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|  |  **Qualitative Research On Immigration –Summer 2016** |  |

 **Report on Qualitative Findings: Executive Summary**

Submitted to

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

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*Ce sommaire exécutif est aussi disponible en français.*

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# Executive Summary

Leger is pleased to present Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) with this report on findings from a series of focus groups on Immigration in Canada. This report was prepared by Leger who was contracted by IRCC (contract number B8815-170100/001/CY awarded June 21, 2016).

## Background and Objectives

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is currently engaged in planning immigration levels and Canada’s immigration priorities. The Department identified a need for qualitative (focus group) research, in order to assess the Canadian public’s views on immigration to Canada.

The main objective of the research is to provide IRCC with insights on issues which may include the following:

* Views on Canada as a country of immigration and the values and goals Canada should pursue;
* Views on Canada as a settlement country;
* Immigration levels and how potential changes in levels should impact immigration categories;
* Views/expectation of the Government of Canada; and
* Communication needs and preferences.

Public attitudes toward immigration levels are of key importance to CIC’s policies and programs. The information gained through this public opinion research will be shared throughout the Department. The research was designed to assist it when establishing priorities, developing policies and communications products and strategies, and planning programs and services.

## 1.2 Methodology

## Methodology

A total of ten (10) in-person focus groups were held in five (5) different locations. Two separate groups were conducted in each location, for a total of 10 groups. One group was among members of the general population and the other group among recent immigrants, with the exception of Winnipeg where sessions were held with indigenous peoples.

Twelve (12) participants were recruited for each group in anticipation that in the event of last minute cancellations there would be 8 to 10 individuals attending in each group. Each group lasted approximately 2 hours.

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| **City** | **Composition** | **Language** | **Recruited** | **Show ups** | **Participated** | **Tentative Date** |
| Toronto, ON | Gen PopImmigrant | English | 24 | 23 | 20 | July 11, 2016 |
| Winnipeg, MB | Indigenous Peoples | English | 24 | 23 | 20 | July 13, 2016 |
| Vancouver, BC | Gen PopImmigrant | English | 24 | 24 | 20 | August 16, 2016 |
| Montreal, QC | Gen PopImmigrant | French | 24 | 23 | 20 | August 4, 2016 |
| London, ON | Gen PopImmigrant | English | 24 | 22 | 19 | August 18,2016 |
| **Total** |  |  | **120** | **115** | **99** |  |

General Population Groups: More specifically, the general public group included a good representative mix of:

* Gender
* Age
* Residency status
* Income
* Education

Immigrant Groups: The groups among recent immigrants to Canada included an appropriate mix of:

* Newcomers (less than 5 years) \* Minimum of 5 participants
* Recent immigration (5 to 15 years)
* Ethnocultural groups (varied by location according to immigration patterns)

**Aboriginal Groups: Winnipeg**

In Winnipeg, **both** sessions were composed of Indigenous peoples, with one group held with women and the other with men.

At the start of each group, Leger provided participants with details specific to the conduct of the groups ahead of time. Such details included the audio/video taping of the discussion, the presence and purpose of the one-way mirror, basic rules about privacy and confidentiality, including the fact that tapes will be destroyed one year after completion of the project, and that participation is entirely voluntary. As well, participants were told at the time of recruitment, as well as at the start of each session, that the groups were conducted on behalf of the Government of Canada. In Montreal, where the groups were held in French, simultaneous translation to English was provided. A cash incentive of $125 was given to each participant.

## 1.3 Overview of Qualitative Findings

**Positive Perspective toward Immigration**

* Overall, the mood of the country was very positive about immigration and most participants believed that immigration is at the core of our country’s narrative.
* Participants believe Canada has a long history of openness to immigration and believe that diversity and respect for differences are important Canadian values.
* In fact, participants take pride and state that Canada needs to remain a welcoming and accepting country for immigrants.

**Canada and Immigration**

* Our first exercise asked participants to pick three words from a list of over twenty-five (half negative, half positive words) randomly distributed on a page.
* The words ‘welcoming’, ‘fair’, ‘diversity’, and ‘compassionate’ were the most often mentioned positive words. Regardless of the target group present at the sessions, the general outlook on immigration remained positive, certainly at the level of values and guiding principles.
* While some, mostly in the recent immigrant groups, did choose negative words such as complicated and slow, these were generally associated with the immigration process.
* When the word “overwhelmed” was used it was associated with system capacity as well as the international interest in immigrating to Canada.

**Benefits of Immigration**

* While fairly long lists of benefits were generated by participants, the common thread remained the contribution of immigration to the national economy.
* Almost all of the participants believed that immigration is part essential to Canada (i.e. economic benefits, population growth), obligatory (i.e.: compassionate/responsible) and contributory (i.e.: diversity, innovation, cultural enrichment).
* Participants spontaneously associated the need for immigration in Canada to fill the demands of our job market, but also as a means of creating economic growth.
* Other perceived benefits mentioned were immigration’s contribution to our declining population, cultural enrichment and the influx of newer or fresher ideas.
* The newcomer focus groups particularly insisted on the need for economic immigrants in Canada.

**Challenges and Issues**

* While the tone always remained positive across the five cities visited, some issues and challenges were voiced by both the general public and recent immigrants.
* These concerns or issues tended to be mentioned more as question marks as opposed to critiques or a disapproval of immigration.
* While both positive and negative views were voiced, this should not be interpreted to mean that some participants were favorable and others unfavorable to immigration to Canada.
* The “It is a good thing … but (…)” tended to be the most common way Canadians expressed their views.
* It should be noted that very few participants cited security as an immigration issue or concern.

The concerns most often voiced by participants were:

1) Integration issues (mostly tied to linguistic integration, and economic integration often referred to as “finding that first job”);

2) The capacity of our job market to supply enough quality employment opportunities to newcomers;

3) Our capacity to properly support and adequately educate newcomers on our laws, and “general way of doing things”, allowing newcomers to smoothly “fit in” (an individual responsibility of members of the host society directly in contact with newcomers);

4) Foreign credential recognition and the burden on professionals to “regain” their right to work in their field; and

5) System capacity issues (vetting, selection, welcoming, and proper follow ups and measurement of outcomes).

**Changing Immigration Levels and Prioritizing Immigration Categories**

**Immigration Levels**

* When asked about immigration levels, very few participants were familiar with the annual immigration figure for Canada and expressed mixed views on that current figure albeit with a common caveat that they didn’t feel that they could judge the immigration figure.
* When the suggestion was made that this figure could grow in the near future, participants who had been more vocal on the economic necessity of immigration, tended to be more supportive.
* In all locations, participants tended to trust that those making decisions regarding the appropriate levels of immigration would know what the right level should be (would have the right social and economic indicators).
* There were several comments regarding the increase in levels, and many also tied this objective with the necessity to ‘better’ disperse immigration across all regions (outside Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal).
* The concept of immigration levels reaching 1% of the total population did not generate any significant ‘pushback’ from Canadians. In actual fact, except maybe for Montreal, using the 1% figure helped Canadians make sense of the number and, for many, made it more acceptable.

**Immigration Categories**

* On the issue of immigration categories, Canadians felt the country should adopt a balanced approach; and that an increase in one category of immigrants should not negatively impact other categories.
* When looking at levels and categories, participants tended to believe that Canada should strive to be very competitive in attracting talent (economic immigration), while maintaining an enviable reputation globally for its humanitarian efforts.
* More would prioritize economic immigrants, while some also believed we should increase the number of refugees into the country.
* In all five cities, participants tended to support an overall increase in immigration levels (derived mainly from an increase in economic immigrants), if it did not compromise other immigration categories such as refugees or family reunification.
* It should be noted that immigrant groups in all cities would like to see a reduction in the backlog or an increase in levels in the family reunification category.

**Information Needs of Canadians and Basis of Potential Support for Increased Immigration Levels**

* Participants stated that, while they may be open to increased immigration, that they needed additional context which would enable them to understand current and proposed immigration levels (i.e.: Labour market needs and the immigration plan)

**Regional Differences**

* It should be noted that if the report does not directly name a region or directly reports on a noticeable difference between locations, the reader should consider that no significant regional differences were apparent. As such, much of this report will be from a national perspective, as general outlook on immigration, perspectives on changing immigration levels and concerns regarding immigration to Canada were largely the same in all five locations.
* While Vancouver sessions spent more time on economic integration of newcomers and ‘system-capacity’ issues (can our hospitals, schools and social services handle the new demand), Toronto showed more interest in measurement of immigration outcomes (Is Canada doing a good job of ensuring immigrants succeed?), Montreal focused more on selection criteria, Winnipeg spoke about housing and community services, and London spent more time on local job market issues. While these differences do exist, the general conclusions presented here apply to all locations visited.

## 1.4 Note on Interpretation of Research Findings

The views and observations expressed in this document do not reflect those of IRCC. This report was compiled by Leger, based on the research conducted specifically for this project. The analysis presented represents what Leger believes were the most salient points during the focus group sessions. All words or sentences in quotation marks are actual verbatim comments from participants. As such, these quotes do not reflect the views of IRCC. They were selected by Leger for their capacity to directly convey the views and opinions of participants, in their own words.

Findings from this qualitative research (i.e. focus groups) should be considered directional only and results should not be projected as representative of the entire Canadian population. It is intended to provide deeper insight into the underlying reasons for opinions or lack thereof.

## 1.5 Political Neutrality Statement and Contact Information

Leger certifies that the final deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada’s political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research.

Additional information

Supplier name: Leger

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To obtain more information on this study, please email por-rop@cic.gc.ca .