Canadian Exceptionalism: Are we good, or are we lucky?

A Survey of Canadian Attitudes in Comparative Perspective

Michael J. Donnelly
University of Toronto
Department of Political Science
&
School of Public Policy and Governance

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McGill Institute for the Study of Canada
L'Institut d'études canadiennes de McGill
Summary

The McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC), working in cooperation with the School of Public Policy and Governance (SPPG) at the University of Toronto, surveyed 1,522 Canadians about their understanding of and preferences for immigration policy. The survey took place from January 18-27, 2017. The questions fall into three categories:

1. **Comparative attitudes**: these questions are designed to measure just how exceptional Canadian attitudes toward immigration are.

2. **Integration and refugees**: these questions probe satisfaction with the integration of immigrants into Canadian society.

3. **Knowledge of the system**: this section tests how much Canadians know about the immigration system.

4. **Experimental studies**: these questions are designed to allow respondents to demonstrate their socially stigmatized attitudes without directly expressing them.

Are Canadians Exceptional?

Given the relative lack of conflict over immigration that the Canadian political system has experienced, Canadian attitudes are often assumed to be unusually pro-immigration. However, levels of support for immigration and evaluations of the impact of immigration on society are unexceptional when compared to a large sample countries (including the US and many European countries). Whatever is driving Canada’s exceptionally positive history of immigration and integration over the last half century, it does not appear to be an exceptionally tolerant public.

What do Canadians Know?

One possible explanation for the lack of conflict over immigration is that Canadian policy, by selecting migrants based on characteristics thought to predict economic integration, insulates immigrants from nativist backlash. To test the plausibility of this argument, we asked respondents a series of factual questions about the immigration system. Canadian knowledge of the immigration system is, on the whole, impressive. They more or less know how immigrants are selected, though they do harbor some misconceptions about the number and education of immigrants.

Are Canadians satisfied with integration?

The Canadian model of multiculturalism may require natives to see new arrivals making an effort to integrate. While our results suggest that most Canadians are satisfied with the way the model is working, there are some hints of potential problems. A majority of Canadians think that immigrants are generally not well connected to the broader society.

‘Real’ vs. Expressed Preferences

Finally, we designed a series of questions meant to allow respondents to take unpopular positions without revealing themselves to be doing so. The findings in these experimental questions were pro-immigrant in some ways — Canadians do not appear to be hiding substantial discriminatory preferences — and anti-refugee in others — members of the major political parties are not well-disposed toward bringing in a substantial number of Syrian refugees.
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Goals of the Survey

Canada has among the largest foreign born population shares in the Western world. And yet, immigration has rarely played the kind of divisive role in Canadian politics that it has in many similar countries. This exceptional record could be attributed to Canada’s institutions and policies, its geography, choices made by its leaders, or the attitudes of the public. The goal of this survey is to examine the latter possibility.

This survey is designed to examine the extent and sources of the Canadian public’s exceptionalism on immigration matters. It asks three major questions. First, whether Canadian attitudes are, in fact, unusual among a wider sample of wealthy countries. Second, what Canadians know about existing immigration policies and what they think of those policies. Finally, it examines whether survey respondents restrained by pro-immigration norms from revealing their true attitudes.

1 Canadian Attitudes among Our Peers

This section examines what Canadian respondents say about immigration in the context of results from other countries. The goal is to determine the extent to which Canadians express more pro-immigrant attitudes than other, similar, countries. Each of these questions, then, is drawn from surveys conducted recently in other countries, allowing for direct comparisons with Canadian attitudes.

The core finding of these comparisons is that Canadians — including immigrants to Canada and their children — are exceptionally proud of their country, but are more or less unexceptional in their attitudes toward immigration policy and their evaluations of the impact of immigration on society. That is, while Canadians are generally positive toward immigration, they are not unusually pro-immigration when compared to European and other peer countries.

1.1 National pride

One concept that is closely related to the topic of exceptionalism is national pride. That is, how proud are people to be from their countries? The wording of the question in both the MISC and the ISSP surveys was: “How proud are you to be [nationality]?.”

The response scale ranges from “Not proud at all” (1) to “Very proud” (4). These samples exclude residents who say they are not members of the relevant nationality.
As is clear from this figure, Canadians are quite proud of their country. This level of pride is to be expected if Canada is truly exceptional. However, it turns out that this pride is not, itself, exceptional, as can be seen in the comparative figures below.\(^1\)

Wright and Bloemraad (2012) have argued that we can get substantial leverage on the impact of multiculturalism and immigration on national solidarity by examining questions like this separately for minorities and majorities. The next two figures do just that. The figure labeled “Native” shows pride in being a person’s nationality among those whose parents were both citizens at the time they were born, while that labeled “Immigrant Origin” shows the same comparison for those whose parents were not citizens or who themselves immigrated to the country in which they were surveyed.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Note that these dotplots include 95% confidence intervals around the points, though in many cases those intervals are too narrow to see on these scales.

\(^2\)In the MISC survey, we asked about parents’ place of birth, rather than citizenship, so that “immigrant origin” in Canada is defined as first or second generation migrants.
1.2 Accepting immigrants from poor countries

Another ESS question that can be usefully imported to Canada is one about whether a country should allow people from poorer countries to immigrate. By emphasizing poorer countries the question leads respondents to think of relatively unskilled non-white immigrants (certainly, many skilled workers and many whites come from poorer countries, but that is not likely to be the image conjured by the phrase). It thus usefully separates Canadian attitudes from the current selective system.

The wording of the Canadian question was: “To what extent should Canada allow people from poorer countries to come and live here?” The wording of European Social Survey question was: “Now, using this card, to what extent do you think [country] should allow people...to come and live here ?...How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?” The response scales range from “Allow none” (1) to “Allow many” (4). The phrase “outside Europe” is included in part to separate responses to this question from attitudes about the EU. In Canada, there is no such need.

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Canadians seem willing to accept “A Few” or “Some” migrants from poor countries, but relatively few are willing to accept “Many.” Indeed, the cross-national results show that Canada’s support is quite typical for a European country, again falling right near the center of the distribution.

1.3 Crime impact of immigration

We now turn to three evaluative questions, asking how immigration in general shape society. These do not specify the origin of the immigrants, and so respondents are likely thinking about immigration as Canada experiences it today. The first question addresses how immigration shapes crime. The wording of both the ESS and the MISC survey was: “Now thinking of immigrants more generally, do you think Canada’s crime problems are made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries?”

Both response scales range from “Crime problems made worse” (1) to “Crime problems made better” (11).
About 43% of respondents think immigration makes crime somewhat or much worse, while about 21% thing immigration helps the crime problem. The rest (36%) fall on the midpoint, presumably thinking that it makes no difference. The Canadian average — around 5.4 — is near the top of the European distribution.

### 1.4 Accepting refugees

Recent controversies in Europe, the United States, and Canada have made understanding the politics of refugee policy an essential task. In 2014-15, the ESS asked respondents for their attitudes toward refugee policy. We repeated that question in Canada.

The wording of the question was: “Some people come to this country and apply for refugee status on the grounds that they fear persecution in their own country. Please say how much you agree or disagree that: ‘the government should be generous in judging people’s applications for refugee status’. " The response scale ranges from “Disagree strongly” (1) to “Agree strongly” (5).
While around 1 in 5 respondents want the government to take a suspicious approach to evaluating asylum claims, many more people seem to take a generous view. The same is true through much of Europe. Canada here ranks 9th out of 22 countries in generosity, right next to the United Kingdom, and only modestly better than Germany, where the refugee crisis had just begun, and would pick up steam shortly after this survey was fielded.

1.5 Economic impact of immigration

Of course, crime is not the only consideration for respondents. Another is the impact of immigration on the economy. This question again refers to immigration generally, and so should prompt people to consider how immigration happens in Canada now.

The wording of both the ESS and the MISC survey was: “Would you say it is generally bad or good for Canada’s economy that people come to live here from other countries?” Both response scales range from “Bad for the economy” (1) to “Good for the economy” (11).
Here the answer is reasonably positive, with most Canadians (56%) falling in positive territory, and only about a quarter of respondents taking any position worse than neutral. The same pattern appears elsewhere, though, and so the Canadian average remains among the more positive in Europe, but not exceptionally so.

1.6 Cultural impact of immigration

A final consideration often raised in immigration debates is how immigration shapes the broader society of a receiving country. It is a bit harder to phrase this in a succinct question, but the ESS does this using a similar question.

The wording of both the ESS and the MISC survey was: “Would you say that [country’s] cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?” Both response scales range from “Cultural life undermined” (1) to “Cultural life enriched” (11).
Once again, most Canadians are neutral or positive about the impact of immigration on Canada’s culture. Here, Canadians again are relatively optimistic, but pretty close to the middle of the distribution.

1.7 Foreign investment in land

In 2016, British Columbia announced a foreign buyers’ tax, meant to limit foreign investment and speculation in residential real estate. While Ontario, like BC, home to a major city with a hot housing market, has not (yet?) followed suit, this is a live political issue. To put Canadian attitudes on the subject into comparative perspective, we turned to the ISSP, which asked respondents about whether foreigners should be allowed to buy land in their country.4

The wording of the question in both the MISC survey and in the ISSP was: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that foreigners should not be allowed to buy land in [country]?”

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4While this is not quite the same as taxing transactions, it is close enough that we have good reason to believe attitudes on one will be related to attitudes on the other.
The response scale ranges from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5). Canadians in 2017 took a wide range of positions. While slightly more agreed than disagreed (that is, more took the anti-foreign-investment position), the median position was indifference.

The figure below reverse-codes the scale, so that higher numbers indicate greater openness. It shows that Canadians fell near the middle of the pack, neither particularly nationalistic about real estate investment nor particularly open.  

2 Canadian Attitudes about Refugees and Integration

In addition to the questions designed to compare Canadians to their peers, we also asked respondents a series of questions about the integration of refugees and immigrants more generally. The goal of these questions is to address some of the 2017-specific and Canada-specific aspects of the immigration experience.

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5 Unsurprisingly, preliminary analysis suggests that BC residents are unusually strong proponents of the idea that Canada should ban foreign investment in real estate.
2.1 End refugee flows?

One of these questions asks respondents whether they would support ending all Syrian refugee flows. The goal here is to see how many Canadians would be actively opposed to such a policy, giving them the option of saying that they are neither supportive nor opposed.

The question (which followed the a more general question about support and opposition to immigration) asked “How about preventing Syrian refugees from coming to Canada?” The results are displayed below. They shows that there is substantial opposition to a complete end to Syrian refugee flows, but there is also a large group of Canadians who could go either way on such a policy.

2.2 Refugees or money?

Another approach is to ask more generally how to deal with the Syrian crisis, to gauge how open to accepting more refugees they respondents are. While we show above that only 24% of respondents actively support ending Syrian flows, it may be that having other options for dealing with the crisis will prompt more respondents to choose a more restrictive policy. We asked

Some people argue that Canada’s role in the Syrian refugee crisis should be to give money to countries closer to help refugees settle in countries closer to Syria, while others say that Canada should take more refugees in. Still others say that it is not our responsibility to do either. What do you think?

The results suggest that just about half of respondents want to take in refugees, and half want to send money to other countries to deal with refugees, but that there is very little correlation between the two dimensions, so the country is close to evenly split across the four possible combinations.
2.3 Refugee sponsorship

Next, we asked them for their opinion on the private sponsorship program, an area where Canada has produced a number of policy innovations. We wanted to know what the public thinks about the effectiveness private sponsorship of refugees. While this cannot substitute for a more formal program evaluation, it does tell us something about the political sustainability of the approach. We first asked

As you may know, some refugees that come to Canada are settled by the government, which provides them with assistance in finding housing, integration services, and work. Other refugees are sponsored by private groups, including charities and small groups of Canadians, who work together to help the refugees settle and integrate. Which of these approaches do you think works better?
About half of respondents think it does not make a difference, but among those who perceive a difference, the result is overwhelming. The Canadian public sees private sponsorship as more effective than government sponsorship. This suggests that, to the extent that potential sponsors continue to step up to the plate, this may be the most politically palatable way to bring refugees into the country.

We then asked whether they knew a group that had sponsored a refugee in their neighborhood. About a fifth of respondents answered that they did know such a group. The highest numbers of ‘Yes’s were reported in Atlantic Canada, and the lowest in Quebec.

### 2.4 Immigration and satisfaction with system

A common claim is that immigration can undermine solidarity. We asked respondents to consider how immigration has impacted their feeling of connection to Canada. The result is en-
couraging, though not overly so. The figure below shows that most respondents do not feel it has reduced this feeling, though 27% of respondents do feel this way. The text of the question is

And to what extent do you agree with the following statement: “Immigration makes me feel less connected to Canadian society as a whole.”

If this has undermined support for multiculturalism in Canada, it does not show up as dissatisfaction with the general idea. This figure shows that 43% of respondents are satisfied, and just 17% are dissatisfied with the overall performance of Canadian multiculturalism.

The wording was “Would you say that you are satisfied with how multiculturalism in Canada generally works?”

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6 Clearly, multiculturalism in Canada is not just relevant to immigrant-native relations, but this was the last question in a survey that included many questions about immigration, and so that is likely to be the consideration at the top of respondents’ minds.
2.5 Ending immigration?

To push the boundaries of acceptable immigration discourse, we asked how many respondents would actively oppose an end to immigration in Canada. As with the question about refugees above, we allow respondents to express indifference, in order to distinguish between those who would completely reject such a policy and those who could, perhaps, be convinced.

The wording was “And would you support or oppose stopping all immigration into Canada?” The results are surprisingly weak. While only 19% of respondents support it, just 46% of respondents are clearly opposed to a full stop. That leaves a large block of voters who are open to the idea, at least in the abstract. To give a sense of the challenge this might pose to those who want to maintain Canada’s relatively peaceful immigration politics, consider that in 2010, 43% of US respondents opposed closing their borders. In the event that ending immigration enters the serious political discourse, many of the fence-sitters would probably be pulled into the pro-immigration side of the debate, but these results suggest that a serious anti-immigrant movement is not impossible.
2.6 Immigrant integration

We were also interested in perceptions of the migrant integration process. To examine this, we asked respondents whether they thought immigrants were connected to society. This captures one potential objection to multiculturalism. If minority groups are not pushed to integrate, they may seem to non-members to be an entirely separate society. The results suggest that many Canadians do harbor this fear. Indeed, 58% take a relatively negative view of the current state of integration by migrants. The wording was

And to what extent do you agree with the following statement: “Too many immigrants don’t seem to feel connected to Canadian society.”
A different version of the same basic question is whether immigrants have a responsibility to adapt to Canadian ways of doing things. Canadians generally agree that immigrants do have such a responsibility.

And to what extent do you agree with the following statement: "People who come to Canada should change their behaviour to be more like Canadians."

![Bar chart showing agreement levels with the statement]

3 Public Knowledge and Selectivity

If Canadian attitudes are somewhat more immigrant friendly than many peer countries, perhaps this is because the Canadian immigration system — unlike those of most other countries — has long been designed to select immigrants largely on the basis of characteristics believed to be tied to the possibility of economic and social integration. There are a number of ways that this may reduce conflict over the issue in the long run. One potential mechanism is that the Canadian public may know enough about the system to believe that it works to select the right immigrants.

3.1 Basic facts about immigrants

The simplest fact about immigration that could shape attitudes is the question of how many immigrants there are in the country. While respondents are not demographers and should not be expected to know the number exactly, a general sense of the scale of immigration is a useful thing to have if one is making judgements about policy.

The wording of the MISC survey was: “And what percentage of the Canadian population as a whole do you think are immigrants (i.e. not born in Canada)”? The wording of the ESS question was “Out of every 100 people living in [country], how many do you think were born outside [country]?"
Though a few respondents make wildly unreasonable claims (this is true in most surveys), the bulk of respondents cluster around the 30-40% range. However, it is clear that most overestimate the number (the vertical line marks the truth, 21%). These overestimates are normal, as the figure below shows. Every country in the ESS overestimates the share of the population that is foreign born. An ‘x’ has been included to indicate the truth (using 2013 OECD statistics). Canada’s overestimation is a bit larger than that of many countries, but not wildly out of line.

We also asked respondents what percentage of immigrants they believed had a college degree. Since we were not specific about whether this includes all college diplomas and certificates, there is a wide range of responses that could be ‘correct’ under at least one interpretation. According to the 2011 NHS, 36% of immigrants aged 25-64 have a bachelor’s degree or higher, while 61% have some form of post-secondary certification. The figure below shows that most Canadians underestimate the educational credentials of immigrants.
3.2 Knowledge of selection criteria

One common explanation for the lack of conflict over immigration in Canada is that most people know how Canada selects immigrants. However, immigration policy is complex, and assuming that many people know the key details might be asking too much of citizens. To examine this question, we asked respondents, for each of 12 criteria that could affect a person’s admissibility into Canada, whether that criterion made it harder to get in, easier to get in, or had no effect. The wording was:

The Canadian immigration system makes it easier for some people to come to Canada than for others. For each of the items below, please tell us whether you think the government considers the factor when determining who to let in, and if so, whether that characteristic makes it easier or harder to immigrate to Canada. NOTE: This is about what the policy IS, we will ask you about what the policy should be later.

The criteria we included can be divided into four groups based on the true policy. Four of them — speaking English, speaking French, having a college degree, and having a job offer from a Canadian employer — clearly make it easier to get into Canada. Two of them — being older and having a chronic illness — make it harder. Four — having children, being a Muslim, being White, and being from the UK — make no difference.

Finally, two are ambiguous. Being from the US does not make a difference for most applicants, but NAFTA does facilitate work permits for some categories of migrants.\footnote{See http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/tools/temp/work/international/nafta.asp} Intending to live in a small town does not, as a rule, make it easier to immigration, but some provinces have used the Provincial Nominee Program to target such immigrants.\footnote{See, for instance, https://www.mordenimmigration.com/}
The results, displayed below, are mixed. The overall pattern suggests that Canadians pick up on the general rules of the immigration system. Responses to those characteristics that make it easier to get in almost all correctly identify that policy, though a moderate number of respondents think speaking French does not help a migrant gain entry. At the other end of the scale, most respondents know that having a chronic illness is bad for one’s prospect of gaining admission, though many people are not sure.

With the categories in between, there is substantially more confusion. For instance, many respondents think that Muslims are discriminated against, which — at least according to written policies — is not the case. Similarly, about half of respondents think that being from the UK is a boost to a migrant’s case for admission. Altogether, Canadian knowledge of the system is impressive.
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Beliefs about actual criteria

- **Easier**
  - English
  - French
  - Job

- **Ambiguous**
  - Town
  - USA

- **Neither**
  - White
  - Muslim
  - Children
  - UK

- **Harder**
  - Sick
  - Older
  - Not considered
Another simple criterion that Canadians may or may not know about the immigration process is how long it takes to become a citizen. We asked respondents "How long do immigrants have to live in Canada before they can become citizens? (Answer in years)," and allowed them to enter any number.

The results, displayed in the figure above, are encouraging. The current policy — four years after obtaining permanent residence — could reasonably be interpreted as either four or five years, and the policy that will come into effect soon — three years, including one half of the time spent in Canada before obtaining permanent residency — could reasonably be interpreted as either three or four years. Thus, the large number of people answering three, four, or five years suggests most Canadians have a good sense of this aspect of the system.

### 3.3 Preferences for selection criteria

Following the questions about what policy currently is, we asked respondents to consider what policy should be, presenting them with the same twelve potential criteria and asking which should make it harder/easier to enter Canada and which should not be considered. For the most part, respondents seem (in the aggregate) to like the status quo as they see it. That is, the figure below looks quite similar to the figure above. The big exceptions are in the two listed criteria that make entry harder: age and sickness, where Canadians seem more generous than they think policy is. Another noticeable difference is the large number of people who think being from the US or the UK makes entry easier, but would prefer a policy that does not reward birth in those countries.
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Despite the fact that these relative differences suggest a rather generous set of attitudes,
it should be noted that almost a third of respondents would prefer a policy of discrimination against Muslims. Similarly, a third of respondents would prefer a policy that discriminates in favor of whites.

4 Social Norms and ‘Real’ vs. Expressed Preferences

A major challenge in studying public opinion about immigration is that it is a potentially sensitive topic. Canadians may believe that that expressing anti-immigrant or racially discriminatory preferences places themselves outside of the mainstream, and so may self-censor — consciously or unconsciously — to present a more acceptable face to the world. This problem is somewhat mitigated in the context of online surveys, such as this one, because the social pressure of speaking to a live interviewer is not present (Kreuter, Presser and Tourangeau, 2008). However, it remains the case that respondents may hide their true beliefs or preferences from themselves or surveyors.

In order to reduce this bias, we conducted a series of randomised experiments. Each of these experiments is designed to weaken the feeling of being observed, thus allowing respondents to feel more comfortable revealing their preferences. We conduct two basic types.

- **List experiments**: these questions ask respondents to report how many of a series of social phenomena or governmental policies they oppose. By asking them to report only the number to which they are opposed, rather than which one, we offer ‘plausible deniability’ about opposition to a potentially sensitive item. Respondents are randomly assigned to receive a list with or without the potentially sensitive item, and the difference between the average number of items to which people are opposed in the two conditions is, under certain assumptions, a good estimate for the proportion of respondents who oppose that sensitive item.

- **Conjoint experiments**: these questions ask respondents to make choices between two or three profiles (in this case, the profiles are social housing applicants, immigration applicants, and candidates for party leader). Each profile consists of randomly varied characteristics. Since they have access to a wide range of information about each applicant/candidate, respondents can discriminate based on race or ethnicity if they choose to, again while maintaining ‘plausible deniability.’

4.1 Ending immigration? (revisited)

In 2005 and again in 2010, respondents to surveys in the United States were asked about a relatively extreme solution to the challenges of immigration - “cutting off all immigration to the US” (Janus, 2010; Creighton, Jamal and Malancu, 2015). Recognizing that some survey takers might support this policy but be unwilling to appear so extreme, the scholars who designed the surveys conducted a list experiment. They found a surprisingly large proportion of respondents appeared unwilling to say that they opposed ending immigration to the US. The text of the US question was:
Below is a list of things that some people oppose or are against. After you read all three, just tell us HOW MANY of them you OPPOSE. We do not want to know which ones, just HOW MANY.

Respondents were then randomly assigned to one of two lists:

• The federal government increasing aid to the poor
• Professional athletes making millions of dollars per year
• Large corporations polluting the environment

OR

• The federal government increasing aid to the poor
• Professional athletes making millions of dollars per year
• Large corporations polluting the environment
• Cutting off all immigration into the US

Our survey replicated this experiment in two forms.

Below is a list of things that some people oppose or are against. Please count how many of them you oppose and enter the number below.

• The federal government increasing aid to the poor
• Professional athletes making millions of dollars per year
• Large corporations polluting the environment

OR

• The federal government increasing aid to the poor
• Professional athletes making millions of dollars per year
• Large corporations polluting the environment
• Preventing Syrian refugees from coming to Canada

OR

• The federal government increasing aid to the poor
• Professional athletes making millions of dollars per year
• Large corporations polluting the environment
• Stopping all immigration into Canada

Since the phrasing of the question is whether respondents oppose something, higher estimates are more pro-immigrant. Here the “Direct” estimates come from the questions presented above in Sections 2.1 and 2.5.
Interestingly, Canadians do not seem to feel the need to pretend to oppose closing the border. In fact, the estimates for such opposition — both in the case of closing the border and of ending Syrian refugee inflows, are quite similar across question mode. Unlike in the United States, respondents do not seem reluctant to reveal whether they oppose closing the border or not.

4.2 Who should be let in?

The first conjoint experiment we conducted asked respondents to consider two potential immigrants to Canada and choose which person they would rather allow into the country. It closely follows a study done in 2011-12 in the United States (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015). Respondents were presented with the task and then randomly assigned three different pairs of immigrants, choosing one of each. This is designed to include a substantial amount of information about the individuals, and so to weed out explanations for any discrimination it finds that might be based on assumptions about the skill levels of the migrant.

Since this exercise does not allow respondents to reject both potential immigrants, it cannot tell us about the level of immigration Canadians might prefer. It does, however, provide a powerful tool for allowing discrimination on a wide range of ‘illicit’ grounds to be disguised, since respondents can seek out a more acceptable justification for preferring one migrant over the other.

Please read the descriptions of two potential immigrants carefully. Then, indicate which of the two immigrants you would prefer to see admitted to Canada.

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9Two plausibility constraints were included. Immigrants who were seeking to escape persecution could only come from China, Sudan, and Syria, while immigrants who were doctors or computer programmers had to have at least a Bachelor’s degree.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immigrant 1</th>
<th>Immigrant 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior trips to Canada</td>
<td>Came to Canada once as a tourist</td>
<td>Never been to Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for Application</td>
<td>Seeks to reunite with family already in Canada</td>
<td>Seeks to escape political/religious persecution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills</td>
<td>During admission interview, this applicant spoke broken French</td>
<td>During admission interview, this applicant spoke through an interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Janitor</td>
<td>Computer programmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Experience</td>
<td>2 years of working experience</td>
<td>No work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Plans</td>
<td>Has a contract with an employer</td>
<td>Will look for work after arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Equivalent to completing high school in Canada</td>
<td>Equivalent to a postgraduate degree in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results can be seen below. For each characteristic, we can use the results of these choices to estimate the impact on the immigrant’s probability of being accepted relative to some baseline. Thus, for instance, the point (and confidence interval) next to Germany shows that, for this sample, respondents were slightly more likely to select a German immigrant than an otherwise similar Indian immigrant, though this difference is not statistically significant.

Most of the results are intuitive and mirror those in the US in a study conducted by Hainmueller and Hopkins (2015). Canadians are more likely to select the well educated, those with job plans, those with high status occupations, and those with work experience. On the other hand, they are less likely to select those who struggle with English and French. Like Americans, Canadians also prefer those who come for family reunification and to escape persecution over those who are seeking a better job.

One finding that stands out, given Canadians’ reputation for multicultural acceptance is the similarity of the effects of the potential immigrant being from Sudan. In Canada, such an immigrant, all things equal, is about 8% less likely to be chosen than a German immigrant. In the US, the corresponding difference was 10%. Since the profiles include information about the immigrant’s education, occupation, language skills, and work plans, this suggests that

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Strictly speaking, these estimates cannot be compared directly, since the design was slightly different, and so any given immigrant profile faced a different “opponent” than it would have in the other country. However, the designs are sufficiently similar that we comparisons can be useful.
the differences are driven by racial or religious assumptions respondents make based on the national origin of the migrants.

Who should we let in?

Country:
- (Baseline = Germany)
- Poland
- China
- Philippines
- India
- Sudan
- Syria

Education:
- (Baseline = No Education)
- Eighth grade
- High school
- Some college
- Bachelor
- Post-grad

Experience:
- (Baseline = None)
- Two years
- Four years
- Eight years

Gender:
- (Baseline = Female)
- Male

Job:
- (Baseline = Will look)
- Has no plan
- Planned interviews
- Has contract

Language:
- (Baseline = Fluent English)
- Interpreter
- Broken English
- Broken French
- Fluent French

Occupation:
- (Baseline = Janitor)
- Waiter
- Nurse
- Teacher
- Doctor
- Computer programmer

Reason:
- (Baseline = Family reunification)
- Better job
- Escape persecution

Visit:
- (Baseline = Never visited)
- Visited once

Effect on probability of being chosen
Who should we let in?

Country of Origin:
- (Baseline = Germany)
- India
- France
- Mexico
- Philippines
- Poland
- China
- Sudan
- Somalia
- Iraq

Education:
- (Baseline = no formal)
- 4th grade
- 8th grade
- high school
- two-year college
- college degree
- graduate degree

Gender:
- (Baseline = female)
- male

Job:
- (Baseline = janitor)
- waiter
- child care provider
- gardener
- financial analyst
- construction worker
- teacher
- computer programmer
- nurse
- research scientist
- doctor

Job Experience:
- (Baseline = none)
- 1–2 years
- 3–5 years
- 5+ years

Job Plans:
- (Baseline = will look for work)
- contract with employer
- interviews with employer
- no plans to look for work

Language Skills:
- (Baseline = fluent English)
- broken English
- tried English but unable
- used interpreter

Prior Entry:
- (Baseline = never)
- once as tourist
- many times as tourist
- six months with family
- once w/o authorization

Reason for Application:
- (Baseline = reunite with family)
- seek better job
- escape persecution

Effect on probability of being chosen

Taken from the replication materials for Hainmueller and Hopkins (2015).
4.3 Who should get benefits?

Another place we might look for attitudes toward diversity to matter is in the distribution of benefits. Like the experiment above, this question presents respondents with profiles and asks them to make a choice. However, this version offers three profiles and asks the respondents to rank them.

Imagine you worked for a municipal housing office, and 3 applicants applied at the same time for a 3 bedroom apartment in a social housing complex. There is a waiting list, and you need to put them onto the list in order of who should get the apartment first. Please put the profiles into the order that you prefer, where number 1 will be given first priority for a house. (Characteristics randomized across a range of plausible values)

1. Alex Croft:
   - 45 years old
   - Single, no children
   - Works as a mechanic
   - Earned $28,000 last year
   - Grew up in the same apartment building
   - Was convicted of shoplifting at age 18
   - Has high blood pressure

2. Christopher Sanford:
   - 33 years old
   - Married, 2 children
   - Is currently unemployed
   - Earned $18,000 last year
   - Grew up in Toronto
   - Has never been arrested
   - In good health

3. Ibrahim Nour:
   - 28 years old
   - Married, 1 child
   - Works as a waiter
   - Earned $21,000 last year
   - Grew up in Pakistan
   - Has never been arrested
   - In good health
Who should get housing priority?

The hypothetical names are randomly selected from a list that includes Anglo names, Polish names, and Muslim names for both men and women. Thus, if respondents can correctly recognize the ethnicity and gender behind the names, they can, if they wish, discriminate.11

11 For reasons of plausibility, the variation in place of birth is limited: only those with Muslim names can grow...
Again, most of the findings are intuitive. A criminal record — especially a violent one — puts respondents far down the list. On the other hand, being older, being employed, and having rheumatoid arthritis are all beneficial.

There does appear to be some discrimination against those born in Poland, though the same may not be true of those born in Pakistan. There does not appear to be any pure ethnic discrimination (once we account for place of birth).

### 4.4 Who should be party leaders?

Over the last half century, few major Canadian politicians have staked out strong anti-immigrant positions. This outcome could be the result of a general public support for immigration or of institutional factors like the electoral system (Triadafilopoulos, 2012). Here, we test the possibility of another institutional factor: leadership selection mechanisms. Since party leaders have extensive power over the direction and rhetoric of the party, the preferences and strategic considerations of the group of people who choose the leader carry significant weight. In Canada, party leaders are typically chosen by an electorate made up of party activists, rather than solely the parliamentary party. This trend toward broader participation, though, has not reached the point of opening the process up to the entire electorate (Cross and Blais, 2012). What would happen if they did? Could an anti-immigrant candidate win a Canadian primary?

Here, we present respondents with a choice of two potential leaders for their party, along with some basic demographic information — name, age, province — and three policy positions. The name carries information on gender and ethnicity (in this case, Anglophone, Francophone, and Indian). The policy positions concern Syrian refugees, economic migrants, and the Canada Pension Plan. While there is some overlap across parties in the possible positions, and the positions include some out-of-the-box options, we limited them to at least plausible positions for someone competing within a particular party. Thus, only the Conservative candidates propose to eliminate the CPP.

The next three pages display the results. The interpretation of the graph, like the conjoint results above, is simply a comparison of how much more likely a hypothetical candidate is to be chosen with a particular characteristic relative to an otherwise identical candidate who has the baseline characteristic. Thus, the first dot on the next page indicates that a 38 year-old has a modestly reduced probability of being chosen relative to a 32 year old.

Encouragingly, across all four of these experiments there is no detectable ethnic or gender discrimination. A few of the results stand out. First, the economic issue we included — the CPP — is the only one that matters in all three parties. In each case, voters want more benefits (punishing Conservatives who want to cut it, rewarding those in other parties that propose expansion). In no party is there a clear desire to depart from the status quo on economic immigration, though the Liberal electorate would resist cuts, and the NDP would resist expansion.

---

12 This is defined as the party they said they would vote for if an election were held today. We include only the three largest parties for sample size reasons.

13 Gender may be unclear in cross-ethnic pairings. That is, an Anglophone may or may not know that “Priyanka Gupta” is a female.
It is on refugee policy that we can see clear results. There are modest gains to be had for Liberal leader candidates who offer token refugee programs (1,000 Syrians per year), but not much beyond that, and for Conservatives, bringing refugees in beyond a token number would seem to be a very unpopular position.
Who should lead the Conservatives?

Age:
(Baseline = 32)
38
41
45
47
52
55
60
63
66

CPP:
(Baseline = Status quo)
Cut by 10%
Cut in half

Ethnicity:
(Baseline = Anglo)
French
Hindu

Gender:
(Baseline = Female)
Male

Immigration:
(Baseline = Status quo)
Cut in half
Full stop

Province:
(Baseline = Alberta)
British Columbia
New Brunswick
Ontario
Quebec

Refugees:
(Baseline = None)
1,000
10,000
25,000
50,000

Effect on probability of being chosen
Canadian Exceptionalism: Are we good or are we lucky?

Who should lead the Liberals?

Age:
- (Baseline = 32)
- 38
- 41
- 45
- 47
- 52
- 55
- 60
- 63
- 66

CPP:
- (Baseline = Status quo)
- Increase by 25%
- Double benefits

Ethnicity:
- (Baseline = Anglo)
- French
- Hindu

Gender:
- (Baseline = Female)
- Male

Immigration:
- (Baseline = Status quo)
- Cut in half
- Increase by 25%
- Double

Province:
- (Baseline = Alberta)
- British Columbia
- New Brunswick
- Ontario
- Quebec

Refugees:
- (Baseline = None)
- 1,000
- 10,000
- 25,000
- 50,000

Effect on probability of being chosen

-20% 0 20%
A Data and Methods

The survey was conducted on the Qualtrics survey platform using 1,522 respondents recruited through Ipsos Observer. The sample was designed to be representative of the Canadian adult population, and all quantities reported above, unless otherwise noted, are based on the weighted sample. The raked weights make attitudes representative on age, education, ethnicity, language, and region.

In the comparative figures, responses for countries other than Canada are the design weights taken from the original source. Means for the comparative figures are calculated by treating the ordered categorical variables as numeric (that is, as 1-5 or 1-7 scales). The conjoint estimated effects are calculated using the method described in Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014), and unless otherwise noted, are based on fully orthogonal randomization. The immigration (party leader) selection conjoint question was presented to each respondent three (two) times, and the standard errors are clustered by respondent.

As with all surveys, the results presented here are estimates with uncertainty. Given the number of respondents, the typical percentage estimate included here can be assumed to have a 95% confidence interval of about \( \pm 2.5\% \), though some of the estimates will be less precise. The averages presented in the comparative section include confidence intervals, though the plotted points often obscure them.
## Descriptive Statistics

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### Demographics (weighted)

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C Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>ESS European Social Survey</td>
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<td>ISSP International Social Survey Programme</td>
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<td>MISC McGill Institute for the Study of Canada</td>
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<td>SPPG School of Public Policy and Governance</td>
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References


Author

Michael J. Donnelly is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Toronto. He has previously been a post-doctoral fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy and received a PhD in Politics and Social Policy from Princeton University. His research focuses on the intersection of public attitudes and public policy, especially immigration and welfare state policies, in North America and Europe.

Michael Donnelly
100 St. George St., Suite 3018
Toronto, ON M5S 3G3
mj.donnelly@utoronto.ca

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