

Canadian Dream? High housing costs has two-in-five recent immigrants saying they may leave their province (or Canada)

Three-in-ten Canadians overall are considering relocating from their current province

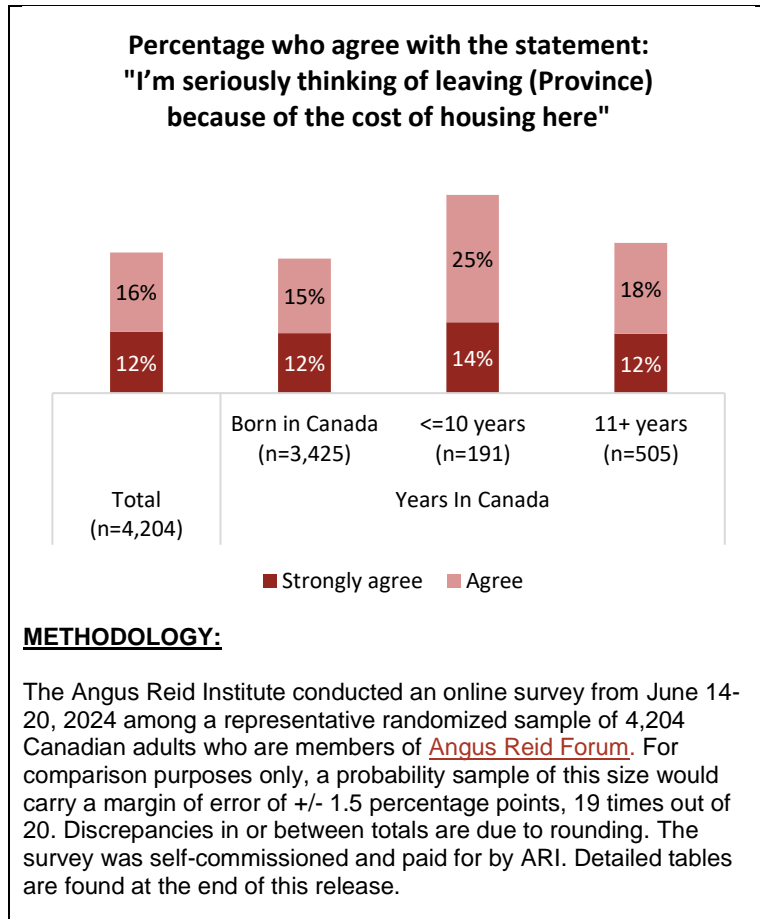
July 3, 2024 – Canada's immigration levels have reached [record highs](#) in recent years, but as more immigrants seek the Canadian dream from abroad, many who have arrived in recent years have discovered less of a dream and more of a nightmare.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds recent trends that have seen Canadians concentrating [in Alberta, moving south, or beyond Canada and the U.S.](#), potentially increasing in coming years. Most likely among those to consider further relocation are recent arrivals. Consider that while three-in-ten Canadians (28%) say they're giving serious consideration to leaving their province of residence due to housing affordability, this number rises to 39 per cent for those who have lived in the country for less than a decade.

Canada's newcomers [tend to be urbanites](#) with [skills](#) to quickly engage in the economy, and housing affordability challenges in these urban spaces is perhaps compounding their uncertainty. In Toronto and Vancouver, the long-term risk would be one of losing the workforce required to keep the city cores humming. In Downtown Toronto, 44 per cent say they consider leaving, with 22 per cent saying this is a strong current consideration. Similar numbers also say this in the surrounding 905 area code. In Metro Vancouver, one-in-three (33%) aren't sure if that region is a long-term home.

More Key Findings:

- Two-in-five renters (38%) are considering moving away from their province, compared to 28 per cent of homeowners with a mortgage and 16 per cent of homeowners without one.
- The most common destination for those who consider relocating is another province in Canada. Nearly half say this (45%) with Alberta the top choice (18%). That said, one-quarter say they would leave for another country beyond the U.S. (27%) and 15 per cent would head south to that latter nation.



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- Alberta is the primary potential beneficiary of emigrants from B.C., with 35 per cent saying they would travel one province east if they were to leave. In Ontario, the largest group say they would move abroad beyond the U.S. (26%), while Alberta ties for second (17%) with Canada's southern neighbor (17%).

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.*

Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.

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Part Two: Hopeful for the future?

Part One: Housing costs and relocation

The rapidly rising cost of housing has become a cross-country story in recent years. Last year the housing market [cooled somewhat](#) as higher interest rates took hold, but [there is an expectation](#) that it will heat up again with the Bank of Canada now looking at cutting rates instead of raising them further. Though the countrywide ramp up of housing prices has slowed, rent has continued to rise across the country, with some provinces seeing year-over-year average rent increases of [more than 17 per cent](#).

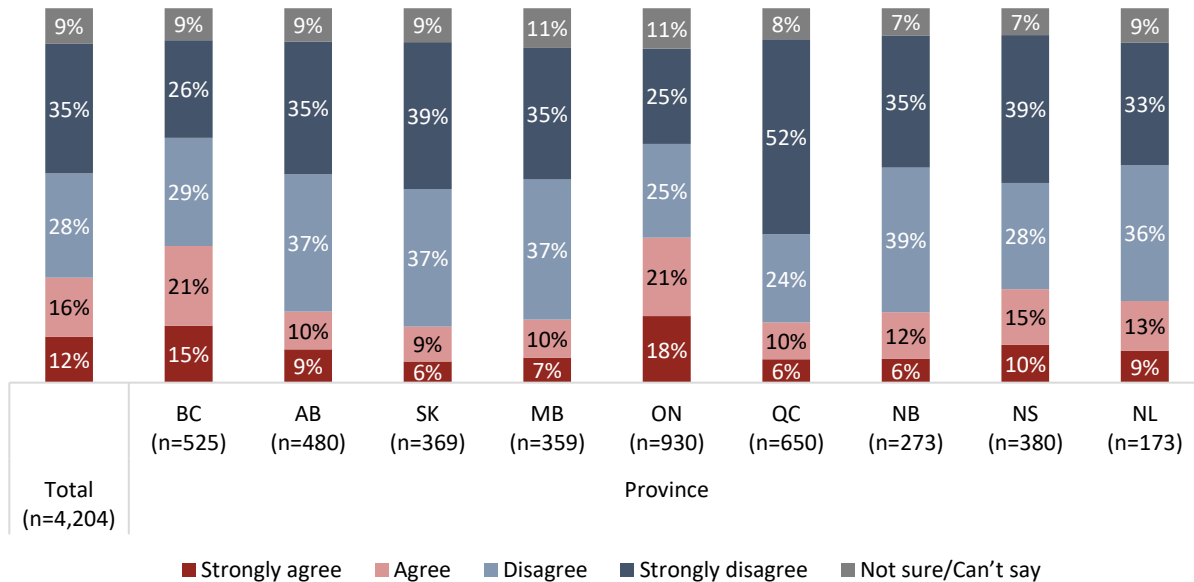
Housing costs push three-in-10 Canadians to consider relocation

This evidently has led many Canadians to look for more affordable housing climates. Three-in-ten (28%) Canadians say they are seriously considering leaving the province they live because of the current cost of housing. This sentiment is evidently higher in B.C. and Ontario, which have been dealing with high housing costs for longer than other regions in the country. However, one-quarter (25%) in Nova Scotia say they are considering leaving that province as it [deals with low vacancy rates](#).

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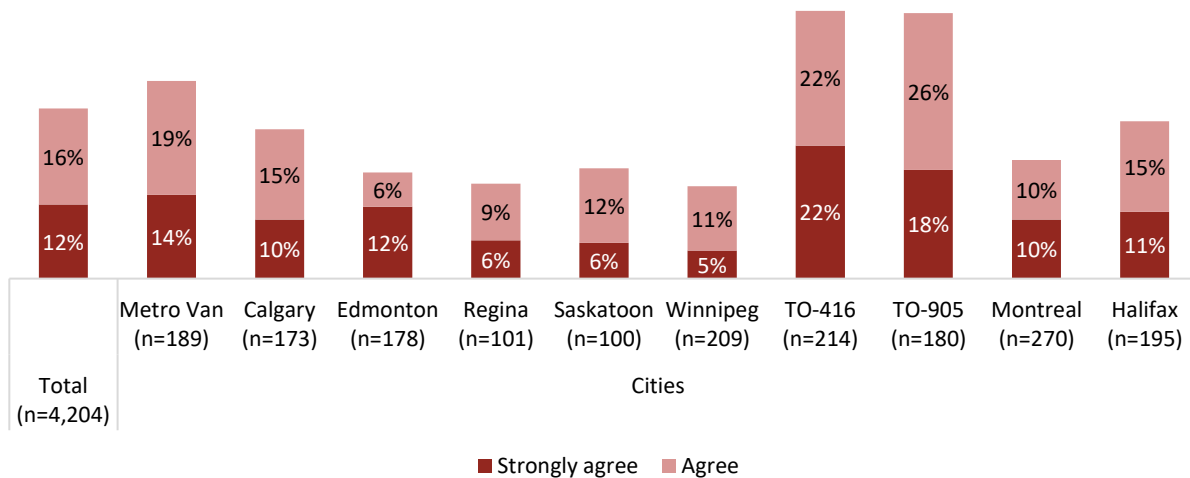
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**Agree vs. disagree -
"I'm seriously thinking of leaving (Province) because of the cost of housing here"**



Indeed, one-quarter in Halifax say they are considering departing Nova Scotia because of how expensive housing has become in the province. But it is those in Toronto's core and outskirts, or the 416 and 905 area codes respectively, who are most likely to say they are thinking of leaving their province. More than two-in-five in Toronto say this. One-third (33%) in Vancouver are also considering leaving B.C. in search of more affordable housing. Notably, BMO released a report showing that the cities of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver combined lost more than 130,000 people to interprovincial migration than they gained between 2022 and 2023.

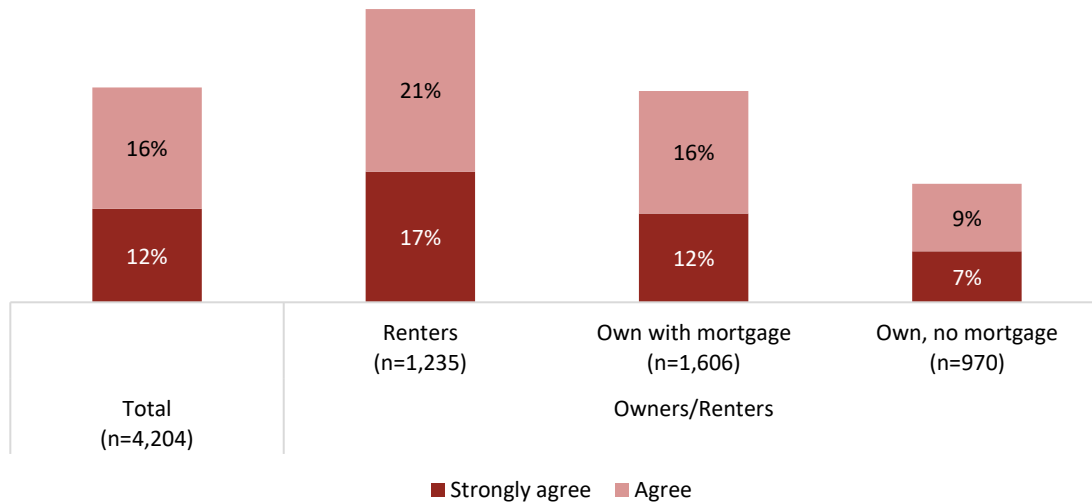
Percentage who agree with the statement: "I'm seriously thinking of leaving (Province) because of the cost of housing here"



Two-in-five 18- to 24-year-olds (42%) say they are at least thinking about leaving the province they currently live in because of how expensive housing is. Notably, at least one-in-third of all Canadians under 55 agree it is something they are thinking about, including one-in-seven who strongly agree ([see detailed tables](#)).

Renters across the country are feeling the pinch of rising rent across the country. Approaching two-in-five (38%) say they are seriously thinking of leaving their province because of housing costs. Homeowners are less likely to be contemplating leaving, but more than one-quarter (28%) of those still paying off their mortgage are considering finding cheaper housing elsewhere:

Percentage who agree with the statement: "I'm seriously thinking of leaving (Province) because of the cost of housing here"



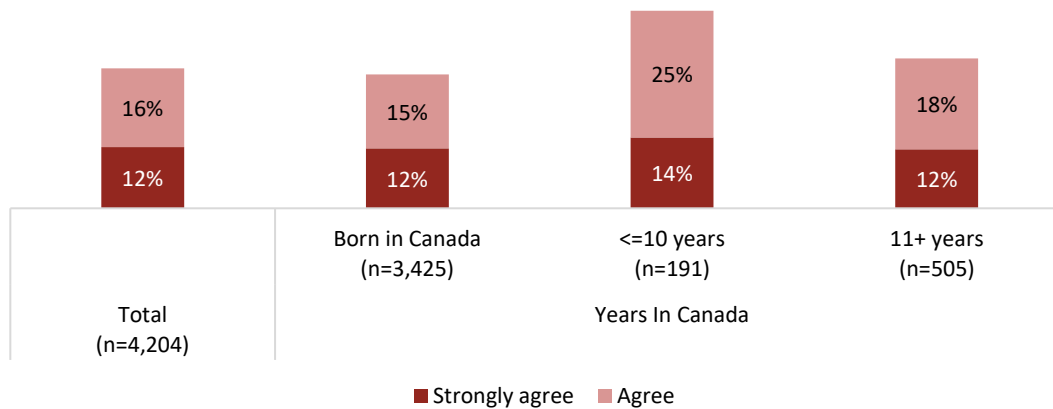
Recent immigrants more likely than others to consider move

Canadians who have come to the country in the past 10 years are much more likely to agree they are thinking of leaving the province they currently live in because of the cost of housing than others. Notably, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship reported that fewer permanent residents are becoming citizens in recent years, [dropping from 75 per cent who did so in 2001 to 45 per cent in 2021](#). Historically, Canada has been viewed as a “[role model](#)” by the OECD for labour migration and has outperformed most OECD countries when it comes to [economically integrating immigrants](#). But many recent immigrants are departing the country because of the high cost of living, and especially housing, perhaps harming Canada’s reputation as [a welcoming country for newcomers](#).

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Percentage who agree with the statement: "I'm seriously thinking of leaving (Province) because of the cost of housing here"



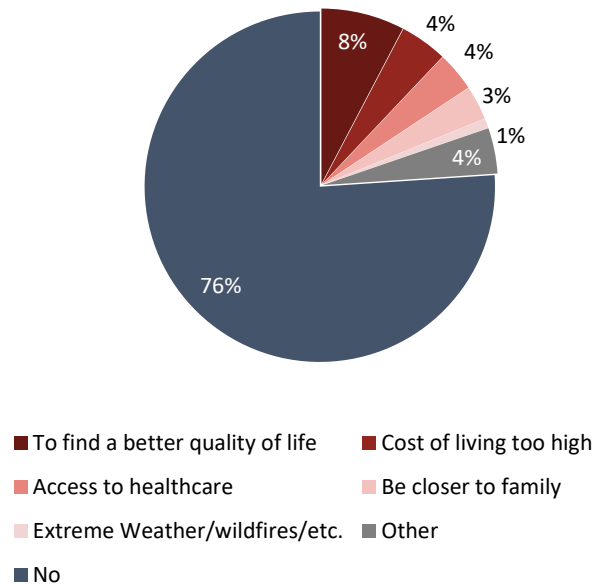
More considerations that may push Canadians to move

Housing isn't the only variable in Canadians' calculus as to deciding whether or not they are looking for greener grass elsewhere. Respondents who said they weren't considering leaving their province because of the cost of housing were asked a follow-up question to see if they were considering leaving their province because of other factors. Three-quarters say no, but for the other quarter, searching for a better quality of life (8%) is the most chosen consideration. Equal-sized groups say high cost of living (4%), health care (4%), and to be closer to family (3%) have made them think about leaving their province:

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You've mentioned you aren't considering leaving [your province] due to cost of housing. Are you considering leaving for any other reasons? (n=2,633)

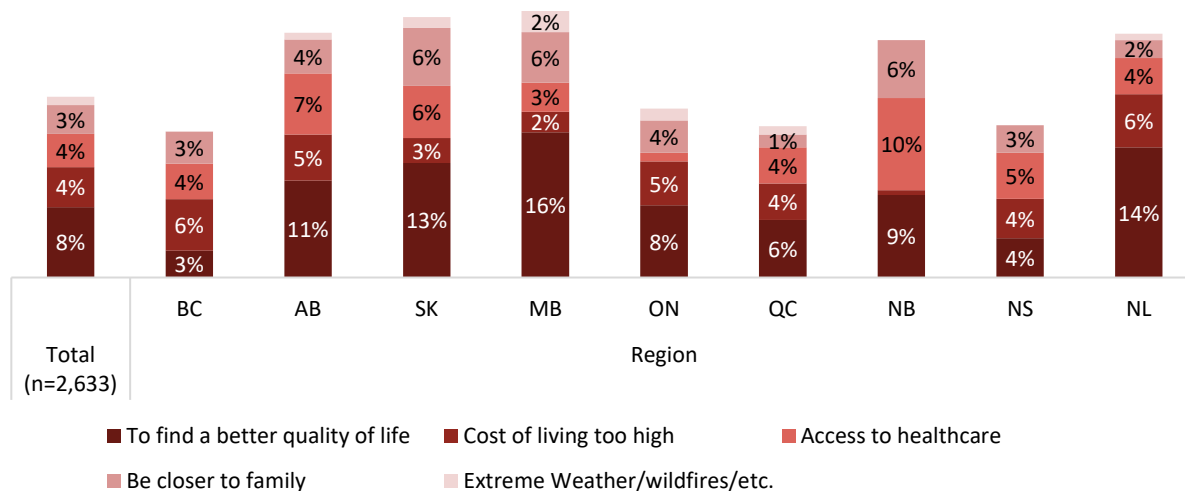


Regionally, the search for a better quality of life is a higher consideration for those looking to leave Alberta (11%), Saskatchewan (13%), Manitoba (16%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (14%). Finding better access to health care is a higher concern for those considering leaving Alberta (7%), Saskatchewan (6%) and New Brunswick (10%) than elsewhere ([see detailed tables](#)).

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**Reasons respondents would move away from current province of residence
(Those who say they are not considering leaving are hidden)**



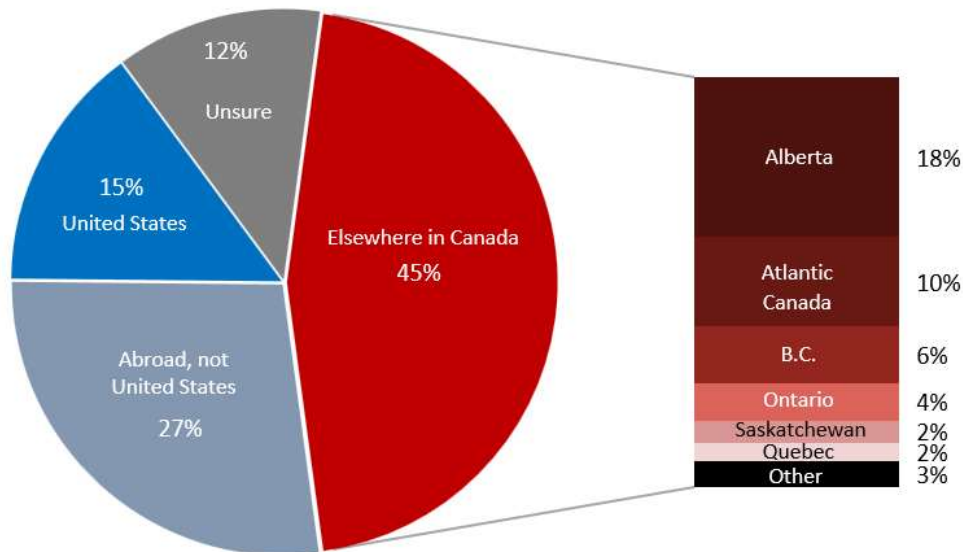
Where would they go if they left?

Fewer than half (45%) of Canadians who are considering moving due to the cost of housing say they are thinking of staying in Canada. Two-in-five (42%) say they are considering another country, whether that's the U.S. (15%) or elsewhere (27%). Within Canada, Alberta (18%) and Atlantic Canada (10%) are considered as potential destinations at higher rates than other provinces. Notably, Alberta was the most popular province for interprovincial migration [in 2022/2023](#), surpassing British Columbia, the previous most chosen destination for Canadians moving between provinces.

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**Where would you move?
(Among those who say they're considering leaving due to housing costs)**

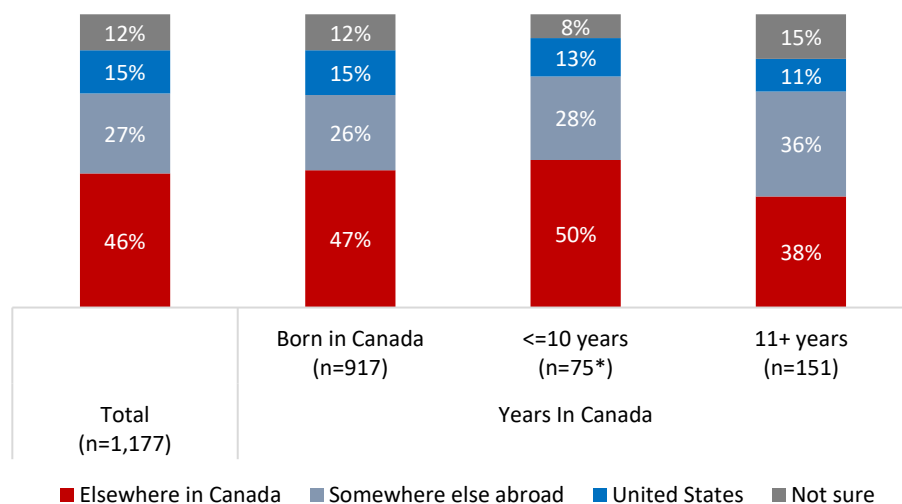


If Canadians did, indeed, relocate, there is a considerable range of desired locations across generations. The oldest Canadians are most likely to say they would move to Alberta, while young and middle-aged alike cast their gaze beyond the borders of Canada and the United States. One-in-five younger than 35 years of age would travel south of the border and set up in the United States if housing costs continue to persist:

Where Canadians are considering moving due to the cost of housing in their own province							
	Total (n=1,177)	Age					
		18-24 (n=106)	25-34 (n=290)	35-44 (n=317)	45-54 (n=170)	55-64 (n=169)	65+ (n=124)
Somewhere else abroad	27%	28%	23%	27%	38%	27%	22%
Alberta	18%	15%	19%	13%	17%	20%	26%
United States	15%	19%	19%	17%	11%	8%	8%
Not sure	12%	8%	11%	13%	12%	13%	17%
ATL	10%	10%	6%	11%	9%	18%	10%
British Columbia	6%	4%	9%	4%	5%	4%	11%
Ontario	4%	6%	3%	6%	2%	3%	5%
Other	3%	7%	4%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Saskatchewan	2%	0%	3%	3%	2%	4%	0%
Quebec	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%	0%

Canadians who have immigrated to this country and have been here 11 plus years are less likely (38%) than those who have more recently arrived (50%) or those born in Canada (47%) to say they would move somewhere else within Canada’s borders. Instead, immigrants who have been here for more than a decade are more likely to say they would go “somewhere else abroad” (36%).

**Where would you move?
(Among those who say they're considering leaving due to housing costs)**



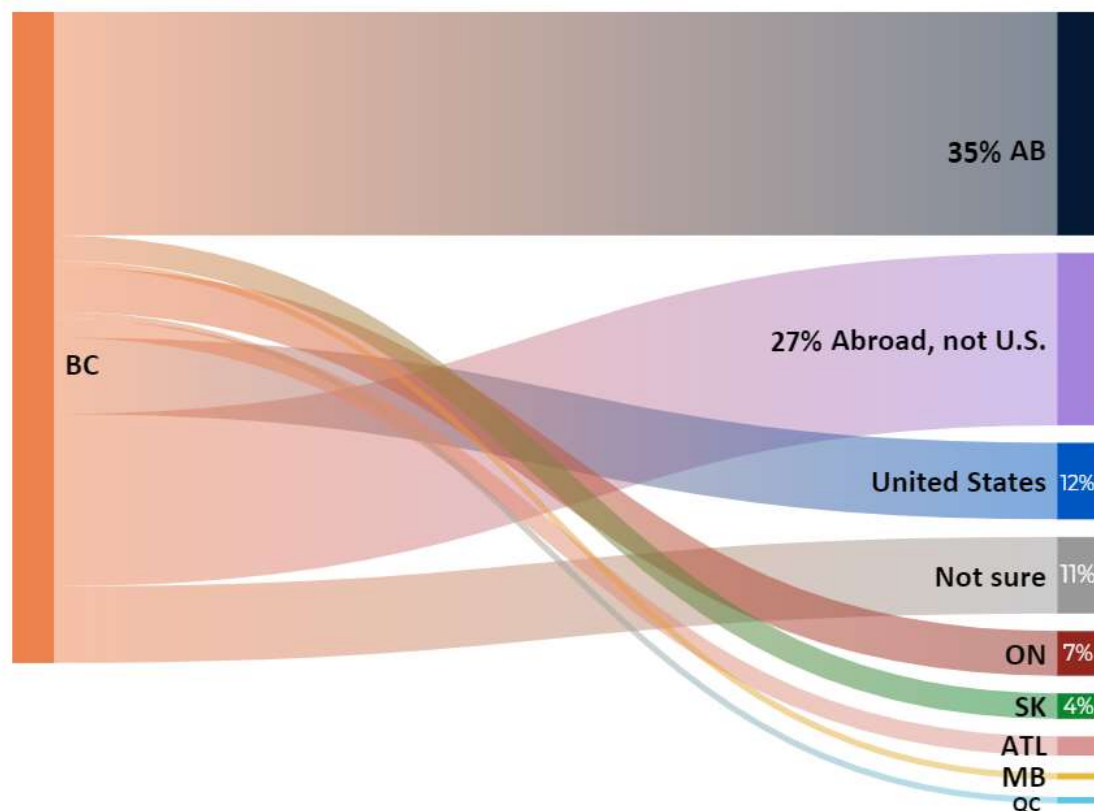
**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

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British Columbia

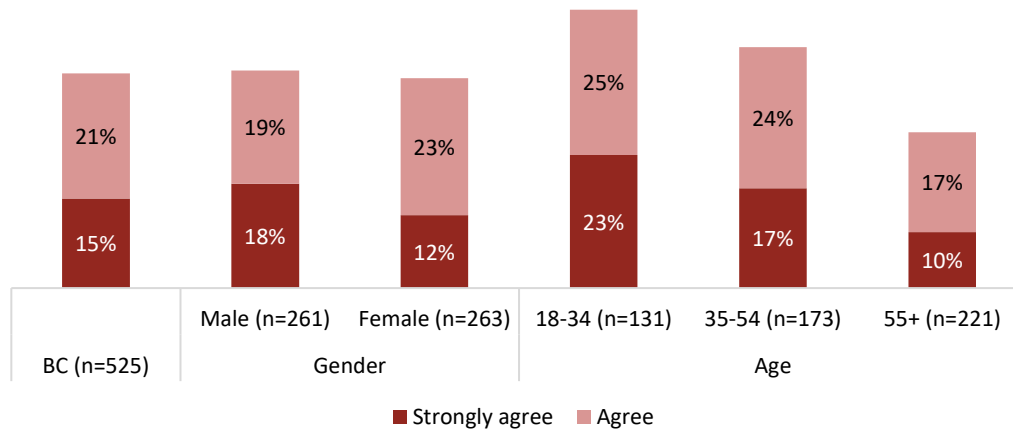
Because of the potential mobility of both provincial populations, it is worth focusing in on British Columbia and Ontario. B.C. residents' recent migration to Alberta is supported in these data, with the largest portion of those who consider leaving saying that they would shift one province east. A significant group say they would look outside of North America if they did decide to make a change (27%), while the United States is the top destination for 12 per cent.

36% of British Columbians say they would consider leaving the province due to housing costs, here's the top choice for destination among that group:



The trend of younger generations feeling least settled in their communities continues here. 18- to 34-year-olds are more than twice as likely as those 55 plus to say they are strongly considering leaving (23% to 10%). That said, at least two-in-five of those in the more family building age group of 35 to 54 say they give this some consideration:

Percentage who agree with the statement: "I'm seriously thinking of leaving British Columbia because of the cost of housing here"



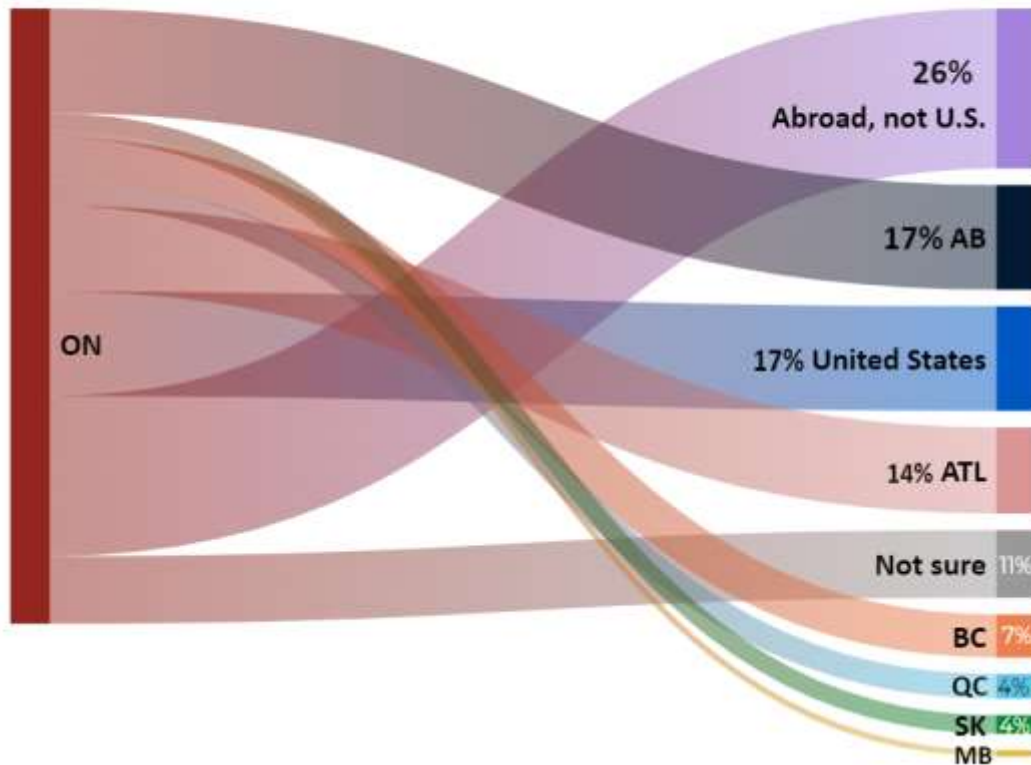
Ontario

In Ontario, the largest number of residents who say they may have to leave because of housing costs in their communities say that they would move outside of North America (26%), to Alberta (17%), or to the United States (17%). Notable here are the significant number (14%) who say they would prefer Atlantic Canada if they made a move. This region of the country has long struggled to maintain its population and employment levels, and could be boosted by a transfer of Canadians looking for a more suitable situation on Canada's east coast:

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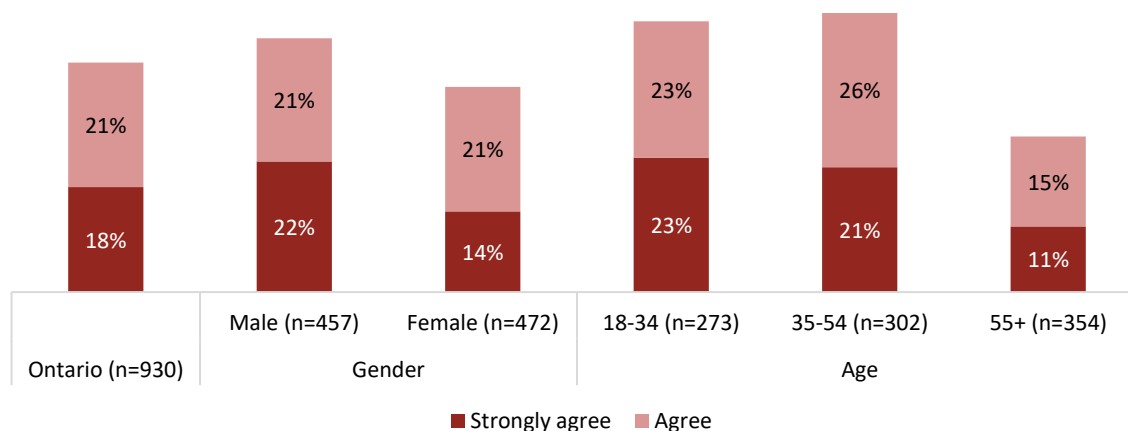
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39% of Ontario residents say they would consider leaving the province due to housing costs, here's their top choice for destination among that group:



The same generational challenges are noted in Ontario as in B.C. Those younger than 55 are twice as likely as those of that age and older to say that they're strongly thinking about relocating:

Percentage who agree with the statement: "I'm seriously thinking of leaving Ontario because of the cost of housing here"



Across the nation, Canadians say that they would prefer to relocate outside of Canada and the U.S., or to Alberta, as their top destinations. For Albertans, one-in-five (19%) say they would move west to British Columbia, helping to soften the blow to Canada's pacific-most province from residents evidently looking to do the opposite:

Where Canadians are considering moving due to the cost of housing in their own province							
Where	Total (n=1,177)	Region					
		BC (n=197)	AB (n=92*)	SK/MB (n=116)	ON (n=360)	QC (n=114)	ATL (n=190)
Abroad, not U.S.	27%	27%	35%	23%	26%	28%	30%
Alberta	18%	35%	-	26%	17%	10%	15%
United States	15%	12%	8%	16%	17%	13%	10%
A province in ATL	10%	3%	11%	5%	14%	3%	17%
B.C.	6%	-	19%	8%	7%	6%	2%
Ontario	4%	7%	1%	3%	-	17%	8%
Other	6%	6%	10%	10%	9%	4%	4%
Not sure	12%	11%	15%	9%	11%	18%	14%

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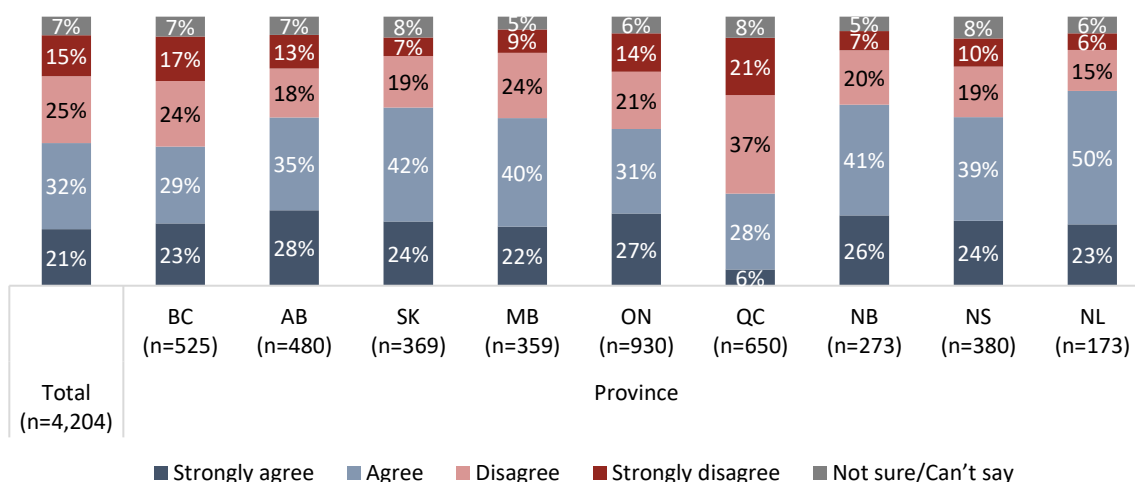
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**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

Part Two: Hopeful for the future?

Although there is evidently plenty of concern over the current housing situation in the country, many still have hope that the problem is solvable. The issue has increasingly been a focus of both the [federal and provincial governments](#). A majority (53%) of Canadians agree they are “hopeful that housing affordability will improve over the next few years”, while two-in-five (40%) disagree. Those in Quebec are the most likely to be in the latter category, with approaching three-in-five (58%) expressing pessimism there is relief on the horizon for the housing affordability crisis.

Agree vs. disagree - "I'm hopeful that housing affordability will improve over the next few years"



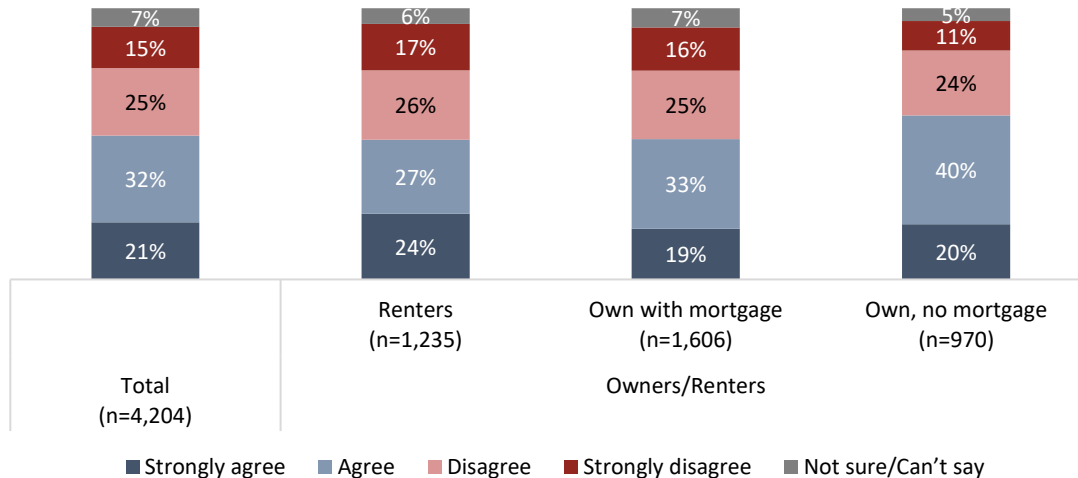
A majority (53%) of 18- to 24-year-olds are hopeful housing affordability will improve, but 25- to 44-year-olds are divided between optimism and pessimism on the matter ([see detailed tables](#)).

Half of renters (51%) and owners with a mortgage (52%) believe there is hope for a solution to the housing affordability crisis, but more than two-in-five in both groups (43% renters, 41% owners with mortgage) express doubt relief is coming. Owners who have paid off their mortgage are the most optimistic that housing affordability will improve in the near term:

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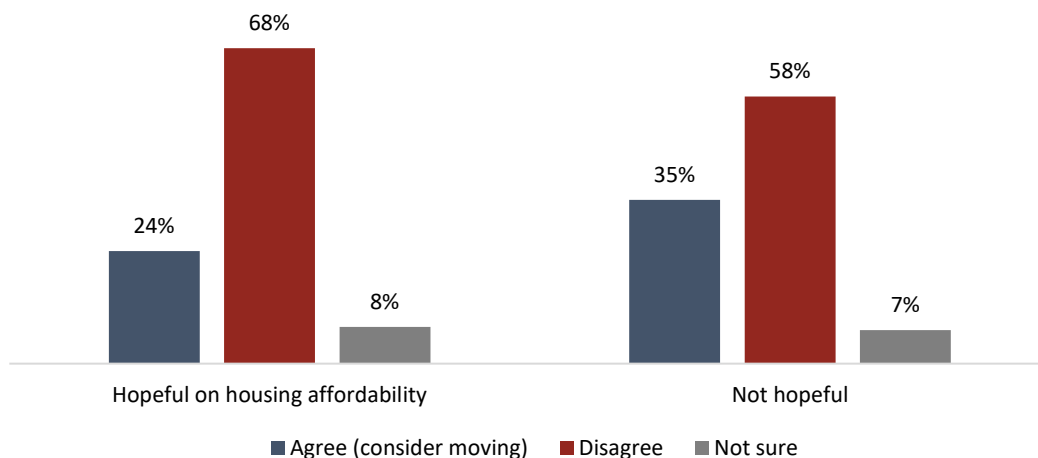
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Agree vs. disagree - "I'm hopeful that housing affordability will improve over the next few years"



Hope for housing affordability to improve does play a small role in one's willingness to stay in their community. Those who say they are hopeful are less likely to say they are considering moving (24%) than those who have little or no hope (35%).

Hope for housing affordability improvement vs Considering moving away from current province of residence



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

For detailed results by homeowners and renters, [click here](#).

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