

IMMIGRATION

Canadians Prefer High-Skilled Workers, But See Immigrants as Underutilized

Two-thirds support government-sponsored amendments, but large majorities claim immigrants are having a tough time finding work.

[VANCOUVER – Jun. 23, 2008] – The results of a comprehensive Angus Reid Strategies poll on immigration show a Canadian public that appears torn between the push to make the country attractive to high-skilled workers, and the actual difficulties encountered by immigrants when they attempt to find adequate work in Canada.

The online survey of a representative national sample also reveals that Canadians are mostly satisfied with the recent changes to immigration guidelines enacted by the federal government, and express preference for encouraging newcomers to settle in rural areas. In addition, respondents are not too informed on the actual figures that have fueled recent debates on immigration.

What the Immigration System Should Do

Respondents to this Angus Reid Strategies survey were provided with a list of eight directives, and asked to rate their importance as part of Canada's immigration system.

More than four-in-five respondents believe attracting high-skilled workers who want to immigrate to Canada (83%) and attracting entrepreneurs and investors who can start a business in Canada (81%) are very or moderately important policies.

Having temporary worker programs to address specific skill shortages is third on the list with 72 per cent, followed by encouraging foreign students to stay in Canada after they obtain their degrees with 67 per

KEY FINDINGS

- **83% think attracting high-skilled workers is important to Canada**
- **66% support the proposal to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act**
- **65% believe the new rules will help ease labour shortages in Canada; 49% believe they will lead to unfair and arbitrary decisions affecting immigrants**
- **85% think there are too many immigrants in Canada who are not working in their fields of study or experience**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From June 6 to June 7, 2008 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,001 adult Canadians. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.1 %, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

cent, offering refugee protection to people who may be at risk in their countries of birth with 66 per cent, working to expedite the adoption of foreign children by Canadian citizens and permanent residents with 52 per cent, and reuniting foreign-born residents with family members who live abroad with 44 per cent. Attracting low-skilled workers who want to immigrate to Canada was regarded as a priority for just 25 per cent of respondents.

The survey shows that high-skilled foreign workers and businesspeople are seen as the cornerstones of the immigration system, followed by temporary workers, foreign students and refugees. Less than half of respondents think it is important for Canada to reunite families and attract low-skilled workers.

The Government's Immigration Amendments

The recently passed government proposal to amend Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act garners the support of 66 per cent of respondents, including 73 per cent of males, 69 per cent of Canadians aged 55 and over, and 71 per cent of those with at least one university degree.

Two-thirds of respondents (65%) believe the new rules will help ease labour shortages in Canada, and three-in-five (59%) think they will effectively reduce processing times for immigration applications. However, half of Canadians (49%) believe the guidelines will lead to unfair and arbitrary decisions affecting prospective immigrants, and two-in-five (41%) fear they will negatively affect the process of family reunification.

Other Changes to Immigration Rules

Respondents to the survey were provided with four ideas to revamp Canada's immigration system. More than two-thirds of Canadians (71%) believe new immigrants should be encouraged to settle in rural areas, rather than urban centres, and a majority of respondents believe Canada should attract immigrants primarily from industrialized countries (58%) or people who come from English- and French-speaking countries (55%). A slim majority (51%) also voiced support for reducing the number of immigrants who enter Canada each year.

The Life of Immigrants in Canada

Despite their inclination to support the influx of high-skilled workers, Canadians are aware of the difficulties that some of these immigrants face when they arrive. Respondents believe that there are too many immigrants in Canada who are not working in their fields of study or experience (85%), and that there are too many immigrants in Canada whose qualifications are simply unnoticed by employers (75%).

Three-in-five respondents (61%) also deem Canada's immigration system as elitist, because the applications of people who had better opportunities in their home countries are more likely to be successful. More than half of respondents (55%) also claim that the family reunification guidelines provide little benefit to Canada and Canadians.

Perceptions on Immigration

Finally, the survey sought to find out how many Canadians are aware of some specific numbers related to immigration. Only 12 per cent of respondents correctly responded that the number of foreign workers who come to Canada each year under existing temporary worker programs stands between 75,000 and 100,000. More than three-quarters of respondents thought fewer temporary workers were allowed into Canada annually.

On the topic of foreign students who come to Canada to take courses at a school, college or university (not counting those who come to Canada to learn English or French), 12 per cent of respondents accurately calculated the number as between 100,000 and 150,000. Only three-in-ten Canadians (30%) are aware that one of every six residents of Canada was born outside of the country.

Immigration

Thinking about Canada's immigration system, please say whether each of the following directives is very important, moderately important, not too important, or not important at all to you.
(Very Important and Moderately Important listed)

	Region						
	National	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Attracting high-skilled workers who want to immigrate to Canada	83%	83%	86%	83%	82%	84%	80%
Attracting entrepreneurs and investors who can start a business in Canada	81%	79%	75%	79%	81%	87%	76%
Having temporary worker programs to address specific skill shortages	72%	70%	71%	74%	69%	78%	72%
Encouraging foreign students to stay in Canada after they obtain their degrees	67%	62%	64%	73%	63%	76%	68%
Offering refugee protection to people who may be at risk in their countries of birth	66%	66%	63%	67%	67%	64%	65%
Working to expedite the adoption of foreign children by Canadian citizens and permanent residents	52%	51%	50%	42%	46%	65%	59%
Reuniting foreign-born residents with family members who live abroad	44%	40%	43%	40%	41%	49%	52%
Attracting low-skilled workers who want to immigrate to Canada	25%	31%	25%	28%	21%	29%	18%

Immigration

As you may know, the House of Commons recently passed a government proposal to amend Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Among other things, the bill would grant the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the power to fast-track immigration applications of skilled workers in categories that are in demand, and reject others. Do you support or oppose this proposal?

	Region						
	National	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Support	66%	66%	73%	74%	66%	67%	56%
Oppose	28%	27%	18%	21%	31%	25%	36%
Not sure	6%	6%	9%	5%	3%	8%	8%

Immigration

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	Gender		Age			Income			Education		
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	\$100K+	HS or less	College/ Tech school	Univ+
Support	73%	61%	60%	67%	69%	61%	69%	75%	59%	67%	71%
Oppose	23%	32%	33%	27%	26%	32%	26%	21%	32%	28%	25%
Not sure	4%	7%	8%	6%	5%	7%	5%	4%	10%	5%	4%

Immigration			
From what you have seen, heard, or read about the proposed changes to immigration regulations, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?			
	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
The new rules will help ease labour shortages in Canada	65%	26%	10%
The new rules will effectively reduce processing times for immigration applications	59%	26%	15%
The new rules will lead to unfair and arbitrary decisions affecting prospective immigrants	49%	39%	13%
The new rules will negatively affect the process of family reunification	41%	38%	22%

Immigration

Here are a few ideas that have been discussed at some point in order to change Canada's immigration system. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following ideas?
(Strongly Agree and Moderately Agree listed)

	Region						
	National	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Encouraging new immigrants to settle in rural areas, rather than urban centres	71%	75%	72%	73%	70%	69%	70%
Attracting immigrants primarily from industrialized countries	58%	60%	59%	64%	57%	56%	53%
Attracting immigrants primarily from English- and French-speaking countries	55%	44%	55%	54%	54%	71%	46%
Reducing the number of immigrants who enter Canada each year	51%	49%	50%	41%	55%	51%	49%

Immigration

Here are a few ideas that have been discussed at some point in order to change Canada's immigration system. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following ideas?
(Strongly Disagree and Moderately Disagree listed)

	Region						
	National	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Encouraging new immigrants to settle in rural areas, rather than urban centres	23%	18%	23%	21%	25%	24%	22%
Attracting immigrants primarily from industrialized countries	36%	32%	33%	27%	38%	38%	41%
Attracting immigrants primarily from English- and French-speaking countries	41%	51%	41%	44%	44%	25%	46%
Reducing the number of immigrants who enter Canada each year	44%	46%	45%	51%	42%	44%	47%

Immigration			
Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?			
	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
There are too many immigrants in Canada who are not working in their fields of study or experience	85%	8%	7%
There are too many immigrants in Canada whose qualifications are simply unnoticed by employers	75%	18%	7%
Canada's immigration system is elitist—the applications of people who had better opportunities in their home countries are more likely to be successful	61%	24%	16%
The family reunification guidelines provide little benefit to Canada and Canadians	55%	30%	16%

Immigration

The following questions also deal with immigration. This part of the survey is not an opinion poll, but rather an exercise geared at understanding public perceptions on immigration in Canada. Please choose the answer that comes closer to your own evaluation.

a) How many foreign workers do you think come to Canada each year under existing temporary worker programs?

Less than 25,000	24%
25,000 to 50,000	32%
50,000 to 75,000	22%
75,000 to 100,000	12% ✓
More than 100,000	11%

Immigration

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b) How many foreign students do you think come to Canada each year to take courses at a school, college or university (not counting those who come to Canada to learn English or French)?

Less than 50,000	40%
50,000 to 100,000	39%
100,000 to 150,000	12% ✓
More than 150,000	9%

Immigration

The following questions also deal with immigration. This part of the survey is not an opinion poll, but rather an exercise geared at understanding public perceptions on immigration in Canada. Please choose the answer that comes closer to your own evaluation.

b) How many current residents of Canada were born outside of the country?

One of every two	6%
One of every four	38%
One of every six	30% ✓
One of every eight	15%
One of every ten	10%

Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.

Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its four offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices San Francisco, New York and London, England. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel (www.angusreidforum.com), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.

Over the last year, Angus Reid has covered five elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes. <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=news&newsid=194>

More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**