

IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Report of survey findings
March 15, 2023

ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH



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INTRODUCTION

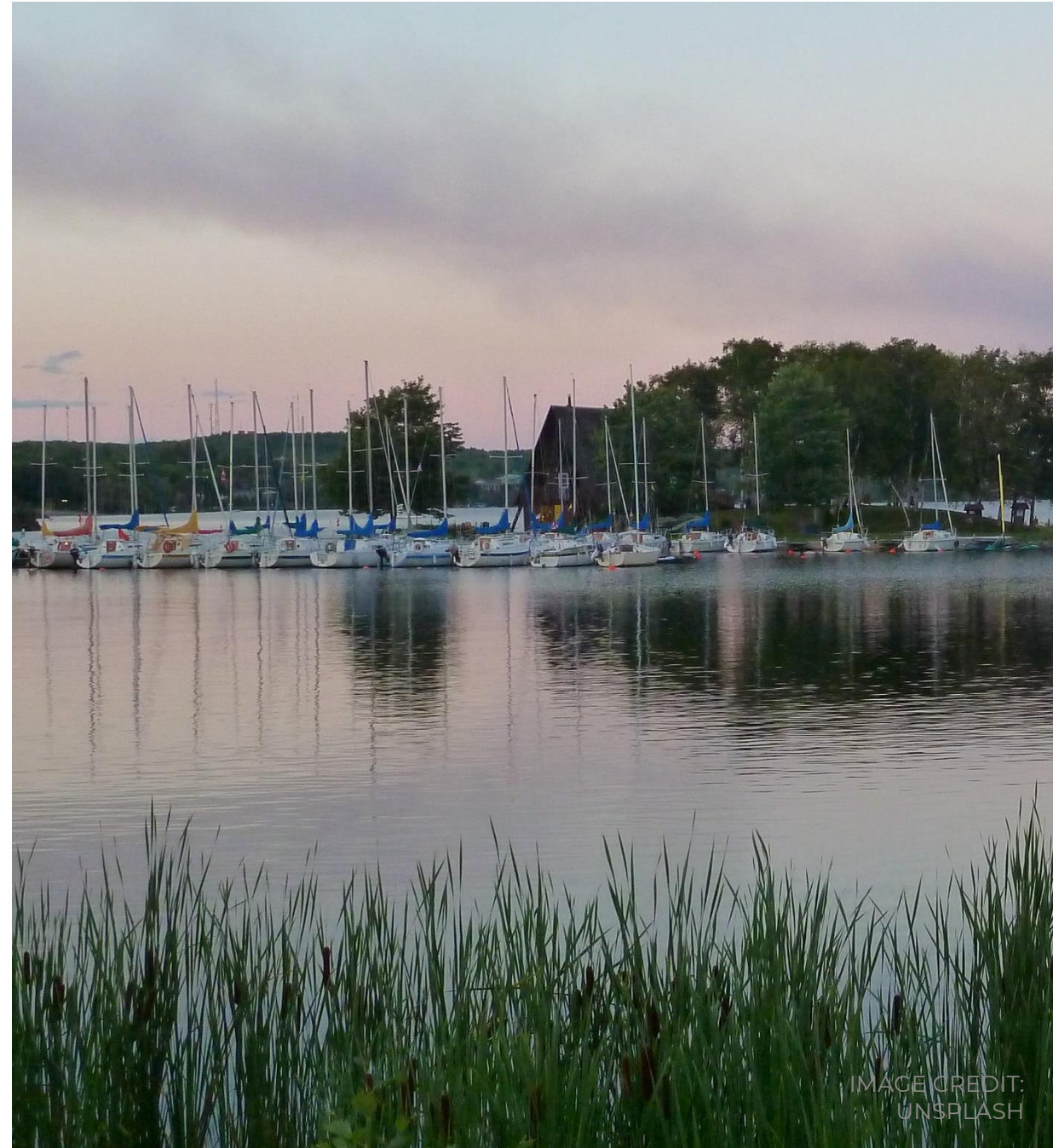
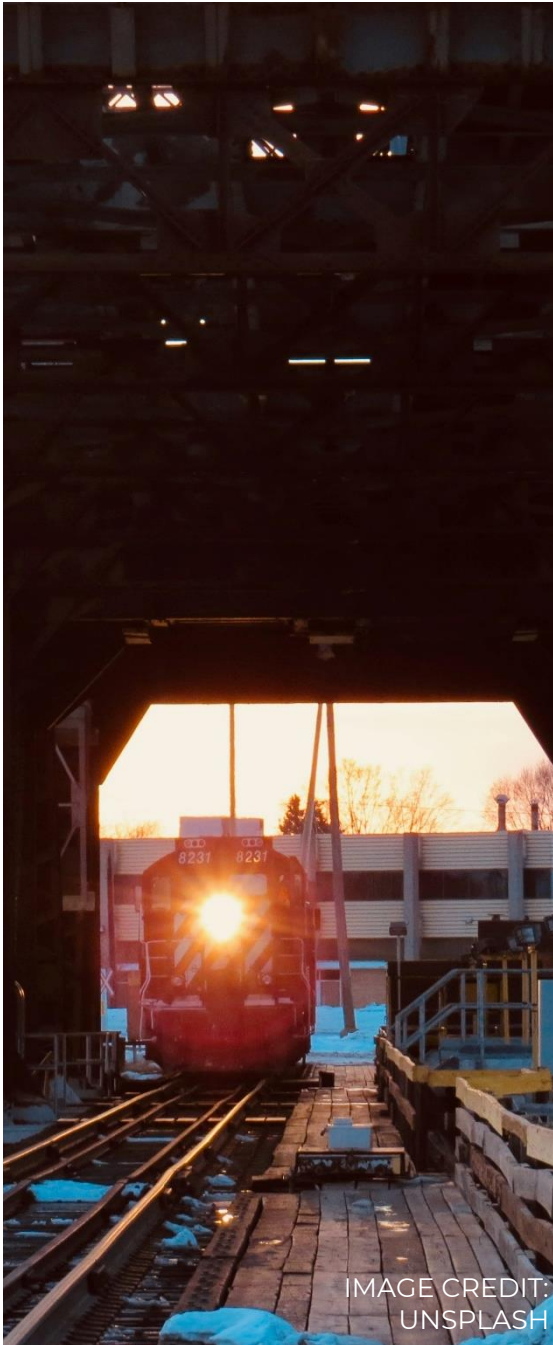


IMAGE CREDIT:
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Objectives

The Northern Policy Institute (NPI) engaged Environics Research to gather opinions from residents in the 'Big Five' Northern Ontario communities: Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Timmins, and North Bay. These communities were selected to participate in the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)'s Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot project, and they are expected to see an influx of new skilled immigrants over the next several years.

This is the third study in a series being conducted over six years, to measure resident attitudes toward immigration and immigrants. Along with telephone surveys conducted by Environics Research, NPI is conducting its own additional research to complement these findings.



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Methodology



Type: 9-minute random telephone survey, landline and cellphone.



Respondents: Adults aged 18+ living in the geographic areas of interest: Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Timmins, and North Bay. Quotas of n=250 were set in each of the 5 cities. Data were weighted by city, age, and gender according to 2016 Census figures.



Total Sample Size: n=1,250



Timing: Data collected between February 4 – February 25, 2023.



Comparison: Results are compared to Year 1 (2021) of this study, labelled as tracking. Where applicable, results are also compared with the Environics Institute's Focus Canada 2020 and Focus Canada 2022 data. These were surveys of 2,000 Canadians conducted by telephone in fall 2020 and 2022.



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About This Report

This report shows results for the 2023 Immigration Attitudes in Northern Ontario survey, broken down by city and key demographics.

Due to rounding, results may not add up to 100%. Additionally, data points equal or less than 3% are not labelled.

Statistical testing is indicated with green and orange ovals. A green oval indicates a result that is significantly higher than other groups, while an orange oval indicates a significantly lower result. Differences between groups are only noted when statistically significant.

Year-over-year differences are indicated with arrows.

Complete data tables with further breakdowns are provided under separate cover.

IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES



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General views on immigration

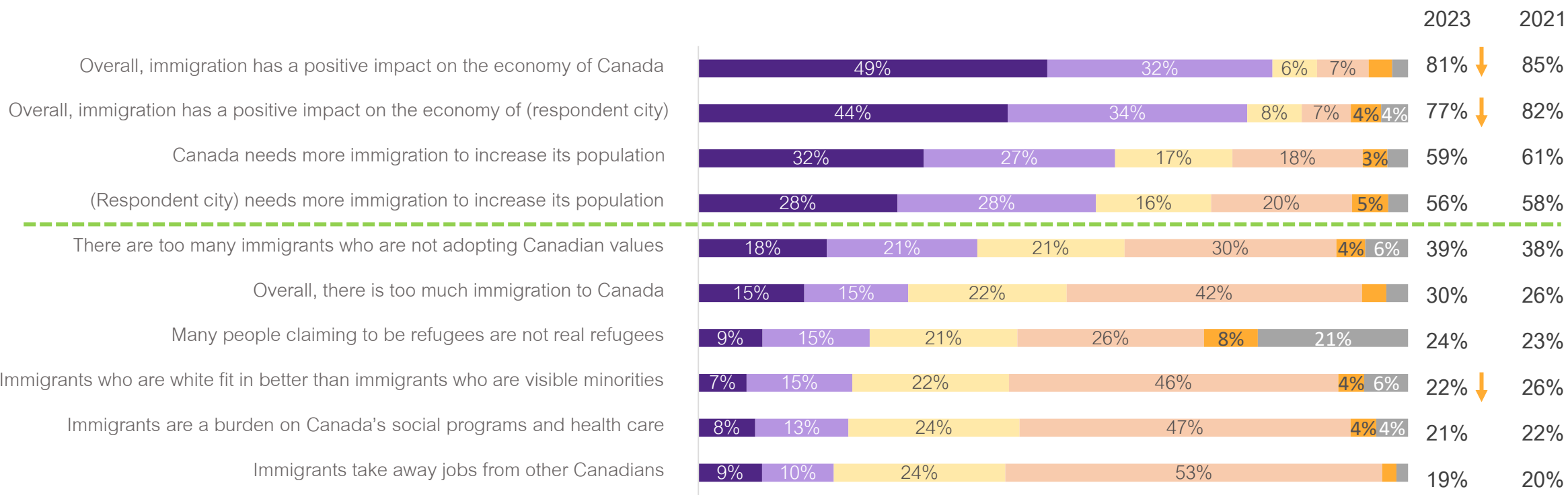
- Northern Ontario residents were asked to state their agreement with ten different attitudinal statements about immigration. The statements, shown at random, contain a mix of positive and negative sentiments about immigration.
- Similar to the 2021 survey results, majorities of Northern Ontario residents (ranging from 56% to 81%) agree with the positive statements about immigration's benefits. 81 percent of residents agree that immigration has a positive effect on Canada's economy, and 77 percent agree it benefits the economy in their own city. Smaller proportions of residents agree with statements that are more negative or critical toward immigration and immigrants (between 19% and 39%).
- Results changed only slightly between 2021 and 2023, with overall agreement across positive statements down between two and five percentage points, and an increase of four percentage points when it comes to whether there is too much immigration to Canada.
- Some differences are noted across demographic groups, with Thunder Bay residents are generally more positive about immigration than those in Timmins and Sudbury.
- Comparing with Focus Canada 2022, respondents in Northern Ontario are less likely than Canadians overall to feel immigration has a positive impact on the Canadian economy and more likely to feel there is too much immigration to Canada.

General views on immigration

Northern Ontario residents remain positive toward immigration, with majorities agreeing it has a positive economic impact on Canada and their home community, and more than half agreeing more immigration is needed to increase the population. Agreement that immigration has a positive impact has decreased significantly since 2021, particularly at the community level. This year, respondents are less likely to feel immigrants who are white just fit in better.

Q4. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

% Agree



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Don't know / not sure

Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

General views - by city

Thunder Bay residents are more likely to agree that immigration has a positive impact on their economy and that Canada needs more immigration, while also less likely to agree there are too many immigrants not adopting Canadian values and too much immigration in general. Sudbury and Timmins residents are less likely to agree that their home communities need immigration, and more likely to feel immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians.

Q4. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)	Total	Thunder Bay	Sault Ste. Marie	Sudbury	Timmins	North Bay
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada	81%	85%	81%	77%	80%	83%
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of (respondent city)	77%	84%	76%	73%	79%	75%
Canada needs more immigration to increase its population	59%	68%	57%	53%	54%	60%
(Respondent city) needs more immigration to increase its population	56%	65%	61%	49%	44%	59%
There are too many immigrants who are not adopting Canadian values	39%	32%	42%	44%	39%	39%
Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada	30%	21%	28%	34%	36%	33%
Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees	24%	22%	22%	27%	22%	25%
Immigrants who are white fit in better than immigrants who are visible minorities	22%	23%	16%	24%	18%	23%
Immigrants are a burden on Canada's social programs and health care	21%	14%	21%	27%	19%	20%
Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians	19%	14%	20%	21%	26%	18%

Base: All respondents (n=1,250)

Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals denote results that are significantly lower.

General views - by age and gender

Older residents (55+) are more likely to feel that Canada and their home community need more immigration to increase population, but they are also more likely to believe many refugee claimants are not real refugees, and to feel immigrants are a burden on Canada’s social programs. Men and women are generally similar in their views, with the exception that men are more likely to agree that many refugee claimants are not real refugees.

Q4. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)	Total	<35	35 to 54	55+	Male	Female
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada	81%	77%	79%	84%	79%	83%
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of (respondent city)	77%	78%	76%	78%	77%	78%
Canada needs more immigration to increase its population	59%	51%	52%	69%	62%	56%
(Respondent city) needs more immigration to increase its population	56%	50%	54%	61%	58%	54%
There are too many immigrants who are not adopting Canadian values	39%	35%	37%	43%	43%	36%
Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada	30%	34%	32%	25%	31%	28%
Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees	24%	20%	23%	28%	30%	19%
Immigrants who are white fit in better than immigrants who are visible minorities	22%	20%	22%	23%	20%	23%
Immigrants are a burden on Canada’s social programs and health care	21%	13%	22%	25%	22%	21%
Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians	19%	21%	19%	18%	19%	20%

Base: All respondents (n=1,250)

Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals denote results that are significantly lower.

General views – Tracking by city (1 of 2)

Compared to 2021, higher proportions of Thunder Bay residents agree with the positive statements about immigration, while in Sudbury, residents are less like to agree with positive statements in 2023. Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, and North Bay also saw declines on some positive statements.

Q4. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)	Total		Thunder Bay		Sault Ste. Marie		Sudbury		Timmins		North Bay	
	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada	81% ↓	85%	85% ↑	82%	81% ↓	86%	77% ↓	87%	80% ↓	87%	83%	85%
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of (respondent city)	77% ↓	82%	84% ↑	78%	76% ↓	82%	73% ↓	84%	79%	81%	75% ↓	81%
Canada needs more immigration to increase its population	59%	61%	68% ↑	63%	57%	59%	53% ↓	62%	54%	53%	60%	60%
(Respondent city) needs more immigration to increase its population	56%	58%	65% ↑	60%	61%	59%	49% ↓	59%	44% ↓	58%	59% ↑	55%

Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

General views – Tracking by city (2 of 2)

For the negative statements about immigration, some cities saw increases and decreases in agreement with some statements compared to 2023. Of note, the proportion who agree there is too much immigration to Canada increased in three cities (Sudbury, Timmins, North Bay), while the proportion who agree that white immigrants fit in better declined in three cities (Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, North Bay).

Q4. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)	Total		Thunder Bay		Sault Ste. Marie		Sudbury		Timmins		North Bay	
	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021
There are too many immigrants who are not adopting Canadian values	39%	38%	32%	33%	42% ↑	38%	44%	41%	39% ↓	46%	39% ↑	34%
Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada	30%	26%	21% ↓	25%	28%	28%	34% ↑	27%	36% ↑	32%	33% ↑	22%
Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees	24%	23%	22%	20%	22% ↓	28%	27%	24%	22% ↓	31%	25% ↑	20%
Immigrants who are white fit in better than immigrants who are visible minorities	22% ↓	26%	23%	26%	16% ↓	27%	24%	23%	18% ↓	27%	23% ↓	28%
Immigrants are a burden on Canada's social programs and health care	21%	20%	14% ↓	18%	21% ↓	25%	27% ↑	20%	19%	21%	20%	21%
Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians	19%	22%	14% ↓	21%	20%	22%	21%	21%	26%	24%	18% ↓	22%

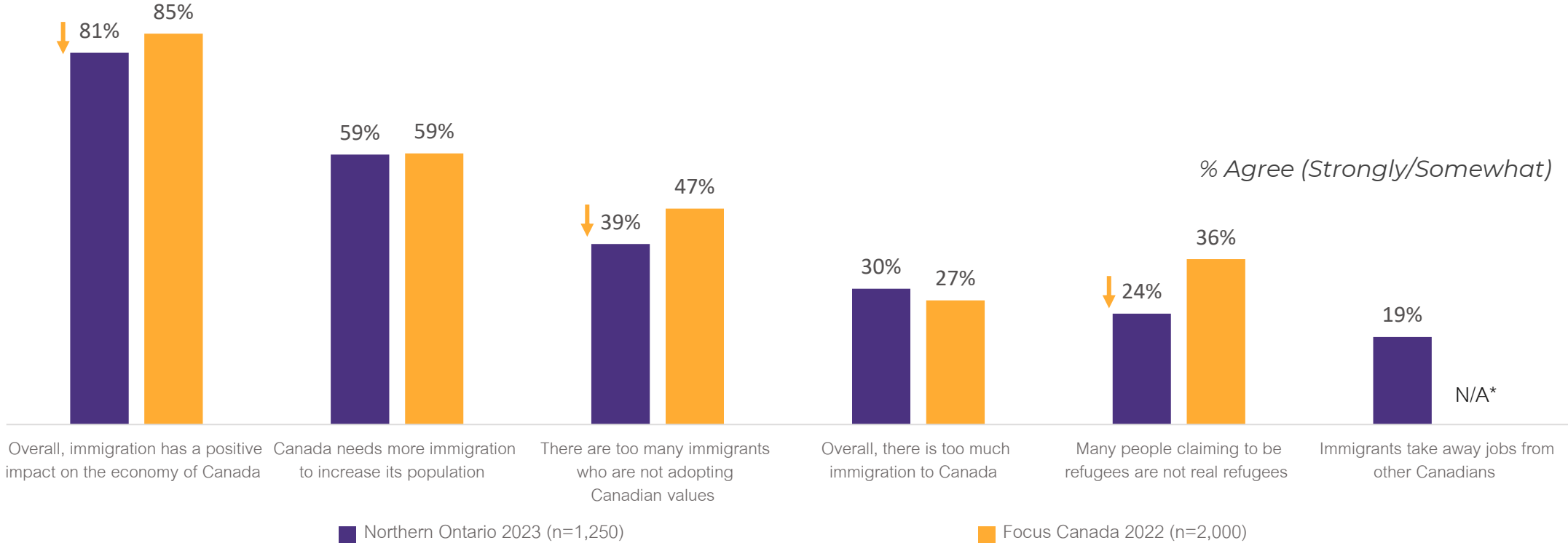
Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

General views – National Comparison

Residents in Northern Ontario are less likely to agree that immigration has a positive impact on the Canadian economy compared to Canadians as a whole, but they are also less likely to feel there are too many immigrants not adopting Canadian values and that many refugee claimants are not real refugees. Other results are similar between Northern Ontario residents and the Canadian population.

Q4. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:



Base: All respondents

Note: Green arrows denote 2023 Northern ON result's that are significantly higher than 2022 Focus Canada results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

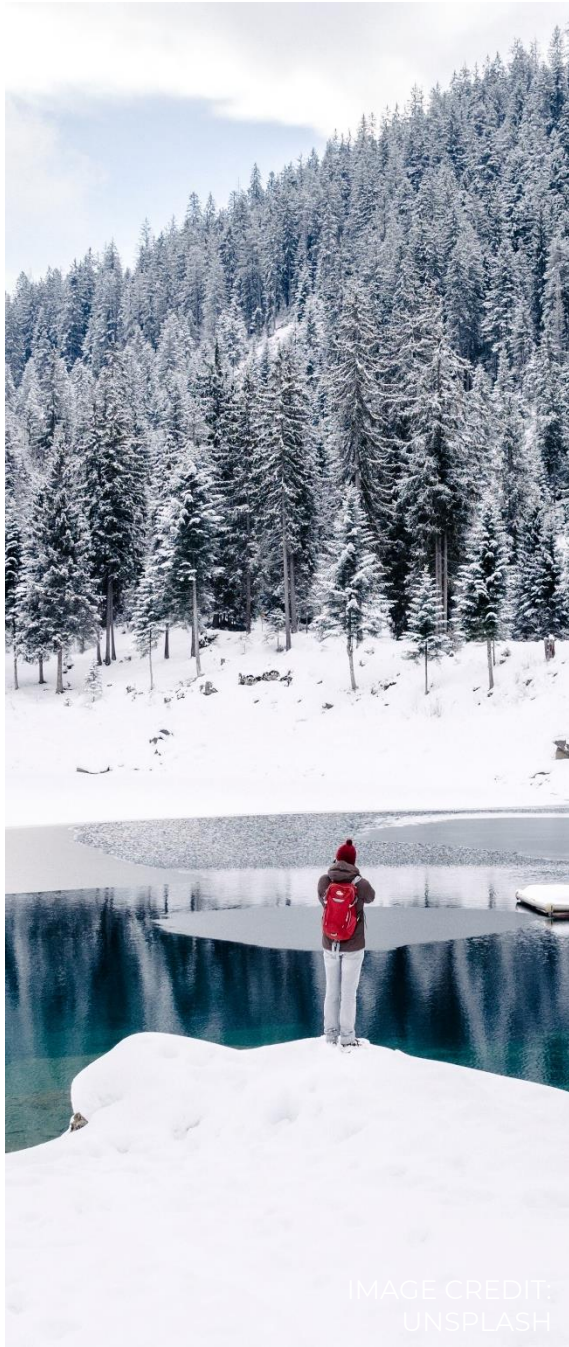


IMAGE CREDIT:
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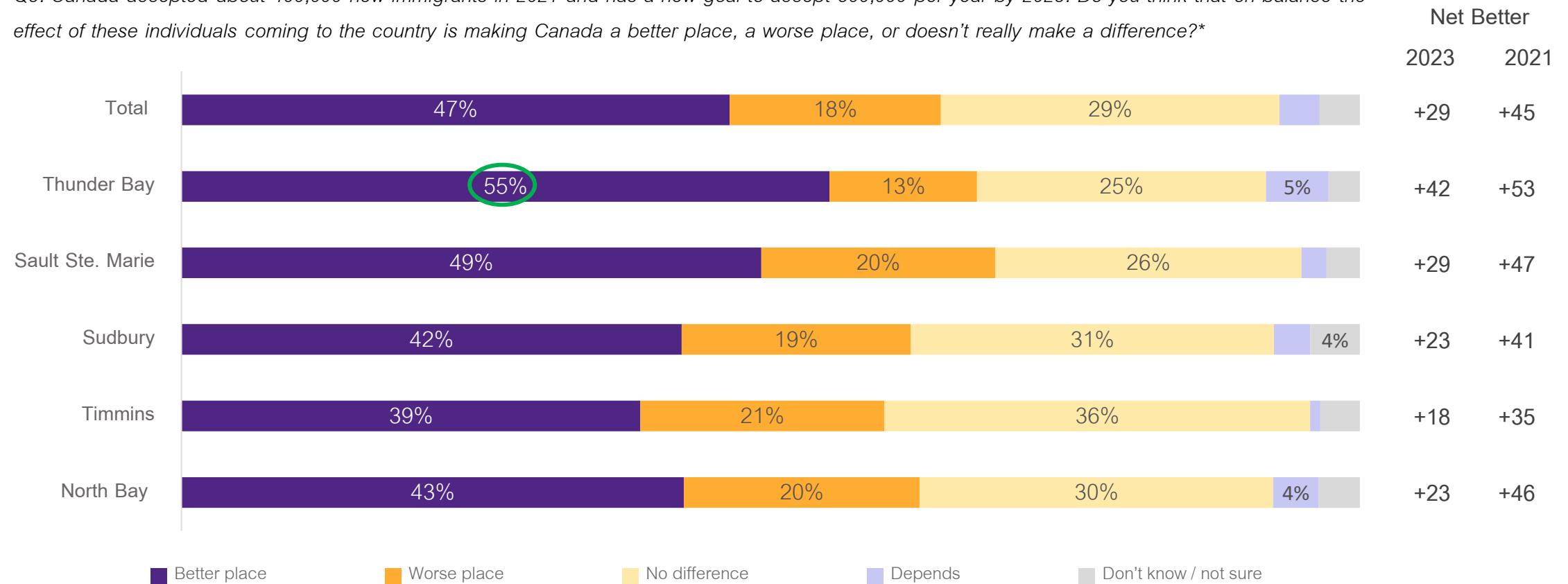
Immigration Perceptions

- In 2023, Northern Ontario residents are split on whether immigration plays a positive or negative role in Canada, with just under half (47%) saying that, on balance, Canada is a better place for it. This number is down compared to 2021 when 55 percent felt this way. Residents of Thunder Bay feel more positively about immigration overall.
- Larger proportions of Sault Ste. Marie (88%) and Timmins (94%) say they have noticed an increase in immigrant over the past three years.
- The proportion in favour of bringing in skilled immigrants (89%) is 14 points higher than those who favour bringing in unskilled immigrants (75%). Views about skilled and unskilled immigrants are generally uniform across cities and demographic groups.
- About four in ten (39%) Northern Ontario residents say they interact with new immigrants often, an increase of 11 points compared to the 2021 survey (28%). Residents in Timmins are most likely to say they often interact with new immigrants, at 47 percent.
- When it comes to cultural or ethnic events in the community Thunder Bay stands out again, with half of percent of residents saying they have attended such an event in the past three years; in the other cities attendance ranges from 41 to 47 percent, which is higher than in 2021.

Perceived impact of immigration

Just under half of Northern residents feel that, on balance, immigrants make Canada a better place. Residents in Thunder Bay are the most positive about the impact of immigration in Canada. Overall, the percentage of Northern Ontario residents who feel immigrants make Canada a better place has decreased since 2021.

Q5. Canada accepted about 400,000 new immigrants in 2021 and has a new goal to accept 500,000 per year by 2025. Do you think that on balance the effect of these individuals coming to the country is making Canada a better place, a worse place, or doesn't really make a difference?*



Base: All respondents (n=1,250)

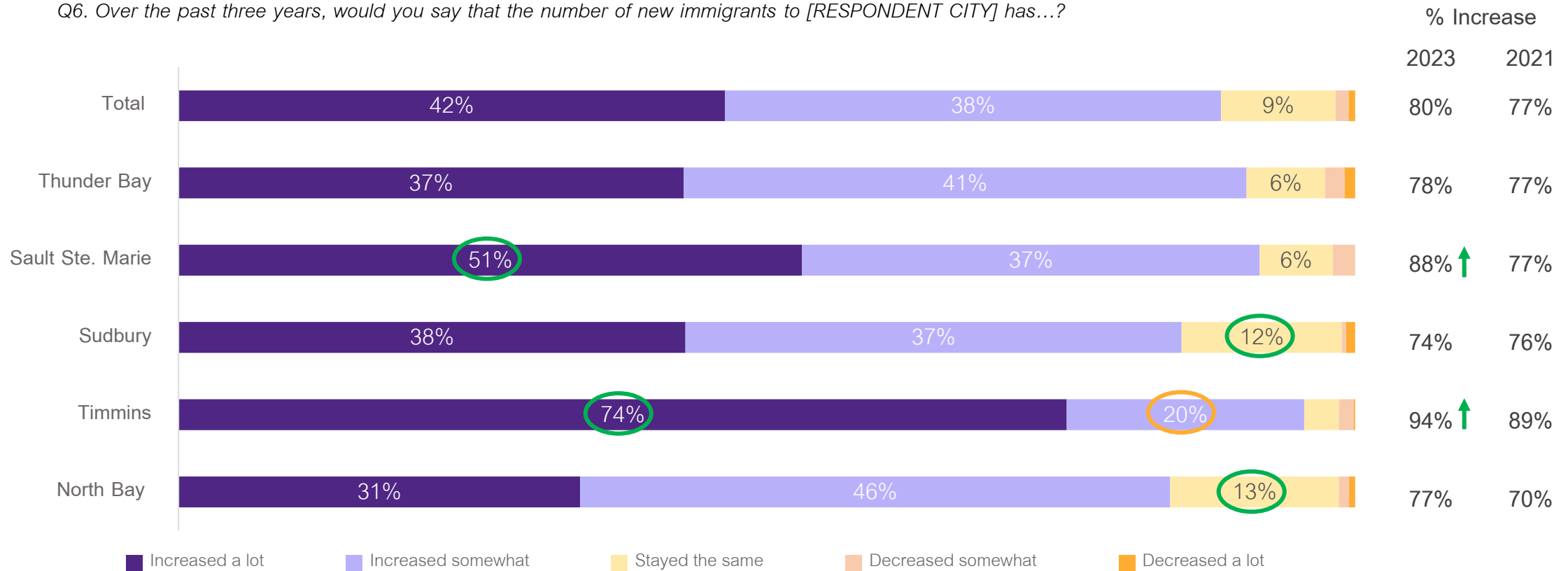
Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups.

*Question wording changed in 2023.

Perceived influx of new immigrants

Eight in ten Northern Ontario residents have noticed an increase in new immigrants to their city in the past three years; this is highest in Timmins (94%) and Sault Ste. Marie (88%). Comparing to 2021, the proportion of residents seeing an increase of new immigrants has increased in Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins.

Q6. Over the past three years, would you say that the number of new immigrants to [RESPONDENT CITY] has...?



Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

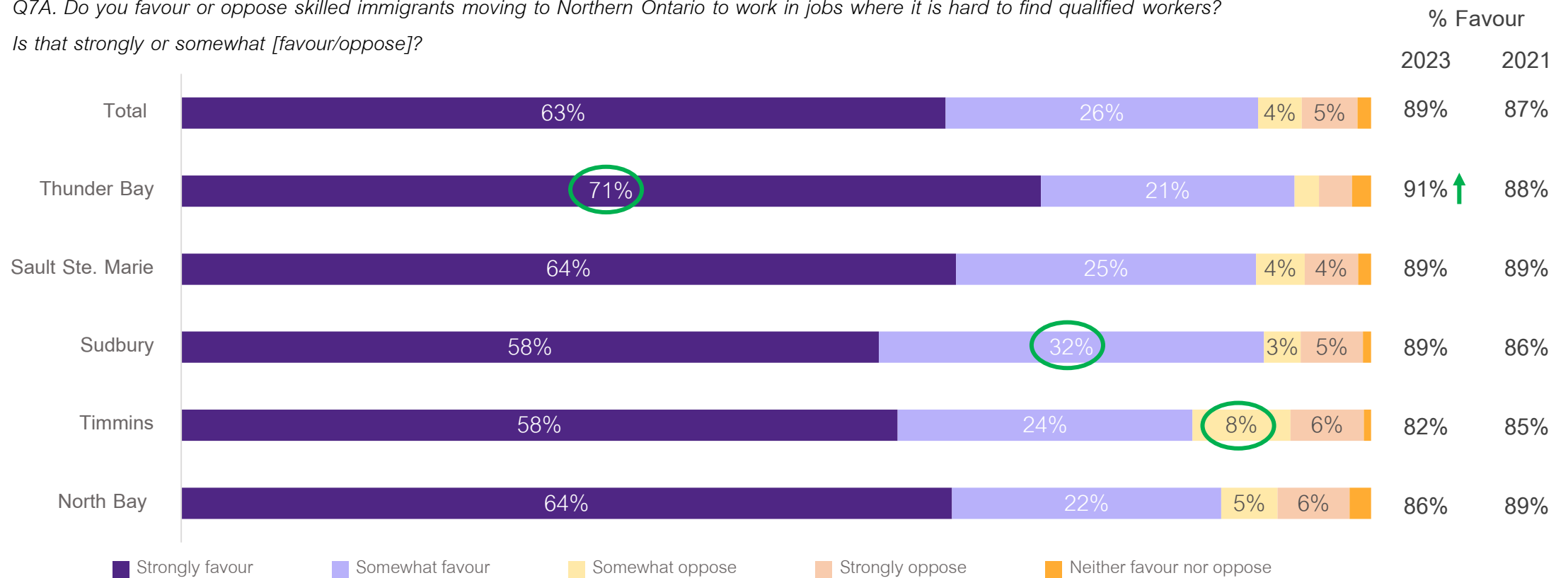
Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals denote results that are significantly lower. Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

Views on skilled immigrants

Strong majorities of residents in all five cities are in favour of skilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario to fill jobs where qualified workers are in short supply. Thunder Bay residents in particular are likely to favour this. Results slightly changed from 2021, with higher levels in favour in 2023 overall and specifically in Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

Q7A. Do you favour or oppose skilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario to work in jobs where it is hard to find qualified workers?

Is that strongly or somewhat [favour/oppose]?

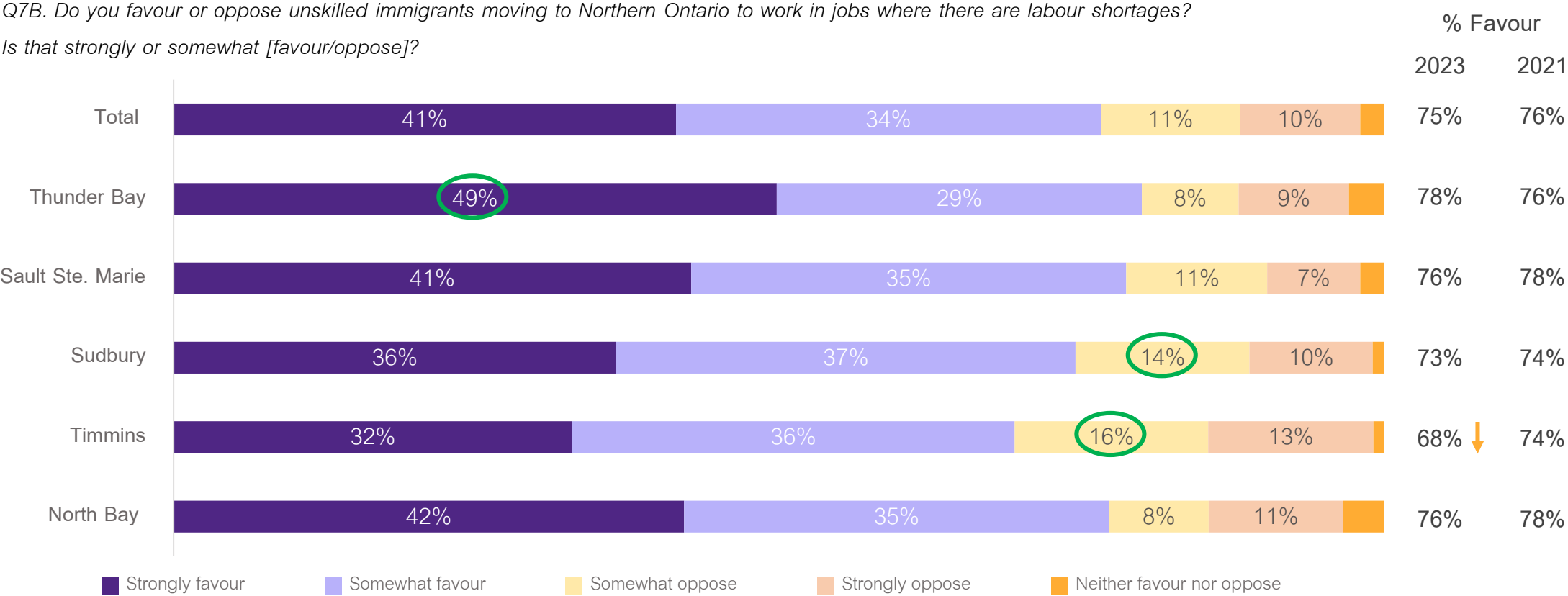


Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals denote results that are significantly lower. Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

Views on unskilled immigrants

Three-quarters of Northern Ontario residents favour unskilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario to help with labour shortages. While this is a strong majority, it is 14 points lower compared to the proportion who favour skilled immigrants. Again, Thunder Bay residents are most likely to favour this. Results for most cities are similar compared to 2021; Timmins is the exception, with a 6 point decline.



Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)
 Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals denote results that are significantly lower. Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

Skilled/unskilled immigrants - 2021 comparison

Comparing levels of support for skilled and unskilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario, the difference in support ranges from 10 to 17 points in each city. Still, support for bringing either type of immigrant to Northern Ontario is very high across all cities. In 2023, support for both skilled and unskilled immigrants decreased in Timmins and North Bay.

Q7A. Do you favour or oppose skilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario to work in jobs where it is hard to find qualified workers?

Q7B. Do you favour or oppose unskilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario to work in jobs where there are labour shortages?

% Favour (Strongly/Somewhat)	Total		Thunder Bay		Sault Ste. Marie		Sudbury		Timmins		North Bay	
	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021
% Favour skilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario	89%	89%	91%	92%	89%	90%	89%	88%	82%↓	88%	86%↓	90%
% Favour unskilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario	75%	78%	78%	79%	76%↓	82%	73%	75%	68%↓	77%	76%↓	82%
Difference	14 pts	11 pts	13 pts	13 pts	13 pts	8 pts	17 pts	13 pts	14 pts	11 pts	10 pts	8 pts

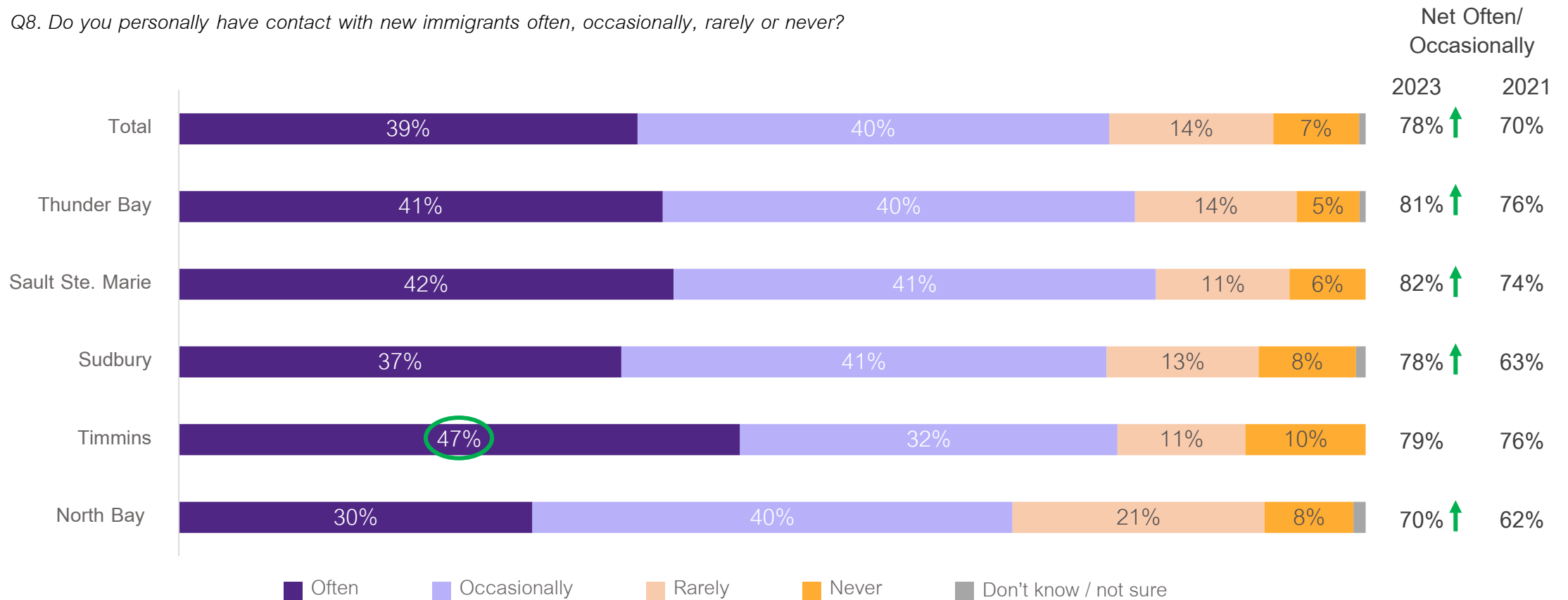
Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

Relationship/contact with new immigrants

Nearly eight in ten Northern Ontario residents overall say they often or occasionally have contact with new immigrants, ranging from a low of 70 percent in North Bay to 82 percent in Sault Ste. Marie. These numbers have increased between 2021 and 2023 in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and North Bay.

Q8. Do you personally have contact with new immigrants often, occasionally, rarely or never?



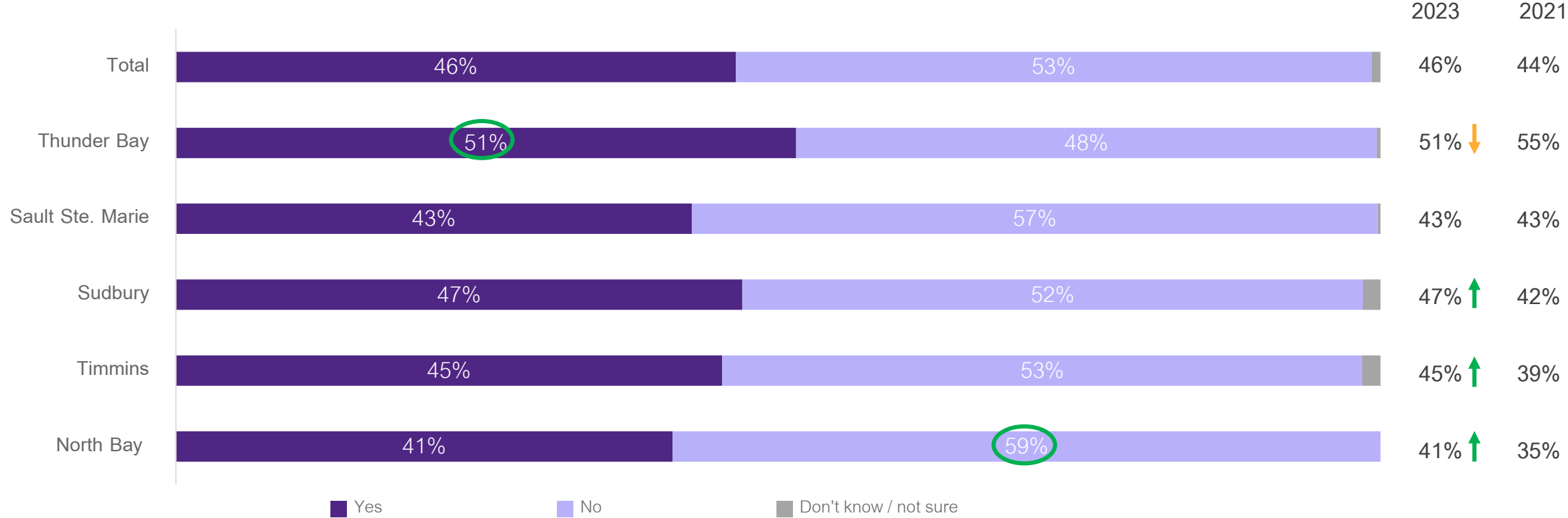
Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals denote results that are significantly lower. Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

Attendance at cultural events

Nearly half of Northern Ontario residents say they've attended an ethnic or cultural event in the past three years. Compared to 2021, this proportion is higher in Sudbury, Timmins, and North Bay, and lower in Thunder Bay (though this city still has the highest proportion overall).

Q9. In the past three years, have you attended an event celebrating a different ethnicity or culture, such as a festival, music or dance performance, or holiday celebration?



Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals denote results that are significantly lower. Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

Immigration perceptions by age and gender

Across major demographic groups, there are few differences in overall perceptions. The only group that stands out is the age 55+ cohort. Northern Ontario residents in this age category are less likely to say that immigration to their community has increased recently, to have contact with new immigrants often, or to have attended ethnic or cultural events. They are more likely, though, to favour unskilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario.

	Total	<35	35 to 54	55+	Male	Female
Q5. Impact of immigration (% Better place)	47%	47%	48%	45%	48%	45%
Q6. Influx of immigrations to community (Net % Increased a lot / some)	80%	85%	84%	73%	78%	81%
Q7A. % Favour skilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario	89%	85%	89%	91%	87%	90%
Q7B. % Favour unskilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario	75%	72%	71%	80%	72%	77%
Q8. Contact with new immigrants (Net Often)	39%	43%	49%	28%	40%	37%
Q9. Attended cultural event in past 3 years (% Yes)	46%	56%	54%	35%	47%	46%

Base: All respondents (n=1,250)

Note: Green ovals denote results that are significantly higher than other groups, orange ovals significantly lower.

Immigration perceptions – Tracking

In 2023, Northern Ontario residents are less likely to feel immigration makes Canada a better place. They are also more likely to have noticed more immigrants to their community and have more contact with new immigrants. Other results remain similar between the two years.

	2023	2021
Q5. Impact of immigration (% Better place)	47% ↑	55%
Q6. Influx of immigrations to community (Net % Increased a lot / some)	80%	77%
Q7A. % Favour skilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario	89%	87%
Q7B. % Favour unskilled immigrants moving to Northern Ontario	75%	76%
Q8. Contact with new immigrants (Net Often)	39% ↑	28%
Q9. Attended cultural event in past 3 years (% Yes)	46%	44%

Base: All respondents (2023: n=1,250; 2021: n=1,250)

Note: Green arrows denote results that are significantly higher than 2021 results, orange arrows denote results that are significantly lower.

DEMOGRAPHICS



IMAGE CREDIT:
UNSPLASH

Demographics at a glance

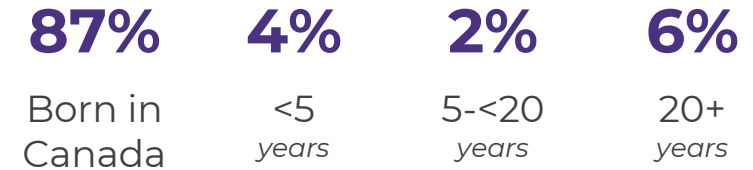
AGE



GENDER



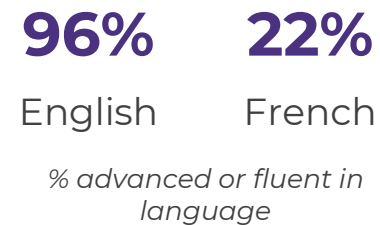
YEARS IN CANADA



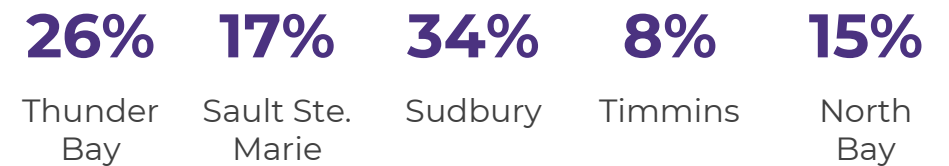
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



LANGUAGE



LOCATION



ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH

