

What underlies concern over Canada's immigration numbers?

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Introduction

The 2023-2025 Government of Canada 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. For 2023 the country exceeded 500 000 new permanent residents.

Canadian opinion on increased immigration has evolved considerably since January 2023 as it jumped from some one in five Canadians feeling there were too many immigrants coming to Canada to one in two Canadians saying there were too many immigrants by February 2024. That which follows examines why Canadians feel there are too many immigrants and confirms that housing is the issue that most preoccupies Canadians who feel there are too many newcomers as well other matters related to the perceived state of the economy. On the other hand those who feel that there are not enough newcomers also cite economic reasons for why the current levels of immigration are insufficient.

The survey was conducted via web panel for the Metropolis Institute and the Association for Canadian Studies by the firm Leger Marketing over the period February 23-26, 2024 with a sample of 1590 Canadians. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1590 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20

One out of two Canadians think that there are too many immigrants coming to Canada

Do you feel that there are too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?	February 2024 (Leger-ACS)	September 2023 (Leger-ACS)	January-March 2023 (IRCC-Phoenix SPI survey)
Too many	50%	49%	21%
About the right number	37%	35%	43%
Too few	7%	5%	24%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	6%	10%	12%
NET	100%	100%	100%

Half of the population believes that there are too many immigrants coming to Canada but less than one-third believe that there are too many in their neighborhood

Canada - Do you think that there are too many immigrants, about the right number or not enough immigrants in...?	Canada	Province	Your City or Town	Your Neighborhood
Too many	50%	52%	40%	31%
About the right amount number	37%	34%	42%	48%
Not enough	7%	7%	11%	13%
I prefer not to answer	6%	7%	7%	8%

Lower income Canadians are more likely to be concerned about the number of immigrants coming to Canada

Canada - Do you think that there are too many immigrants, about the right number or not enough immigrants in...?	<40k	40-59k	60-79k	80-99k	100k+
Too many	57%	52%	49%	48%	46%
About the right amount number	33%	35%	39%	39%	39%
Not enough	5%	6%	6%	8%	10%
I prefer not to answer	4%	7%	6%	6%	5%

Positive Opinion about type of migrant is little affected by how you feel about the number of entrants

Do you have a very positive view of the following?	Canada – Do you think that there are too many immigrants, about the right number or not enough immigrants in...?		
	Too many	About the right amount number	Not enough
Refugees	38.9%	80.4%	89.1%
Immigrants	38.8%	86.0%	94.6%

Those who feel that there are too many immigrants want more skilled workers and fewer refugees while those who feel the numbers are about right favor family reunification more than do others

Rank in order of importance which group of migrants Canada should prioritize for entry into the country	Do you think that there are too many immigrants, about the right number or not enough immigrants in...?		
	Too many	About the right amount number	Not enough
Temporary workers	8.8%	6.0%	8.6%
Intl Students	9.7%	7.6%	9.7%
Family Members	17.9%	30.4%	21.5%
Refugees and asylum seekers	9.6%	21.6%	24.3%
Skilled workers-permanent residents	58.6%	37.9%	38.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Amongst those Canadians who feel that there are too many immigrants most are concerned about the housing situation followed by perceived drain on services

Please tell us in one sentence why you think there are too many immigrants in Canada ?

The housing crisis / shortage of housing	39%
Canadians not getting enough support/services / they are draining the system	21%
They are taking jobs from Canadians / shortage of jobs	18%
The government/Trudeau policy has allowed it / immigration is not limited/controlled enough	14%
It is costing the government/taxpayers too much / government subsidizing them	12%
They are adding a burden to the health care system / health care system is collapsing	10%
Immigration is changing our demographic composition (social fabric) / Canadians became a minority	10%
The infrastructure of Canada cannot handle it / cannot accommodate them (unspecified)	9%
They have different ideas/value / they don't adhere to culture/language	8%
Too crowded cities / overpopulation	7%
It is a fact / it is true / it obvious	6%
They are adding a burden to educational system (including daycares)	6%
Higher cost of living / inflation	6%
Don't know / refusal	4%
They are bringing criminals to Canada / some immigrant are fraudulent / illegal ones	4%
Economic problems / recession	3%
They are responsible of low wages / no good paying jobs are available	2%
They are adding a burden to the traffic/public transportation	2%
They are bringing unqualified workers / we should bring/keep qualified one	2%
Other	2%

Amongst those who feel that there are not enough immigrants most feel that they're need to fill job vacancies and to address demographic challenges

Please tell us in one sentence why you think there are not enough immigrants in Canada ?	
We need more immigrants to fill jobs vacancies	37%
We need more immigrants to prevent population decline / to compensate aging population	27%
We need more immigrant to sustain our economy / to have more tax-payers	18%
We have the land/resources to accommodate more immigrant	15%
We need more diversity / they enrich our culture	13%
They contribute to our society / they add value to our country	12%
Don't know / refusal	10%
We need qualified/skilled workers	7%
The country is built on immigration / no need for quotas	7%
Other	6%
They come to have a better quality of life / economic immigration	6%
We should be able to bring our family members	3%
They come to Canada to live in a safer place / to escape war	1%

As regards which group of migrants should be prioritized for entry, most Canadians feel it is skilled workers and that is especially so for British Columbians and Quebecers. Gender differences in priorities are also noteworthy

Rank in order of importance which group of migrants Canada should be prioritized for entry into the country	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Atl.	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
Temporary workers	7%	8%	7%	7%	8%	7%	9%	8%	7%	8%	9%	6%
International students	8%	10%	6%	13%	8%	5%	7%	10%	7%	3%	11%	9%
Family members/Family Reunification	23%	18%	27%	24%	26%	20%	29%	20%	24%	25%	26%	17%
Refugees and asylum seekers	15%	11%	18%	15%	16%	13%	13%	12%	17%	17%	15%	13%
Skilled workers-permanent residents	47%	53%	42%	41%	41%	56%	41%	50%	46%	48%	39%	54%

Not much difference between white and non-white when it comes to the numbers of immigrants being admitted into the country

	Non-white	White
Do you think that there are too many immigrants, about the right number or not enough		
Too many	46.5%	50.5%
About the right amount number	36.6%	36.8%
Not enough	7.6%	6.8%
I prefer not to answer	9.2%	5.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Residents of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia most likely to think that there are too many immigrants with Quebecers least likely to think so

	Canada Do you think that there are too many immigrants, about the right number or not enough immigrants in...?		
	Too many	About the right amount number	Not enough
British Columbia	52.7%	35.1%	9.0%
Alberta	50.0%	34.3%	7.3%
Saskatchewan	53.2%	31.9%	8.5%
Manitoba	45.5%	41.8%	9.1%
Ontario	52.8%	34.4%	5.0%
Quebec	43.6%	41.4%	7.9%
New Brunswick	58.8%	35.3%	5.9%
Nova Scotia	55.8%	37.2%	7.0%
Total	49.7%	36.8%	7.0%

Canada: How Serious an Issue is Return Migration?



Introduction

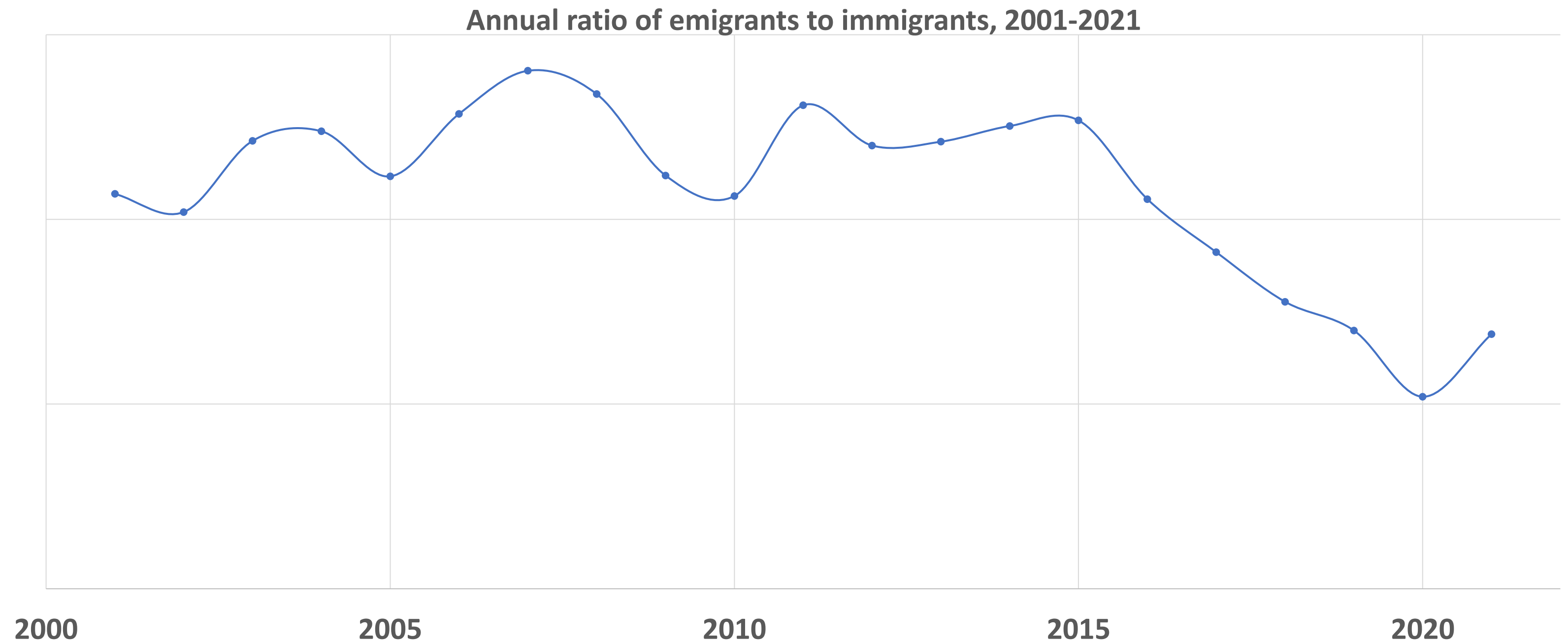
A fall 2023 report from the [Institute for Canadian Citizenship](#) (ICC), *The Leaky Bucket*, finds that growing numbers of immigrants to Canada are deciding to leave rather than stay. [The report](#), produced for the ICC by the [Conference Board of Canada](#), finds onward migration, immigrants leaving Canada, has been increasing slowly for decades, but suddenly surged in 2017 and 2019 — the most recent period of available data. The report also finds the risk of onward migration is particularly high between years four and seven following arrival in Canada.

The results of the study raised concern about the share of migrants leaving the country. Yet for many it seemed counterintuitive to believe that return migration was making so significant an impact on net migration and population given reports of record population growth in the country in recent years.

On February 2 2024 a report issued by Statistics Canada demonstrated that historically the onward migration rate has averaged at 0.9% or less yearly at a time when annual immigration counts remained more or less similar between 2001 and 2014. Since then Statscan notes that the onward migration rate has been steadily increasing in Canada (apart from a slight dip in 2017 and COVID year 2020), with a dramatic rise in 2021 (up by 19% compared to 2019). Statscan concludes by pointing out that with such increasing immigration trends, there are bound to be fluctuations in the onward migration rate.

However the overall data examining net migration—the difference between Canadians (immigrant and non-immigrant) versus immigrants coming to Canada shows a very favourable outcome for Canada across the period 2015 -2020 with net losses dropping well below 20%. It's evident that in the year following the pandemic we witnessed a spike in external migration. Still the overall results raise questions about whether the issue of return migration represents a significant departure from previous trending.

As reflected below rate of net migration dropped between 2015 and 2020 as further seen in the next table



Canada's net migration rate, the percentage of Canadians moving abroad (immigrants and non-immigrants) is in steady decline

Year	Total immigrants	Total emigrants	NET MIGRATION
2001	250638	53588	197050
2002	229049	46721	182328
2003	221349	53684	167665
2004	235824	58426	177398
2005	262240	58561	203679
2006	251644	64707	186937
2007	236754	66411	170343
2008	247247	66234	181013
2009	252177	56427	195750
2010	280682	59688	220994
2011	248733	65125	183608
2012	257809	61873	195936
2013	259038	62709	196329
2014	260296	65222	195074
2015	271857	68945	202912
2016	296405	62532	233873
2017	286490	52214	234276
2018	321049	49888	271161
2019	341192	47710	293482
2020	184586	19189	165397
2021	405750	55935	349815

Who's returning 'home'?

According to Statistics Canada, immigrants born in Taiwan, the United States, France, Hong Kong or Lebanon and immigrants admitted in the investor and entrepreneur categories are more likely to emigrate. More than 25% of immigrants born in Taiwan, the United States, France, Hong Kong or Lebanon emigrated within 20 years of admission. As Statistics Canada points out, these countries can continue to be attractive to their nationals because of a higher standard of living or because settling in Canada was part of a larger migration strategy.

Furthermore, over 40% of immigrants admitted in the investor category and 30% of those admitted in the entrepreneur category emigrated within 20 years of admission. These categories include wealthy immigrants who tend to be highly mobile and who may—even when they are admitted—intend to leave Canada in the future.