

An Immigration System for Canada's Future

Strengthening our Communities

October 2023



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Canada

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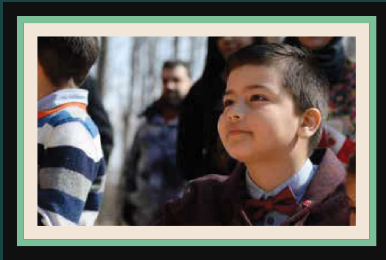
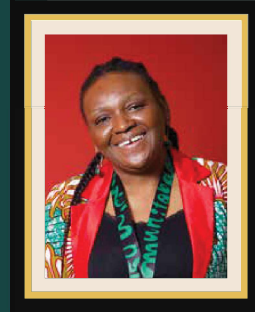
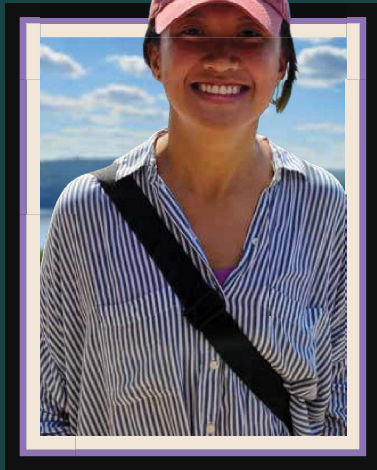
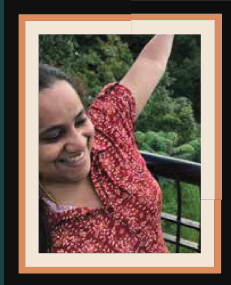
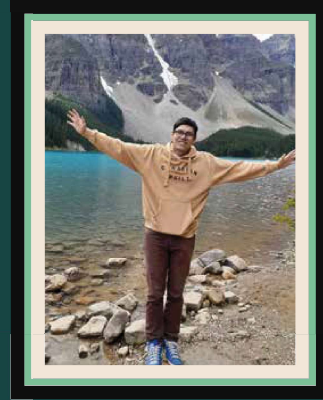
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Table of Contents

Message from the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	5
Context	8
What we heard	25
A plan to get us there	40



An Immigration System for Canada's Future

Minister's message

Minister's message

Canada has a long history of immigration. It is who we are. With the exception of Indigenous communities who have been here since time immemorial, the story of every other family in this country begins with a migrant's journey.

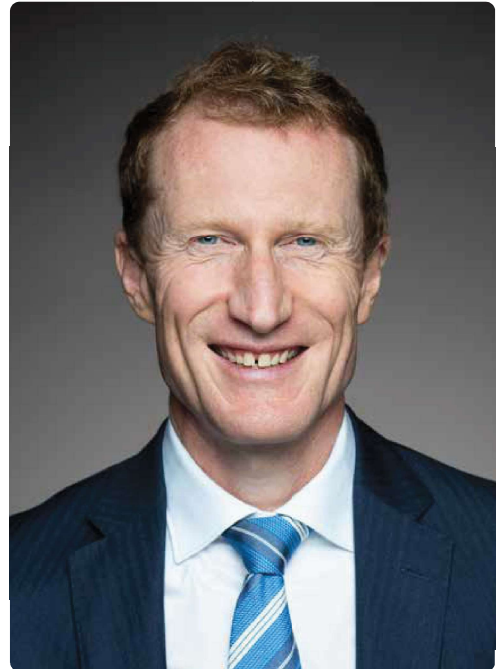
We need immigration to grow our communities, address labour market needs and be able to continue to enjoy the public services we are accustomed to. It is, however, so much more than that. It's the opportunity to connect people to people, to welcome new ideas and innovation, and to take pride in how we, as Canadians, welcome newcomers. Our approach is unique in the world.

I consider myself fortunate to have been appointed Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and I recognize that my work, and the work of my department, is just one part of an important network of support and welcome for newcomers.

When newcomers settle in our country, they come to know Canada first through their journey here, and then through their neighbours and community, schools, businesses, health care professionals, governments and so many others.

It's a life-changing journey. We want it to be positive and rewarding for newcomers, and for our communities.

We also need to ensure that we have the conditions in place for those coming to Canada to settle and integrate successfully. This is a shared responsibility, and we need to work closely with federal, provincial/territorial and societal partners on issues from housing and infrastructure, to jobs and health care.



In 2022, I had the opportunity to co-chair the Task Force on Services to Canadians, with the goal of improving the delivery of government services. Investing in our immigration system, and the technology, policies and processes required to make it work for families, communities and business, was at the forefront of this work.

To fully harness the potential of immigration and create the best experience for newcomers, Canada needs an immigration system that is easy to navigate, integrated and adaptive to change.

While we are making progress on backlogs and processing times, and addressing outdated technology, there is more work to do and there are new ways of doing it.

That's why, in February, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada launched a review of Canada's immigration system, and have spent the last few months meeting with stakeholders, and receiving feedback from people who use the immigration system, and others who have creative ideas on how to improve it. Hearing the strengths and challenges of current immigration programs, policies and services has helped to inform where we need to go in the future and the steps we'll need to take to get there.

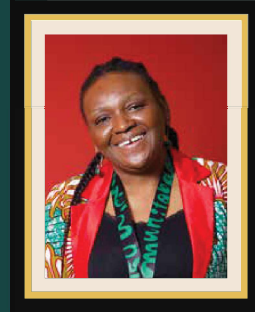
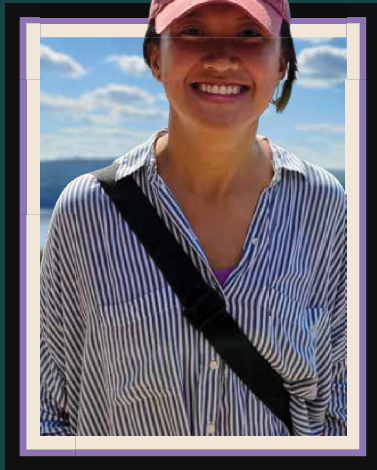
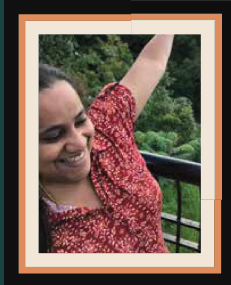
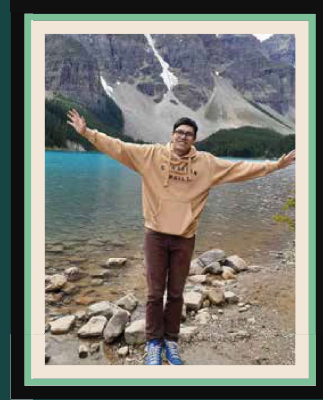
My sincere thanks to everyone who shared their thoughts, ideas and experience and have fed into this report, “An Immigration System for Canada’s Future”. Whether you participated as a government partner, employer, service provider, learning institution, expert, academic, practitioner, client or community member—I appreciate you contributing to this discussion, and inherent in that, I appreciate that you also recognize the importance of this conversation at this time in Canada’s history.

As a country, we’ve been through a lot over the last few years. We’ve seen how quickly change can happen when it needs to happen. Immigration is not the solution to all of our challenges, but it is key to growing our economy and strengthening our communities — its future is something in which we all have a vested interest.

Welcoming newcomers is a team effort. This has been demonstrated through the level of participation and rich discussion that this review prompted. This report is only the beginning of a transformation to the way Canada approaches immigration. I invite you to review the report to learn more about what we heard, where we are headed, and how we plan to get there.



The Honourable Marc Miller, M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship



An Immigration System for Canada's Future

Context

Context

Immigration is a defining feature of Canada. It has contributed, and continues to contribute, to Canada's economy and society in long-standing, meaningful ways. With the exception of Indigenous Peoples, who have called these lands home since time immemorial, everyone who lives in Canada is an immigrant or the descendant of an immigrant.

In the same way that immigration has created the Canada we all enjoy today, immigration is central to our future.

It's important that we attract the people we need to grow Canada's economy, support our diversity and strengthen our communities. We must serve those looking to come to our country in a way that is modern, efficient, fair and transparent while also maintaining the integrity of Canada's borders. The combination of immigrant skills and talent, along with the great source of skills and talent already in our country, will help fill labour market needs now and into the future, foster innovation and fuel investment in our economy.



This is why Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) launched “An Immigration System for Canada's Future.” In close collaboration with other government departments, we undertook extensive engagement to explore how Canada's immigration policies and programs can support a shared vision for our country's future.

Immigration cannot be considered in isolation. Welcoming newcomers is intrinsically linked to housing, health care, education and infrastructure in our communities. These important issues require continued and enhanced collaboration among all levels of government recognizing that, in particular, the challenge of finding affordable housing is acute for many Canadians and newcomers. Immigration can be part of the solution to challenges in these areas by bringing in people and innovative ideas to help address these challenges, and by reversing demographic trends, especially in small and rural communities that depend on immigration to drive population and economic growth. At the same time, we must continue to have a well-managed immigration system, one that has historically resulted in public support for immigration in Canada.

Canada's immigration system is considered world class. However, population trends, migration patterns and international challenges are evolving. To maintain our country's cultural vibrancy, resiliency and innovative and economic capacity, we must adapt to address the pressures.

“An Immigration System for Canada's Future” is exploring how Canada's immigration policies and programs can support a shared vision for Canada's future.

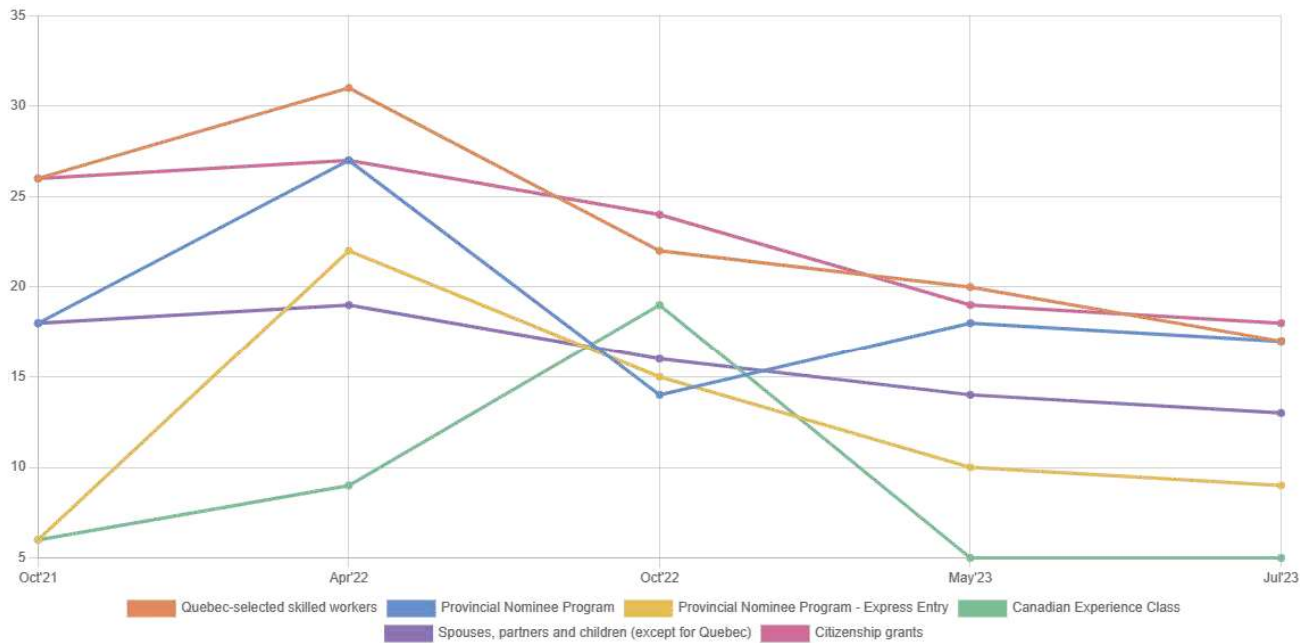


Our current immigration system

The immigration system has been under strain. The COVID-19 pandemic caused shutdowns and operational delays around the world, and led to significant backlogs and processing delays. There has been significant progress, but there is still more work to do. IRCC has been exploring and implementing new digital solutions, adding processing resources and streamlining the way individuals apply for our services.

As a result, processing times for key categories of applications are decreasing.

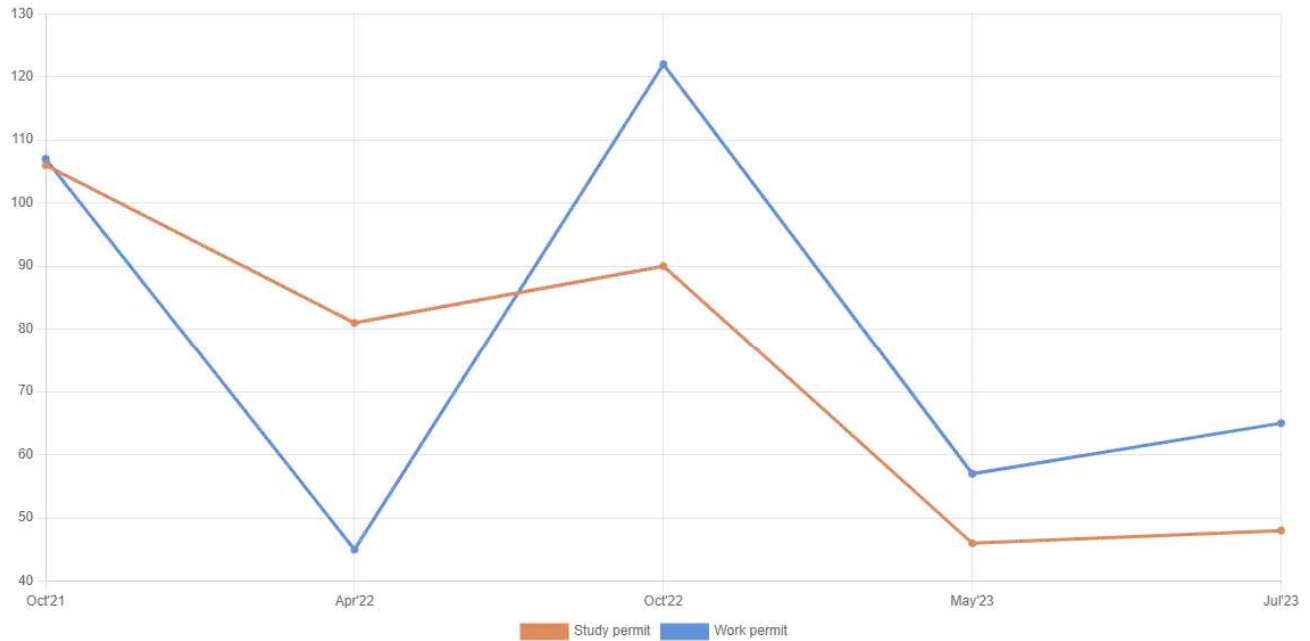
Processing times* (in months) of select permanent residence lines of business and citizenship grants, October 2021 to July 2023



* Processing times refer to the time in which 80% of applications were finalized by IRCC.

Source: IRCC

Processing times* (in days) of study permits and work permits, October 2021 to July 2023



* Processing times refer to the time in which 80% of applications were finalized by IRCC.

Source: IRCC

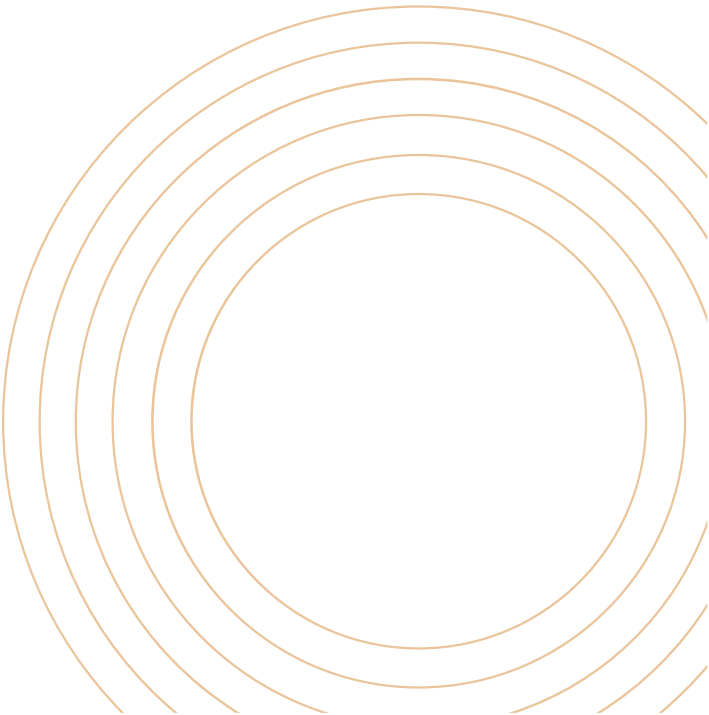
In addition, Canada continues to be a destination of choice for people all over the world. The number of people wanting to settle permanently in Canada, or wishing to study, visit or work here temporarily, is steadily increasing. The world has also faced unprecedented humanitarian crises due to world events, including the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the war in Ukraine, the ongoing conflict in Syria, human rights violations in Iran, and conflict in Sudan. An increase in natural disasters, and events linked to a changing climate, like the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, will continue to create displacement and demand Canada's immigration response.

As Canada is a country with people from all over the world, there are few global events that do not, in some way, impact Canadians.

There is an increasing need for the immigration system to be nimble and respond quickly. The main legislation that enables our immigration system, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, is over 20 years old, and the world has changed drastically. Our application processing system is also showing its age and limitations.

Informed by our partners and by those who have used the immigration system, we want to make sure Canada's proud history of immigration is matched by a modern system that supports our economic recovery, improves the immigration experience, and strengthens our communities. Work to this end is already under way. For example, we've digitized many types of applications and we've introduced several application status trackers. These tools empower people with timely and accessible information on their files.

There is much to be accomplished, but we are well on our way to modernizing Canada's immigration system.



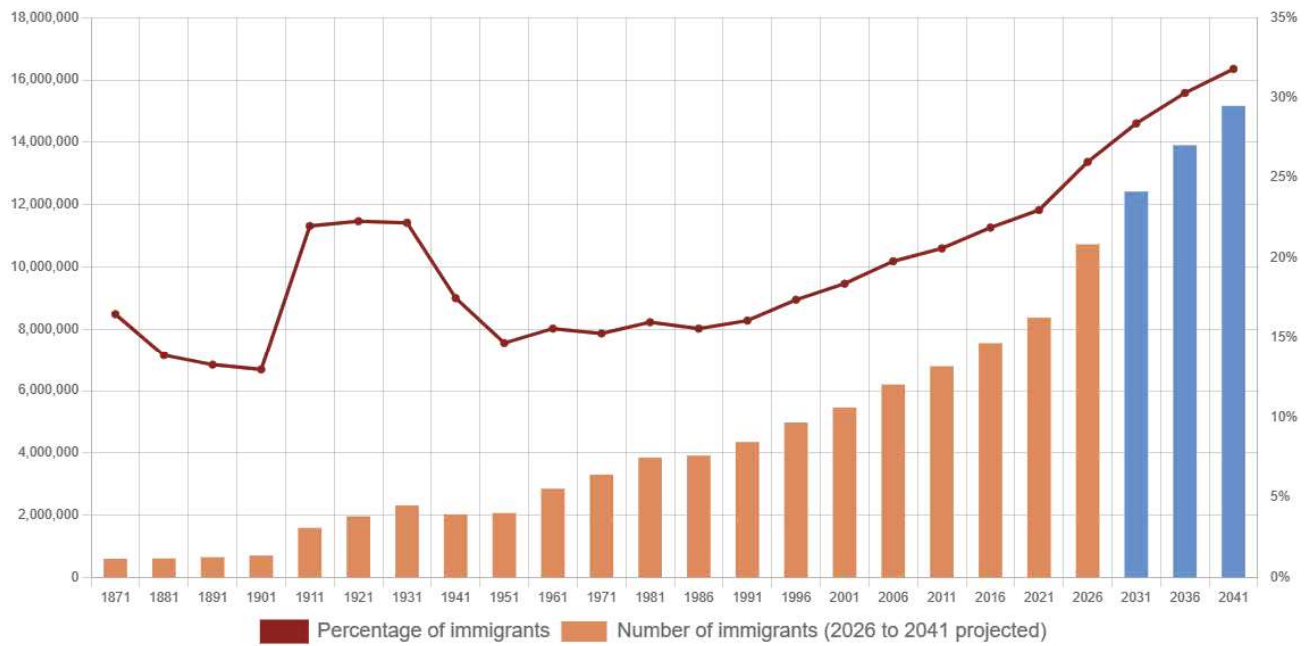
Population

According to the 2021 census, almost one in four people in Canada (23%) are immigrants—the largest percentage in Canada in 150 years and the highest among G7 countries.

23%

of people in Canada are immigrants

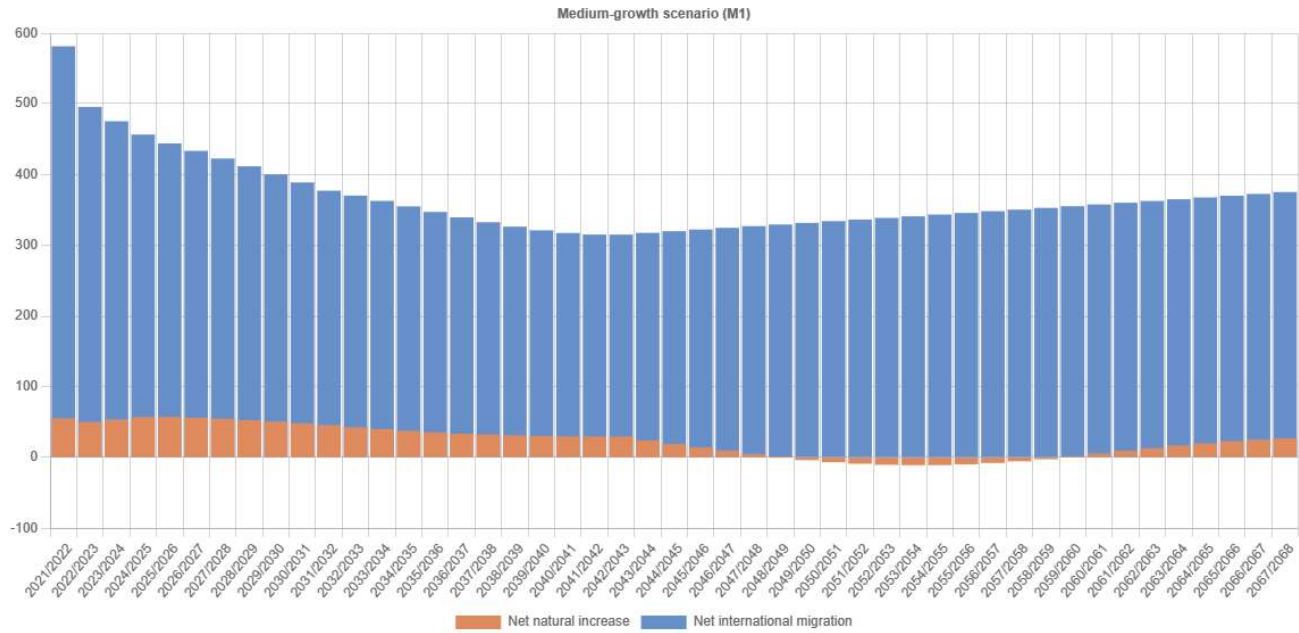
Number and % of immigrants in Canada, 1871 to 2041



Source: Census of Population, 1871 to 2006, 2016 and 2021 (3901); National Household Survey, 2011 (5178); Population projections on immigration and diversity for Canada and its regions, 2016 to 2041 (5126); the presented data are based on the reference scenario.

Immigration will drive 100% of population growth by 2032, while Canadian society continues to age.

Projection scenario: Fast-aging scenario (FA)



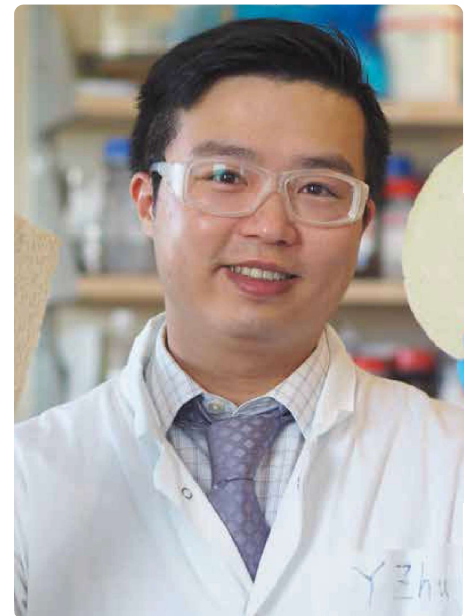
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0058-01 Components of projected population growth, by projection scenario (x 1,000).

#ImmigrationMatters

The strength of Canada’s economy is measured in part by the number of people working (known as the labour force) and paying taxes to fund our public services, such as health care.

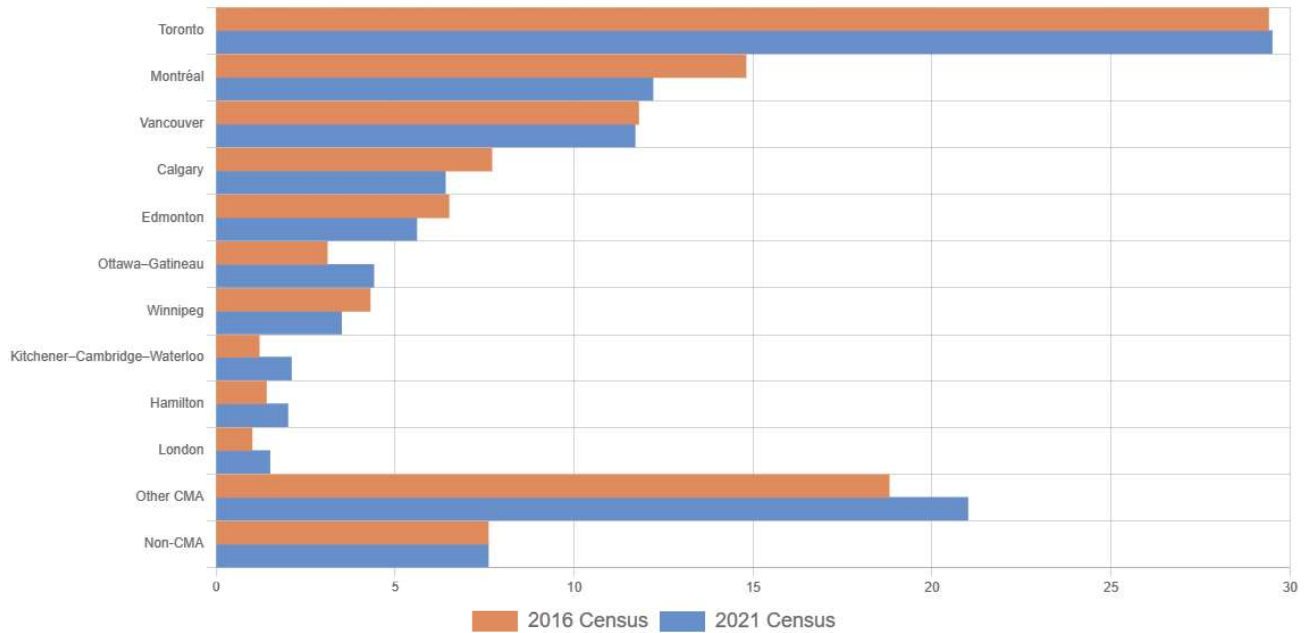
Thanks to immigration, Canada’s labour force continues to grow every year. While funds for public services are vital, welcoming immigrants is also important in helping employers find qualified workers to fill jobs. Canadians are living longer and having fewer children, more people are retiring, and there are fewer students in schools. As a result, the pool of Canadian-born existing and potential workers is limited.

Source: #ImmigrationMatters, IRCC



Increasingly, it is becoming important to spread the benefits of economic immigration to smaller communities. Immigration can support provinces and territories in attracting the skilled newcomers they need to address labour shortages and demographic challenges in their regions. This includes supporting the vitality of Francophone communities outside of Quebec, which is not only a requirement in annual immigration levels planning, but remains an overarching goal of the Government of Canada.

Distribution (%) of recent immigrants in Canada, by census metropolitan area (CMA) and census year



Source: Statistics Canada. [Table 98-10-0302-01 Immigrant status and period of immigration by place of birth and citizenship: Canada, provinces and territories and census metropolitan areas with parts.](#)



Immigration trends update: Greater Moncton

According to a 2022 report on immigration in Greater Moncton, immigration is, by far, the top source of population growth in Greater Moncton. In 2020 and 2021, net interprovincial migration also increased and some of those migrants were immigrants who initially settled in Toronto and other parts of Canada.

This matters because in the new reality of aging populations and tightening labour markets, the jurisdictions that can show an ability to attract and retain talent from around the world will be the best poised to attract investment and grow.

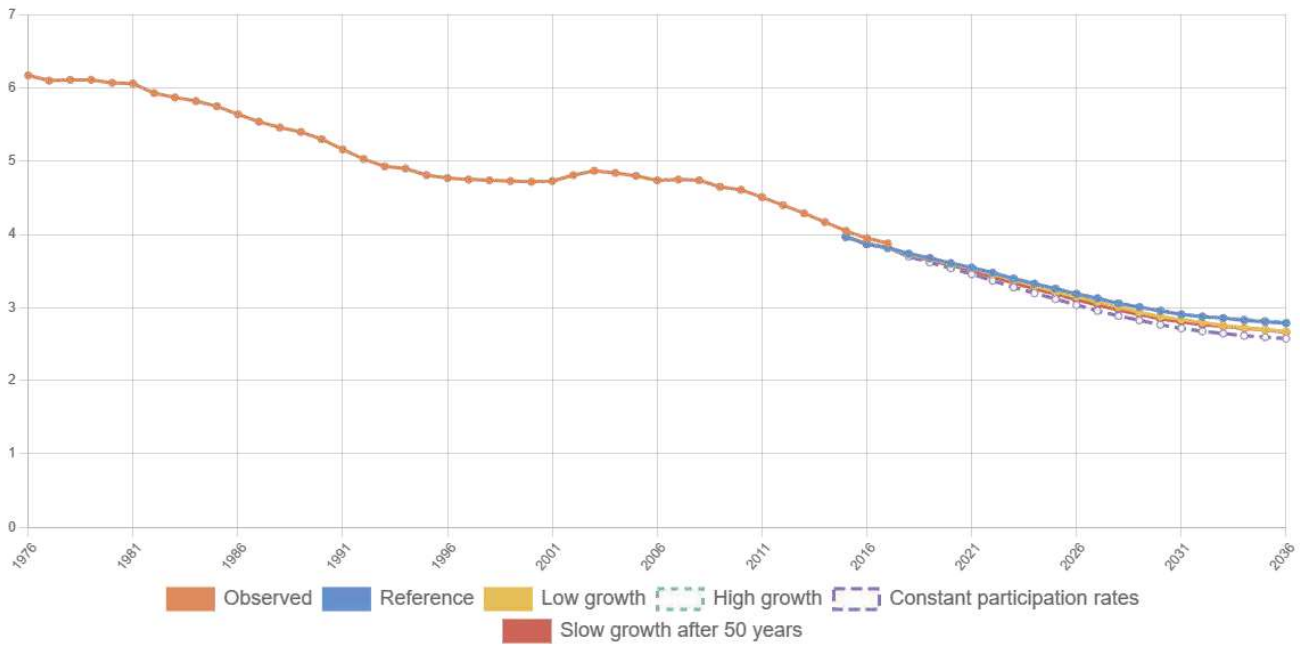
Source: [Immigration Trends Update: Greater Moncton \(2022\) \(PDF, 550 KB\)](#)

Labour market context

Aging populations are not unique to Canada. In fact, much of the world is experiencing the same phenomenon. It means that our share of the working-age population is shrinking.

While 50 years ago, the worker-to-retiree ratio in Canada was 7 to 1, by 2027, it will be only 3 to 1.

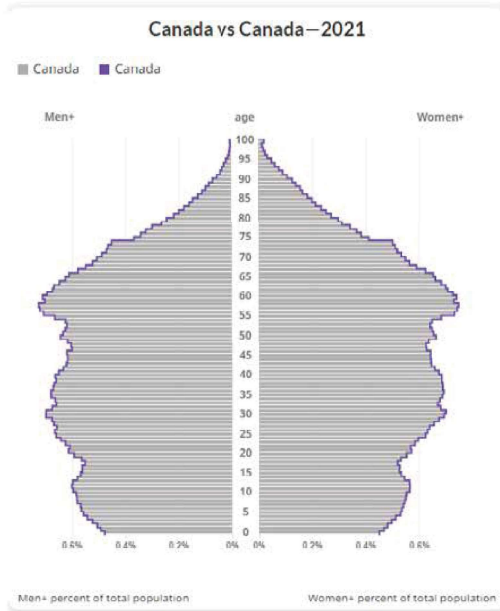
Worker-to-retiree ratio in 5 scenarios



Source: Statistics Canada. Labour Force Survey, 1976 to 2017; Demosim microsimulation model, 2017 (2036).

Age and sex distribution of the population, 2021, Canada

Compares the age and gender structure of the population at three different levels of geography (Canada, provinces, territories, census metropolitan areas, census agglomerations and census subdivisions) through the pull-down menus below. Data are available for the 2021 Census.



Number (proportion)—Age Total		
	Canada	Canada
Men+	18,226,240 (49.3%)	18,226,240 (49.3%)
Women+	18,765,745 (50.7%)	18,765,745 (50.7%)
Total	36,991,985	36,991,985

Median age (Average age)		
	Canada	Canada
Men+	40.4 (41.0)	40.4 (41.0)
Women+	42.8 (42.8)	42.8 (42.8)
Total	41.6 (41.9)	41.6 (41.9)

Source: Statistics Canada. [Age Pyramids](#).

Canada is facing both short-term and long-term labour market pressures, including labour shortages and demographic shifts due to an aging population. Immigration can help mitigate some of these pressures, along with investing in productivity and increasing the labour market participation of under-represented groups, including women, people with disabilities, racialized Canadians and Indigenous People.



Job Vacancy Rate

Current job vacancies (Q2 2023):

780,200

Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

#ImmigrationMatters

Immigrants deliver and improve our health and social services.

Because many immigrants are young and economically active, they contribute more than they receive in benefits over their lifetime.

According to the 2021 Census, more than 468,000 immigrants work in health-related occupations.

Source: [#ImmigrationMatters](#), IRCC

To ensure Canada is not only filling in-demand jobs today but also attracting the skills and business talent to create the jobs of tomorrow, the Government of Canada is embracing its emerging role as a leader in global tech talent recruitment and attraction.

Canada as a destination for start-up talent

According to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development's (OECD's) Indicators of Talent Attractiveness, Canada is ranked as the most attractive country for immigrant start-up founders and entrepreneurs, compared to all other OECD countries.

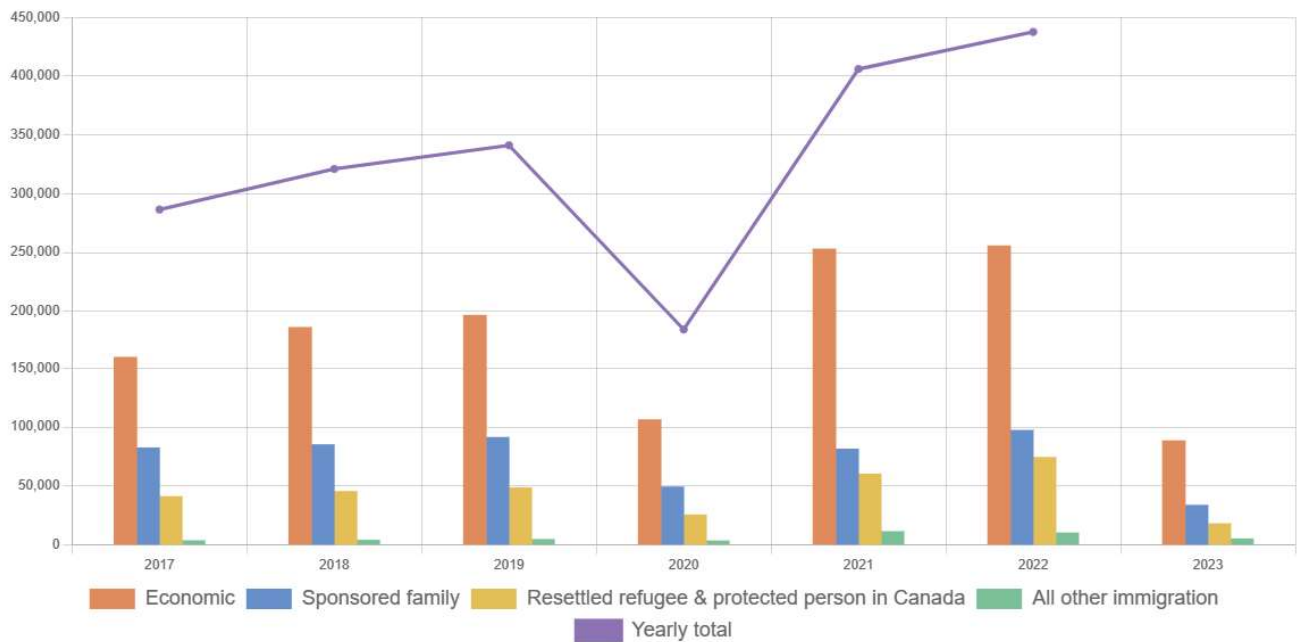
Source: [OECD Indicators of Talent Attractiveness 2023 \(PDF, 2.2 MB\)](#)

Immigration levels

In 2022, Canada set a historical record, welcoming over 437,000 permanent residents—the most newcomers to be welcomed in one year in Canadian history. Many of the newcomers we welcomed as permanent residents last year, 35%, were already living, studying and working here as temporary residents, contributing to the country in sectors such as health care, skilled trades, manufacturing and technology.

437,000
permanent residents welcomed in 2022

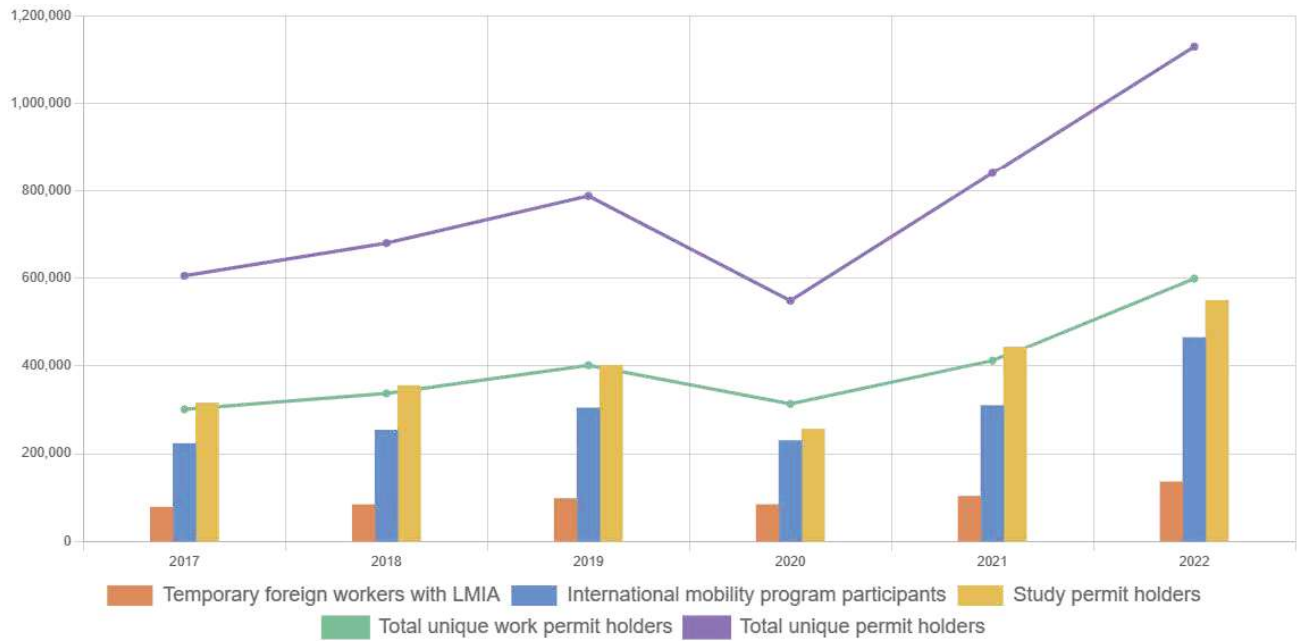
Number of permanent residents by immigration category, 2017 to 2023



Source: IRCC

The number of temporary residents (including temporary workers, students and visitors) keeps increasing and adds to the pressure the system is facing overall. Temporary residents also contribute to Canada’s economic, social, and cultural development.

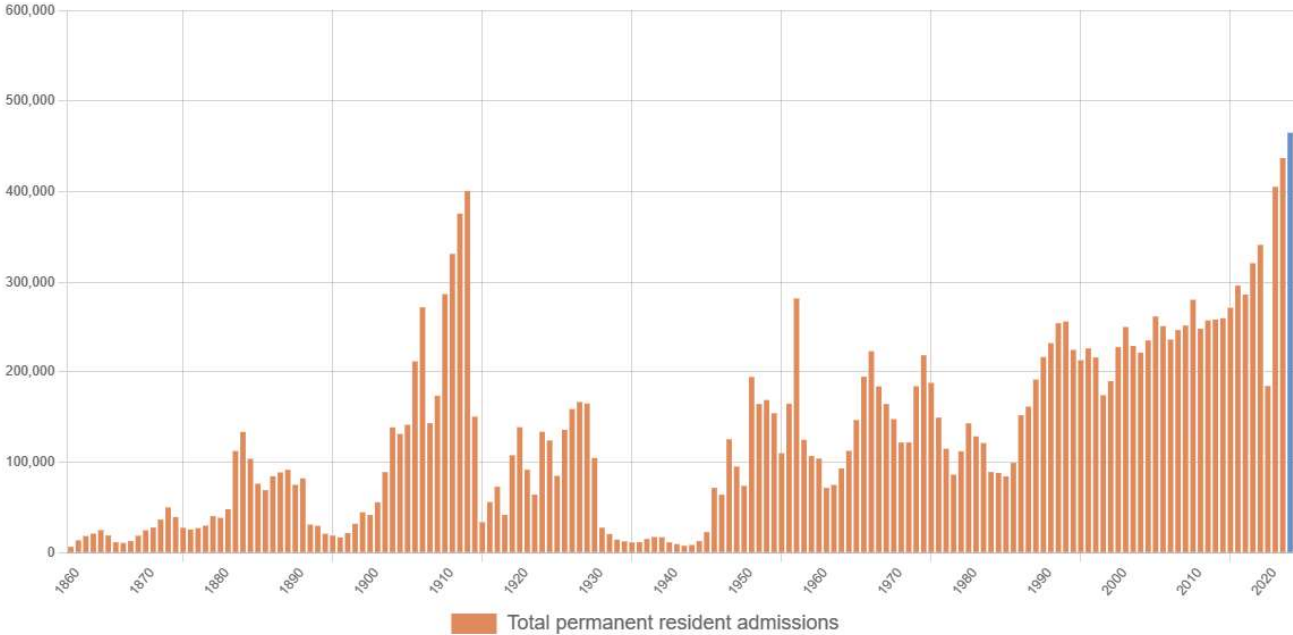
Number of temporary residents by permit type, 2017 to 2022



Source: IRCC

The Government has a multi-year plan for the number of immigrants who will come to Canada as permanent residents.

Permanent resident landings, 1865 to 2023



Source: IRCC

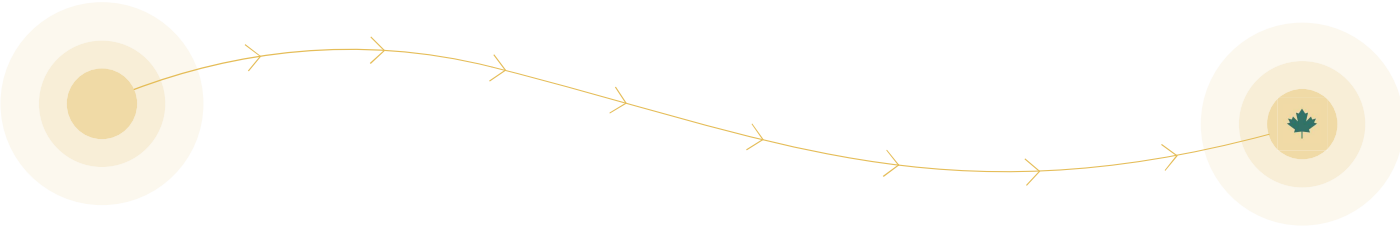
Client service and service standards

The Government of Canada is committed to improving its services.

At IRCC, this includes ongoing work to reduce application backlogs and to improve adherence to service standards.

- A service standard is a commitment to process an application in a certain amount of time under normal circumstances. Not all programs have service standards.
- Processing times tell an applicant how long they can expect it will take IRCC to process an application under normal circumstances.

To keep Canadians up to date on progress toward reducing backlogs, IRCC publishes monthly data on its website.



Migration

With an unprecedented number of displaced people worldwide, Canada is being called on to respond to more complex humanitarian crises and to do so faster than ever before.

Canada's changing role in responding to humanitarian crises has demanded new approaches for managed migration—from the response to the Syrian refugee crisis and human rights violations in Iran, to those fleeing Afghanistan and the war in Ukraine, among others.

100 million people worldwide forcibly displaced

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 100 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of conflict, persecution, human rights violations and violence.

Source: [United Nations Refugee Agency](#)

Canada's response to the situation in Afghanistan

We've resettled over 40,000 refugees and some of the most vulnerable Afghans in Canada through several special measures and programs.

Source: [Canada's response to the situation in Afghanistan](#)

Operation Syrian Refugees

Operation Syrian Refugees was Canada's response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Over the span of 100 days, beginning in November 2015, we worked with Canadian private sponsors, non-governmental organizations and provincial, territorial, municipal governments and international partners to welcome more than 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016.

Source: [#WelcomeRefugees: Canada resettled Syrian refugees](#)

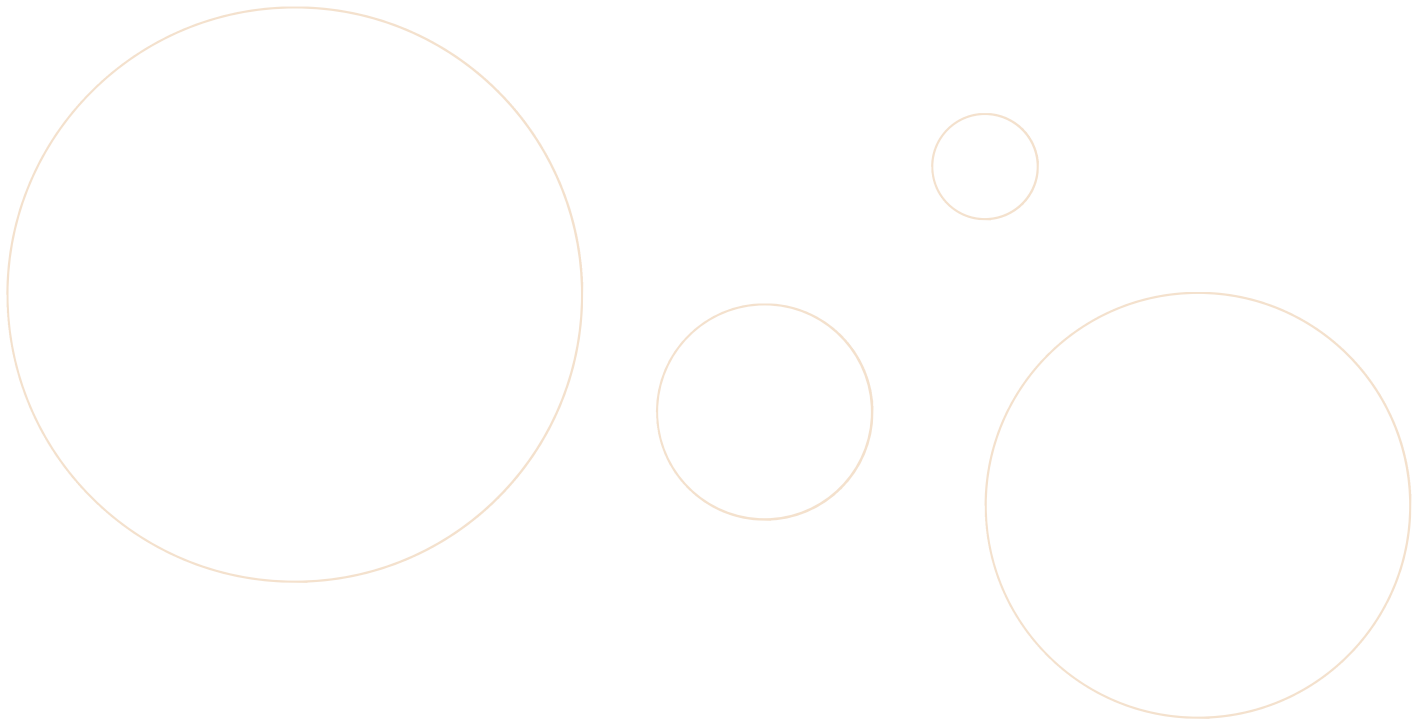
Immigration measures and support for Ukrainians

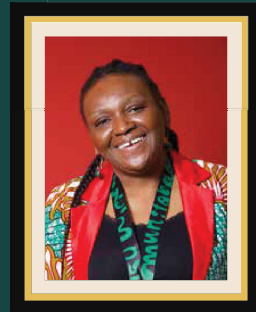
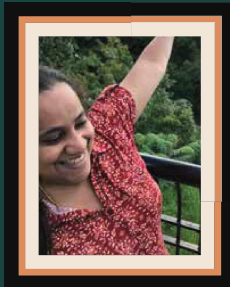
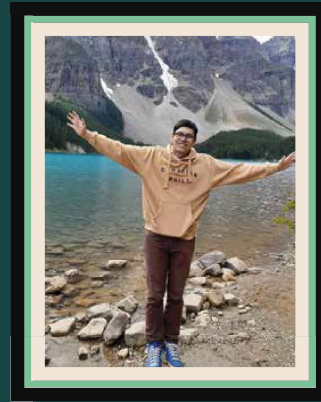
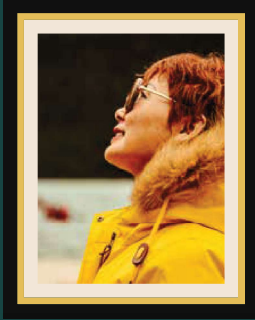
Canada is committed to supporting those affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We're helping Ukrainian families get visitor visas as quickly as possible so that they can find a safe, temporary home in Canada. We're also actively working with provinces, territories and settlement organizations across the country to expand the services available to Ukrainians and their family members while in Canada.

Source: [Immigration measures and support for Ukrainians and their families](#)

Additional immigration responses

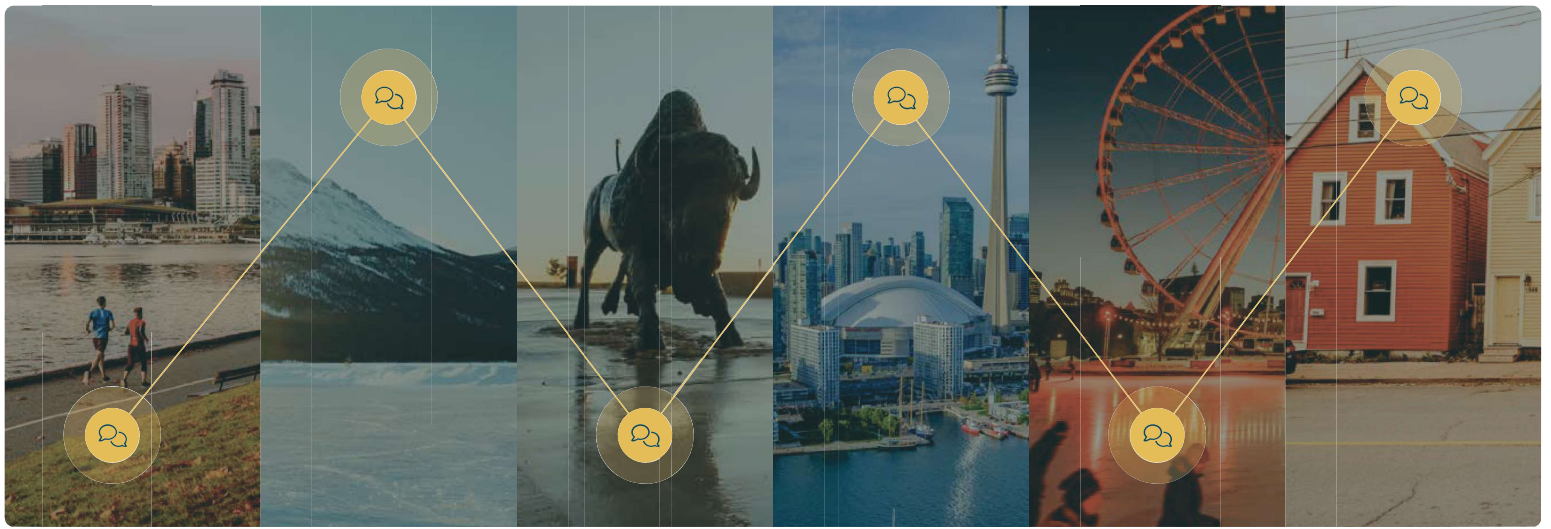
- [Canada makes it easier for Hong Kongers to stay and work in Canada](#)
- [Canada doubles resettlement spaces for human rights defenders](#)
- [Canada announces support for Iranian temporary residents](#)
- [Statement from Minister Miller on Canada's commitment to support migrants in the Americas](#)





An Immigration System for Canada's Future

What we heard



What we heard

Recognizing the historic pressures exerted on Canada's aging immigration system and the opportunities afforded by more modern and agile approaches, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada launched a wide-ranging consultation and review of Canada's immigration system. "[An Immigration System for Canada's Future](#)" was launched on February 23, 2023, to hear directly about how Canada's immigration policies and programs can best support Canada's present and future needs.

The review included broad engagement that covered all components of Canada's immigration system. It was focused on finding solutions to long-standing problems with the system that partners and applicants know all too well. Consultations were in person across Canada, hybrid and virtual. These methods ensured a wide variety and diversity of perspectives.

The invaluable expertise gained through the cross-Canada dialogues subsequently informed a series of more focused discussions with experts and practitioners. Topics ranged from housing, rural immigration, skills and service excellence, to Francophone immigration, refugees and the integrity of the immigration system.

Stakeholders and businesses showed not only their interest in the topics, but their desire to be part of the solution, with some convening their own engagement sessions. Bilateral meetings were held with businesses, thought leaders, Indigenous representatives, youth councils and many others. This exercise also benefitted from feedback shared formally and informally at conferences and events like the Metropolis Canada Conference and the Public Policy Forum Growth Summit. These external engagements were complemented by input from IRCC employees and subject matter experts.

In order to hear directly from Canadians and those who have used the immigration system, we launched a public online survey and received more than 16,000 responses.

“

I've been working in settlement services for over 18 years, and I've never been part of a consultation like this.

Infused in all of these engagement activities was a sincere offer to bring curiosity, knowledge, experience and bold ideas. Participants took us up on this offer and shared their important perspectives directly with senior government officials, including Cabinet ministers, deputy ministers and others.

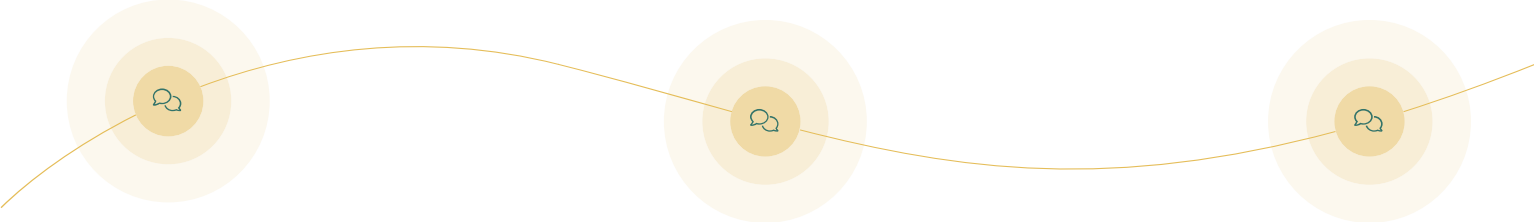
We heard from more than 17,500 voices, including over 2,000 organizations and over 2,100 current or former clients, such as foreign workers in Canada on a temporary basis, international students and permanent residents. Moreover, in order to ensure that we heard from stakeholders and communities who will help us support and grow Francophone immigration outside of Quebec, we held dedicated sessions for Francophone stakeholders.

Immigration is intrinsically linked to many other important pillars of our society, and as a result linked to several other policies and programs. To ensure a holistic approach, we worked with more than 20 federal government departments and agencies, and had several ministers, deputy ministers and parliamentarians participate in the sessions.

Collaboration between the federal government, provinces and territories and municipalities is crucial to strengthening Canada's immigration system and contributing to Canada's long-term economic growth. For this reason, provinces and territories were engaged directly and were invited to provide feedback on the future immigration system and participate in dialogue sessions. Their input has been an important part of this engagement, as has the input from municipalities and groups representing municipalities.

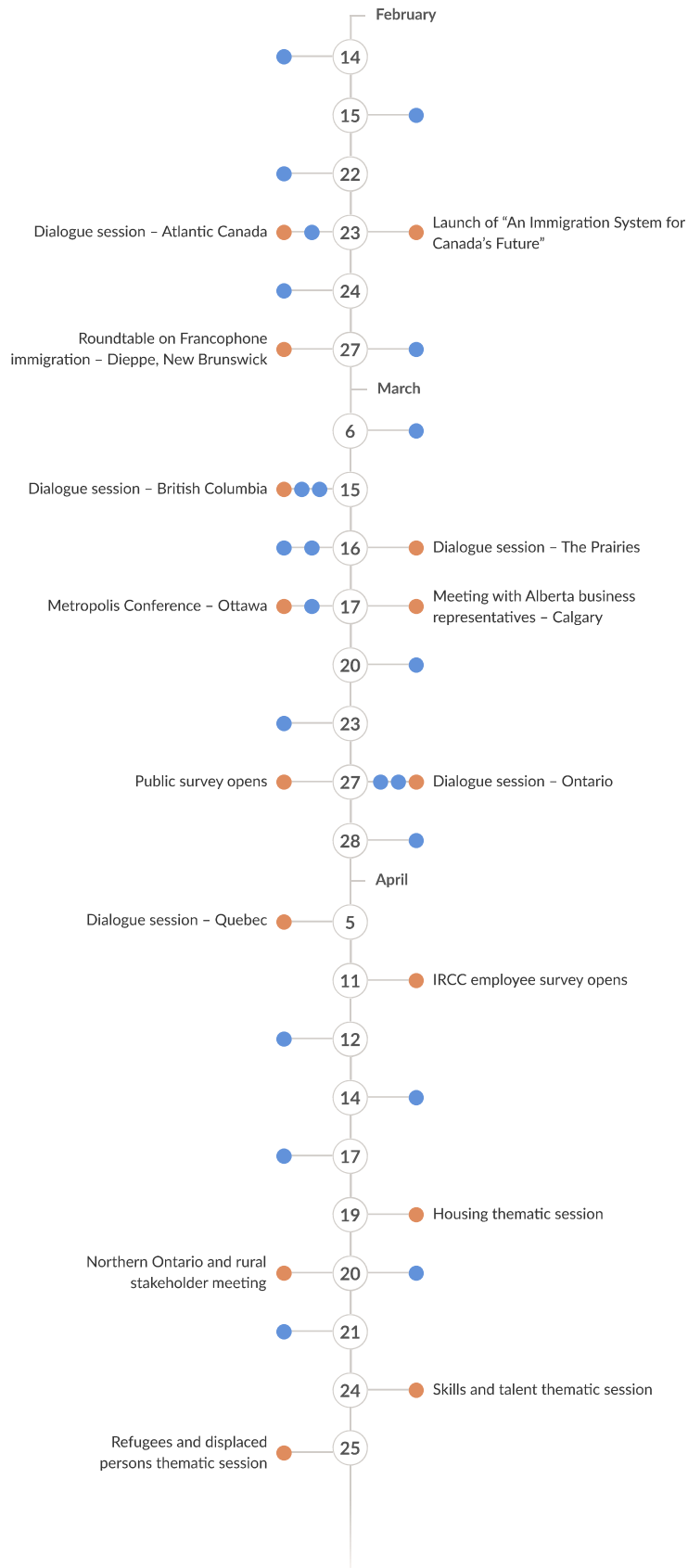
In person dialogue sessions

Thematic sessions



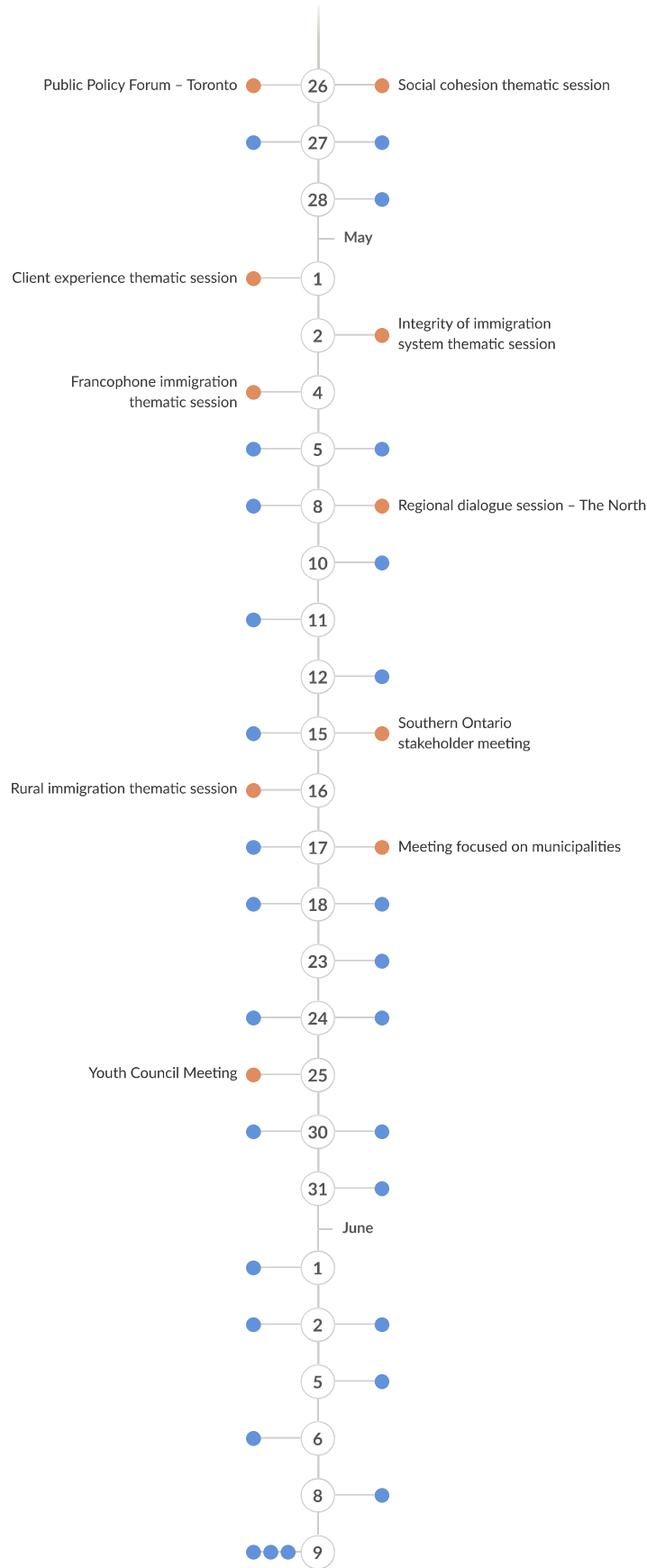
Engagement events timeline

- Key engagements
- Group and bilateral discussions



Engagement events timeline continued

- Key engagements
- Group and bilateral discussions





Key takeaways from engagement

The discussions and ideas advanced by stakeholders were rich, thoughtful, informed and reflective of a diversity of perspectives and experiences. While every conversation led to unique discoveries and conclusions, particular themes began to emerge:

- **Canada has a world-class and well-managed immigration system.** There are orderly pathways for individuals who want to come to the country. The selection of immigrants is rigorous and evidence-based.
- **The system is overly complex and should be simplified with target audiences in mind.** Make it easier to apply to come to Canada, provide clear information on government websites, provide more access to information about the status of applications and provide additional information for employers.
- Immigration places **pressure on housing, health care and infrastructure.** There is a need to ensure that communities can absorb and support newcomers. Immigration can also be part of the solution to addressing these pressures by adding workers in critical sectors.
- **Fast and predictable processing times** are key to Canada remaining competitive in attracting skills and talent, as well as for tourism and bringing families together.
- **Client service excellence** must be at the core of what we do. Reduce duplication in the system, and ensure fairness, accountability and transparency in decision making, with a focus on diversity, equity and anti-racism. Provide support for navigating the system.
- It's important to have **effective tools, mechanisms and partnerships** in place to attract and retain the skills and talent we need to grow our economy (particularly in small, rural and Francophone communities), and take steps to **encourage innovation and entrepreneurship** to remain globally competitive.
- Newcomers are needed to fill critical labour gaps in key sectors under pressure. Their access to the job market, **through integrated job matching and improved foreign credential recognition process**, is key to positive outcomes for immigrants and for the country.



Bring top students to Canada, particularly in areas of study linked to labour market gaps, and work to improve retention of international students to better position us for the future. Provide additional supports to international students and address equity concerns raised about approval rates from different regions of the world.



Ensure comprehensive planning for and information sharing on the arrival, settlement and integration of newcomers, including planning for pressures on areas such as affordable housing, infrastructure and health care. **All levels of government need to work together.** Employers, post-secondary institutions and communities can play key roles in supporting newcomers.



Pathways for temporary residents to become permanent residents are important so that workers and students know there are opportunities to settle in Canada and one day become Canadian citizens. Focus on bringing family units to encourage greater retention.



Be responsive to regional needs: **promote settlement outside of major urban centres to extend the benefits of immigration across Canada.** Learn from targeted regional programs like the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot or the Atlantic Immigration Program. Continue to grow ambitious levels of Francophone immigration and focus on building partnerships and connection, including with Indigenous Peoples.



Maintain Canada's positive international reputation in responding to humanitarian crises. Be prepared to respond quickly and equitably to the crises of the future, given increasing levels of global migration and displaced people, including those due to climate change.



Make changes, as needed, to ensure the right tools are in place to support a decision-making process that is focused first and foremost on people. **The views and lived experience of newcomers should help guide program and policy development.**





- Equitable
- Inclusive
- Transparent
- Proactive
- Responsive
- Flexible
- Agile
- Safe
- Balanced
- Regulated
- Efficient
- Collaborative
- Easy to navigate
- Integrated with social supports
- Human-centered

Vision of Canada's future immigration system

Common key words to describe features of a future immigration system:

More on what we heard through engagement on “An Immigration System for Canada’s Future”

While key takeaways provide a snapshot of input received through the engagement period, it’s important to reflect on some of the more extensive perspectives we heard. These are grouped under four central themes, informed by participants in discussion groups and survey respondents:

- expectations for client service
- greater facilitation for people wanting to come to Canada
- how immigration can contribute to our economy and fill jobs
- what should go into the planning process for immigration and for responding to humanitarian crises





On client service excellence

Stakeholders consistently highlighted Canada's positive reputation as a welcoming destination that offers many opportunities for immigrants to settle and thrive. Processing delays and backlogs were key areas of concern, as was the need to promote transparency, neutralize bias and improve communication with applicants to ensure Canada's reputation is maintained. The department was encouraged to be more user-friendly with rapid, transparent and responsive application processing and selection.

Other ideas that were raised with client service at the forefront:

- **Be timely and clear in communication with clients**, including on the website, and in information on the various program streams, which is sometimes hard to navigate for those looking to come to Canada.



The Canadian immigration system services should work on simplifying the application process and providing clear guidelines and support for immigrants to enable them to easily navigate the process.

- **Process applications faster**, without compromising transparency and equity. Know that timely communication empowers newcomers, businesses and educational institutions to plan effectively.
- Meet local labour market needs more effectively by **helping smaller businesses and other stakeholders navigate the system**.
- Review programs and services regularly to **be agile and continually improve**, especially as new technology and innovations become available.

- Offer a more seamless, **modern and digitized application experience for clients**, with a way to easily get in touch with the department.
- **Make it easier for applicants to receive updates on the status of their file**. Provide more detailed explanations to clients about the outcomes of their applications, particularly in cases of refusals.



Real time updates/status checks on processing should be available.



On a more facilitative system for those applying to come to Canada

Stakeholders want Canada’s immigration system to focus on how to welcome people in, while maintaining safety, security and the integrity of the system, which includes considering any unintended barriers faced by people who legitimately want to come to Canada—either as temporary or permanent residents.

Other ideas for a more facilitative system:

- **Safeguard the immigration system by promoting trustworthy and reputable sources of information** and trusted individuals or organizations that are able to provide assistance in navigating immigration pathways and provide protection from exploitation.
- **Look at options to regularize** (offer permanent residence to) undocumented workers. They are already working in Canada but need certainty in order to fully contribute.
- Recognize that applicants who want to come to Canada temporarily may want to legitimately transition to permanent residence in the future, and **consider the impact of “dual intent” on these individuals.**
- Continue to identify opportunities for temporary workers and students to become permanent residents and **further contribute to Canada’s economic growth.**



Make it fair, just and welcoming.



Modernize the approach to laws in Canada about immigrants and refugees.

- Address concerns of low approval rate for **French-speaking students from Africa.**
- **Value immigrants for the many benefits they bring to Canada and to communities,** beyond supporting economic growth.
- Re-examine rules, regulations and laws that guide programs, policies and decisions to ensure they support **a facilitative approach to immigration.**



On skills, talent and labour

Highlighting the economic contribution of newcomers and immigration that encourages qualified candidates to meet labour market needs is a strength of Canada's current system. However, we must close gaps between newcomer skills and labour market needs, including the recognition of foreign credentials and the under-utilization of the skills of immigrants already in Canada.

The department was encouraged to ensure that the immigration system meets current and future labour market demands, makes it easier for newcomers to live and work in Canada and explores innovative strategies to deal with acute regional, sectoral and seasonal labour shortages and upskilling.

Other insights on this topic include:



Hope Canada can invite more skilled trades and healthcare immigrants to solve labour shortages issues.

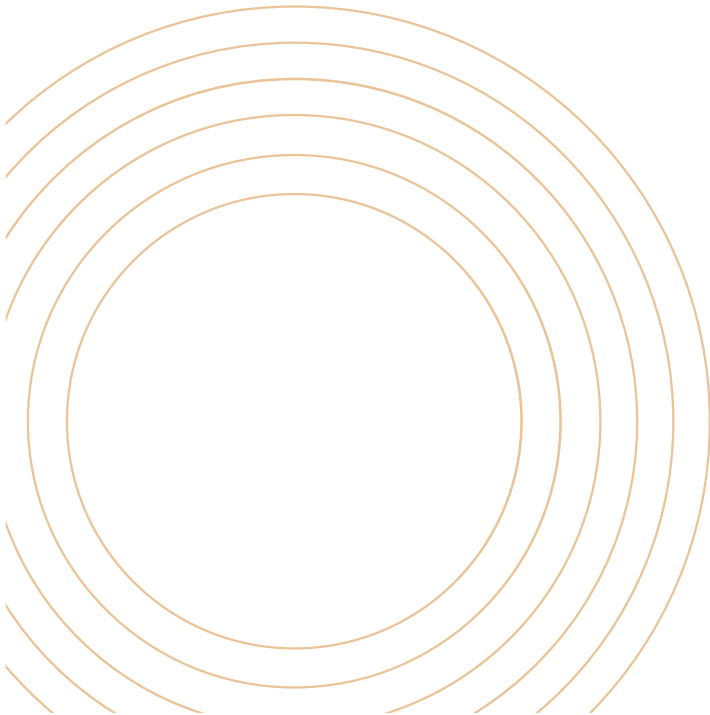
- **Better match** the skills of newcomers with the needs of employers.
- Create the role of a **chief international talent officer** to ensure we are targeting immigration to the skills needed for the labour market of the future.
- **Offer pathways for workers of various skills to meet specific labour needs**, such as for entrepreneurs.
- **Pursue more programs based on partnerships that have high retention rates:** the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP), the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) and the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) are good examples of this.
- Help the International Student Program better align with Canada's labour market needs and **make it easier for international students to enter the labour force.**
- Work with recognized institutions on a partnership model that would ease the administrative burden in bringing in international students, while **ensuring students are treated fairly and have the supports they need to succeed.**
- **Collaborate with other levels of government and businesses to recruit talent** (for example, skills missions).
- Work with provinces and territories and regulatory bodies to **make it easier for immigrants to have credentials recognized.**



Think about students who graduated from Canadian universities, and are working in Canada.

“

We say we want to attract talent, but we don't recognize qualifications. We aren't making use of talent.





On comprehensive planning to welcome newcomers

Public support for immigration was identified as a strength of the current system; however, in order to maintain this support, we must meet the needs of those already in Canada. This was said frequently in the context of housing, infrastructure, health services and available jobs. Immigration planning is about more than the number of immigrants coming to Canada; it is about what is needed to ensure our communities are set up for success.

The network of settlement agencies, employers, libraries, learning institutions and other supports was cited as a strength. Together, these services help newcomers integrate and build connections in their new communities.

While federal, provincial and territorial and municipal governments work together on immigration, evolving labour market needs and pressures on infrastructure will require even closer collaboration between all levels of government.

Other ideas that participants raised:

- Seek input on newcomer-focused programs and policies from those **with lived experience**.
- **Integrate access to affordable housing and health care, including mental health services, when planning the welcoming of newcomers.**

“

Actively and deliberately consult with those who have directly experienced the current immigration system. More bridge building between newcomer and Indigenous communities must be prioritized.

- **Coordinate delivery of services among settlement agencies so it is easier for newcomers to find and access the services they need,** including services provided before arrival to Canada. Recognize an increased need for services in rural and Francophone communities.
- **Consider targeted supports for international students and other temporary residents,** many of whom are likely to make Canada their permanent home.
- Increase preparedness to respond to humanitarian crises with a framework that allows for **consistent and equitable responses to different crises.**

- Collaborate with partners who are experts in the populations we are looking to serve to help identify those in need of protection and respond to the needs of refugees and displaced people.
- Given the growing volumes of displaced people globally, **have a comprehensive strategy that addresses the increased number of people and families seeking asylum in Canada.**

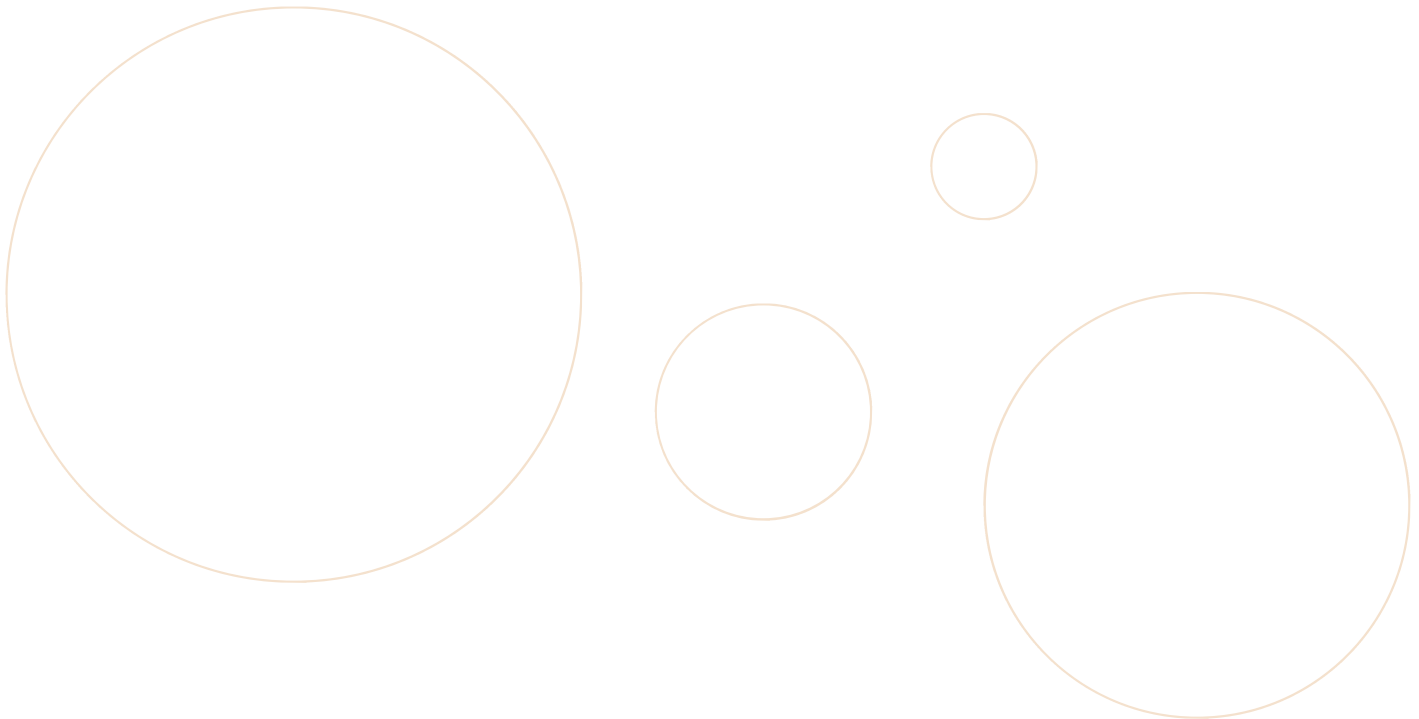
- **Look to collaborate more closely with other levels of government**, including municipalities and local organizations, to better plan for and welcome immigrants.
- **Comprehensive planning for the arrival of newcomers must include dialogue with representatives of Indigenous communities.**

“

Try to find ways to divert new immigrants to live in provinces other than Toronto and Vancouver.

“

Affordable housing needs a whole-of-government approach. All levels of government need to speak (and listen) to each other, as well as to the society at large.

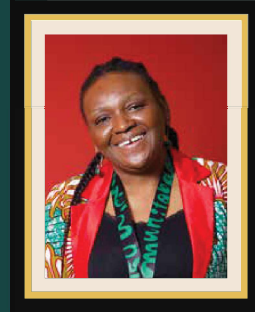
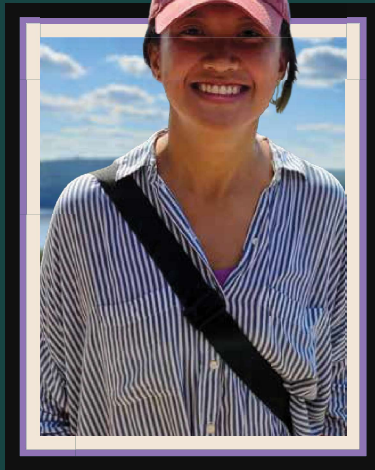
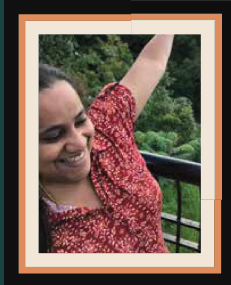
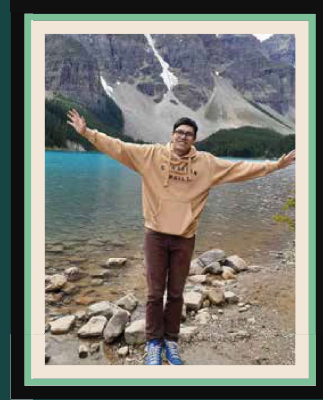
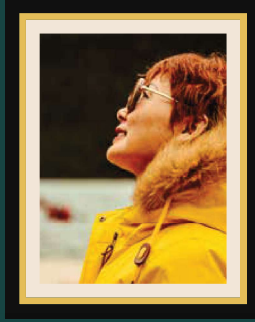




Thank you for the rich discussion and your thoughtful comments

A sincere thank you to all of the individuals, businesses, organizations, experts, practitioners and newcomers who shared their views and ideas on the future of Canada's immigration system. You have taken part in an incredibly valuable exercise, and have helped to inform recommendations for the future of Canada's immigration system.

Ultimately, immigration is sustaining and growing the country that we call home. As we all have a vested interest in what that looks like, we commit to continuing the conversation as we dig deeper into the feedback we've been privileged to hear from you.



An Immigration System for Canada's Future

A plan to get us there

A plan to get us there

Canada is a destination of choice for people from all over the world looking for a new place to work, study and build their lives. Our rich culture and diversity is a reality, at least in part, because of our immigration policies. Our tradition of protecting the world's most vulnerable people and acting as a global leader in refugee resettlement has earned Canada immense respect on the world stage.

In order to maintain our status as a strong multicultural country, and as a destination of choice, our immigration system of the future must be nimble and better meet the needs of our country and of newcomers.

This includes attracting and retaining the people we want and need, ensuring communities can absorb and support them, and maintaining the integrity of Canada's borders. It means aligning our programs with labour market needs, and taking a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to immigration.

What follows is a list of actions to improve Canada's immigration system. It captures months of purposeful conversations with Canadians and experts, as well as the most recent research insights and policy thinking on the future of our immigration system. Some changes are already underway, others are in development.

We are pleased to share the path forward with you.





Create a more welcoming experience for newcomers



The Government of Canada is working to deliver a pleasant and user-friendly experience for all those who use our services—both in Canada and abroad. To compete for global talent, we must be modern and efficient, fair and transparent, predictable, and timely.

A new state-of-the-art operating platform, Digital Platform Modernization (DPM), will underpin these efforts. This new digital platform will maximize efficiency and allow us to better meet the unprecedented level of demand to work, study, visit, and live in Canada. DPM will bring new capabilities—such as an online single window into immigration programs, enhanced automation and digital self-service—and will transform the way we do business. It will speed up processing and improve program integrity, while making the immigration journey clearer and more human focused.

Although it will bring rapid and real improvement, we are not waiting until the new operating platform is available to improve on what we do. The people who use Canada's immigration system are more than applicants or file numbers; they are individuals, families, and employers making life changing decisions. The way we deliver services must first and foremost reflect this.

We will work to make the immigration system more facilitative, and ensure newcomers have an understanding and respect for the integral role Indigenous Peoples have played in Canada's past, present and future.

By improving on how we welcome newcomers, we will further strengthen our labour force, and grow our population to enrich and empower our communities. A welcoming and efficient immigration system does not mean compromising safety and security. In fact, it means more effectively allocating resources to strengthen and streamline our processes, while we maintain the integrity of Canada's borders.

These efforts will bolster the integrity of the immigration system, and the system's reputation as one that reflects fairness and equity, while maintaining public health, safety and security.

Actions

Reduce wait times and improve service standards

➤ **Get application processing times back to service standards for key programs, and re-evaluate them**

- IRCC has made several key investments to boost operational processing capacity and address backlogs, including technological improvements and hiring over 1,200 officers during 2022-2023. We will continue to work towards achieving the stated processing standards, so that applicants can obtain an immigration decision in a timely and predictable manner. Further, IRCC is committed to reviewing current service standards with a human-centric lens to ensure that Canada remains competitive globally.
- Embrace digital tools that allow officers to process requests from different parts of the world more effectively, and the use of Advanced Analytics to automate some determinations for routine cases while ensuring there is no built-in bias.
- Align application intake with available admissions spaces, to prevent years-long waits that applicants can experience when demand far exceeds available spaces. Reducing wait times through admissions intake management will allow applicants and their support networks to better plan for their arrival, making it easier for them to settle and integrate in Canada.

- ### ➤ **Expedite visitor visas, with benefits for tourism, major conferences and events.** As of June 6, 2023, 13 more countries have been added to a partial visa exempt countries list. Now, travellers from 67 countries can apply for an electronic travel authorization (eTA) instead of a visa with most eTA applications approved within minutes. We are also committed to ensuring priority visa processing so those from all over the world attending major conferences and events in Canada that are registered with IRCC, make it there on time.

Actions

Help remove barriers to welcoming in the people we need for the future

- **Examine the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)** to assess the need for legislative amendments or reform. The legislation that stands up most of IRCC's programs, policies, and procedures, IRPA came into force in 2002. At the time, it was the first major legislative change to Canada's immigration system in 25 years. We must ensure the legislation continues to reflect the goals of our immigration system, and that it provides a sufficiently flexible framework to meet them while keeping Canadians safe.
- **Tackle barriers in accessing the international student program, including for francophone applicants from sub-Saharan Africa.** We will develop a pilot with select post-secondary institutions to address barriers faced by students in meeting the financial requirements for study permits and to facilitate applicants destined to institutions in francophone minority communities.

Strengthen partnerships with employers and institutions that rely on immigration, while addressing fraud and strengthening student and worker protections.

- **Launch Letter of Acceptance (LOA) Verification.** IRCC will strengthen its fraud prevention measures with the introduction of a new mandatory requirement for international student letters of acceptance to be verified directly between IRCC and all designated learning institutions.
- **Implement a Recognized Institutions Framework.** IRCC will adopt a Recognized Institutions Framework with qualifying universities and colleges. The Framework will be developed in close consultation with designated learning institutions, provinces and territories. These post-secondary institutions will benefit from faster processing of study permits, if they achieve higher standards across key performance indicators such as integrity, student supports such as housing, and sustainable intake of students.
- **Implement the Recognized Employer Pilot.** On August 8, 2023, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) launched a Recognized Employer Pilot for repeat employers who meet compliance standards in occupations with a demonstrated labour shortage. Qualifying employers will receive several benefits, including streamlined Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) application processing. This complements ongoing work to increase protections for foreign nationals under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), including rebuilding the compliance regime to improve the quality and reach of inspections.

Actions

Improve communications and ensure a human-centric approach

- **Build an advisory body with lived experience in immigration to guide policy development and improvements to service delivery.** We will establish an advisory council of newcomers to provide advice from diverse perspectives and experience using Canada's immigration system. This will strengthen policy and program development and anchor it in a human-centric approach.
- **Make it easier for applicants to find the information they need.**
 - We will make IRCC's website easier to navigate, and look to tools to make it more user-friendly—including an updated program finder tool.
 - We will empower applicants by giving them more information about the status of their applications through ongoing service improvements. As of this spring, people can use the applications status tracker to find information about their applications for the sponsorship of a spouse, partner or child, for Express Entry, study permits, work permits, visitor visas, citizenship and passports through Service Canada. IRCC will begin simplifying the way applicants access their status information in their single window online account, starting with a subset of applicants this fall and expanding through 2024.
- **Pursue opportunities to enhance the immigration experience for families.**
 - We will identify and explore solutions to potential barriers faced by families accessing and navigating Canada's immigration system, such as reviewing ways to ensure equity considerations are built into policy and program changes and better support accompanying family members.
 - We will consider lessons learned from understanding family compositions from various parts of the world, and implement more inclusive measures when possible.
- **Streamline pathways and programs.** We will look for opportunities to simplify complex pathways to reduce duplication and eliminate barriers. This would involve ensuring the compatibility between our programs, and identifying potential harmonies with provincial programming. We will also explore eliminating requirements of limited value to support faster processing of applications.
- **Explore new opportunities to support employers,** such as greater hands-on supports to employers looking to hire international talent, including small and medium-sized employers, who may require additional support and guidance, but who stand to gain exponential benefits from an increased reliance on immigration.

Actions

Make applications more user-friendly, using digital and virtual technologies

- **Build a modern, digital, and data-driven online client experience.** The Client Experience Platform will be the new online portal for applicants to access all of IRCC's programs and services and to interact with the department. It will offer a more positive and personalized experience to those looking for information, applying for programs and services, and checking for updates on the status of their application(s). With this platform, we will begin rolling out a digital portal that will allow applicants and their representatives to send IRCC updated information about themselves or to respond to requests from officers for additional information or documents.
- **Make it easier for Canadians to obtain or renew passports.** As announced this spring, IRCC and ESDC will provide Canadians an option to apply online for adult passport renewals. IRCC will also streamline access to passports for newcomers being granted citizenship.

Continue to advance reconciliation as we welcome newcomers

- Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan 2023–2028, pursue legislative amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, amendments to relevant regulations and revisions to policies in order to **address complex border crossing and migration challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples divided by Canada's international borders**, including options to amend Canada's right of entry provision, and work and study permit requirements.
- **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada will launch a new Citizenship guide that better reflects the history of systemic racism and discrimination faced by Indigenous Peoples.** The guide will respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 93 by reflecting a more accurate and inclusive history of Indigenous Peoples to newcomers, including information about Treaties and the history and legacy of residential schools.



Align immigration with labour market needs

The Canadian labour market continues to grow and strengthen. This evolution brings unique challenges and opportunities. Immigrants have an important role to play in strengthening labour market resilience and growing our economy now and into the future. Not only does immigration help to address a declining worker to retiree ratio, it also helps to ensure Canada has the skills needed to meet the goals of our industrial policy, and that labour force gaps are not a barrier to the success and expansion of Canadian businesses.

Attracting and retaining the top talent we need across all sectors, from construction to green technology to health care, means identifying what skills are needed, who has these skills, and how to best match them to available jobs in Canada. This includes providing more opportunities for international students and temporary workers with in-demand skills to stay in Canada.



In addition, the recent launch of changes to Express Entry to better select workers who match specific in-demand skills and experience, will act as a catalyst for growth, help to address labour needs, and strengthen Francophone communities. This year, category-based selection invitations will focus on candidates with strong French language proficiency, as well as candidates with work experience in health care, STEM professions, transport, agriculture and agri-food and trades such as construction. Candidates with experience in trades such as carpentry, plumbing and welding, would add more workers to Canada's home building sector.

Whether people come as skilled economic immigrants, refugees, or arrive under family streams, they bring with them a variety of skills and talent that we must harness to help our communities grow.

Actions

Maintain Canada's global competitiveness in attracting and retaining top talent

- **Create the new role of a Chief International Talent Officer to align Canada's immigration policies with a long-term skills and labour strategy.**
 - The innovator in this role will be tasked with leveraging information about the skills needed for the future, and ensuring that immigration better aligns with Canada's labour market and sectoral strategies.
 - The government will develop a comprehensive approach to mapping future skills needs that will be strongly linked to sectoral strategies, such as agriculture and health human resources, and will take into account regional needs as well as the needs of Francophone minority communities.
 - Global skills missions will be organized in collaboration with government representatives, employers and stakeholders, to recruit the talent Canada needs.
- **Implement the first-ever tech talent strategy** which includes an open work permit for H-1B visa holders to bolster the strength of the North American tech sector, a digital nomad strategy to promote Canada as a remote work destination with the possibility to remain upon receipt of a job offer, and development of additional options for highly talented individuals to come to Canada to work with or without a job offer. This momentum will drive future collective efforts to attract and retain workers who can contribute to Canada's economy.
- **Continue to improve the Start-Up Visa Program** including prioritizing applications that are supported by venture capital, angel investor groups and business incubators and have capital committed, along with applications that are supported by business incubators that are members of Canada's Tech Network.
- **Focus on international students with high-demand skills.** Explore new measures to better transition international students to the labour force in alignment with the International Education Strategy led by Global Affairs Canada, by enhancing connections between students, post-secondary institutions and employers, including work-integrated learning within the International Student Program and updating the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program to support critical sectors, as well as marketing high-demand skills and sectors to prospective international students.
- **Working with partners, improve foreign credential recognition to enable more newcomers to apply their skills.** Enhance efforts to ensure newcomers understand what is needed to have their credentials recognized in Canada, and encourage them to begin the process as soon as possible. The government will promote awareness of programs that provide financial assistance, including loans, to help newcomers with the costs associated with the credential recognition process. We will strengthen the connection between permanent resident selection and foreign credential recognition to help ensure that individuals who are selected for their ability to work in a regulated occupation can do so as soon as possible.
- **Bring workers to Canada who can help alleviate social pressures in key areas** like housing and health care, using dedicated Category-Based Selection draws in Express Entry.

Develop a comprehensive and coordinated growth plan



Welcoming newcomers is not just about the number of people we welcome, but must also take into account supports and services required by newcomers and Canadians alike, including housing and healthcare. Key to an effective newcomer welcome plan will be ensuring that the benefits of immigration are spread out across the country.

In addition to broad national programs, regional economic programs like the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), are important to sustain growth and support our economic recovery. We have also seen great success with the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot in participating communities.

Enhancing the vitality of Francophone minority communities is also an integral part of IRCC's mandate, and the government has committed in the new Official Languages Act to restore and increase the demographic weight of Francophone minority communities.

Recent changes to the Express Entry system also give us the ability to specify particular attributes, so we can better target candidates to receive invitations to apply to come to Canada permanently.

Planning for newcomer arrivals, also means planning for the unknown, such as global events that result in new humanitarian crises. Canada has a long history of welcoming people facing crisis situations, however recent flows of refugees and displaced persons have presented new challenges to processing and facilitation of individuals and families, and to the communities who receive them. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in 2022, the world reached a dramatic milestone with more than 100 million people forcibly displaced. The government needs an established plan in order to react quickly and equitably to crisis situations, with a good line of sight on emerging situations.

Coordination, collaboration, communication and partnerships are instrumental to welcoming newcomers, and ensuring that appropriate supports are in place to help them achieve positive outcomes.

Actions

Build a more whole-of-government approach to immigration growth

- **Seek to integrate housing and health care planning, along with other important services, into planning Canada's immigration levels.** IRCC leads on an annual plan to project how many new permanent residents Canada will welcome in the following year(s). We will explore options to develop a more integrated plan to coordinate housing, health care and infrastructure between federal government departments, and in close collaboration with provinces, territories and municipalities. There is an increasing need to have a plan that reflects newcomers with both permanent and temporary resident status and takes into account the supports required to welcome them into our communities. We will also increase collaboration and engagement with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, stakeholders and communities across Canada.



Actions

Support communities

➤ **Examine opportunities to better target support for the settlement and integration of newcomers.** We want to provide the right services at the right time. As part of the upcoming call for proposals for settlement service providers, we will look for opportunities to fund initiatives that enhance community partnerships and increase services in mid-size, rural and northern areas, increase access to digital settlement services and expand services **by** Francophones **for** Francophone newcomers in official-language minority communities outside of Quebec.

➤ **Explore options to leverage the investment of those coming to Canada in order to support more affordable housing.** Building on best practices, explore and adapt an immigration pathway for foreign nationals committed to investing in and building net new housing in Canada. Rigorous design and monitoring for compliance would ensure that benefits are fully realized.



➤ **Explore opportunities to enhance regional immigration, supporting welcoming communities across Canada.**

- Includes better understanding the unique needs and strengths of smaller, rural and Francophone minority communities and exploring opportunities for growth.
- IRCC will seek to make the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) a permanent program including assessing options to expand it to more communities, with particular attention to the needs of Francophone communities. RNIP is a community-driven program designed to spread the benefits of immigration to smaller communities by creating a path to permanent residence for workers who want to work and live in participating communities.
- We will also develop an ambitious new Francophone Immigration Policy to enhance the vitality of Francophone minority communities and work toward restoring and increasing their demographic weight. The policy will boost promotion and selection efforts as well as support the settlement and integration of French-speaking immigrants in Francophone minority communities. The policy will include a framework for setting ambitious yet attainable targets to increase the number of Francophone admissions on an ongoing basis.

Actions

Position the immigration system to adapt quickly and to respond equitably and sustainably to growing global humanitarian crises

- **Develop a crisis response framework that includes a transparent and evidence-based assessment mechanism to inform when a rapid immigration response is triggered for foreign nationals in need of urgent protection.** The framework would include a toolkit to support government responses that can be tailored to each unique situation, and well-informed, consistent and equitable decision making, and informed by lessons learned. This will help increase information sharing among government and civil society partners, who are critical in supporting response efforts on the ground. As part of the crisis response framework, we will develop a special measures model for people affected by natural disasters or other crises within Canada, including replacement of Canadian citizenship and immigration documents, priority processing of in-country applications, and extension of temporary resident status.
- **Develop a global incident response team, working in close collaboration with Global Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence to better anticipate, assess and manage emerging crises.** We will also develop a skills inventory of public servants who can provide surge capacity as needed. This will enable the Government of Canada to respond quickly and equitably to new humanitarian crises while mitigating impacts on operations in other areas. Effective response, coordination and communication will also help communities who play vital roles in welcoming newcomers seeking protection.
- **Partner with organizations working on the ground to refer people to Canada in need of humanitarian and other pathways.** Recently we doubled the number of Human Rights Defender (HRD) spaces to 500, and we entered into a partnership with ProtectDefenders.eu and Front Line Defenders, two organizations with a global reach who are now able to directly refer human rights defenders in need of protection. We are exploring options to further expand the HRD program, including ways to provide temporary protection. On June 8, the Prime Minister announced that the Canadian organization Rainbow Railroad has become a referral partner for 2SLGBTQI+ Government-Assisted Refugees. This partnership complements Canada's long-standing referral partnership with the UNHCR, and strengthens Canada's ability to resettle at-risk 2SLGBTQI+ refugees from around the world. IRCC is working to further diversify Canadian referral partners, which will allow Canada to be more inclusive in our humanitarian responses. Additionally, IRCC will further diversify referral partners for the Economic Mobility Pathway Pilot (EMPP) which is an economic pathway to help employers hire skilled refugees and other displaced individuals.
- **Explore options to enable the asylum system to better manage higher claim volumes and help ensure that claimants are met with a process that is fast, fair and final.** Record levels of forced migration globally have led to higher volumes of asylum claims in Canada. We will continue to look for ways to improve system resilience and processing capacity, reduce wait times and improve services to those seeking asylum to ensure a human approach with consideration for their situations, while also maintaining border integrity. We will work with provinces, territories and municipalities to ensure a well managed and supported approach.

Conclusion

This report, *An Immigration System for Canada's Future*, and the engagement exercise it reflects marks the conclusion of formal engagement sessions, but the beginning of a transformation to Canada's immigration system. As our society continues to evolve and new realities emerge, so too will our immigration programs and policies.

In order to seize opportunities that come with change, we have to be nimble and continue to innovate and adapt. This cannot happen in isolation. It's through partnership and staying connected that we share information, become aware of emerging issues and find solutions.

We all have an important role to play in what is a national effort to welcome newcomers and help set them, and our communities, up for success.

We commit to staying connected, and keeping the lines of communication open.

Our work together continues.



The photos used in this section of the report are from a photographic project “We are all immigrants” by digital photographer Oskar Dap. Oskar was born in Cali, Colombia. He now lives and works in Ottawa, and became a Canadian citizen on May 27, 2023, in a ceremony held as part of Citizenship Week.

Background on “We are all immigrants” exhibit

In the words of Oskar Dap: The photographic project puts forward the faces and realities of migration to promote an inclusive and diverse narrative of immigration. This exhibit reflects on what immigration is and what defines us as a multicultural society.