



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

# 2022–2023 IRCC Annual Tracking Qualitative Research

## Executive Summary

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For more information on this report, please contact IRCC at

[IRCC.COMMPOR-ROPCOMM.IRCC@cic.gc.ca](mailto:IRCC.COMMPOR-ROPCOMM.IRCC@cic.gc.ca)

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

## **2022–2023 IRCC Annual Tracking Qualitative Research Executive Summary**

Supplier name: Quorus Consulting Group Inc.  
March 2023

This public opinion research report presents the results of a series of 18 online focus groups conducted by Quorus Consulting Group Inc. on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada between January 23 and February 6, 2023.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : *2022-23 Étude de suivi annuelle d'IRCC recherche qualitative - sommaire exécutif*

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Communications Branch  
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
Jean Edmonds Tower South  
365 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa ON K1A 1L1

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## Executive summary

### Background and study objectives

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) conducts an ongoing research program to ensure that it has a good understanding of Canadian attitudes towards the issues surrounding immigration, refugees and citizenship.

The research objectives of this study included assessing Canadians' perceptions of

- immigration levels
- the impact of immigration on Canada
- service provided by IRCC to clients and to the general public
- Canada's immigration system and priorities
- the settlement and integration of newcomers

IRCC will use the research to explore underlying sentiments on a wide variety of immigration-related perceptions, mitigating potential risks associated with maintaining inadequate information on Canadians' attitudes.

### Methodology

This research project included 18 online focus groups that Quorus ran between January 23 and February 6, 2023. Each session lasted approximately 105 minutes. The participants were recruited from across the country and from both urban areas and smaller communities, including communities participating in the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) program and the Welcoming Francophone Communities initiative. In addition to general population groups (Canadian adults 18 and older), the target audiences consisted of newcomers to Canada who had arrived since 2012 and Indigenous peoples of Canada. Fifteen groups were held in English and three in French. A total of 122 people participated.

## Summary of research findings

### Top-of-mind awareness

While immigration news was not top-of-mind for most participants, some topics were mentioned, including

- the Government of Canada's announcement about new immigration levels, including the target of 500,000 per year and the link with Canada's labour shortage
- the influx of Ukrainian people in the past year since the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Afghan refugees
- immigration backlogs and wait times for applicants
- asylum seekers at Roxham Road (in Quebec)

### Immigration levels

The participants were shown how many permanent residents Canada is planning on admitting over the coming years, along with the percentage of the Canadian population that those numbers represent. Most respondents did not have any issues with the numbers and generally said they made sense.

As to why they thought Canada is increasing its targets, the main theories suggested were

- to fill labour shortages
- to help address issues caused by Canada's aging population
- to increase Canada's declining tax base
- to counter a low birth rate and naturally declining population

Participants said that their communities need to plan for accommodating more immigration and more permanent residents. They pointed to a variety of things that they saw around them today that they felt were not working well and would need to be addressed, including

- housing shortages and affordability
- the rising cost of living
- infrastructure and transportation (including public transit)
- the health care system (access, and shortages in staff and funding in all areas)

- the education system (more support for newcomers)

As well, participants noted that there should be a plan to encourage new immigrants to settle throughout the country and to ensure better recognition of foreign credentials.

During discussions on particular skills, education or experience that Canada should focus on when attracting and admitting new permanent residents, the responses were often linked to the issues brought up in the previous discussion, with the two main sectors raised being health care and skilled trades.

There was also broad support for including those who do not have specialized skills or education, to address labour shortages in industries like farming, unskilled labour, fast food and retail. However, some participants mentioned that the cost of living was too high for people to support themselves and their families on those types of jobs and that it would not be fair or right to believe new immigrants would want or be able to do those jobs and build a successful future in Canada.

The Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot, which helps refugees overseas who have skills and qualifications find jobs in Canada and immigrate permanently to Canada as skilled workers, was generally seen as a good program. It was mostly seen as a “win-win” situation because it helped both foreign refugees and Canada. Since the program was not something many were familiar with, there were many questions for clarification, mainly about whether Canada was cherry-picking skilled refugees over others who may also be in dire straits.

### Francophone immigration

The participants were provided with information about Canada’s Francophone Immigration Strategy, which was not something anyone was familiar with or had given previous thought to. The idea that it would help restore or maintain the demographic weight of Francophones outside Quebec was understood and generally appreciated, given Canada’s bilingual nature.

However, some commented that language should not be the only criterion for selection, while others felt that even though these new immigrants speak French, their language (or accent) and culture would still be quite different from those of the Francophones currently living in these communities. Among participants from Quebec, there was some sense that many non-

Francophones were currently settling in Quebec and that there should also be a focus on settling Francophones in Quebec.

### Welcoming communities

Most participants felt that new immigrants make their community a better place to live, expressing an appreciation for cultural diversity, for learning from and about new cultures, and for the fact that this was “the Canadian way.”

For the most part, the participants generally felt that they live in welcoming cities, towns or communities. This generally meant that efforts are made to get to know and to support newcomers—whether at an individual or community level. Proof of this was often seen in the fact that their community was diverse and that there was an absence of general intolerance.

However, there was a sense that larger cities are generally more welcoming and open to newcomers than smaller centres.

Participants see the Government of Canada’s role in welcoming newcomers mainly as an administrative one that should involve supporting local, community-led efforts. More specifically, the Government of Canada was seen as the right player to provide initial support—such as help with documentation, administrative matters and finding a job and housing—and then to ensure a transition or introduction to local or community support systems, which it would fund but not run. The “welcoming” part was said to be best left to people and organizations in the community, since they know their own people, services and resources the best.

### Newcomer experiences

The newcomers were asked to share their experiences with any newcomer services they may have accessed following their arrival. Those who had used these services were generally pleased and said they were helpful. Many had not accessed these services, often because they had support from family and friends who had already gone through the immigration process.

That being said, the gaps identified included

- more support finding housing
- more support finding a job, including for recognition of foreign credentials and experience
- help with finances, such as understanding the tax system, pay slips or government programs such as RRSPs
- help navigating the medical system

The main reason why new immigrants settled where they did was because they already had a connection there, mostly family or friends who already lived there who supported them as they settled. Their other reasons included

- already having a job or a place to go to school
- a provincial program
- the assumption that it would be an area where finding a job would be relatively easy
- the weather

#### Supporting the people of Ukraine and the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel

The final topic discussed was the fact that Ukrainians had come to Canada since the Russian invasion in February 2022. While all the participants were aware of that fact, only a few had heard any recent news or developments on that topic.

There was broad support for Canada accepting Ukrainians and their families, including for the fact that more than 100,000 Ukrainians and their families had come to Canada since the invasion. It was seen as the “right thing to do” to help those in need. Participants explained that Canada has a lot of room and that there already is a large Ukrainian diaspora who could support their compatriots.

Awareness of the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET) was very low. Once explained, this approach was generally supported and seen as a good way to help those in need quickly while ensuring they could “hit the ground running” once here. The following are some questions that were raised about the program:

- How would it be determined, or who would determine, when it would be safe to return?

- Will Ukrainians who benefited from the initiative be allowed to stay in Canada if they want to? What if the war were to continue and Ukrainian refugees successfully settled in and integrated into Canada? What if rebuilding after the war is too difficult?

In response to the question about whether the Government of Canada should introduce a special program to allow Ukrainians who came as extended visitors to stay permanently, the feedback was mixed and many participants were not sure what the best way forward was. Some said that since they came under a special program, there should also be a special follow-up program for those who want to stay. Others said that they should fall under the usual pathways for temporary residents if they want to apply for permanent residency or citizenship and that it would not be fair to others who have applied and are also waiting—that “jumping the queue” should not be allowed.

Moving forward, most participants said that the extended visitor visa program should also be applied to others who live in armed conflict areas elsewhere in the world. Again, it was seen as the fair thing to do. While there was general support for doing so, some said that it should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Others said that the program should be evaluated first and that better plans should be in place before applying it in the same way again.

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### 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.

### Political neutrality certification

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Quorus Consulting Group Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the [Policy on Communications and Federal Identity](#) and the [Directive on the Management of Communications – Appendix C](#).

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 grid background.

March 2, 2023

Rick Nadeau, President

Quorus Consulting Group Inc.