



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

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Canada 

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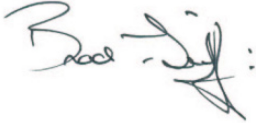
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Griffin", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brad Griffin
President
Ipsos Public Affairs

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Executive Summary

Background and Objectives

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) conducts an ongoing research program, called the Annual Tracking Study, to help the Department develop a better understanding of Canadian attitudes toward the issues surrounding citizenship and immigration. This report provides the qualitative findings from the 2025-26 Winter Wave of the Annual Tracking Study.

The objectives of the Winter 2025-26 wave were to:

- Explore Canadians' top-of-mind issues and their trusted sources for immigration information
- Assess familiarity with, and perceptions of, how the Canadian government manages the immigration system
- Test understanding of Canada's immigration system through statement testing
- Evaluate social media content designed to communicate about immigration
- Gauge reactions to temporary resident reduction targets
- Gather feedback on the Canada's Immigration Levels website
- Explore receptiveness to a proposed intercultural competence orientation module for newcomers

The research findings will contribute to:

- Supporting objectives under the Departmental Results and Management Accountability Frameworks and the Program Activity Architecture.
- Establishment of departmental priorities, developing policies and communications products and strategies, and planning programs and services.
- Canadians having access to high-quality policy options, program design and advice; encouraging and effectively managing client-focused services; managing organizational and strategic risks proactively; and gathering and using relevant information on program results.

The contract value was \$119,802.09.

Methodology

Fourteen (14) online focus groups were conducted between February 17th and 26th, 2026, with Canadians (aged 18 or older). As shown in the table below, the research included: general population Canadians from various regions, including Indigenous participants; first-generation immigrants from Chinese, Indian, Filipino diaspora communities and other top source countries of origin who arrived 6-20 years ago; newcomers from these same diaspora communities who arrived within the past 5 years; and second-generation Canadians (children of first-generation immigrants) from top source countries of origin. The research was conducted in both official languages.

Table 1: Breakdown of Online Focus Groups

Group Number	Audience	Geography and Language	Number of Participants
1	General population	Small centres/mix of provinces (Ontario and Atlantic Canada), English	8
2	General population	Small centres/mix of provinces (BC and Prairies), English	6
3	General population	Large centres/national (except Quebec), French	8
4	General population	Small centres/national (except Quebec), French	8
5	General population	Quebec, French	8
6	General population	Indigenous/national, English	7
7	Diaspora communities	Chinese diaspora community – newcomers who arrived in past 5 years, English	7
8	Diaspora communities	Chinese diaspora community – first-generation (arrived in Canada between 6 to 20 years ago), English	5
9	Diaspora communities	Indian diaspora community – newcomers who arrived in past 5 years, English	8
10	Diaspora communities	Indian diaspora community – first-generation (arrived in Canada between 6 to 20 years ago), English	6
11	Diaspora communities	Filipino diaspora community & other top source countries of origin - newcomers who arrived in past 5 years, English	6
12	Diaspora communities	Filipino diaspora community & other top source countries of origin – first- generation (arrived in Canada between 6 to 20 years ago), English	6
13	Diaspora communities	Second-generation immigrants (children of 1st generation) from top source countries of origin – skew Western Canada, English	7
14	Diaspora communities	Second-generation immigrants (children of 1 st generation) from top source countries of origin – skew Eastern & Central Canada, English	7

Discussions lasted 90-minutes. Participants in the general population focus groups received a \$125 honorarium and those from diaspora communities received a \$150 honorarium. A copy of the discussion guide has been provided in the Appendix.

Interpretation of Findings

Please note that qualitative study results are exploratory and directional in nature. The value of qualitative research is that it allows for in-depth exploration of the factors that shape public attitudes and behaviors toward certain issues. When interpreting the results, it is important to bear in mind that the intention is in no way to produce results that are statistically representative of the general population.

Nuances by audience have been highlighted where they were apparent, and the following terminology is used to denote each audience: general population participants, first-generation participants, second-generation participants, and newcomer participants.

Key Findings

Top-of-Mind Issues and Information Sources

Cost of living emerged as the dominant concern across all focus groups, with housing affordability, inflation, and broader economic pressures consistently identified as Canada's most pressing challenges. The healthcare system strain ranked as the second most significant issue, with participants sharing personal experiences of "eight-hour wait times" in emergency rooms and persistent difficulties finding family doctors. Employment challenges, particularly youth unemployment and general job market difficulties, rounded out the top three concerns. Several participants described feeling "overwhelmed" by compounding economic pressures, with many sharing personal struggles finding "good paying jobs." The ongoing trade tensions between Canada and the U.S. were mentioned as an additional economic concern, with a few participants highlighting broader geopolitical tensions.

Immigration rarely surfaced as an unprompted top-of-mind concern, emerging spontaneously primarily among first-generation immigrant participants who explicitly connected immigration levels to infrastructure and economic pressures. When specifically asked about immigration, most participants demonstrated some awareness of recent policy shifts, with many noting that government was "putting the brakes on" after a period of rapid growth. Specific references to international student visa caps and overall reductions in targets were common, though the depth of knowledge varied considerably.

Participants across all groups demonstrated significant skepticism toward individual sources of news and current affairs, emphasizing the importance of cross-referencing multiple sources. Traditional media outlets such as CBC, CTV, and major newspapers maintained relevance for some participants who valued "rigorous fact-checking" and professional journalism standards. However, even these participants stressed the need to be "wary of who it's coming from and what is the kind of angle or agenda." Social media emerged as a dominant source for discovering news and information, with many participants describing passive consumption through "scrolling" their feeds. Trust in social media varied widely. Some placed higher confidence in posts from official government sources or established media outlets, while others who displayed strong distrust toward official sources preferred user-generated content on Reddit and specific YouTube channels or podcasts.

The Government of Canada was generally not mentioned spontaneously as a source for discovering news or current events. Instead, participants indicated they might turn to government sources when

seeking additional information on specific topics. Most participants trusted official sources like Statistics Canada as authoritative and "coming from the horse's mouth," though others approached government information critically, conscious of potential political messaging. Several participants noted that the perceived difficulty of navigating the Government of Canada website created hesitation about turning to it for information. When it came to immigration information specifically, few participants outside the newcomer groups had actively searched for such content, with most having "stumbled upon" immigration news through regular media consumption. Newcomers demonstrated the most experience searching for immigration information, viewing the Government of Canada and IRCC specifically as the most credible sources, though many supplemented official information with immigration consultants, settlement service providers, and diaspora-specific platforms.

Management of the Immigration System: Levels of Familiarity and Perceptions

Familiarity with the immigration system varied considerably across audiences, shaped primarily by personal connections to the system. General population participants typically described themselves as having "minimal knowledge," while newcomers derived understanding from direct personal experience navigating the system. First-generation and second-generation participants fell between these two ends, with knowledge often coming through friends' experiences or community observations rather than active information seeking.

Most participants who expressed opinions about immigration management held predominantly negative assessments, consistently using words like "out of control," "disaster," and "haphazard" to describe the system. While there was an acknowledgement of recent policy changes aimed at reducing numbers, views diverged on whether these represented genuine improvement or merely reactive damage control. Most participants adopted a "wait-and-see" approach, emphasizing that meaningful assessment would require observing whether announced policies translated into tangible improvements in housing availability, healthcare access, and employment opportunities.

The core criticisms centered on several interconnected themes. Participants across all groups perceived that immigration levels had been set without adequate consideration of Canada's capacity to absorb newcomers, pointing to housing shortages, healthcare system strain, and overwhelmed educational institutions as evidence of poor planning. Many participants identified a disconnect between who was being admitted and what skills Canada's economy required, with particular concern about educated professionals unable to practice in their fields while critical sectors faced worker shortages. General population participants specifically highlighted how entry-level positions traditionally available to Canadian youth had been absorbed by temporary workers and international students.

Beyond infrastructure and economic concerns, a few participants, particularly from general population groups, expressed discomfort with the rapid demographic changes in their communities. Newcomer and first-generation participants added another dimension to the criticism, describing frustration with slow processing times, inaccessible support services, and an inability to reach anyone for assistance during critical moments in their immigration journey. Despite the range of concerns, participants consistently emphasized that results over time would be more important than promises in determining whether the immigration system was being properly managed.

Understanding of Canada's Immigration System – Statement Testing

To explore perceptions of immigration and test messaging that could counter misperceptions, participants were shown a series of seven statements (see table below – statements have been presented in order of the theme they are grouped in as opposed to the numeric number assigned for testing) about Canada's immigration system and asked to vote whether they thought each statement was true or false. After voting, participants were presented with factual information explaining why each statement was true or false, followed by discussion of their reactions to this corrective messaging.

Table 2: Statements Tested

Statement Theme	Statement Tested
Economic Contribution	Statement 2: Immigrants impact every part of the Canadian economy. Statement 2 is TRUE: According to Statistics Canada, immigrants contribute to every sector of Canada's economy. Immigrants aged 25 to 54 represented: • over 36% of people working in accommodation and food services • nearly 38% of those working in the transportation and warehousing sector • over 34% of those working in professional, scientific and technical services • over 20% of those working in construction
Economic Contribution	Statement 1: The majority of Permanent Residents Canada accepted until November 30, 2025 (the most recent data we have at this point) were Economic immigrants, who were accepted based on how well they can help fill job shortages in important industries. Statement 1 is TRUE: Statistics up until November 30, 2025 are currently available. As of that point, 58% of Permanent residents admitted to Canada (between Jan 1 and Nov 30) were through the Economic Immigration Category.
Economic Contribution	Statement 7: Temporary foreign workers are taking Canadians' jobs. Statement 7 is FALSE: Though the Government of Canada is decreasing the number of temporary workers overall, temporary work programs can help fill short-term labour and skills gaps, including by building homes, supplying food to Canadians, and developing cutting-edge technologies. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a last resort for employers and requires a labour market impact assessment to prove that no Canadian is available for the job to make sure that jobs are available to Canadians first.
Government Support	Statement 3: All immigrants get financial support from the Canadian government that Canadians don't have access to. Statement 3 is FALSE: The majority of immigrants who come to Canada do not receive financial support (such as cash transfers) from the Canadian Government. Government-assisted refugees are the only group that regularly receives financial support from the Canadian Government to support only their most basic needs. In 2024, government-assisted refugees represented approximately 4% of the total permanent residents admitted to Canada.
Government Support	Statement 5: The federal government is always responsible for housing asylum claimants and is paying thousands of dollars each month to house them in hotels. Statement 5 is FALSE: Temporary accommodations for those seeking asylum is a shared responsibility across all levels of government. The Government of Canada

	supports provinces, territories, and municipalities; it does not replace their role. One way the Government of Canada previously offered support was by providing temporary accommodations, a measure which ended September 2025. Federal funding now focuses on options such as reception centres and transitional housing (temporary, supportive housing designed to help individuals move to permanent, stable housing).
Levels and screening	Statement 4: Canada has stopped accepting immigrants. Statement 4 is FALSE: Canada continues to accept immigrants though at sustainable levels for both permanent and temporary residents in the next few years. Canada is adjusting its approach to focus immigration on where it can deliver the greatest impact - filling labour gaps with top international talent, strengthening key sectors of the economy and supporting communities across the country.
Levels and screening	Statement 6: The Government of Canada does not screen or conduct background checks on people who come to Canada under our immigration programs. Statement 6 is FALSE: Everyone is screened. The type of screening depends on the immigration program and whether the person needs a visa or an electronic travel authorization (eTA) to travel to Canada. All applications are checked against immigration, law-enforcement, and security databases. When risk indicators are present, files are referred to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) or Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) for more in-depth security screening.

Statement testing revealed significant gaps between official narratives and public perception across all audiences. Even when they were informed with supporting information about the factual accuracy of each statement, many participants often remained skeptical due to personal experiences and community observations that contradicted official information.

Levels and screening statements achieved high accuracy but limited impact on confidence. Almost all participants correctly identified that Canada continues accepting immigrants (Statement 4) and conducts screening (Statement 6). The term "sustainable" in immigration levels resonated positively, with many appreciating the government's calibrated approach. However, participants emphasized that tangible outcomes rather than promises would determine confidence. For screening, while most knew it exists based on common sense, they questioned its effectiveness, particularly regarding document fraud from certain countries. The information served more as confirmation of existing beliefs than confidence-building.

Economic contribution statements generated mixed accuracy and effectiveness. Statement 2 about immigrants impacting every part of the economy was almost universally answered correctly, with several participants valuing the specific statistics (36-45% representation across sectors) for potentially shifting public perception. However, Statement 1 about 58% being economic immigrants saw participants evenly split, with many unfamiliar with the term "economic immigrant" itself. Statement 7 about temporary foreign workers also divided participants—those aware of labour market impact assessments (LMIA) answered correctly, while others' observations of youth unemployment in entry-level positions contradicted the official narrative. Across these statements, participants questioned whether economic immigrants work in their intended fields, pointing to skilled professionals driving taxis while their sectors face shortages.

Government support statements proved least effective. For Statement 3 about financial support, while most correctly identified it as false, a significant portion conflated immigrants with refugees. Despite learning only 4% receive government assistance, some remained unconvinced, pointing to perceived advantages from banks, provincial programs, and other sources. Statement 5 about asylum housing responsibilities generated the weakest response—participants were evenly split on accuracy and showed general indifference to learning about shared government responsibilities, with the information being too vague to build confidence.

Across all statements, participants consistently requested evidence of tangible outcomes—improved healthcare, available jobs, better infrastructure—rather than abstract percentages. Many expressed that accurate statistics alone would not change views shaped by broader economic struggles and daily observations contradicting policy narratives.

Understanding of Canada’s Immigration System – Social Media Content

Participants consistently found the social media content too wordy and vague, which in turn would translate to low levels of engagement on social media. The content tested lacked supporting data, used generic corporate language, and failed to provide personal relevance or human stories.

Table 3: Social Media Content Tested

Post 1: The majority of immigrants accepted to Canada each year are economic immigrants. Canada prioritizes these newcomers to help fill jobs and keep our economy strong.
Post 2: Canada's immigration plan focuses on reducing pressure on infrastructure, public services and housing, so communities across Canada can continue to thrive. Learn more.
Post 3: The 2026-2028 Immigration Levels Plan is not just about numbers. It's about shaping a sustainable, stable immigration system that supports people, the economy, and communities for years to come. Learn more.

The term "economic immigrant" in post 1 created confusion, while the lack of specificity about job sectors opened the messaging to counter-arguments. Post 2's mention of "reducing pressure" on housing and infrastructure resonated but lacked credibility given current realities. Post 3 was perceived as the most generic, reading like an official statement rather than engaging content.

Participants felt that the social media content could be improved through engaging hooks (e.g., personal questions, surprising statistics), concrete examples and statistics, captivating visual imagery potentially including video content, simplification of language to cater to those for whom English or French is not their first language, and personal relevance through testimonials and real-life stories.

Temporary Residents Levels

The government's commitment to reduce temporary residents to less than 5% of the population by 2027 generated mixed reactions across all groups. Many participants wished to know what the current situation was in order to provide context; many specifically wondered about the percentage share of temporary residents in previous years before forming an opinion on the target. When provided with context showing the decline from 7.5% in late 2024 to 6.8% in October 2025, most participants viewed the reduction as reasonable and gradual rather than drastic. However, reactions diverged based on participants' broader views on immigration and current economic conditions.

Some participants viewed any reduction positively but questioned whether 5% was still too high given current challenges. Others worried the reduction would disproportionately impact genuine opportunity-seekers while failing to address those who abuse the system. The absolute number—approximately 2 million people—prompted varied interpretations, with some focusing on percentage reductions as progress while others saw the raw numbers as still overwhelming.

Most participants were uncertain about the proposed 60% temporary foreign workers to 40% international students split for 2026 temporary resident admissions. Instead of endorsing the specific ratio, discussions focused on the merits and concerns about each category. Concerns about employer exploitation of temporary foreign workers for cheap labour and LMIA scams were raised alongside acknowledgment of universities' dependency on international student tuition revenue.

A consistent theme across all groups was that numerical targets alone wouldn't solve underlying problems without addressing systemic issues. Participants emphasized the need for clarity on implementation and enforcement mechanisms—particularly how the government would handle those who overstay visas—and the broader strategic objectives driving the specific 5% target.

Canada's Immigration Levels Webpage

The [Canada's immigration levels - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizens/services/immigration-and-asylum/immigration-levels.html) landing page was largely positively received, in contrast to the limited receptivity to the statements and social media content tested.

The website's strength lay in its specificity and design. Unlike the vague promises of the social media content tested, the site provided tangible figures that participants could evaluate: the commitment to less than 1% permanent resident admissions, the 37% reduction in temporary foreign workers, and clear targets extending to 2028. This transparency resonated particularly strongly with those who had expressed frustration about "empty government promises" earlier in the sessions. Many participants appreciated the intuitive layout with boxed statistics and clear headings that made complex information digestible.

The focus on highly skilled workers in specific sectors—healthcare, skilled trades, and emerging technologies—directly addressed concerns about whether immigration was targeting Canada's actual labour needs rather than creating general competition for jobs. Some participants felt the website demonstrated a genuine new plan with clear priorities. However, a participant noted the absence of any mention of foreign credential recognition, which had been a recurring concern throughout the discussions.

Despite the generally positive reception, a small number of participants expressed skepticism rooted in past government performance. These participants emphasized that while the presentation was excellent, numbers alone would not build confidence without demonstrated results. Overall, most participants felt that the website was a positive step in providing them with confidence that the government has a plan.

Intercultural Competence Orientation

There was general openness across all groups to the proposal of creating an online intercultural competence module for newcomers. Most participants acknowledged the value of helping newcomers navigate Canada's diverse society by providing practical guidance that would otherwise be learned

through trial-and-error, fostering mutual respect, and establishing clear expectations about Canadian norms.

Topics suggested for inclusion fell into four main categories:

- Workplace integration – communication styles (indirect/passive Canadian approaches versus more direct feedback), team-based work culture where collaborative success is valued over individual achievement, organizational hierarchies, safety protocols, religious accommodations, and worker rights to prevent exploitation.
- Day-to-day practicalities – navigating banking and tax systems, price-matching and money-saving practices, finding community resources, understanding provincial differences in services, and language nuances beyond formal instruction.
- Social norms and boundaries – personal space and physical contact expectations, queuing and politeness etiquette, driving etiquette, and photography protocols.
- Understanding Canada's multicultural landscape – recognizing the diversity of backgrounds newcomers will encounter, gender equality, and Charter Rights.

The main challenge identified across multiple groups was defining "Canadian culture" and determining "whose values" would be taught in a nation that defines itself through multiculturalism. Many participants questioned whose perspectives would be privileged in such a course. Several participants also expressed skepticism about an online, self-led format, comparing it unfavorably to mandatory workplace training that people complete perfunctorily. Instead, they suggested a hybrid approach combining online elements with in-person interactions, potentially delivered through partnerships with community organizations. This preference was underpinned by the belief that cultural competence requires human interaction and cannot be fully developed through self-directed online learning alone.

2. Detailed Research Findings

2.1 Top-of-Mind Issues and Information Sources

Unaided Top-of-Mind Issues

Economic concerns dominated discussions across focus groups, with participants consistently identifying the interconnected challenges of housing affordability, inflationary pressures, cost of living, a weak economy and job market as Canada's most pressing issues. Several mentioned the ongoing trade tensions between Canada and U.S. as a pressing economic concern affecting Canada and a few went further to highlight broader geopolitical tensions. The compounding economic pressures led to feelings of being “overwhelmed” with several participants sharing personal challenges of finding “good paying jobs”.

“I am somewhat of a newsfreak, so as far as I'm concerned, the biggest problem in the country, Canada, is obviously what is happening south of our country.” - General population participant

“I feel the biggest issues in Canada right now are the cost of groceries and gas, and just the cost of living—including rent, mortgage, and other financial expenses. Low wages are also a major issue.” – Second-generation participant

Healthcare system strain consistently ranked as the second most pressing issue facing Canada. Participants shared personal stories of difficulties with access, such as “eight-hour wait times” in emergency rooms and the persistent challenge of finding family doctors. A few participants who were healthcare workers offered their professional perspectives on the system's capacity constraints.

“I work in a hospital, and I can see every day long wait times, people dying in waiting rooms—this is happening all over Canada.” – First-generation participant from Indian diaspora community

Top-of-Mind Immigration Issues

Immigration rarely surfaced as an unprompted concern, emerging spontaneously only among specific segments with direct exposure to its impacts. Some first-generation participants and a small number of general population participants explicitly connected immigration levels to infrastructure pressures.

“My biggest concern with the country is immigration—specifically who they're allowing into the country and the amount of people they're allowing in. It's affecting everything.” – General population participant

When specifically prompted about immigration, there was some awareness across all the discussions that government was “putting the brakes on” after a period of rapid expansion. References to international student restrictions, visa caps and reduced targets were common, though the depth of knowledge on changes varied considerably by audience. Newcomers and first-generation participants showed the most detailed understanding of specific policy changes, and this was often driven by their

own experiences of the immigration system or experiences of those in their social circles. They brought up new Express Entry categories, the "35% reduction" in student permits, and restrictions on spousal admissions. Several newcomer participants noted that the policy changes and a general feeling of uncertainty affected their families and their friends personally, which in turn led to debates on whether or not to stay or leave Canada. Meanwhile, participants in the general population and second-generation discussions tended to demonstrate broader awareness of policy direction without necessarily knowing specifics, and a few appeared to have very little awareness of the latest changes to government immigration policy.

"I have a few friends that came a few years after I did, and the PR process is a lot stricter and a lot harder now." –Newcomer participant from Chinese diaspora community

Trusted Information Sources

Participants tended to be skeptical of individual sources of news and information, preferring to cross-reference multiple sources. Traditional media outlets like CBC, CTV, CP24 and major newspapers maintained relevance for some, particularly among those who valued "rigorous fact-checking" and professional journalism standards. However, even these participants who preferred to turn to traditional media emphasized the need to cross-reference information, with one participant noting the importance of being "wary of who it's coming from and what is the kind of angle or agenda."

"I watch The National, and I also like CBC and Global News. I guess with traditional media, I would stick to sources like the Free Press and similar outlets. I just feel like they're more fact-checked than a lot of stuff you can see online." – General population participant

"I am a Radio Canada-native by birth. I am an informed person, and I rely on newspapers like La Presse. I believe very little of what is found in marginal media, and I always recognize a conspiracy theory when I see one." - General population participant

Social media emerged as a dominant source of discovering news and information for all participants, with many describing passive consumption through "scrolling" their feeds. Some were wary of the credibility of information on social media and tended to place higher trust in posts from official government sources or established media outlets. Those who displayed strong levels of distrust towards official government sources and traditional media tended to trust the experiences or consensus that emerged in user-generated content on Reddit and other social media platforms, or they actively followed specific YouTube channels or podcasts. Others still appeared to not have any strong preference towards any sources and simply consumed the posts that were shown on their social media feeds.

"When a majority of peers are saying the same thing and talking about it, it has to have some truth to it." – General population participant

"If I see something about a new law or anything, if I see it in online news, on television, or in the newspaper, honestly most of the time, I will go to Reddit to see what people are saying." - General population participant

The Government of Canada was generally not brought up unaided as a source for discovering news or current events. Instead, it was a source of information participants might turn to if they were looking for additional information on a specific story or topic. For the most part, participants trusted official

government sources such as Statistics Canada as authoritative and “coming from the horse’s mouth”. For a few participants, official government sources have increased in importance in light of the prevalence of misinformation on social media. Others meanwhile approached government sources critically, conscious that information may be presented with a particular political slant similar to traditional media outlets. A small number were highly distrustful of government sources which was often complemented with dissatisfaction with the federal government’s record on a number of issues in recent years. Beyond trust, there was a general perception that the Government of Canada website is difficult to navigate leading to hesitation to turn to the website for more information.

"I believe there are levels of truth with the Government of Canada, and we've had a wild ride in the last four to five years. Last year, in my opinion, has been a lot better. But we had a bit of a wild ride, and the credibility, I think, got really shaky for me and a lot of Canadians that I've spoken to." – Second-generation participant

Trusted Information Sources on Immigration

When it came immigration information specifically, with the exception of some participants in the newcomer focus groups, few had actively looked for this type of information. Most participants had “stumbled upon” immigration information through their regular media consumption. A few first-generation participants, while they had not proactively sought information on immigration, they admitted to paying close attention to reporting on immigration as it is a topic that is of interest to them given their personal background. Asked where they might go for information on immigration, they tended to default to the Government of Canada website.

As might be expected, newcomer participants had the most experience of searching for information about the immigration system. The Government of Canada, and the Immigration Department specifically, were seen as the most credible source of information on immigration requirements. Still, many supplemented government information with multiple sources including immigration consultants, settlement service providers, and diaspora-specific platforms (e.g., Red Note for Chinese newcomers, Reddit communities among Indian newcomers, YouTubers for other diaspora communities). This multi-source approach allowed them to combine official information with sources that focused on providing the information in a more accessible manner.

"Digital creators on Instagram, like immigration consulting companies, help us a lot because they bring information and present it in an easy way that's very easy to understand." – Newcomer participant

Personal networks emerged as an influential source of information about the immigration system among the general population, newcomers, first-generation and second-generation participants alike. Many had become aware of changes to the system as a result of their friends’ first-hand experiences with the immigration system.

"I have a lot of friends who are trying to get PR. I try to get firsthand experience with this, which I have been doing through multiple friends who are currently going through the PR process." – First-generation participant from Chinese diaspora community

2.2 Management of the Immigration System: Levels of Familiarity and Perceptions

Familiarity with the Immigration System

Levels of familiarity with the immigration system varied across audiences and were often shaped by personal connections to the system.

General population participants typically described themselves as having "minimal knowledge" with limited personal touchpoints to the system. Several openly acknowledged gaps in their understanding, and even those who claimed some knowledge expressed uncertainty about the accuracy of their information. Personal connections, such as family members who employed immigrants or friends navigating the system, provided occasional windows into immigration processes but rarely translated to a comprehensive understanding. Limited familiarity with the system did not prevent some participants from holding strong views on the topic of immigration and its impact, as discussed in later sections.

"I'd say I'm somewhere in the middle. I probably pay more attention when there are more news stories about it. I've got a family member who runs a business that hires a lot of immigrants and refugees." – General population participant

Second-generation participants demonstrated slightly more nuanced knowledge due to their social networks, which often included friends awaiting permanent residency decisions and interactions with international students. Despite these connections, most admitted to not following immigration closely, with their understanding coming primarily through passive exposure rather than active information seeking. They frequently qualified their responses with acknowledgments of knowledge gaps, noting they relied mostly on personal observations in their communities.

"I think that I am familiar enough, though I don't think that I follow it closely enough. I just go by what I'm seeing happening in my own city." – Second-generation participant

First-generation participants showed the widest range of familiarity, from "somewhat" to "very familiar," though most clustered towards the lower end of this spectrum. The passage of time since their immigration to Canada emerged as a key factor in their current limited levels of familiarity. Chinese first-generation participants particularly emphasized how frequent system changes had made their past experience obsolete. First-generation participants who worked in fields with exposure to newcomers demonstrated deeper current knowledge of the immigration system.

"I'm only familiar with it based on how I emigrated here, which was twenty years ago. So I'm not familiar with the current process for immigrants." – First-generation participant

Newcomer participants derived familiarity mainly from direct personal experience with the system or those of friends currently navigating the system. A recurring theme across newcomer discussions was frustration with the lack of "human touch" in the system and long processing times. These negative experiences shaped their impressions of how the system is managed.

"If you have to reach customer support, it's not easy. It's like climbing Mount Everest because they're very tricky to get a hold of." – Newcomer participant

Before examining how participants assessed the current management of Canada's immigration system, they were asked to describe their ideal immigration system in three words. As illustrated in the weighted word cloud below (i.e., size of the word is weighted to the frequency that it was mentioned), fair emerged as the overwhelmingly dominant descriptor across all audiences, followed by clusters around efficient, safe, transparent, and welcoming.

A word cloud of 100 adjectives describing a good company. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the most prominent words in the center and smaller words towards the edges. The colors are a mix of red, orange, yellow, and green. The words include: equality, simple, welcoming, acceptance, opportunity, functioning, fairness, talent, equal, diverse, smooth, respectful, honest, structured, competitive, transparency, affordable, skilled, secure, controlled, limited, supportive, members, equitable, responsive, stable, reliable, contributing, thorough, open, balanced, inclusive, transparent, workforce, accessible, organized, fast, easy, selective, reassuring, safe, efficient, fair, and wellcoming.

Efficiency emerged as a priority particularly for those with direct system experience. Newcomers and first-generation participants frequently chose words like "smooth," "fast," "streamlined," and "accessible," reflecting frustration with current processing delays and bureaucratic complexity (see also next section). General population participants were less likely to emphasize efficiency, and when they did, they often paired it with "control".

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Transparency appeared across all audiences, though with different emphases. General population participants wanted clearer public understanding of immigration processes and decision-making, while newcomers sought transparency about their own application status and timelines.

“When I refer to the transparency [of the system], I would talk about a system where all the steps and decisions are visible according to all criteria and where the information is completely perceptible. That everyone can retrieve them to know what is expected, what information is available, and what skills are necessary.” - General population participant

Welcoming and inclusive language appeared most frequently among second-generation participants and newcomers, who emphasized values like "diverse," "multicultural," and "acceptance." However, even among these audiences, inclusive language was often balanced with a need for safeguards—second-generation participants paired "welcoming" with "thorough" and "purposeful," suggesting hospitality should not come at the expense of planning.

Perceptions of the Management of the Immigration System

Among participants who expressed opinions about the management of the immigration system, assessments were predominantly negative across all audiences. Words like "out of control," "disaster," "messy," and "haphazard" frequently emerged to describe the immigration system. While there was considerable variation both within and between audiences regarding the intensity of criticism and underlying reasons, the overall sentiment remained consistently critical. Recent policy changes aimed at reducing numbers were acknowledged across groups, though most participants remained skeptical about whether these represented genuine improvement or merely reactive damage control.

Several themes emerged to explain why participants believed the immigration system had been mismanaged, with some nuances across audiences.

1. Lack of Planning and Infrastructure Readiness. The most widespread criticism centered on the perception that immigration levels had been set without adequate consideration of Canada's capacity to absorb newcomers. Participants consistently pointed to housing shortages, healthcare system strain, and overwhelmed educational institutions as evidence of poor planning. General population participants expressed this concern most forcefully, with many asserting the government lacked any strategic plan and had allowed numbers that were "not sustainable" given current infrastructure constraints. Second-generation participants echoed these sentiments, with some using strong language to describe how poor planning had "crashed our economy." Among first-generation and newcomer participants, those from the Chinese diaspora community appeared to be most vocal on the negative impact of immigration on services and infrastructure.

"I don't think the government has a plan, unfortunately. Because what plan do they have? If so many international students are here now, they don't have housing, they can't find jobs."
– General population participant

"Everything is such a long wait with everybody. I took my daughter to the hospital one day and there were many immigrants and they don't have their paperwork right away. It's probably an eight-hour wait just to see a doctor." – General population participant

"The influx of immigrants brings a lot of problems to the society. If I go to the community centre now, I have to line up even for the waiting list. Not sure whether I can join the program or not. But a few years ago, we could easily drop in." – First-generation participant from Chinese diaspora community

"Too many immigrants are arriving. No houses available, the schools are full, no jobs, no daycare, no healthcare system capable of handling that many people." –Newcomer participant from Chinese diaspora community

2. Mismatch Between Immigration and Economic Needs. Participants across audiences identified a fundamental disconnect between who was being admitted and what skills Canada's economy required. This mismatch manifested differently for various groups. General population participants focused on how entry-level positions traditionally available to Canadian youth had been absorbed by temporary foreign workers and international students, while their children struggled to find work. The failure to recognize foreign credentials emerged as another dimension of this mismatch, with participants across the board pointing to educated professionals working in low-skill industries while the industries they were qualified for faced worker shortages. Those who identified a weak job market as a pressing challenge facing the country felt that immigration increased competition for limited jobs.

"My son is 22 years old, and he's been looking for a job for a year, and he can't even find an entry level job, even general labour. You can't get no jobs." – General population participant

"Doctors come from other countries, but they're not able to get jobs at hospitals because their qualifications don't match the Canadian standard, and they have to go back to school and take the exams again to be qualified to work." – Second-generation participant

"There are too many migrants arriving, but there is no structure for it to work well here, like [...] the economy. Canada does not have everything a country needs to properly welcome all these migrants and integrate everyone into the job market and meet all their needs." - General population participant

3. System Vulnerabilities and Processing Challenges. Some newcomer participants' negative perceptions were grounded in frustration with how the immigration system is administered, describing slow processing times, inaccessible support services, and an inability to reach anyone for assistance during critical moments in their immigration journey.

"If we consider the IRCC, I think they have, I don't know exactly how many, about 1.5 million or 2 million unprocessed applications. There are huge delays with the IRCC just to manage existing applications. They are even blocking new applications for the moment. So I don't think it's necessarily well managed, there is a lack of officials to keep the machine running. In my opinion, they have neither the capacity nor the employees." - General population participant

Meanwhile, first-generation participants, particularly those from the Chinese diaspora community, believed that standards have been lowered over time when compared to their own immigration journeys. Similarly, general population and second-generation participants focused their criticism on how easily the system could be exploited. They highlighted "diploma mills" and "fake universities" as

examples of how international students were using education as a backdoor to permanent residence, displacing what they saw as legitimate economic immigration.

"I think it's been out of control. A big part of it was the way students were coming here on student visas and sort of going to these fake universities and colleges and finding their way into either permanent residence or temporary residence for a few years. And that was really poorly managed." – Second-generation participant

"It's far too easy compared to previous generations. If I remember correctly, you needed to have a certain education, certain credentials. Right now, anyone and their mother can come." – First-generation participant from Chinese diaspora community

"I had heard stories that [for international students] it has become more strict. Even in different universities like in Canada, there are many who, after finishing their studies, thought they could stay. Then they had to leave. It's a shock [for them]." General population participant

4. Insufficient Integration Support. Failure to support newcomers to integrate within Canadian society was highlighted in some sessions, creating what participants saw as unnecessary tension between newcomers and the communities that they are settling in.

"They're just letting people in, but they're also not really setting them up for success. I think it's a catch-22." – General population participant

"There is a phenomenon that is quite normal when we talk about diversity and the integration of social values in Canada: when people arrive here, often, as immigrants, they don't necessarily have a lot of resources. So, they often turn towards things that are familiar or common to them. People will say 'immigrants don't integrate,' but there are certain economic and social factors which mean you only interact with [members] of your community." General population participant

5. Pace and Nature of Community Changes. A subset of participants, primarily from the general population groups, expressed discomfort with the rapid demographic changes in their communities. These concerns ranged from feeling like strangers in familiar spaces to perceptions that immigration had become concentrated among particular ethnic groups rather than maintaining Canada's multicultural balance. First-generation participants from various diaspora communities also noted this shift, with some expressing nostalgia for what they perceived as a more balanced multicultural environment when they first arrived.

"I personally don't think they are managing it. I think it's a disaster. In some parts of Canada, Ontario specifically, you don't even feel like you're in your own country anymore." – General population participant

"It used to be really multicultural, and that was the best part about it. It was equal. Everywhere you went, it was an equal amount of people from different countries that emigrated." – First-generation participant

"In the news, they were talking about a certain percentage of immigrants, that it was increasing. But the immigrants, they reproduce more than Quebecers, so the Quebec population is decreasing." - General population participant

Perceptions of Recent Changes to Immigration

As noted previously, there was some acknowledgement of a recent shift to a more restrictive immigration policy. Reactions to this policy shift among those with some level of awareness ranged from skepticism to cautious optimism.

At the most critical end, some participants dismissed recent adjustments as superficial or inadequate responses to public pressure. First-generation participants were particularly skeptical, characterizing changes as reactive measures implemented without strategic planning or genuine reform intent.

"They concentrated on certain things while overlooking others. And now that a lot of things are getting out of control, and it seems like they allow a lot of people with tricks and deceit into the country." – First-generation participant

Others came across as less critical and believed changes were necessary. However, a "damage is done" mentality was common. Second-generation participants particularly embodied this perspective, recognizing positive steps while maintaining that recovery would require extensive time and effort.

"It certainly was a bit crazy for a bit. I do see signs of it somewhat improving, but the damage is already done. And we can't really go back in time now. So, it'll take a lot to fix." – Second-generation participant

Some participants worried the corrections had swung too far in the opposite direction, potentially creating new problems while attempting to fix old ones.

At the more optimistic end of the spectrum, a small group of participants came across as expressing genuine confidence in recent changes. This appeared to be a function of greater confidence in the government among general population and second-generation participants. Newcomers viewed the shift as government responsiveness to public feedback and thus evidence of a functional democracy.

"It does actually give me some more confidence. I had basically zero confidence in the previous government, and I do think that this present government right now is doing a fairly decent job." – Second-generation participant

Despite this range of opinions, participants consistently emphasized that meaningful assessment would require observing whether announced policies translated into tangible improvements in housing availability, healthcare access, and employment opportunities—the core areas where immigration's impacts were most acutely felt.

"It was mismanaged, but it's getting better. It does look like the current government is trying to tune that back." – General population participant

Immigration as a Topic of Conversation

The frequency and nature of immigration discussions across participants' social networks partly reflected their personal connection to immigration and partly their sensitivity towards the general negative public discourse on the topic.

Newcomers, who had the most immediate personal experience with the system, reported that immigration dominated their social conversations as their families and many of their peers are still affected by the system. Chinese newcomers described how "everyone is discussing then how we can get our PR," while Indian newcomers confirmed it was "always among the top things that get discussed." These frequent exchanges served dual purposes: sharing practical knowledge about system navigation and collectively processing whether to remain in Canada given recent policy changes.

However, at the same time, newcomers in the group from other diaspora communities admitted to being more reserved on the topic when in mixed company, particularly when interacting with Canadian-born citizens. They described experiencing discriminatory comments disguised as jokes, leading them to carefully self-censor.

"Sometimes I'm just quiet. If you say something, it might offend someone, so I just keep quiet." – Newcomer participant

A few first-generation participants from the Indian diaspora community also deliberately avoided the topic of immigration to distance themselves from negative stereotypes and the increasingly negative public discourse on immigration. Other first-generation participants indicated that immigration was not regularly discussed except when promoted by news events.

"Being an immigrant, I feel like that word is always attached to us anyway, and it feels like we're always in the news being talked about. So we don't talk about it personally in our circles." – First-generation participant from Indian diaspora community

Second-generation participants with immigrant friends reported more frequent discussions, though these often focused on friends' difficulties obtaining permanent residence or the challenges facing international students rather than broader policy questions.

General population and second-generation participants tended to characterize immigration as an increasingly sensitive topic. They described it as "polarizing," with some avoiding discussions to prevent conflict. Those who engaged in conversations on immigration commented these often centered on shared concerns about youth unemployment and housing affordability.

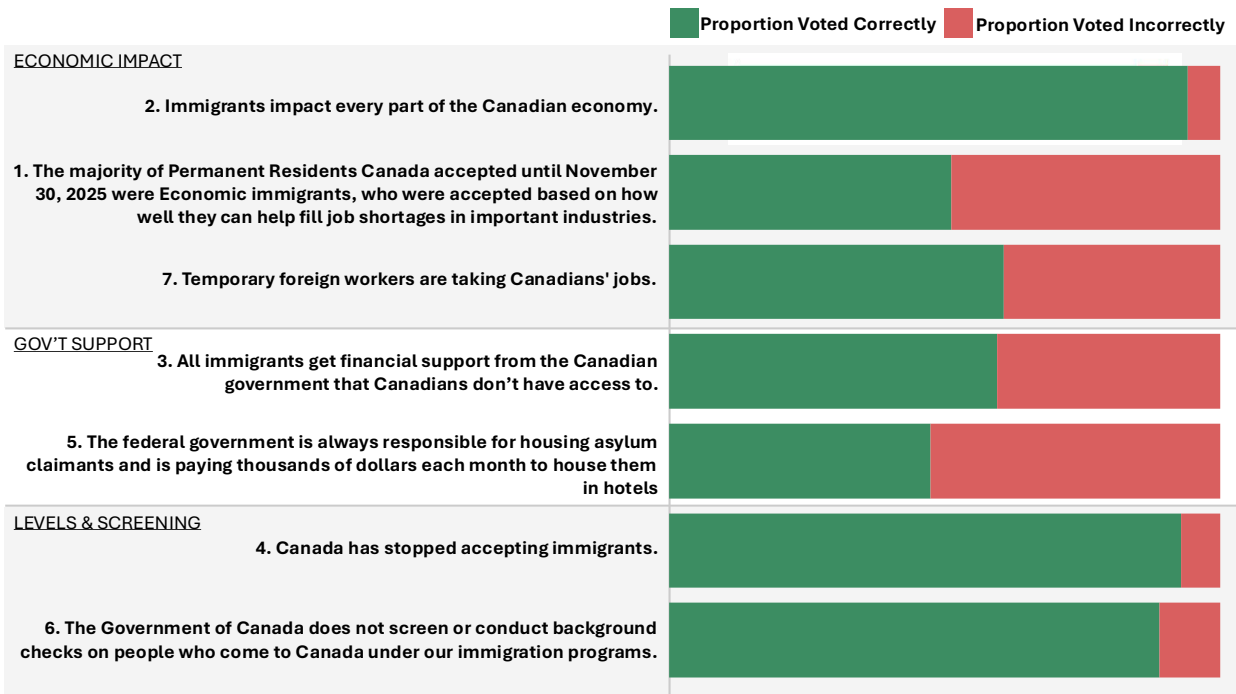
"Immigration has become a polarizing topic. You're either a 'bleeding heart' if you support it or a 'racist' if you do not." – General population participant

2.3 Understanding of Canada's Immigration System – Statement Testing

To dig deeper around perceptions on immigration and messaging that could be used to counter misperceptions on the topic, participants were shown a series of statements and asked to vote whether they thought each statement was true or false. They were then given supporting information to explain

why a statement was true or false and asked to react. The results from the voting are shown in the figure below. The statements fell into three themes: economic contribution (statements 2, 1 and 7), government supports (statements 3 and 5), levels and screening (statements 4 and 6). The statements have been presented in order of the theme that they fall into instead of their numeric number assigned at the time of testing.

Figure 2 Statement Testing Voting Results



The statement testing revealed gaps between the narratives presented in the statements and public perception across all audiences. Despite participants being informed of the factual accuracy of statements and presentation of supporting information, many remained skeptical due to their personal experiences and conflicting word-of-mouth accounts on the topics.

Levels and screening statements achieved the highest accuracy but had the least impact on building confidence. Participants correctly voted on these statements based their general knowledge of the system and how it would operate. However, accuracy did not translate to confidence—participants questioned not whether these basic functions exist but whether they work effectively. The recurring demand was for evidence of outcomes rather than descriptions of processes, with participants emphasizing that promises about "sustainable" levels or screening protocols meant little without tangible results in their communities.

Economic contribution statements generated mixed results, hampered by terminology barriers and disconnects between policy narratives and observed realities. While participants readily recognized immigrants' presence across economic sectors from daily observation, unfamiliarity with terms like "economic immigrant" created some confusion. More significantly, personal experiences—youth unable to find entry-level work, skilled immigrant professionals driving taxi while their sectors face shortages—contradicted official narratives about labour market needs and economic benefits.

Government support statements proved least effective, with misconceptions persisting despite factual corrections. Confusion between immigrants and refugees was common, but even accurate information failed to shift perceptions. Participants who learned that only 4% receive government assistance often remained unconvinced, pointing to perceived advantages from various sources or expressing that their broader economic struggles shaped their interpretation more than any statistics could. The information about asylum housing responsibilities generated particular indifference, suggesting these clarifications were too removed from participants' concerns to resonate.

A recurring theme across all statements was participants' desire for evidence of tangible outcomes—improved healthcare, available jobs, better infrastructure—rather than abstract percentages or process descriptions. In terms of public communications, participants expressed their desire for multi-platform approaches, more localized data, personal storytelling, and clearer explanations of policy terminology, together with evidence of real-world outcomes.

Economic Contribution Statements

Statement 2: Immigrants impact every part of the Canadian economy.

Statement 2 is TRUE: According to Statistics Canada, immigrants contribute to every sector of Canada's economy. Immigrants aged 25 to 54 represented:

- over 36% of people working in accommodation and food services
- nearly 38% of those working in the transportation and warehousing sector
- over 34% of those working in professional, scientific and technical services
- over 20% of those working in construction

Almost all participants answered correctly to this statement. Overall, they largely found the statement about immigrants impacting every part of the Canadian economy to be unsurprising and consistent with their lived experiences. Many indicated that seeing immigrants working across various sectors was simply part of their everyday reality. This sense of familiarity was particularly strong among first-generation participants, who connected the information to their own experiences as taxpayers and workers.

While the information was not novel for most, several participants valued the specific statistics for framing immigration more positively. There was recognition that immigration often carries negative connotations in the media, and sharing this data could help shift public perception. However, some questioned whether the statistics actually supported the statement, noting that percentages in the thirties did not constitute a majority.

"I like the statistics. I find it helpful to kind of break down how each sector is being impacted, rather than just saying immigrants contribute to the economy, they actually put numbers in there." – Newcomer participant

"The statement was pretty broad, so I didn't expect or know what information was supposed to come out of it." – Newcomer participant

A recurring suggestion was the desire for more granular, localized data broken down by province. Participants felt this would contextualize immigrant contributions within their communities and connect statistics to issues like housing costs. There was also interest in seeing how immigration levels align with sectoral needs rather than simply viewing aggregate numbers.

"I think it'd be good if they could take it one step further and customize it per province, so that we can see the impact they are having in terms of contributions to where we live." – Newcomer participant

Some second-generation participants expressed surprise at how high the percentages were, having expected lower figures. This surprise was accompanied by concern about ensuring immigration fills genuine gaps rather than displacing Canadian workers.

"I'm surprised. I didn't think the numbers were that big. I also don't want it to push out Canadians who are in those professions. Seeing them filling voids and areas of need would be much better." – Second-generation participant

Statement 1: The majority of Permanent Residents Canada accepted until November 30, 2025 (the most recent data we have at this point) were Economic immigrants, who were accepted based on how well they can help fill job shortages in important industries.

Statement 1 is TRUE: Statistics up until November 30, 2025 are currently available. As of that point, 58% of Permanent residents admitted to Canada (between Jan 1 and Nov 30) were through the Economic Immigration Category.

Reactions to this statement were split evenly between those who voted correctly and those who voted incorrectly. A key barrier to engagement was unfamiliarity with the term "economic immigration category" itself—several participants across groups admitted they didn't know what it referred to, which contributed to uncertainty in their responses and made it difficult for them to assess the statement's significance.

Even among those who felt the 58% figure was accurate, skepticism persisted about whether the system was actually working. Multiple participants questioned whether economic immigrants end up employed in the fields they were admitted for. The current labour market downturn heavily shaped interpretations, as layoffs and job scarcity made it difficult for many to believe economic immigration was functioning as intended. For some, the disconnect between admission numbers and employment outcomes undermined the statement's credibility entirely.

"Even with that percentage, I feel like most people said that's what they were coming to do or that's their qualification, but came and did something else. So having that whole criteria and all those categories, I think it didn't even matter." – Newcomer participant

Rather than statistics, most participants wanted tangible proof of the benefits of economic immigrants to the Canadian economy or society. Abstract percentages felt unconvincing without evidence of improved services, infrastructure, or economic outcomes in their daily lives.

"I want to see how this economic immigration impacts or helps us here. I want to know how many millions of dollars were spent. Have our hospitals doubled in size? Have we now built a brand new TTC line or a brand-new high-speed rail network because of these 58% of people coming in?" – First-generation participant

A minority found the statement reassuring. For these participants, prioritizing economic immigrants aligned with their expectations of how the system should function and suggested intentionality in admissions decisions.

"If this information is correct, then that's wonderful, because it is filling current gaps that we have and being more intentional with who we are allowing to immigrate." – Second-generation participant

Statement 7: Temporary foreign workers are taking Canadians' jobs.

Statement 7 is FALSE: Though the Government of Canada is decreasing the number of temporary workers overall, temporary work programs can help fill short-term labour and skills gaps, including by building homes, supplying food to Canadians, and developing cutting-edge technologies. The Temporary Foreign Work Program is a last resort for employers and requires a labour market impact assessment to prove that no Canadian is available for the job to make sure that jobs are available to Canadians first.

Participants were fairly divided on this statement. Responses split between those who understood the program's requirements and those who judged based on daily observations. Participants who voted correctly knew about the labour market impact assessment, while those who voted incorrectly did so because their everyday experiences contradicted policy claims.

"I voted false. The jobs for the temporary workers are certain jobs that most Canadian-born people are not going to do anyway." – Newcomer participant

A consistent theme was the perception that Canadian youth are struggling to find entry-level employment. Many participants drew directly from conversations with family and community members whose children cannot secure part-time work. This perception was reinforced by what participants physically observe—demographic shifts in who works where.

"I've been talking to a lot of people here in Vancouver, British Columbia, and their teenage or college kids cannot do part-time work in retail, coffee shops, or even in fast food chains." – Newcomer participant

Beyond the question of whether temporary foreign workers are taking Canadian jobs, several participants expressed concerns about whether employers genuinely follow the program's rules or exploit it for access to cheaper labour. They questioned whether the labour market impact assessment process is rigorous enough to prevent abuse, and whether employers are genuinely exhausting Canadian hiring options.

"Are the employers trying hard enough to find people that are credible to work, or is it because they have to pay them more, whereas these temporary workers are willing to work at minimum wage or maybe even less?" – Newcomer participant

Reactions to the supporting information were mixed. Some participants found it credible and informative, particularly learning about the labour market impact assessment and the decreasing numbers of temporary workers. Participants who had personally navigated the immigration system—either as temporary workers themselves or through family sponsorship—tended to have greater trust in the program's integrity.

Others noted that their uncertainty stemmed from a lack of understanding about what the Temporary Foreign Worker Program actually entails. Without sufficient context about the program's requirements and the types of jobs it fills, participants defaulted to their assumptions or personal observations. They generally agreed that broader public communication is needed, with some emphasizing social media as a tool for spreading accurate information while cautioning about the need to verify sources.

"I'm not fully aware of exactly what a temporary foreign worker is and the stipulations around what jobs they are filling. There's a lot of context that needs to be filled in there for those of us who are not really versed in what that means." – Second-generation participant

"In the world of social media and advanced technologies, I think we should take advantage of this to spread information, but of course, always check the source to see if it is true." – General population participant

Government support statements

Statement 3: All immigrants get financial support from the Canadian government that Canadians don't have access to.

Statement 3 is FALSE: The majority of immigrants who come to Canada do not receive financial support (such as cash transfers) from the Canadian Government. Government-assisted refugees are the only group that regularly receives financial support from the Canadian Government to support only their most basic needs. In 2024, government-assisted refugees represented approximately 4% of the total permanent residents admitted to Canada.

The majority of participants who voted correctly did so based on logical assumptions or personal knowledge rather than concrete information about immigration policy. Many reasoned that the government simply could not afford to financially support all immigrants, or they had direct knowledge through friends and acquaintances who had immigrated without receiving government assistance. Those with firsthand experience—either as immigrants themselves or through close relationships with recent newcomers—generally understood that most immigrants are expected to be financially self-sufficient upon arrival.

A significant portion of those who voted incorrectly acknowledged conflating immigrants with refugees. This confusion was explicitly identified by multiple participants who, upon seeing the clarification,

recognized they had mentally substituted one category for the other. This pattern was consistent across both the general population and diaspora community groups.

"I think a lot of people maybe lump them into the same group. I think that's why I thought it was true because there's just been so much talk recently about refugees." – Second-generation participant

Despite being presented with correct information, a subset remained unconvinced, expressing skepticism rooted in perceptions that newcomers receive exclusive benefits beyond direct federal cash transfers. These participants pointed to bank programs for newcomers, business grants marketed to immigrants and observed leniency in healthcare billing as evidence that immigrants receive advantages unavailable to Canadian-born residents.

Some participants stated that even accurate statistics would not change their views because the information failed to reflect the broader economic struggles they experience. Frustration stemmed less from immigration policy and more from compounding difficulties with housing, employment, and healthcare access.

"I don't want the correct number. I want to believe what I want to believe. The societal issues are not fixed. So even if you give me the number 1%, I still won't believe it." – First-generation participant

Several participants attributed their initial misconceptions to social media narratives and informal conversations that overstate immigrant support levels. Even those who accepted the clarification acknowledged that prevailing narratives had shaped their expectations, with some suggesting the 4% figure seemed implausibly low given what they had heard elsewhere.

"If you ask TikTok that same question, I'm sure it would be a much, much, much higher number. The information that we receive, at least from social media, definitely seems to vastly exaggerate that number." – First-generation participant

"I'm honestly not too educated on that one aspect. This could be from word-of-mouth, hearing people talk, or biased media. I just gathered that assumption." – Second-generation participant

Statement 5: The federal government is always responsible for housing asylum claimants and is paying thousands of dollars each month to house them in hotels.

Statement 5 is FALSE: Temporary accommodations for those seeking asylum is a shared responsibility across all levels of government. The Government of Canada supports provinces, territories, and municipalities; it does not replace their role. One way the Government of Canada previously offered support was by providing temporary accommodations, a measure which ended September 2025. Federal funding now focuses on options such as reception centres and transitional housing (temporary, supportive housing designed to help individuals move to permanent, stable housing).

Participants were fairly evenly split on this statement, with voting patterns reflecting genuine uncertainty about how housing responsibilities for asylum seekers are distributed across government levels. What stood out most clearly was a sense of general indifference toward the information provided. Many participants acknowledged learning something new but expressed little emotional reaction to it.

"It's useful to know, but I'm not feeling either positive or negative from this. Because these things change all the time, and I don't really know exactly what is going to happen tomorrow." – First-generation participant

Some participants expressed genuine surprise upon learning that temporary accommodation for asylum seekers is a shared responsibility across different levels of government, and particularly that the hotel accommodation measure ended in September 2025. Several participants who voted "true" did so based on outdated information or assumptions that the federal government bore sole responsibility.

"I didn't know this measure ends in September 2025, but I heard before that the government of Canada was giving housing to people who were seeking asylum. But I didn't know the program was ending." – General population participant

Some participants who correctly identified the statement as false did so not because they understood the policy nuances, but because their real-world observations told them asylum seekers were not receiving adequate housing support regardless of which level of government was responsible. For some, the technical accuracy of the statement mattered less than the perceived gap between policy claims and visible outcomes on the ground.

"I put false because I see a lot of people that are immigrants still on the streets with no housing. Not everyone's getting the help they need." – First-generation participant

Several participants found the corrective information too vague to be truly useful or confidence-building. They requested more specific details about how the system actually operates, including numerical figures, timelines, and clearer definitions of government roles.

"I don't find it that useful. Reading it feels kind of like a blanket statement rather than something that's providing me with more useful information." – Newcomer participant

Levels and screening statements

Statement 4: Canada has stopped accepting immigrants.

Statement 4 is FALSE: Canada continues to accept immigrants though at sustainable levels for both permanent and temporary residents in the next few years. Canada is adjusting its approach to focus immigration on where it can deliver the greatest impact - filling labour gaps with top international talent, strengthening key sectors of the economy and supporting communities across the country.

Almost all participants correctly identified this statement as false, with many viewing it as an obvious answer. However, the subsequent discussions revealed significant nuance in how participants

interpreted the government's stated approach to immigration management, particularly around the concepts of sustainability, labour gaps, and follow-through on promises.

The term "sustainable" consistently caught many participants' attention and was viewed positively across groups. For newcomers especially, this language suggested a measured approach that acknowledged both Canada's need for immigration and the pressures unchecked growth places on communities. Many participants appreciated that the government appeared to be calibrating rather than either closing or fully opening the doors.

"They're also working on strengthening the key sectors. Canada does need talent, people with highly skilled labour. So bringing those right people in, I think, will help Canada become more sustainable and more self-reliant." – Newcomer participant

"I think the key point is that the immigration plan is adjusted every year. Now, perhaps we are looking more to fill certain specific employment sectors where there is a shortage of Canadian labor. There are certain sectors that are more affected, we need more external labor, so it is simply about better targeting immigrants who can add value to the Canadian economy and the needs of the country." – General population participant

Those with more open views toward immigration emphasized that outcomes would be the true measure of success—not the promises themselves. They expressed willingness to give the government the benefit of the doubt, but only if tangible improvements materialized over time. This pragmatic stance reflected accumulated frustration with consultation processes that don't seem to lead to action.

"Every year, the process is the same, and every year, we keep giving recommendations, and the same questions get asked the next year. Where's the action? Where is the implementation happening?" – Newcomer participant

Across multiple groups, many participants raised concerns about skilled immigrants unable to work in their fields. For many, this gap between recruitment and integration signaled a systemic failure.

"I see a lot of taxi drivers and Uber drivers that were doctors in their country. Instead of the government supporting them to go into positions that we need here, they bring in people for entry-level jobs." – General population participant

Statement 6: The Government of Canada does not screen or conduct background checks on people who come to Canada under our immigration programs.

Statement 6 is FALSE: Everyone is screened. The type of screening depends on the immigration program and whether the person needs a visa or an electronic travel authorization (eTA) to travel to Canada. All applications are checked against immigration, law-enforcement, and security databases. When risk indicators are present, files are referred to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) or Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) for more in-depth security screening.

Across all focus groups, participants overwhelmingly voted correctly. However, this information was not new or surprising to most participants—many had already assumed this was standard policy based on

personal experience with the immigration process, news coverage, or general expectations about government procedures. The information served more as confirmation of existing beliefs than as a revelation that might shift perspectives on the immigration system.

Participants who had personally navigated the immigration system recalled being required to provide criminal record checks and other documentation, reinforcing their baseline assumption that screening protocols are in place. Even those without direct immigration experience assumed such processes would naturally exist as a matter of common-sense governance.

"I just assumed everyone would be screened. I just thought that was policy. Because I've seen it on the news, so I just kind of believed it." – First-generation participant

Because most participants already believed screening was occurring, the statement had limited impact on changing perceptions or building confidence in the immigration system. When asked directly whether the information provided instilled greater confidence in how immigration is managed, many participants consistently indicated it did not move the needle for them. For some, the basic statement about screening being conducted raised more questions than it answered, prompting them to wonder about the details and depth of those screening procedures rather than feeling reassured.

"The question really comes down to: how much screening do they do, and can they trust the country that they're coming from—that information? Do they have access to the necessary information to make a good decision?" – Second-generation participant

The central issue across all groups was not whether screening exists, but whether it works effectively. Many participants acknowledged screening occurs on paper but questioned its adequacy in practice—particularly regarding document fraud from countries with unreliable or corruptible government databases. Personal knowledge of individuals with questionable backgrounds who nonetheless entered Canada, including public figures and acquaintances, reinforced doubts about significant gaps in the process.

"I voted false because I went through the process, so I know that there is a screening done. However, personally, I don't think the screening that the government of Canada does is enough because some countries don't have a database that can be relied on." – General population participant

2.4 Understanding of Canada's Immigration System – Social Media Content

Across all three social media posts tested, several recurring concerns emerged. Participants consistently found the social media content too wordy, vague, and generic, which would likely translate to low engagement on social media. Many participants questioned the credibility of the social media posts due to their lack of supporting data or specificity, dismissing them as broad statements without backup. The language was perceived as too generic and corporate, resembling typical government communications that fail to connect with audiences on a meaningful level. Participants expressed a need for concrete information and actionable details rather than vague promises. Many also noted the absence of personal relevance or human stories that would motivate engagement. Among French-speaking participants,

concerns arose about accessibility for non-native speakers, with suggestions to simplify language for newcomers whose French or English may be a second or third language.

Post 1: The majority of immigrants accepted to Canada each year are economic immigrants. Canada prioritizes these newcomers to help fill jobs and keep our economy strong.

The term "economic immigrant" once again created confusion, with many participants finding the terminology vague or insufficiently defined.

"'Economic immigrant,' it's a really odd way to announce something. First, I find it isn't clear, and secondly, I don't find it true." – General population participant

The phrase "fill jobs" was particularly problematic without specifying which sectors or types of jobs were being targeted. Some pointed out that without this specificity, the post opens itself to counter-arguments—people could immediately respond that the jobs being filled are not the important ones.

Several participants, particularly in newcomer groups, raised concerns that the language about "prioritizing newcomers for jobs" could inadvertently provoke negative reactions from Canadian-born citizens struggling with employment. A participant suggested adding language about "job gaps" to clarify that these are positions that cannot be filled domestically.

"If people are already feeling negatively about newcomers filling jobs, you might want to include something like 'help fill job gaps,' something saying that they are jobs that we can't fill in-house." – Second-generation participant

Some participants suggested that relevant visuals—such as images of immigrants working in specific, in-demand professions like healthcare—might increase engagement and help communicate the intended message more effectively. Visuals of medical staff or other professionals would immediately signal which sectors are being targeted, making it more credible.

Post 2: Canada's immigration plan focuses on reducing pressure on infrastructure, public services and housing, so communities across Canada can continue to thrive. [Learn more.](#)

The phrase "reducing pressure" resonated strongly as it directly addressed issues participants identified as pain points in their daily lives. Housing emerged as a particularly compelling hook. The language around public services and infrastructure similarly generated curiosity, prompting many participants to want to understand what specific measures were being proposed and how the government intended to address these pressures.

"I would definitely want to learn more about this because I see housing in there. Cost of living, like I mentioned before, is a big issue for me." – General population participant

However, the post's credibility was questioned by some given their perceptions of current realities. It generated enough curiosity to prompt some to say they would click "learn more," though sometimes this interest stemmed from skepticism rather than genuine engagement.

"Honestly, when I just read it, I might just go past it if I saw it on my feed because it just seems like a statement that we've been hearing over and over again. It doesn't really give something interesting or present something new that I want to learn." – Second-generation participant

Among French-speaking participants, concerns arose about the post's accessibility for non-native speakers. The vocabulary used was seen as potentially challenging for newcomers whose French or English may be a second or third language. Suggestions emerged to simplify the language and communicate more directly to ensure comprehension across varying language proficiency levels, recognizing that immigration-related messaging should be accessible to the very populations it discusses.

"Could they make it a bit clearer or simpler, popularizing it in a more direct way so that people understand? When I read that, I think that for an immigrant or someone who doesn't necessarily master French, it could be much clearer . – General population participant

Post 3: The 2026-2028 Immigration Levels Plan is not just about numbers. It's about shaping a sustainable, stable immigration system that supports people, the economy, and communities for years to come. Learn more.

This post was perceived as the most generic and corporate of the three. Participants noted that phrases like "sustainable, stable immigration system" and "supports people, the economy, and communities" read more like an official statement than engaging content. The message required effort to process, with nothing personal attached to make readers stop and consider the information. While scrolling through social media feeds, this type of content would not compel users to stop, read, or engage further.

"I probably wouldn't click just because I feel like it doesn't say anything new. That's the rhetoric that we've been seeing for years and years." – General population participant

"It sounds like an official statement. There is nothing personal. So why am I stopping, and why would I be thinking about immigration here when there is nothing personal to me attached?" – Newcomer participant

"You need to have more testimonials. You need to have more examples of why we should be trusting this. More like a real-life story, maybe a storyline. It should be more structured for somebody to at least stop and watch." – Newcomer participant

Suggested Improvements

Participants across all groups felt the social media content could be improved through:

- Engaging hooks – personal questions, surprising statistics that most people wouldn't know, or human stories to capture attention.

- Concrete examples and specificity – statistics, specific measures, and details about which sectors or jobs are being targeted rather than broad promises.
- Visual imagery – including images or videos of professionals in targeted sectors like healthcare to immediately signal relevance and credibility.
- Simplified language – ensuring accessibility for those whose English or French is not their first language, avoiding corporate jargon
- Personal relevance – testimonials, real-life stories, or content that connects to viewers' daily experiences and concerns

2.5 Temporary Resident Levels

Awareness and Contribution of Temporary Residents

Participants demonstrated reasonable awareness of who temporary residents included, consistently identifying international students and temporary foreign workers spontaneously as examples of temporary residents. Agricultural workers, construction workers, and those in food service emerged as the most visible examples, while awareness that asylum claimants were also temporary residents proved less common across audiences.

In terms of the contribution of temporary residents, agricultural workers emerged as the category most consistently viewed as essential. There was recognition that "Canadians don't want to work in agriculture" and that temporary workers filled genuine gaps. Those with higher levels of awareness of the agricultural industry recognised this reality the most and saw the value of this class of temporary workers.

Views on temporary workers in retail and food service positions generated more divided opinions. Some participants, particularly Indigenous and second-generation participants, expressed frustration that temporary residents had displaced Canadian youth from entry-level positions traditionally available as first jobs. Several shared personal stories of children unable to secure employment at establishments like Tim Hortons or McDonald's. Others, however, suggested these were jobs that "Canadians don't want," viewing temporary workers as filling necessary but undesirable positions in the service sector. This division reflected broader tensions about whether temporary workers addressed genuine labour shortages or simply enabled wage suppression in entry-level positions.

"You have a young kid that's 17 years old or 16 years old trying to like, when we grew up, it was get a job at McDonald's, Tim Hortons, something like that as a student would normally take. Now these jobs aren't out there for the Canadian students to do." – General population participant

- International students similarly divided opinion. While their economic contributions through tuition and spending were recognized, participants questioned whether benefits outweighed pressures on housing and education access. Second-generation and general population participants again expressed concern that international students working in service industries displaced Canadian youth from entry-level positions. Francophone participants, on the other hand, were very supportive of the influx of international students.

"I do not agree with the idea of reducing [the number of international students]. Firstly, they also contribute. If they are students, they pay more for their university study. So, they contribute to our economy, either through housing, their groceries... To me, they are welcome." - General population participant

Some participants, especially from the Francophone groups, perceived refugees as being more problematic than temporary residents (students and workers), as they saw the latter as contributing directly to the economy with a clear purpose, while they perceived the arrival of refugees as a "surplus" that puts more pressure on the country's resources.

Reactions to Temporary Residents Targets

The government's commitment to reduce temporary residents to less than 5% of the population by 2027 was broadly welcomed, though reactions were fairly muted. Most participants were less likely to report that the change instilled greater confidence in the government's handling of the system and instead were inclined to see these as "band-aid solutions" or were more likely to raise additional questions or caveats.

"5% compared to how much now? If it's 6% now and it goes down to 5%, it's negligible. If it's 25% now and it goes down to 5%, that's a big difference. So, I have a hard time reacting positively or negatively without more context.." - General population participant

Many participants requested historical context before forming opinions. When informed that temporary residents had decreased from 7.5% in late 2024 to 6.8% in October 2025, most viewed the reduction as reasonable and gradual rather than drastic. However, interpretations of whether this reduction was sufficient, excessive, or achievable varied considerably based on participants' broader views on the impact of immigration.

General population supported the target but some questioned whether 5% remained too high given current infrastructure pressures. A few emphasized the need for provincial breakdowns, noting that national averages obscured regional variations affecting their communities directly.

Second-generation participants tended to express support for reductions primarily because they wish to see an overall reduction in the number entering Canada rather than endorsing a specific policy target on temporary residents. Their reactions reflected immediate concerns about system strain rather than a considered assessment of optimal levels of temporary residents that should be admitted.

"I think it's a good target. I can't give you a rock star answer about why less than 5% is good. But what I do know is that I think fewer people is better right now." – Second-generation participant

Newcomers were more likely to display a lack of faith in the government's ability to achieve the target and how those in their network may be adversely affected by this change. Newcomers from Indian diaspora communities added that the policies could be seen as an "overcorrection" that created new problems while attempting to fix old ones.

Most participants were fairly agnostic on the proposed 60% temporary workers to 40% international students for 2026 temporary resident admissions. Instead, the discussions focused on the merits and concerns about each category rather than the specific proportions.

When discussing the temporary worker allocation, distrust of the program's integrity was common across audiences. General population participants characterized employers as "greedy" and viewed the program as a way to drive wages down. Similarly, a publicised case of temporary foreign workers not being paid what they were due was brought up in one discussion with second-generation participants. Newcomer participants in the Indian diaspora group shared firsthand accounts of fraud within the system, describing LMIA scams where companies existed only on paper.

"I met a person two weeks ago, and he told me that when he came to Canada, the company didn't even exist at that time. Now his whole life is messed up." – Newcomer participant

Still, as noted previously, some participants acknowledged the necessity of temporary workers in specific sectors.

On international students, participants reiterated concerns about housing pressures and displacement from entry-level jobs while acknowledging tuition revenue dependencies. Newcomer participants particularly noted that universities were "heavily relying on international students' fees," questioning the sustainability of rapid reductions.

In sum, rather than endorsing the specific ratio, many participants emphasized that the quality and purpose of admissions mattered more. Others argued that without addressing systemic issues—geographic distribution, and enforcement against fraud—adjusting percentages was meaningless.

"I mean, if they say they want to bring in a whole bunch of highly skilled temporary workers, well, maybe it does benefit the country because we can't get enough MRI operators or this or that. But if they're bringing in 70% of people to dig a ditch or flip a burger, maybe that's a difference." – General population participant

Information Needs

It was clear from the discussions that exposure to the targets alone had limited impact in instilling greater confidence in the government's handling of immigration. There were calls for additional information in order to help participants form an opinion. The key questions raised included:

- Implementation and enforcement mechanisms - how the government would handle those who overstay visas and achieve the stated reductions. This was especially important for participants who had the most negative outlook towards the government's handling of immigration.
- Government objectives and rationale - the broader goals and "end game" driving the specific 5% target.
- Provincial and regional breakdowns - recognition that national averages obscured significant local variations in their communities.
- Sectoral impacts and labour market alignment - which industries would be affected, and whether targets reflected genuine economic needs.

- Methodology behind the 60/40 split - how this specific allocation between workers and students was calculated

More broadly, across exposure to the statements and levels, a "wait-and-see consensus" emerged across groups. Participants consistently emphasized that meaningful assessment would require observing whether announced policies translated into tangible improvements. They would only be persuaded by seeing "action" taken and tangible evidence of pressures on housing and infrastructure easing. As one participant noted, "the results are going to do the talking" rather than the numbers alone.

2.6 Reactions to Immigration Levels Webpage

Participants were asked to review information about immigration levels that is currently available to the public on the federal immigration department's website (see [Canada's immigration levels - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugee-citizenship/services/immigration-and-asylum/immigration-levels.html)).

Overall, most participants responded positively to the landing page. The website was notably better received than the statements and social media content tested earlier in the sessions, especially with regards to instilling greater confidence in the government's handling of immigration. The website's provision of concrete data – specific figures that participants could evaluate, including the commitment to less than 1% permanent resident admissions, the 37% reduction in temporary foreign workers, and clear targets extending to 2028 – addressed the transparency and concreteness concerns participants had previously expressed throughout the discussions.

"It's giving a concrete plan. For all the questions, the doubts about immigration, I think the numbers really speak for themselves." – Newcomer participant

A consistent theme across groups was appreciation for the website's design and digestibility. Most participants found the layout intuitive, with statistics presented in boxed formats that made complex information more accessible. Many participants saw the design choices – boxed statistics, clear headings, digestible text blocks – as evidence of the Government's attempt to make complex policy information accessible to the general public.

"For a government page, I find it good. Visually, it's quite easy to read. There is text, but it's not blocks of text, there are some visuals." – General population participant

The website's focus on highly skilled workers in specific sectors — healthcare, skilled trades, and emerging technologies — resonated with some participants, especially for newcomers and first-generation participants, who felt it was successfully addressing concerns about whether immigration policy aligns with Canada's actual labour needs. Several participants noted that the website seems to be establishing a genuine new plan, with explicit prioritization of highly skilled workers in key sectors. On the other hand, a minority view expressed was that while the page emphasized targeting top talent, there was no mention of recognizing foreign diplomas. A brief acknowledgement of provincial cooperation on credential recognition would have helped strengthen the webpage's credibility.

"It has a nice layout, and they're using all the right words and verbiage to get people's attention. Targeting the top talent section and where they're prioritizing the highly skilled workers in the key areas—technologies, health care, and skilled trades. I

think they're all what's important to Canadians right now." – First-generation participant

Despite the generally positive reception, a small number of participants expressed some skepticism rooted in past government performance. Some observed that while the website design was “excellent” and the information was presented well, the numbers alone would not build confidence without demonstrated results.

"It's admirable that they're making it very bold and standing out. But ultimately, the results are going to do the talking. They need to show specifically how they intend to do that, how they intend to get rid of the backlog." – General population participant

2.7 Intercultural Competence Orientation

Across all groups, there was openness to the proposal of creating an intercultural competence module for newcomers. Most participants acknowledged the value of helping newcomers understand and navigate Canada's diverse, multicultural society. However, questions emerged about how to define "Canadian culture" in a nation that prides itself on multiculturalism, and some concerns were raised about the proposed online, self-led delivery format.

The rationale for this support was multifaceted: most participants believed such a course could help newcomers adapt more quickly to their new environment, reduce misunderstandings that arise from cultural differences, and provide practical guidance that would otherwise be learned through difficult trial-and-error experiences. Several participants emphasized that the course could foster mutual respect by helping newcomers understand and appreciate the diversity they would encounter in Canada, while also providing them with the tools to participate effectively in workplaces and communities.

"I actually took an intercultural competence class in university, and I think it could be beneficial. There's a certain way to do things and in order to preserve a little bit of the Canadian culture that we do have, it could be beneficial [to include] work etiquette, communication etiquette or driving etiquette." - General population participant

For some, particularly in the general population groups, the course was seen as a way to establish clear expectations about Canadian norms and values from the outset, helping newcomers understand "what they're getting into." For others, particularly those with personal immigration experience, the value lay in addressing the small but significant gaps in knowledge that newcomers often face—the unwritten rules and practical information that can make daily life challenging without guidance. The general sentiment was that while implementation details would be critical to get right, the underlying concept of providing structured cultural orientation was sound.

"When I immigrated, there were some small things that I didn't know. And if [that course] could provide support but also be like an outlet where immigrants could ask questions, I think that [would also be] a good thing." - Newcomer participant

"I feel like this is a good idea. [...] Everybody getting together to learn about each other in more than just a colleague way and actually learn about each other's cultures and [building] the respect within." – First-generation participant

While the course was overwhelmingly seen as positive, participants brought up several caveats. A significant challenge identified across multiple groups was the difficulty of defining what constitutes "Canadian culture" or "Canadian values" in a fundamentally multicultural nation. This concern was raised by many participants who questioned whose perspectives would be privileged in such a course, underscoring the tension between creating a standardized cultural competence module and honouring Canada's multicultural identity.

"I think it is important, but it would be incredibly tricky because identifying things that you can teach would be an insurmountable task. Like, how do we identify which parts of the multicultural aspects do we bring over to other people?" – Second-generation participant

"According to whose values? Because in some corners of our country, I don't have reproductive rights. Right? They're compromised different values depending on where you're looking across the country... I would be careful with language like 'values'." - General population participant

Another critique across groups was skepticism about the effectiveness of an online, self-led delivery format. Several participants expressed concern that such a format would not foster genuine learning or cultural understanding, comparing it unfavourably to mandatory workplace training that people complete perfunctorily. Instead, they suggested a hybrid approach with both online elements and in-person interactions.

"I think that an online self-led course might just be like any other workplace safety where you feel like people just do just to get it over with because they need to." - Newcomer participant

"If this course is completely online, I think it'll lose the clear outcome that we are trying to achieve. It needs to be a balance between online and offline. [For online], maybe partner up with nonprofits and organizations on the ground who are already dealing with newcomers and foreign workers." - Newcomer participant

Topics suggested by participants fell into four main categories:

1. Workplace integration emerged as a priority area across all groups. Participants, especially those from first-generation groups, identified communication styles as particularly important, noting that Canadian workplace communication tends to be indirect and non-confrontational, which may confuse newcomers accustomed to more direct feedback. The team-based nature of Canadian work culture was emphasized, where collaborative success is valued over individual achievement. Other suggested topics included understanding organizational hierarchies and workplace schedules, safety protocols, religious accommodations, and worker rights and protections against exploitation.

"[Canadians] work as a team. That's the mentality of workplace individualism... if, other, like, immigrants from different countries come, that a lot of places, that's not the case. And they might think they just have to excel by themselves... And then they

try to do that. And then if they don't get feedback on it as well, they might just be outcasted.” – Second-generation participant

“The work context, what is acceptable when you arrive at work, if you have to leave, what rights you have as a worker, unions, benefits, all that, it can be extremely different or unknown to people.” - General population participant

2. Day-to-day practicalities were consistently identified as essential content, especially by newcomer participants. These included understanding banking and tax systems, finding community resources, learning money-saving practices, and understanding provincial differences in services. Language nuances beyond formal English instruction, including common slang and colloquial expressions, were also identified as areas where newcomers may benefit from guidance.

“When I first came, I was obviously a little more financially tight. And I remember someone telling me, ‘You could price match things when you go to grocery store’. That was something that I never knew was a thing. So, I think things like resources on your day-to-day life, just basic things to integrate, a new lifestyle, I think, would be helpful.” - Newcomer participant

3. Social norms and boundaries were identified by participants, specifically from general population groups, as areas where cultural differences may be significant. These included expectations around personal space, physical contact, and photography etiquette. Queuing behaviour and general politeness conventions were mentioned, though some participants felt these might be obvious. Driving etiquette was raised by multiple participants as an area where cultural differences may be significant.

4. Understanding Canada's multicultural nature itself was emphasized as an important topic, helping newcomers recognize that they will be interacting with people from many different cultural backgrounds, not a homogeneous Canadian population. Some participants suggested that topics around gender equality and Charter Rights could be valuable, though others cautioned that the relevance might depend on the audience and that content should be presented without bias.

“It is very important to properly understand a choice of changing countries, adapting to new cultures. It is important to understand that one will live in a country that already exists and has its own culture. You need to adapt.” - General population participant

Some participants, especially those from Indian newcomer communities, raised unique perspectives about regional variations within Canada, noting that cities like Vancouver and Toronto are more diverse than central provinces. They also offered the suggestion of tailoring content to specific source countries, with some participants proposing modules that would address the specific cultural context newcomers are coming from and how it relates to Canadian norms.

“Emphasizing diversity is really important because if you immigrate here, you're not just talking to Caucasian Canadians—there are so many different cultures. Canada isn't like a melting pot where you're just all identified as Canadian. You bring your own culture, but you still integrate—you share your culture, but you also take in as well.” - Newcomer participant

"I don't see this working as a one-size-fits-all module. It would be beneficial if newcomers from India, for example, have a specific module that represents their culture and society, and then shows them Canadian culture—what we do here—and the differences between the two." - First-generation participant

Appendix 1: Qualitative Research Instruments

English and French instruments are provided under separate cover.