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Immigration

Canadians increasingly divided on immigration, government research shows

By **Quinn Patrick, True North Wire** · July 31, 2024

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Canadians are becoming increasingly divided on the federal government's current immigration targets, with over a third now saying we're taking in "too many" people from other countries.

The Department of Immigration requested polling agency Ipsos conduct a national survey on its current immigration quotas.

"Many participants felt that the targets set for the next three years, which were presented to them, were too high," reads the survey. "They could not fathom how cities, that are already receiving high volumes of immigrants and where infrastructure is already under great strain, could accommodate the proposed targets."

The survey cost $295,428 and included 3,000 people canvassed with two surveys and 14 focus groups.

When asked if they thought that immigration has a positive effect on their city or town, just over half, 55% agreed, while 22% said the effect has been negative.

Asked if immigration had a net "negative effect" on their province, 41% of Ontarians surveyed said yes, while a third of Prince Edward Islanders, 33%, and 27% of Albertans saw immigration as a net negative.

Only 48% of respondents felt that the current targets were "about the right number," while a little over a third, 35%, said it was 'too many.'

Another small cohort of 12% said that "too few" immigrants are coming to Canada.

closely by Nova Scotia and Ontario at 51% and 49%, respectively.

On the national level, 63% said immigration has a positive effect and 23% said it's negative.

This shows the erosion of a long-held immigration consensus in Canada, one expert says.

"For the first time in recent history, support for immigration has eroded steadily amongst the public," immigration lawyer Sergio Karas told True North.

"There are a multiplicity of reasons why this is happening. Still, the main issues are the cost of living, housing, competition for good jobs, and the general perception that the recent cohorts of immigrants do not contribute to the economy in the same way that previous generations have."

The immigration department said the "broad sentiment" indicates support for immigration generally but with the caveat of "not right now" or "how are

However, "reactions to prioritizing those with business skills were more mixed."

On the issue of family and immigration, respondents generally agreed on "setting a higher target for sponsoring spouses and partners, who are likely healthier parents and grandparents over "frailer ones."

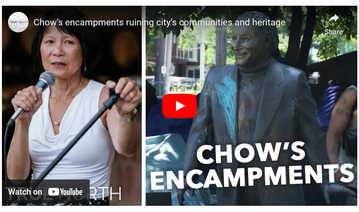
"There is also resentment, especially from immigrants who have been in Canada for many years, that the current crop of newcomers is far more interested in receiving government benefits, and that their language and work skills are not up to par," said Karas. "This seems to be especially acute about the large number of refugees that Canada has admitted."

According to the department's data, few participants believed that Canada was doing the "right thing" by providing asylum to large numbers of refugees.

While some respondents recognized the "need to assist," they were also concerned about Canada's ability to "realistically support population growth given the current strains on public infrastructure."

Karas said that a further reason for Canadians' shifting opinion of immigration is the notion that the government is "admitting anyone" without properly vetting them for their skills, language ability and security.

public being obligated to adapt to them. Current policies of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion have exacerbated that perception as organizations show a preference for EDI hires rather than using a merit system."



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