

Immigration and Refugee Numbers: What's 'Up'?

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Introduction

The 2023-2025 Federal Government Immigration Levels Plan, set its immigration target for 2023 at 465,000 new permanent residents. The government proposes admitting 485,000 new permanent residents in 2024 and another 500,000 in 2025. Already for 2023 the country is on track to exceed 500 000 new permanent residents.

At the time the plans were announced (<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/11/an-immigration-plan-to-grow-the-economy.html>) in November 2022 public opinion as assessed by IRCC showed a fair degree of openness to immigration increases especially as the country came of the pandemic. But opinion on increased immigration have shifted considerably into negative territory revealed in a September 25-29 survey conducted by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies via web panel. The detailed survey also examines the extent to which Canadians are aware of actual numbers of immigrants and refugees that reside in Canada overall and those admitted on an annual basis. Finally we examine the extent to which housing challenges are contributing to uneasiness about the numbers of immigrants admitted yearly.

The Leger survey was conducted during the week of September 25th, 2023 for the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute via web panel with 1502 Canadians. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1502 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

There has been an unprecedented increase over the course of the year in the extent to which Canadians feel that there are too many refugees coming to Canada

Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of refugees coming to Canada?	September 2023 (Leger-ACS)	January-March 2023 (IRCC-Phoenix SPI survey)
Too many	46%	21%
About the right number	33%	43%
Too few	6%	24%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	15%	12%
NET	100%	100%

As regards numbers of immigrants there are few differences across gender and age in the extent to which Canadians feel that there are too many immigrants with nearly one in two holding this view

Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?

September 25th, 2023	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Too many	49%	49%	50%	46%	49%	52%
About the right number	35%	37%	33%	34%	37%	34%
Too few	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	10%	8%	12%	14%	10%	8%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

As regards the numbers of refugees there is relatively close proximity in the extent to which Canadians feel that there are too many. Only those Canadians under 35 are somewhat less likely than others to feel that there are too many refugees. Persons born outside of Canada are also a bit less likely than the national average to feel that way

ACS –LEGER	Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of refugees coming to Canada?							
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Born in Canada	Born outside of Canada
September 25 th , 2023								
Too many	46%	45%	47%	36%	49%	49%	47%	41%
About the right number	33%	37%	30%	36%	32%	33%	34%	32%
Too few	6%	6%	5%	5%	4%	7%	6%	4%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	15%	12%	18%	22%	15%	12%	13%	24%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The majority of residents of the GTA think that there are too many immigrants as well as too many refugees coming to Canada. Montrealers less likely to feel there are too many while Vancouver is far more likely to feel that there are too many immigrants than there are too many refugees

September 25 th , 2023	Toronto		Montreal		Vancouver	
	Immigrants	Refugees	Immigrants	Refugees	Immigrants	Refugees
Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of.....						
Too many	57%	55%	41%	40%	49%	39%
About the right number	29%	26%	40%	37%	39%	44%
Too few	3%	4%	7%	7%	6%	7%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	11%	17%	12%	16%	6%	10%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Most Canadians do not know how many immigrants there are in the country

How many immigrants do you think there are in Canada (i.e., persons born outside of Canada)?	Total
Between 7.5 and 10 million	26%
Between 5 and 7.5 million	26%
(NET) LESS THAN 5 MILLIONS (3,4)	24%
Between 2.5 and 5 million	19%
Less than 2.5 million	5%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	24%
NET	100%

Most Canadians do not know how many immigrants come to Canada per year

How many immigrants do you think Canada admits to the country per year?	Total
500,000 or more	27%
Between 400,000 and 500,000	23%
Between 300,000 and 400,000	18%
Below 300,000	11%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	21%
NET	100%

Most Canadians do not know how many refugees currently reside in the country

How many refugees do you think there are in Canada (i.e., persons born outside of Canada who were forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disasters)?	
Column %	Total
More than one million	19%
Between 750,000 and one million	18%
Between 500,000 and 750,000	18%
Less than 500,000	18%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	27%
NET	100%

Most Canadians do not know how many refugees are admitted to Canada each year

How many refugees do you think Canada admits to the country per year?
(ACS-LEGER, September 25th, 2023)

500,000 or more	13%
Between 250,000 and 500,000	24%
Between 50,000 and 250,000	27%
Less than 50,000	10%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	26%

Canadians who feel that there are too many immigrants have a better idea of how many immigrants Canada admits per year

How many immigrants do you think Canada admits to the country per year?	Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?		
	Too many	About the right number	Too few
500,000 or more	38.2%	17.5%	17.1%
Between 400,000 and 500,000	23.4%	28.4%	12.2%
Between 300,000 and 400,000	14.7%	21.7%	31.7%
Below 300,000	8.7%	13.3%	20.7%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	15.0%	19.0%	18.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Eight in ten Canadians that think there too many immigrants think that there are too many refugees

Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of refugees coming to Canada?	Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?		
	Too many	About the right number	Too few
Too many	80.2%	14.1%	4.9%
About the right number	12.6%	68.4%	33.3%
Too few	0.8%	5.9%	54.3%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	6.4%	11.6%	7.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Canadians believe that housing affordability followed by rising numbers of immigrants are main factors contributing to current housing crisis

According to you, what are the top three reasons for the current housing crisis in Canada?	Total
Housing affordability (housing is too expensive)	34%
Rising immigration numbers in Canada	15%
Foreign buyers	9%
Housing availability (there is currently not enough housing on the market)	9%
Population growth	8%
Low supply of new homes (not enough homes are being built)	8%
Rising costs of construction	7%
A decrease in rental units to make way for condos	5%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	3%
Other (please specify):	2%
Total	

Amongst those who feel that there are too many immigrants most cite affordability as the main factor in the housing crisis but rising numbers of immigrants not far behind

According to you, what is the top reason for the current housing crisis in Canada	Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?		
	Too many	About the right number	Too few
Housing affordability	31.0%	34.7%	35.8%
Rising Immigration	25.5%	4.9%	6.1%
Housing availability (there is currently not enough housing on the market) -	7.4%	11.4%	8.6%