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Canadians' support for immigration not without limits: Poll

By Norma Greenaway, Canwest News Service July 2, 2010 [Comments \(47\)](#)

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Immigration Minister Jason Kenney is prepared to accept amendments from the Bloc Quebecois and the NDP in order to gain their support for legislation to reform the refugee system.

Photograph by: Brent Foster, National Post Files, National Post

OTTAWA — Canadians overwhelmingly say immigration is good for the country, but they add a big qualifier: It should be kept at the current level of about 250,000 a year or even reduced.

Canadians' reservations about allowing more immigrants into Canada surfaced in a new national poll conducted by Nanos Research and released on the eve of Canada Day.

The poll said more than four in five respondents agreed immigration is "a key positive feature of Canada as a country." Only one in five, however, said they believed immigration should be increased.

Pollster Nik Nanos said the conflicting findings appear counterintuitive, but they make sense when considered against the reality that Canada is just emerging from a severe economic recession.

"In good times, with the economy growing, Canadians would likely be more supportive of bringing in as many immigrants as there are jobs to be filled," he said.

"In the present economic cycle, coming out of a severe recession, they are more supportive of the status quo. In other words, immigration is a good thing, but we don't want too much of a good thing."

The poll was published in Policy Options, the monthly magazine published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

The survey said that Canadians, for the most part, believe immigrants fit in well. Two of three respondents said they blend in, compared with about one-third who said they blend in very little or not at all.

Still, the survey says, Canadians have a high degree of sympathy for the difficulties faced by both immigrants and temporary foreign workers.

Almost 66 per cent agreed governments should provide more job and language support for immigrants, and seven in 10 of those surveyed said temporary foreign workers "should enjoy the same rights as other workers."

Canada accepts about 250,000 permanent residents each year. As well, in any given year there are 200,000 temporary foreign workers and international students, according to Immigration Department figures.

Nanos said he wasn't surprised at the level of empathy for foreign workers.

"A big part of Canada's self-image and identity has to do with fairness and respect, and so it's not surprising to me to see these types of numbers related to foreign workers," he said in an interview.

A strong majority — seven of 10 — also endorsed allowing Canadians to hold dual citizenship, the second poll out this week that says a solid majority of Canadians believe the government should continue to support a dual citizenship policy.

The Nanos poll, a random telephone survey of 1,008 people between May 29 and June 3, is considered accurate within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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