

# CANADIANS STRONGLY SUPPORT IMMIGRATION, BUT DON'T WANT CURRENT LEVELS INCREASED

Nik Nanos

In his latest exclusive poll for this special *Policy Options* issue on immigration, Nik Nanos finds that an overwhelming majority of Canadians thinks that immigration is a positive feature of Canada and that it is good for the country. Canadians also generally believe that immigrants blend in well here, that governments should do more to help them settle and that guest workers should be eligible for workers' benefits such as employment insurance. They also support dual citizenship. However, they believe immigration levels should not be increased but should be maintained at the current level or reduced.

Selon un sondage réalisé en exclusivité par Nik Nanos pour *Options politiques*, une forte majorité de Canadiens considèrent que l'immigration apporte une contribution positive à leur pays. Dans l'ensemble, ils estiment en outre que les immigrants s'intègrent bien, que les gouvernements devraient faire davantage pour les aider à s'établir et que les travailleurs temporaires étrangers devraient être éligibles aux avantages sociaux comme l'assurance-emploi. Les Canadiens se disent aussi favorables à la double citoyenneté. Cependant, ils ne souhaitent pas voir augmenter le niveau d'immigration, préférant qu'il soit maintenu à son niveau actuel ou réduit.



Canadians overwhelmingly support immigration and see it as a positive feature of our country, but a strong majority believes immigration should be maintained at the current rate of nearly 250,000 per year or decreased.

These are the principal findings of the latest Nanos Research poll for *Policy Options*, conducted by telephone with 1,008 randomly selected Canadians between May 29 and June 3, 2010.

Four Canadians in 5 agree (65.3 percent) or somewhat agree (16.1 percent) that immigration is "a key positive feature of Canada as a country." About 1 Canadian in 6 disagrees (11.8 percent) or somewhat disagrees (4.2 percent) with this statement (question 1).

Yet when asked if immigration levels should be increased, decreased or maintained at present levels, Canadians are much more ambivalent. Only 1 in 5 (21.4 percent) believes immigration should be increased, while nearly 4 in 10 (38.9 percent) believe present levels should be maintained. One in 3 (32.4 percent) believes immigration should be decreased (question 2).

While these conflicting findings might appear counter-intuitive, they are logically consistent with the current eco-

nommic cycle. In good times, with the economy growing, Canadians would likely be more supportive of bringing in as many immigrants as there are jobs to be filled. In the present economic cycle, coming out of a severe recession, they are more supportive of the status quo. In other words, immigration is a good thing, but we don't want too much of a good thing.

Just as Canadians regard immigration as a positive feature of the country, they also regard it as vital to strengthening the economy. Seven Canadians in 10 agree (51.8 percent) or somewhat agree (18.5 percent) that "immigration is one of the key tools Canada can use to strengthen the economy." Only 1 in 4 disagrees (18.9 percent) or somewhat disagrees (6.6 percent) with this assertion (question 3).

Canadians also evince a high degree of sympathy for the difficulties immigrants encounter in settling in a new land. When we asked if governments should do more through language and labour-market support to help immigrants settle in Canada, 2 Canadians in 3 agree (45.8 percent) or somewhat agree that they should (19.9 percent). Only 3 in 10 dis-

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agree (24.5 percent) or somewhat disagree (6.2 percent) (question 4).

And to a remarkable degree, Canadians are also sympathetic to the plight of temporary foreign workers in terms of their access to benefits to employment insurance and workers' compensation.

Seven Canadians in 10 agree (55.4 percent) or somewhat agree (15.7 percent) that temporary foreign workers "should enjoy the same rights as other workers" (question 5). While this finding is quite striking, it is also logically consistent in the sense that Canadians understand visiting workers are likely the least fortunate in the labour force, enjoying none of the benefits of our wealthy society, even as their fruit of their labours — often quite literally — helps Canadians enjoy a better life. This likely explains the high

degree of empathy for the predicament of guest workers.

Canadians also believe that, by and large, immigrants fit in well. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "do not blend in at all" and 5 is "blend in completely," 2 in 3 feel that immigrants blend in here, rating 3 through 5 on a 5-point scale, while 3 in 10 think new permanent immigrants do not blend in at all (9.2 percent) or blend in very little (19.8 percent) (question 6).

Finally, when we asked if Canadians should be allowed to hold dual citizenship, 7 in 10 agreed (58.9 percent) or somewhat agreed (11.8 percent). One Canadian in 4 disagreed (21.0 percent) or somewhat disagreed (4.2 percent) (question 7). This response could be subject to current events, such as the hostilities between the Israelis and Hezbollah in

the summer of 2006, when the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade spent millions of dollars evacuating dual citizens of Canada and Lebanon during. In other words, Canadians likely support the right of other Canadians to hold another passport, provided taxpayers are not significantly burdened by it.

Overall, the results of this poll are very positive on immigration and related issues, subject only to the caution that in difficult times, such as those we have recently experienced, Canadians generally do not want immigration levels to be increased.

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**Question 1. Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement: Immigration is a key positive feature of Canada as a country?**

		Total N	Agree %	Somewhat agree %	Somewhat disagree %	Disagree %	Unsure %
<b>Region</b>	Canada	1,008	65.3	16.1	4.2	11.8	2.6
	Atlantic	97	63.6	19.4	3.1	10.8	3.1
	Quebec	251	66.5	20.3	6.1	6.6	0.6
	Ontario	300	65.4	16.2	4.0	12.0	2.4
	Prairies	214	63.3	12.0	3.8	15.8	5.1
	BC	145	67.2	12.3	2.7	15.0	2.8
<b>Gender</b>	Male	507	66.4	16.6	4.3	11.3	1.5
	Female	500	64.2	15.6	4.2	12.2	3.8
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	198	62.9	18.1	4.8	10.5	3.8
	30 to 39	194	73.8	13.8	3.8	6.9	1.9
	40 to 49	217	65.7	17.4	3.0	11.9	2.0
	50 to 59	172	61.5	12.4	5.3	18.6	2.2
	60 plus	227	62.9	17.8	4.4	11.7	3.2
<b>Home</b>	Own	745	66.3	16.4	3.9	11.3	2.0
	Rent	226	61.1	16.1	5.0	13.5	4.3
	Refused	37	70.9	9.0	4.9	10.2	5.1
<b>Vote profile</b>	Liberal	220	73.6	14.2	1.9	8.6	1.7
	Conservative	277	62.9	16.7	4.1	14.3	2.0
	NDP	158	68.5	18.4	2.8	7.2	3.1
	Bloc	71	61.1	16.0	18.0	4.9	0.0
	Green	38	67.1	23.4	0.0	9.5	0.0
	Undecided	244	59.5	14.4	4.0	17.1	5.0

**Question 2. In 2008, Canada admitted 247,202 permanent immigrants. Do you think Canada should increase, decrease, or keep the same number of new permanent immigrants each year?**

		Total N	Increase number %	Decrease number %	Same number %	Unsure %
<b>Region</b>	Canada	1,008	21.4	32.4	38.9	7.3
	Atlantic	97	26.0	22.5	35.8	15.7
	Quebec	251	17.1	29.6	49.3	4.0
	Ontario	300	19.4	38.6	35.3	6.8
	Prairies	214	22.1	31.0	38.2	8.7
	BC	145	29.2	33.1	31.4	6.4
<b>Gender</b>	Male	507	23.9	28.8	40.5	6.8
	Female	500	19.0	36.0	37.3	7.8
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	198	25.7	22.9	45.7	5.7
	30 to 39	194	25.0	28.8	37.5	8.8
	40 to 49	217	15.4	35.3	42.3	7.0
	50 to 59	172	19.9	42.0	31.9	6.2
	60 plus	227	21.6	33.7	36.2	8.6
<b>Home</b>	Own	745	21.8	31.5	39.2	7.5
	Rent	226	20.4	37.2	37.1	5.3
	Refused	37	19.7	20.3	44.6	15.4
<b>Vote profile</b>	Liberal	220	21.7	31.6	40.0	6.6
	Conservative	277	19.1	36.3	38.4	6.2
	NDP	158	29.5	23.5	41.4	5.5
	Bloc	71	17.3	31.1	47.8	3.8
	Green	38	29.3	23.5	45.3	1.9
	Undecided	244	18.6	36.1	33.2	12.2

**Question 3. Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement: Immigration is one of the key tools Canada can use to strengthen the economy?**

		Total N	Agree %	Somewhat agree %	Somewhat disagree %	Disagree %	Unsure %
<b>Region</b>	Canada	1,008	51.8	18.5	6.6	18.9	4.2
	Atlantic	97	54.3	20.0	2.3	14.4	9.0
	Quebec	251	48.0	23.9	16.4	9.9	1.9
	Ontario	300	52.8	17.1	2.5	24.6	3.1
	Prairies	214	53.8	15.9	3.6	20.9	5.8
	BC	145	51.7	15.0	5.1	23.2	4.9
<b>Gender</b>	Male	507	55.5	17.5	5.5	18.5	3.0
	Female	500	48.0	19.5	7.7	19.4	5.4
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	198	51.4	18.1	5.7	19.0	5.7
	30 to 39	194	53.1	18.8	8.1	16.3	3.8
	40 to 49	217	51.7	17.4	7.5	19.9	3.5
	50 to 59	172	49.6	16.4	8.0	23.9	2.2
	60 plus	227	52.7	21.3	4.1	16.5	5.4
<b>Home</b>	Own	745	52.4	19.6	6.2	17.7	4.1
	Rent	226	49.8	15.7	8.4	22.0	4.1
	Refused	37	50.9	13.2	3.3	25.6	7.0
<b>Vote profile</b>	Liberal	220	51.7	18.2	5.2	19.8	5.1
	Conservative	277	56.0	16.8	4.9	18.5	3.7
	NDP	158	58.6	18.3	3.8	16.6	2.7
	Bloc	71	49.8	18.1	23.6	8.5	0.0
	Green	38	42.3	23.5	8.8	25.4	0.0
	Undecided	244	44.8	20.1	6.2	22.2	6.8

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**Question 4. Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement: Governments should do more to help immigrants settle (e.g., language classes and labour market support?)**

		Total N	Agree %	Somewhat agree %	Somewhat disagree %	Disagree %	Unsure %
<b>Region</b>	Canada	1,008	45.8	19.9	6.2	24.5	3.6
	Atlantic	97	47.7	25.2	3.6	20.8	2.8
	Quebec	251	53.9	23.0	8.9	13.4	0.9
	Ontario	300	43.3	17.9	4.0	31.7	3.0
	Prairies	214	45.8	13.6	6.9	28.6	5.1
	BC	145	35.7	24.3	6.8	25.5	7.6
<b>Gender</b>	Male	507	45.9	19.5	5.9	25.8	2.9
	Female	500	45.7	20.3	6.6	23.2	4.2
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	198	47.6	26.7	4.8	18.1	2.9
	30 to 39	194	56.9	16.3	5.0	17.5	4.4
	40 to 49	217	38.3	21.9	8.5	27.4	4.0
	50 to 59	172	41.6	19.0	6.2	31.4	1.8
	60 plus	227	45.1	15.9	6.3	28.3	4.4
	<b>Home</b>	Own	745	42.7	21.1	7.7	25.0
Rent		226	56.9	17.7	2.5	20.2	2.7
Refused		37	39.9	10.1	0.0	41.7	8.4
<b>Vote profile</b>	Liberal	220	44.6	22.1	3.6	27.2	2.5
	Conservative	277	40.0	19.9	7.2	29.0	3.8
	NDP	158	49.8	22.6	5.2	18.9	3.5
	Bloc	71	52.3	28.4	6.7	11.1	1.5
	Green	38	64.9	19.5	6.8	8.8	0.0
	Undecided	244	45.9	13.7	7.9	27.1	5.4

**Question 5. Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement: Temporary foreign workers should enjoy the same rights as other workers (e.g., EI and workers' compensation benefits)**

		Total N	Agree %	Somewhat agree %	Somewhat disagree %	Disagree %	Unsure %
<b>Region</b>	Canada	1,008	55.4	15.7	5.8	19.8	3.3
	Atlantic	97	56.7	21.7	2.2	15.0	4.3
	Quebec	251	56.6	16.8	9.7	15.5	1.4
	Ontario	300	53.0	13.4	6.1	24.4	3.1
	Prairies	214	57.9	12.7	4.7	18.6	6.1
	BC	145	53.9	19.0	2.4	22.8	1.8
<b>Gender</b>	Male	507	56.8	14.8	5.9	19.4	3.2
	Female	500	54.0	16.7	5.7	20.3	3.3
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	198	53.3	21.0	2.9	19.0	3.8
	30 to 39	194	55.6	14.4	6.9	18.8	4.4
	40 to 49	217	51.7	21.4	4.5	19.4	3.0
	50 to 59	172	57.1	8.4	7.5	24.8	2.2
	60 plus	227	59.4	12.4	7.3	18.1	2.9
	<b>Home</b>	Own	745	53.3	16.9	6.8	19.5
Rent		226	60.5	13.2	3.3	21.2	1.8
Refused		37	66.2	8.1	0.0	17.3	8.4
<b>Vote profile</b>	Liberal	220	55.4	16.5	8.0	16.0	4.1
	Conservative	277	51.0	16.5	4.3	25.8	2.4
	NDP	158	61.9	18.7	3.5	14.2	1.7
	Bloc	71	52.2	19.0	16.5	11.3	1.1
	Green	38	56.8	11.8	2.8	28.6	0.0
	Undecided	244	57.0	11.9	4.2	21.3	5.7

**Question 6. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is do not blend at all and 5 is blend completely, how well do you think new permanent immigrants in Canada blend into their host society?**

		Total N	1 = do not blend in at all %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 = blend in completely %	Unsure %
<b>Region</b>	Canada	1,008	9.2	19.8	41.5	18.3	7.9	3.4
	Atlantic	97	8.3	21.7	43.5	11.0	11.7	3.8
	Quebec	251	4.5	19.5	44.3	22.5	7.7	1.5
	Ontario	300	12.1	19.1	41.7	14.6	7.7	5.0
	Prairies	214	10.5	20.2	38.7	21.5	5.4	3.8
	BC	145	10.1	19.9	38.8	18.7	9.5	2.9
<b>Gender</b>	Male	507	10.1	18.7	41.5	18.9	8.0	2.7
	Female	500	8.2	20.9	41.4	17.7	7.7	4.2
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	198	6.7	21.0	40.0	20.0	9.5	2.9
	30 to 39	194	8.1	16.3	45.0	20.6	6.9	3.1
	40 to 49	217	10.0	18.4	42.8	16.9	9.5	2.5
	50 to 59	172	11.9	24.8	39.4	16.8	5.3	1.8
	60 plus	227	9.5	19.4	40.0	17.1	7.6	6.3
<b>Home</b>	Own	745	9.3	20.4	42.1	17.5	7.8	2.9
	Rent	226	8.8	19.6	39.2	20.5	7.5	4.4
	Refused	37	10.3	9.0	41.1	19.6	11.6	8.4
<b>Vote profile</b>	Liberal	220	7.1	15.7	50.6	18.9	4.9	2.7
	Conservative	277	11.6	23.5	42.8	12.7	5.9	3.5
	NDP	158	7.9	20.6	38.3	24.6	7.5	1.1
	Bloc	71	7.4	18.0	45.7	26.8	1.1	1.0
	Green	38	10.1	16.3	45.6	18.1	10.0	0.0
	Undecided	244	9.6	19.8	31.8	17.4	14.7	6.7

**Question 7. Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement: A Canadian citizen should be allowed to have another citizenship**

		Total N	Agree %	Somewhat agree %	Somewhat disagree %	Disagree %	Unsure %
<b>Region</b>	Canada	1,008	58.9	11.8	4.2	21.0	4.1
	Atlantic	97	62.1	16.0	2.2	14.2	5.5
	Quebec	251	54.2	15.1	8.0	21.0	1.7
	Ontario	300	57.5	8.0	3.1	25.7	5.6
	Prairies	214	62.2	12.0	3.3	17.3	5.2
	BC	145	62.8	10.4	2.7	21.5	2.6
<b>Gender</b>	Male	507	56.6	11.6	4.9	23.8	3.1
	Female	500	61.2	11.9	3.5	18.3	5.2
<b>Age</b>	18 to 29	198	59.0	18.1	1.0	18.1	3.8
	30 to 39	194	67.5	9.4	6.3	13.1	3.8
	40 to 49	217	63.2	11.9	5.0	17.4	2.5
	50 to 59	172	52.7	11.1	3.5	29.6	3.1
	60 plus	227	52.1	8.6	5.1	27.3	7.0
<b>Home</b>	Own	745	58.1	11.9	4.7	21.8	3.5
	Rent	226	59.9	12.2	2.8	19.3	5.8
	Refused	37	68.7	6.5	3.3	16.4	5.1
<b>Vote profile</b>	Liberal	220	63.2	9.3	3.7	20.3	3.6
	Conservative	277	53.5	11.9	4.4	23.8	6.4
	NDP	158	62.0	12.7	5.2	19.6	0.5
	Bloc	71	57.8	8.9	7.3	25.0	1.0
	Green	38	69.1	8.7	2.0	18.3	1.9
	Undecided	244	57.9	14.5	3.3	18.7	5.6

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