

Canadian attitudes towards immigrants, refugees and multiculturalism in the Age of Trump and Brexit



Environics Institute for Survey Research

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Environics Institute

The background consists of three overlapping geometric shapes in shades of blue. A large, dark blue triangle occupies the top right and center. A medium blue triangle is positioned on the left side, partially overlapping the dark blue one. A light blue triangle is at the bottom left, also overlapping the other two. The text is centered within the dark blue area.

First, a little background . . .

*My professional life has been
dedicated to the study of Canada
in historical and comparative
perspective, through the lens of
survey research*

Which has led to the founding of the Environics Institute, and a series of books:

- *Sex in the Snow*
- *Better Happy than Rich*
- *Fire and Ice*
- *American Backlash*
- *Unlikely Utopia*
- *Stayin' Alive*
- *Committing Sociology*
- *And now . . . Could It Happen Here?*

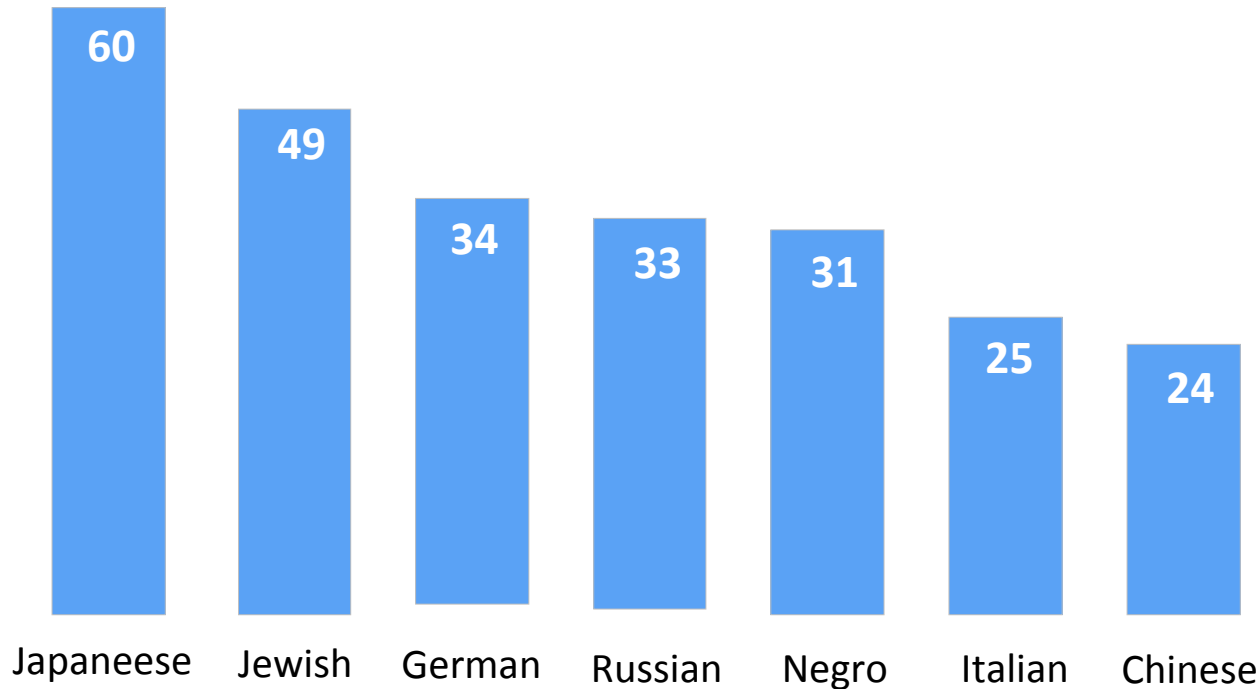
Canada is no stranger to xenophobia

- ❖ 1600s – today: “Long assault” on Indigenous Peoples
- ❖ 1800s: Poor treatment of Irish migrants
- ❖ 1867 – 1967: Racist immigration policies
- ❖ 1930s: Anti-semitism (“None is too many”)
- ❖ 1940s: Internment of Japanese Canadians
- ❖ More recently: Police profiling of racialised minorities

And our racist policies reflected public opinion of the times

1946

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



Even in the early 1960s

1961

As you know, Canada restricts the admission of non-whites to this country. Do you think this should continue, or do you think there should be fewer restrictions on non-whites?

Restrictions should continue

53

Should be fewer restrictions

36

Qualified / No opinion

11

However, the mid 1960s ushered in more progressive principles and policies – reflecting the rapid evolution of Canadian values

- ❖ 1967: Opening the door to point-based/colour blind immigration
- ❖ 1971: Canada becomes the first country to adopt 'Multiculturalism' as an official policy, reinforced by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988

In the late 1970s, Liberal and Conservative gov'ts welcomed 60,000 “boat people” as did Canadians as private sponsors



In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission releases its report and 94 Calls to Action



And in 2015/16, Canada welcomed 40,000 Syrian refugees, inspired in part by the image of baby Alan Kurdi

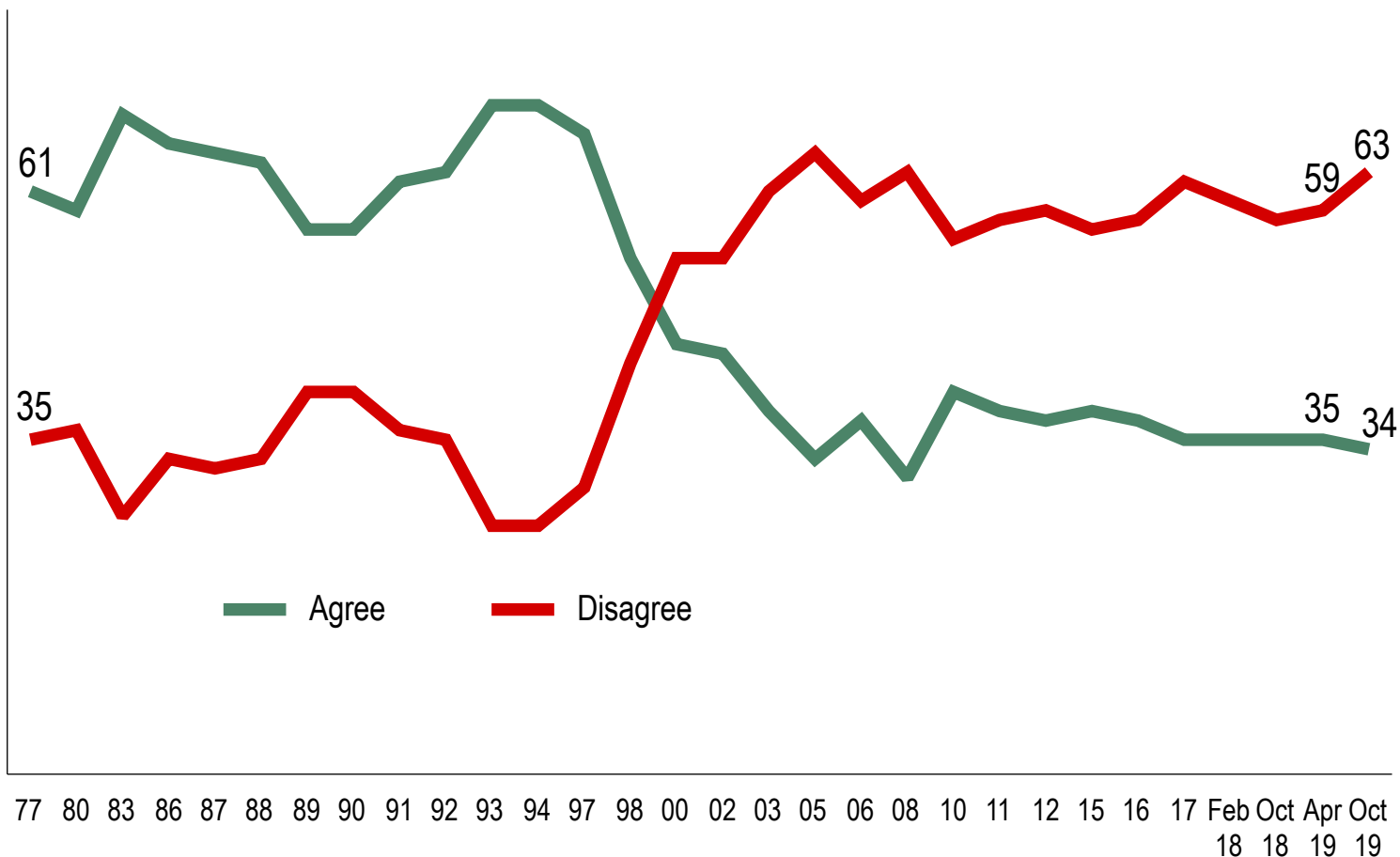


But do average Canadians truly support immigration and the ideology of multiculturalism?

In recent decades there has been a sea change in Canadian public attitudes toward immigration...

1977 – 2019

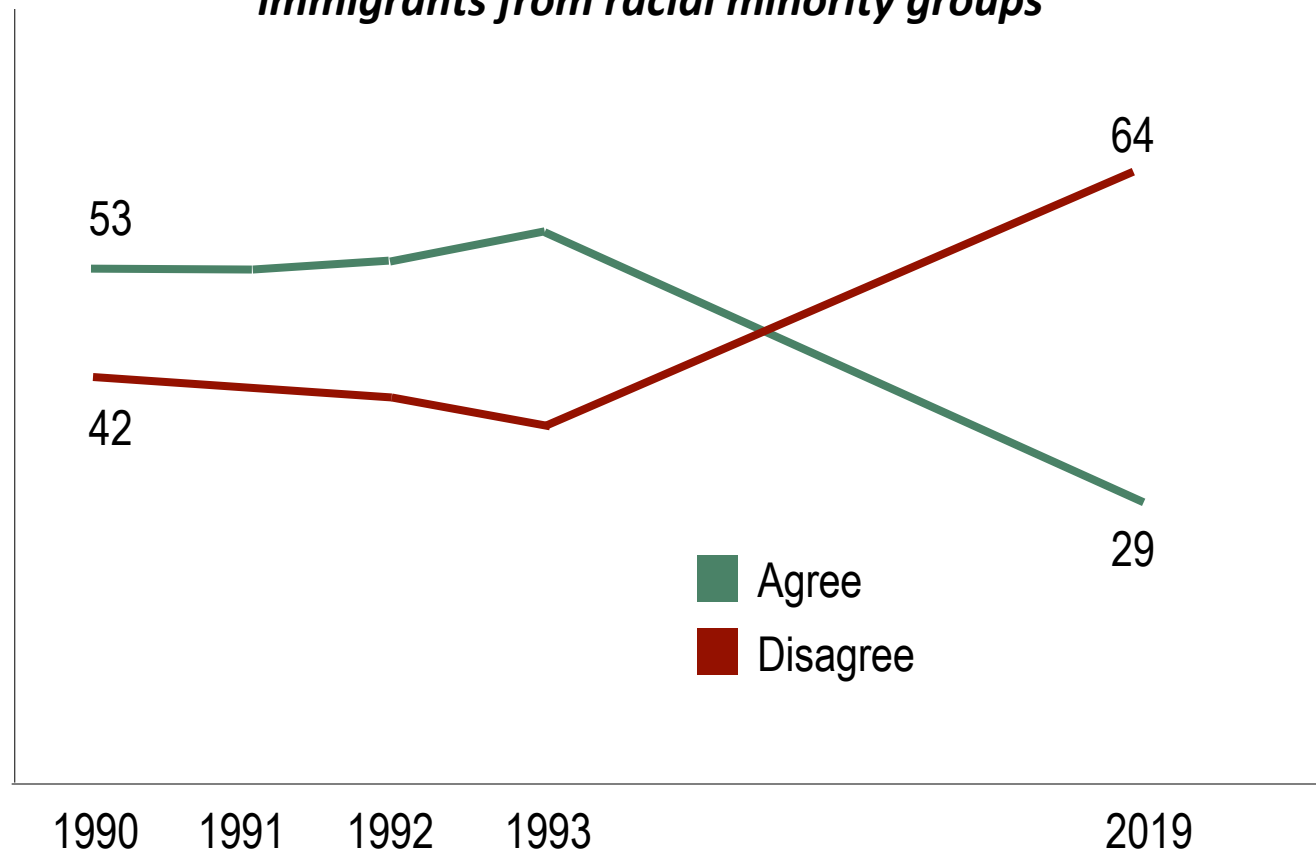
Agree – Disagree: *Immigration levels are too high*



...and Canadians are also much less likely to oppose immigration from racial minority groups...

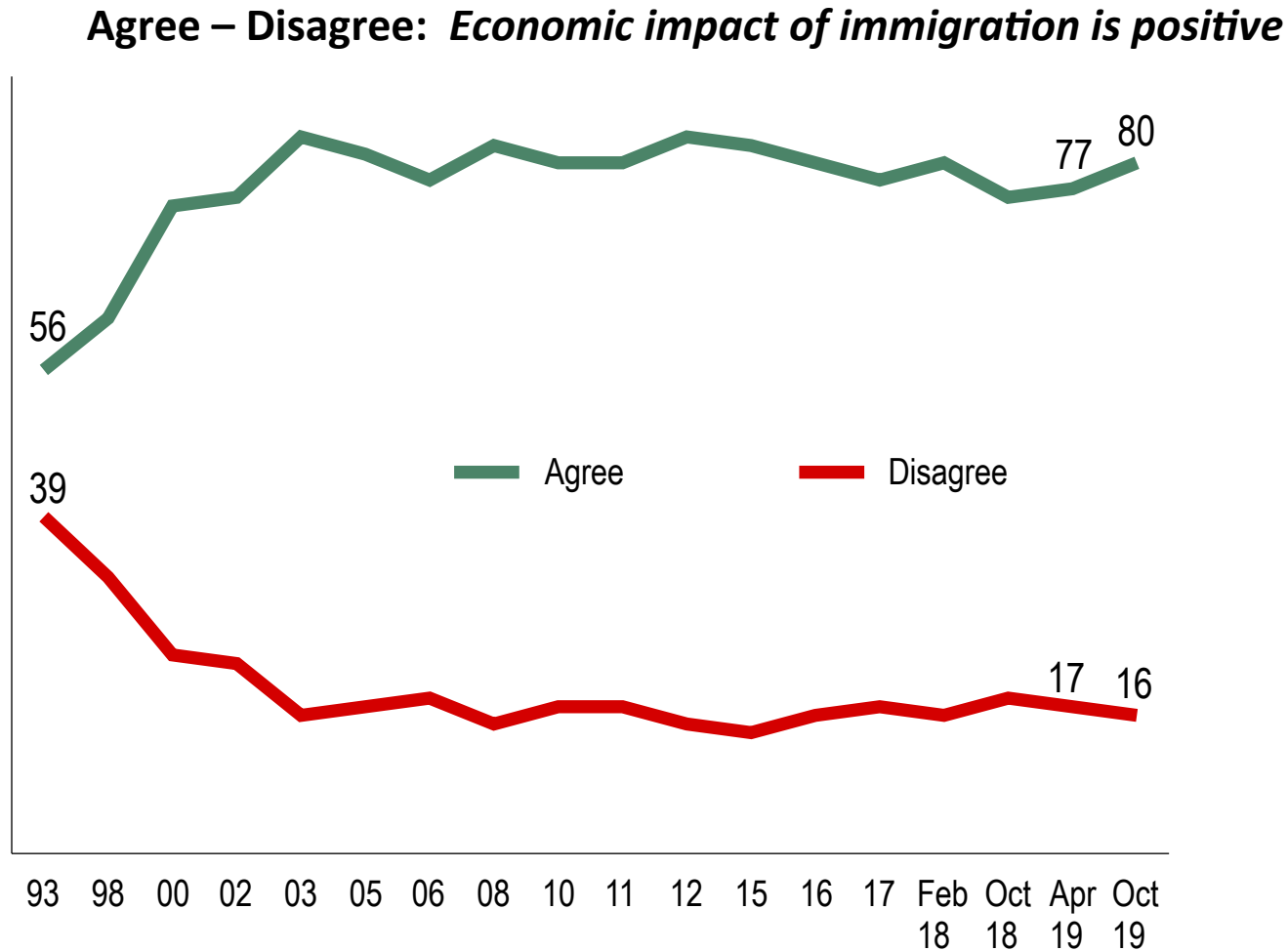
1990 – 2019

Agree – Disagree: *Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups*



...with the vast majority continuing to believe that the economic impact of immigrants is positive

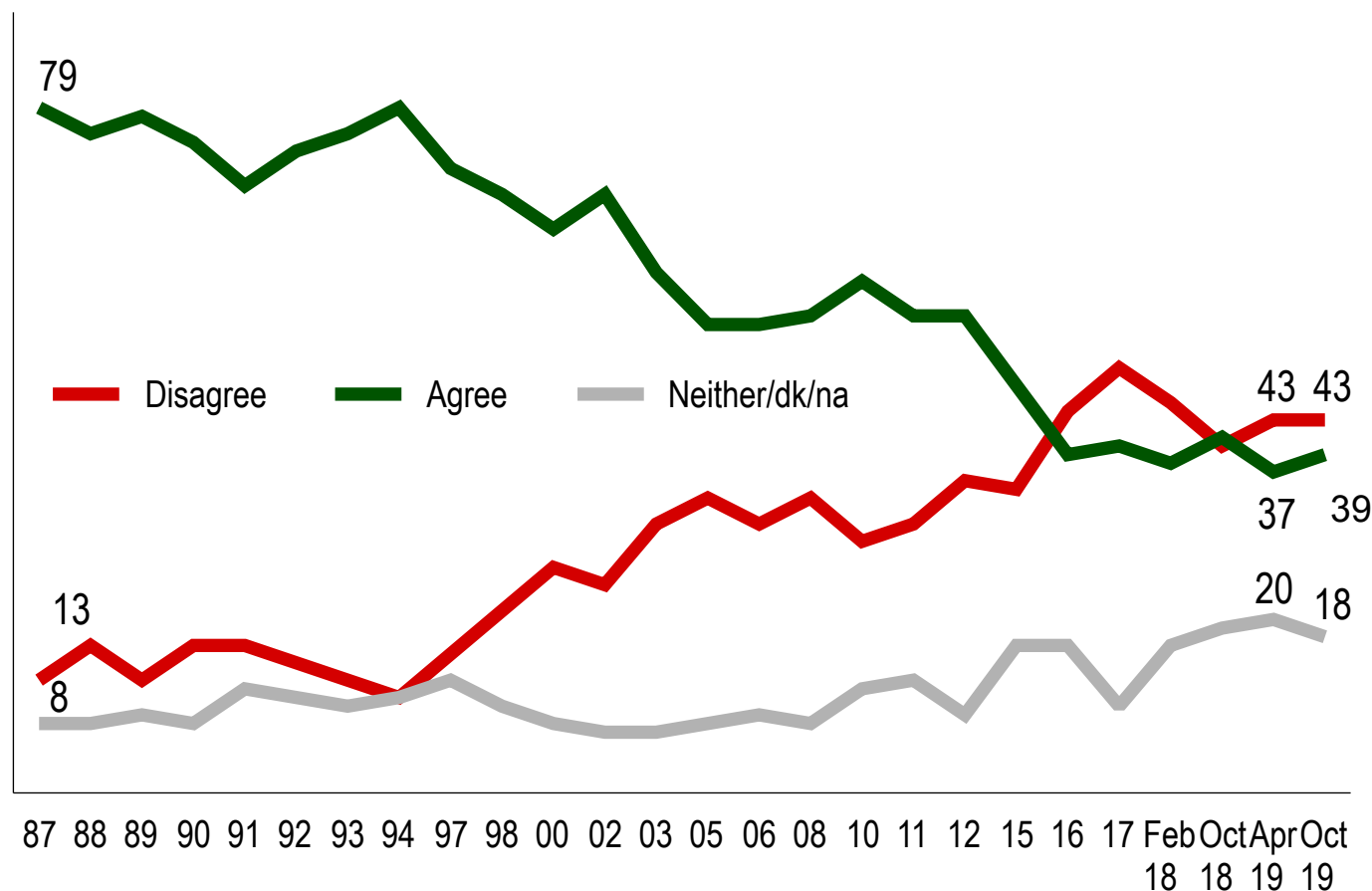
1993 - 2019



Canadians are less likely than before to believe that many refugees are not legitimate, but opinions remain divided

1987 - 2019

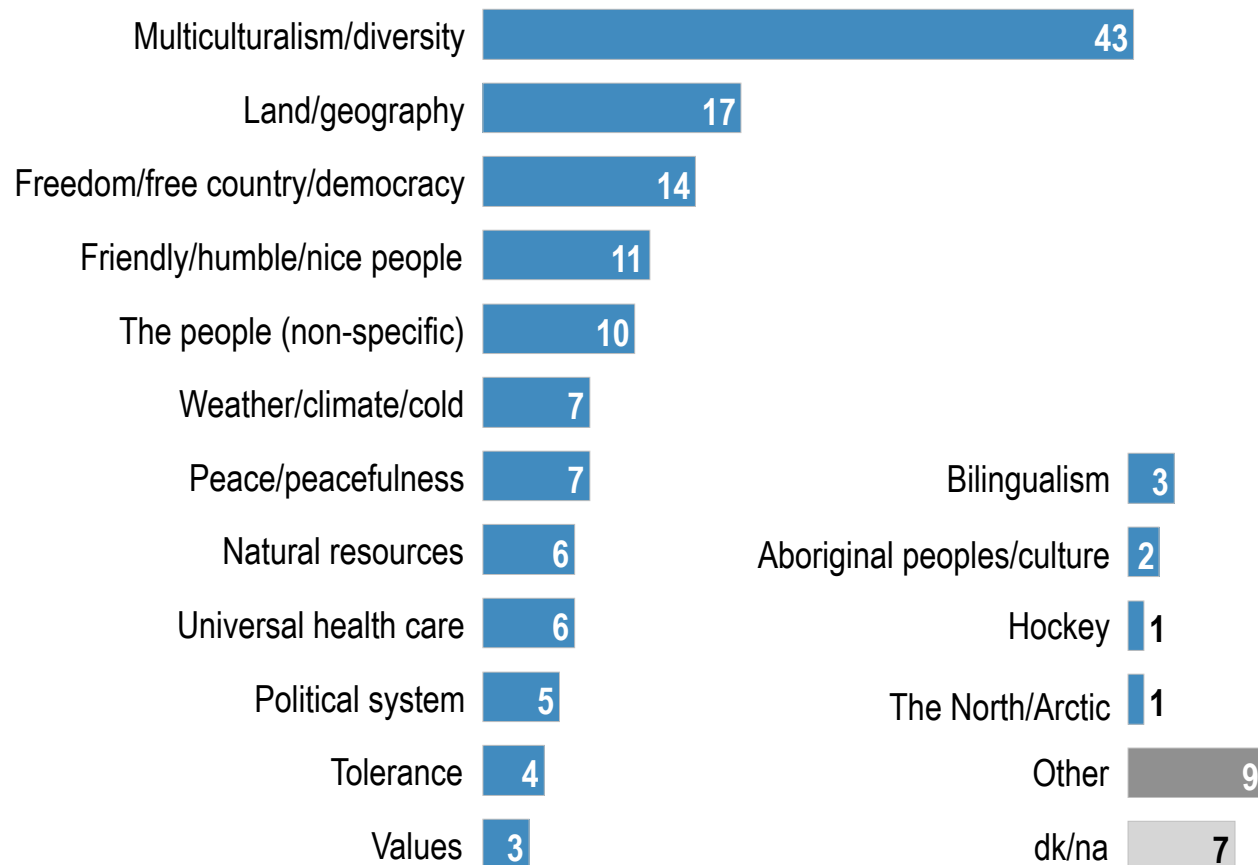
Agree – Disagree: *Many refugee claimants are not legitimate*



Canadians now identify multiculturalism and diversity as a defining aspect of what makes Canada unique

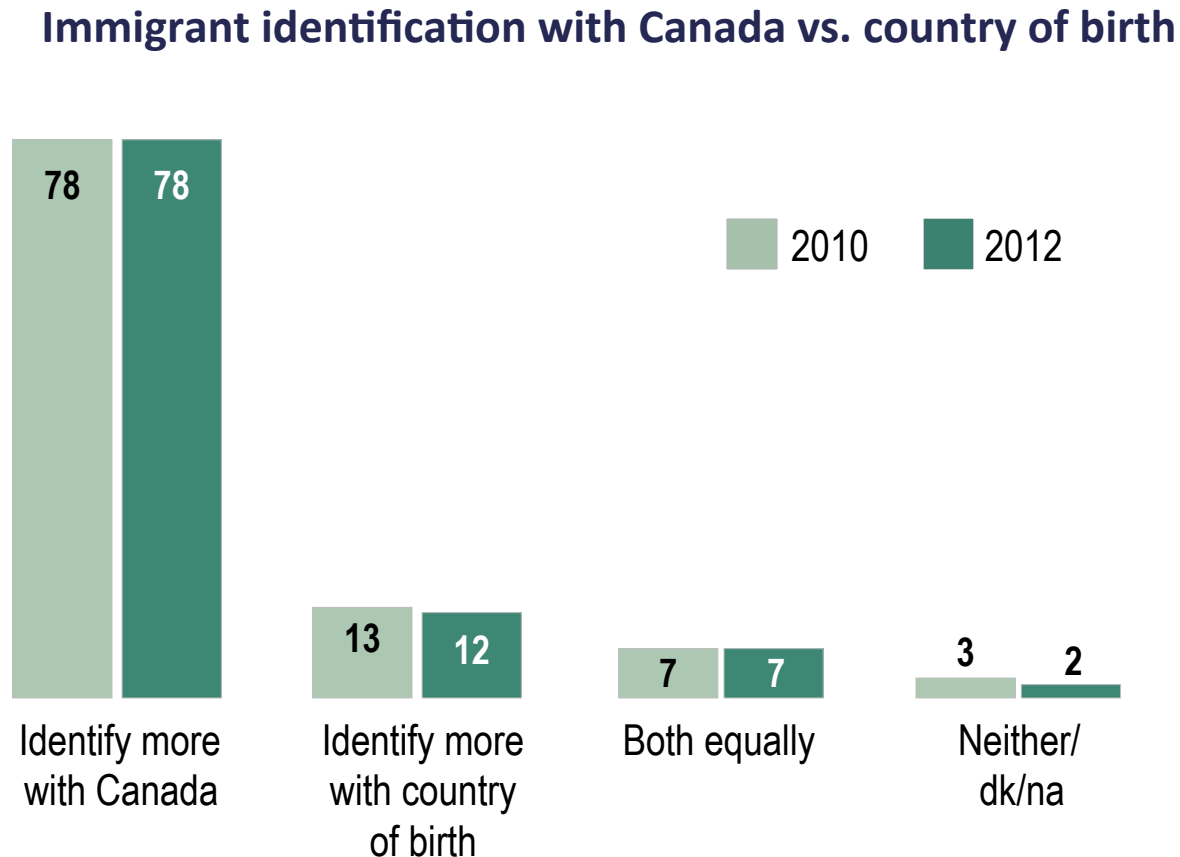
2016

What makes Canada unique? (unprompted mentions)



As for immigrants, the vast majority identify more with Canada than with their country of birth

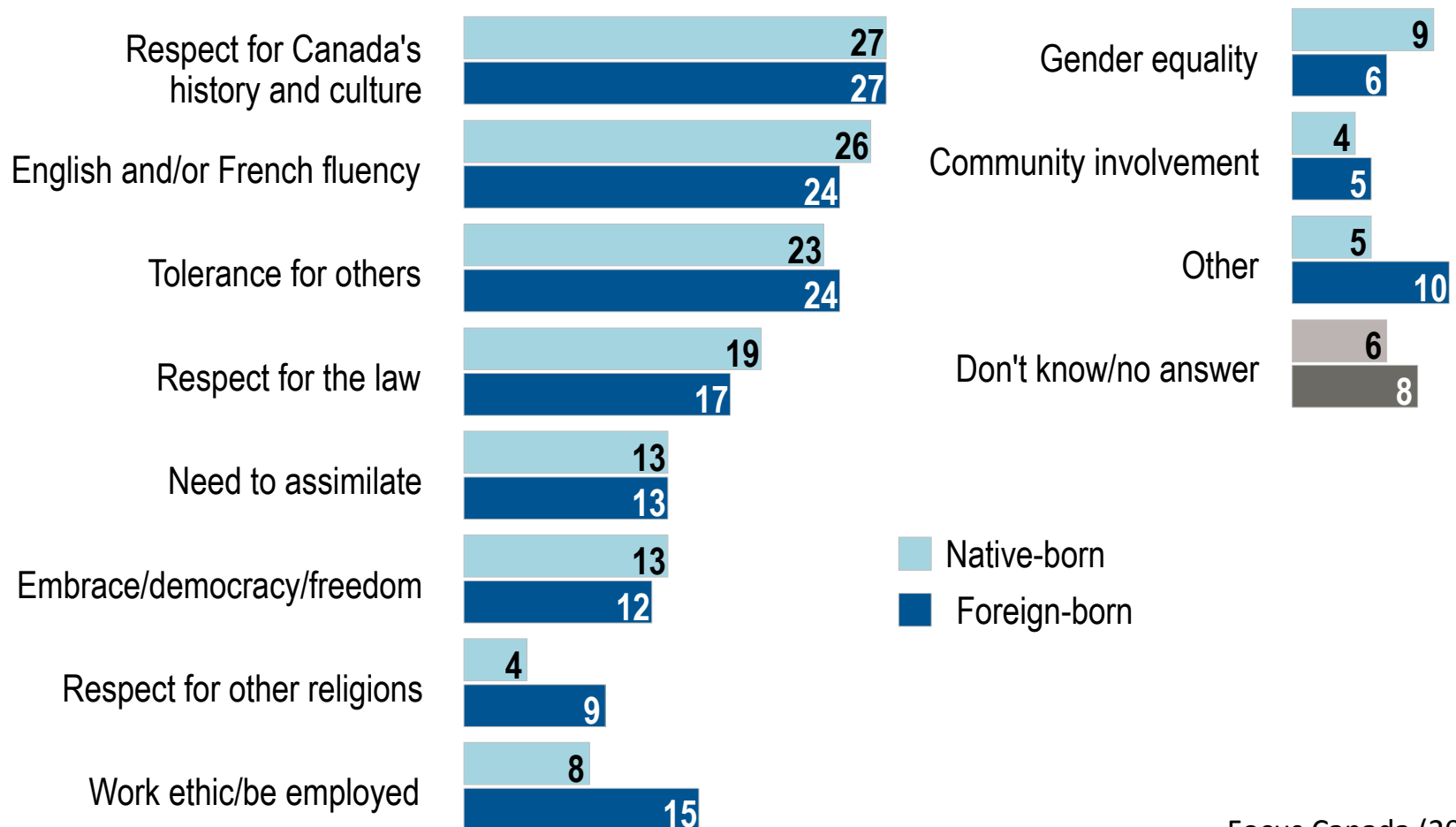
2010 – 2012 Among Canadians born abroad



Native-born Canadians and immigrants both agree on the values that immigrants should adopt

2018

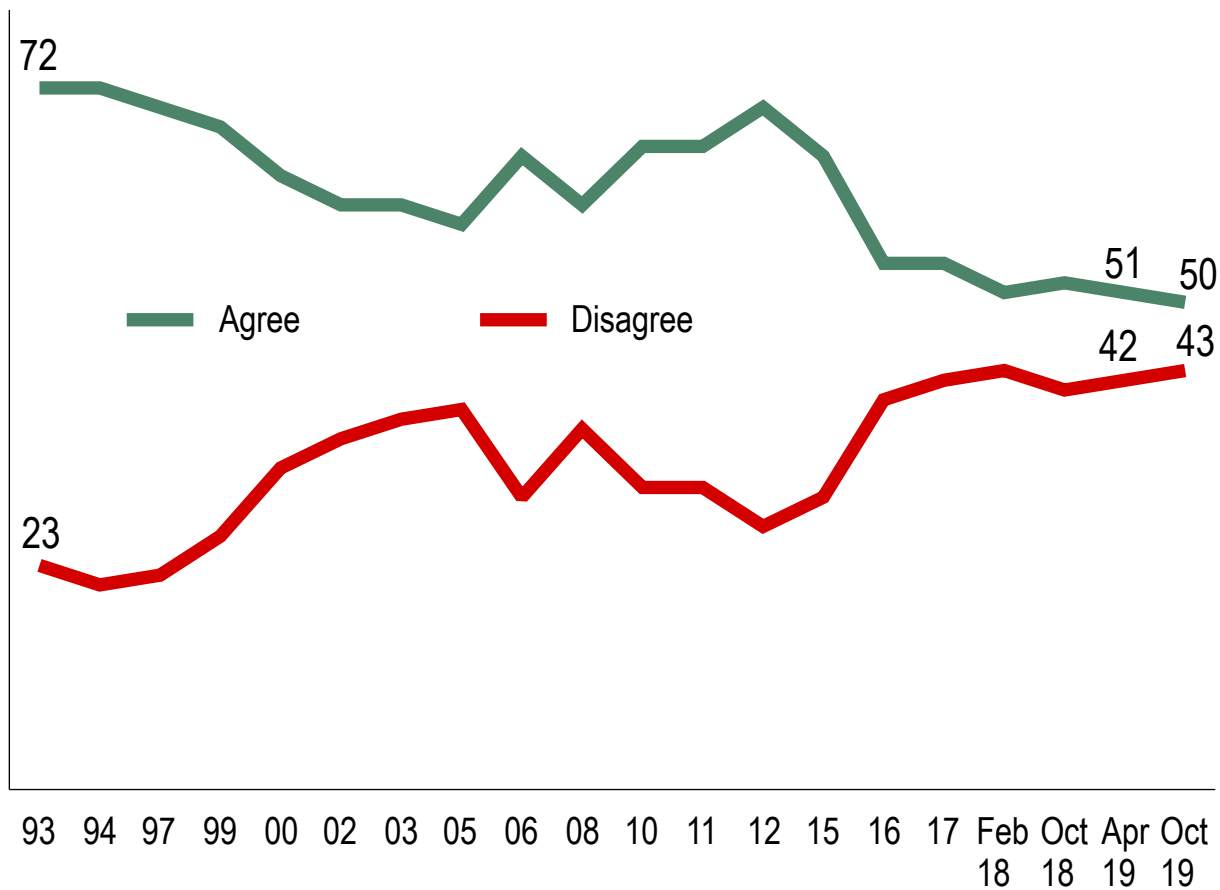
What values are most important for immigrants to adopt?
(unprompted mentions)



However, the majority (though a declining proportion) of Canadians believe that too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values

1993 - 2019

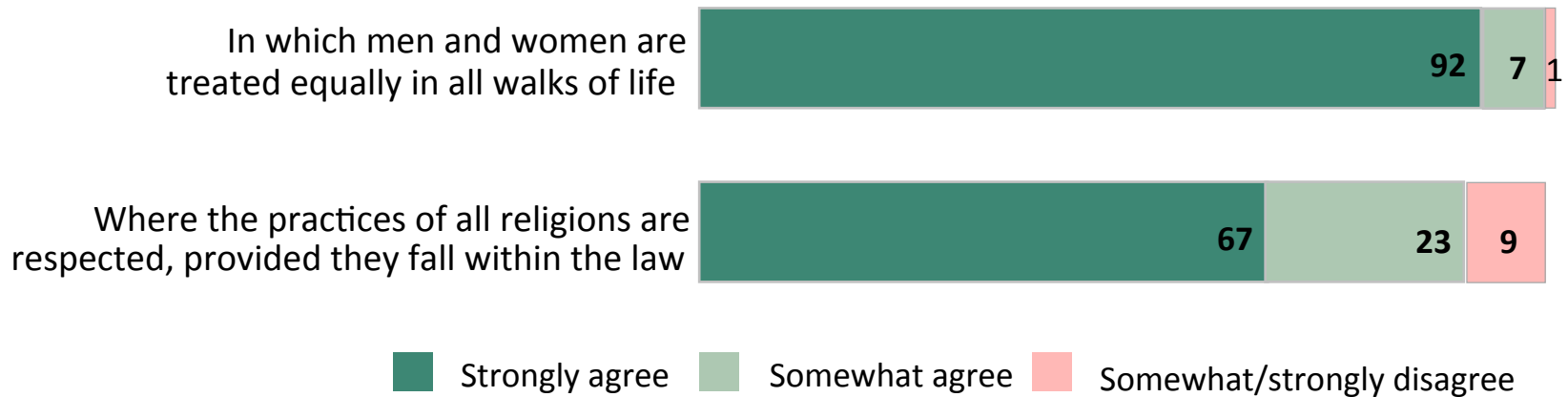
Agree – Disagree: *Too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values*



In part because no Canadian value is more important than gender equality, including religious tolerance

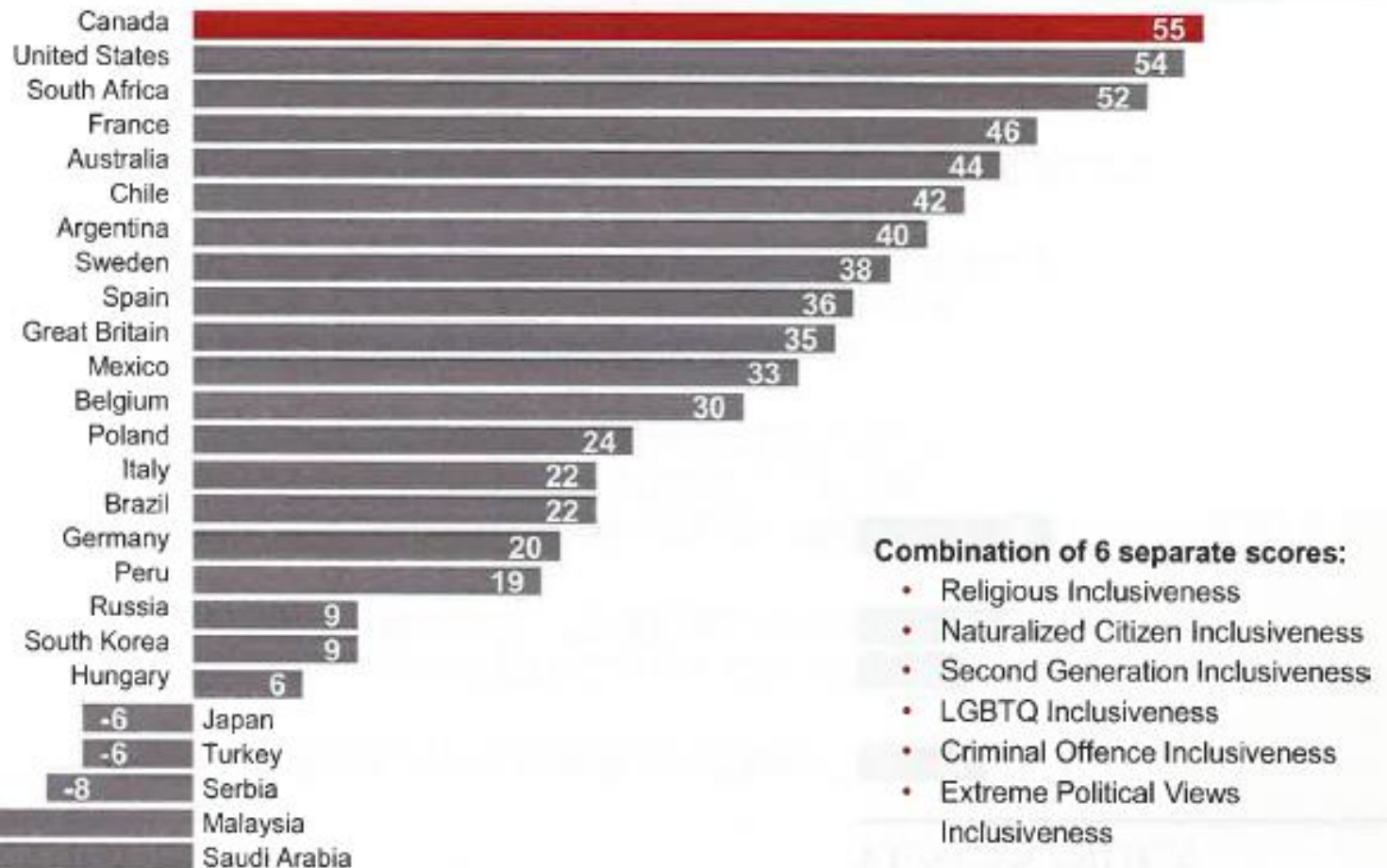
2012

Canada should be a country ...



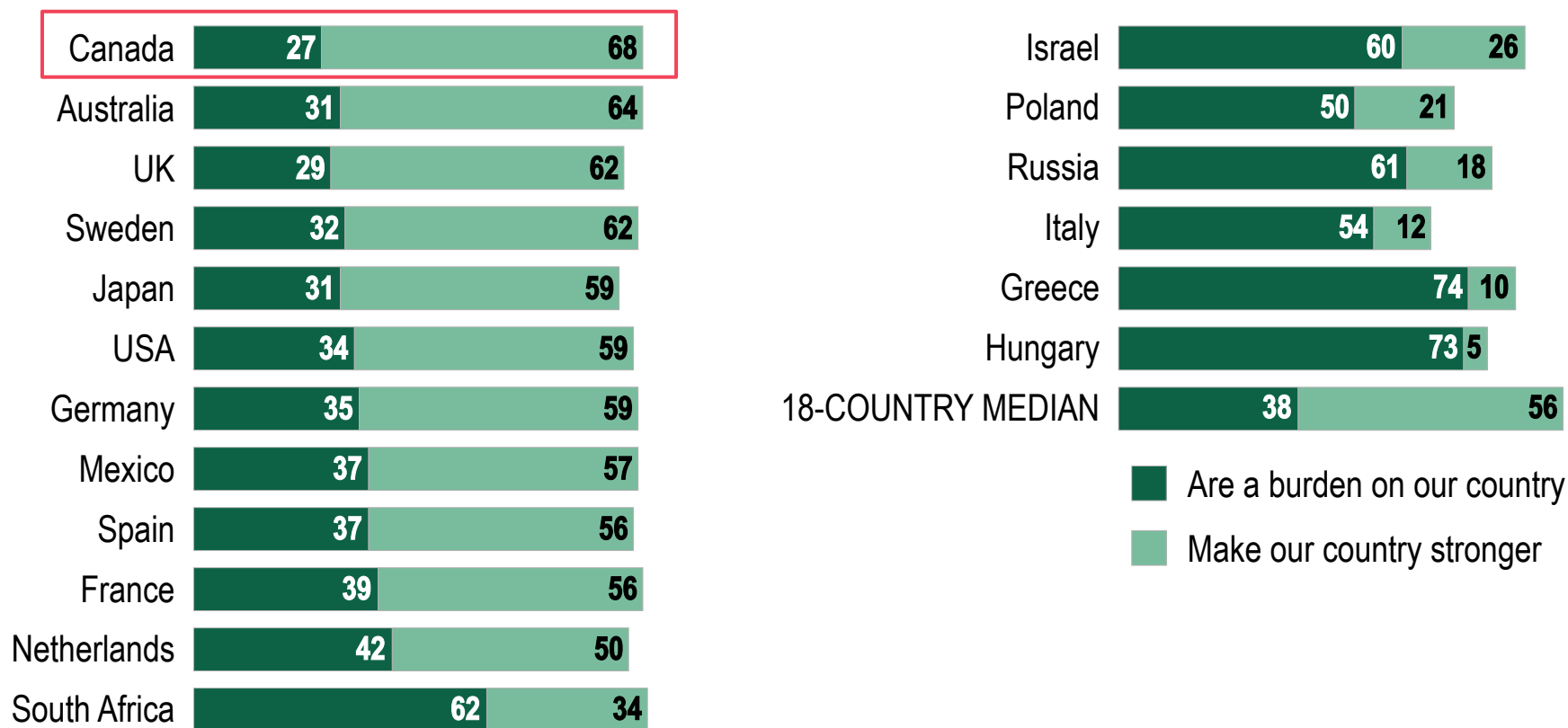
From an international perspective, Canada ranks 1st out of 25 countries in a recent “overall inclusiveness” index . . .

2018



... and are among the most likely globally to view immigrants as a strength rather than a burden

2018



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*Lest we forget our recent
history*

The early Reform Party tapped into the Eastern establishment's progressive liberalism by giving voice to...



...opposition to relentless efforts to accommodate Quebec, increasing immigration and the ideology of multiculturalism

In 2015, Stephen Harper insists Muslim women show their face at citizenship ceremonies, however...



...Zunera Ishaq asserts her Charter rights in court (and wins)

In 2016, Kellie Leitch, co-author of the barbaric cultural practices snitch line, launches her bid for the Conservative party leadership



“If you are tired of feeling like we can’t discuss what our Canadian values are, then please help me to fight back by making a donation.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4msHDzO-GQ4>

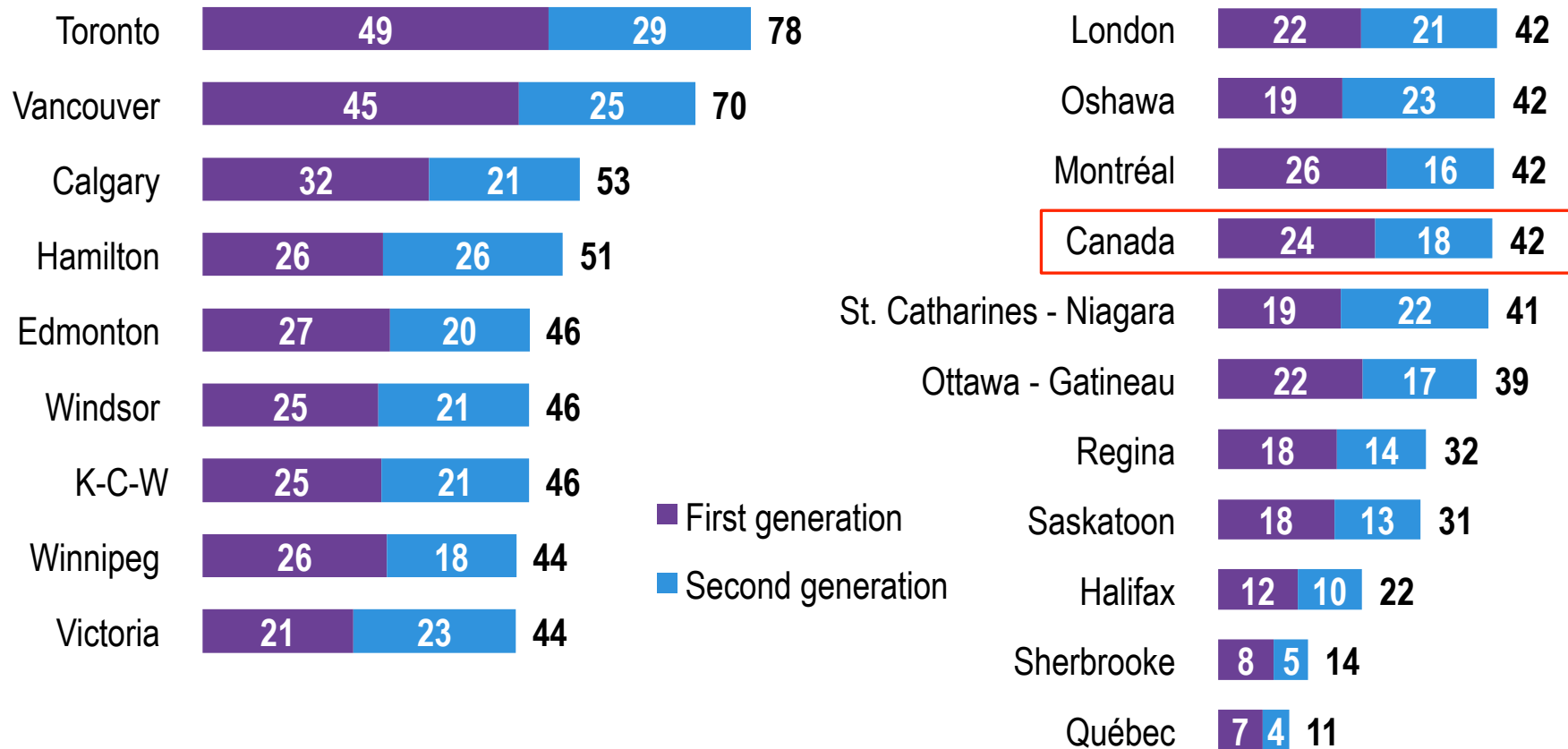
*And more recently, the new Coalition
Avenir Québec government has
introduced a new immigrant agenda,
known as Bill 21*

*So while Canada is not immune
to xenophobia, what is it that
protects us from a populist
tsunami?*

Immigrants matter: At least 2 in 5 in our 12 largest cities - and nearly 80% in the Toronto CMA - are first or second generation

2016

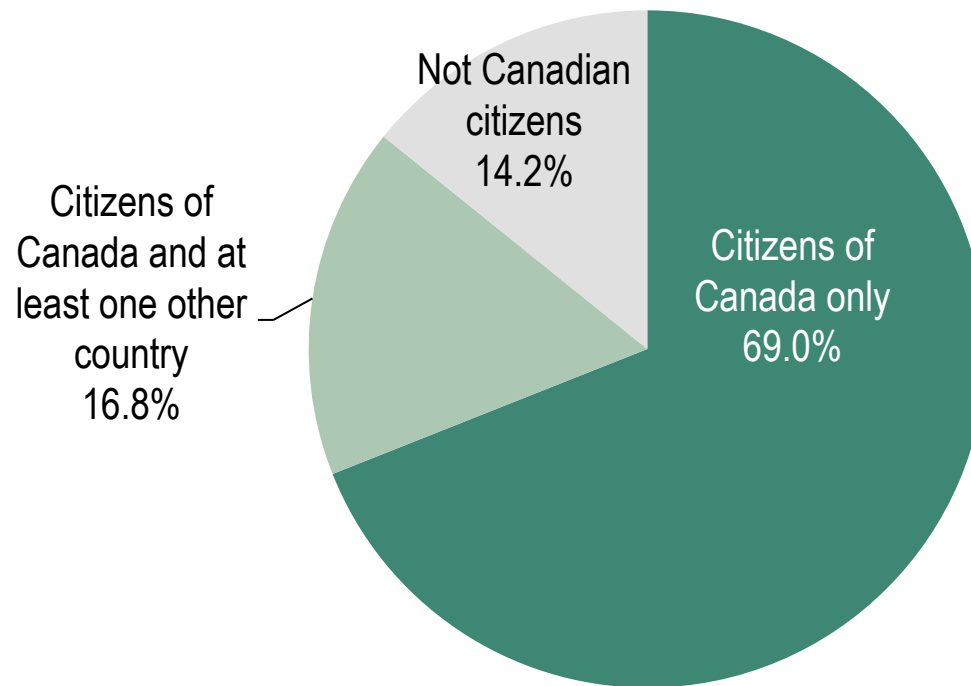
Percent of population by generation, Canada, 2016



The vast majority (85%) of eligible immigrants become Canadian citizens . . .

2016

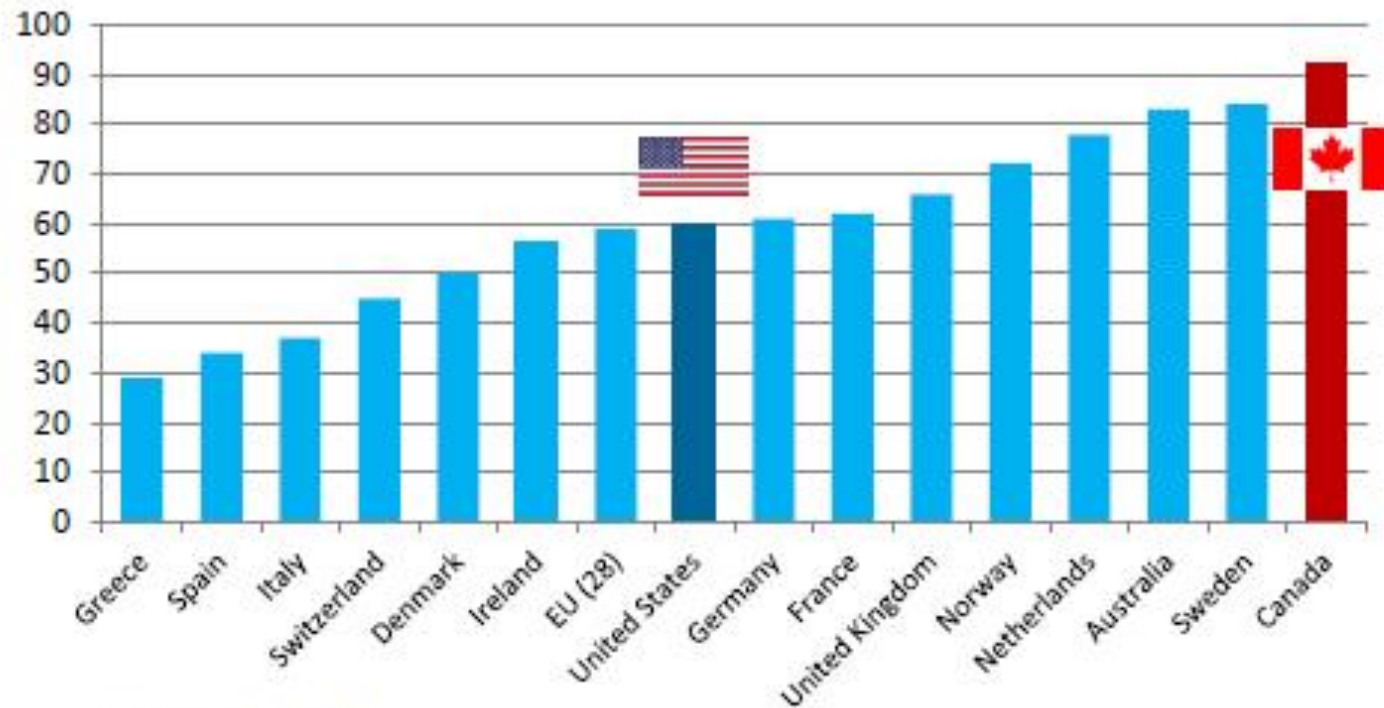
Citizenship status for Immigrants prior to 2012



... unlike in many other countries

2015

% who have citizenship – working age immigrants with at least 10 years experience

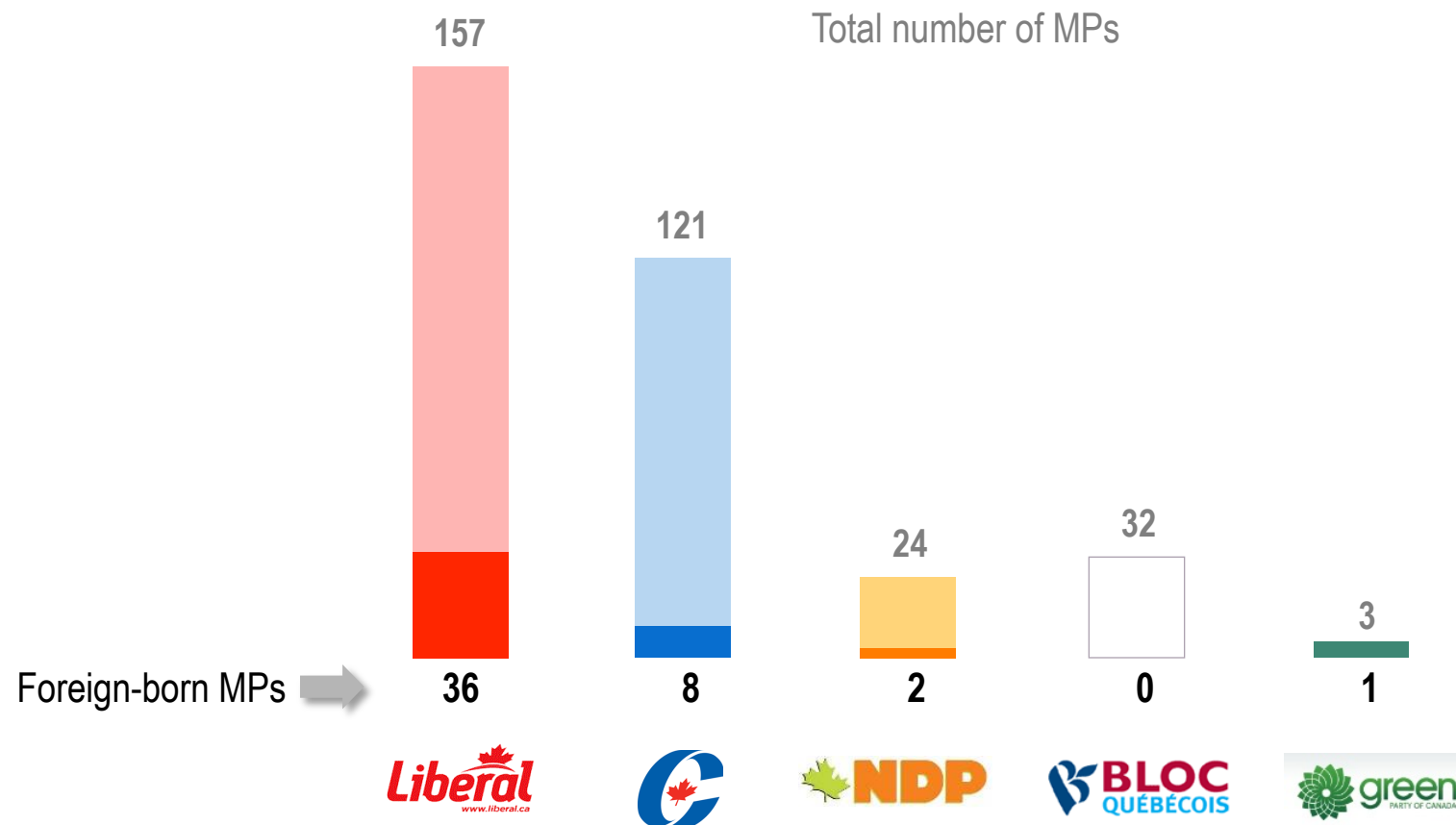


Source: OECD 2013: 203

Remarkably, Canadians elected 47 foreign-born MPs in 2019 (including Conservatives); up from 42 in 2011

2019

2019 Parliament – number of foreign-born elected MP's, by party



From the RCMP to 24 Sussex: how soon before Canada's Prime Minister sports a Turban (and totes a kirpan)?



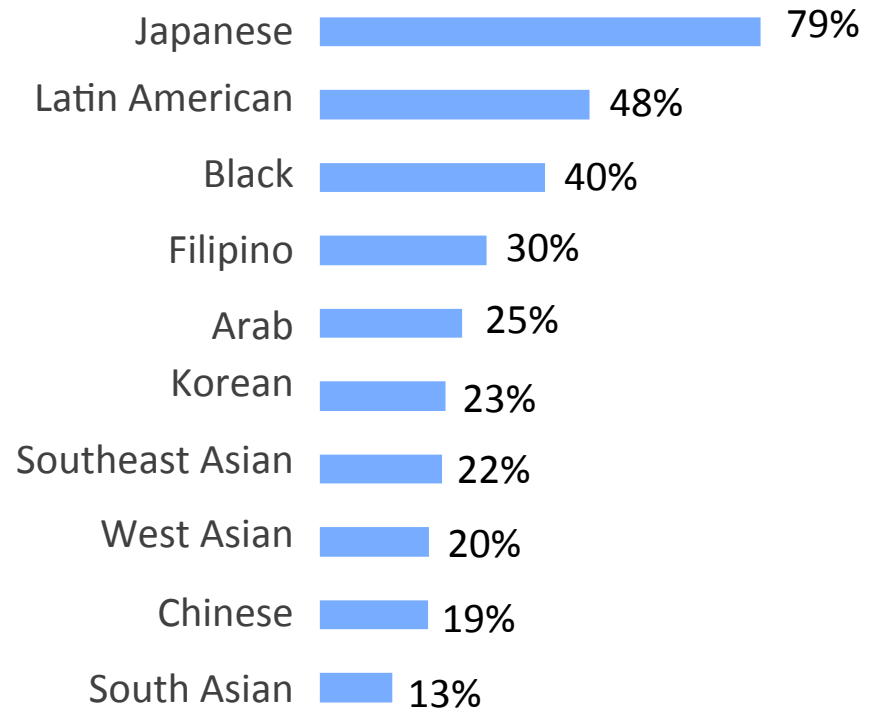
And sometimes we go beyond tolerance of the other: mixed race unions are becoming more commonplace

2011

**% of couples in mixed unions
in Canada - 2011**



**Proportion of individuals in mixed unions -
Visible Minority Group, Canada, 2011**

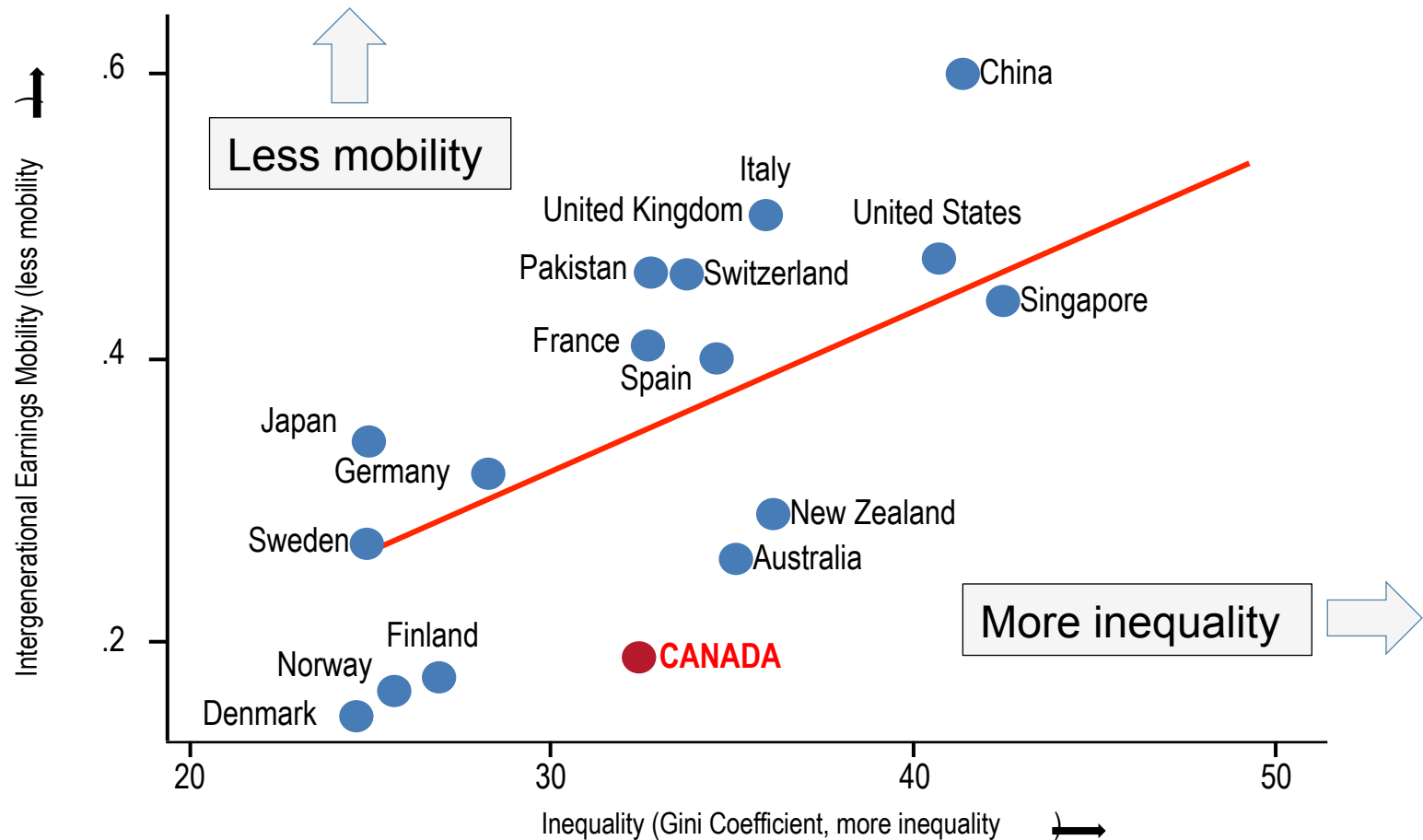


*And when it comes to the
backlash to globalization and
income inequality, Canada is less
vulnerable than the USA and
many other countries*

Canada is closer to Denmark than the USA when it comes to lower inequality and higher social mobility

2018

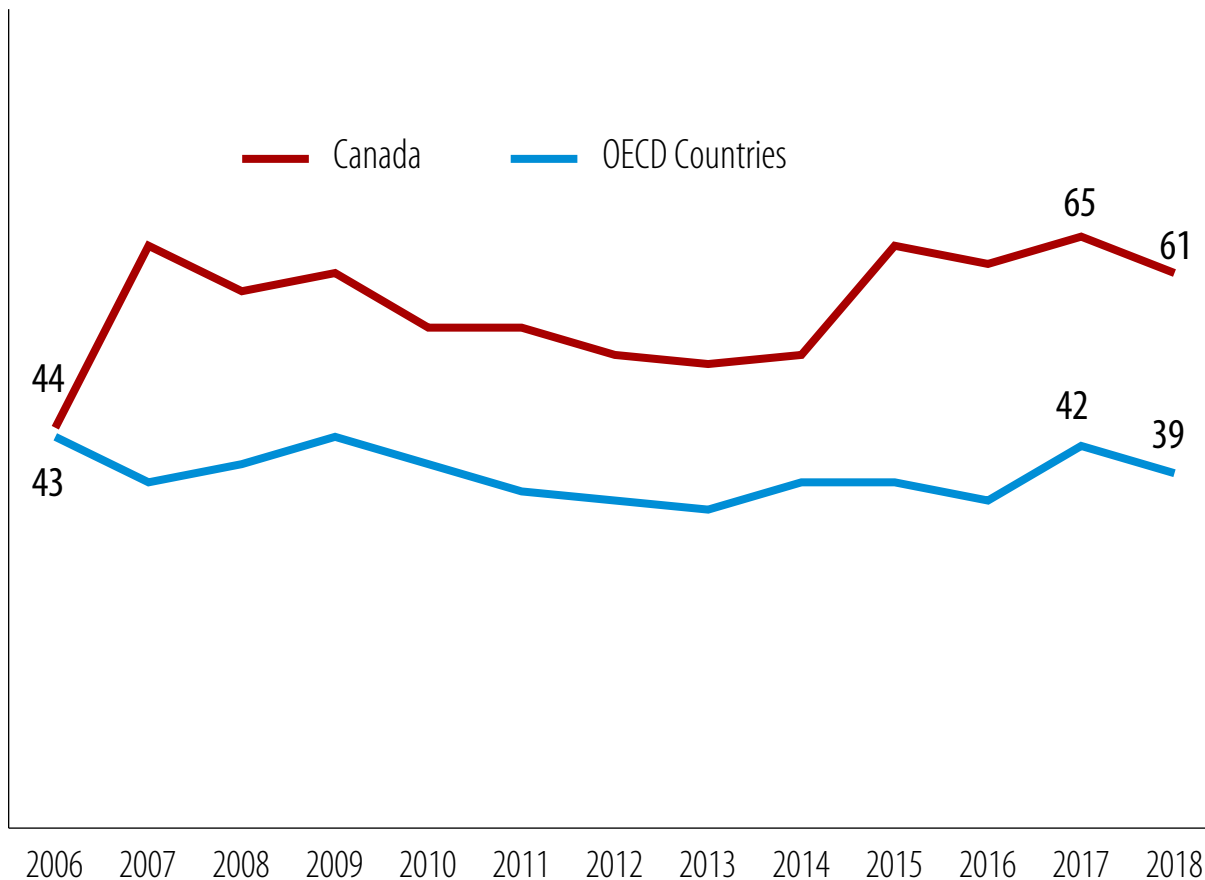
Social immobility and income inequality – selected countries



*And Canadians continue to
express robust confidence in their
national institutions*

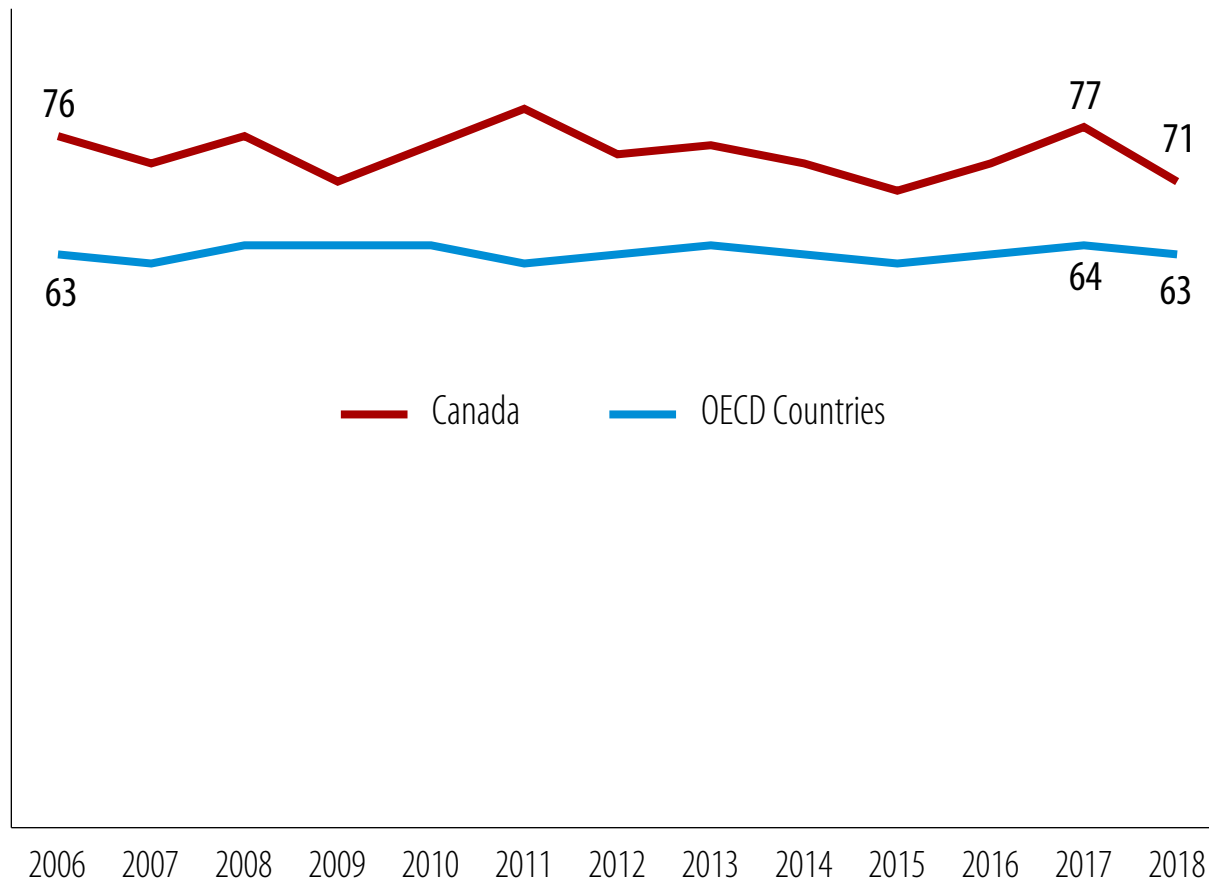
Canadians are more confident in their national government than they were in the past decade, and confidence is higher than in many OECD countries

Percentage who say they have confidence in their national government



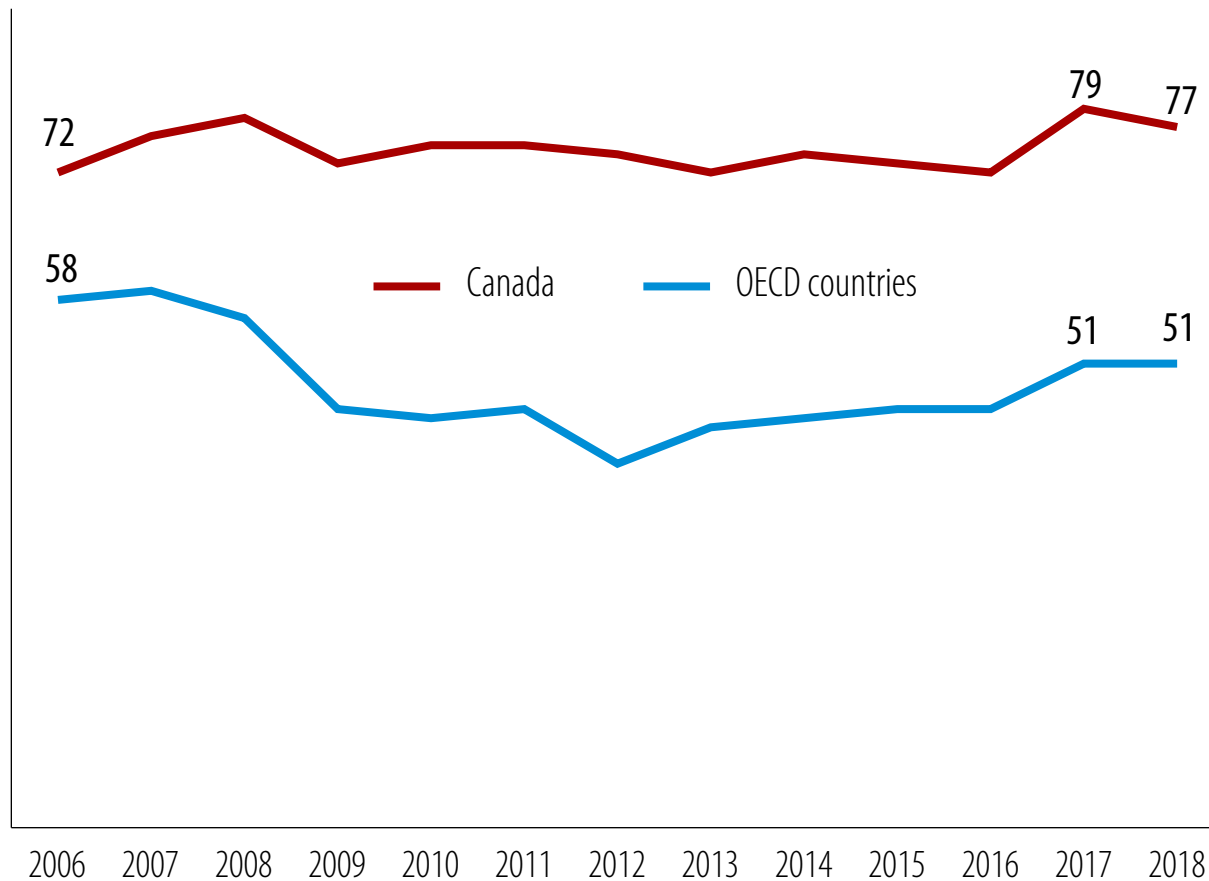
Canadians are more satisfied with the educational system in their country, than are citizens in most other OECD countries

Percentage who are satisfied with the educational system or the schools



Canadians are much more confident in their financial institutions, than are citizens in many OECD countries

Percentage who are confident in their country's financial institutions or banks



*So, could it still happen
here in Canada?*

The Canadian advantage

- ❖ Canada has not been devastated by NAFTA or China joining the WTO in 2001
- ❖ Enjoys good public healthcare and social programs across the country
- ❖ Plus very good public education
- ❖ Income/wealth inequality and status anxiety are not as evident as in the USA and Europe
- ❖ Lots of evidence that immigrants and refugees are successfully integrating into the economy, education and the workplace – and as citizens



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