



Public sentiment toward immigrants and refugees:

Current perspectives in Canada and Germany

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**Environics
Institute**

CIC
CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
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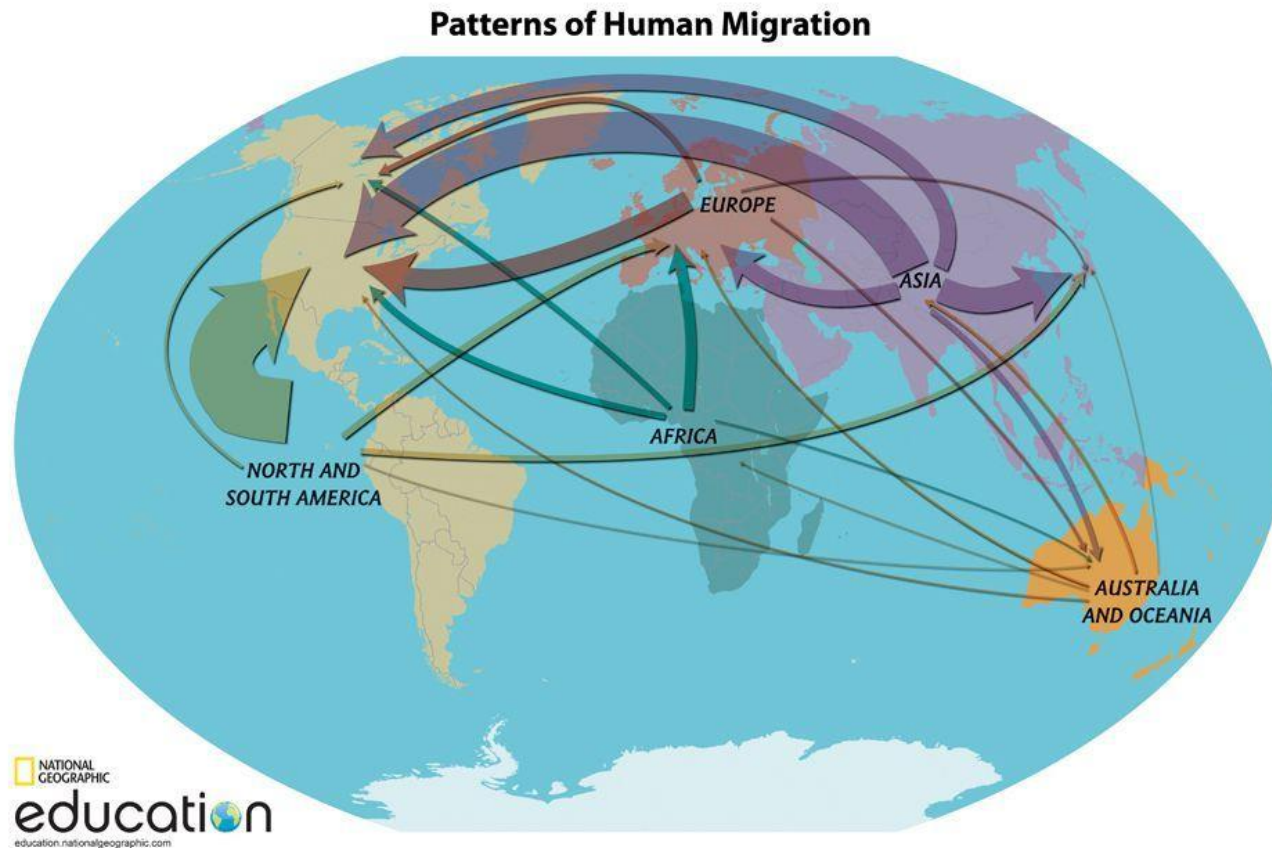
 **KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG**

A high-angle, top-down view of a dense crowd of people, many wearing backpacks, suggesting a large gathering or migration. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance, and the overall atmosphere is one of a busy, packed event. The text "Migration in the 21st century" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Migration in the 21st century

Migration in the 21st century

- Migration across borders has reached unprecedented levels in the past decade – 272 million on the move in 2019



Migration in the 21st century

- Some countries are driving people away – through conflict, famine, and/or desperate economic prospects
- Others are on the receiving end – but not all to the same degree
- Canada and Germany stand out in stepping up to take in more than others through deliberate policy, and has sustained it in despite political pressures

The role of public sentiment

- Public sentiment – collective perceptions and attitudes – is a critical dimension in shaping national and local policy and response to migration
 - Reflects the impacts – both real and perceived
 - Shapes and constrains policy and politics
 - Impacts migrants themselves
- How do we understand public sentiment?
 - Personal experience
 - Shared anecdote
 - Political outcomes and discourse
 - Media coverage and consumption
 - Empirical research



- Conducted by the **Environics Institute for Survey Research** – independent non-profit that conducts public opinion and social research on important issues of public policy and social change in Canada
- Focus Canada research program includes an ongoing focus on immigration and related issues – surveys dating back to the 1970s
- Spring 2019 survey conducted with 2,000 Canadians (ages 18+) by telephone (landline and cell) April 1 to 10, 2019



- Conducted by **Bertelsmann Stiftung** – independent philanthropic foundation with mandate to contribute to social reform in Germany across a range of sectors through dialogue with social stakeholders
- Ongoing focus on immigration and related issues – surveys dating back to 2012
- Spring 2019 survey conducted with 2,025 Germans (ages 14+) by telephone (landline and cell) April 1 to 15, 2019

The questions to be answered

1. What is the current public sentiment toward immigration and refugees, in each country?
2. How have attitudes and perceptions been evolving over time?
3. How do opinions vary across segments of the population (e.g., by region, demographics)?
4. What is similar and different in the public sentiment among Canadians and Germans?

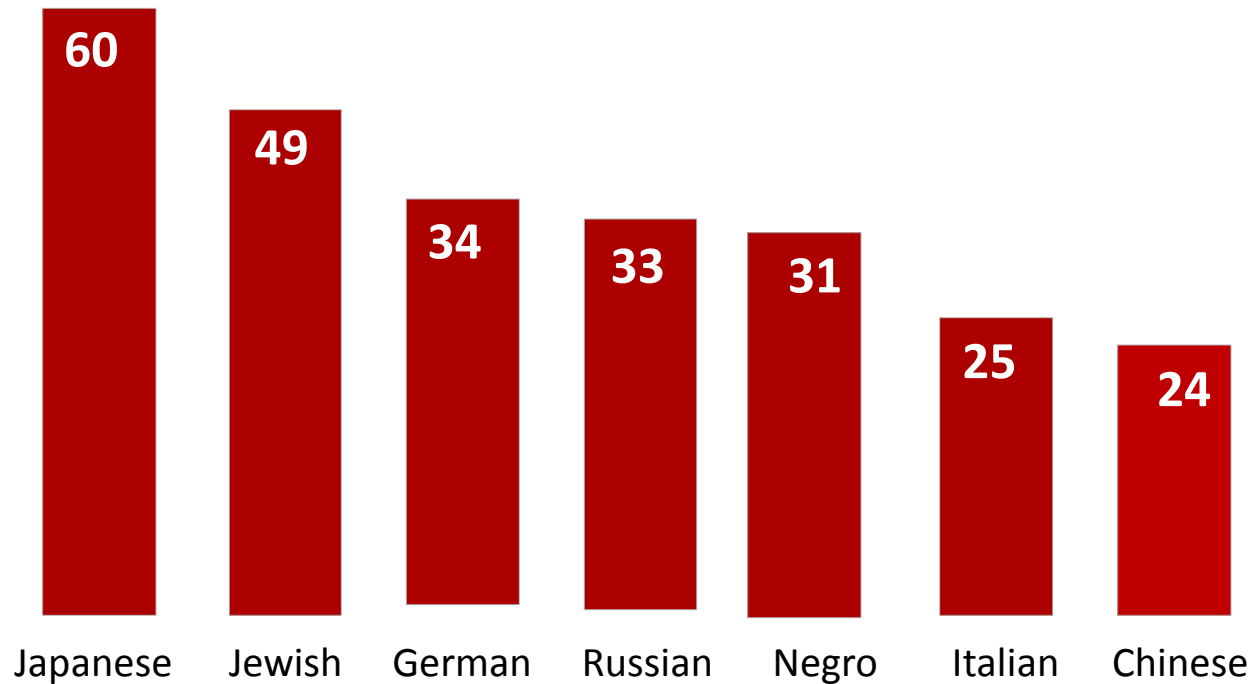
A red maple leaf is painted on a concrete sidewalk. The leaf is the central focus, with its characteristic shape and veins. The concrete is light-colored and shows some texture and wear. The text "Canadian public sentiment" is overlaid on the leaf.

Canadian public sentiment

Canada has a rich legacy of racism and xenophobia – well into the 20th century

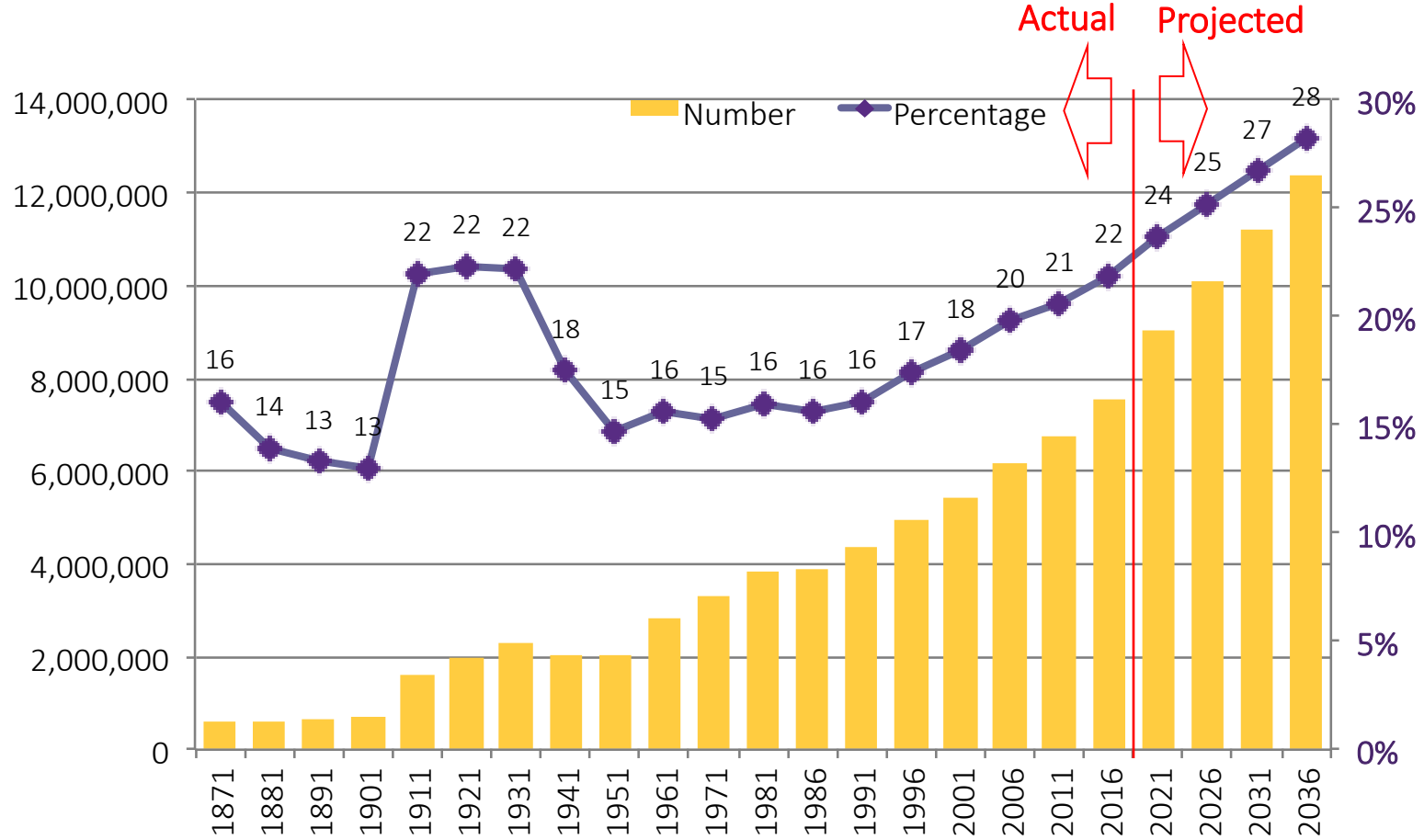
1946

If Canada does allow more immigration, are there any of these nationalities which you would like to keep out?



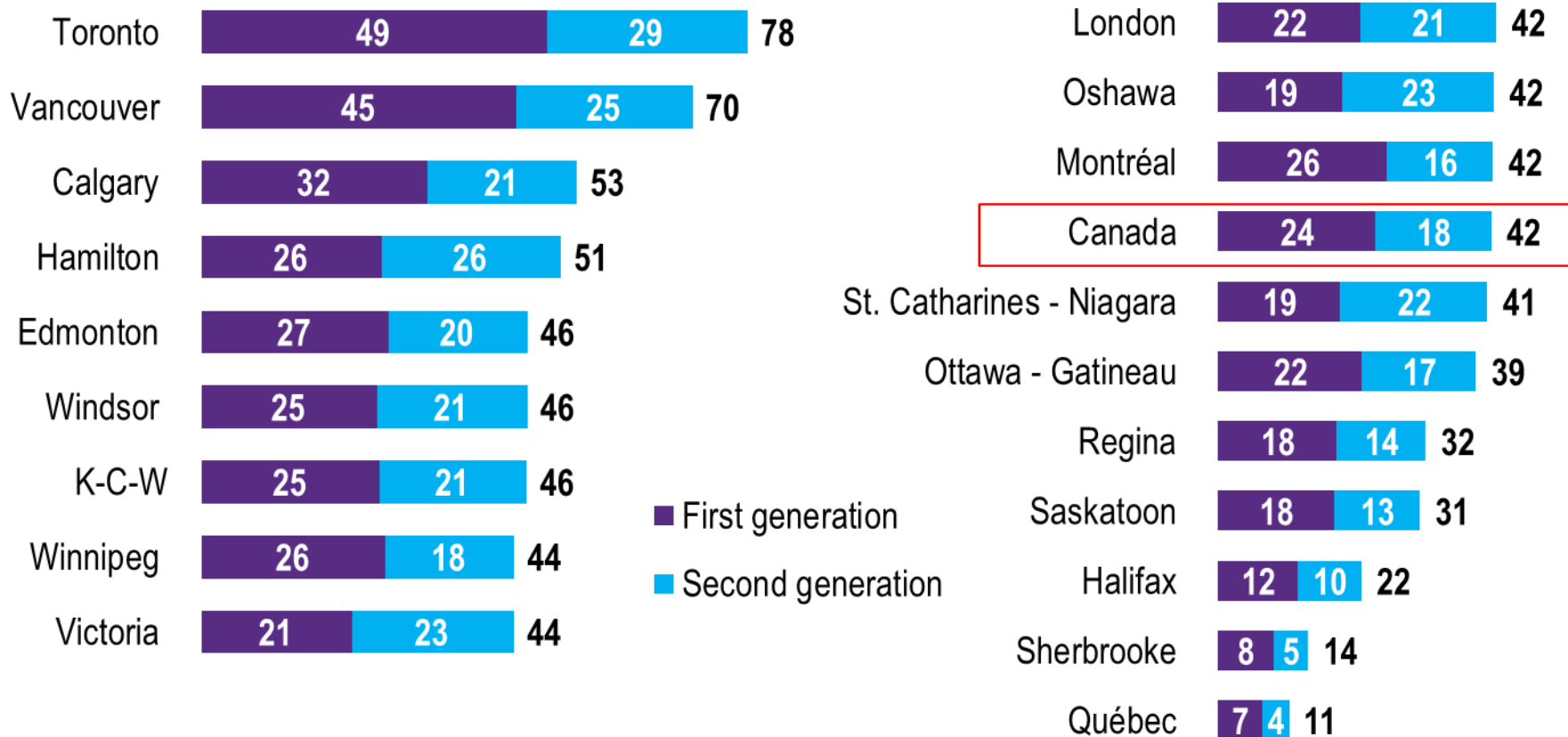
Today, more than one in five Canadians is foreign-born, and the proportion is rising steadily over time

1871 - 2036



At least one in five in our 12 largest cities -- and nearly 80% in the Toronto CMA -- are first or second generation

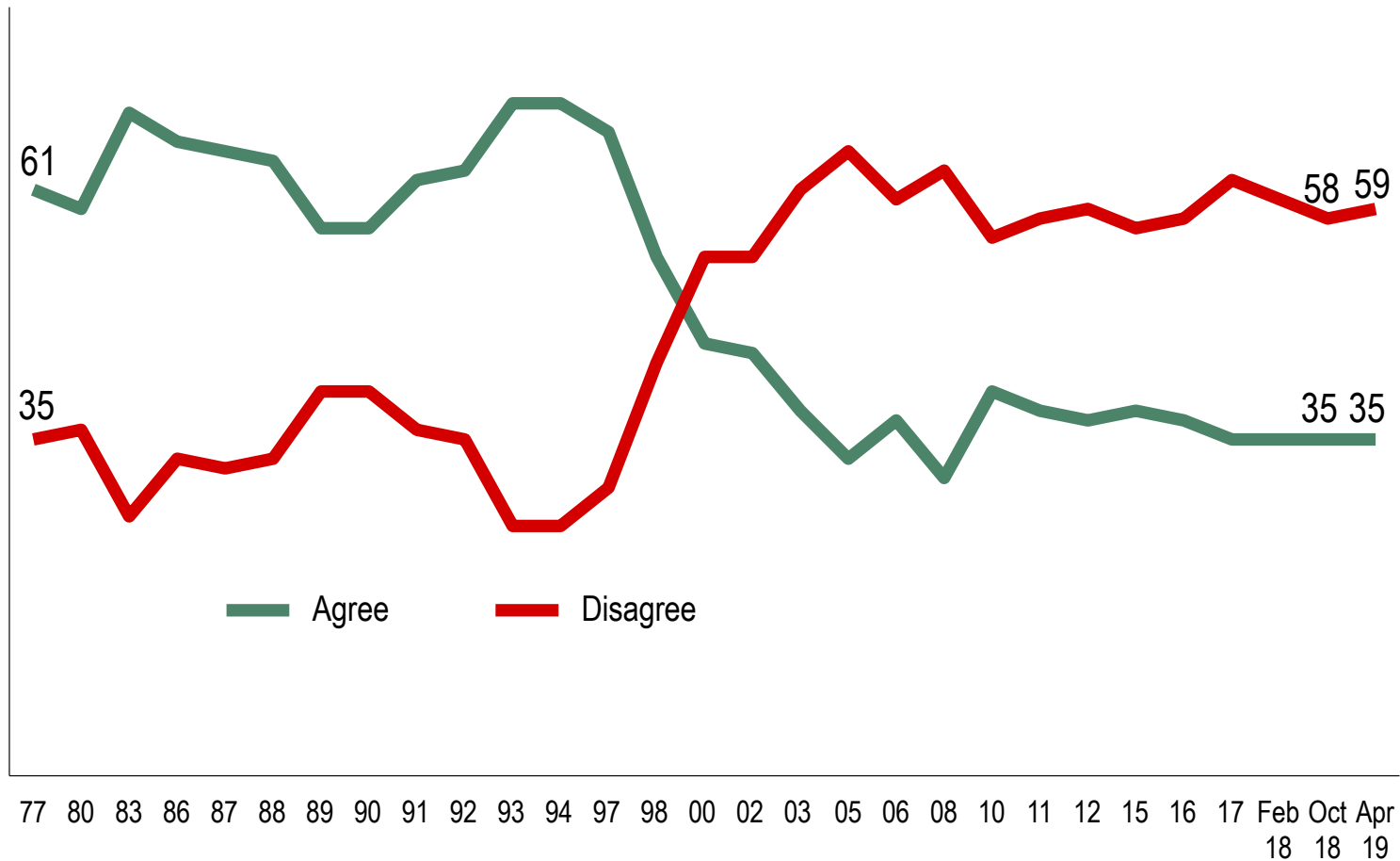
Percent of population by generation, Canada, 2016



By the 21st century, a majority rejected the idea there is too much immigration, reflecting a sea change in opinions from the past

1977 - 2019

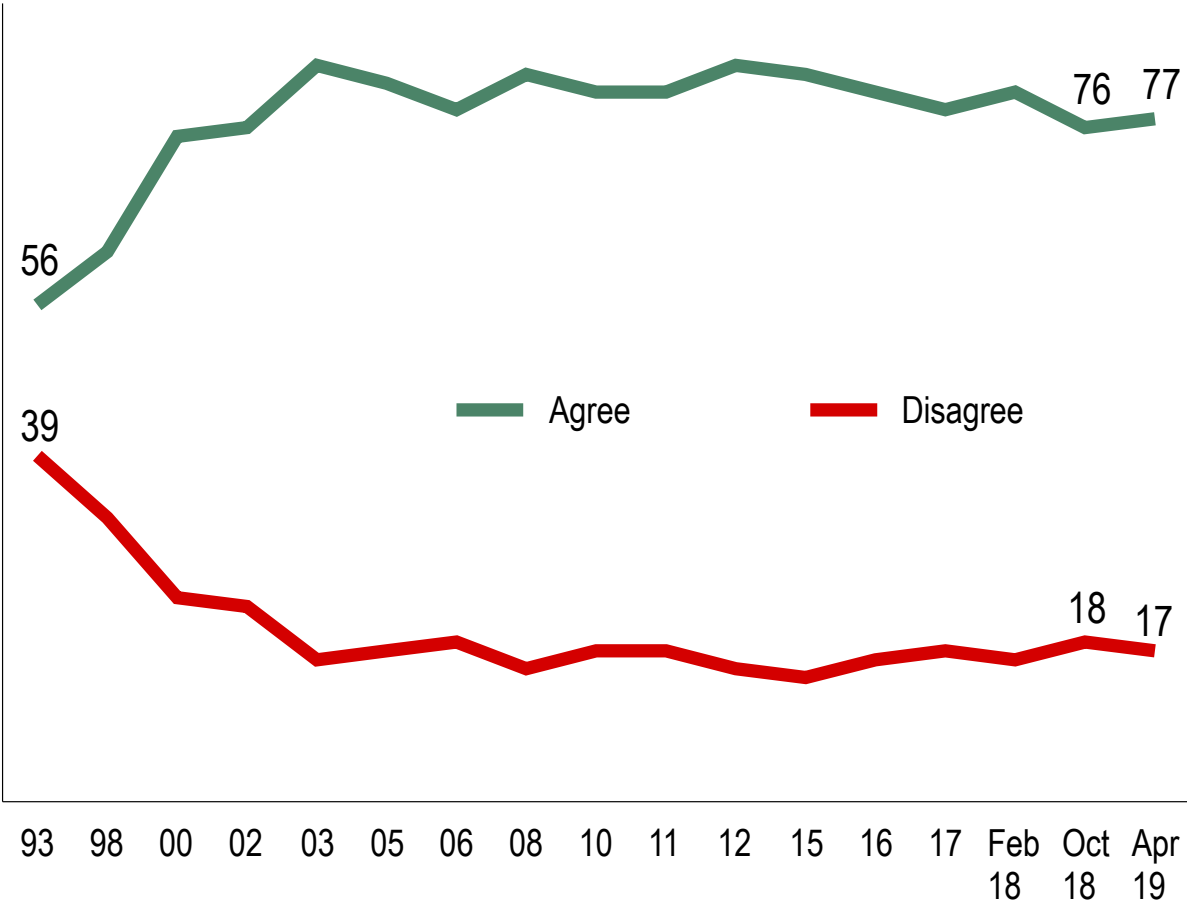
Agree or disagree: "There is too much immigration in Canada"



Most Canadians view immigrants as helping rather than hurting the economy and job creation

1977 - 2019

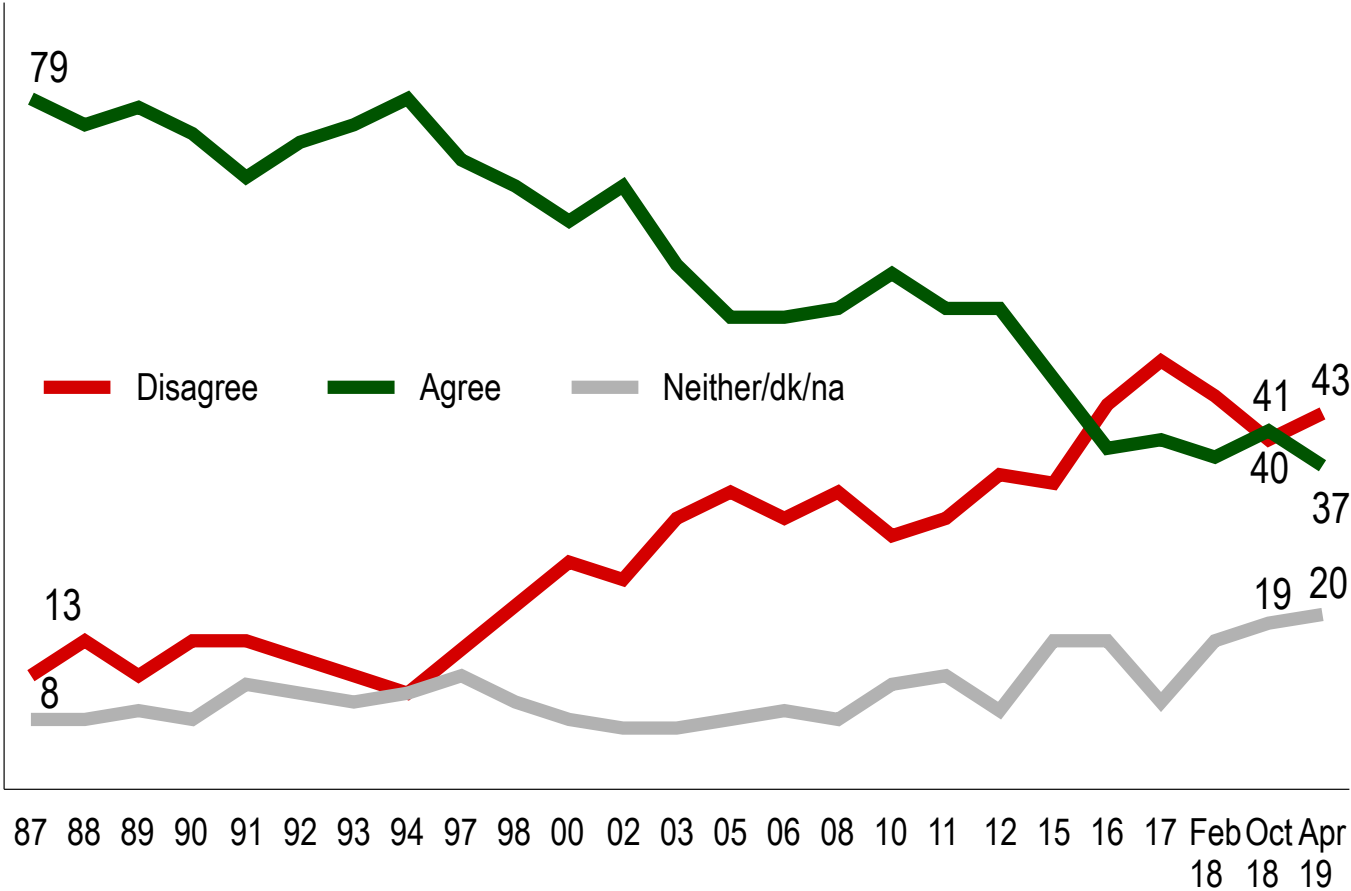
Agree or disagree: "The economic impact of immigrants is positive"



Canadians are divided on whether many refugee claimants are not legitimate, but views are growing more positive over time

1987 - 2019

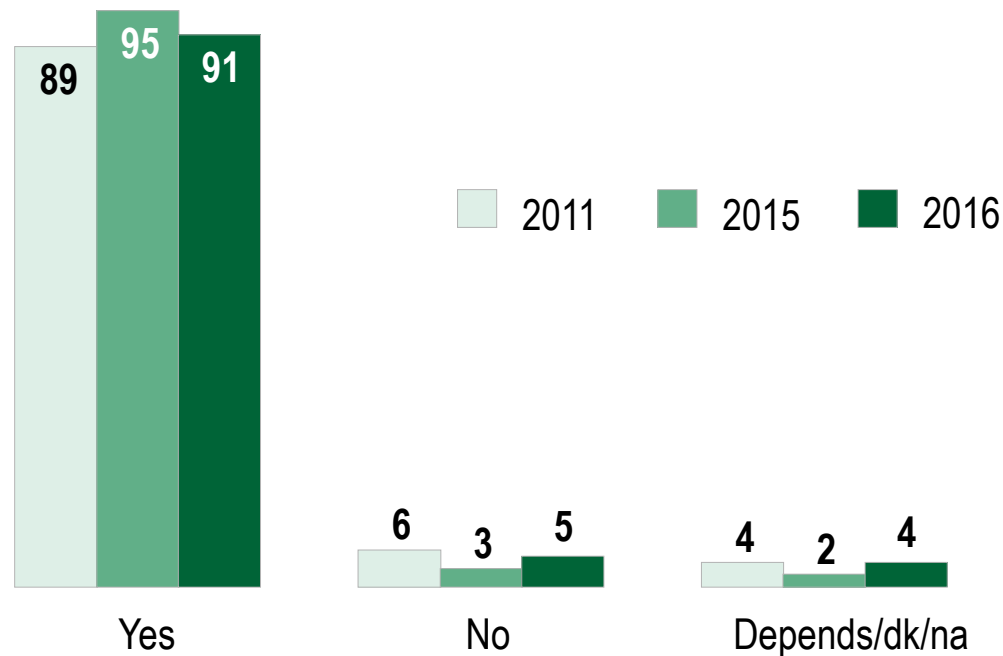
Agree or disagree: "Too many refugee claimants are not legitimate"



There is near consensus that being born abroad is no impediment to being a good citizen in Canada

2011 - 2016

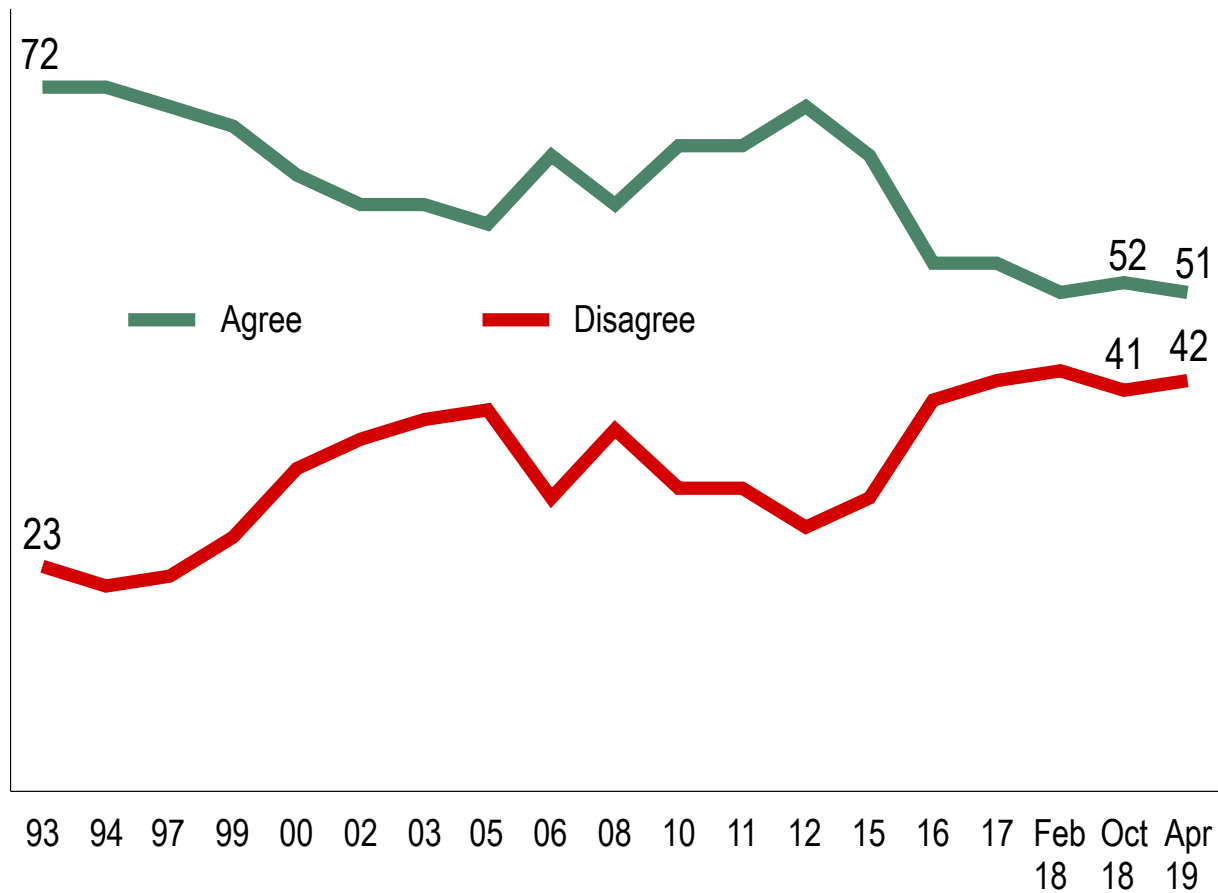
“Can someone born outside Canada be just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born here?”



At the same time, the public is divided about how well some newcomers are integrating into Canadian society

1993 - 2019

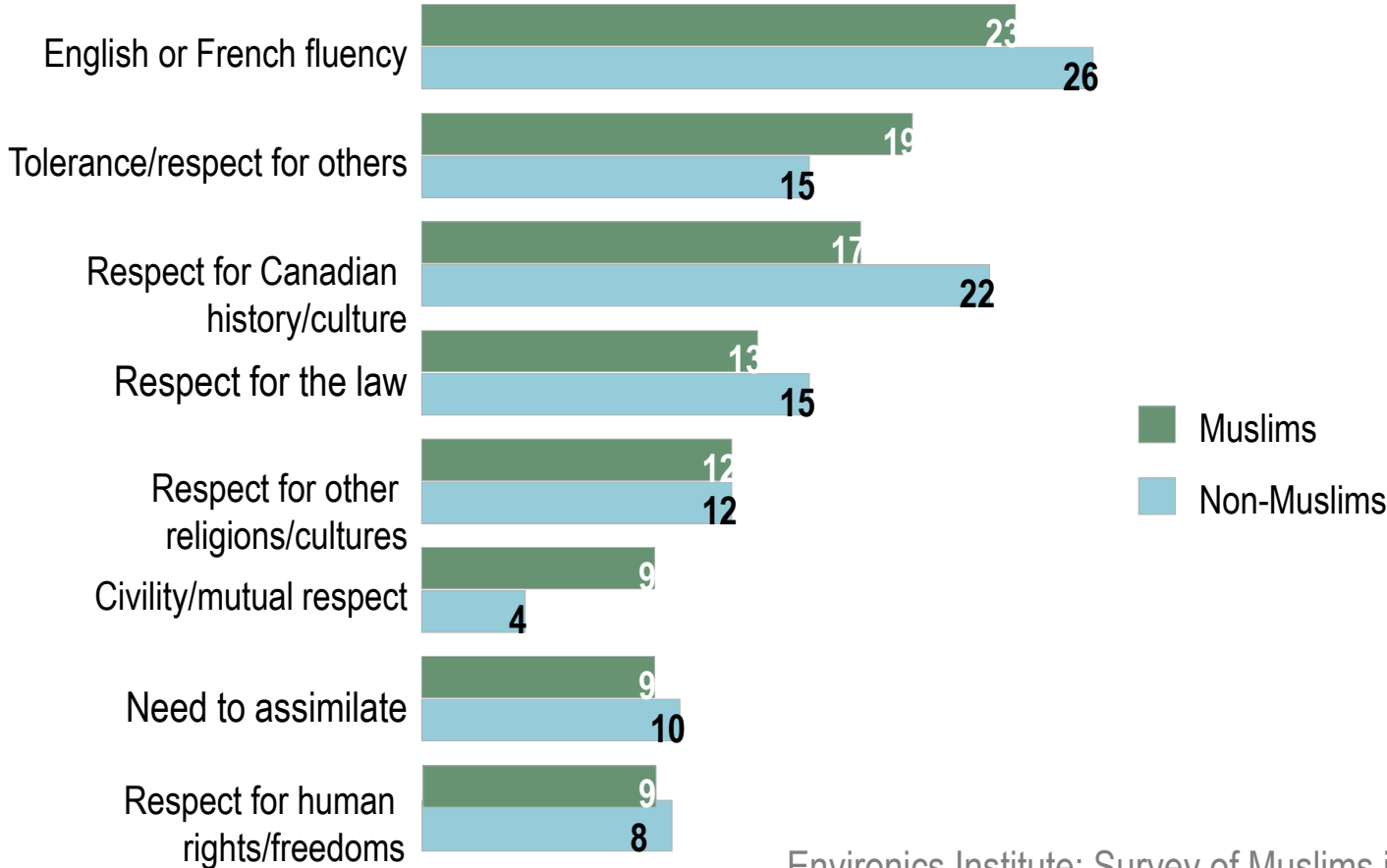
Agree or disagree: "Too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values"



And yet - Muslims & non-Muslims generally agree on the important values which immigrants need to adopt

2016 Surveys of Muslims and non-Muslims

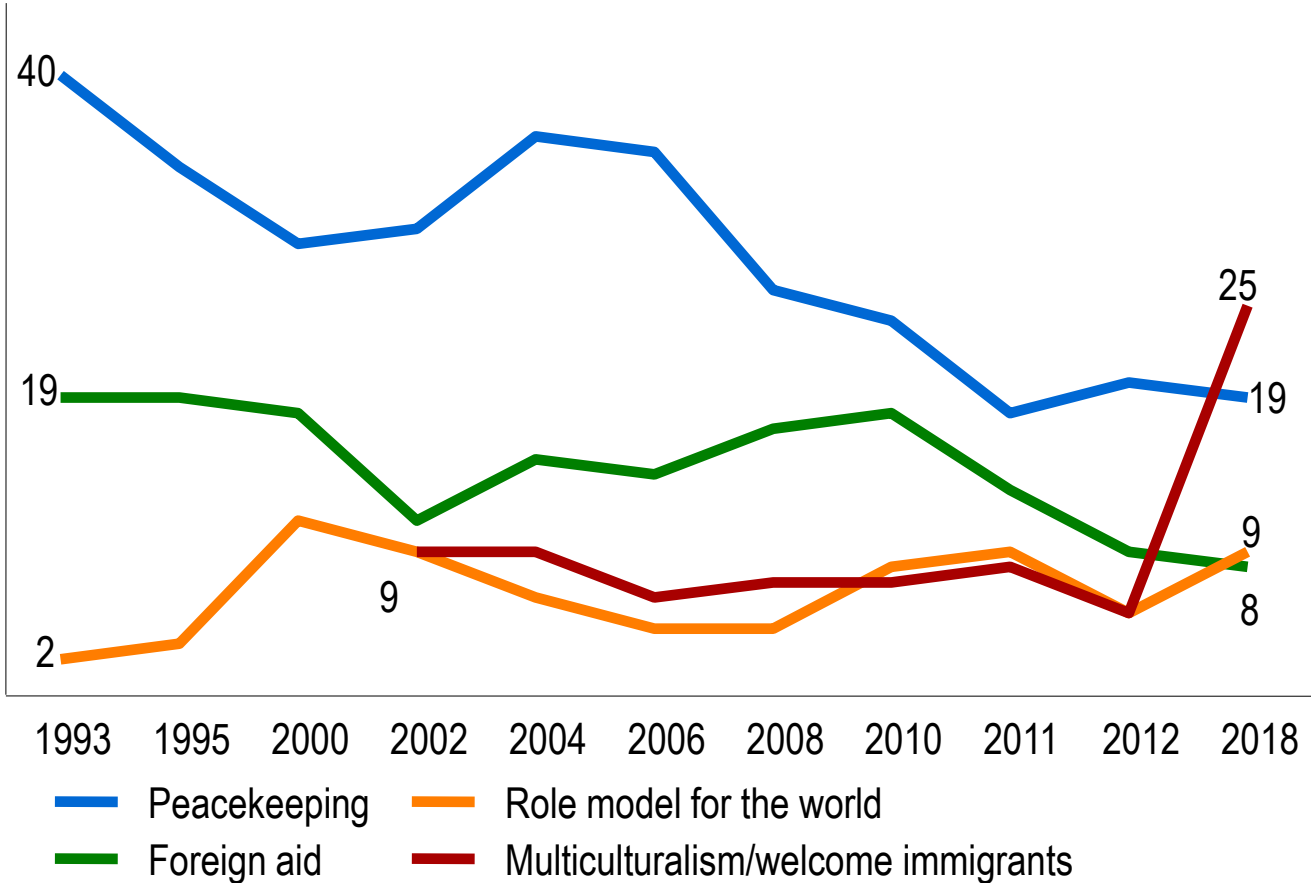
What values are most important for immigrants to adopt? (unprompted mentions)



Canadians' increasingly view their country's global contribution is being a place that welcomes immigrants and ethnic diversity

1993 – 2018 Top mentions (unprompted)

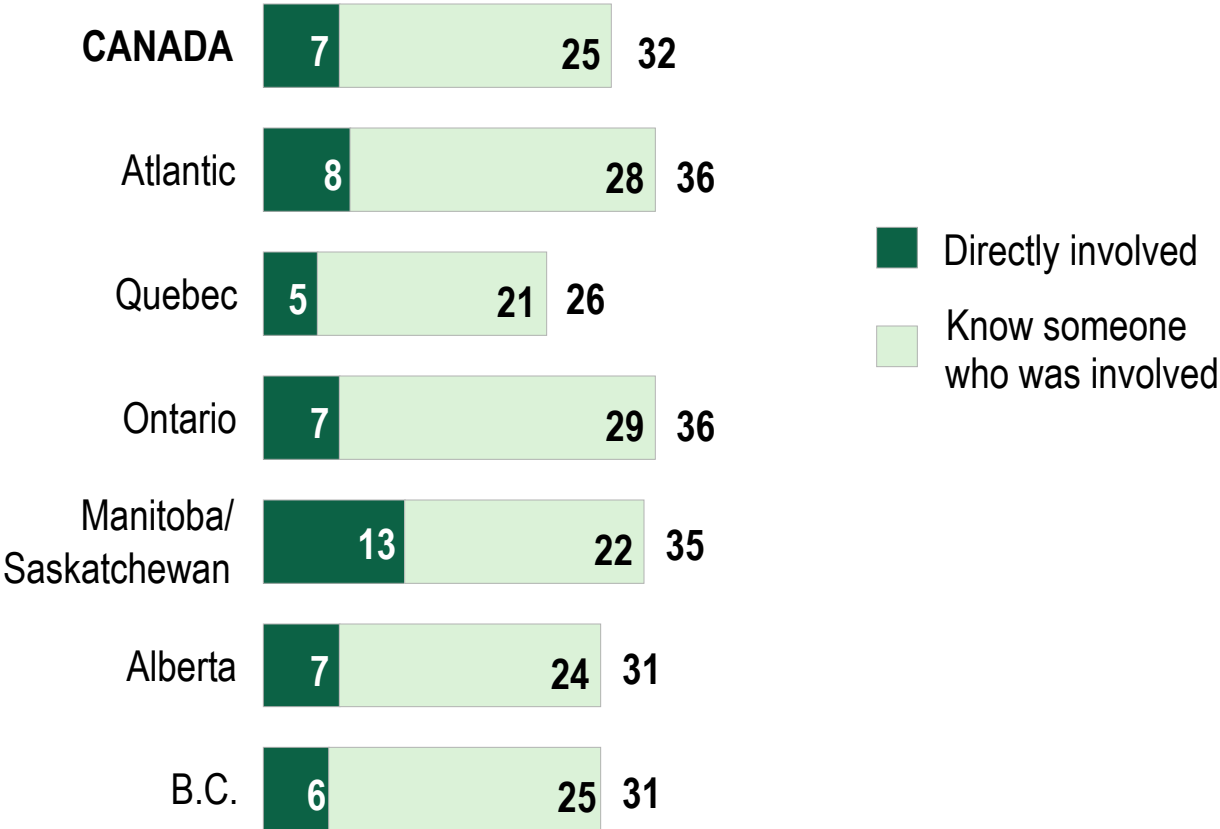
What is the most important contribution that Canada makes to the world today?



And this is powerfully reflected in the public response to sponsoring Syrian refugees in 2015-16

2018

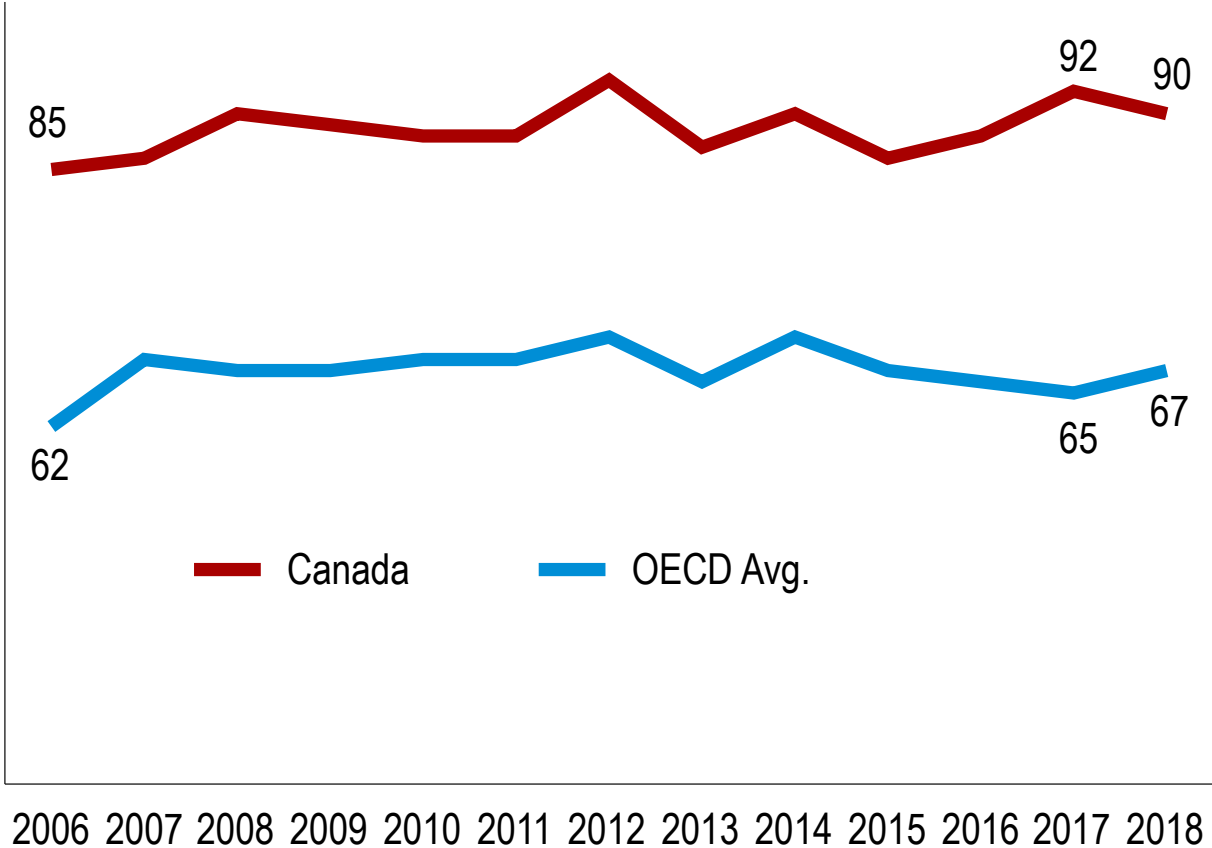
Were you involved in the Syrian refugee sponsorship program in some capacity, or know someone who was involved?



Worldwide – Canadians have been among the most positive in viewing their communities as a good place for immigrants to live

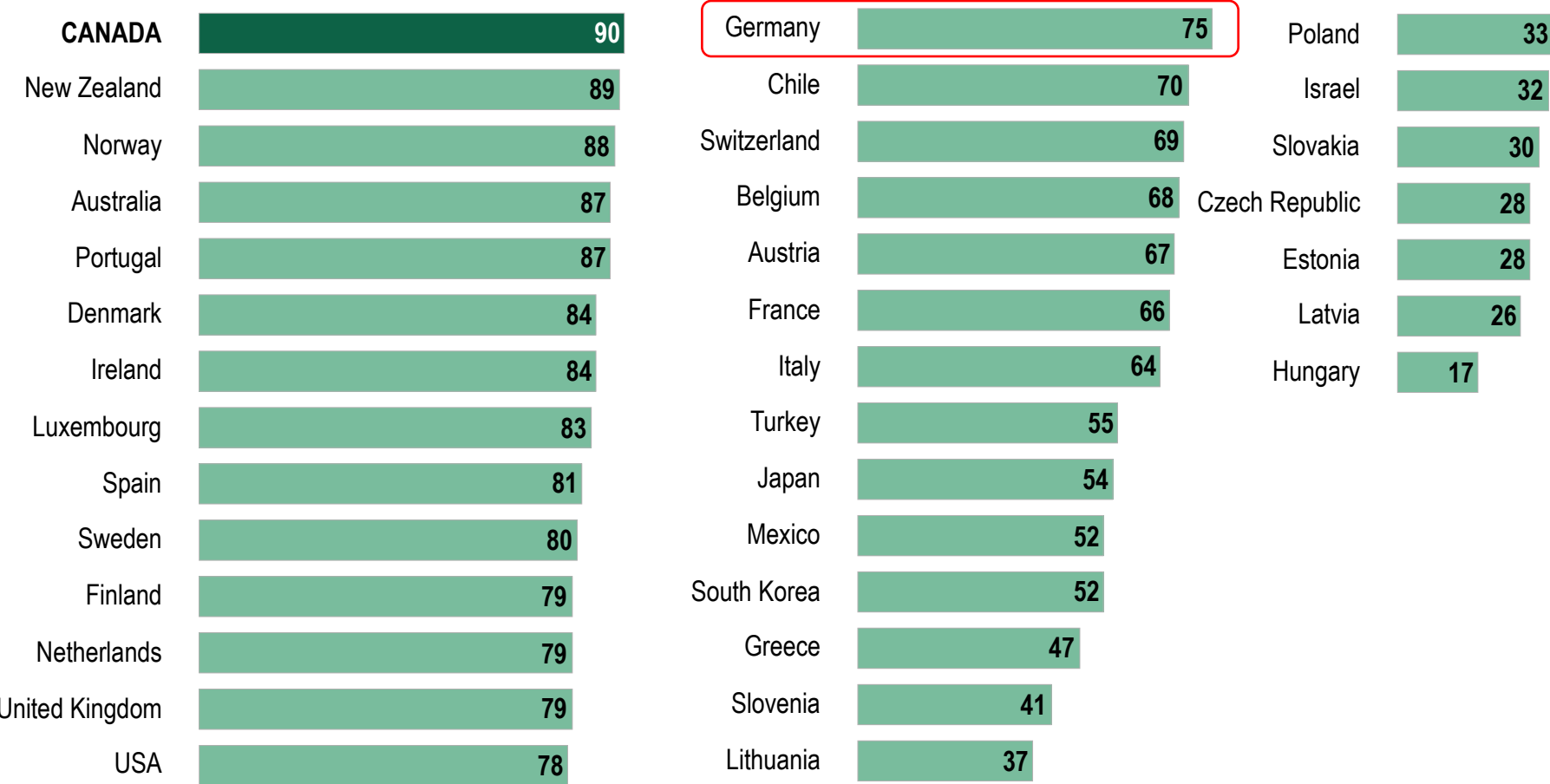
2006 - 2018

Your city/area is a good place for immigrants to live



In 2018, Canada ranked first among OECD countries in terms of public sentiment about one's city being a good place for immigrants

Gallup World Poll 2018 OECD City/area is a good place for immigrants to live



Canadian public sentiment about immigration is not uniform across the population -- but most differences are modest

More positive

- Younger Canadians
- University educated
- Atlantic Canadians
- First generation Canadians

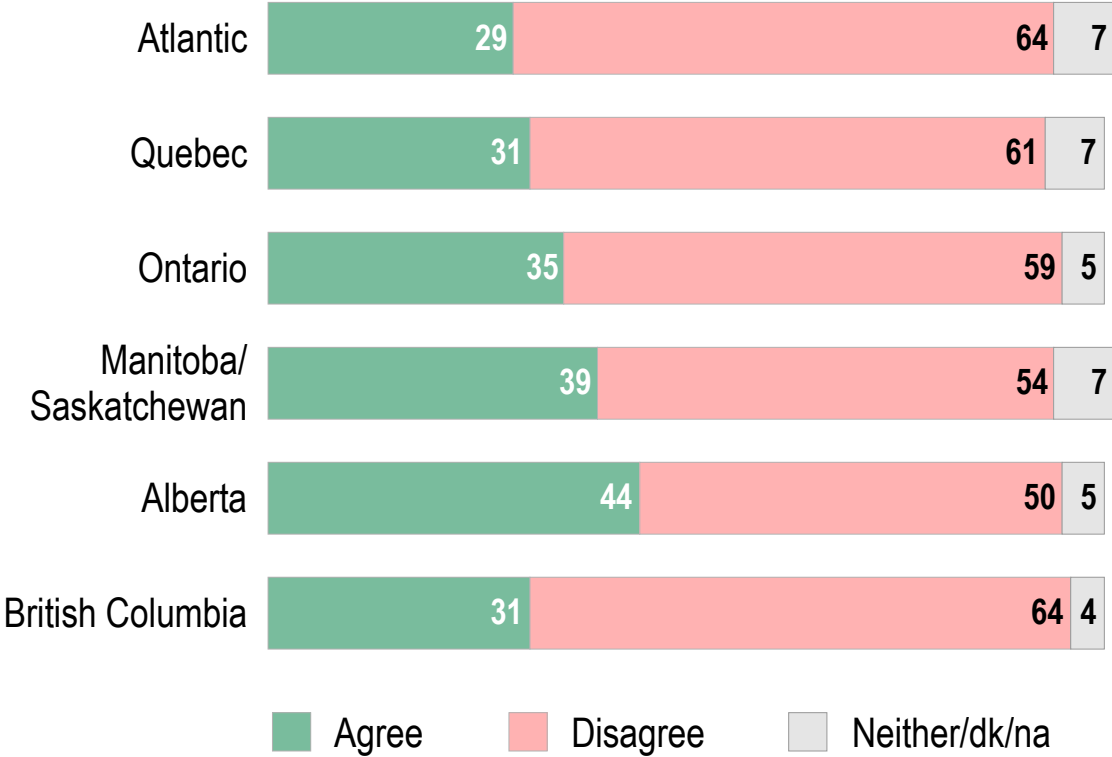
More negative

- Canadians 60 plus
- No post-secondary degree
- Albertans

The view that Canada is taking in too many immigrants increases from east to west, until B.C.

Canada – By province

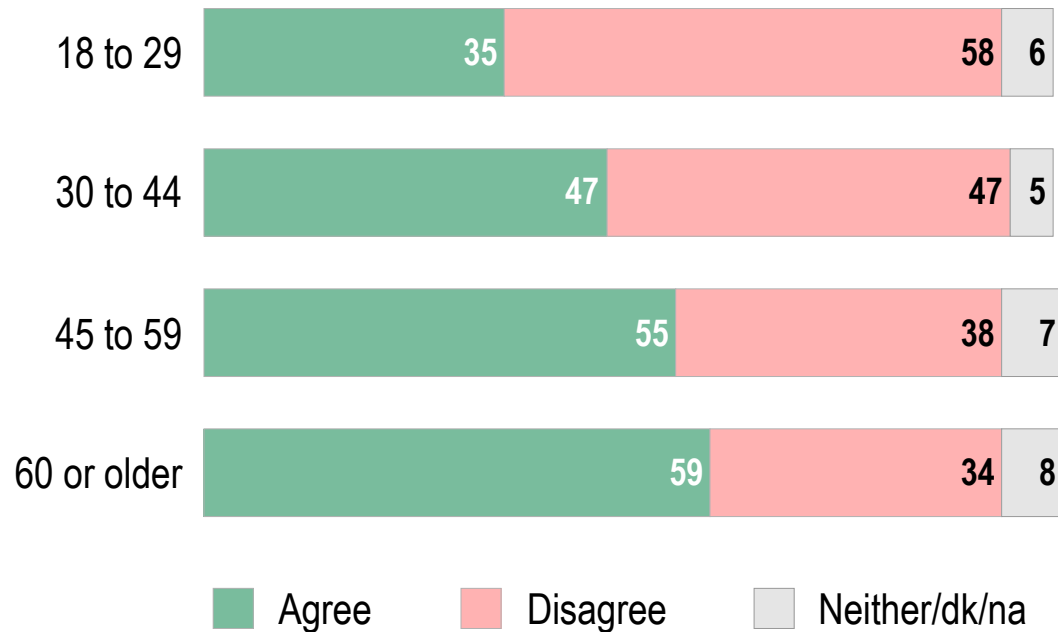
Agree or disagree: “There is too much immigration in Canada”



Canada's youth express the least concern about the integration of immigrants coming from different cultures

Canada – By age group

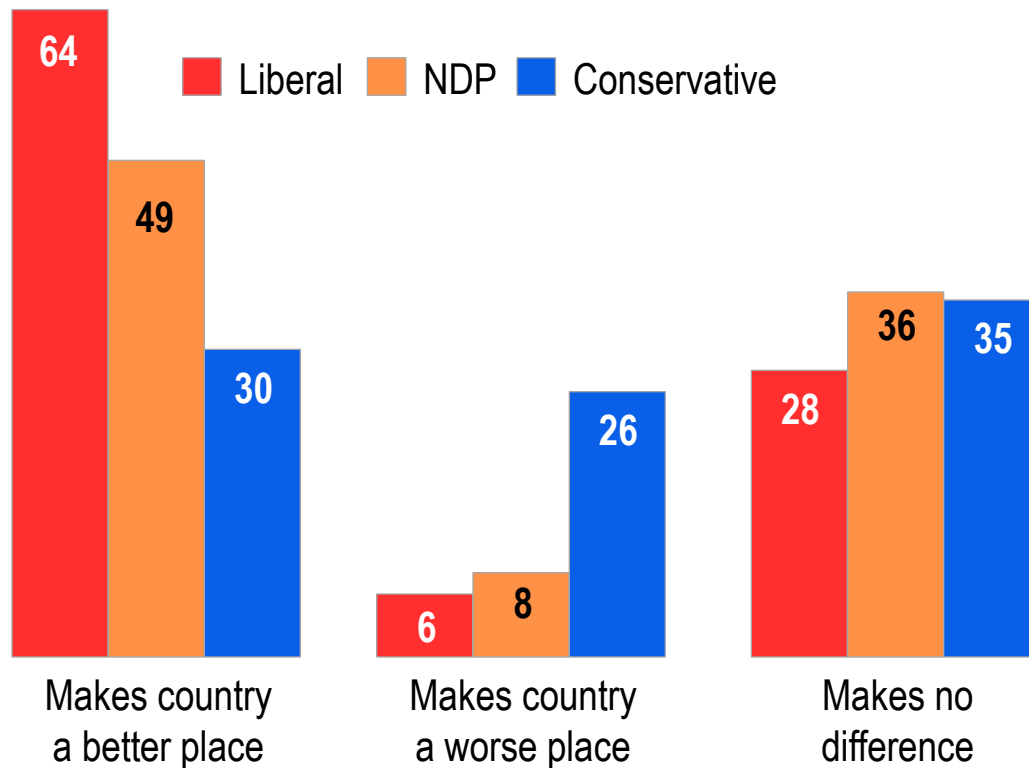
Agree or disagree: "Too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values"



Perspectives on immigration in Canada are most polarized across political party affiliation . . .

Canada - By political party

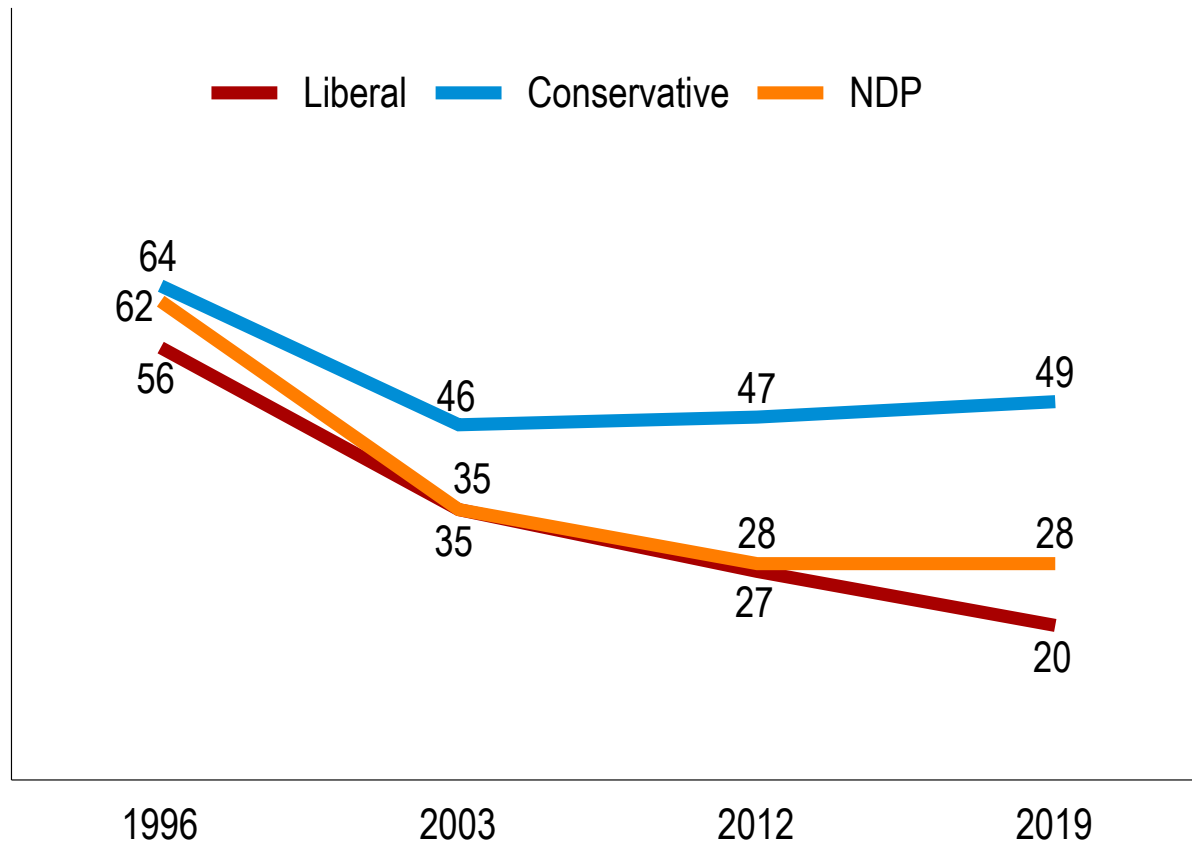
The overall effect of new immigrants on the country overall?



... and this divide has been widening over time

Canada 1996 - 2019 By political party support

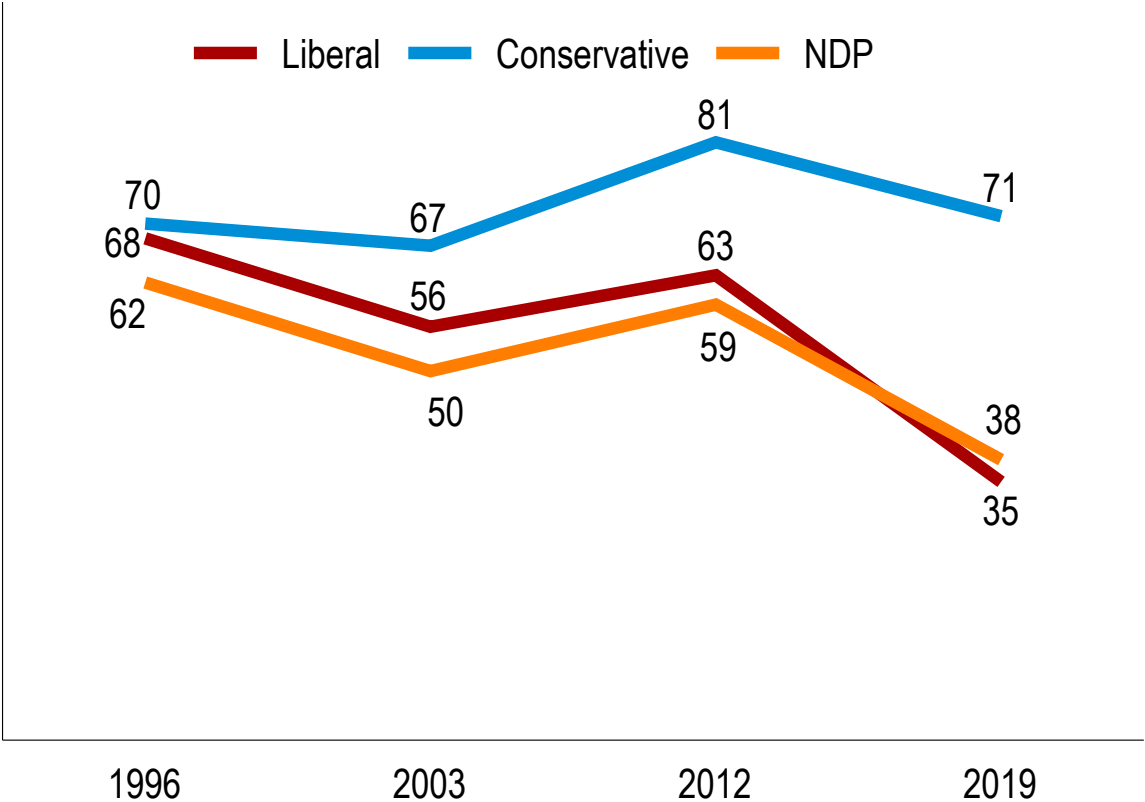
Agree or disagree: "There is too much immigration in Canada"



A similar trend for concerns about the lack of integration by some newcomers – most likely Muslims

Canada 1996 - 2019 By political party support

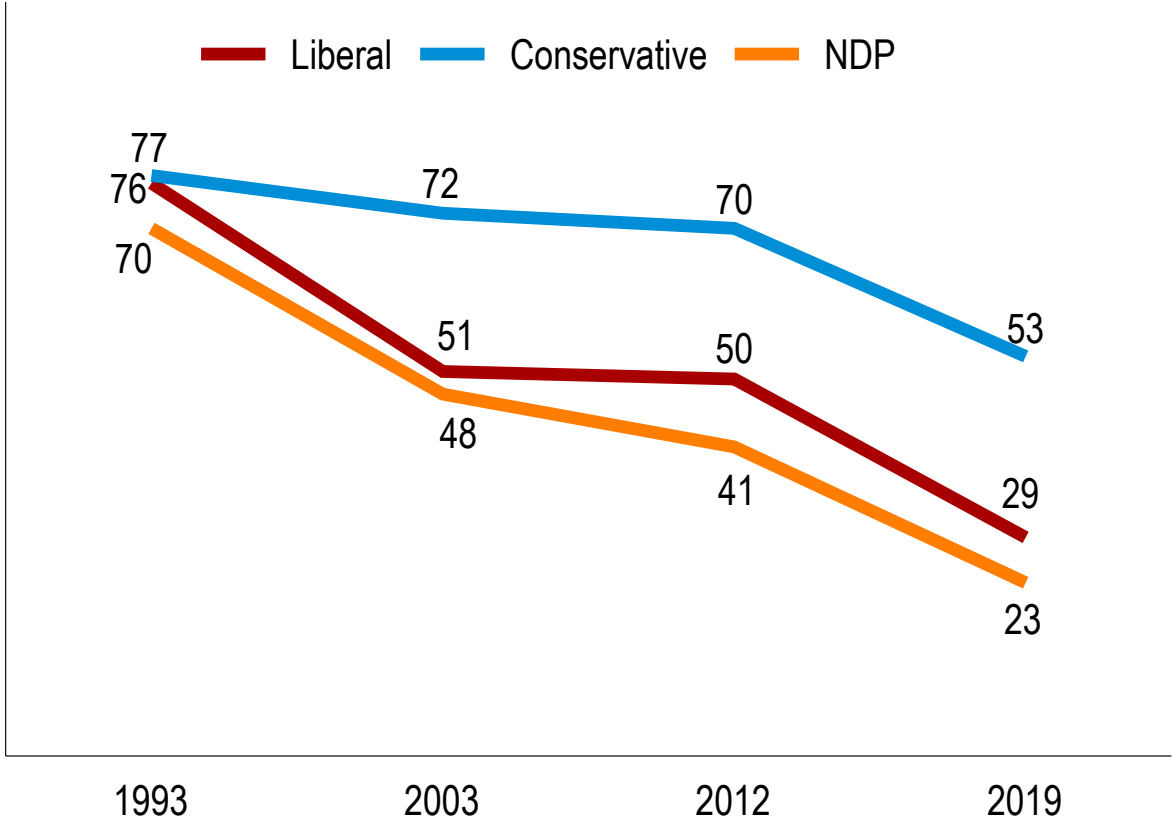
Agree or disagree: "Too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values."



Public concerns about illegitimate refugees are declining across the population, but less so among Conservatives

Canada 1996 - 2019 By political party support

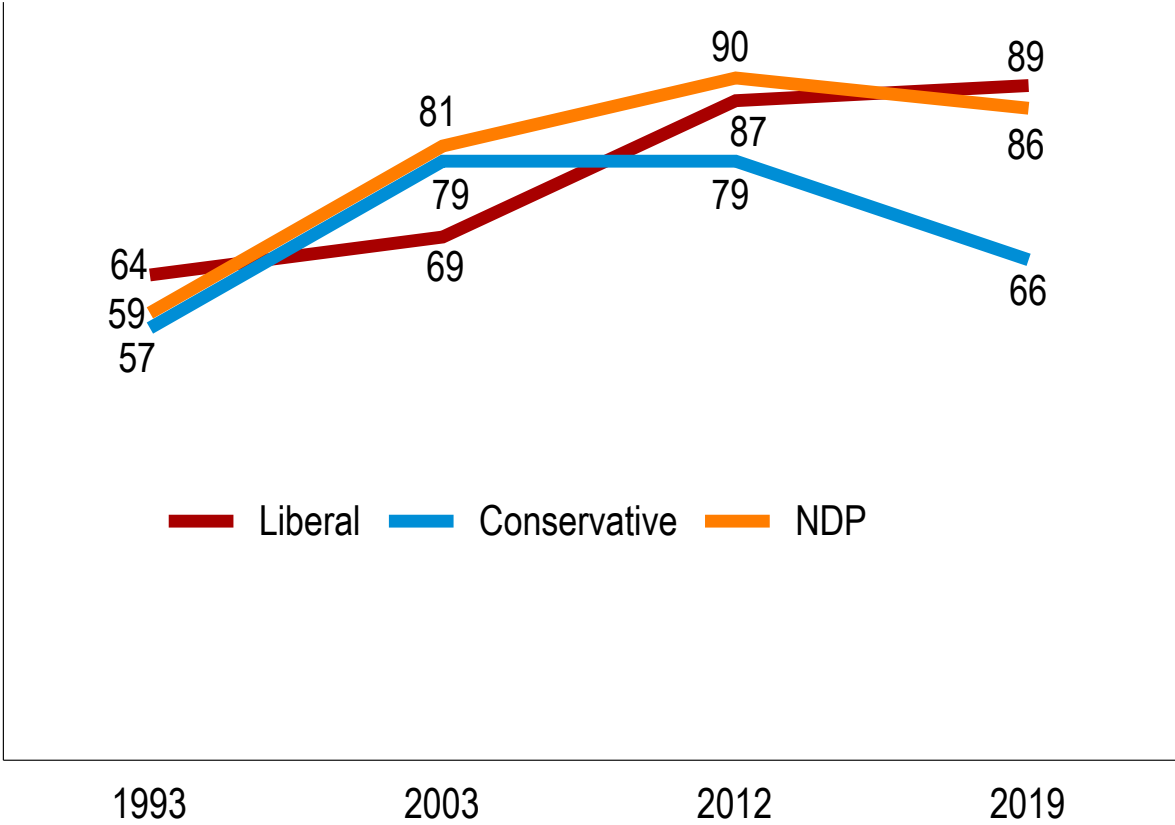
Agree or disagree: "Too many refugee claimants are not legitimate"



And the growing political divide extends to views about the impact of immigration on the Canadian economy

Canada 1996 - 2019 By political party support

Agree or disagree: "The economic impact of immigrants is positive"



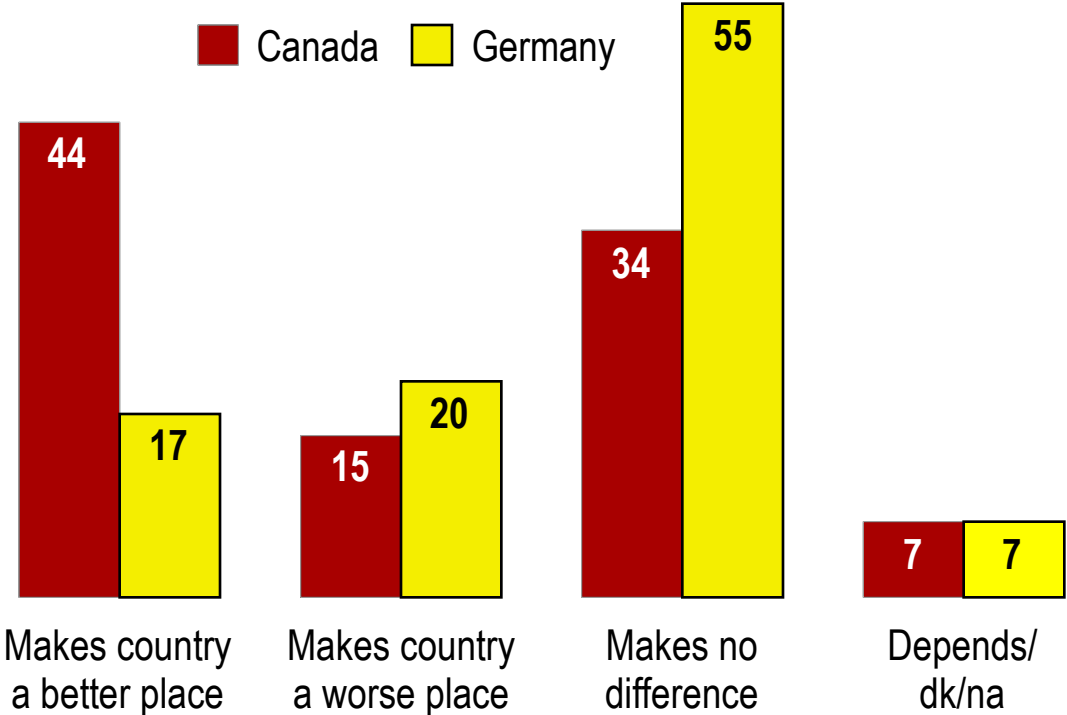
The image features a close-up, artistic view of the German flag, showing the black, red, and gold horizontal stripes. The flag is draped and folded, creating a sense of movement and texture. The colors are vibrant and slightly blurred, giving it a soft, ethereal quality. The text "German public sentiment" is overlaid in the center in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

German public sentiment

Germans are less likely than Canadians to see immigration as benefitting their country

Canada & Germany

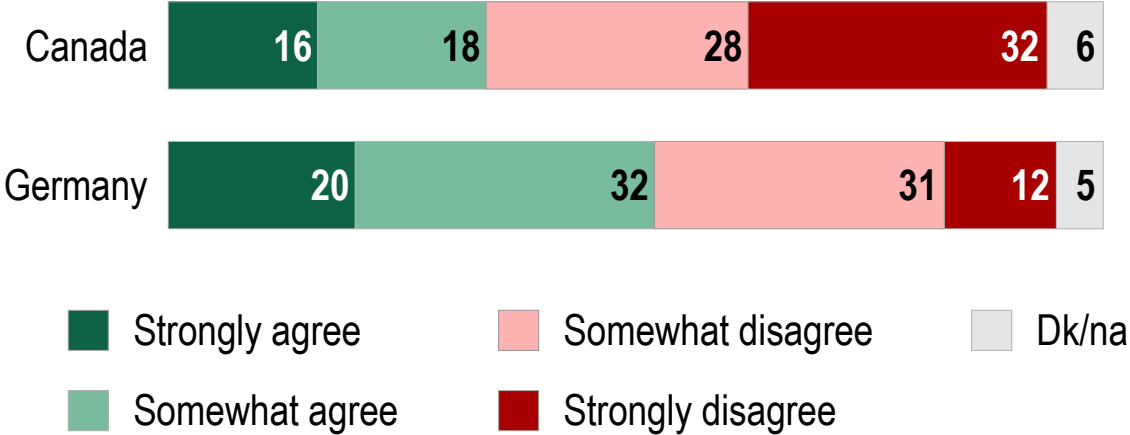
The overall effect of new immigrants on the country overall?



Germans are more likely to believe their country is accepting too many immigrants . . .

Canada & Germany

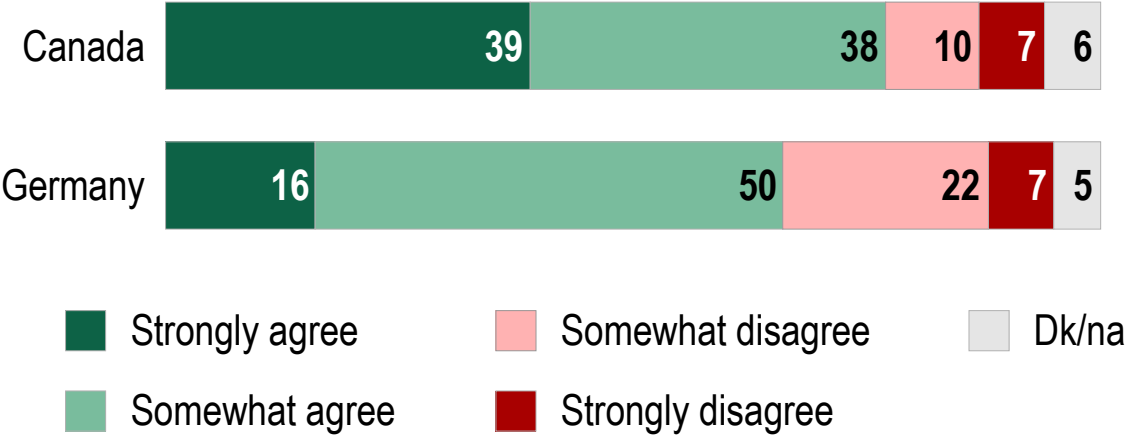
Agree or disagree: “There is too much immigration in [Canada/Germany]”



. . . and less likely to believe that immigration is good for their economy . . .

Canada & Germany

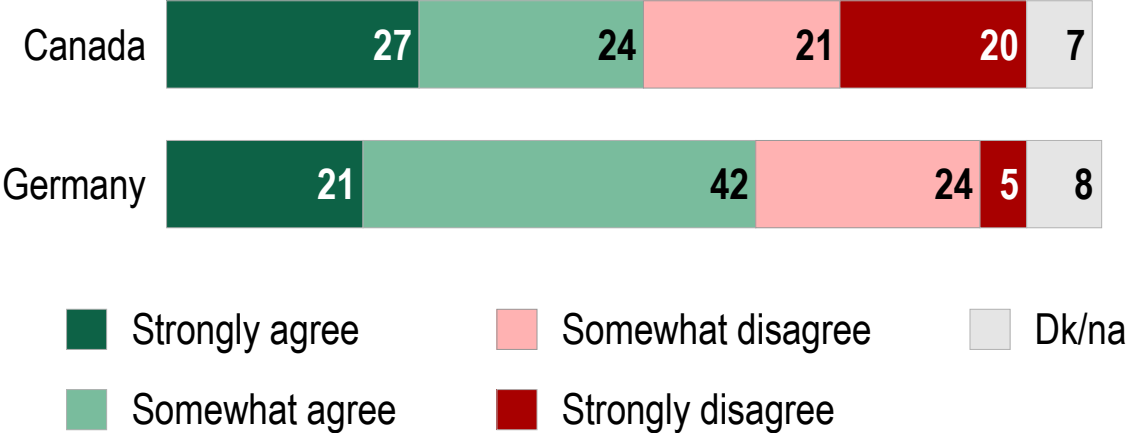
Agree or disagree: “The economic impact of immigrants is positive”



Germans are also noticeably more widely concerned about some immigrants not adopting the right values

Canada & Germany

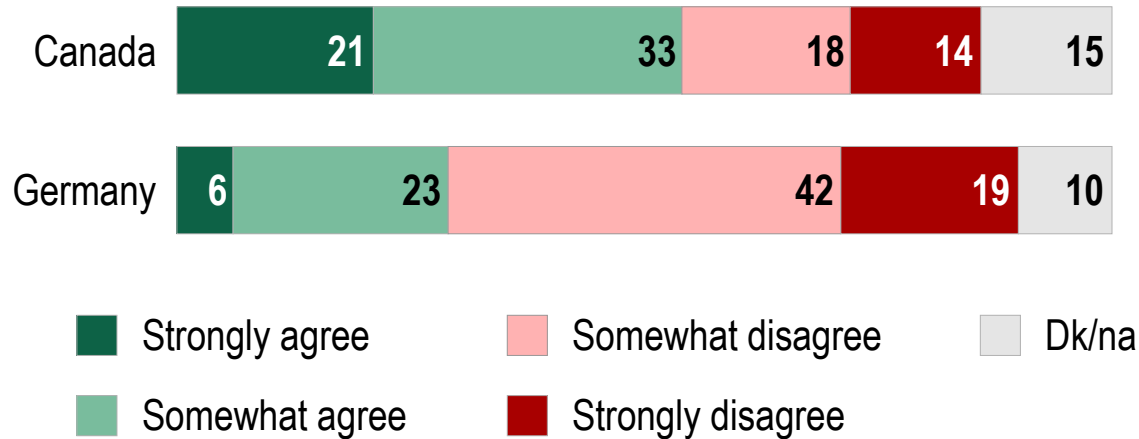
Agree or disagree: “Too many immigrants do not adopt [Canadian/German] values.”



... and less likely to believe that immigrants work harder

Canada & Germany

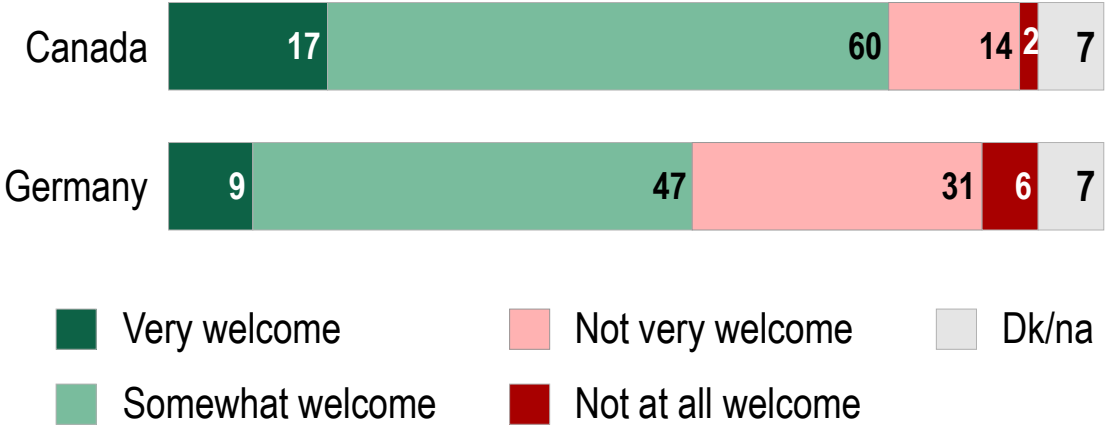
Agree or disagree: "Immigrants tend to work harder than people born in [Canada/Germany]."



A majority of Germans believe refugees are welcomed in their local communities, but less so than Canadians

Canada & Germany

Agree or disagree: “To what extent do you think that refugees are welcomed by the local population.”



Public sentiment about immigrants and refugees across Germany varies across the population in ways similar to Canada

More positive

- Younger Germans
- University educated
- Western region

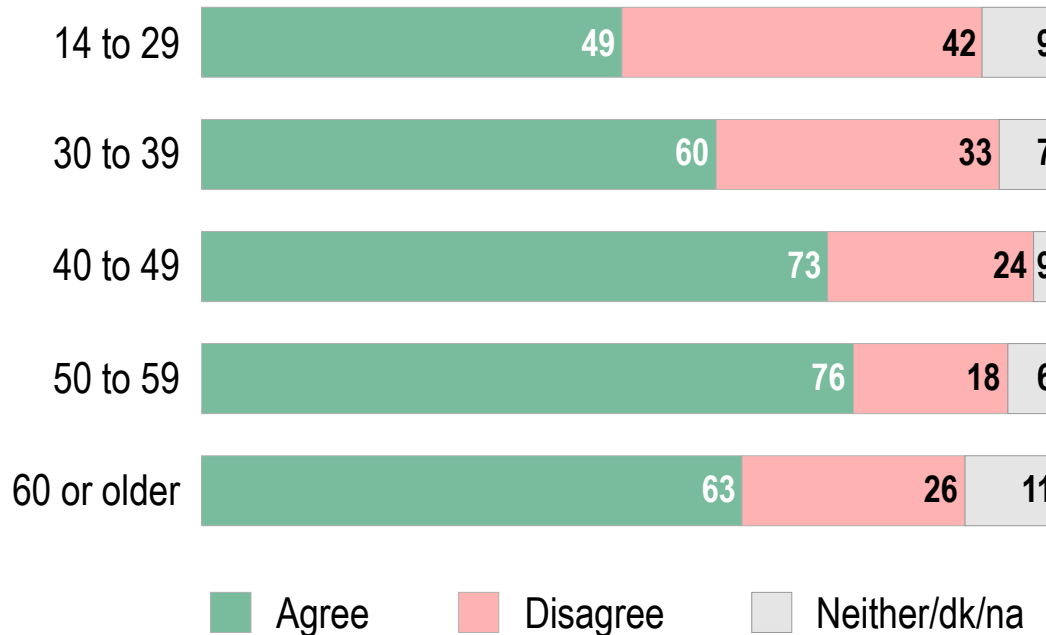
More negative

- Germans 60 plus
- No post-secondary degree
- Eastern region

As in Canada, German youth are the least concerned about the level of immigration to their country

Germany – By age

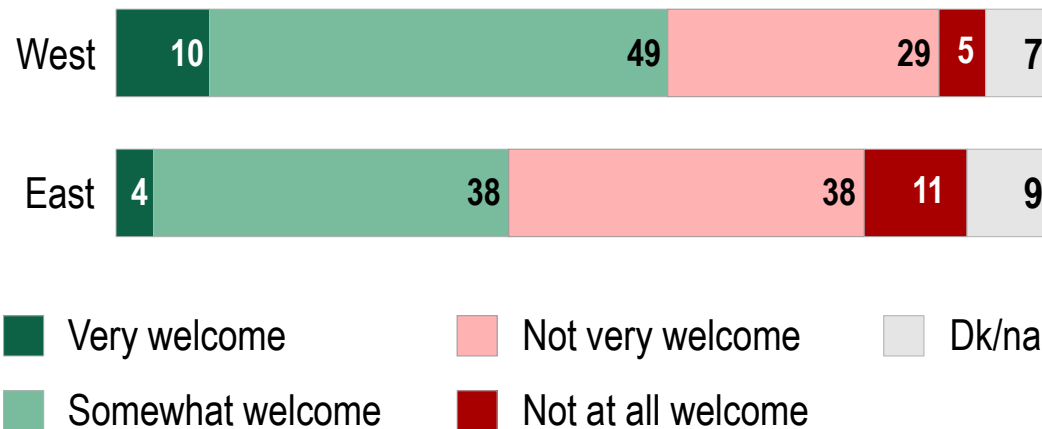
Agree or disagree: “Too many immigrants do not adopt German values.”



And there is notable difference in the perspectives of Germans living in the west and east portions of the country

Germany – By region

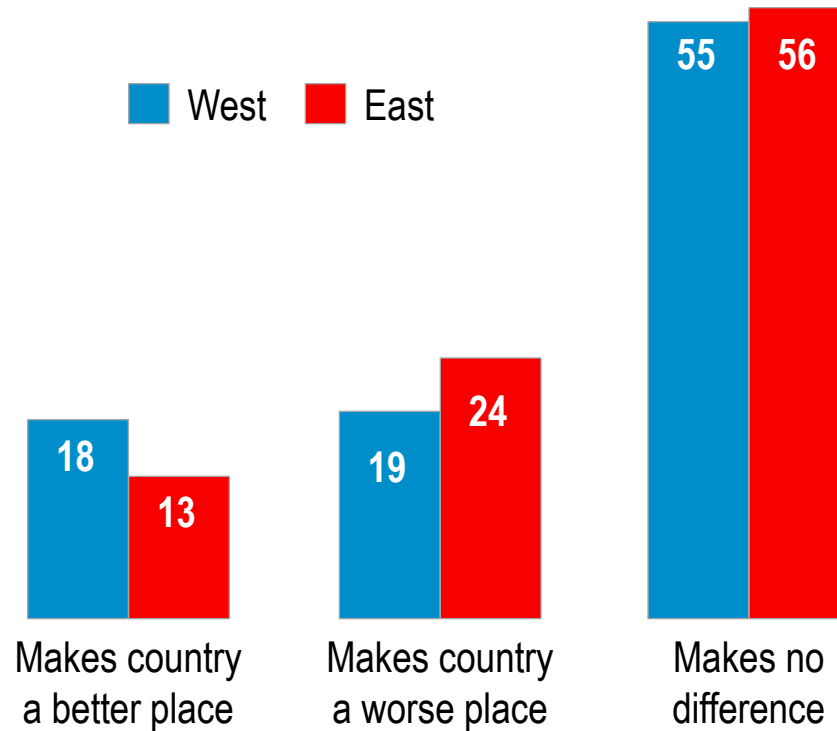
Agree or disagree: “To what extent do you think that immigrants are welcomed by the local population.”



But on the general question about overall impact of immigration, Germans from the east and west are equally ambivalent

Germany – B region

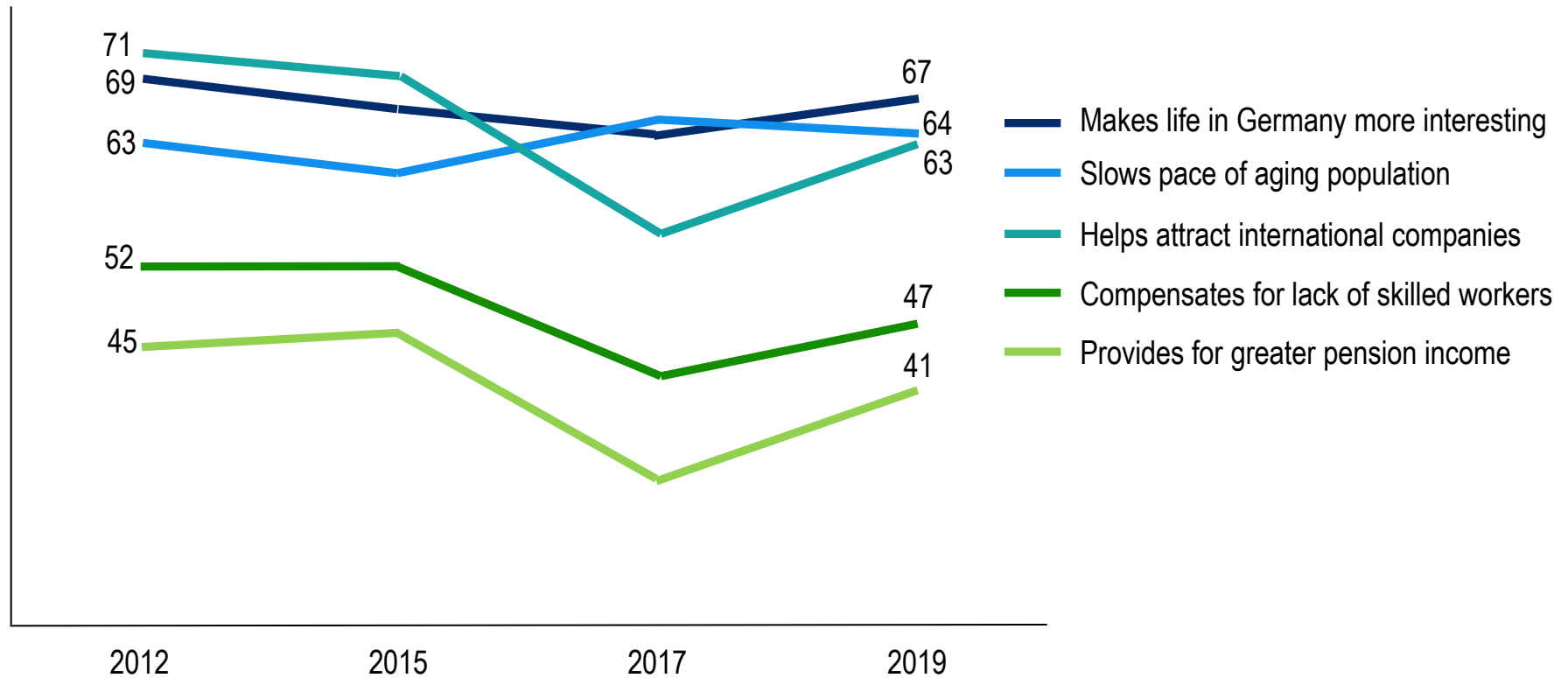
The overall effect of new immigrants on the country overall?



Perceived positive impacts of immigration have been largely stable, except for a notable decline in 2017

Germany 2012 - 2019

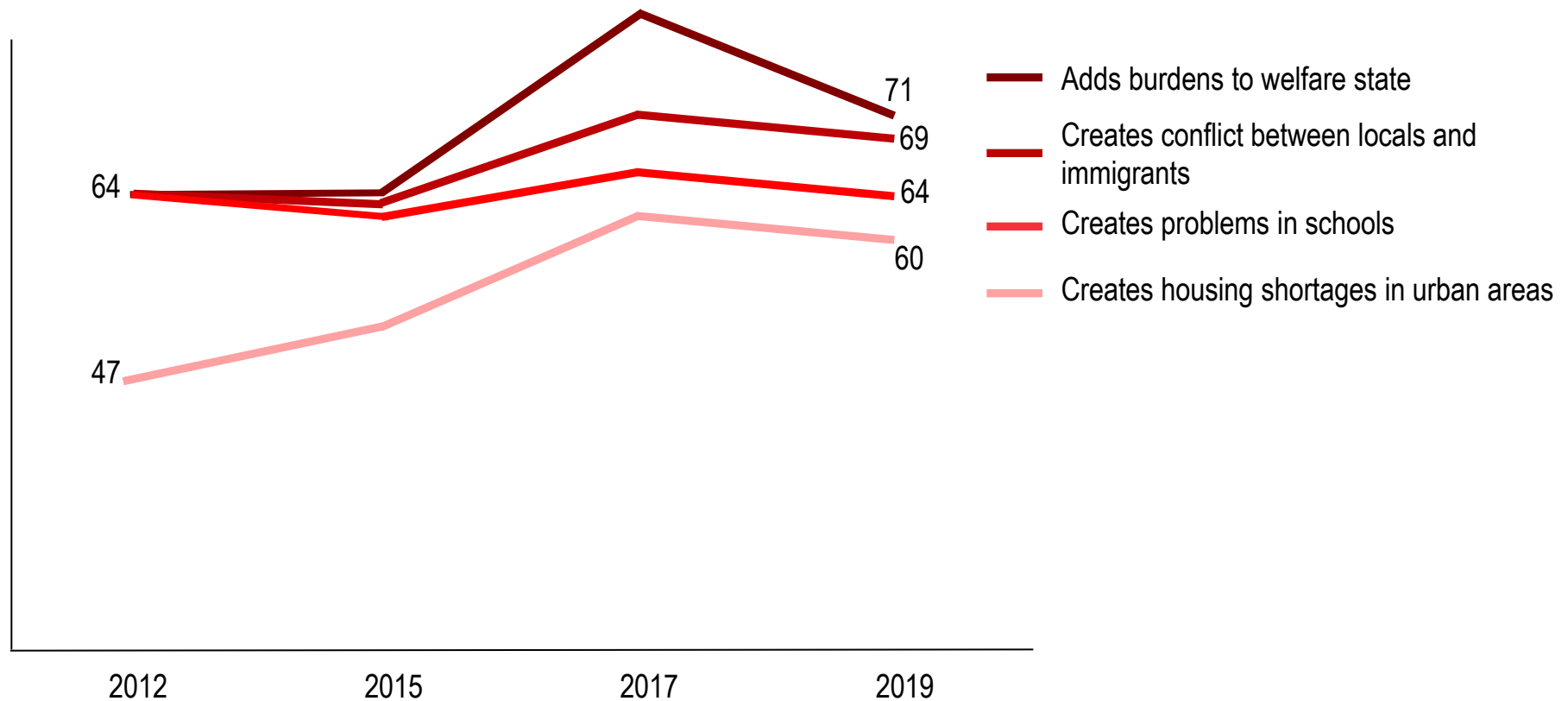
Positive impacts of immigration



Perceived negative impacts also spiked in 2017, and remain higher than in 2012 - 2015

Germany 2012 - 2019

Negative impacts of immigration



Wrap up

Current public sentiment toward immigration & refugees

- In Canada, clear majority support for high levels of immigration and widespread acceptance (if not celebration) of increasing diversity
- In Germany, views are more divided, reflecting considerable ambivalence about the presence of migrants in large numbers

How opinions have evolved over time

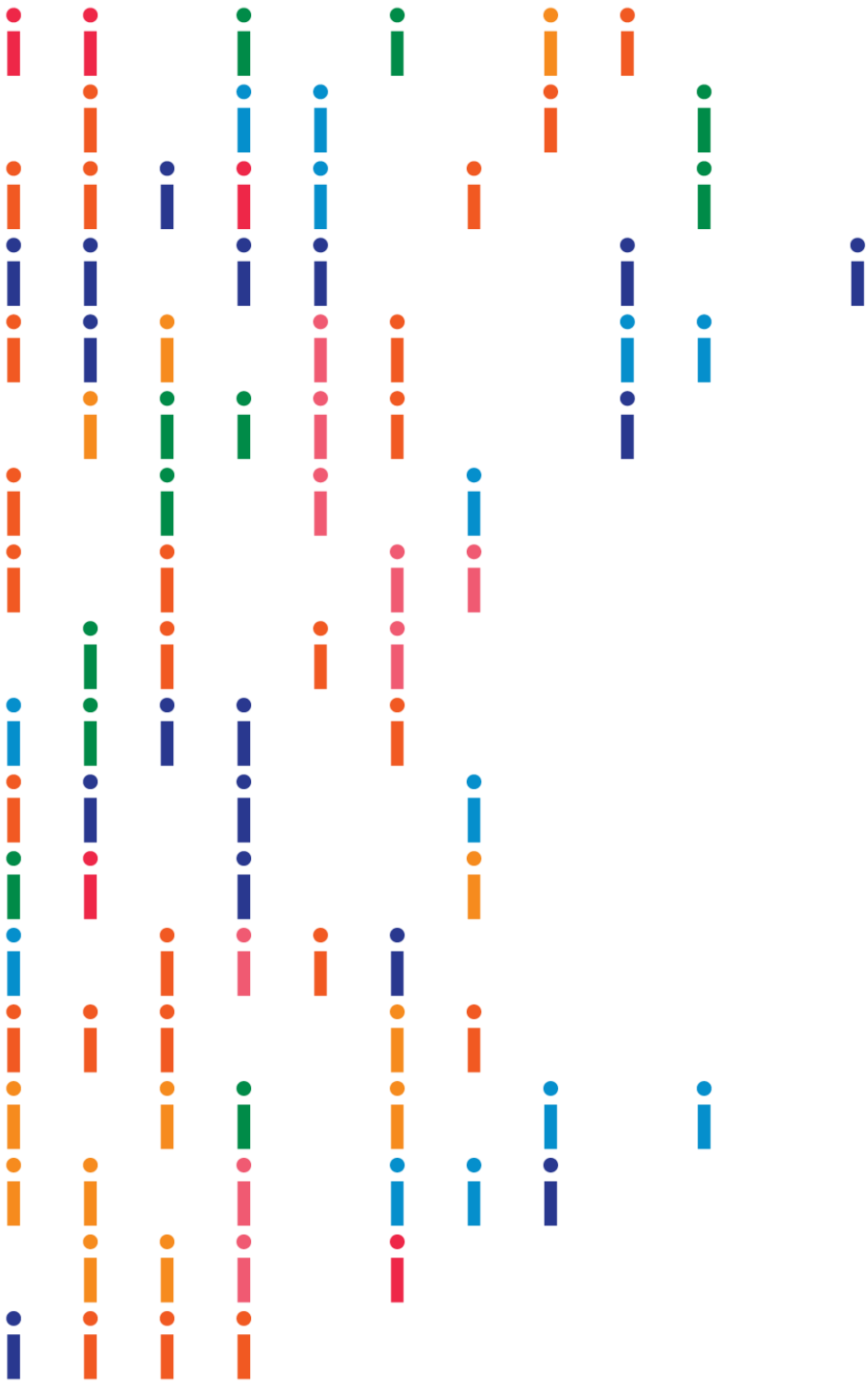
- In Canada, public sentiment has held steady and in some cases improved over past decade, despite domestic and international pressures; but increasing polarization across political lines
- In Germany, opinions have improved since low point in 2017, but remain less positive than earlier (2012 – 2015)

How opinions vary across the population

- Public sentiment varies by region and demographics, in a similar pattern in both countries:
 - Generation
 - Education
 - Region
 - Political party

Canada and Germany – context matters

- Geography
- History and culture
- Policy
- Role of migrants in economy
- Politics



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