

Title: Canadian Attitudes Towards Immigration: Individual and Contextual Influences

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**Note: A significantly revised version of this paper is forthcoming in the journal International Migration Review with the title “No Thanks We’re Full: Individual characteristics, national context, and changing attitudes toward immigration”*

Research Question: How do individual and contextual characteristics affect attitudes towards immigration?

Importance: Although there are a lot of national and cross-national studies of attitudes towards immigration most studies only consider attitudes at one point in time. In this paper we hold country constant and consider attitudes spanning a 25 year time period between 1975 and 2000. We also use a new methodology (most studies treat attitudes on a continuum ranging from anti to pro-immigration) that treats attitudes as three qualitatively different categories (want immigration levels to decrease, stay the same or increase).

Research Findings: The greatest opposition to immigration was in 1982 – which was the largest recession during the past decades. In the most recent period we see the greatest support for immigration. Our results also show that support for immigration increases with education and with minority status (in the form of non-majority first language and religion). We also find that some personal characteristics (such as intending to vote Liberal and provincial region) are associated with pro-immigration attitudes but not anti-immigration attitudes.

Implications: As long as the economy is strong (or at least improving) we will continue to see people becoming more supportive of immigration. The size of the incoming immigrant population does not seem to matter. However, caution should be exercised about increasing immigration during economic downturns. Policy-makers should also consider whether they are interested in preventing anti-immigration attitudes or whether they want to increase pro-immigration attitudes. Our results suggest that these are not binary opposites.