

As Ottawa prepares to ramp up immigration post pandemic, Canadians are divided over target levels

One-third say 2022 target of 400K newcomers "about right", 39% say "too high", 13% say "too few"

June 28, 2021 – As travel restrictions in Canada brought by COVID-19 begin to lift, the impacts will not only be felt by people living in this country, but those waiting to settle here.

An unprecedented, pandemic-related slowdown in immigration over the last year and a half is poised to ramp up against news [last Monday](#) that some 23,000 approved immigrants to Canada could immediately begin their journey to their new home country.

Public health, economic and perhaps even electoral outcomes pending, the Canadian government has signalled it plans to land more than [400,000 newcomers next year](#).

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute in partnership with the University of British Columbia finds Canadians divided along age, gender, and political lines about whether that number represents an appropriate target.

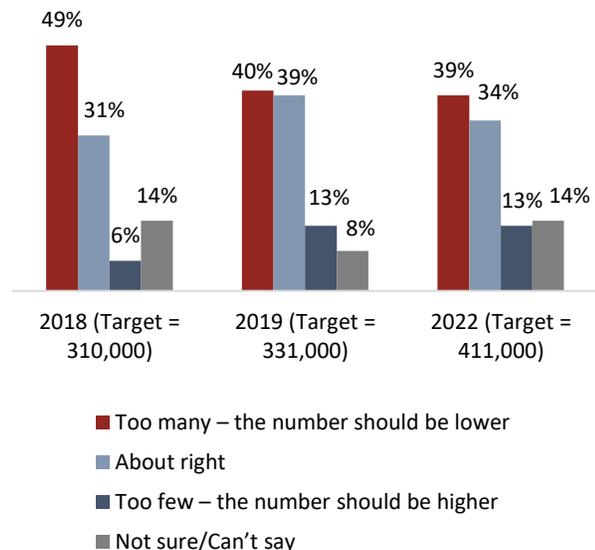
Overall, one-in-three (34%) say that this is the right level. A plurality of past NDP (43%) and Liberal (47%) voters believe the current target of 411,000 new permanent residents is the right amount. One-quarter of past CPC voters agree (23%).

On the other hand, a plurality of 39 per cent feel that the target is too high. This proportion rises to a majority in Alberta (50%) and Saskatchewan (54%) and is the opinion of nearly two-thirds (64%) of past Conservative voters.

One-in-eight (13%) Canadians say the 411,000 target is not ambitious enough, rising to one-in-five among past Liberal and New Democrat voters.

As to which regions of the globe Canada should prioritize for new permanent residents, three-in-five Canadians say that it does not matter to them, and that no region should have priority over another. One-quarter (26%) prefer Europe, while one-in-five (20%) say the United States and Mexico. Immigration from

Would you say this immigration target is ...



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 11 – 17, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,984 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

The survey was conducted in partnership with the University of British Columbia (UBC) and paid for jointly by UBC and ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

South Asia is chosen by just four per cent, a finding starkly contrasted against the fact that Canada's [largest source of immigration](#) is currently India.

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by **pollster** and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Part One: How many immigrants should Canada accept?

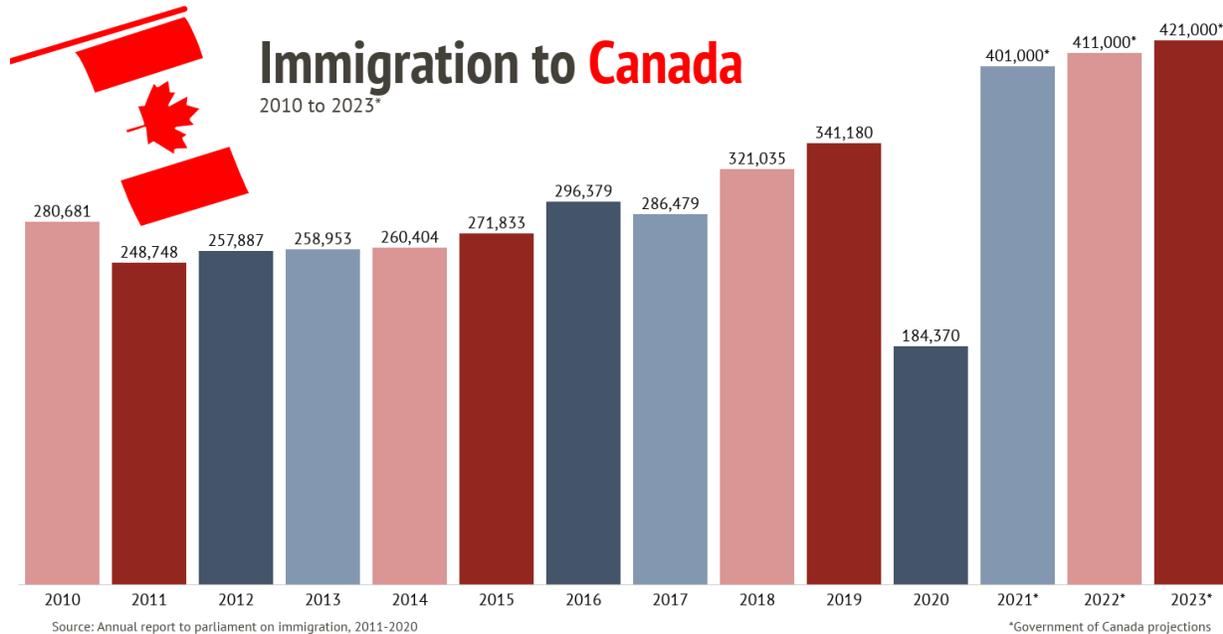
Disagreement over immigration levels across regional and political lines

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, immigration to Canada has declined recently to levels not seen in over two decades. Just 184,370 new permanent residents [arrived in Canada in 2020](#), just over half the number from the previous year, and the lowest number [since 174,000 arrived in 1997](#).

Before the pandemic, Canada's immigration program had been expanding. The Liberal government's plan is to increase the number of new permanent residents from approximately 300,000 per year over the last five years (without including 2020), to 411,000 in 2022.

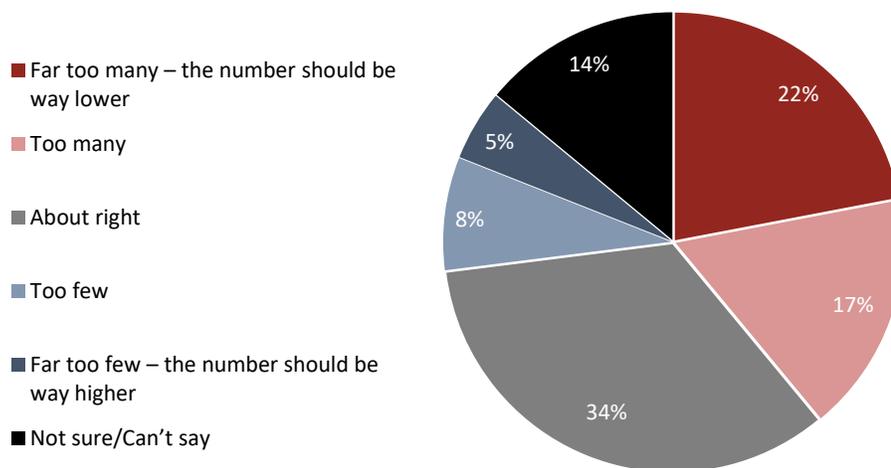
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This new target is met with varied response across a number of different age, gender, political, and regional demographics, but overall, the largest group say that this is too many new permanent residents (39%). Slightly fewer (34%) say that this target is ideal, while 13 per cent would actually increase it even more.

**Would you say 411,000 new permanent residents in 2022 is ...
(Total n=1,984)**



In Atlantic Canada, where population growth lags behind the rest of Canada and immigrants bring the prospect of new economic opportunities, enthusiasm is highest. The region has seen an “[immigration revolution](#)” in the past two decades and many would like that to continue. Half (52%) in that region say that the current level is about right or should be increased.

Alberta and Saskatchewan, meanwhile, are least likely to support current targets. In each province at least half of residents say that the targets are too high. [In 2020](#), Alberta took in approximately 12 per cent of new arrivals while Saskatchewan welcomed just four per cent.

The two provinces that receive the [highest levels](#) of immigration, British Columbia, and Ontario, are more likely to say that the 411,000 level is ideal or not high enough. That said, populations of both those provinces – not unlike the rest of the country — are home to high levels of disagreement, as seen in the table below:

Would you say 411,000 new permanent residents in 2022 is ...								
	Total (n=1,984)	Region						
		BC (n=284)	AB (n=192)	SK (n=133)	MB (n=154)	ON (n=566)	QC (n=450)	ATL (n=205)
Far too many – the number should be way lower	22%	19%	30%	29%	25%	22%	16%	24%
Too many	17%	16%	20%	25%	19%	17%	16%	16%
About right	34%	35%	33%	23%	33%	35%	35%	34%
Too few	8%	11%	5%	4%	6%	7%	10%	9%
Far too few – the number should be way higher	5%	5%	3%	2%	5%	5%	5%	9%
Not sure/Can't say	14%	14%	11%	16%	13%	13%	18%	7%

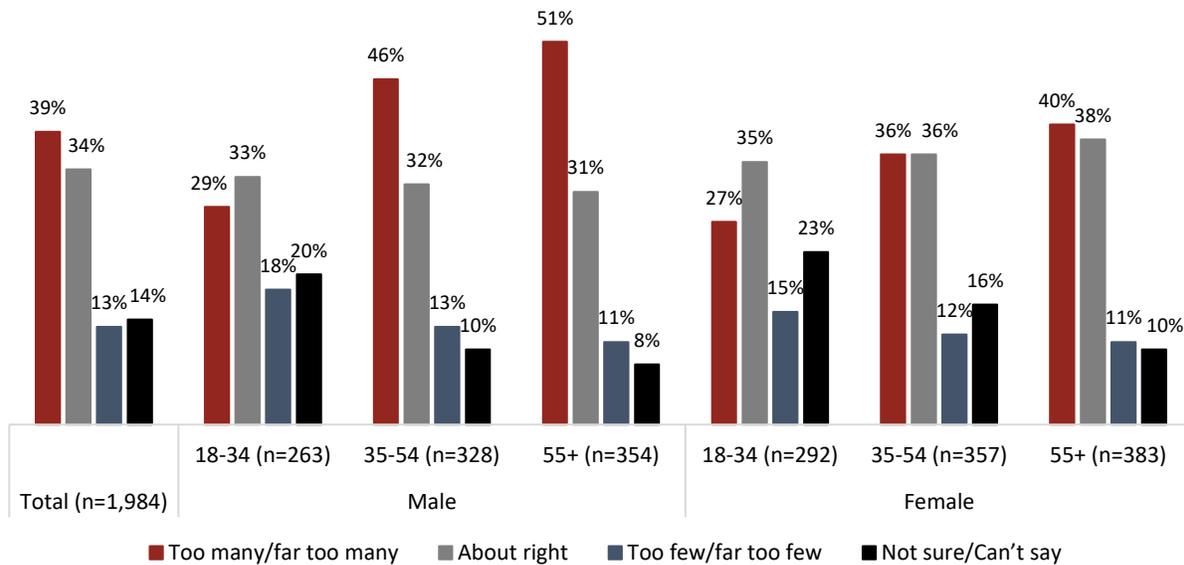
Perspective on the immigration target is varied by gender and age. Men over the age of 35 are much more likely than other age and gender combinations to say that the total is too high.

This fits a trend established recently in the Angus Reid Institute’s [in-depth look](#) at views of diversity in Canada. Men and women tend to disagree on a number of measures on this topic.

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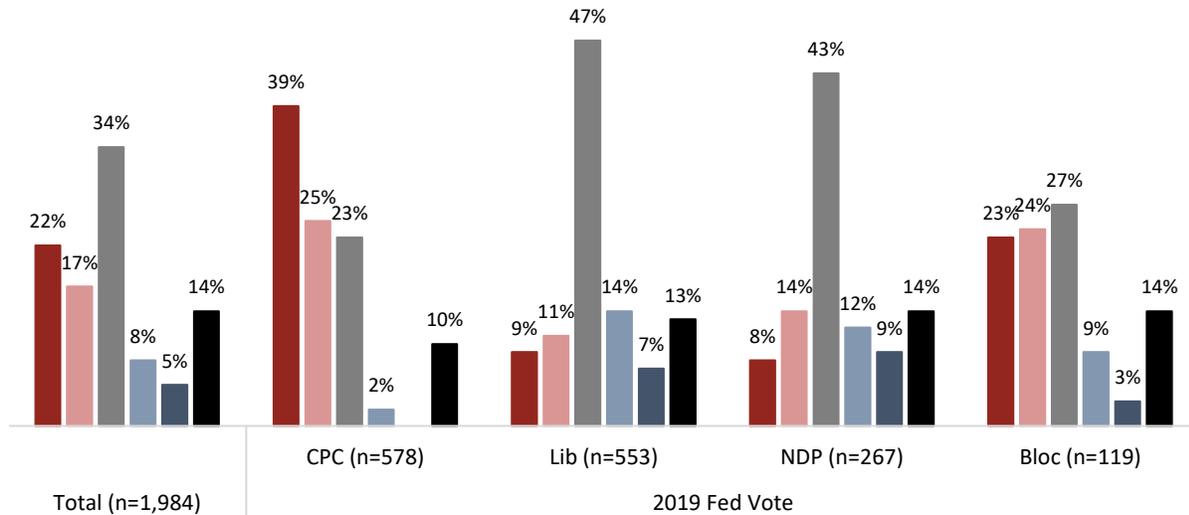
Would you say 411,000 new permanent residents in 2022 is ...



Conservative party leader Erin O'Toole has been described as "bullish" on immigration, calling it "critical to (Canada's) success." O'Toole will have to work to persuade his party's established voting base if he plans to maintain the immigration levels of recent years. In [2018](#), [2019](#), and in this most recent study, the vast majority of past CPC voters say that immigration levels should be reduced.

Meantime, a plurality of Liberal voters (47%) and NDP supporters (43%) believe 411,000 is about right:

Would you say 411,000 new permanent residents in 2022 is ...



- Far too many – the number should be way lower
- Too many
- About right
- Too few
- Far too few – the number should be way higher
- Not sure/Can't say

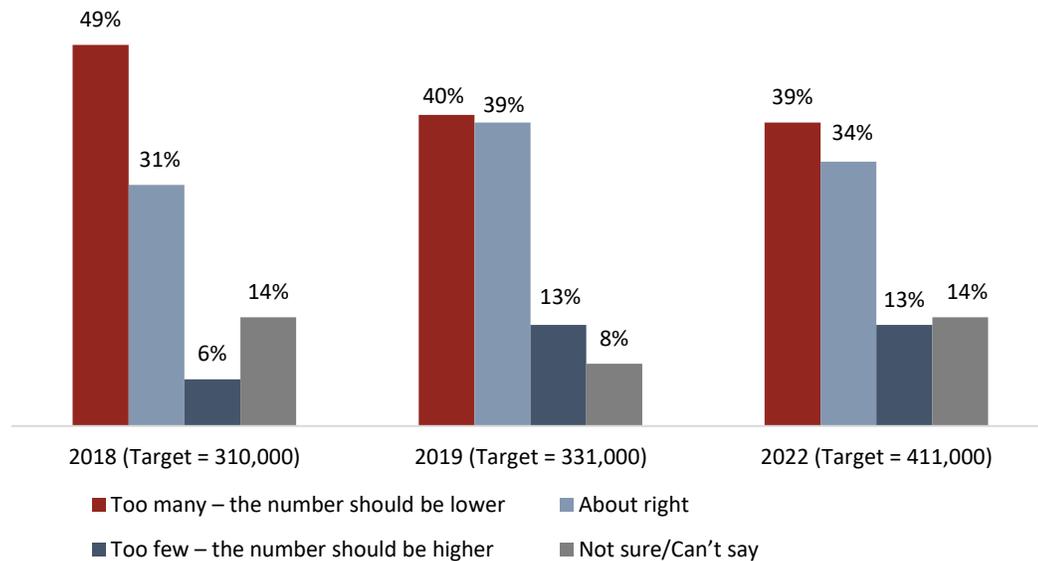
Changing context around immigration

As future immigration target levels have gone up over the last three years, it is notable that the number of Canadians expressing concern over those targets have in fact gone down. When the Angus Reid Institute first asked in [2018](#) about an immigration target of 310,000, almost half (49%) said that was too many.

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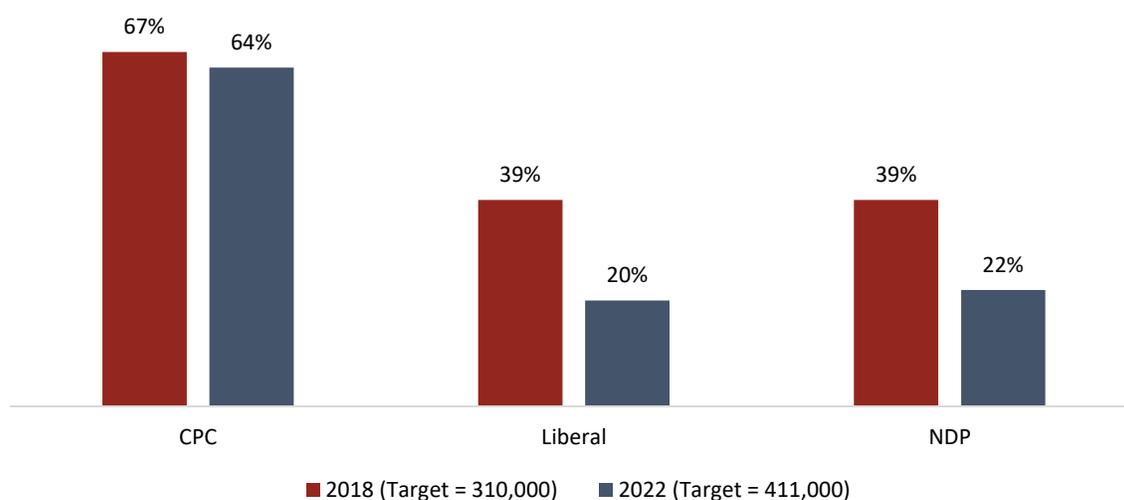
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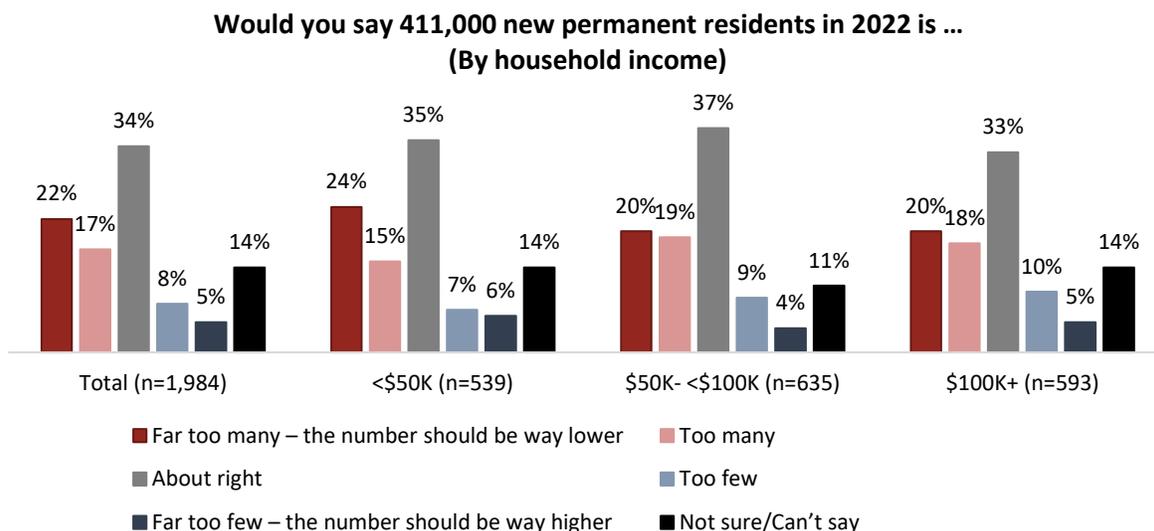
It is important to note the [changing context](#) surrounding this question. In 2018, questions about [asylum seekers](#) leaving the United States, driven by [inflammatory rhetoric](#) from then-President Donald Trump, may have shifted public opinion against new arrivals. Indeed, while past CPC supporters maintain their opposition at similar levels to 2018, for Liberal and New Democrat voters it has dropped by nearly half.

Percentage saying immigration targets "too high"

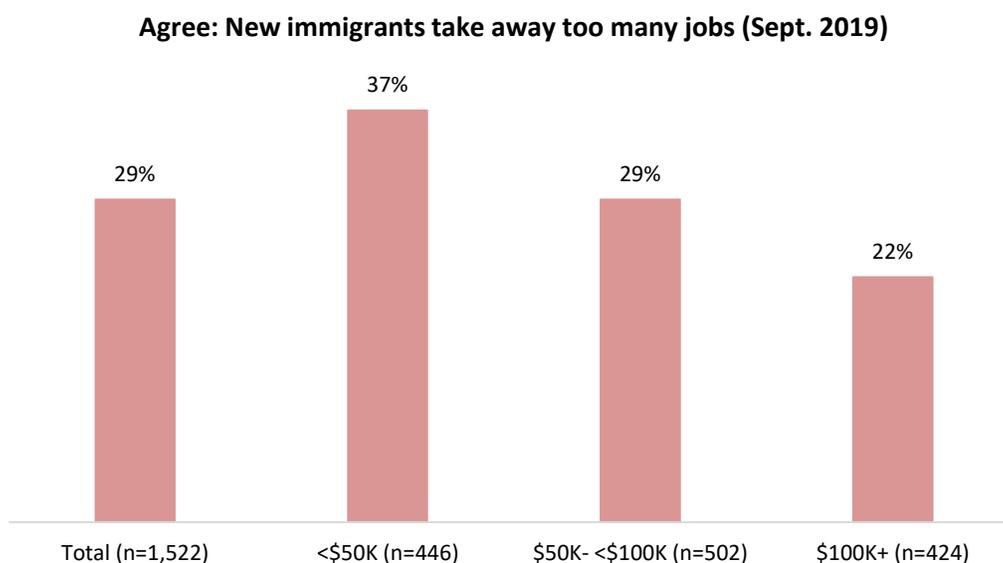


Lower income Canadians more strongly opposed to immigration

Though those in all income brackets are about as likely to say next year’s immigration target is too many, the proportion of those *strongly opposed* to the target is much higher in the lowest income bracket. One-quarter (24%) of those in households earning less than \$50,000 annually said it was far too many:



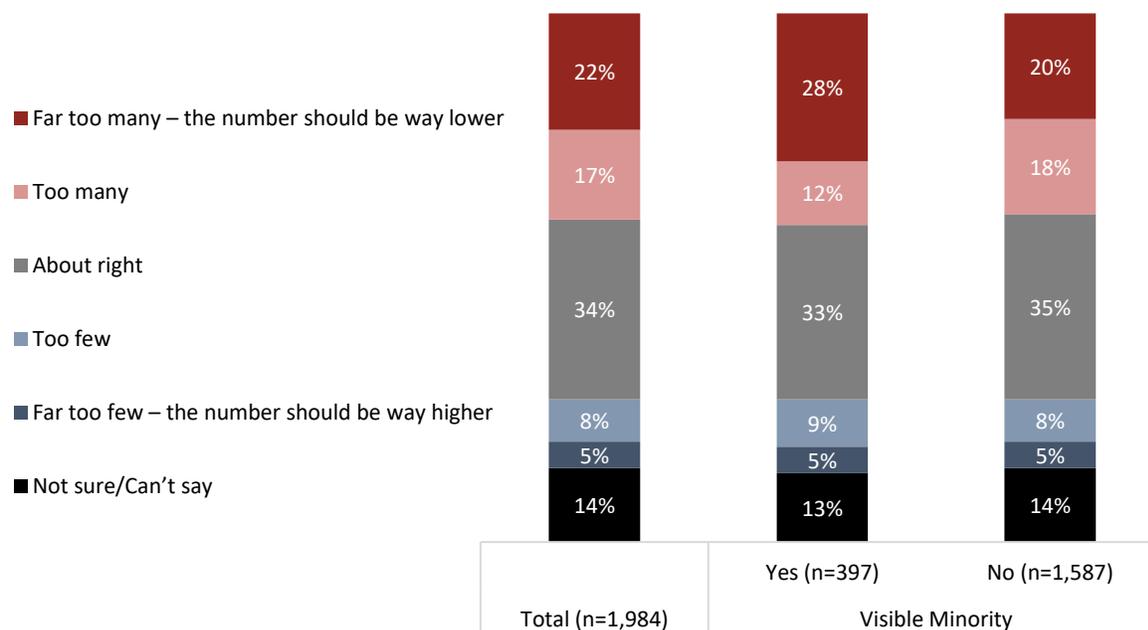
This may be partially driven by elements of economic anxiety. Past data from the Angus Reid Institute showed [in 2019](#) that the lower the household income of a respondent, the more likely they were to agree that “new immigrants take too many jobs”:



Little difference in opinion based on ethnicity

There is very little difference in opinion between those who identify as a visible minority on this issue and those who don't. In each case, approximately two-in-five say that immigration levels should be reduced and close to one-in-eight say they should be increased:

Would you say 411,000 new permanent residents in 2022 is...



Part Two: Which regions should Canada prioritize for accepting new immigrants?

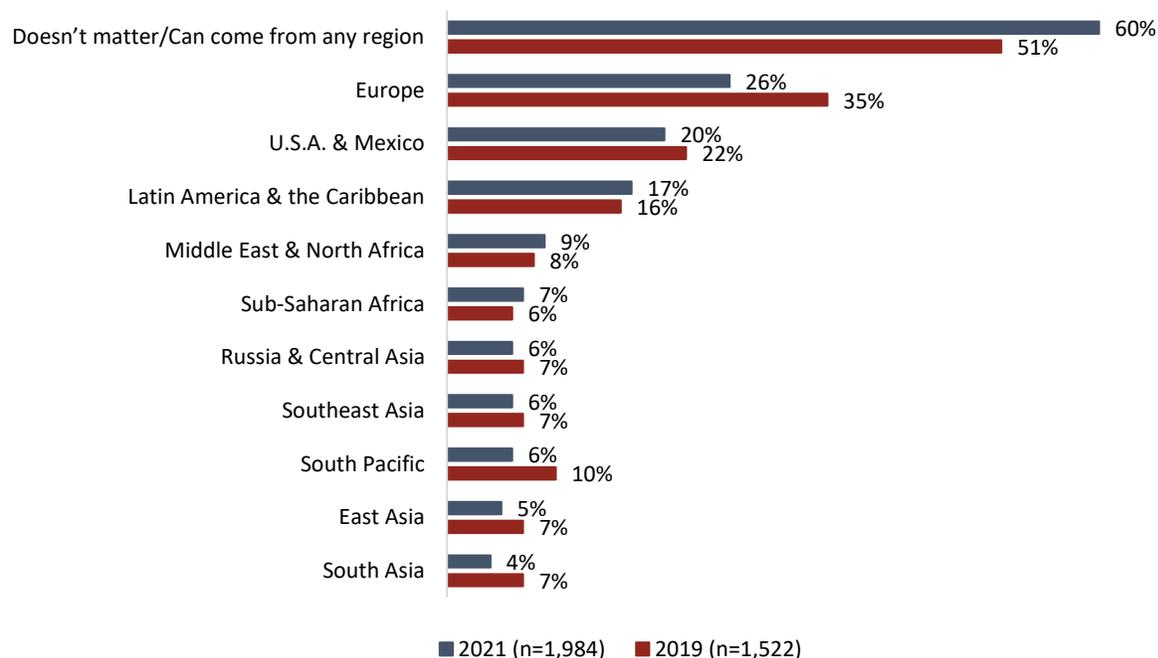
Majority say it doesn't matter where new immigrants come from

While they may be more or less supportive of higher immigration targets, Canadians largely agree that it doesn't matter from where new residents arrive. Three-in-five Canadians say this, while the top two specific regions preferred are Europe and NAFTA partners the United States and Mexico. Notably, Canada is expected to receive more new residents from India than any other nation under the new plan; this region – South Asia – is the choice of just four per cent of respondents. That said, views on this question have shifted from before the pandemic. When ARI canvassed Canadian in 2019, more were likely to say Europe (35%), and less likely to say that the source region shouldn't matter (51%):

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Which parts of the world should Canada’s immigrants be coming from?



Differences along gender and generational lines

Men and women are divided on regional preference. Women of all ages are more likely to say that it doesn't matter where new Canadians arrive from compared to men of the same age group. Among men who do have a preference, Europe and the United States and Mexico are preferred at a much higher rate than other regions. Women, meanwhile, show a similar preference for those two regions, alongside Latin America and the Caribbean.

Women aged 18 to 34 are the only group to prioritize a region other than Europe as their first choice. One-in-five (18%) say Canada should prioritize the Middle East and North Africa, nearly double the rate of any other age-gender group.

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Which three regions should Canada give priority to as a source of immigrants?							
	Total (n=1,984)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=263)	35-54 (n=328)	55+ (n=354)	18-34 (n=292)	35-54 (n=357)	55+ (n=383)
Doesn't matter/No region should receive priority	60%	59%	53%	47%	63%	68%	69%
Europe	26%	25%	32%	43%	12%	18%	21%
U.S.A. & Mexico	20%	21%	26%	31%	12%	13%	15%
Latin America & the Caribbean	17%	15%	18%	20%	17%	15%	14%
Middle East & North Africa	9%	8%	9%	4%	18%	10%	8%
Sub-Saharan Africa	7%	6%	7%	4%	12%	6%	6%
South Pacific	6%	6%	7%	10%	5%	2%	7%
Russia & Central Asia	6%	9%	9%	7%	4%	6%	2%
Southeast Asia	6%	8%	8%	6%	5%	5%	3%
East Asia	5%	7%	9%	6%	6%	4%	2%
South Asia	4%	6%	3%	5%	6%	3%	2%

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

For detailed results by ethnicity, [click here](#).

Methodology *(Delete for pdf, insert after image credits, before media contacts in WP Post)*

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