

How should we interpret public opinion data about immigration?

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Abstract

In the past year, many surveys have agreed that Canadians' attitudes toward immigration have shifted, becoming much more negative. But beyond that, there are some conflicting signals. Different survey questions produce different levels of agreement or disagreement. And there are competing interpretations about the extent to which Canada's "social consensus" on the issue has broken down, or about the larger significance of the shift in opinions on immigration for support for diversity and multiculturalism. How can we make best sense of the collection of surveys, questions and findings? Do surveys inform or confuse the public debate? And what role should studies of public opinion play in public policy making?

Biography

Andrew Parkin is the Executive Director of the Environics Institute for Survey Research, a not-for-profit agency created in 2006 to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. Prior to joining the Institute, Andrew served as the Director of the Mowat Centre and Associate Professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, Director General of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), Associate Executive Director and Director of Research and Program Development at the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, and Co-Director of the Centre for Research and Information on Canada.