

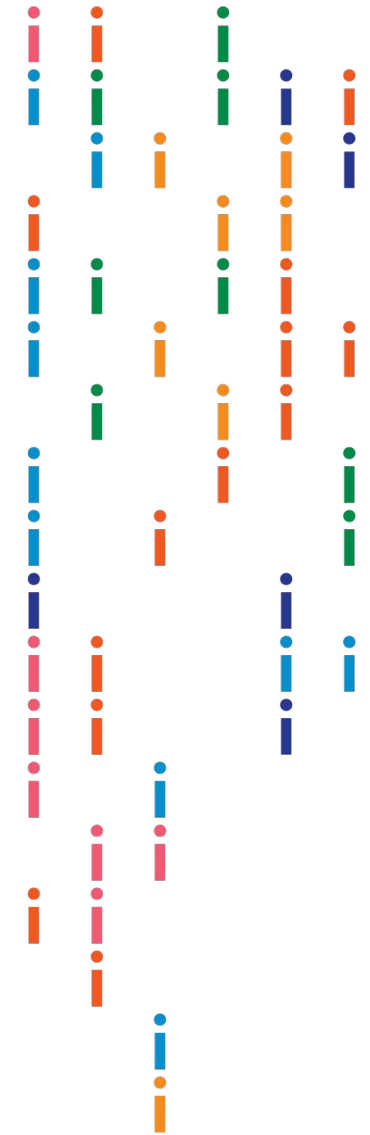
**Environics
Institute**
For Survey Research

How do Canadians think about immigration today?
An update

Keith Neuman, Ph.D
Environics Institute for Survey Research

Pathways to Prosperity 2023 National Conference
November 20, 2023

- Canadian non-profit research institute
- Mission: Do social research to help Canadians better understand themselves and their changing society
- **Focus Canada** - Canada's longest running and most comprehensive public opinion research program on public policy



Canada has done well as an immigrant nation [from 2021 P2P presentation]

- Canadians have never been on the same page on immigration issues, but the country has sustained a critical threshold of acceptance, reflected in our social norms, political discourse and public policy
- The COVID-19 global pandemic and 2021 Federal Election were important litmus tests
- Canada stands out among western nations in providing little space for anti-immigrant political movements

Most-Accepting Countries for Migrants

Migrant Acceptance Index	
Canada	8.46
Iceland	8.41
New Zealand	8.32
Australia	8.28
Sierra Leone	8.14
United States	7.95
Burkina Faso*	7.93
Sweden	7.92
Chad*	7.91
Ireland*	7.88
Rwanda	7.88

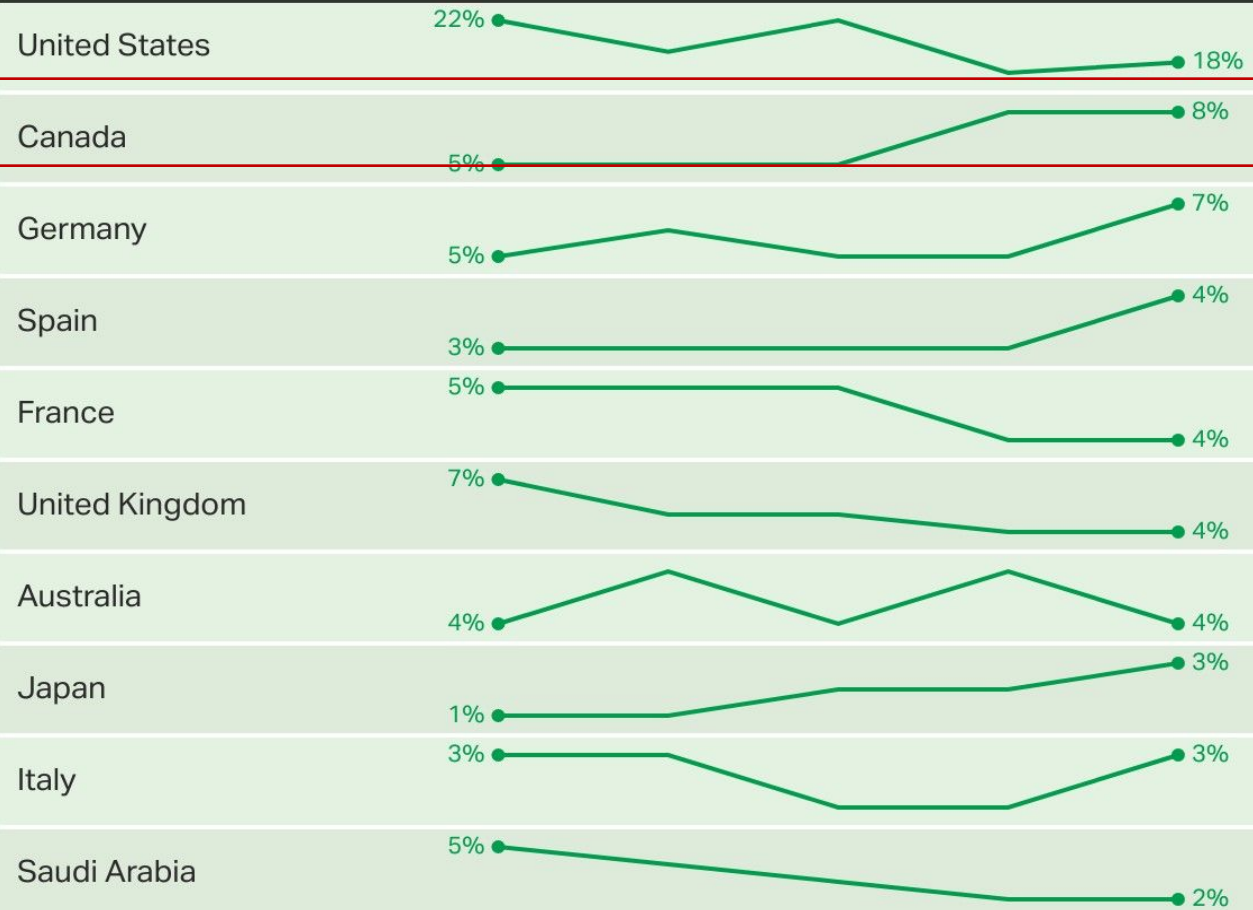
*Countries not on the list in 2016/2017

Gallup World Poll 2019

Top Desired Destinations for Potential Migrants

Among those who would like to move permanently to another country

Desired destination, 2011-2021 ▾



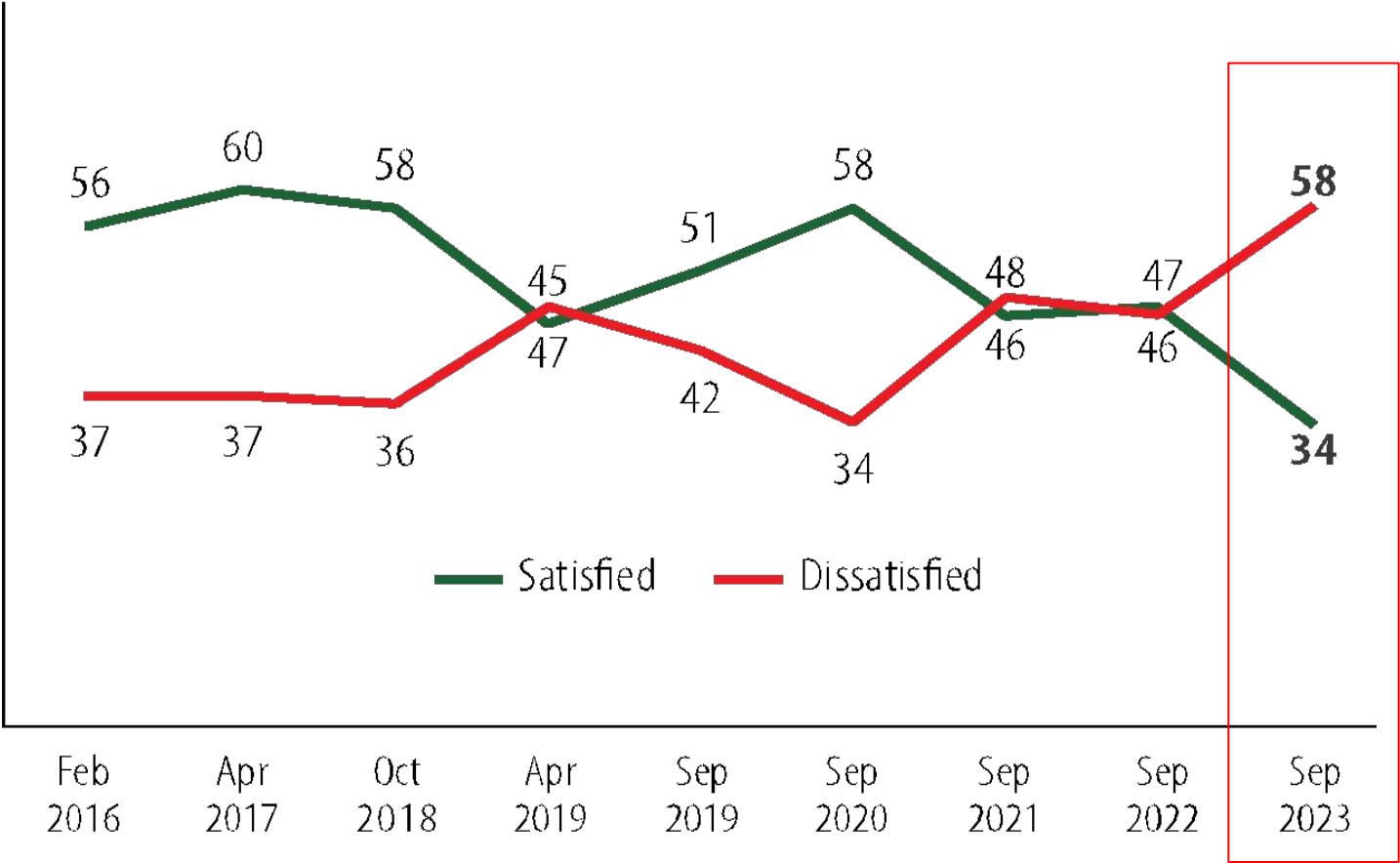
A high-angle, top-down photograph of a very large, dense crowd of people. The individuals are packed closely together, filling the entire frame. Many people are wearing backpacks, suggesting a festival, race, or outdoor event. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance. The lighting is bright, and the overall color palette is somewhat muted, with a lot of white, grey, and dark clothing. In the center of the image, there is a large, white, sans-serif text overlay that reads "2023 has been a difficult year for many Canadians".

2023 has been a difficult year for many Canadians

Canadians are increasingly negative about the direction of the country

Overall are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in your country today?

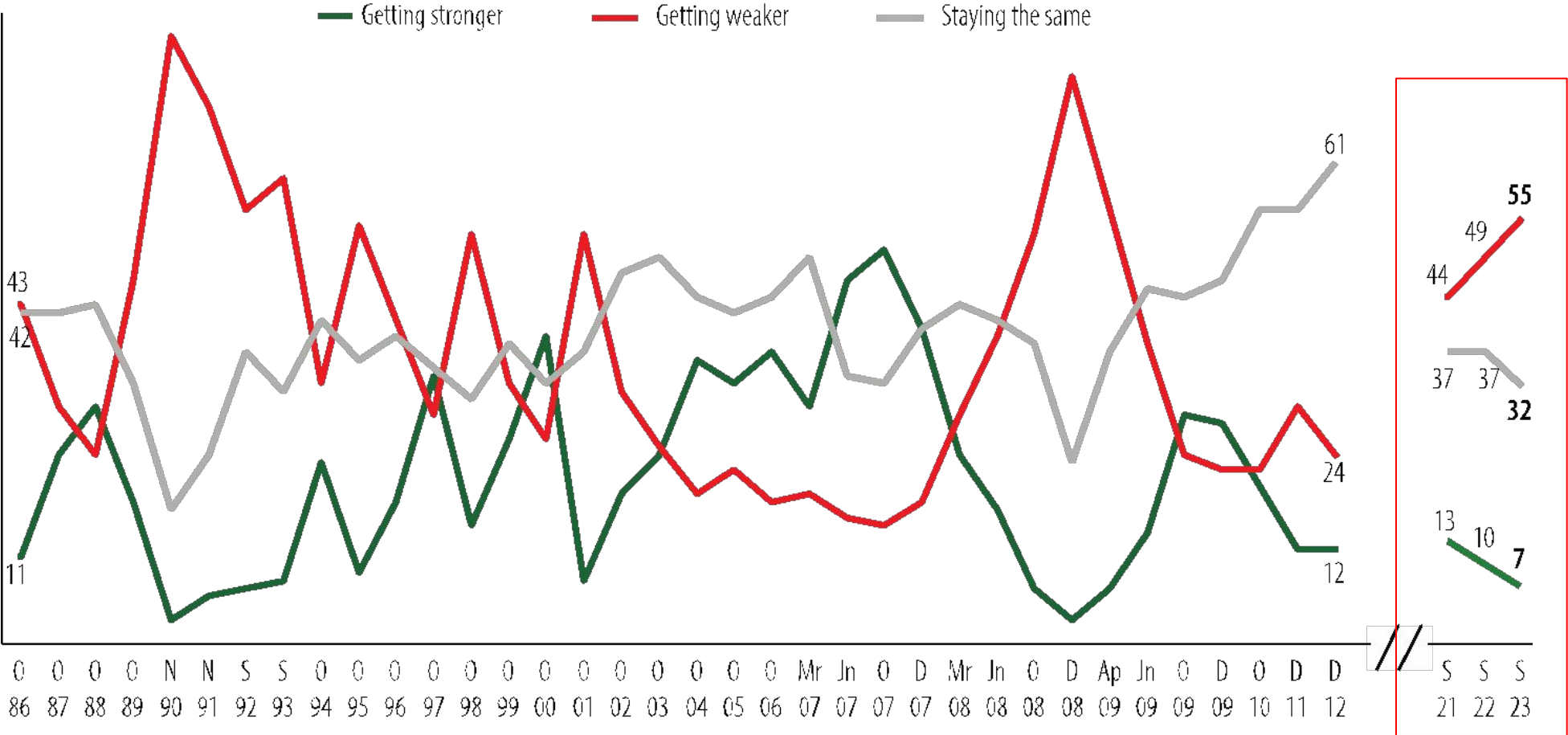
2016 – 2023



Canadians are feeling stressed about the economy and cost of living

Is the Canadian economy getting stronger or weaker?

1986 – 2023



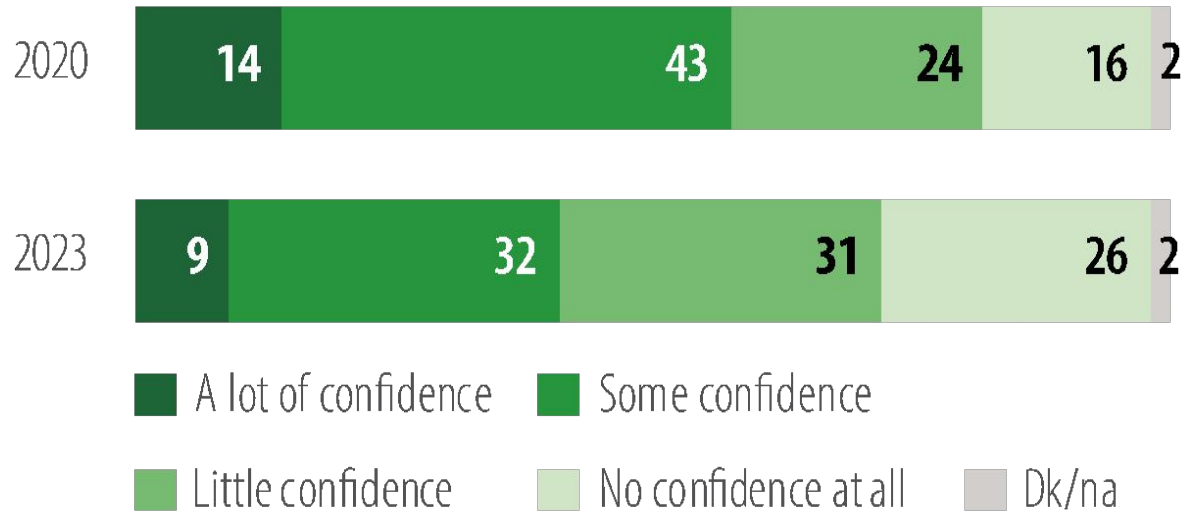
It is about more than the economy

- Housing: Growing scarce and unaffordable, especially for young adults
- Health care: System under persistent duress
- Climate: Unprecedented wildfires and local flooding
- Geopolitical conflict: global wars with imported conflict

The public has less confidence in government effectiveness

Confidence in governments' ability to plan and prepare for future challenges

2020 – 2023



Canada's immigration numbers at an all-time high

- Population surpassed 40 million people in 2023
- Increase by more than 1 million – 96% due to international migration
- Highest annual growth rate since post-war boom of 1957
- Canada relies on immigration for population growth and labour market needs

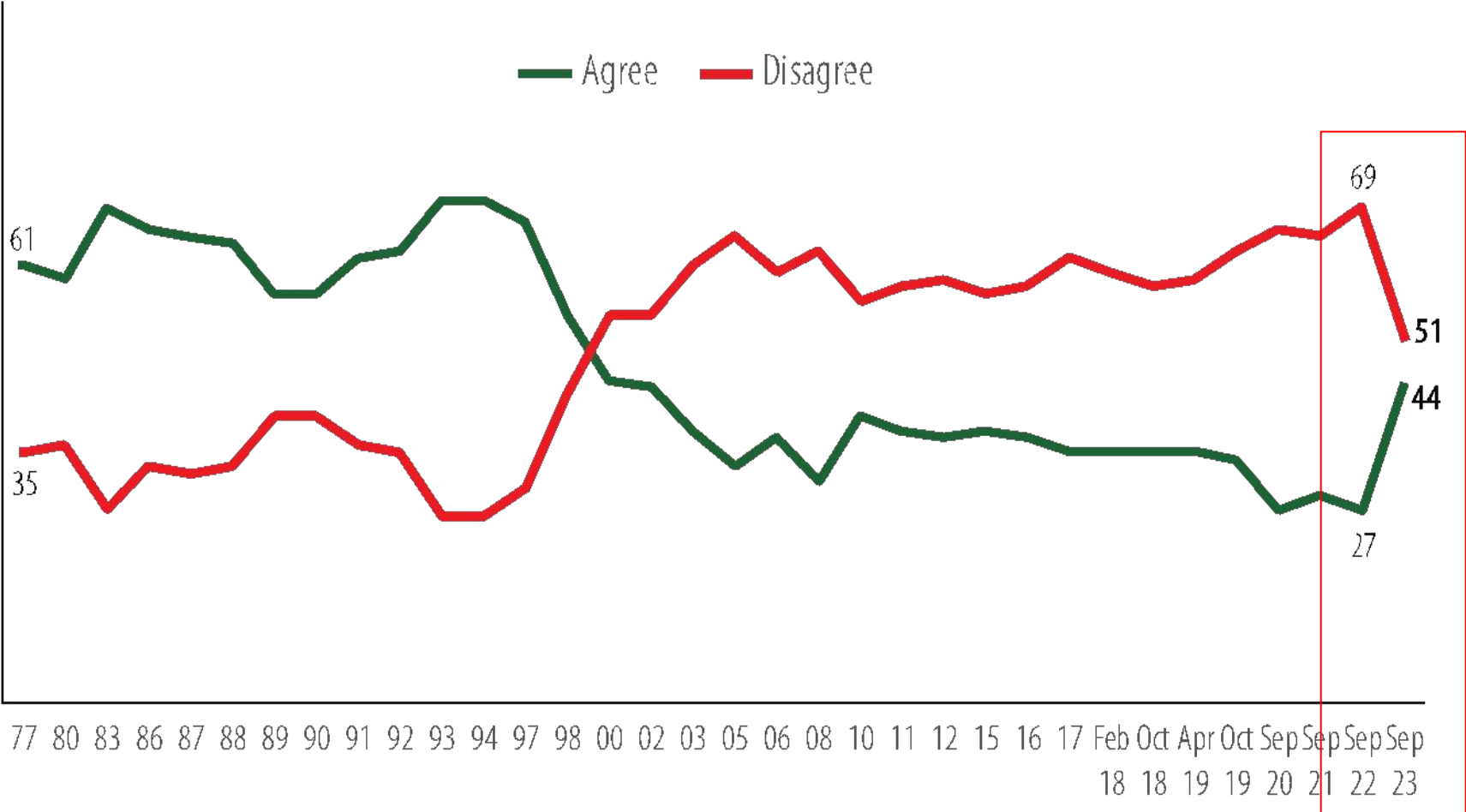
A black silhouette of a compass rose is centered in the image. The rose has four main arms pointing North (N), South (S), East (E), and West (W). A large, thick black arrow is superimposed over the rose, pointing horizontally to the left. The background is a sunset sky with a gradient from orange at the bottom to blue at the top, with some wispy clouds.

**Canadian public opinion
about immigration:
Something has changed**

More Canadians are now questioning immigration levels

Agree – Disagree: Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada

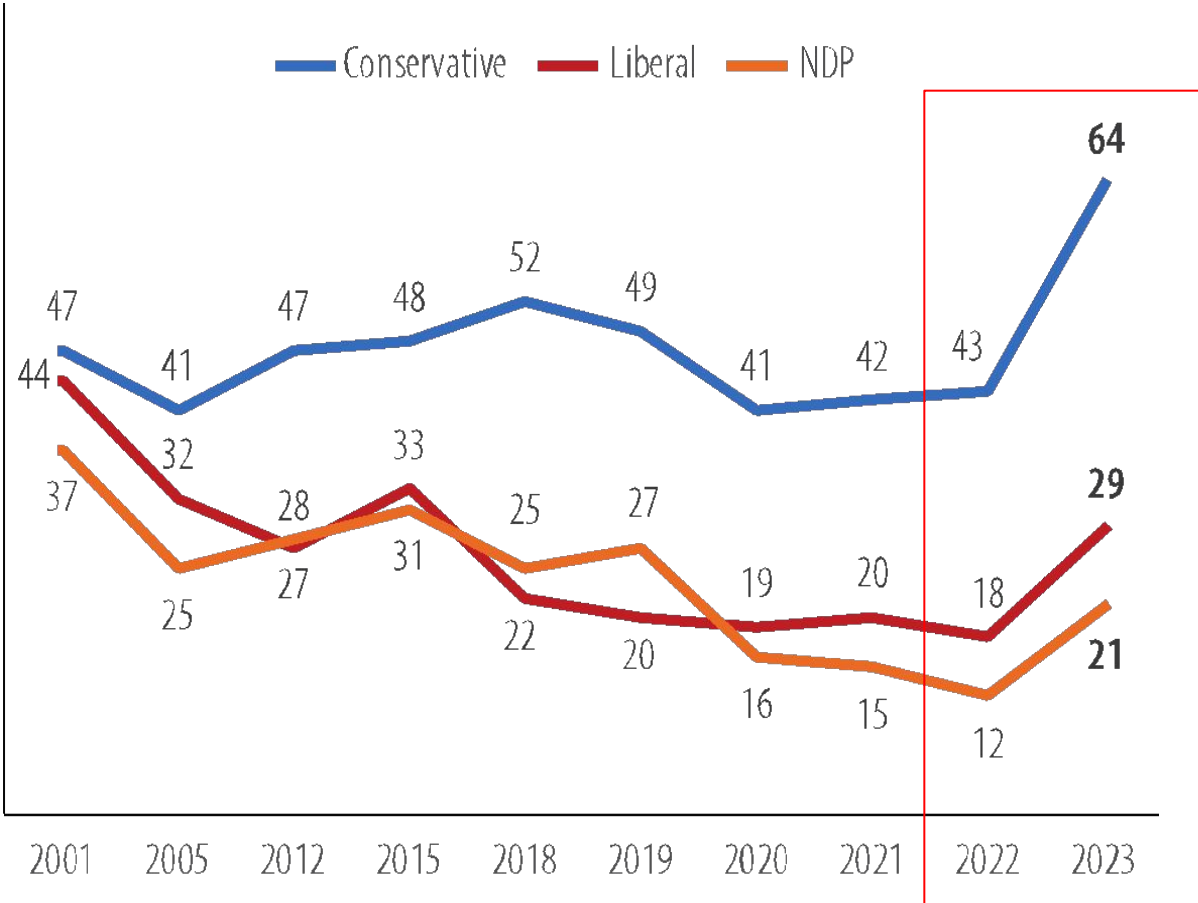
1977 – 2023



Change in opinion spans the political spectrum

Agree: Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada

2001 – 2023 By federal political party support



There is growing concern about newcomer impacts on housing

Why there is too much immigration to Canada

2022 – 2023 Those who agree with statement

	2022	2023
Immigrants drive up housing prices / less housing for other Canadians	15	38
Immigrants are a drain on public finances / cost too much	23	25
Bad for economy / take jobs from other Canadians	21	25
Over-population / already too many people in Canada	19	19
Immigration is poorly managed by government / lack of screening	13	10
Threat to Canadian / Quebec culture (identity / language / values)	24	8
Immigrants are a security risk / risk of terrorism / extremism	3	4
Too many foreign students	*	4
Immigrants are a public health risk / COVID-19 threat	1	1
Other reasons	5	3

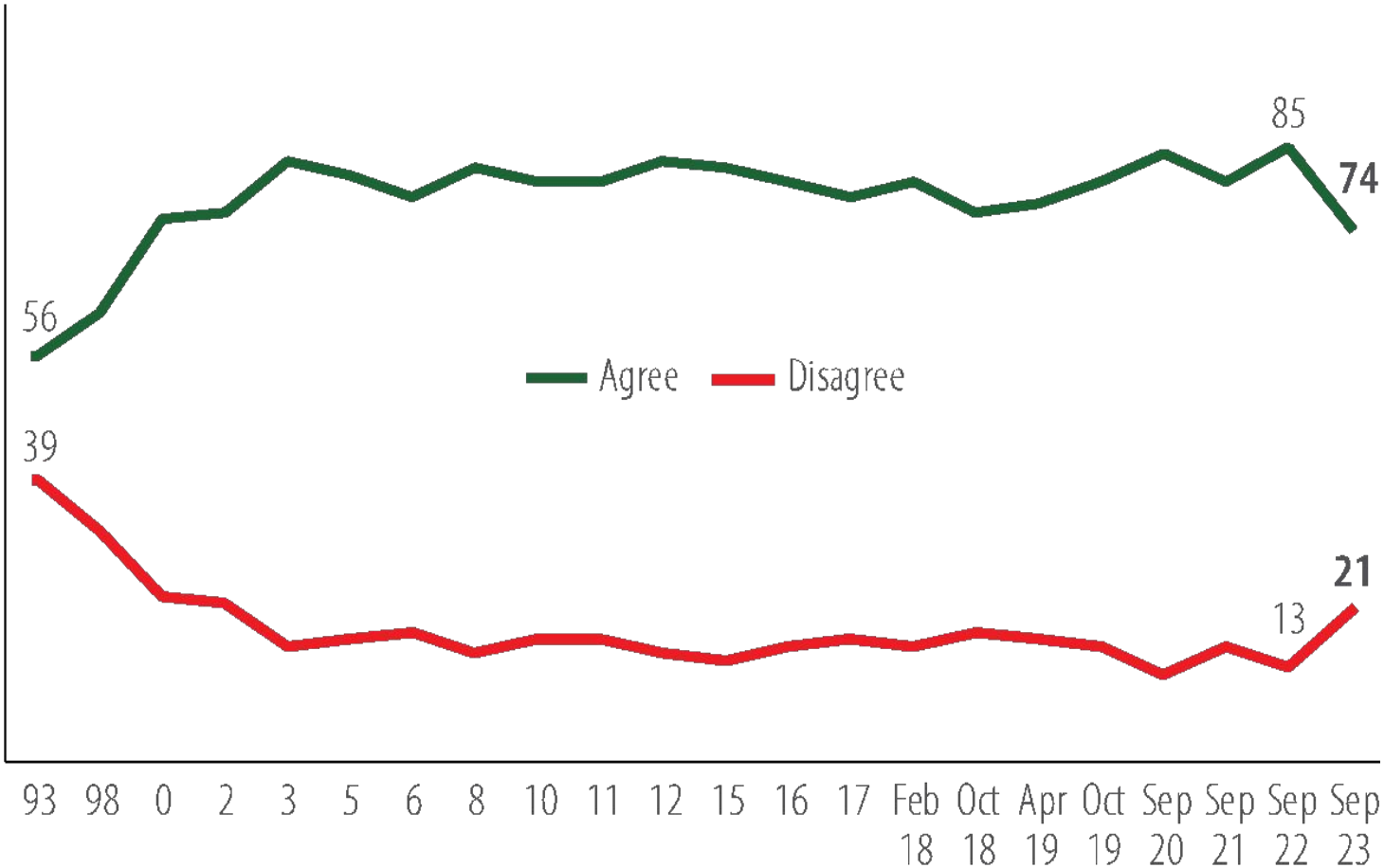
Canadian public opinion
about immigration:
Not everything has changed



Most Canadians continue to acknowledge the economic benefits

Agree – Disagree: Overall Immigrants have a positive impact on the economy of Canada

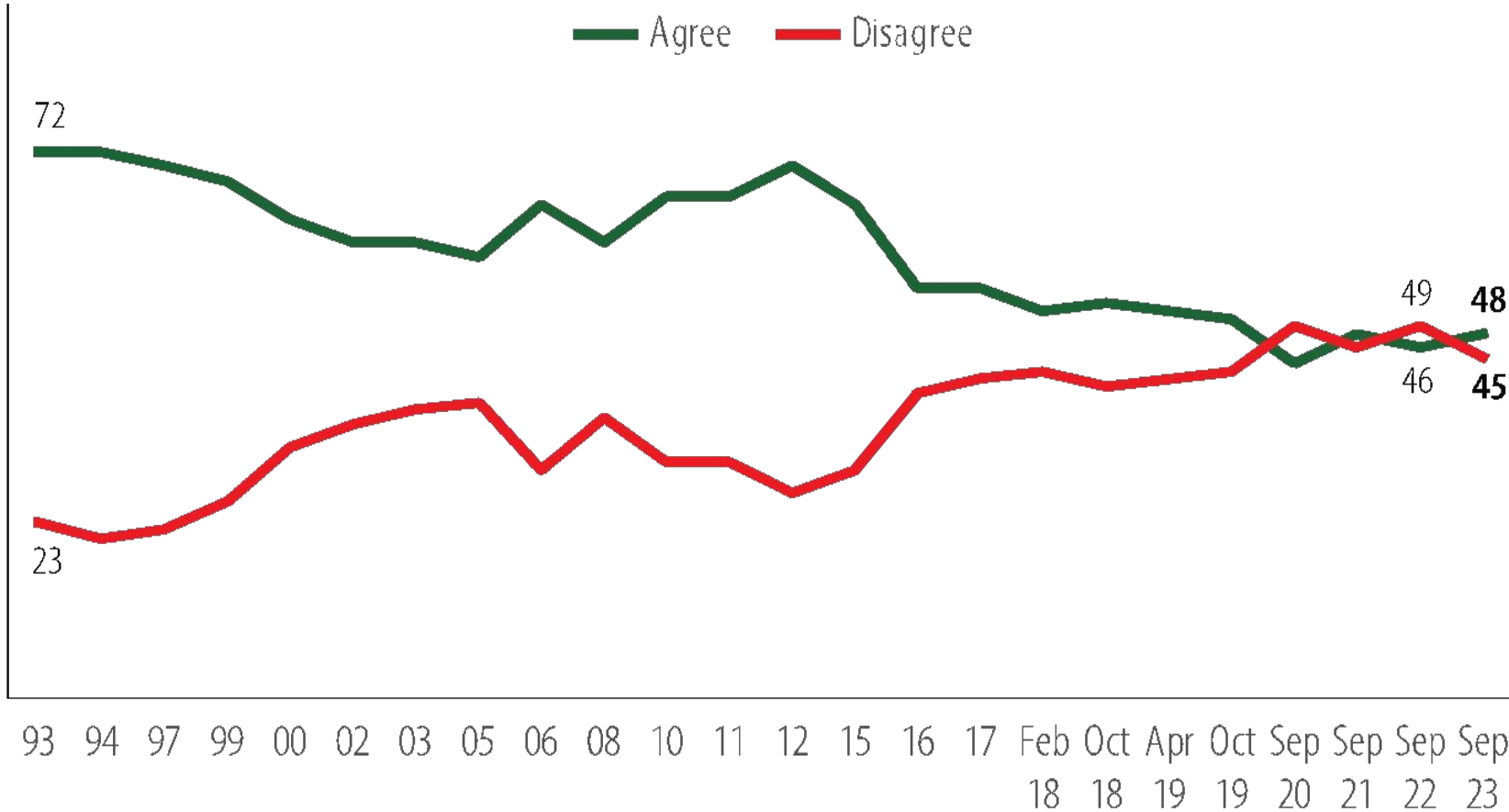
1993 – 2023



Opinions about immigrant integration remain mixed but stable

Agree – Disagree: *Too many immigrants are not adopting Canadians values.*

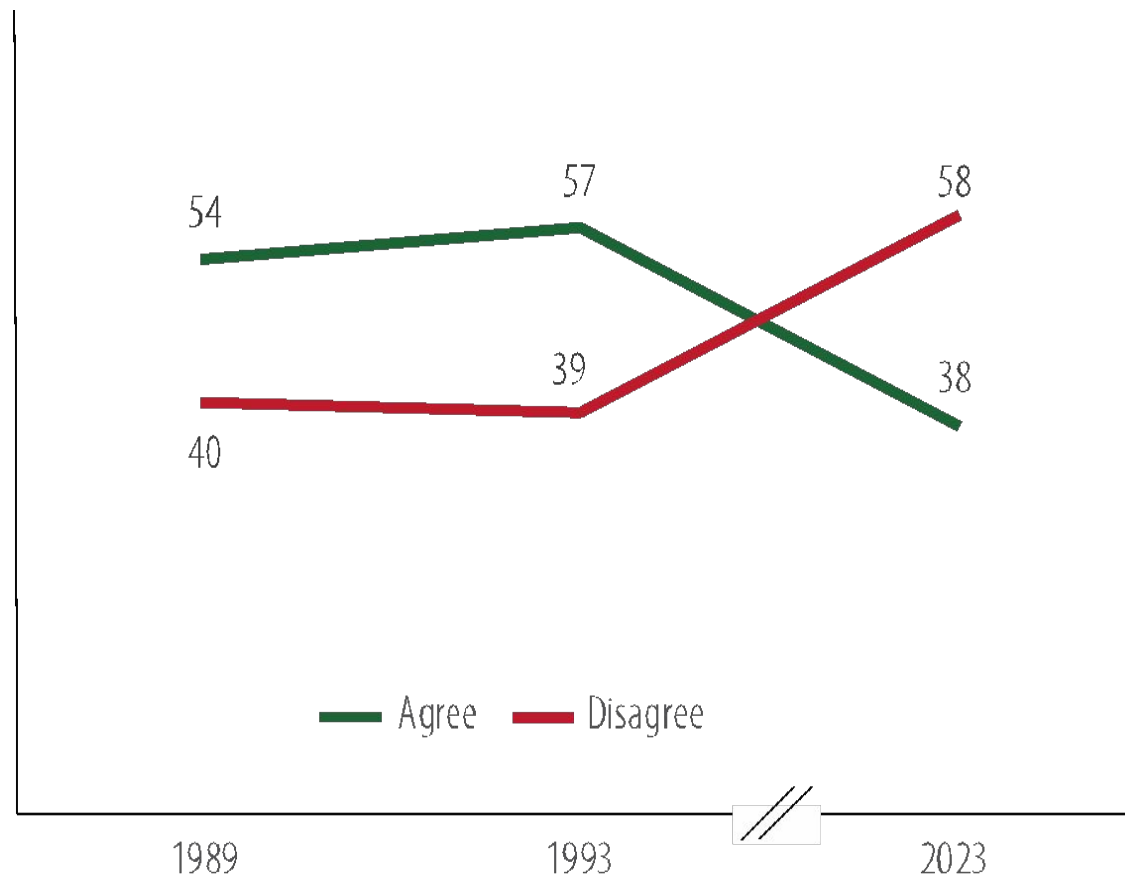
1993 – 2023



Quebecers have become more comfortable with immigration over time

Agree – Disagree: *Immigration tends to threaten Quebec culture.*

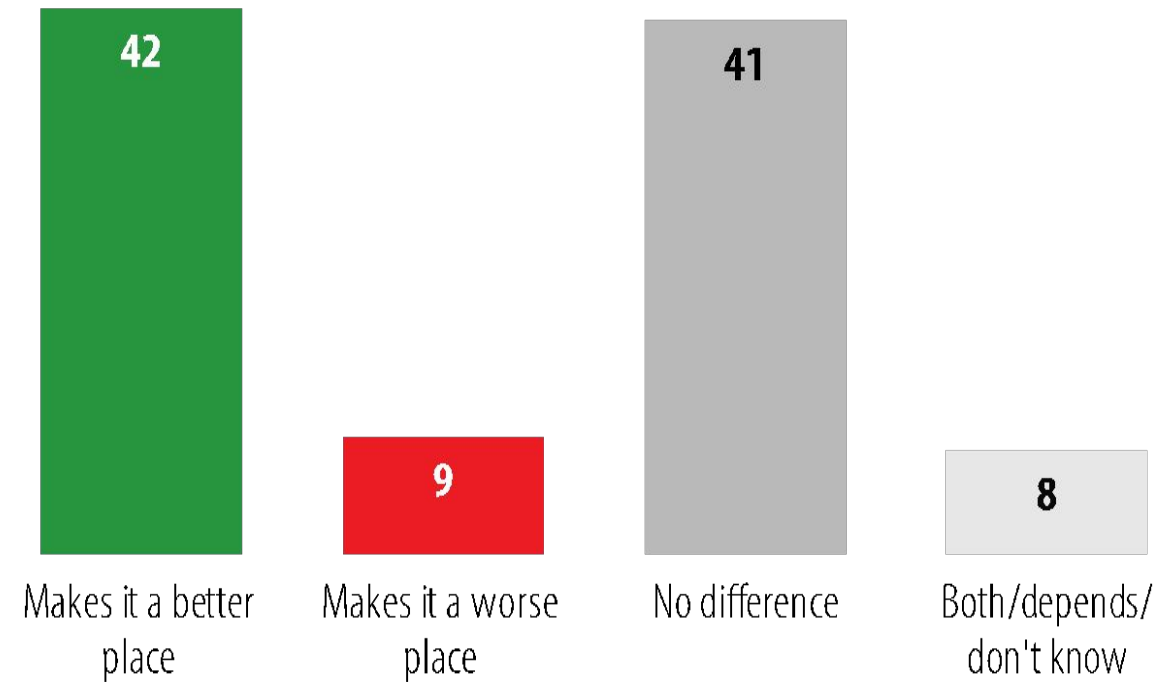
1989 – 2023 Quebec



Canadians are mostly positive about immigrants where they live

What, on balance, is the effect of immigration on your own local community?

2023



Conclusions

- Dramatic shift in public opinion over the past year – more Canadians are now questioning current immigration levels
- Driven by concerns about newcomers contributing to the housing crisis, but other factors as well
- Shift is evident across the population
- No comparable change in Canadians' views about immigrants and what they contribute to the country and their communities

Implications

- The public narrative around immigration and diversity in Canada is changing
- Canadians are focusing more on how many newcomers, separately from who they are and where they come from: *Capacity vs. Character*
- Essential to keep this distinction in mind in understanding public sentiment, and in future policy and communications



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