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# Younger Canadians and housing crisis drive sharpest anti-immigration shift in 50 years

Anirudh Bhattacharyya - Dec 06, 2025

Public opinion on immigration to Canada has sharply reversed, especially among younger people, linking it to housing affordability issues, per a new study.

The “sharpest reversal” in public opinion of immigration to Canada in 50 years was driven, in part, by younger people turning against an increased intake of newcomers, that they blamed to a housing affordability.



A Canadian flag in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. (Bloomberg)

This was among the conclusions of a new paper published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy's Centre of Excellence on the Canadian Federation. Authored by Randy Besco, an associate professor at the University of Toronto, and Natasha Goel, a scholar there, the brief on immigration was based on over 40 years of surveys conducted by the Environics Institute.

The authors noted that "in 2023-24, polls showed the sharpest reversal in public opinion since at least the late 1970s, with opposition to immigration rising quickly".

"Retrenchment on immigration may come as a surprise to some, given Canada's reputation for being tolerant, multicultural and pro-immigration. While this has been generally true at the policy level, public opinion has not always aligned with this image," they stated.

They pointed out that survey data showed that most Canadians wanted less immigration from at least the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. Public opinion became more positive toward immigration in the mid-1990s, improved further into the mid-2000s, then stabilized for more than a decade, before the current anti-immigration sentiment emerged.

"The most striking reversal is seen in the generational divide. Older Canadians had long been less positive about immigrants. However, in the latest surveys, younger respondents expressed higher levels of opposition," the paper said.

"This change may reflect concern about the housing affordability crisis, which disproportionately affects younger Canadians," it added, pointing to high rents and limited prospects for home ownership, combined with media coverage and statements by politicians, that may be leading younger respondents to link immigration to their economic anxieties.