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Refugee Numbers, Asylum Claims in Canada in near free fall and trust of refugees remains low

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November, 2025



Introduction

Canada's federal government immigration plan for 2026–2028 looks to stabilize permanent resident admissions and curb the numbers of temporary residents that were seen as addressing labor shortages. The plan favors economic immigration while preserving a stable level for family reunification and a targeted allocation for refugees and protected persons (13%), deemed necessary to meet Canada's humanitarian commitments. For the first 8 months of 2025 the percentage of refugees in the overall migration intake was at 12.5% compared with 15% for the first 8 months of 2024. As the percentage of refugees admitted declined, the numbers of asylum claimants has gone into a veritable free fall (see slide 6).

As the shift is occurring, the Canadian public exhibits low trust in refugees when compared with economic immigrants and international students. A Leger survey for the Association for Canadian Studies reveals that more Canadians say they distrust rather than trust refugees. Trust of refugees is especially low amongst immigrants.

The survey was conducted by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies with 1537 respondents in Canada over the period October 24-26, 2025. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1537 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

January 1 to August 31	First 8 months of the year	Economic	Sponsored family	Refugee	Total	
Canada - Total	2024	210975	68935	51260	343030	
	2025	171730	63300	34560	276850	
Numbers Decline	24-25	39 245	5 635	16 700	66 180	
Percentage Decline	24-25	-18.6	-8.1	-32.7		
Newfoundland and Labrador	2024	3395	200	535	4145	-655
	2025	2945	195	320	3490	
Prince Edward Island	2024	3040	125	80	3270	-1620
	2025	1450	140	60	1650	
Nova Scotia	2024	9525	775	820	11195	-4525
	2025	5275	765	560	6670	
New Brunswick	2024	10495	500	655	11755	-4115
	2025	6700	515	390	7640	
Quebec	2024	28955	7750	5310	42505	-1430
	2025	30625	6035	3955	41075	
Ontario	2024	73440	33550	26200	140730	-20390
	2025	67970	31200	16805	120340	
Ontario percentage decrease		-7.5%	-7%	36.1%		
Manitoba	2024	13845	2295	1910	18390	-5125
	2025	9385	2250	1385	13265	
Saskatchewan	2024	14920	1420	1020	17435	-7000
	2025	8205	1430	705	10435	
Alberta	2024	24025	10670	9830	46195	-11590
	2025	16060	10435	6980	34605	
British Columbia	2024	28430	11500	4875	46320	-9560
	2025	22390	10155	3390	36760	

Massive decline in Airport Asylum Claimants at the Airport and inland over first 8 months of 2025 compared with same in 2024 but land border claims rise

	Asylum Claimants by Claim Office Type,, January- August 2024, complete year 2024 and January-August 2025			
	January-August 2024	2024 Total	January to August 2025	Decrease January – August 2024 - 2025
Airport - Total	33, 455	42,590	8,075	-76%
Border - Total	10,545	15,425	17,120	62%
Inland - Total	74,780	113,790	54,825	-27%
Other Offices	10	30	5	
Total	118 785	171,835	80,030	-33%

Measures taken by the Federal Government have contributed to big drop in asylum claimants

Canada has implemented specific measures that have resulted in sharp declines in asylum claims at airports. In February 2024, Canada reimposed a partial visa requirement for Mexican nationals due to a significant rise in unfounded asylum claims. This measure caused asylum claims by Mexican nationals at Canadian airports to fall by over 97% between February and March 2024. Canada heightened scrutiny of Temporary Resident Visa (TRV) applications from countries with high rates of "asylum system abuse" which led to a drop in asylum claims from TRV holders.

Over the period Jan to August 2024 to Jan to August 2025 Canada has seen tremendous drops in asylum claims from nearly all countries except Haiti

Asylum Claimants - Total - change from 2024 to 2025 (Jan-Aug)		
Country	Difference	% change
India	-17720	-59%
Bangladesh	-12310	-82%
Nigeria	-7640	-63%
Sri Lanka	-7050	-79%
Haiti	6840	139%
Mexico	-5100	-61%
Ghana	-4265	-68%
Pakistan	-2720	-53%
Colombia	-2130	-54%
Iran	-1645	-26%

Asylum Claimants - Airport - change from 2024 to 2025 (Jan-Aug)		
Country	Difference	% change
India	-11820	-87%
Nigeria	-3105	-76%
Bangladesh	-2775	-93%
Ghana	-2720	-93%
Mexico	-2395	-94%
Sri Lanka	-1040	-93%
Kenya	-905	-92%
Uganda	-885	-88%
Algeria	-420	-57%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	-420	-53%

Asylum Claimants - Border - change from 2024 to 2025 (Jan-Aug)		
Country	Difference	% change
Haiti	6840	139%
Colombia	-1070	-65%
India	-450	-81%
Turkey	-405	-83%
Afghanistan	-335	-74%
Pakistan	-230	-32%
Republic of Chad	-200	-87%
Republic of Guinea	-200	-98%
Bangladesh	-180	-95%
Senegal	-85	-94%

Asylum Claimants - Inland - change from 2024 to 2025 (Jan-Aug)		
Country	Difference	% change
Bangladesh	-9355	-79%
Sri Lanka	-5930	-77%
India	-5435	-35%
Nigeria	-4510	-56%
Mexico	-2655	-47%
Pakistan	-2245	-56%
Iran	-1595	-26%
Ghana	-1540	-46%
Lebanon	-1150	-79%
Turkey	-1125	-59%

More Canadians distrust rather than trust refugees with men more likely than women to say so though there is high percentage saying they don't know amongst the latter

Refugees - When it comes to the following do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer	Total	Male	Female	Between 18 and 24	Between n 25 and 34	Between n 35 and 44	Between n 45 and 54	Between n 55 and 64	65+
NET TRUST	36%	35%	37%	41%	37%	36%	33%	33%	39%
Very much trust	5%	5%	4%	5%	6%	4%	3%	4%	5%
Somewhat trust	32%	30%	33%	35%	31%	32%	30%	29%	34%
NET DISTRUST	43%	49%	36%	43%	43%	38%	46%	47%	39%
Somewhat distrust	26%	30%	23%	28%	25%	22%	28%	31%	25%
Very much distrust	16%	20%	13%	15%	18%	16%	18%	17%	14%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	21%	15%	27%	16%	20%	26%	21%	19%	22%

Distrust of refugees is highest in Ontario and the Prairies Trust of immigrants is highest on the East and West coast of the country and trust of international students is highest in Atlantic Canada and Alberta

Net Trust	Total	Atl.	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
Immigrants -	46%	53%	41%	45%	37%	50%	49%
Refugees	36%	42%	38%	33%	31%	42%	37%
International/foreign students	44%	52%	43%	43%	37%	50%	43%

Distrust of refugees is highest amongst Immigrants and non-white respondents and trust of international students is lowest amongst Canadians of South Asian origin

Net Trust	Total	Immigrant	Non-immigrant	White	Not White	South Asian	Chinese
Immigrants -	46%	47%	45%	46%	44%	53%	55%
Refugees	36%	28%	38%	39%	26%	30%	32%
International/foreign students	44%	44%	45%	45%	42%	39%	47%

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