



Press Release

Canadians Broadly Favourable Toward Immigration, But Four in Ten (40%) Say It's Making the Country Change in Ways They Don't Like

One in Four (25%) Think Canada Should Close Borders to Refugees

Toronto, Ontario, September 15, 2017 — A new Ipsos poll has revealed that Canadians have mixed opinions on immigration and refugees, but are among the most favourable worldwide. The poll, which surveyed some 17,903 residents of 25 countries, finds Canadians broadly agree that immigration is good for Canada's economy, yet many feel it is bringing unwelcome change – while the number of people who think we should close the border to refugees is on the rise.

Immigration

A majority of Canadians (80%) think that over the last five years, the number of migrants in Canada has increased (51% a lot / 30% a little). This is up 2 points since July 2016, and has increased by ten points since July 2015. Nearly two in ten Canadians (18%) think the number of migrants has stayed the same, while only 2% think it has decreased (1% a lot / 1% a little).

Canada exceeds the global average of 75% who think the pace of immigration to their country has picked up. By contrast, the United States falls below the global average: two in three Americans (64%) think there are more migrants in the US today than was the case five years ago.

Canadians are more inclined to think that immigration has generally had a positive impact (38%; 9% very / 29% fairly) than a negative impact (29%; 11% very / 18% fairly) on Canada – positivity up 2 points since 2016. Three in ten (29%) think the impact has been neither positive or negative, while 3% aren't sure. Canadians are more likely than most to see a positive impact from immigration – globally, just two in ten (21%) agree, including 35% in the United States (unchanged since 2016).

Despite this, many feel that immigration is 'causing their country to change in ways that they don't like': four in ten (40%) Canadians agree (21% strongly / 19% tend to), marking a four-point drop since last year, while just one in four (26%) disagree (19% strongly / 13% tend to). Another one in four (26%) are neutral, while 3% don't know. Canada sits just below the world average of 44% who agree immigration is bringing unwelcome change – a feeling that is stronger in Turkey (77%) than anywhere else. Nearly half of Americans (46%) agree – down six points since 2016.

Canadians are more split as to whether 'there are too many immigrants in our country', though there are slightly more who agree with this premise than disagree. A minority – about one in three (35%) – agree that Canada has "too many immigrants" (18% strongly / 17% tend to), down 6 points from July 2016, while nearly as many (33%) disagree (17% strongly / 15% tend to). Another one in three are on the fence, either saying they neither agree nor disagree (29%) or they aren't sure (3%). Canada's views on the number of immigrants are softer than at the global level, where nearly half (48%) agree. Again, Turkey has the strongest agreement, at 83%, while the United States is on par with the global average at 48% (down 3 points since July 2016).

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Seeing the Positive and the Negative

When it comes to the national economy, more Canadians think immigration creates a positive (43%) than a negative impact (25%). Nearly three in ten (28%) neither agree nor disagree, and 4% aren't sure. The four in ten who agree there is a positive impact (12% strongly / 31% tend to) are up by 1 percentage point since 2016, and are well above the 28% globally who also see a positive impact. Canadians hold similar views to Americans on this subject: four in ten Americans (42%) agree (13% strongly / 29% tend to) that immigration has had a positive impact on the US economy.

With nearly half (48%) agreeing (18% strongly / 30% tend to) that 'immigrants make Canada a more interesting place to live' (up 4 points since 2016), Canada outpaces the global average of 31% who feel the same way about immigrants in their country. Americans are also more inclined to agree (47%). Two in ten Canadians (20%) disagree with this statement, while 30% neither agree nor disagree, and 3% don't know either way.

At the same time, many feel immigration is draining public services, though these perceptions have softened slightly over the past year. In line with the global average of 49%, half (50%) of Canadians agree (23% strongly / 27% somewhat) that 'immigration has placed too much pressure on public services in Canada' (-1 point since 2016) – more than twice the 22% who disagree (9% strongly / 13% tend to). One in four (24%) choose to remain neutral, while a further 4% aren't sure. This feeling is stronger in the US, where more than half (56%) agree there is too much pressure on public services, though this view is down 4 points from last year.

Similarly, four in ten Canadians (40%) agree (17% strongly / 22% tend to) that 'immigrants in Canada have made it more difficult for people of their nationality to get jobs' (-3 pts since July 2016), on par with the global average of 41%. By contrast, only three in ten (31%) disagree (13% strongly / 18% tend to), while 26% are neutral and 3% don't know. Again, this feeling of immigration making job-hunting more difficult is slightly higher in the United States at 45% (-4 pts).

Refugees Still Welcome, But Concerns Are On the Rise

Canadians do not support a closed-door approach to refugees, although agreement with this stance has increased somewhat over the last year: one in four (25%) agree (10% very much / 15% somewhat) that 'we must close our borders to refugees entirely – we can't accept any at this time.' This leaves a majority (66%) who disagree (34% very much / 32% somewhat), while 10% aren't sure. South of the border, support for closing the borders is stronger, with four in ten Americans (40%) agreeing. Here in Canada, among those with an opinion on the question, 27% agree Canada should close its borders to refugees – up 6 points since 2016.

Concerns over security appear to be driving this perception. Half (52%) of Canadians agree (20% very much / 32% somewhat) 'there are terrorists pretending to be refugees who will enter my country to cause violence and destruction,' up 2 pts, but well below the 65% of Americans who feel the same. One in three (32%) Canadians disagree (13% very much / 19% somewhat), while 16% aren't sure. Among Canadians who do have an opinion, six in ten (62%) agree that there are terrorists pretending to be refugees – up 2 points from last year.

Opinion is split on whether refugees are really refugees: four in ten (41%) agree (14% very much / 27% somewhat) that 'most foreigners who want to get into Canada as a refugee aren't really refugees. They just want to come here for economic reasons, or to take advantage of our welfare services,' a perception that has strengthened by 4 points since last year, but is still softer than in the United States, where half (51%) agree. Slightly more Canadians (45%) disagree (18% very much / 27% somewhat), while 13% aren't sure either way. Among those with an opinion, nearly half (48%) agree that some refugees are here for purely economic reasons (+4 pts).

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Despite this, a majority of Canadians are optimistic that refugees will be able to integrate. More than half (54%) agree they're 'confident that most refugees who come to Canada will successfully integrate into their new society,' compared to 48% of Americans who feel the same about refugees in their country. In Canada, this leaves one in three (36%) who disagree (13% very much / 23% somewhat), and 10% who don't know. Six in ten (60%) Canadians with an opinion on the subject agree that most refugees will be able to integrate into Canadian society (+1 pt).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between June 24 and July 8, 2017. In total, 17,903 interviews were conducted among adults aged 18-64 in Canada and the US, and adults aged 16-64 in all other countries. The survey was conducted in 25 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United States, Serbia, Peru, and New Zealand. The sample was 100+ in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the United States of America. In all other countries, the sample was 500+. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval, with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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