



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

# 2021-22 IRCC Annual Tracking Qualitative Research

## Final report

### Prepared for: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Supplier Name: Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

Contract Number: B8815-220340/001/CY

Contract Value: \$115,347.00 (including HST)

Award Date: 2022-01-24

Delivery Date: 2022-03-31

Registration Number: POR 111-21

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**Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.**

## Copyright

This public opinion research report presents the results of a series of 16 online focus groups conducted by Quorus Consulting Group Inc. on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada between February 22 and March 7, 2022.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : **Étude de suivi annuelle 2021-2022 d'IRCC recherche qualitative.**

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**Catalogue Number:** Ci4-183/2-2022E-PDF

**International Standard Book Number (ISBN):** 978-0-660-44951-7

**Related publications (registration number: POR 111-21):**

Catalogue Number: Ci4-183/2-2022F-PDF (Final Report, French)

ISBN: 978-0-660-44952-4

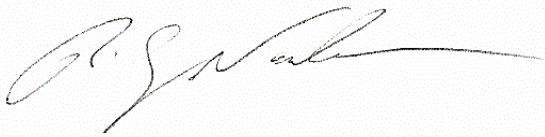
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Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Nadeau", is written over a light gray, textured rectangular background.

Rick Nadeau, President  
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

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## Executive summary

### Background and study objectives

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) conducts an ongoing research program to help the Department develop a better understanding of Canadian attitudes toward the issues surrounding citizenship and immigration.

The research objectives of this study included assessing, in the context of COVID-19, Canadians' perceptions of:

- immigration levels;
- the impact of immigration on Canada;
- Canada's immigration system and priorities; and
- the settlement and integration of newcomers.

By gauging and exploring Canadian attitudes about key elements of the department's mandate, this research supported IRCC in:

- ensuring high quality policy options, program design and advice;
- encouraging and effectively managing citizen-focused services;
- managing organizational and strategic risks proactively; and
- gathering and using relevant information on program results.

The value of this contract, including HST, is \$115,347.00.

### Methodology

This research project included 16 two-hour online focus groups that Quorus completed between February 22 and March 7, 2022. Participants were recruited from across the country and from both urban areas and smaller communities, including Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) communities; besides general population groups (Canadian adults 18+), target audiences consisted of newcomers to Canada who arrived since 2011 and Indigenous Peoples. Thirteen groups were conducted in English and three in French. A total of 111 people participated.

### Qualitative Research Disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate "statistics" but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and

to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used, and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.

Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

## Summary of research findings

### Economic recovery and the role of immigration

- While many brought up social challenges such as the “divide” they are feeling in society over people’s approaches to pandemic responses, restrictions and loosening thereof, there was also mention of economic issues such as unemployment, businesses that failed and have to rebuild, labour shortages in certain jobs or sectors, and the increasing cost of living.
  - Housing affordability and availability were also issues that were often mentioned in this context, as well as throughout the discussions.
- Newcomers are by and large seen as more helpful than harmful to Canada’s economy and post-pandemic economic recovery.
- The majority of participants agreed with the statement that *“Put simply, increased immigration means more people in Canada participating in our workforce, engaging in our communities, and giving back to our economy.”*
  - They said that most immigrants gave back to the economy, which was understood as being employed, paying taxes and spending money. Some also mentioned that they saw an entrepreneurial spirit in many newcomers, who might start businesses which in turn pay taxes and employ other Canadians.
  - While most participants also agreed that newcomers engage in Canada’s communities, there were those who countered that they saw newcomers being more likely to stick to themselves and stay within their own ethnic communities instead.
- The statement *“The reality is that Canadians are living longer and having fewer children. This also has an impact on our economy—not just today, but in the years and decades ahead. This*

*is why Canada needs to increase the number of immigrants we welcome each year,”* was also mostly met with agreement.

- The vast majority agreed with the first sentence and said they saw evidence of this around them.
- Some participants disputed the last sentence, saying either that there were alternative ways to address the demographic shifts, or that Canada might not need increased immigration, but rather the same level as in the past.
- The third statement discussed was: *“Canada has regained 106% of the jobs lost during the pandemic. Despite these achievements, there are still more than 960,000 unfilled jobs. This is a clear sign that we have a strong economic need for increased immigration.”* While most agreed with this statement, not everyone felt the statistics led to them feeling it was a “clear” sign that there was a “strong” economic need for more immigration.
  - Again, there was some hesitation to fully endorse increased immigration as the only or foremost solution to the current labour market issues, with some suggesting that Canada should focus on unemployed or underemployed Canadians first.
- Overall, while the facts and statistics shown in the statements went undisputed, they did not go as far as to change the views among most of those who were generally less supportive of immigration to begin with. At the same time, those who were already in favour of immigration saw their position further entrenched.

### **Immigration Levels and Mix**

- The recently announced plans to admit 432,000 permanent residents in 2022; 447,000 permanent residents in 2023; and 451,000 permanent residents in 2024, was generally supported. The accompanying fact that this was roughly 1% of Canada’s population helped solidify this support.
  - However, quite a few participants also admitted to not being entirely certain what the “right” levels were, sometimes wondering how these levels compared to those in the past, where in the country immigrants would settle and what the breakdown of “types” of immigrants would or should be.
- When shown the proposed mix of classes of immigrants, there was also a general sense that this was “probably right.” There was a general consensus that the skilled workers category should make up the largest proportion; however, there was some more discussion about the level of refugees vs. family reunification, with some calling for more refugees.

- Many participants wondered and hoped that there was flexibility in the overall levels and the mix to accommodate the sudden need to receive refugees, especially in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- When prompted to think of particular skills, education or experience that Canada should prioritize these days, the health care sector was most often mentioned. Other mentions included education, people in the IT field, manufacturing, and people in skilled trades.
  - Generally, and after some reflection on what people were seeing around them, groups tended to agree that there was a need for a mix of higher educated or more professional newcomers, those who would be able to work skilled trades, as well as unskilled labour – those “willing to take on anything they could.”
- Although there was support for prioritizing immigrants who can speak at least one of the official languages, there was no strong sense that Canada should try to increase the number of Francophone newcomers in particular.

### **Integration**

- Views on how ready Canada is to integrate newcomers were mixed, with participants often saying Canada was ready in certain ways, but that there were also societal barriers or larger issues that should be addressed before they felt the country and their communities would be fully ready to easily integrate newcomers.
  - Besides the sentiment that there should be a focus on pandemic recovery, the main specific barrier discussed was the current housing market or housing crisis.
  - In the context of integration, there was not a lot of discussion about the level of formal or government newcomer services, although there was general agreement that newcomer services were important, including for example language training and help with finding employment, or housing.
- On a community or personal level, it was generally seen as true that “everyone could do their part” and could and should be “welcoming.”
  - Some suggested that individuals or community groups could help newcomers with finding jobs, navigating systems and services (such as banking, Service Canada, registering children for school, etc.) and day-to-day activities such as grocery shopping.



- To most, being welcoming means treating newcomers with respect, being friendly or neighbourly, and helping out in small ways to make them feel accepted into their new community.
- When asked to reflect on their own experiences, newcomers mostly spoke of supports they received through and in their community, whether they be through established members of their home community (in person or online), through churches or mosques, or through family members and friends who had immigrated before them.
  - Asked about how and when the Government of Canada should communicate with newcomers about its services, suggestions were to have information packages available at airports upon arrival, and to include information at key points that any newcomer has to go through, such as when getting a SIN number from Service Canada, or online/through email when filling out paperwork related to their immigration process.

### **Afghan refugees**

- The Government of Canada's plans to admit 40,000 Afghan refugees over two years was supported by most participants. There was some general knowledge that Canada intended to resettle those who had "worked for Canada," which was also endorsed, reflecting the general sentiment of support for admitting refugees, irrespective of their country of origin.
  - Information about the targeted refugee groups, including regarding those with skills proven to be of help to Canada and those who spoke English, resulted in a higher level of support and the sense that at least a large proportion of Afghan refugees would be employable and would be less likely to need a high level of supports.
- While this group was generally seen as probably in need of the same supports as other refugees, it was often mentioned that mental health supports to help with trauma would be required for this group in particular.
- Where some had concerns about Afghan refugees in particular, it was less about the proposed numbers, but more about the perception that they would not easily integrate into Canadian society due to linguistic, cultural, religious or social differences.

### **Irregular migration**

- Irregular immigration or asylum seeker issues at the Canada-U.S. border were not top-of-mind. When probed, some recalled the news about a family fleeing Canada across the Manitoba border into the U.S. in the winter, resulting in deaths. In a few groups, a participant

remembered reading about irregular immigration in Lacolle, Quebec. If anything, participants seemed to feel this had been more of a pre-pandemic issue rather than anything recent.

- When more information was shared, there were still quite a few unanswered questions, namely about how prevalent that was (with the assumption mostly being that it was not such a “big deal” as it was a largely unfamiliar issue) and why people would use irregular points of entry rather than regular channels.
- Overwhelmingly, the sentiment was that Canada should help and accept asylum seekers, and that they should be allowed to go through the process of making a claim, no matter how they entered.
  - Some were a bit more cautious, feeling that those entering through irregular channels should be put under additional scrutiny as they were trying to do something illegal, which made them question these claimant’s morals. Still, they said that claimants should be heard and allowed to prove their case; there was no suggestion that anyone should be turned back without due process.

## Research findings

### Background, study objectives, and rationale

#### **Background**

IRCC conducts an ongoing research program to help the Department develop a better understanding of Canadian attitudes toward the issues surrounding citizenship and immigration.

#### **Objectives**

The research objectives of this study included assessing, in the context of COVID-19, Canadians' perceptions of:

- immigration levels;
- the impact of immigration on Canada;
- Canada's immigration system and priorities; and
- the settlement and integration of newcomers.

The research allowed IRCC to explore underlying sentiments.

#### **Rationale and Intended Use of Research**

Consistent with the policy requirements of the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity, IRCC conducted research with Canadians on their attitudes, priorities and needs pertaining to issues covered within this research.

Public opinion data on key departmental priorities, issues and programs is also used to support departmental objectives under the Departmental Results and Management Accountability Frameworks and the Program Activity Architecture.

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

By gauging and exploring Canadian attitudes about key elements of the department's mandate, this research supported IRCC in:

- ensuring high quality policy options, program design and advice;
- encouraging and effectively managing citizen-focused services;
- managing organizational and strategic risks proactively; and

- gathering and using relevant information on program results.

## Detailed research findings

### Economic recovery

Participants were first asked to describe some challenges their community is facing when it comes to pandemic recovery. The three main themes that emerged were social challenges, health challenges and economic challenges.

Social challenges brought up included:

- The “divide” people are feeling in society writ large as well as on a more local or personal level, over people’s approaches to pandemic responses, restrictions and loosening thereof, which has led to more siloed communities,
- To get people to return to community volunteering and community involvement,
- Children being behind in their education,
- Trying to “reconnect” with people, whether by returning to a workplace or to a social setting, and
- Social skills being rusty, especially among younger children.

Health and health care challenges mentioned included:

- The health effects of long COVID,
- The sector being understaffed and overworked,
- The effects of postponed surgeries and other medical procedures,
- Mental health challenges for adults and youth, and
- The growing opioid crisis.

And finally, from an economic perspective, challenges mentioned included:

- High unemployment rates,
- Many (small) businesses that closed and have to rebuild, including restaurants and local shops,
- Labour shortages or it being generally difficult to find staff in certain jobs or sectors,
- Higher interest rates,
- Cost of housing and availability of housing, for both renters and (potential) homeowners, and
- Inflation, or similarly cost of living, including higher prices for food, gas, utilities, and construction materials.

A few participants who were newcomers to Canada mentioned that they were either experiencing or had heard of delays in immigration processes during the pandemic that they were seeing as a continuing challenge.

After this introductory question, participants were asked to shift their thinking to the role immigration could play in the country's post-pandemic economic recovery.

Newcomers are by and large seen as more helpful than harmful to Canada's economy and post-pandemic economic recovery. There was a general sentiment that Canada had always welcomed immigrants, and that the country, and by extension its economy, was built by immigrants and that immigrants had helped build and re-build at key times throughout Canada's history.

*"Immigration's always helped Canada. Canada was built on the backs of immigrants. So, it's obviously going to help recover Canada because it has always helped the Canadian economy."* Atlantic Canada – small centres – general population

Specifically, when it comes to economic recovery, the two points often brought up were surrounding how newcomers would fit into and benefit the current labour market and surrounding their work ethic. To the first point, newcomers were typically seen as bringing skills that are needed in the current labour market, or are more likely to fill positions, which include jobs requiring unskilled labour, that Canadians are more reluctant to want to take on. To the second point, newcomers were generally seen as entrepreneurial, "hard working" and "willing to take on anything to build a new life."

*"They're skilled individuals that are eager and willing to work and can fill in a lot of the jobs that are going to be coming up."* Ontario - small centres - general population

*"I think that we will need a new wave of immigration to get our main streets back to a healthy state."* Greater Toronto Area – general population

*"I think there is a shortage of workforce right now, so I could see there being a need for people who are really looking for work and that want to work. Yeah, that's why I would say it's more helpful than harmful."* Western Canada – small centres – general population

However, some voiced concern about a strategy to attract more newcomers to help the country's economy at this juncture. Mostly, those concerned, conflicted or of the opinion that immigrants would be more harmful than helpful, said that Canada has the responsibility to employ those currently unemployed and already living in Canada first, or focus on retraining Canadians who currently could not find a job so they would be able to fill open positions, rather than to focus foremost on immigration as the main solution. This was mentioned in the context of (perceived) high unemployment and underemployment rates, especially in certain sectors and certain areas of the country, particularly in the Western provinces and among Indigenous People.

*“Especially in the short term I would like to see prioritizing the investment in the local individuals and getting them the education they need. Things of that nature before opening the doors to bring in more immigrants and foreign workers.”* Vancouver – general population

*“I agree with all the other points people have made, that there is a lot of talk about a lot of positions needing to be filled and I think that our society can handle more immigration to help with that but I do also think that more support should be made available to people who are already here, already available to work and maybe struggled during COVID with needing to shape-shift their role or find themselves unemployed and maybe just not sure where to start.”* Vancouver – newcomers

As well, some participants indicated that their view on this depended somewhat on each individual newcomer. More specifically, these participants felt that while many newcomers contribute or are helpful rather than harmful to the economy, there are also those who will rely on social assistance, at least initially, and are therefore not contributing or helping. Others countered that these newcomers might contribute in other ways, for example by supporting their children, making sure they have an education and become contributing members of Canadian society down the road.

*“Personally, I don't know. I struggle with them coming in and just being like long-term social service clients. I know that sounds terrible, but I feel like if they are coming in and they're going to prosper in Canada, that's great but if they're going to drain then maybe not so much.”* Eastern Canada – Indigenous

[Translation] *“I don't think that immigration will directly boost the economy or work, the lack of manpower. We need to train people who are on social assistance. We need to train people who receive government benefits.”* Montreal – general population

In large urban centres in particular, but also in smaller communities, another reason given for newcomers potentially being more harmful was related to housing costs and availability. It was said that with housing prices already too high for most people currently looking, an increased demand on the market would create more competition for limited stock, only pushing prices up more for everyone.

It is important to note that in many of the groups, housing (both affordability and availability) and cost of living became the main threads throughout the course of the discussions and were mentioned as very important concerns when talking about all immigration topics, whether related to economic recovery, to the number of newcomers Canada could or should accept, or to integration.

## **Statements about immigration**

Following this initial discussion, three statements about immigration were shown; participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each.

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*Statement 1:*

*Put simply, increased immigration means more people in Canada participating in our workforce, engaging in our communities, and giving back to our economy.*

---

The majority of participants agreed with this statement.

Giving back to the economy was understood as being employed to earn an income, paying taxes and buying goods and services. It was also mentioned in this context that newcomers' economic contributions were necessary to support government programs such as CPP. A few also mentioned how immigrants might start businesses which in turn pay taxes and employ other Canadians.

*"They're definitely contributing taxes and taking care of all the boomers that are going to be retiring." Alberta – urban centres – general population*

*"We need the immigrants to continue to grow our tax base to continue to support CPP so that when I get there, hopefully it'll have some funds left for me to draw on. But we also need their expertise because technologically, we have done really well. [...] immigrants are a contributor to the innovation that we have in this country." Western Canada – small centres – general population*

*"[I agree] because immigrants or newcomers come here, they value more. They want to give back to the community also. They also connect with other groups, it could be the same where they came from building networks, and also because they have the skills and also the expertise that they are able to also add value to the economy from where they are." Vancouver - newcomers*

There were also some who had mixed feelings about this statement. Some said, again, that newcomers are not one uniform group, and that while some may participate, whether in the workforce or in communities, others do not. As well, a few participants questioned whether now was the right time to increase immigration, and that this may be more desirable in the long term rather in the short term when Canada is focused on pandemic recovery.

*"...but in some cases, there's more of a natural segregation creating their own communities which happens certainly in certain areas around BC, which is a mixed bag I guess you could say." Vancouver – general population*

*"I feel like there's too much of a divide still. I feel like the way we are with this pandemic, there's a lot of unsettling feelings going around. I feel it's not*

*the greatest time to start making such a decision like this.” Western Canada  
– small centers – general population*

Those who did not agree with this statement tended to believe that newcomers do not contribute to the economy but rather cost Canada money. At least initially, they felt that immigrants may not join the workforce and many need various services or financial supports for themselves and their children. A small group also said that newcomers are more likely to stick to themselves rather than be engaged in, and contribute to, the larger community.

*“It is probably difficult to make the transition, or I could see it being difficult, so there is the possibility that instead of putting more into the economy, that there could be a withdrawal of resources from the economy to make that transition happen.” Western Canada – small centres – general population*

*“My concern is that and I've seen this in other places and what have you that when you get large groups that come from different ethnics, they end up creating their own closed community and that the economy that they create is within that community [...] I don't know that it benefits our overall economy.” Ontario – small centres – general population*

The second statement showed participants a number of facts about Canada’s demographics, linking these to the need for more immigration.

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*Statement 2:*

*The reality is that Canadians are living longer and having fewer children. This also has an impact on our economy—not just today, but in the years and decades ahead. This is why Canada needs to increase the number of immigrants we welcome each year.*

---

The idea that Canadians are living longer and are having fewer children was not disputed. In fact, many participants said they knew this and saw evidence of this around them, and that they also understood the (negative) impact of this on Canada’s economy. Therefore, it was also seen as logical to most that Canada should increase immigration. Many echoed the statement back when explaining why they agreed with it.

*“The number of children that families have does not replace the death rate. So, we need to have the immigration. It can only be helpful from an economic standpoint.” Greater Toronto Area – general population*

*“The fewer children thing appeals to me because I don't have kids and I know a lot of my friends chose not to have kids. So, that is yeah, really true these days.” Atlantic Canada – small centres – general population*



Some newcomers also mentioned that they agreed because they felt that people from their communities were more likely to be family-oriented and may not think about finances or economics when deciding to have children, something they say is more likely to be the case among other Canadians.

*“Lots of immigrants come to Canada because they feel safer here, so that's the reason why they immigrate and why they decide to have children here and expand the community and, you know, bring the new cultures and everything and that will definitely, you know, impact the economy in a good way because those people are feeling safe to start the families, to bring the children here, comparing to Canadians that, you know, decide to postpone it or rather like not have children at all.”* Greater Toronto Area - newcomers

However, a few participants questioned whether this was the best rationale for increased immigration or whether there is actually a need for an increase (as opposed to the current levels being maintained). As well, some felt that the reasons behind Canadians not having children or having fewer children – mainly the increased cost of living, meaning Canadians cannot afford to have more children – should be understood and tackled by the government in order to boost the natural growth rate. They said for example that the government should focus on providing more financial incentives or family support, such as more access to affordable childcare, or on ensuring wages were higher so that it would be more affordable to have (more) children, or so that one parent could stay home with their children.

*“...you have to have more incentives to have kids.”* Vancouver – general population

*“Increasing immigration isn't the only tool available to the government. For instance, a lot of parents are at home looking after their kids and if we had better childcare in Canada, then some of them would be quite willing to go back to work.”* Greater Toronto Area – general population

There were also some who questioned why Canada continued to push for population growth and economic growth. They questioned whether this approach was sustainable and pointed to the current housing availability and affordability issues in many parts of the country, or to the environmental toll that an increased population has on our resources.

*“From my part, I'm not entirely sure with the obsession with growth, why the objective of a country needs to be on growth, you know?”* Vancouver – general population

Two supporting facts were also shown as part of this statement:

- 
- *Immigration accounts for nearly 100% of our labour force growth and almost 80% of our population growth.*
  - *Without immigration, the Canadian population is projected to start declining in about 10 years.*
- 

These facts were surprising to many, with participants often saying they did not realize that the impact of immigration on labour force and population growth was as significant as these statistics showed. For the most part, these supporting statements further entrenched agreement with the overall statement, and they helped a few participants who were on the fence to change their views. However, some participants again countered that the government should have other strategies to encourage growth in both the labour force and population numbers.

*"I was not surprised that the numbers were high, but I was surprised that they were that high."* Vancouver - newcomers

The third statement showed more statistics about jobs in Canada:

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*Statement 3:*

*Canada has regained 106% of the jobs lost during the pandemic. Despite these achievements, there are still more than 960,000 unfilled jobs. This is a clear sign that we have a strong economic need for increased immigration.*

---

The majority of participants agreed with this statement, although it begged more questions and had more people on the fence than earlier statements.

*"...that's like a really large number. So, bringing in a decent amount of immigrants that are qualified to do these jobs, whatever the category is."*  
Greater Toronto Area - newcomers

While the majority of participants agreed with this statement, not everyone felt the statistics led to them feeling it was a "clear" sign that there was a "strong" economic need for more immigration. Some felt that the language in the last sentence was perhaps a bit too strong.

Others questioned whether immigration, or increased immigration, should be the most important or the only solution to the issue of unfilled jobs. In this context, there were often discussions about prioritizing finding ways for those currently unemployed to rejoin the workforce to help mitigate these issues. Some suggested again to ensure those currently on social assistance programs such as CERB should be encouraged to work, while others suggested that retraining people to better meet current labour market demands, mentorship programs or offering higher wages would be effective and should be prioritized over immigration as the solution.

*“I think it's not so much a clear sign that we need increased immigration. Yes, we need immigration, but we also need to [be] investigating who should be off CERB now and who is still on it and who is ready to work and is now abusing that system.” Eastern Canada – Indigenous*

It also begged other questions, particularly about the nature of the unfilled jobs. There were also questions about Canada’s unemployment rates (current and pre-pandemic) and a few questioned the so-called quality of the jobs that were regained to replace those that were lost during the pandemic. Participants expressed that the unfilled jobs may be less desirable because they were part-time, have irregular shifts, are temporary or precarious, do not pay a living wage, or are not paid according to how (physically) taxing the work is.

*“Why do you think these jobs are unfilled? [...] Instead of just saying, okay, well, we're just going to get the immigrants to take care of that for us....think about what our people need in these sectors where there's unfilled jobs and why that's happening and what we could do to encourage people to go back to those trades, and fill those jobs.” Greater Toronto Area – general population*

*“It's a fair statement. However, you know, if you are unemployed and you cannot find a job, this statement doesn't mean anything to you. So, what we are trying to figure out [is] where these types of jobs are coming from.” Alberta – urban centres – general population*

The view that immigration was not necessarily the only or the most logical solution was more prevalent in smaller centres, and in Western Canada, including among Western Canadian Indigenous participants, who were more likely to mention they encounter unemployment, those living under the poverty line or working low-income jobs (“working poor”) in their communities and people on CERB.

*“I just think that there could be more opportunity and potential for mentorships and apprenticeships for people that are living here currently that are underemployed and they could benefit from these opportunities, particularly those of Indigenous, black and people of colour that are currently living here and are not employed and certain barriers that they face to have employment.” Western Canada – Indigenous*

*“I'm curious about the number of unemployed individuals right now, because I would need that number. I definitely agree if it's 960,000, I don't know if we've got that many unemployed right now. If we do, maybe we can fill those jobs here at home.” Small centres - newcomers*

Finally, discussions related to this statement prompted some to argue that immigration should not be seen purely in economic terms. In fact, in their reactions to many of the statements presented, participants explained how immigrants contribute to and enrich Canada in so many different ways,

and also how it was Canada's duty to help people from other countries. For some participants, the statement's specific focus on how immigrants can address a need for 960,000 unfilled jobs left them slightly uncomfortable and insisted on refocusing the importance of immigration on broader considerations.

*"I don't just think about it from an economic standpoint, especially with the refugees, no matter how it affects the economy, I think we should be letting more in, I just think it's the right thing to do."* Vancouver – general population

*"So, they are contributing by working. Some of them are opening up their own restaurants and bringing a little bit more culture into a city that's kind of lacking it, right? So, from my perspective, I think that, yeah, absolutely. I think that they are very engaged and a lot of them are volunteering their time. Some of the local restaurants here have opened up businesses and give back to the community and give free meals out as well to people when they're in need on holidays."* Ontario – small centres – general population

*"I mean, obviously, the taxes are the never-ending circle of what's generating everything, but then also just again, what people are bringing from where they're from, whether it's a health industry, a service industry, mechanical, technical, things like that. A lot of people that are moving into the communities, are increasing just the experience, the culture that's there. I think overall, not even just on a financial basis, but overall the atmosphere in those environments."* Atlantic Cities – general population

### Immigration Levels and Mix

As a transition question, participants were asked whether they had seen or read any news about immigration lately. This discussion revealed that immigration was not top-of-mind for most, with only a few participants in each group indicating they had heard something in the news about immigration recently. A few suspected or had heard that immigration had been significantly reduced during the pandemic since "the borders were closed."

Some, particularly in the newcomers groups, had heard of administrative backlogs at IRCC during the pandemic, while others, especially in groups which were held after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, mentioned having heard about Canada accepting or prioritizing those fleeing Ukraine. Not many were very familiar with any of the details, as demonstrated by their use of the term "Ukrainian refugees." For clarification in this report, these individuals will arrive as temporary residents without applying for official refugee status. This means that these individuals will not arrive as permanent residents and will not impact the immigration levels plan. Only a few participants across all groups recalled something about immigration levels or that immigration was increasing.

*"The Ukraine and the fast-tracking of the immigration applications from Ukrainians."* Atlantic Canada – small centers – general population

Participants were then shown how many permanent residents Canada is planning on admitting over the coming years and what the approximate mix will be:

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*The Government of Canada has recently announced plans to admit 432,000 permanent residents in 2022; 447,000 permanent residents in 2023; 451,000 permanent residents in 2024, or roughly 1% of Canada's population.*

*The breakdown is:*

- *56%: either immigrants selected because of their skills, education or experience, or family members of these people*
  - *24%: immigrants sponsored by a family member who lives in Canada, and include spouses, children, parents and grandparents*
  - *18%: refugees and successful asylum claimants*
- 

When discussing the overall proposed levels for 2022-24, many felt this was “probably the right number.” While it was common feedback that the numbers themselves may feel high, putting it into perspective that they represent 1% of Canada’s population, helped solidify the support for these levels. Many also recalled the previously mentioned fact that 960,000 jobs remain unfilled, which also helped participants feel that the proposed numbers were appropriate. As well, there was a general assumption underpinning their agreement that newcomers would settle across the country.

*“With this number, I think is just about right with the amount or the vast land that we have here in Canada.”* Vancouver – newcomers

*“The 1% of Canada's population that sounds like, okay, that's justifiable, at least there's enough opportunities for the rest of the people here. 1% doesn't seem unrealistic.”* Atlantic Canada – urban – general population

Still, quite a few participants were not sure as they felt they didn’t have enough information to form an opinion.

*“I don't know, the numbers honestly have no meaning to me. Trying to picture that within the Canadian population, it's not striking me in any way.”* Greater Toronto Area – general population

*“Yeah. It sounds about right. I mean, I don't really know. One percent isn't very much... it just seems about right.”* Prairies – urban centers – general population

In some groups, there was more discussion about the location of newcomers and where they would set roots. On one hand, in some of the smaller centres in particular, there was support for ensuring that newcomers would live, and continue to live for a certain period of time, in smaller

communities where there may be a need. All too often, they said, newcomers would not stay long in their communities, quickly choosing to move to larger urban centres with more economic opportunity and with a larger immigrant population. Related to this, some participants in large urban centers expressed that the number of immigrants felt too high to them if all or most immigrants would settle in their cities. Concerns raised in this context were again mainly related to the impacts on housing and the cost of living.

A few other participants said that the overall numbers were too high because they felt that more resources should first go into supporting and retraining people who were already in Canada, rather than accepting more newcomers who would also be in need of those supports and services.

In some groups, a few participants said that they were not sure whether they supported the levels because they wanted to first understand more about the proposed mix, or they wanted to know how these levels compared to those in previous years.

The category mix was also mostly supported. Given the information provided previously on Canada's economy, economic recovery, jobs and labour force, the consensus was that it would be logical to have the largest category be skilled immigrants.

*"I think that number is perfect where it is because the 56% are the ones that have the skills that can hop right into the economy, working and spending their dollars on things and we basically want to get the economy working again."*

Small centres – newcomer

However, there were also those who felt that the number of refugees should be higher, especially in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many participants wondered and hoped that there was flexibility in the overall levels and the mix to accommodate the sudden need to receive refugees in light of the war in Ukraine.

[Translation] *"The other thing that worries me a little considering the news with what is happening in Ukraine. Will the percentage of refugees perhaps have to change in response to this developing war and how will it evolve in the coming months, next years?"* Montreal – general population

The main reason given for increasing the number of refugees was from a moral or humanitarian standpoint, rather than an economic one. When asked which other category should be lowered in order to accommodate more refugees, some said it could come from either or both the other categories, while for the most part, participants would prefer to decrease the family reunification category. Economic reasons were often given for decreasing the family reunification category in favour of accepting more refugees – dependent children and elderly family members were seen as less likely to contribute economically to the country. On the other hand, some participants noted the importance of including family members for immigrants' mental health and to increase their likelihood of staying in Canada.

While refugees were also not always seen as able to contribute (or at least not initially), for this group, the idea that it was just “the right thing to do” to accept those who were displaced and who were living in hardship outweighed the economic arguments.

*“I’m just thinking right now, like for the refugees because of what’s happening currently, will that 18% be enough for the current issues we’re having like in Ukraine? There will be a lot of refugees if it becomes worse, but I do like the fact that there is a big percentage on immigrants with skills because we need the skills because these people are the ones who will be helping with the economy.” Vancouver - newcomer*

The view that increasing the proportion of refugees was desirable was also more common among those who generally felt that Canada should focus first and foremost on Canadians rather than on (skilled) immigration – whether on the job and economic fronts, or in other areas, such as housing, the opioid crisis or reconciliation. For these participants, there was often a sense that the reasons for accepting refugees were different and perhaps more valid, or more in line with their own views, saying that Canada accepted refugees mainly to help those people, rather than to help Canada – and this was a good thing to do.

When prompted to think of particular skills, education or experience that Canada should focus on attracting, the health care sector was most often mentioned. Participants in many regions of the country see and feel an acute shortage in that area, whether among doctors, nurses or those working in long term care. Other sectors mentioned included education, particularly education assistants (who could help other newcomers), people in the IT field, manufacturing, farming and people in all skilled trades, with a few emphasizing welders, plumbers and electricians.

[Translation] *“But health, I will specify, we mentioned doctors and nurses, but also everything [...] support technicians in care, such as in seniors’ residences, all these staff who work with more vulnerable clientele in long-term care homes.” OLMC – outside Quebec*

*“I think the trades is a good one. I see lots of ads for people under construction fields right now, because there’s such a boost on the renovations and the construction of new homes [...]. So, for sure, the trades, the plumbers, the electricians, those are things that we need here.” Small centres - newcomers*

While there was general support for selecting immigrants because of their skills, education or experience, this did not necessarily mean that only highly educated or professional newcomers were desired or appropriate. There was also a call to accept immigrants in the trades, and those willing and able to work in jobs requiring unskilled or lower-skilled labour, based on (local) needs and unfilled jobs people see in their communities. Examples given often also included jobs that are currently seen as disproportionately held by newcomers, including jobs as cleaners, in coffeeshops, food delivery and rideshare drivers.

As well, other examples given included those where a labour shortage was currently seen by the public, including general labour or construction jobs and restaurant / hospitality positions. The general idea was that Canada should carefully assess the labour market and prioritize immigration based on those needs, while at the same time recognizing that there was also a need to attract those who would generally be willing to roll up their sleeves and to tackle any type of job that they were offered or could find.

*"...for example, hospitality, tourism, janitorial work, anything labour, in construction. I don't know for sure, but I'm pretty certain, there is more of a shortage in these jobs than there is in higher-skilled jobs."* Vancouver - newcomer

In the context of this discussion, some participants shared that they were not too sure about the effectiveness of Canada's current selection practices, as they knew of highly educated or skilled newcomers who were underemployed because they lacked Canadian experience or because their foreign credentials were not recognized. There was a sense that despite all the best intentions to attract immigrants with specific skills, this is a waste if those skills are not recognized once they immigrate or if it requires excessive efforts and time to get those skills recognized. Some in the newcomers groups also said they knew of highly educated people willing to immigrate to Canada who would definitely be employable and willing to work, who just "did not check enough of the boxes," or did not have the right NOC code, suggesting again that the current system should be reviewed.

*"They may be perfectly qualified, but you still make them do whatever to do the job. I know I've heard of doctors. They have to drive a cab, you know, because they can't do their job. I mean just some of that's kind of stupid."* Prairies – urban centers – general population

*"[...] the NOC code. I'm confident they would get a lot of those jobs but the criteria for it, the way it's set up, excludes a lot of people that might be skilled workers."* Vancouver - newcomer

On a related note, some recommended that efforts should be made to ensure that immigrants with specific skills already in Canada who cannot work in their field of expertise receive the proper credentials or training so that they can fill some of the various job openings.

Although there was support for prioritizing immigrants who can speak at least one of the official languages, there was no strong sense that Canada should try to increase the number of Francophone newcomers in particular. Most questioned the relevance or potential success of prioritizing Francophone immigrants for regions outside Quebec since these individuals will face the same challenges as any other non-English speaking immigrant. Francophones in Quebec emphasized the importance of francization efforts and language training over setting specific Francophone targets. The only group to voice support for more Francophones immigrating to regions outside Quebec was the one with Official Language Minority Communities outside Quebec.



[Translation] *“I know a few organizations, organizations in Saskatoon that have many, many difficulties in filling Francophone positions because we do not have the workforce. Qualified people are not here, so we are trying to bring in from other provinces. Yes, so it makes me think of that, precisely, we have positions to fill in French and maybe we would be able to have more [francophone immigrants].”* OLMC - outside Quebec

## Integration

Views on integration were mixed, with participants often saying Canada was ready in certain ways to welcome and integrate (more) newcomers, but that there were also barriers or larger issues that should be looked at before they felt the country and their communities would be fully ready to easily integrate newcomers. One of the topics often brought up in this discussion was the current housing crisis, which was seen as the main barrier.

[Translation] *“I think we have a big problem of affordable housing for us, and then I say to myself ‘it’s going to be the same for them too.’”* Quebec – small centers – general population

Many explained that Canada is, and has historically been, tolerant, open to immigration, and ready to welcome newcomers and to help them thrive. Canada was often described of a “country of immigrants” in this context. Integration was typically explained or experienced as something done at a person-to-person or community level, but some also spoke about Canadian society writ-large, including governments (through official programs) facilitating and being responsible for integration.

*“I think Canadian society is very tolerant and because of that, I think we are more accommodating to people from different countries, different backgrounds, et cetera.”* Ontario – smaller centers – general population

[Translation] *“They arrive here with a great motivation and the desire to integrate. And the very, very large majority want to work and integrate well into the population.”* Quebec – smaller centers – general population

However, there was not a deep level of knowledge about government services, and they often did not factor much into the discussion of integration, unless prompted. When asked, participants offered that governments should focus on helping newcomers find housing, navigating government services, education or job training, access to primary healthcare, and language training.

It was often expressed that the readiness, capability or capacity to integrate newcomers was very different across the country, and that there was a difference between the bigger cities, smaller cities and smaller towns or remote and northern communities. This was something that participants felt should be taken into consideration when accepting and resettling newcomers.

Those in smaller centres across the country, including in northern and Indigenous communities, which were recognized as less diverse than the urban centres, were more likely to express that while there may be more physical space, there were not as many resources and supports for newcomers in their area as there should be, and far fewer than in cities with larger concentrations of newcomers. Some newcomers who live or lived in smaller communities, echoed this and said that this had been their experience.

*“I came straight to the Yukon, and it wasn't even Whitehorse where I lived, it was two hours away from the big city. I visited a multicultural organization; I think they were non-government organization who helps immigrants but the problem for me is that I would have to drive two hours going there and then back another two hours if I really want to avail their services.”* Vancouver – newcomer

*“Yeah, I used to live in Calgary [...] there was actually quite a lot of programs for them. There is English as a second language, I know that the churches offer welcome dinners [...] Now in Golden, it's a much smaller city and I don't see that at all. Big city, yes, small towns, small cities, probably not.”* Western Canada - Indigenous

It was also mentioned that in smaller communities, acceptance of visible minorities might be more of a challenge for other reasons, namely that people may be less familiar and less accepting of newcomers. At the same time, participants from smaller communities were also more likely to say that there was more need for immigration to their area as they saw that employers were having a difficult time finding staff and they saw people leaving their areas for the city.

When it comes to prioritizing settlement in Canada's largest cities, it was said that this would be a more logical strategy because there would be more resources and community support.

*“What kind of thought is being put into where they're going to be dispersed to? Obviously, like major city centers are going to be more accommodating and being able to keep certain groups together so that they can navigate together and support each other through their transition.”* Western Canada – small centers – general population

On the other hand, urban participants in particular mentioned that housing affordability and availability were major barriers to accommodating and integrating more newcomers in their communities. This was seen as something that should be addressed first, especially since more newcomers would mean more people who needed a place to live that they could afford, in addition to those already in the market for a home.

Related to this, there was concern about population density in large urban centers, with participants from the GTA and Vancouver in particular questioning not only how newcomers could afford to live in their cities, but also wondering where more housing could be built to accommodate more newcomers. There was also a sense that this was exacerbated in these areas

because they were already urban areas with large immigrant populations that would be more likely to attract more newcomers relative to the rest of the country. Participants in these areas suggested that other areas of the country, whether smaller urban centres or more rural areas, would perhaps be better options for accommodating, and therefore integrating, newcomers.

*“I live in Scarborough. So, I'd be hard-pressed to find somebody who is not an immigrant. But I would say no, [...] the population density for this area is also very high and I'm thinking of it in terms of [...] the amount of space they can squeeze buildings into.”* Greater Toronto Area – general population

It must be noted, however, that other participants from outside urban centers whether from smaller urban centres or from smaller or northern communities, also often brought up housing as an issue in their area.

[Translation] *“We don't have accommodation. We have like two or three houses that are currently for sale, that's all. There are no apartments.”* OLMC – outside Quebec

*“I think the big barrier here anyways is the housing. There's just not enough, it's not affordable.”* Atlantic Canada – small centers – general population

*“[Newcomers should know] that we're competing for housing, that we're competing for the jobs that pay the living wage. Like the people that are already here are fighting and they're just adding and it's not that they're necessarily a burden, it's just like this is what the market you're walking into.”* Vancouver – general population

There were also those who expressed that Canada is not ready to accept more immigrants until other societal issues that Canadians are currently facing are addressed. These participants focused especially on recovering from the pandemic, including unemployment and economic recovery. Some Indigenous participants also mentioned in this context that reconciliation or dealing with issues on reserves should be prioritized.

*“Before we can offer our help to others, we need to take care of what we have going on here first. It's just a weird time, the cost of living is a lot...”* Western Canada – small centers – general population

*“How can we justify any increased immigration when we can't provide clean water to our own people? It's really ridiculous.”* Western Canada - Indigenous

Some newcomers in particular mentioned that they are seeing and experiencing a divided country, and that there is work to be done to bring everyone together, to (re-)establish a more cohesive Canadian identity before being able to integrate more newcomers. Others, again in the newcomer groups, mentioned that they did not believe that the bureaucracy is ready to process more newcomers at the moment, given the current backlogs.

*"I don't know whether or not we can or not support them, but I know definitely that the immigration process itself is definitely not up to accepting more than they've projected with some applications from pre-2019 are still not even close to being processed."* Vancouver - newcomer

The idea that everyone can play a role in welcoming newcomers was generally understood, accepted and endorsed. On a personal level, many participants said they found themselves to be welcoming and helpful, with participants often sharing stories of chatting with and helping new neighbours or community members feel welcome and supported in many (small) ways. "Treating them like anyone else" and generally showing respect were seen as signs of being welcoming to newcomers.

*"For a community to be welcoming, when you think of community, you think of more social events and knowing your neighbours, [...] for it to be welcoming to new people, I would think that it's the exact same thing."* Ontario – small centers – general population

*"We see people moving into the buildings regularly and we'll just stop and talk."* Prairies – urban centers – general population

Among newcomers in particular, many said they were happy to give back to others in the same way that they had received help when they first arrived in Canada.

Help with finding jobs, navigating systems and services (such as banking, Service Canada, registering children for school, etc.), the school system, and day-to-day activities such as grocery shopping, were also seen as an important part of integration that "everyone" could partake in as individuals. Others mentioned communities coming together in a more organized matter, whether through volunteer organizations, clubs or schools, in order to help newcomers navigate their new community. Generally, these supports were seen as best organized in a grassroots or ground-up, community-led way, rather than through formal government programs.

*"I was thinking about schools as well. Like if you've got 30 kids in a class and the teacher says, we have this new family coming in, is anybody willing?"* Alberta – urban centres – general population

Some Indigenous participants suggested that they and their communities could help newcomers learn about Canada's colonial past and about reconciliation.

In some smaller centers in particular, participants mentioned that they did not really feel that their communities were very welcoming. Some spoke of hidden or explicit racism, fear that newcomers would take away jobs (by working for lower wages, for example), or would not fit into their community because they had different habits or did not speak their language.

Newcomers, thinking of their own integration process when they first arrived, mostly spoke of supports they received through and in their community, rather than focusing on more formal or

government supports they received. They typically said that people or groups that helped them out the most were most often groups of established members of their home community, churches or mosques, or family members and friends who had immigrated before them. Help was found both in person and online, for example through community Facebook groups. Some newcomers who were in school when they arrived mentioned mentors and teachers who helped them in different ways, for example by paying some extra attention to them in class, or providing support with learning English or with writing a resume.

*“When I came here, I received the most support from friends and family, mostly those who are from the same country as me. [...] So, I believe that would be the same for most of the people. Most of the immigrants, each one of them have their own community and if they need help, they most probably first go to their own community, but it doesn't mean that we don't receive help from or support from others.”* Greater Toronto Area – newcomer

*“Facebook groups - there's a really well-established 'Irish in Vancouver' group.”* Vancouver – newcomer

*“When I had come to Canada, I find in the German community, very good resources and they have also the community workers who helped me find the employment [...] they helped me find thrift store and different programs to get me what I need started. Also, for taxes, they help do the taxes here and just to find they're with you around and some socialization. I was very lucky that that is in my community I've come to.”* Smaller centres - newcomer

A few mentioned small Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that helped them out, but there was not a strong sense that the Government of Canada had a large, direct hand in helping them integrate. When prompted, only a few mentioned specific services they knew of or had accessed. Mostly, Service Canada was mentioned as the government agency that had been the most helpful. No one was familiar with information from IRCC about mental health supports specifically for newcomers, or with any advertising or promotion for such a program.

*“I lived across the immigration services but to be honest, I never...like I just never had a need to, you know, to go to the people that I don't know and bother them with questions when...I'd be honest. Sometimes it's just easier to ask the questions in your own language and ask the people from your country because they're familiar with experience.”* Greater Toronto Area – newcomer

*“There was an immigration fair that I attended before I even came to Canada to network for job security.”* Vancouver - newcomer

When thinking of how and when the Government of Canada should communicate with newcomers about its services, suggestions were to have information packages available at airports upon arrival, and to include information at key times or touchpoints that any newcomer has to go through. Examples given included in person or by mail when getting a SIN number from Service

Canada, or online/through email when filling out paperwork related to their immigration process. There was a sense that the Government of Canada knows how to reach them and should take advantage of pre-established channels to share information about programs and services.

A few newcomers mentioned a “newcomer package” they received, but most did not feel that the information there was clear enough or necessarily helpful when it came to finding their way in a new society.

*“I think once they arrive in Canada as a PR they should have some information booklet or send it to email because this is the easiest way to communicate because some people may not follow Twitter.”* Small centres – newcomer

*“I think when you're getting your SIN number, that's like one of the first things that everyone has to do, they can really easily put together a package and give it out.”* Vancouver - newcomer

It was also suggested to reach newcomers where they are, such as in ethnic community centres or places of worship. Hanging up posters in these locations was mentioned as an example.

*“I'm sure that I've been to these community centres and the other places that any newcomers would go. So maybe it would have been a good idea to do something, advertising or I don't know...put a poster or something to communicate this with newcomers.”* Greater Toronto Area - newcomer

## Afghan refugees

The most recent news about Afghan refugees that was recalled was typically from late summer 2021, when Canada was actively working to help resettle Afghan people after the Taliban takeover. Since then, very few had heard any updates. There was little to no recall of any specific resettlement targets for Canada.

The Government of Canada’s plans to admit 40,000 Afghan refugees over two years were discussed, and this idea was supported by most participants. This was often explained as a general support for admitting refugees, rather than by a deep understanding of or appreciation for the actual number that was presented.

*“My heart goes all to the refugees or whoever is seeking asylum to Canada. We were just so fortunate to be given this opportunity to be here, why not to them as well?”* Vancouver – newcomer

*“I don't know if 40,000 is too much or too little, but welcoming Afghan immigrants into Canada after what those people have been through, to me is an extremely positive thing, and we should be doing it.”* Ontario – small centers – general population

In most groups, it was known that Canada intended to resettle those who had “worked for Canada,” which was seen as a good practice. Where this was new information, it often helped solidify support. There was a high level of support for including or prioritizing this group, not only out of a moral duty, but also because they would be more likely to speak English, be educated and had skills that were already proven to be of value to Canada, leading to the expectation that these individuals would be able to find jobs more easily.

There was also support for targeting other groups for resettlement, such as women leaders, human rights defenders, journalists, persecuted religious minorities, LGBTI individuals, and family members of previously resettled interpreters who would be at risk if they stayed.

*“I think we have a responsibility to the Afghans that helped us through that whole conflict to begin with, right? They shouldn't be left behind to suffer.”*  
Western Canada - Indigenous

Only very few participants voiced concern about admitting Afghan refugees in particular, pointing to how different Afghanistan’s and Canada’s society, culture, religious beliefs and people are. A few of those opposed said that Canada would allow an inevitable criminal element to enter the country with this policy. Those who felt this way were mostly not convinced otherwise by information provided about security checks and criminal background checks.

It was expected that this group would not be homogenous and that the ease of integration would to a certain extent depend on the individual and their circumstances. This was particularly true in light of the plans to resettle many Afghans who are highly educated, had already worked with or for the Canadian troops or government and may therefore already be more familiar with Canadians and aspects of Canadian society, and who already spoke English. Integration was also often correlated to being employable - those who have skills that are proven to be beneficial to Canada or who are higher educated were often seen as also having fewer barriers to integration – these groups of Afghan refugees were expected to have an easier time to integrate and “hit the ground running.”

*“With the Afghans, wouldn't they be highly skilled [...] we've trained them. They've rebuilt the country. We've trained them in the military, policing, fire. So, I would think there's a lot of skilled workers out of that group that could really help the economy here. [...] And working hand in hand with the west, they might be better able to adapt here.”* Atlantic Canada – small centers – general population

At the same time, there was also an expectation that there would be those who may not fall under these categories, who are not familiar with Canada, don’t speak either official language, and who may not be ready to integrate as quickly or who would need more supports to do so successfully.

Therefore, if participants said that integration of Afghan refugees would be an issue, they were often related to the idea that there are large cultural, religious, linguistic or other differences

between Afghan society and that of Canada that would be difficult or impossible to bridge. This was a minority view and only expressed by a few participants.

*“Sometimes, those individuals who might be entrenched in special cultures come here and then they’ll want us to respect their culture and then tend to dictate to us how we should respect them. So, for me that is my concern.”*

Alberta – large urban centers – general population

On the other hand, some participants, including newcomers from countries in the region, mentioned that they knew Afghan people and that they knew them to be hard working, often spoke many languages and were generally “nice people.”

*“Growing up in Iran, I have met a lot of Afghan people coming to Iran...going to Iran to work. [...] they are very hardworking people, very nice people, very smart people. So, they deserve to live in a place where which they can show their talents and their abilities, and they should be able to work equally and to live equally as others.”* Greater Toronto Area - newcomers

In terms of the types of supports Afghan refugees specifically would need, many were of the view that they would require the same government and community resources, help and services as any other refugee, including job training, language training, help finding housing, and accessing services. Again, given what was discussed about the groups of Afghan people Canada is prioritizing for resettlement, such as those who already had ties to the Canadian military or embassy or higher educated individuals, it was said that some segments within this group were not seen as particularly poor or in need of high levels of support.

It was often mentioned, however, that mental health supports to help with trauma was very important and would be required for refugees, and for Afghan refugees in particular, given the war and upheaval they had lived through.

*“No, for the most part, it’d be no different than any other refugee from any other country, just the same for everybody.”* Western Canada – small centers – general population

*“... obviously support for mental health...”* Atlantic Canada – urban centers – general population

While in general, participants felt that these supports should be made readily available to them, there were some who were generally concerned with the resources it would cost the Government of Canada to resettle this many refugees, irrespective of where they came from.

*“The support should be there right from my next-door neighbour, right up to the government, the hospital, everyone.”* Alberta – large urban centers – general population



Not many participants had thought about personally helping to integrate or resettle Afghan refugees specifically. However, participants made suggestions as to what they could do, such as donating clothing and household items, or volunteering time to show people around and get them familiarized with their community and its resources. Participants would be most apt to help or support if they were approached by a group or an organization (e.g., their church, their local sports team, etc.) – they did not feel they would proactively seek out ways to provide support on an individual basis.

*“I think a good idea would be to open up like a community centre, something like that, where like every weekend people could come gather, talk, eat, you know, have some activity that they could do that would make them feel more welcomed.”* Greater Toronto Area - newcomer

*“Just guiding them, giving them the phone numbers of who they need to contact. Maybe helping out and doing a few phone calls for them, explaining to them the city that they're in, and the background and how things work around here because this is all new for them.”* Ontario – small centers – general population

*“[The] community would help out as well. Even if it gives them like an entry-level job to start off and have a little small apartment and provide some furniture and some food and so forth.”* Alberta urban centers – general population

*“I don't know. It depends as an individual, where do you belong to? I don't belong to a church, I don't belong to a community center, so how do you get in touch with them, I don't know.”* Ontario – small centers – general population

Only a few participants were familiar with the private sponsorship process, for example because their church had sponsored families in the past. They relayed that it was a good program, but a complicated process and took quite some concerted effort, time and resources to do successfully.

### Irregular migration

Irregular immigration at the Canada-U.S. border was not top-of-mind; in fact, it was not a topic many had given much thought to lately or recalled hearing or reading about recently. In most groups, one or two participants recalled a particular news story about a family fleeing Canada across the Manitoba border into the U.S. in the winter, resulting in deaths.

*“...what happened on the Emerson border in Manitoba [...] We had like five individuals who were freezing to death, they crossed the border, and they didn't cross the border from U.S. to Canada, but they did from Canada to the U.S.”* Atlantic Canada – urban centers – general population

In a few groups, a participant remembered reading about irregular immigration in Lacolle, Quebec. If anything, participants would recall that this was a bigger issue pre-pandemic or during the former American administration. Recall of specifics regarding Lacolle, Quebec or Roxham Road was more likely in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

*“This is old news, but what was the name of that crossing in Quebec? Was it called Roxbury Road?”* Ontario – small centers – general population

[Translation] *“It was more during Trump's time when he started deporting illegal immigrants. That's where we got, that the Canadian borders, there were masses of people who wanted to cross them and seek refuge.”* Montreal – general population

Only a handful of participants overall offered that they were familiar with more details, such as the costs to Canada of irregular migration. A few participants in the newcomers groups in particular mentioned they had read about this when they were reading up about Canadian immigration. Awareness of the Safe Third Country Agreement and its connection to irregular asylum seeking was also very low, and was not brought up in most of the groups. A few in the Quebec sessions mentioned the agreement by name.

*“I've heard that like it's a big problem and it's very expensive. It costs about \$14,000 per person who crosses at illegal points, and it overall comes like millions of dollars for the Canadian government.”* Greater Toronto Area - newcomer

After briefly exploring what participants had heard regarding irregular immigration, the following information was shared as part of the discussion on this topic:

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*Asylum seekers are people who come to Canada and claim asylum, saying that they cannot go home because they face danger or persecution. Individuals can submit an application once they are already inside Canada, or they can request asylum when they arrive at the border. This can be done in two ways:*

- *through “regular channels” such as at official ports of entry (air, land border or marine ports); or*
- *through “irregular channels” which means they enter Canada between official ports of entry, like at Roxham Road in Lacolle, Quebec, are intercepted by the RCMP, and if eligible, request asylum.*

*Regardless of how they make their claim, all asylum claimants must undergo admissibility requirements which include security, criminal checks, and health measures such as COVID-19 safety protocols.*

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Even after hearing this information, familiarity with asylum seekers and with those entering through irregular channels, was very low. Most assumed this was presently not a huge issue or not very prevalent, as they suggested that otherwise they would have likely heard about it. Both because of low levels of awareness and low levels of knowledge about details, there tended to be some confusion on the topic. Overall, opinions were soft, and questions posed often resulted in more questions rather than in clearly articulated opinions. For example, there were often questions about why people would go through irregular channels.

This also resulted in a general sense that those who were seeking asylum in Canada, no matter how they entered, should be given the opportunity to make a case for asylum and be allowed to stay unless or until their application was rejected. As with refugees, most felt that asylum claimants must have a good reason to flee their country and that Canada has the obligation, moral and/or legal, to protect and take in vulnerable people who would not be safe if they returned to their country of origin.

[Translation] *“I think we have to receive them, and then evaluate their file, their claim. Is it really a refugee claim? Then, precisely, do the security and judicial checks. After, unfortunately, there are some who do not pass, but yes, I think we must welcome them.”* Montreal – general population

*“I'd be okay with I guess a vetting process that ensures that they're coming here with that good reason, then they're not being dishonest in any way and as long as they pass all the criteria and go through all the processes, I don't see why not.”* Western Canada – small centers – general population

While most felt that asylum seekers should be allowed to go through the process of making a claim, no matter how they entered, there was some sense that those entering through irregular channels should be put under additional scrutiny. Some explained that someone “trying to do something sneaky” says something about a person’s morals in general, that they may have something to hide or are doing this because they know they would not be accepted in more regular or legitimate ways.

[Translation] *“Certainly, we cannot be entirely naïve about who could take less conventional paths, irregular paths because there could be people, outright terrorists, people who want to cause social unrest in a country.”* OLMC – outside Quebec

To most though, these individuals who would go through the apparent risks of irregular channels instead of through other channels were seen as desperate - and desperately needing Canadian help. Therefore, hearing their claim and helping them out was especially important. Sending them back without having this opportunity was not suggested.

Only very few participants questioned why asylum seekers entering from the U.S. would not ask for asylum there. Other than providing support (e.g., military personnel, tents, etc.), there was also very limited knowledge of Canada’s response to asylum seekers.

*"I don't remember what the government put into place to try to stop it. I think we just have so much uncontrolled border that it's very difficult to stop that."* Eastern Canada - Indigenous

## Appendix 1 - Methodology

The research methodology consisted of 16 online focus groups. Participants were recruited from across the country and from both urban areas and smaller communities (including Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot communities); besides general population groups (Canadian adults 18+), target audiences consisted of newcomers to Canada who arrived since 2011 and Indigenous Peoples.

The focus groups were conducted online from February 22 and March 7, 2022. The groups took an average of two hours. Quorus was responsible for coordinating all aspects of the research project including designing and translating the recruitment screener and the moderation guide, coordinating all aspects of participant recruitment, coordinating the online focus group platform and related logistics, moderating all sessions, and delivering required reports at the end of data collection.

The opportunity to conduct this research using an online platform gave the research team more flexibility and latitude regarding the geographic footprint that could be considered compared to a methodology involving in-facility research. The research primarily involved a mix of participants from all regions across Canada, with some sessions focused on large metropolitan areas (e.g. Metro Vancouver), smaller urban centres (e.g., Calgary and Edmonton) and smaller centres. When targeting more rural areas and smaller communities, the recruitment screener included a question that verified that the participant has access to a sufficiently robust Internet connection to enable participation in a videoconference.

Across all focus groups, recruitment efforts aimed for a mix of participants within the given segment. Where applicable, recruitment aimed for good representation of age, gender, income, education, and employment status. For sessions that covered more than 1 province or territory, efforts aimed for representation from each individual province and territory within the given region.

Participants invited to participate in the focus groups were recruited by telephone from the general public as well as from an opt-in database.

In the design of the recruitment screener, specific questions were inserted to clearly identify whether participants qualify for the research program and to ensure a good representation across demographic dimensions.

In addition to the general participant profiling criteria noted above, additional screening was done to ensure quality respondents, such as:

- No participant (nor anyone in their immediate family or household) may work in an occupation that has anything to do with the research topic area (such an immigration officer or a volunteer for immigrant settlement services), in related government departments/agencies, nor in advertising, marketing research, public relations or the media (radio, television, newspaper, film/video production, etc.), nor may respondents themselves ever have worked in such occupations.
- No participants acquainted with each other may be knowingly recruited for the same study, unless they are in different sessions that are scheduled separately.
- No participants may be recruited who have attended a qualitative research session within the past 6 months.
- No participant may be recruited who has attended 5 or more qualitative research sessions in the past 5 years.
- No participant should be recruited who has attended, in the past 2 years, a qualitative research session on the same general topic as defined by the researcher/moderator.

For each focus group, Quorus recruited 8 participants to achieve 6 to 8 participants per focus group.

All focus groups were held in the evenings on weekdays using the Zoom web conferencing platform, allowing the client team to observe the sessions in real-time. The research team used the Zoom platform to host and record sessions (through microphones and webcams connected to the moderator and participants electronic devices, for example laptops and tablets) enabling client remote viewing. Recruited participants were offered an honorarium of \$125 for their participation.

The recruitment of focus group participants followed the screening, recruiting and privacy considerations as set out in the *Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research—Qualitative Research*. Furthermore, recruitment respected the following requirements:

- All recruitment was conducted in the participant's official language of choice, English and French, as appropriate.
- Upon request, participants were informed on how they can access the research findings.
- Upon request, participants were provided with Quorus' privacy policy.
- Recruitment confirmed each participant had the ability to speak, understand, read and write in the language in which the session was to be conducted.
- Participants were informed of their rights under the *Privacy and Access to Information Acts* and ensured those rights were protected throughout the research process. This included:

informing participants of the purpose of the research, identifying both the sponsoring department or agency and research supplier, informing participants the study will be made available to the public 6 months after field completion through Library and Archives Canada, and informing participants that their participation in the study is voluntary and the information provided will be administered according to the requirements of the *Privacy Act*.

At the recruitment stage and at the beginning of each focus group, participants were informed that the research was for the Government of Canada. Participants were informed of the recording of their session in addition to the presence of Government of Canada observers. Quorus ensured that prior consent was obtained at the recruitment stage.

A total of 16 online focus groups were conducted with 111 Canadians, as per the table below:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Geography</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b># Participants</b>
Feb 22	General population	Greater Toronto Area	English	8
Feb 22	General population	Alberta urban centres (Calgary/Edmonton)	English	8
Feb 23	General population	Atlantic cities	English	7
Feb 23	General population	Metro Vancouver	English	7
Feb 24	General population	Ontario smaller centres (including RNIP communities)	English	8
Feb 24	General population	Western Canada smaller centres (including RNIP communities)	English	5
Feb 28	General population	Quebec smaller centres	French	7
Feb 28	General population	Prairie urban centres (Winnipeg/Saskatoon/Regina)	English	6
March 1	Newcomers	Greater Toronto Area	English	5
March 1	Newcomers	Metro Vancouver	English	7
March 2	General population	Atlantic smaller centres	English	7
March 2	Newcomers	Smaller centres (mix)	English	8
March 3	General population	Montreal	French	6
March 3	General population	Francophone communities outside of Quebec	French	8
March 7	Indigenous Peoples	Ontario/East	English	6
March 7	Indigenous Peoples	West	English	8

## Appendix 2 – Qualitative Instruments

English and French qualitative instruments are provided under separate cover.