that of administrative issues related to immigration. For example, some had read about passport application issues and backlogs, immigration backlogs and applicants having to wait a very long time. Also, some had heard about the difficulty new immigrants have finding a job or having their foreign credentials recognized in Canada. News about foreign students being allowed to work more hours than before was also mentioned.

“How long and how backed-up the issue is for people who immigrate to get their paperwork done.” (Western and Northern Canada – Indigenous)

“There’s a lot of press, media attention around, certainly in BC around immigrants and their inability to get work, particularly in the healthcare industry.” (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

“Recently, there was this issue about students...international students...they can work more hours.” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

In Quebec and Ontario, some participants mentioned recent news about asylum seekers at Roxham Road.

“They were talking about Roxham Road. I guess they had more people crossing over there this year.” (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

“Roxham Road is something we’ve been hearing a lot about lately, which isn’t far away. Illegal immigrants who are entering and being welcomed into the country.” (Quebec smaller centres – general population)

Immigration levels

The participants were shown how many permanent residents Canada is planning on admitting over the coming years, along with the percentage of the Canadian population those numbers represent, as follows:

The Government of Canada has recently announced plans to admit 465,000 permanent residents in 2023. This represents nearly 1.2% of Canada's population.

These targets have been increasing in recent years, not just in terms of the real numbers but also as a proportion of the population:

- In 2019, the target was 330,000 (0.9% of the population)
 - In 2023, the target is 465,000 (1.18% of the population)
 - In 2025, the target is 500,000 (1.24% of the population)
-

For the most part, the participants felt that those numbers and the fact that they would grow over time as a proportion of the population “made sense.”

Supporters of the proposed levels generally expressed the view that Canada needs immigration for a variety of reasons and that while the numbers may seem high, taken as a percentage of the population, they seem very reasonable.

“I feel OK about it.... It looks like high numbers, but it's not really high percentages.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

“I think it's great just based on how our rate of natural growth is decreasing and I think we should be increasing it. I'm certainly happy to see the immigration increasing.” (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

“I think Canada is a country of immigrants and we need more people. There is aging population throughout North America, and family sizes aren't what they were, and retired folks like me need all you young folks to keep on working.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“Well, in my view, the number of permanent residents that Canada would like to admit sounds quite large, but as a percentage, it’s a very small portion of the population.” (Francophone communities outside of Quebec – general population)

As well, there were those who said that Canada has a lot of room and could probably accommodate more immigration.

“When you look at the total population of Canada across this huge land mass, it doesn’t seem like very much.” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

Conversely, a few participants said that although they were generally in support of immigration, they were hesitant to support those targets. They often had concerns regarding how prepared Canadian communities are to accommodate that level of immigration. Specific concerns and what communities need to do to be able to welcome more new immigrants were the topic for a more specific discussion later on in the conversation. A few participants were also concerned that the government would not be able to process that number of permanent residents in a reasonable timeframe.

“I think it is too much, too fast. We’re not geared for it; we’re not ready for it.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“The one kind of concern I have about this is that we’re kind of in, you know, this kind of housing crisis.” (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

“Well, my immediate reaction is that it’s really positive. I don’t know to what extent this will close part of the labour shortage gap that we are experiencing, among other things, because if we don’t manage to overcome it by 2030, we’re going to have major workforce issues. What I’m hoping is that, along with these goals, we prepare our health care system, our school system and our homes, because while it’s nice to welcome them, we also have to give them room to integrate.” (Montréal – general population)

“They are in-taking a lot of applications, but they do not have the necessary resources in order to process all of those applications in time. I think that

would be a struggle and backlog on the government itself and its resources.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

“Well, firstly, I’m not against immigration at all, but from a New Brunswick standpoint, the education system and health system are already under a great deal of stress, so I’m worried about the services that people are going to receive, and how that will affect family doctors, schools and all that. So, I’m wondering how the quality of our services is going to change.” (Francophone communities outside of Quebec – general population)

Some said they had questions or did not know enough about this topic to form an opinion. Their questions included whether Canada had in fact reached its targets in previous years and whether the targets included people who were already in Canada. When asked, the last question was answered by the moderator, who said that those numbers do include people who are applying for their permanent resident status from Canada.

Others questioned whether these new permanent residents would be “spread out” across the country or would end up living in the big cities, often stating that they would be more supportive if all parts of the country would be welcoming these newcomers. A few also wondered whether Canada would be targeting people with certain qualifications or to fill specific labour shortages and how many would be ready to join the labour force.

“What types of people are applying, are some of those 500,000 people going to be doctors? Because that would be fantastic.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“Where are we going to congest them, into the GTA [Greater Toronto Area]? Or will we spread them out into the vast land that we have?” (Western and Northern Canada – Indigenous)

“The only concern I have is that if they send everyone to Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, at some point, there won’t be any more living space. We can already see how expensive it has become to live in Toronto and Vancouver. Montreal is starting to head in the same direction.” (Quebec smaller centres – general population)

“Who are these immigrants? Where are they from? What are they bringing to the country?” (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

“Well, I think it’s not the number that’s important, but rather the quality, the way in which these people are integrated into their community. That’s what really matters. If the integration stage goes well, Canada is a huge country. There’s plenty of room and resources.” (Quebec smaller centres – general population)

Increasing targets

The participants were asked to propose an explanation for the Government of Canada’s increasing targets. The main theories suggested were that it would help fill labour shortages, help address Canada’s aging population and our population’s ability to support high levels of retirees, the country’s declining tax base, its low birth rate and its naturally declining population. A few also noted that the increase in refugees seeking a safe haven because of either conflict or climate could explain the increase in rates of immigration.

“I think it’s a healthy thing to grow the population in the country because by and large in the Western world birth rates are declining, and we need a good base to sustain the economy and future retirees, and their retirement.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“I feel that the Government of Canada is looking for skilled labourers.” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

“There’s companies out there that cannot get workers, with immigration comes experience to fill in those gaps.” (Atlantic Canada smaller centres – general population)

“In my mind, I think of it from a tax perspective; the more individuals that are resident in Canada, the more individuals that they have paying into the system.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

“But there’s also the issue of the baby boomer generation starting to leave the workforce. And I think there will be a greater need for people and labour in a few years. It’s really going to be, since we’re already experiencing a shortage, I think it’s going to be serious.” (Francophone communities outside of Quebec – general population)

Planning for more permanent residents

For the most part, participants agreed that their communities need to plan or prepare if they are going to accommodate more immigration. The most common issue mentioned was housing. Participants raised this as a challenge, regardless of where they lived in Canada. The issue was discussed both in terms of a housing shortage in general and in terms of a lack of affordable housing or rental properties more specifically. Participants from across the country also discussed being concerned about seeing a growing number of homeless people in their communities.

“I think the only thing I can think of is how are we going to house that many people coming in, because housing is a problem already.” (Smaller centres mix – newcomers)

“People are living on the street and dying on the streets because there’s no housing. We need to get our own house in order first before we can welcome anybody else in.” (Atlantic Canada smaller centres – general population)

In terms of what governments could do specifically to address the housing crisis, participants offered a number of possible solutions. The suggestions included removing red tape or speeding up processing times for permits, discouraging or stopping foreign investment in real estate, having better rent-control rules, cracking down on the short-term rental market, allowing cities and towns to expand outside their current borders, encouraging urban densification, building and subsidizing more affordable housing and encouraging people to go into the trades and find jobs in the building sector.

Related to this were comments about the rate of inflation and the cost of living overall being currently very high.

“The cost of living just keeps going up. So once they get here, then it’s another set of problems for them to face.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

As well, participants from across the country, including from both large urban and smaller centres, explained the need for more and better-funded (public) transportation and infrastructure, particularly with the assumption that many new immigrants would not necessarily own a car or be able to live close to their job. Some expressed the need to build more

complete communities that would eliminate the need for people to commute to jobs, schools, daycares, stores and services.

“On top of the housing crisis, we need to improve this transportation system.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“With the increase of the population happening so quickly, this will put quite a heavy strain on the infrastructure in Canada too.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

“Being from a smaller community, I think a big one too would be transportation.” (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

The health care system was another area often mentioned as one that needs to be addressed to ensure communities are ready to welcome newcomers. It was said that current underfunding and labour shortages in the health care system made access to good care a challenge, which would be exacerbated by the proposed levels of immigration if those issues are not addressed.

“I work in health care, so my example is the health care, especially here in North Bay and for most of Northern Ontario...we don’t have enough doctors...there’s a huge shortage of resources so I think that’s a huge thing to consider.” (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

“I think the government should focus on hospitals as well as more immigrants are going to come.... Of course, they will need to see a doctor at some point.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

Others called for more support for the education system, particularly by hiring more English-as-a-second-language teachers and other classroom support geared towards newcomers.

“I think about the educational system and how are we preparing our system to meet the needs of all those children that are coming in.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

Some felt that when planning for these immigration levels, it would be important to settle newcomers across the country so that they would not all end up living in the big cities and adding to these challenges disproportionately in some areas over others. Related to this,

participants mentioned that the government could support job creation across the country or incentivise newcomers to settle and find work in smaller communities.

“Creating as many jobs in these small towns would be good.” (Atlantic Canada smaller centres – general population)

Finally, some agreed that more work needs to be done to improve recognition of foreign credentials, a topic that resurfaced later in the sessions when specific labour shortages were discussed.

Addressing labour shortages

Participants generally expressed support for trying to attract immigrants with particular skills, education or experience to help address labour shortages.

When prompted to think of which skills, education or experience Canada should focus on when attracting and admitting new permanent residents, the health care sector was most often mentioned.

“I would say health care, for sure. We’re all getting older; all of the baby boomers are getting old now.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“If we can incentivize people who do have great training to move here and work in health care and there is some incentive for that, then we could always use more doctors and we could always use more nurses for sure.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

Often related to the issue of housing and the need to build more houses in the near term, many also mentioned that they saw a need in the skilled trades. Other categories mentioned were IT workers, financial service professionals, farmers and farm workers, truck drivers, and people working in education (including language training).

“Trades, just all around like electricians, mechanics, plumbers. There’s fewer and fewer people want to get into trades, so trades are definitely going to be in demand in the next coming years when the aging population falls off.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“Trades...a huge shortage of skilled trades whether that’s electrician, plumber, carpenters...those are the skill sets that not many people want to get into locally. ...I spent the last 18 months trying to hire 3 people for skilled labour, without any success.” (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

“There’s a shortage of workers all over the Prairies for farming jobs.” (Western and Northern Canada – Indigenous)

There was also broad support for bringing in people who do not have specialized skills or education to address labour shortages in industries like fast food and retail. However, there were those who felt that it was not “right” to attract people to work in these relatively low-paying jobs specifically, since their chance for success in Canada would be relatively low given the high cost of living.

“Yeah, I think it is important to accept people who aren’t super specialized.... It’s a good thing to accept people who are more like regular people and not super-educated people.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“It’s tough because a lot of those retail and fast food jobs, unfortunately, don’t pay very well, especially with the cost of living, inflation and housing.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

“We do need it for sure; we need people working in Starbucks, so we can go there. I understand the reasoning, but I think it’s not right, unless those jobs pay more.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“Well, firstly, I find that there’s a lack of people working in the hospitals. While there’s a huge shortage in that sector, there’s also a shortage of truck drivers. There are increasingly fewer of them, and whether we like it or not, we can’t always welcome people who have PhDs and doctorates, etc. So, if someone who decides to come to Canada for X or Y reason does not have, let’s say, a high school-level education, we can find them jobs like these, which don’t require any particular skills. You know, it doesn’t take much to become a plumber or an electrician. You can learn all of these trades simply by applying logic. You don’t need a high school diploma.” (Quebec smaller centres – general population)

Although not specifically asked, in many discussions, particularly in the new immigrant groups, it was brought up that there were challenges with recognizing foreign credentials and work experience, leaving many who come as skilled immigrants either underemployed or working in lower-paying jobs outside their area of expertise.

“Right now, one of the problems is not that we don’t have enough qualified nurses; the thing is, the associations here don’t qualify the nurses from other countries, so even though if we talk about what we need, the government needs to meet that second step.” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

“Even trying to get a job in any clinical capacity in Ontario, in the GTA [Greater Toronto Area], it’s always ‘what Canadian experience do you have’.... Looking at what would be required of me to re-qualify, I’d have to go back to school. I don’t have the money, I don’t have the years left in my life to go back and re-qualify my degree.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot program

The next part of the discussion revolved around the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot program, which helps refugees overseas who have skills and qualifications find jobs in Canada and immigrate permanently to Canada as skilled workers.

This approach was generally seen as a win-win. Participants explained that refugees would be able to leave the dire situations they in and have a good chance of succeeding in Canada with the supports they would be offered, and Canadian society would benefit from their skills and help address labour shortages.

“I mean, it’s a good thing, they’re being displaced from everything they’ve known and if we got a place for them, then why not.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

“Canada needs somebody...; a refugee really needs something; you’re matching them up perfectly. Somebody has a skill that we need; they need something, there is nothing better than that. That sounds like a perfect program to me.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“Feels like it solves two problems at once.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“Well, I think it’s absolutely fantastic. You know, it helps others at the same time as it helps us. It provides a solution for everyone, so, in my opinion, it’s great.” (Francophone communities outside of Quebec – general population)

Participants often had questions about the program, wondering whether this made for a two-tiered refugee system or whether Canada was cherry-picking “the best” refugees and leaving others behind. A few were concerned about potential employer abuse once refugees settle in Canada by taking advantage of desperate individuals, or issues these individuals might face having their foreign credentials recognized.

“A refugee needs to move to a country like Canada no matter what skills they have, because they have to move because of the condition in their country. With this pilot program, is Canada saying that we’re picking and choosing the refugee that we want to come in?” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

“Is it ethical to kind of require refugees to be skilled or is it more of, you know, we should allow these people in because they’re refugees and they need a new place to call home?” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

“Sure, the devil’s in the detail on that and I’m always concerned with programs like this that bring people in and...exploitation.” (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

“I think it’s a good idea, except for starting a pilot project. Why don’t we solve the problem for those who are already here? Those who are trying to qualify, to get their equivalence or whatever, because it’s like giving a slap in the face to someone who’s already here, and saying, ‘well, you know, you’re already sort of integrated, so we’re going to let you do your taxi or your manufacturing work,’ for example, ‘but the next wave of people that arrive, we’re going to give them an advantage’.” (Montréal – general population)

Francophone immigration

Canada's Francophone Immigration Strategy was introduced to the participants, as follows:

The Government of Canada has created a Francophone Immigration Strategy, to help ensure the vitality of Francophone communities outside of Quebec. It aims to

- increase Francophone immigration to reach a target of 4.4% of immigrants outside Quebec being French-speaking
 - support the successful integration and retention of French-speaking newcomers
 - strengthen the capacity of Francophone communities to receive immigrants
-

Overall, there were few big concerns with this strategy, particularly among participants outside Quebec. The fact that Canada is officially a bilingual country was often brought up in support of the strategy.

“I support it because, you know, we have two official languages here, French and English, and to target those two speakers, it makes sense. It's the right thing to do.” (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

“I think it's a positive. I don't think we celebrate the Francophone community enough.” (Ontario mid-sized centres – general population)

However, many participants felt neutral about it, mainly since it was not something they had given much thought to. Some also wondered whether the strategy was addressing a big problem in Canadian society that actually needed fixing. As well, some said that this may not be the best or most logical fix and that if there were an actual problem with dwindling numbers of Francophones, perhaps it could be solved by encouraging more Canadians to speak French.

“Maybe I could be educated about it, but thinking about Francophone communities needing more Francophones brought in, that's never been on my radar.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

The idea that this would help restore or maintain the demographic weight of Francophones outside Quebec was understood and generally appreciated. Support for the strategy was quite strong among Francophones living outside Quebec. There was a sense that as a bilingual country, it was the right thing to do to help ensure it stayed this way and that Francophone communities outside Quebec were given this boost to help them survive and thrive. For many, the strategy seemed to make sense only if the intention was to encourage Francophone immigrants to settle in communities where there was already some sort of Francophone presence and support system.

“I think it’s a good thing because there is a lot of French-speaking communities outside of Quebec anyway, and I think those communities are dwindling as well, so having more people just to support the language and keep the language present in those communities, would be really good.” (Atlantic Canada smaller centres – general population)

“I think this program is great! As others have said, yes, it’s a necessity, but the government should also help promote services in French, francophone organizations and initiatives to attract immigrants here because if they only speak French, it will be very difficult to find a job since the French language isn’t used enough. However, there are francophone associations. There are still cultural activities taking place, but these small organizations have a hard time promoting them. So, with some help, they could work together, through collaboration, things could work better.” (Francophone communities outside of Quebec – general population)

Those who voiced some concerns about this strategy often said that they were not sure that it was right to qualify new immigrants solely on the basis of their language skills, rather than (also) focusing on how they would contribute to Canadian society in other ways.

“I think we should be just bringing in skilled workers and not specifically looking for French-speaking.” (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

A few participants, often Francophones or participants who are bilingual or also speak (some) French, also said that French accents from certain countries are different, which could prove to be a barrier when settling into smaller communities, even if they were Francophone. Along the same train of thought, some participants felt that having a common language alone would not

necessarily be enough to ensure that a small, tightly knit Francophone community would be accepting of Francophone newcomers from around the world.

“French in different countries is totally different than the French in Quebec. I learnt Parisian French in England when I grew up there and Quebec French is totally different than that, so yes, they would need to be able to have something in place for them to be able to speak English or speak Canadian French.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

It was also mentioned, particularly by those in Quebec, that the target of 4.4% seemed high or would be unattainable if Canada also wanted to ensure that Quebec would get “its fair share” of Francophone immigration, as there was some sense that a large proportion of the immigrants arriving in that province do not speak French.

“The problem is that 4.4% outside Quebec when here in Quebec, it’s almost 0% who speak French when they arrive. I don’t know they will be able to find 4% of new immigrants in the country outside Quebec.” (Anglophones in Quebec and Ottawa – general population)

Welcoming communities

When asked to consider whether new immigrants make their communities a better place to live, participants overwhelmingly said it was the case. Mostly, it was the cultural diversity that was appreciated, with many participants mentioning that this is what Canada is about and that this country’s rich history of immigration and embracing other cultures is part of what makes them proud to be Canadian. Learning from and about other cultures was also mentioned as a positive aspect of having new immigrants in their community.

“They bring their culture with them. They bring their skills with them, and integration in my community is no problem at all.” (Atlantic Canada smaller centres – general population)

“It’s always great to know about different people and their culture. It makes you more aware of what’s going on in the world.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“Especially for the younger children who have all of those children from all the different cultures in their classroom and they become friends and I think it will make for a much more tolerant and acceptable world in the future.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

Participants generally felt that they live in welcoming cities, towns or communities. Often, participants initially pointed to the fact that their neighbourhood or town or city was very multicultural as proof of this. They, for example, pointed to seeing that “everyone gets along, lives together, works together and goes to school together” as a sign that it was a welcoming place. The absence of unwelcoming or racist behaviours underscored this.

“To me, here in Vancouver, everybody is the same and everybody treats each other the same.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“We have a ton of people from all races, especially where I work with our manufacturing plant...we have everybody of every single race in there and everybody gets along, for the most part, very well.” (Prairies urban centres – general population)

“Yes, well, I find my city welcoming, but what I find quite wonderful is that it’s especially welcoming, I would say, in terms of the younger population.” (Montréal – general population)

When the participants were asked what else it means “to be welcoming” or how a community best demonstrates that they are welcoming, the feedback was that it generally meant that efforts are made to get to know and to support newcomers—whether at an individual or community level. The specific examples included greeting new neighbours and asking whether they needed help, hosting refugee families, organizing or participating in fundraising or household goods donation drives, schools organizing specific events, welcoming and celebrating newcomers and diverse cultures and religions, cultural festivals and special municipal or community programs for newcomers.

“Because we’re all friendly. We all say hi.... That makes it more welcoming.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“I think there is the personal welcoming like, oh, I’ve got a new neighbour and...say, hey, can I show you around? Is there something you need to

know? That's important." (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

"Several art initiatives have been actually started by immigrants in our area, and there's even talk of having a new community centre that anyone can go to get like help with anything, support." (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

"I can give you concrete examples of what I see here. Firstly, like our francophone community, we have a centre called the Accueil francophone. So, all francophone immigrants who arrive in Manitoba are welcomed by the Accueil francophone. They are linked with a family that takes care of them and shows them where they can find things. They even undergo training, as we were saying, like in Canada, that's how it is, don't be surprised if women without [...] there's an adjustment process to help them understand the culture. So, all this is happening in the francophone community, it's already an institution." (Francophone communities outside of Quebec – general population)

"Food is a commonality across all human beings. Breaking bread with your brother, your sister, is a very strong bonding experience. We have community gardens, people come here, they are working in the gardens together and we have, I guess for lack of a better word, multicultural meals together.... Those are wonderful ways." (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

"For us, yes, there are the Maison de la famille organizations where activities are advertised, and it's an interesting option for newcomers with children to gather there. Our Facebook groups are also very active. Sometimes in the 'Les mamans de Saint-Laurent' group, someone will say, 'oh, I know a lady who just arrived with two children, they are living in an apartment, but they have nothing,' and everyone becomes engaged immediately." (Montréal – general population)

Some participants, specifically in smaller towns, said that they felt their community may not be very welcoming. They spoke about the fact that their community was generally still quite white and that newcomers were not always treated warmly or that community events did not necessarily reflect or honour different cultures or religions. Urban participants also spoke of

knowing or assuming that while their experience in the city was welcoming, it was not necessarily the case in smaller towns or rural areas of the county.

“My small town where I’m from, even if I was to go there today, I could see some of the stigmas still. They’re not as on board with welcoming immigrants.” (Prairies urban centres – general population)

“I think the one area where I see a little bit of a lack of community involvement here is, we have the Downtown Business Association and they host all these events. They’re always very white Christian-centric, they host the downtown Santa Claus parade, but they don’t do anything for Diwali or Kwanzaa or Hanukkah.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

In terms of who should be playing the lead role in welcoming new immigrants, there was a strong sense that the Government of Canada should work in tandem with, and in support of, local or community-led efforts—mainly by funding those programs. The Government of Canada was seen as the right player to provide initial support—such as help with documentation, administrative matters and finding a job and housing—and then to ensure a transition or introduction to municipal, local or community support systems. It was suggested that its role was to make newcomers aware of local services and community programs or groups and to help fund them to make them a success.

“I think that it’s pretty much impossible to completely exclude the different branches of government from the process because, of course, they do the paperwork.” (Western and Northern Canada – Indigenous)

However, the “welcoming” part was said to be best left to people and organizations in the community, since they know their own people, services and resources the best. If governments were to be involved formally in welcoming newcomers, participants generally felt that municipal governments would be better suited than the federal government. In fact, some spoke of their municipality or mayor hosting official welcoming events.

“[It] should be the community, and the government would put their financial support behind these initiatives.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

“The community sees the needs and has the people and boots on the ground there to deal with it. ...the government has got to give some money to the needs that are there.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

“Ideally, it’s sort of a marriage of the two. The government creates some infrastructure for community members to get involved in.... The government can’t integrate people; people have to integrate with each other.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“Well, I think it should start with the communities. The government’s role should perhaps be to consult the communities, the various members of the communities who want to get involved and who also want to contribute ideas and opinions. Then, I think, the communities should take the lead. If the government has a role, I think it would be to consult the communities, and it’s sort of like education. It starts at the top and works its way down.” (Quebec smaller centres – general population)

“Well, yes, it’s the community groups and the individuals, because they are the ones who are on the front lines. But obviously, to reach the point earlier, you have to provide them with funding and support, so they can stop scrambling for money to do that.” (Montréal – general population)

Newcomer experiences

The newcomers were asked to share their experiences with any newcomer services they may have accessed following their arrival.

While not all the participants had taken advantage of these services, feedback among those who had was quite positive. They felt that in the areas where assistance was offered, it went a long way towards helping them get settled initially.

“I get the list of information with the email and I go through all that information. I think that was very helpful if you properly read that email and go through all that information.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

“I remember receiving a lot of information all by emails about using new immigrants’ services and looking into specifically trying to learn French, and I was excited to do that.” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

“All the information that was given during the PR [permanent resident] application.” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

Although there was a sense that resources available to support newcomers with their specific needs were helpful and that the most basic and important things were well-organized (such as getting a social insurance number or health card), some still felt that there was a lot that they had to figure out for themselves, which was often quite daunting.

Upon further probing, examples of where support was lacking included mostly things related to “getting to understand how Canadian society and systems work.” Some specific examples were help with finances, such as understanding the tax system, pay slips or government programs such as RRSPs, and help navigating the Medical Services Plan (MSP) in BC upon arrival. Finding housing and employment also had its challenges, and there was a sense that the government did not do enough to help them, particularly with respect to finding a job. Some mentioned that the government could do more to help newcomers, for example, with writing their resume in a way that Canadian employers like to see, or with job interview preparations. There were also concerns regarding support for recognition of foreign credentials.

“We needed to know about, for example, daycare, how to open bank accounts, even how to take a bus. It’s really basic things even looks hard when you come to the new country and so without a friend it was more than hard, actually.” (Smaller centres mix – newcomers)

“Even though my partner is Canadian, I found the MSP and the RRSP and the taxes really confusing.” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

“I think that they need to be more organized and see the new newcomers know everything about the city, the location they live or what they have to do about everything, about schooling, about accommodation.” (Smaller centres mix – newcomers)

“I think that things that I needed the most help with was learning about the tax system or the health system or what the pension situation is or

whatever—that information wasn't readily available.” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

While some said that the federal government should do better and fill these gaps, others said that such support could also be made available at newcomers' centres, which may or may not be funded or run by the federal government. When asked about the newcomers' centres, those few participants who had used them gave mixed feedback, with some saying they were useful in certain ways, for instance in providing help with job searches, while others felt they did not provide the services they needed or did not do so to the extent they had hoped.

Those who had not used newcomer services often said they were made aware of them through information packages or emails upon arrival in Canada. They typically had help navigating the system from family members or others in their community who were already in Canada and who had settled before them. When asked how IRCC should communicate the newcomer services it offers to immigrants, electronic communications were seen as the best approach, as applicants are typically eager to open emails from IRCC. Others suggested that there should be more communication with newcomers before they arrive in Canada and that it should include more information about recognition of credentials.

“I already had my cousins and family over here, so I didn't face too much issues.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

“Half of everything we needed, it was a word of mouth, so we talked with our friends because it's not easy to go to all the documentation or the websites and look for everything.” (Smaller centres mix – newcomers)

Although deemed important, there was no awareness of specific mental health resources available to newcomers.

When it came to making the decision on where to live in Canada, most participants went to cities or towns where they already had a connection, mostly because they had family or friends who already lived there who supported them as they settled. Some said they came to a certain place because they believed they would easily find a job there, while others already had jobs or came to a particular city to study there. A few participants had settled in a particular province because they had come to Canada under a provincial program, while the weather also played a role for some in selecting where they would live (i.e. they wanted to avoid places with the worst winter weather). It was also mentioned by a few participants that although they had originally settled in a smaller town, they ended up having to move to a bigger city in order to find a (better) job.

“I think Brampton side has a lot of job opportunities, so this was my attraction here basically.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

“My cousins and my families were already living over here. That was a reason because, at least at the starting you need support; they were already here.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

“In fact, we decided to come to Vancouver solely based on the weather.” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

“I considered Alberta. There were more job opportunities considering my field, but my little daughter never really did well with the cold.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

Others were not themselves the decision-maker. For example, younger immigrants came with their parents, while others followed a spouse who had a job opportunity in a certain city.

“My parents obviously made the decision because we were young at that time, but there was my uncle already living in the area, so we just settled here just because there was family already.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

The newcomers were asked what they wished they would have known in advance about the place where they settled. For the most part, they felt that they had made the right decision, given their circumstances, and that there was nothing specific to their location that had disappointed or surprised them. If there were any drawbacks, they were typically not related or unique to where they lived specifically; rather, they were generally seen as drawbacks about immigrating to Canada in general, such as issues with the health care system or finding a job. A few drawbacks mentioned were that they wished they lived closer to family because it was still quite a drive from where they lived in the GTA to the area where most of their family lives, while someone else added that they wished they had known that childcare would be difficult to find and expensive in their New Brunswick community.

Supporting the people of Ukraine and the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel

The final topic discussed was the fact that Ukrainians had come to Canada since the Russian invasion in February 2022. While all the participants were aware of that fact, only a few had heard any recent news or developments on that topic. Comments were more often related to what they saw around them in their communities or on social media rather than any recent news in the media.

“I see a lot on social media about it because at the community level, there are a lot of local organizations that are helping people in Ukraine and we have this whole Facebook group...it’s more of a community-led effort.” (Atlantic Canada urban centres – general population)

“I know there is a lot of Ukrainians that are coming here and I don’t think that we’ve been advised of how many Ukrainians are here.” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

There was also no general awareness of the fact that over 100,000 Ukrainians and their families had come to Canada since the invasion. When asked whether they generally supported it or whether they had any specific concerns, most participants said that they were supportive of Canada taking Ukrainian refugees affected by the war at any level. It was seen as the right thing for Canada to do under these circumstances.

“...I was shocked when you said 100,000 to tell you the truth, but I have no problem with it all and I believe it’s the right thing to do and help them, till they don’t need our help.” (Ontario mid-sized centres – general population)

“I feel like this is the one situation where rules and target numbers and all that, shouldn’t apply. It’s more about human decency than anything.” (Anglophones in Quebec and Ottawa – general population)

“It gives me a little bit...of a sense of pride because it shows that Canada is stepping up to do its part.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“Well, I completely agree with that. I always put myself in their shoes. If this were to happen to us, we would be grateful to be able to take our children

and leave, to go to another country that would welcome us. I know there are so many families who have opened their homes to them, who have given them their basements. I follow numerous Ukrainian families on social media, and they're doing very well." (Quebec smaller centres – general population)

Only a few participants raised concerns, sometimes wondering whether the number of Ukrainians impacted how many other refugees or immigrants Canada was accepting from other parts of the world, or whether this would (further) delay others who had been waiting longer to be able to come to Canada.

"I did have a question about...what about our Afghani friends who've been waiting to get their relatives over here?" (Metro Vancouver – general population)

When reacting to the number of over 100,000, some asked how it compared to the number of Ukrainians other countries had accepted, with a few commenting that it should be first and foremost up to neighbouring countries to take them in instead of Canada. This was countered by others saying that Canada already had a very large Ukrainian diaspora and that it therefore makes sense for them to come here in large numbers and find a familiar community and the support they need to succeed.

"I mean, we have a large Ukrainian population in Canada so that's probably part of it." (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

"I think we're obligated to, considering what they're going through there. Saskatchewan has a huge Ukrainian heritage population and I think they're being welcomed here in this province with open arms." (Prairies urban centres – general population)

As well, some participants raised the same concerns about a large influx of newcomers from Ukraine as they did in previous conversations, cautioning that there were some areas of Canadian society that are already strained and would become more so with more people.

"My background is Ukrainian so I totally support bringing them here...my only concern is again the housing. I support it absolutely, but is it being done right?" (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

Very few participants were aware of the program specifically developed to help Ukrainian nationals and their families come to Canada quickly and be supported once here (the CUAET). The following was explained to everyone:

In March of 2022, the Government of Canada created a program to provide Ukrainian nationals and their family members with extended visitor visas that allow them to work, study and stay in Canada until it is safe for them to return home. This means that Ukrainians are not being brought to Canada as refugees the way that most Afghans are and have not been granted permanent residency in Canada.

This approach was generally supported, as participants understood that it was a way to expedite entry for Ukrainians and allow them to “hit the ground running” once here. The idea that they were allowed to work right away, in particular, was appreciated in light of the labour shortages, as was the idea that they would be contributing to Canadian society rather than potentially being burdens on the system.

“It’s a good thing if it’s speeding up the processing time and everything.” (Atlantic Canada smaller centres – general population)

“I think it’s a good thing that the government has granted...extended visa...so that they’re not just coming here to stay and be collecting money as someone mentioned, but they are being productive and useful to the system.” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

However, the initiative also raised a number of questions, and as this information was new to most, the feedback was somewhat limited. Many wondered how it would be determined or who would determine when it would be safe to return. Some suggested that even when the war is officially over, it may still not be safe or a good idea to return to a place that has been severely damaged by the invasion; they will not be able to easily resume their lives, or post-traumatic stress might make it unsafe in terms of their mental health to return.

“I’m sorry, this is a question, is there a time limit on their status?” (Greater Toronto Area – general population)

“I see, but are they going to be forced to leave?” (Western Canada smaller centres – general population)

“I would like to know like how or who will decide and make the decision that it is safe for them to return and they can no longer be on a visitor visa.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

In a number of groups, participants wondered why this approach was different for Ukrainians than for refugees from other countries in similar situations, such as Afghanistan or Syria.

“I just wonder why Ukraine and not Syria or why Ukraine and not any other place where there’s dire refugee problems.” (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

“I’m just curious. I don’t really know much about this, but you know, why we took a different approach with people from Ukraine versus other refugees.” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

As well, it was often asked what would happen to those who do not want to return but who would rather stay in Canada. There was a sense that the longer the war lasts and the more Ukrainian visitors integrate into Canadian society, the more beneficial it might become for them and for Canadian society if they stayed. Most participants felt that, in principle, since many Ukrainians were working or going to school in Canada, had successfully settled and were contributing to Canadian society and ultimately “growing roots here,” they should be allowed to stay if they wanted to.

“I would be curious to know when they fall in love with living in Canada, what are their chances of remaining here if they choose to.” (Prairies urban centres – general population)

At this point, there were those who said it felt like Canada had done the right thing to immediately take action, but that it was becoming clear there was no real longer-term plan. For the most part, this was understood, although it again raised questions.

“I think planning ahead, what’s the contingency plan or what’s plan B, if the war goes on for two years, three years, five years, something like that.... I think the Canadian government, like many other places, will need to evolve as situations change and a plan will need to evolve.” (Greater Toronto Area – newcomers)

“It’s really weird to me that there wasn’t some sort of structure, they need to have some sort of template to go by, because this is not going to end.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

A few raised concerns about the speed with which the program was implemented, prompting some to wonder whether proper background checks were being conducted. They felt that due to the speed with which a high number of newcomers were allowed to come in, it could leave Canada open to abuse of the program and to inadvertently welcoming a criminal or undesired element into the country.

“...is there any vetting process for some of these people being brought in? Do we really know who we are bringing in? So even though the initiative may be good, the intent is perfect, do we have any systems in place to do all these checks.” (Alberta urban centres – general population)

“How are these people being vetted?” (Smaller centres mix – newcomers)

In response to the question about whether the Government of Canada should introduce a special program to allow Ukrainians who came as extended visitors to stay permanently, the feedback was mixed and many participants were not sure what the best way forward was. Some said that since they came under a special program, there should also be a special follow-up program for those who want to stay. They felt that this group would be exceptionally well-positioned to stay in Canada and were “a good fit,” since they were already contributing members of society—assuming they had found jobs or were in school, and had found housing.

“You might as well just continue on with it because then it’s like now you’re going to say, oh, now you have to go back and wait in line when they were already in front of the line. It makes it harder to do that.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

“If you have a program that sounds like it was written on the back of an envelope and didn’t really foresee what was going to come down, what the sort of long-term implications of it were that, and it’s a special program, you’re going to have to have a special program for PR [permanent residency] as well.” (Ontario smaller centres – general population)

“There probably should be a pathway specific to them, seeing there was...they came here differently, so there should be.” (Eastern Canada and Ontario – Indigenous)

Conversely, many participants said they should fall under the usual pathways for temporary residents if they want to apply for permanent residency or citizenship. This argument was often made with the idea of fairness in mind, that it would not be fair to give this group an advantage over others who may have been waiting longer and who also meet the eligibility requirements.

“I think once the threat is over and if they decide they want to stay here, great, but let’s go through the proper channels like everybody else has had to.” (Atlantic Canada smaller centres – general population)

“I think probably to be fair to put them on the same route to permanent residency as other immigrants.” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

“That would be like they bypass the line of people who’ve been waiting for years and years to immigrate.” (Anglophones in Quebec and Ottawa – general population)

When the participants were asked whether the approach taken for Ukrainian nationals should also be applied to others who live in armed conflict areas elsewhere in the world, the responses were generally positive, although the idea raised many questions, mainly in terms of what the criteria would be to establish whether the program would be applied or not. For instance, some questioned whether individuals fleeing domestic or civil war situations as refugees (rather than fleeing because they are being invaded by another country) would also be eligible for extended visitor visas.

Those who said that this approach should become universal often felt that it would be the fair and “right” thing to do.

“I think that if they want to be fair because then why help Ukrainian people and other people in other war zones, or is it different than any other war?” (Metro Vancouver – newcomers)

“It should apply to other individuals, other countries and foreign nationals from other countries who are experiencing armed conflict, or even difficult

climate conditions, for example.” (Quebec smaller centres – general population)

“Why Ukraine, there’s other political hotspots and war-torn countries around the world; why Ukraine, why not Burma, why not the African countries, why not the Middle East? You’re going to do it for one; you got to do it for all.” (Smaller centres mix – newcomers)

It was also mentioned that the Government of Canada should assess how well this program worked and how it could be improved upon for similar situations in the future, particularly in terms of having a consistent plan or program in place rather than an ad-hoc initiative that was seen as “build as you go.” A few felt the program could represent an evolution in the overall approach to immigration in Canada. Conversely, some said it should be determined on a case-by-case basis and not become a new stream for immigration that would be applied in some blanket way.

“I would think that maybe the government should figure their plan out in advance before that happens again.” (Prairies urban centres – general population)

“I think we should be as fair as possible to everyone, but I would say on a case-by-case basis.” (Metro Vancouver – general population)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Methodology

The research methodology consisted of 18 online focus groups. The participants were recruited from across the country and from both urban areas and smaller communities (including RNIP communities). The target segments consisted of the following audiences:

- the general population – Anglophone and Francophone Canadians
- Indigenous peoples – composed of First Nations, Inuit and Métis
- newcomers – immigrants who have arrived since 2012

The focus groups were conducted online from January 23 to February 6, 2023. The groups typically lasted 105 minutes. Quorus was responsible for co-ordinating all aspects of the research project, including designing and translating the recruitment screener and the moderation guide, co-ordinating all aspects of participant recruitment, co-ordinating the online focus group platform and related logistics, moderating all sessions, and delivering required reports at the end of data collection.

The opportunity to conduct this research using an online platform gave the research team more flexibility and latitude regarding the geographic footprint that could be considered, compared to a methodology involving in-facility research. The research primarily involved a mix of participants from all regions across Canada, with some sessions focused on large metropolitan areas (e.g. Metro Vancouver), smaller urban centres (e.g. Calgary and Edmonton) and smaller centres. When targeting more rural areas and smaller communities, the recruitment screener included a question that verified that the participant had access to a sufficiently robust Internet connection to enable participation in a videoconference.

Across all focus groups, the aim of recruitment efforts was to have a mix of participants within the given segment. Where applicable, the aim was to have a good representation of age, gender, income, education and employment status. For sessions that covered more than one province or territory, the aim was to have representation from each individual province and territory within the given region.

Those invited to participate in the focus groups were recruited by telephone from the general public, as well as from an opt-in database.

The recruitment screener was designed with specific questions to clearly identify whether individuals qualified for the research program and to ensure a good representation across

demographic groups.

In addition to the general participant profiling criteria noted above, screening was done to ensure quality participants, as follows:

- No participant (nor anyone in their immediate family or household) may work in an occupation that has anything to do with the research topic area (such an immigration officer or a volunteer for immigrant settlement services), in related government departments/agencies, nor in advertising, marketing research, public relations or the media (radio, television, newspaper, film/video production, etc.), nor may any participant have ever worked in such occupations.
- No participants acquainted with each other may be knowingly recruited for the same study, unless they are in different sessions that are scheduled separately.
- No participant may be recruited who has attended a qualitative research session within the past 6 months.
- No participant may be recruited who has attended 5 or more qualitative research sessions in the past 5 years.
- No participant should be recruited who has attended, in the past 2 years, a qualitative research session on the same general topic, as defined by the researcher/moderator.

For each focus group, Quorus recruited 8 participants to achieve 6 to 8 participants per focus group.

All focus groups were held in the evenings on weekdays using the Zoom web-conferencing platform, allowing the client team to observe the sessions in real-time. The research team used the Zoom platform to host and record sessions (through microphones and webcams connected to the moderator's and participants' electronic devices, for example, laptops and tablets) enabling client remote viewing. The recruited participants were offered an honorarium of \$125 for their participation.

The recruitment of focus group participants followed the screening, recruiting and privacy considerations set out in the *Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research—Qualitative Research*. Furthermore, recruitment respected the following requirements:

- For each participant, all recruitment was conducted in the participant's official language of choice, English or French as appropriate.
- Upon request, participants were informed of how they can access the research findings.
- Upon request, participants were provided with Quorus' privacy policy.

- Recruitment confirmed each participant had the ability to speak, understand, read and write in the language in which the participant’s session was to be conducted.
- The participants were informed of their rights under the *Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act* and assured that those rights were protected throughout the research process. This included informing the participants of the purpose of the research, identifying both the sponsoring department or agency and the research supplier, informing the participants that the study will be made available to the public six months after field completion through Library and Archives Canada, and informing the participants that their participation in the study is voluntary and that the information provided will be administered according to the requirements of the *Privacy Act*.

At the recruitment stage and at the beginning of each focus group, the participants were informed that the research was for the Government of Canada. They were also informed of their session being recorded and the presence of Government of Canada observers. Quorus ensured that prior consent was obtained at the recruitment stage.

A total of 18 online focus groups were conducted with 122 participants, as per the table below.

Date (2023)	Audience	Region	Language	No. of Participants
January 23	General population	Atlantic Canada urban centres	English	7
January 23	General population	Metro Vancouver	English	7
January 24	General population	Greater Toronto Area	English	7
January 24	General population	Alberta urban centres (Calgary and Edmonton, including Welcoming Francophone communities)	English	7
January 25	General population	Ontario smaller centres (including RNIP and Welcoming Francophone communities)	English	8
January 25	General population	Western Canada smaller centres (including RNIP and Welcoming Francophone communities)	English	8
January 26	General population	Atlantic Canada smaller centres (including Welcoming Francophone communities)	English	5
January 26	General population	Prairies urban centres (Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Regina)	English	8
January 30	Newcomers	Greater Toronto Area	English	8
January 30	Newcomers	Metro Vancouver	English	8
January 31	General population	Quebec smaller centres	French	5
January 31	Newcomers	Smaller centres mix	English	6
February 1	General population	Montréal	French	5
February 1	General population	Francophone communities outside of Quebec (including Welcoming Francophone communities)	French	7
February 2	General population	Anglophones in Quebec and Ottawa	English	5

Date (2023)	Audience	Region	Language	No. of Participants
February 2	General population	Ontario mid-sized centres (Hamilton, Burlington, Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo, Guelph, St. Catharines and Niagara; including Welcoming Francophone communities)	English	8
February 6	Indigenous peoples	Eastern Canada and Ontario	English	5
February 6	Indigenous peoples	Western and Northern Canada (including Welcoming Francophone communities)	English	8

Qualitative Research Disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate “statistics” but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.

Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

Appendix 2 – Qualitative instruments

Provided under a different cover.