



WORLD EDUCATION SERVICES

Trend Report:

Canada's Appeal to Prospective Immigrants in the Face of COVID-19

A WES Survey Series: April to August 2020

World Education Services | November 2020

Contents

Part I: Executive Summary	3
Part II: Context	5
Part III: Profile of Respondents	8
Part IV: Results	10
Part V: Appendix	22



Part I:

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has been felt deeply across the world, affecting everything from the micro of our day-to-day lives to the macro of the global economy. To understand the potential impact on prospective immigrants to Canada, World Education Services (WES) conducted surveys in April, June, and August 2020 with applicants for a WES academic credential evaluation for immigration purposes. Our goal was to understand how intentions to immigrate were changing over time as the pandemic unfolded.

As a designated provider of credential evaluations required by the Canadian government for applicants to Express Entry economic immigration programs, WES interacts with many thousands of prospective newcomers to Canada every week. This report summarizes the trends in responses over the period of April to August 2020 of WES applicants residing outside of Canada.

The 12- to 14-question surveys were distributed to a total of 480,822 individuals who had applied for a WES credential evaluation for immigration purposes between January 2018 and July 2020. The overall response rate was 7.7%; 27,930 valid responses were analyzed for this report. Complete survey metrics can be found in the appendix.

Key Findings

Interest in immigrating to Canada increased between April and August 2020 among prospective immigrants.

In April, 38% of prospective immigrants were more interested in immigrating despite COVID-19. That percentage increased to 46% in August, with an additional 48% indicating that the pandemic had no impact on their interest, while only 6% were less interested.

Prospective immigrants expect economic conditions in their home country to be worse than in Canada.

While prospective immigrants expect negative effects on economic conditions and the availability of jobs in their occupation or sector both in their home country and in Canada, more expect their home country to be negatively affected. Based on aggregate responses from all three survey distributions, almost half of the respondents (49%) indicated that an economic recession in their home country would make them more interested in immigrating to Canada or have no impact at all (32%). Almost half (48%) of the respondents indicated that an economic recession in Canada would have no impact on their immigration plans or would increase their interest (22%). These findings suggest that many prospective immigrants are more willing to endure a recession in Canada than in their home country.

The number of respondents planning to delay immigration dropped considerably between April and August.

In August, only 12% of respondents were considering delaying immigration to Canada, a drop from 32% in June. A large majority (62%) reported in August that they were unlikely to delay immigration to Canada because of COVID-19, compared with 35% in April and 47% in June. The number of respondents considering immigrating to a country other than Canada increased slightly from 7% in April to 12% in August.



Part II:

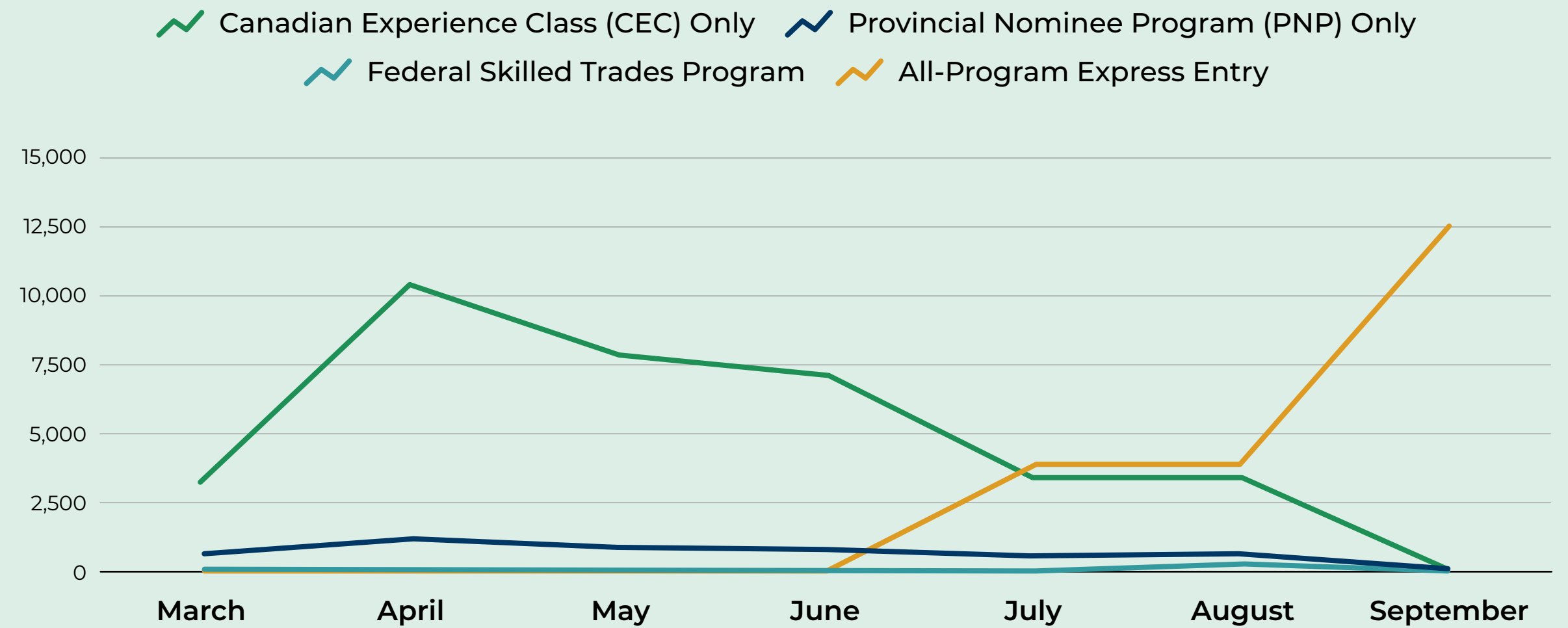
Context

The Changing Immigration Context Under COVID-19

Amid the changing global landscape, the Canadian government has remained committed to welcoming immigrants. On October 30, 2020, the federal government announced a new immigration levels plan for 2021-2023 to grow the population responsibly over the next three years. The new target for 2021 is 401,000 immigrants. These are the highest immigration level targets Canada has seen since 1913.

Since the spring, Canada's immigration priorities have focused on immigrants who support both long-term labour market needs and immediate economic recovery. In the early months of the crisis, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) shifted to issuing Invitations to Apply (ITA) almost exclusively to those already in Canada as temporary workers or students. As a result, the early Express Entry draws were for the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) and the Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP). From September, other streams were included as well. A small pilot pathway to permanent residence was created for asylum seekers working in health care, and a temporary policy was developed to allow those on visitor status with a Canadian job offer to apply for a work permit without having to leave the country. As of September 30, IRCC had issued a total of 78,350 ITAs, which is nearing the 2020 target of 85,800.

Express Entry Draws Month by Month 2020



Source: [IRCC: Express Entry rounds of invitations](#)

Annual Admissions Targets and ITAs



Source: CIC News, [Express Entry: Canada invites 4,200 immigration candidates](#)

Processing Times and Travel Restrictions

To contain the spread of the virus, Canada enacted travel restrictions which severely limited entry. Restrictions in place since March 18, 2020, have been extended several times. Mandatory self-isolation for 14 days is required of all travelers entering the country.

IRCC has focused on priority applications from permanent residents returning to the country, individuals with a work permit who work in or support essential services, and those in vulnerable groups. Application processing times have been affected. According to IRCC, the aim is to process permanent residence applications filed through the Express Entry system within six months; however, because of the coronavirus IRCC is currently unable to estimate processing times.

Groups exempted from travel restrictions:

- ✓ Canadian citizens
- ✓ Immediate family members
- ✓ Extended family members (for compassionate reasons)
- ✓ Permanent residents and their immediate family members
- ✓ Certain temporary foreign workers
- ✓ International students enrolled at a Canadian designated learning institution with an approved COVID-19 readiness plan



Part III:

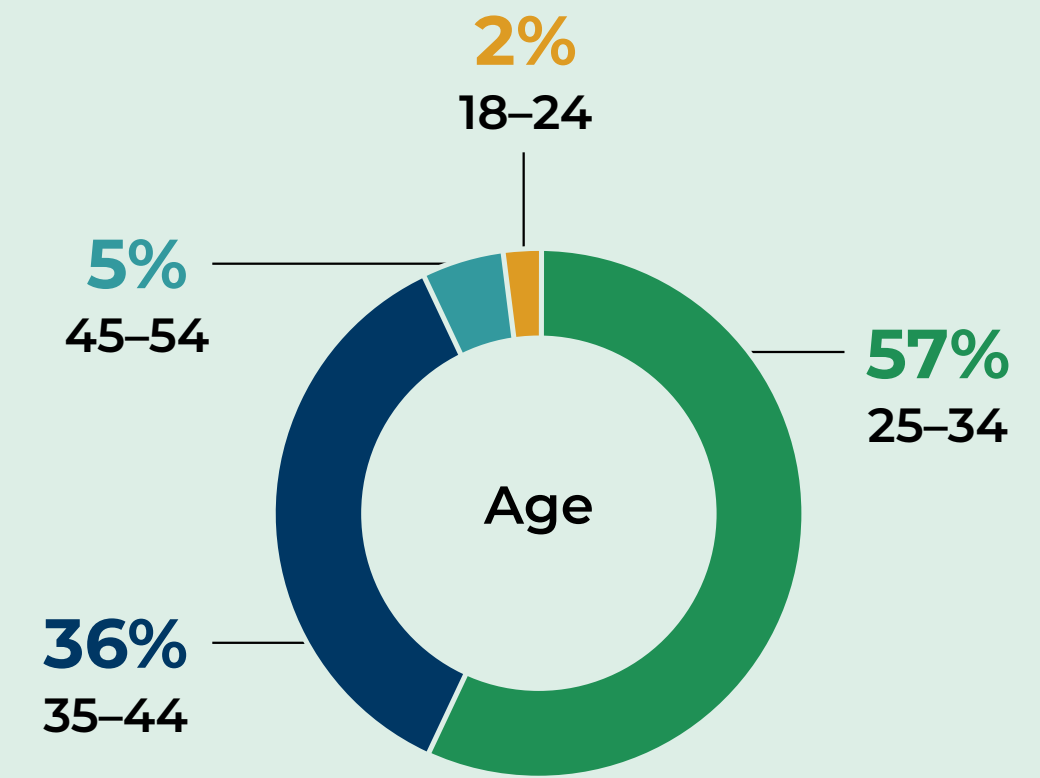
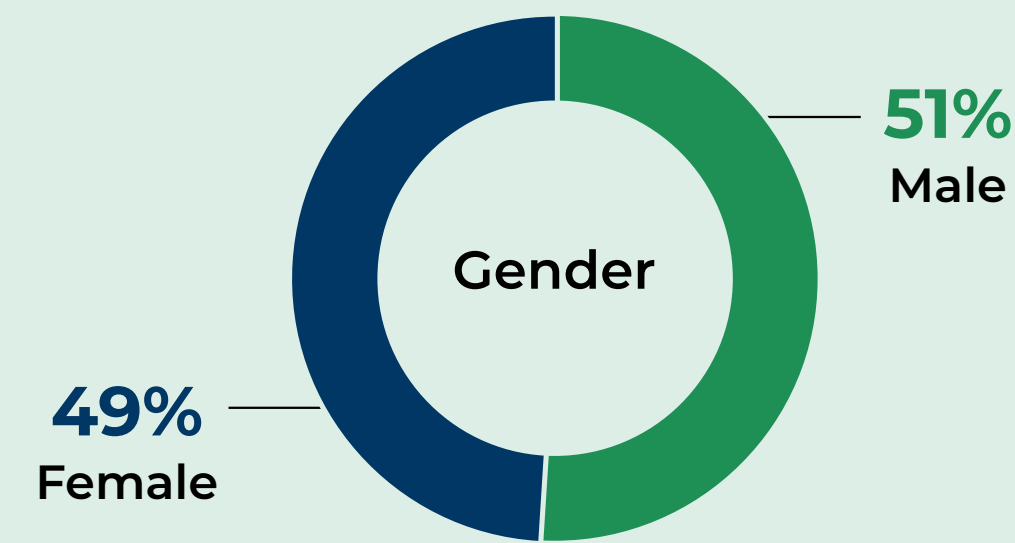
Profile of Respondents

Profile of Respondents

Respondents are WES applicants who obtained a credential evaluation for the purpose of applying to immigrate to Canada and were living outside of Canada at the time of the survey.

Citizens of India represent the highest percentage of respondents (46%). India is, in fact, the top country of citizenship of all applicants to WES for a credential evaluation for immigration purposes, as well as the top country of citizenship for those who received an ITA through Express Entry in 2019.

Respondents' top five countries of residence are India, Nigeria, United Arab Emirates, United States, and the Philippines. This difference between country of citizenship and country of residence suggests that some applicants originally from India and Nigeria were working or studying in the Gulf region or the United States when they responded to the survey.



Country of Citizenship



25% Other

Country of Residence



28% Other

Note: Country of Citizenship was asked in the June and August survey distributions only.



Part IV:

Results

Part IV: Results

Expectations About the Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Canada and Abroad

Respondents continue to expect COVID-19 to have a more negative impact on economic conditions in their home country than in Canada

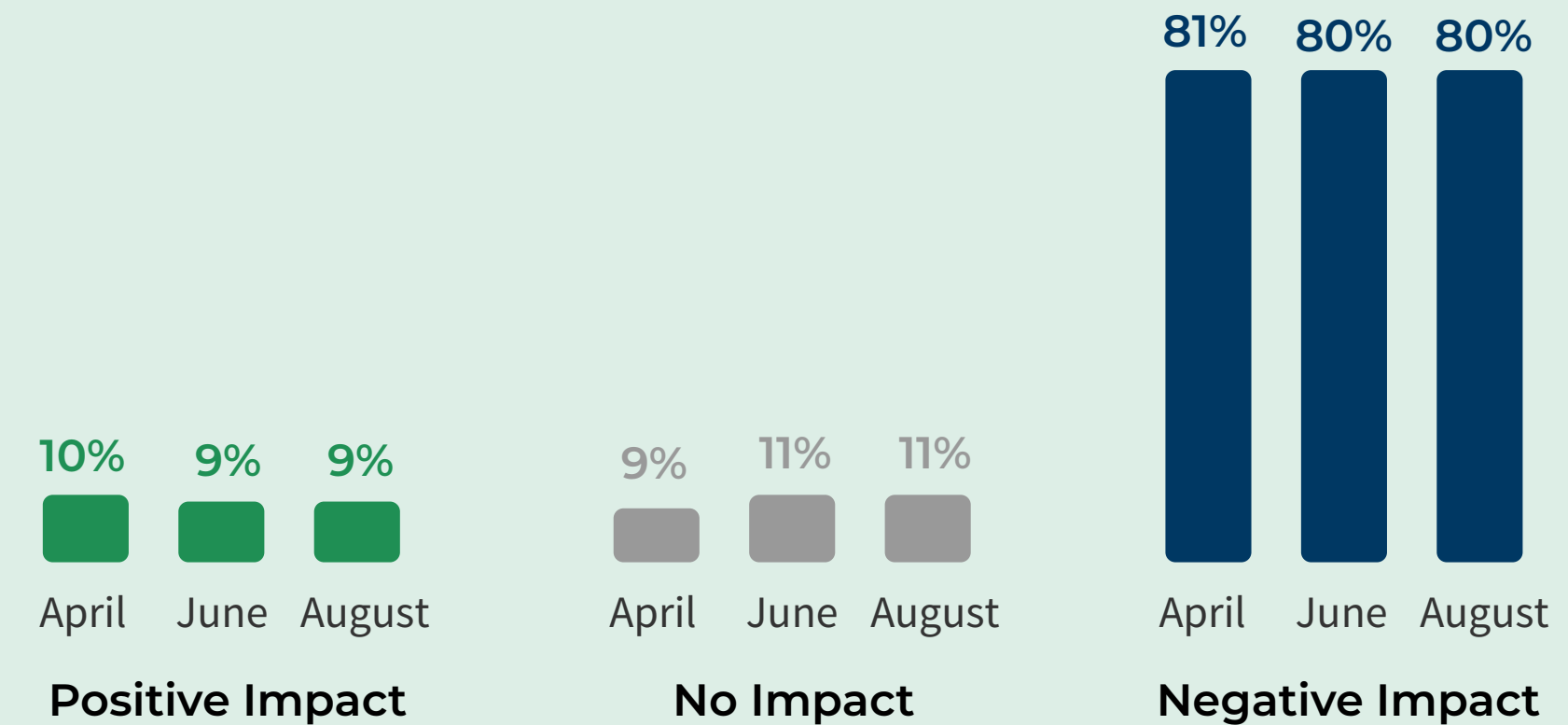
The negative perception of economic conditions in the respondents' home country remained high (80%–81%) from April to August.

However, a decreasing number of respondents—56% in August, down from 68% in April—expected negative economic conditions in Canada.

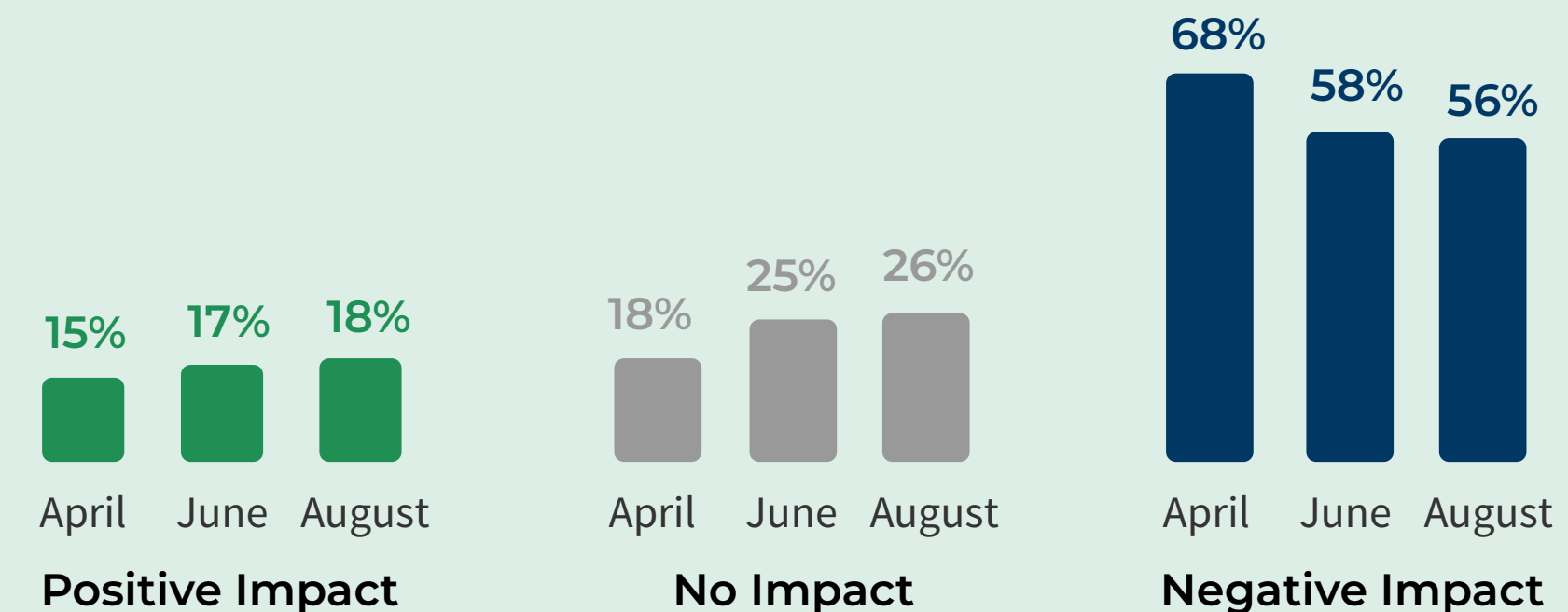
The difference in expectations for Canada and respondents' home countries may explain the trend toward increasing interest in immigrating to Canada.

To what degree do you expect COVID-19 to positively or negatively impact economic conditions?

Economic Conditions in My Home Country



Economic Conditions in Canada



Note: “Not applicable” responses were excluded from analysis. Percentages have been recalculated to reflect this change for all graphs included in this report.

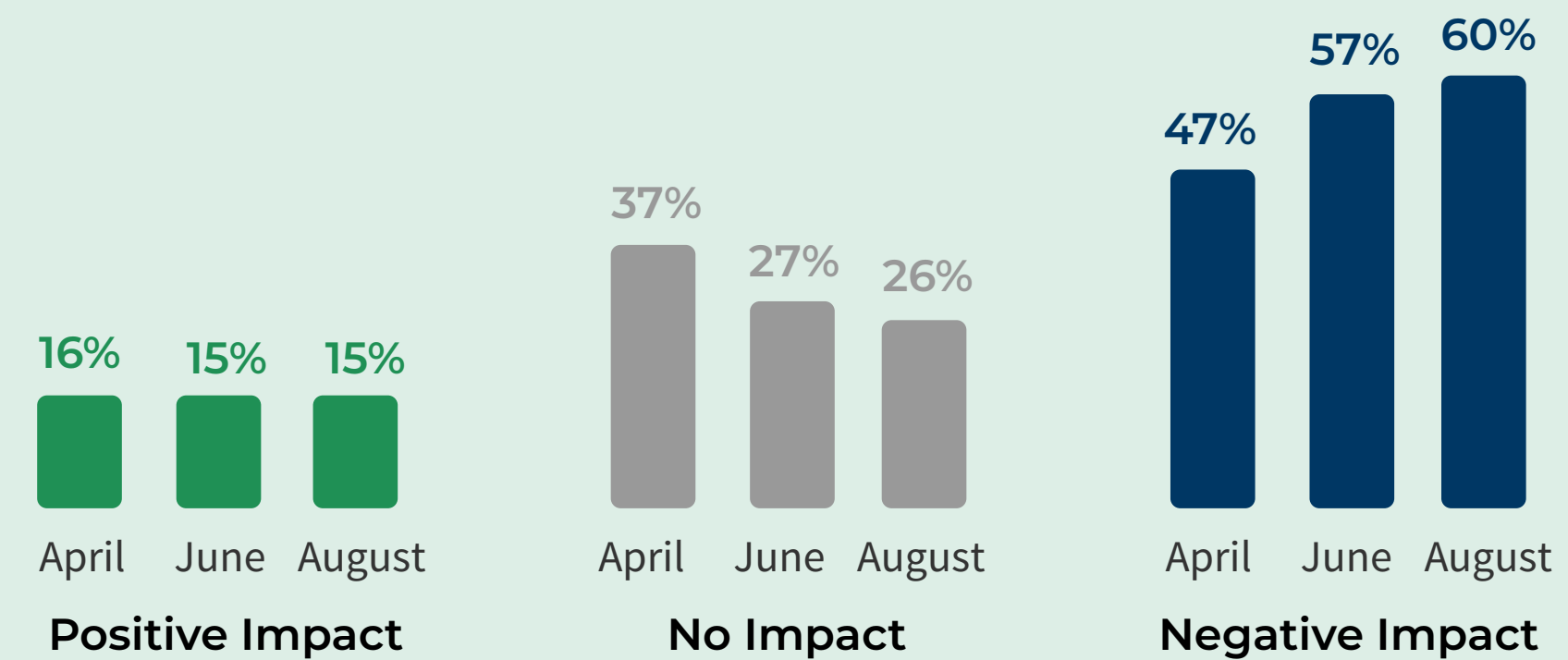
An increasing number of respondents expect COVID-19 to negatively impact the availability of jobs in their occupation or sector in their home country

Sixty percent of respondents in August expected COVID-19 to negatively impact the availability of jobs in their occupation or sector in their home country, up from 47% in April.

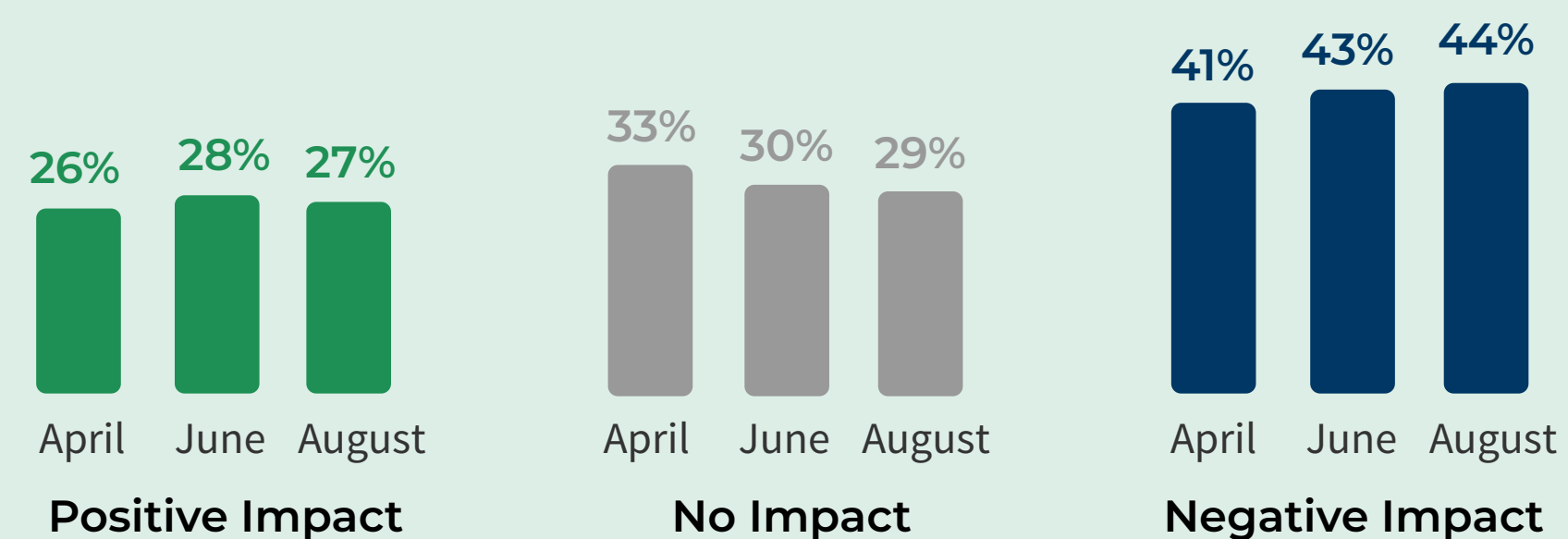
Expectations of the pandemic's impact on job availability in Canada remained relatively similar across the three survey distributions, with a slight increase in those who expected a negative impact from April (41%) to August (44%).

To what degree do you expect COVID-19 to positively or negatively impact the availability of jobs in your occupation or sector?

Availability of Jobs in My Occupation or Sector in my Home Country



Availability of Jobs in My Occupation or Sector in Canada



Part IV: Results

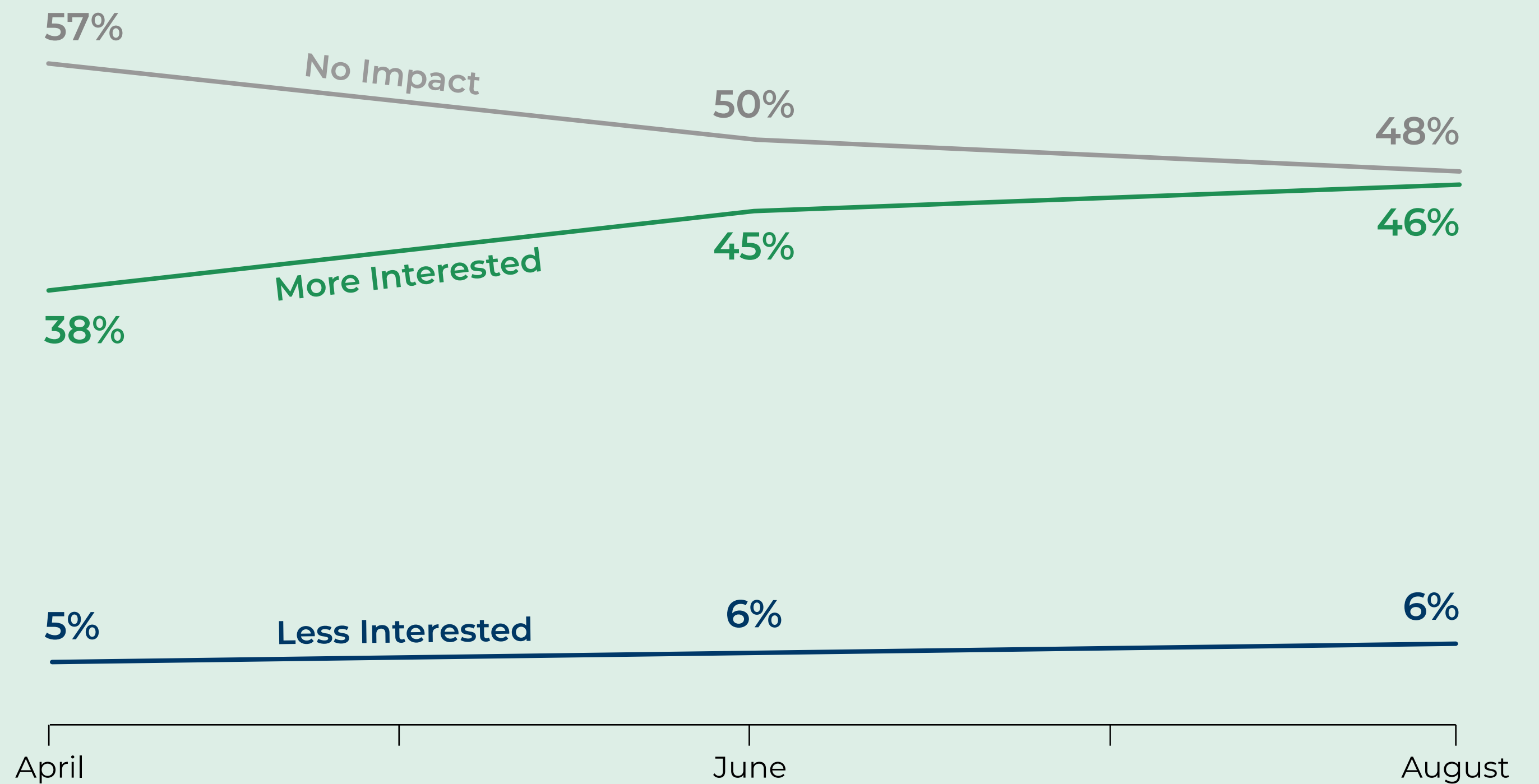
Effect of Expectations on Interest in Immigrating

The proportion of respondents who are more interested in immigrating to Canada grew from 38% in April to 46% in August

Consistently from April to August, the majority or a plurality of respondents stated that COVID-19 either had no impact on their interest in immigrating to Canada or that they were now more interested in immigrating.

Those less interested remained steady at only 5%–6%.

How has COVID-19 influenced your interest in immigrating to Canada?



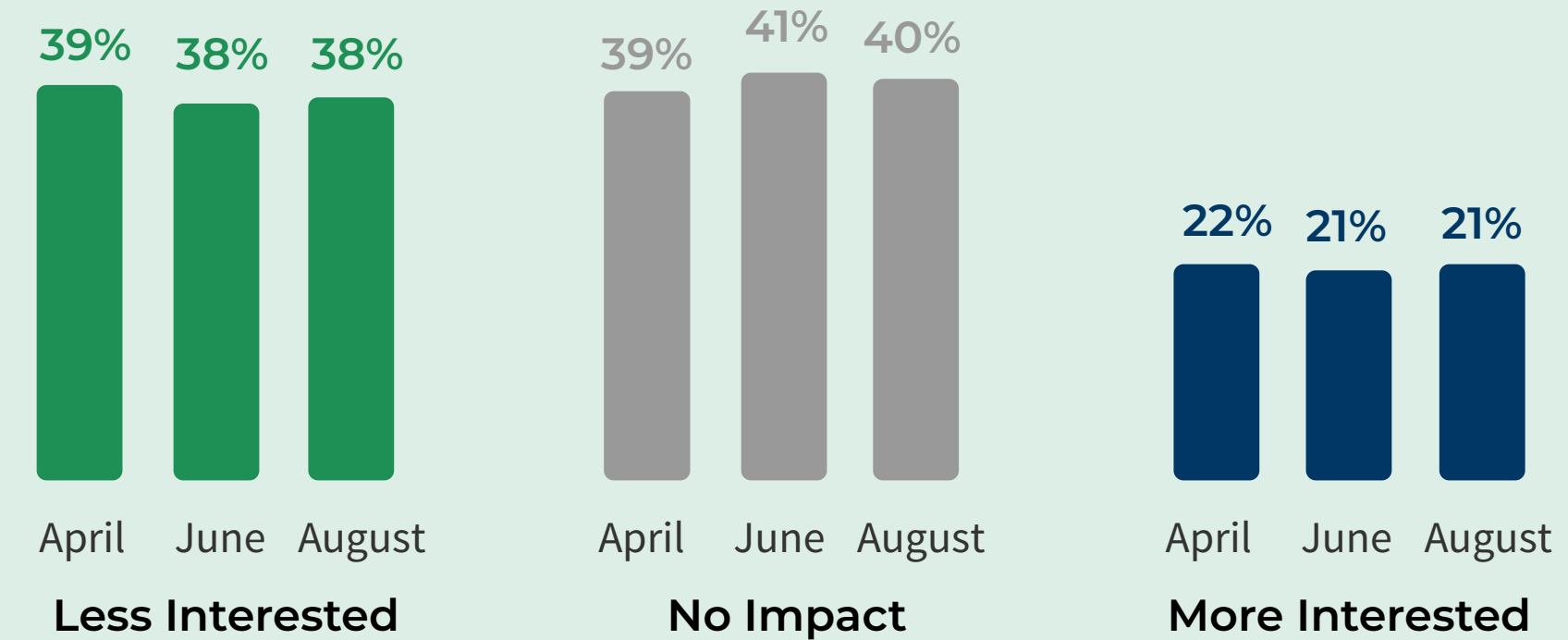
Most Say Economic Hardship and Ability to Pay Costs of Immigration Will Not Have a Negative Impact or Reduce Interest

Interest in immigrating despite personal and/or familial economic hardships and ability to pay the costs of immigration remained consistent from April to August.

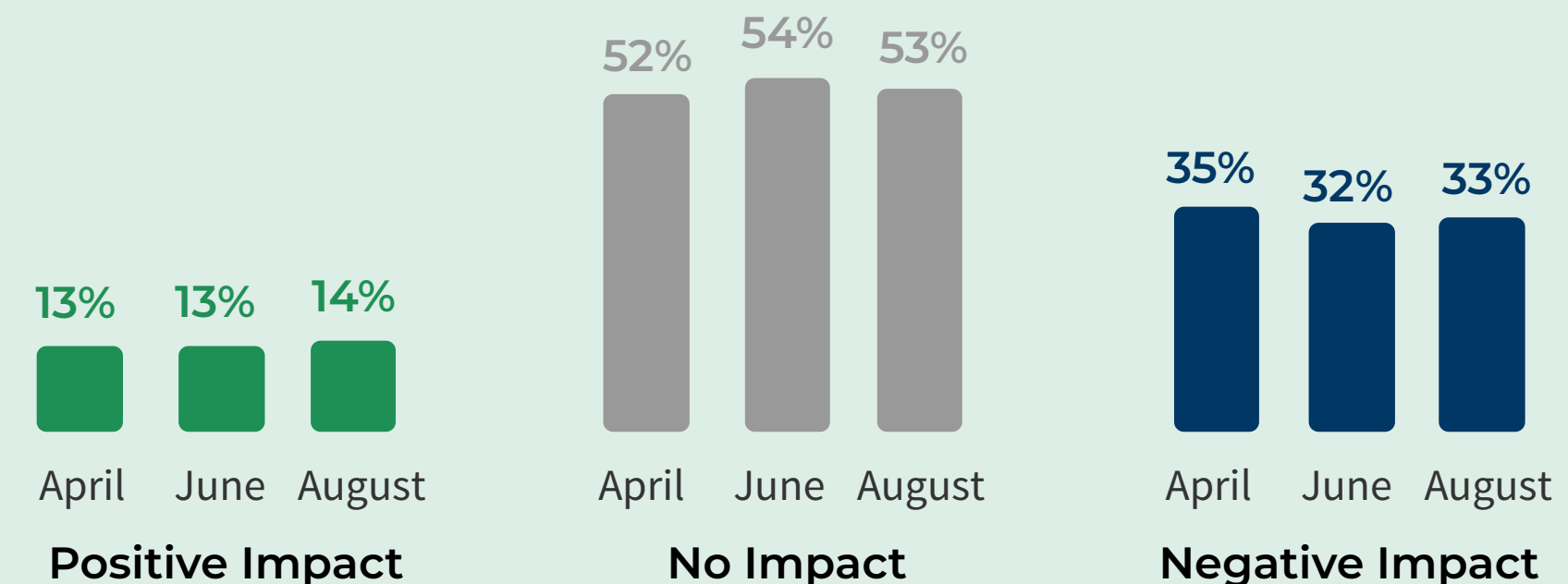
In total, across all three survey distributions, one-third (33%) of respondents expected COVID-19 to have a negative impact on their ability to pay the costs of immigrating, while just over half (53%) expected no impact at all.

However, a plurality of respondents reported that personal and/or familial economic hardships would make them either more interested in immigrating (38%) or have no impact at all (40%).

To what degree would personal and/or familial economic hardship affect your interest in immigrating to Canada?



To what degree do you expect COVID-19 to positively or negatively impact your ability to pay for the costs of immigrating to Canada?



Expectation of a recession in Canada has no impact on immigration plans for almost half of respondents, and many would still be more interested in immigrating

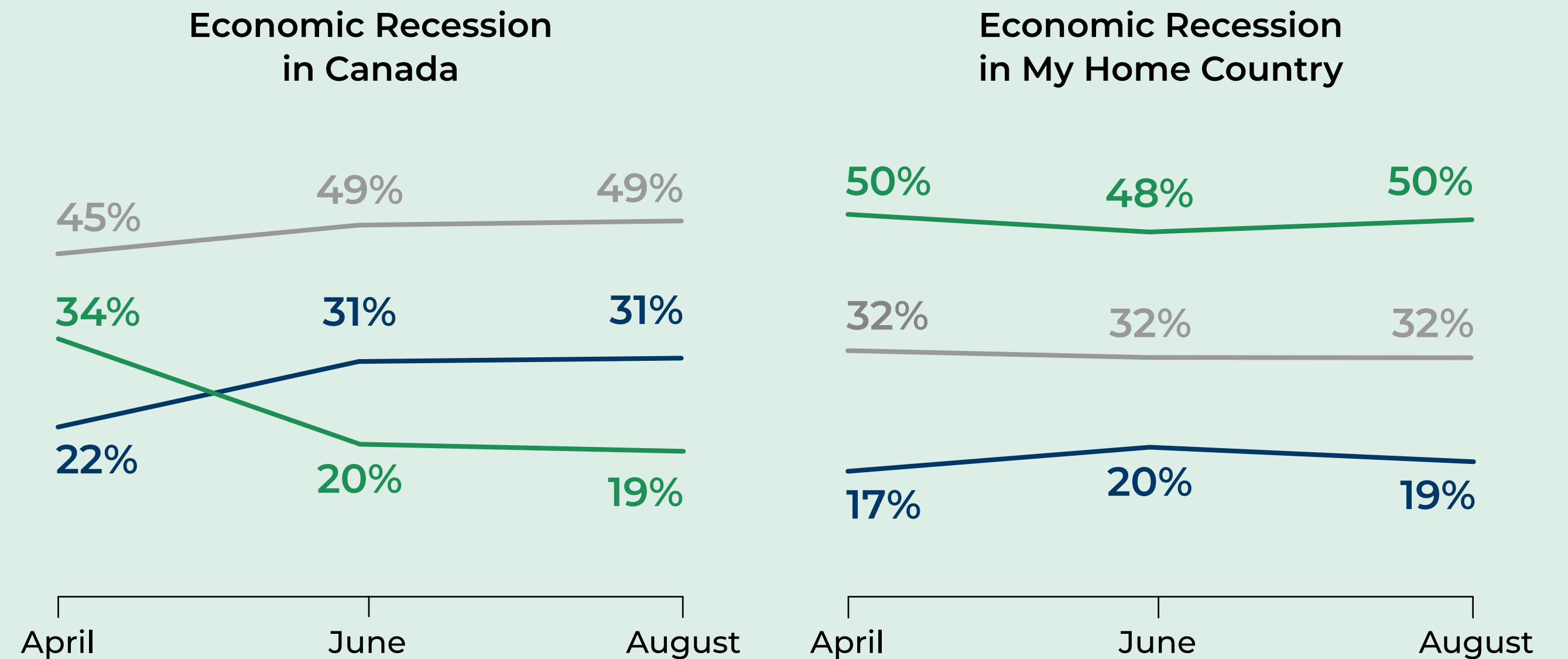
In total, almost half (48%) of respondents across all three survey distributions indicated that an economic recession in Canada would have no impact on their immigration plans.

However, the proportion indicating that a recession in Canada would make them less interested in immigrating increased from 22% in April to 31% in both June and August, while the proportion indicating that they would be more interested decreased from 34% to 19%.

In total, almost half (49%) indicated that an economic recession in their home country would make them more interested in immigrating to Canada, and almost a third (32%) reported that it would have no impact on their current plans.

To what degree would an economic recession in Canada or your home country affect your interest in immigrating to Canada?

More Interested No Impact Less Interested

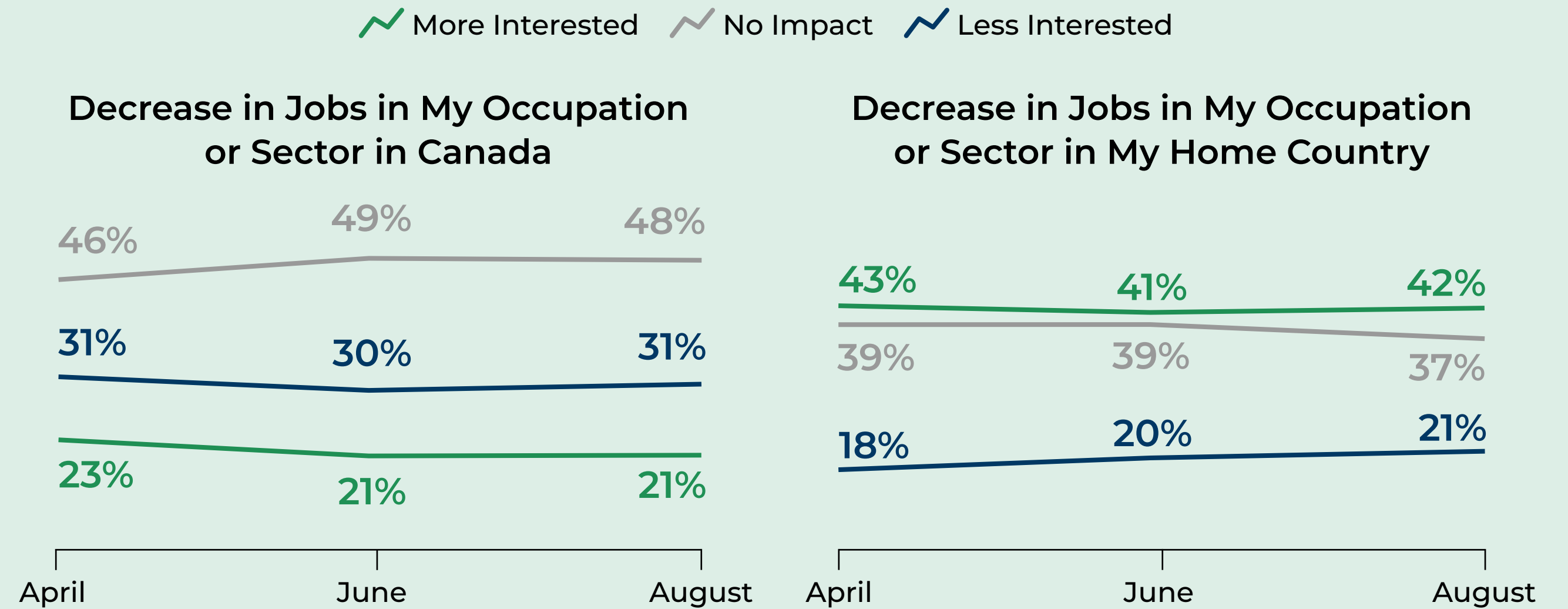


For almost half of the respondents (48%), a decrease in jobs in their sector/occupation in Canada would have no impact on their immigration plans

Across all three survey distributions, a total of 42% reported that a decrease in the number of jobs in their sector/occupation in their home country would make them more interested in immigrating.

At the same time, almost a third (31%) reported that a decrease in the number of jobs in their sector/ occupation in Canada would make them less interested in immigrating. Results were highly consistent from April to August.

To what degree would a decrease in jobs in your occupation or sector in Canada or your home country affect your interest in immigrating to Canada?



Top Sectors of Employment



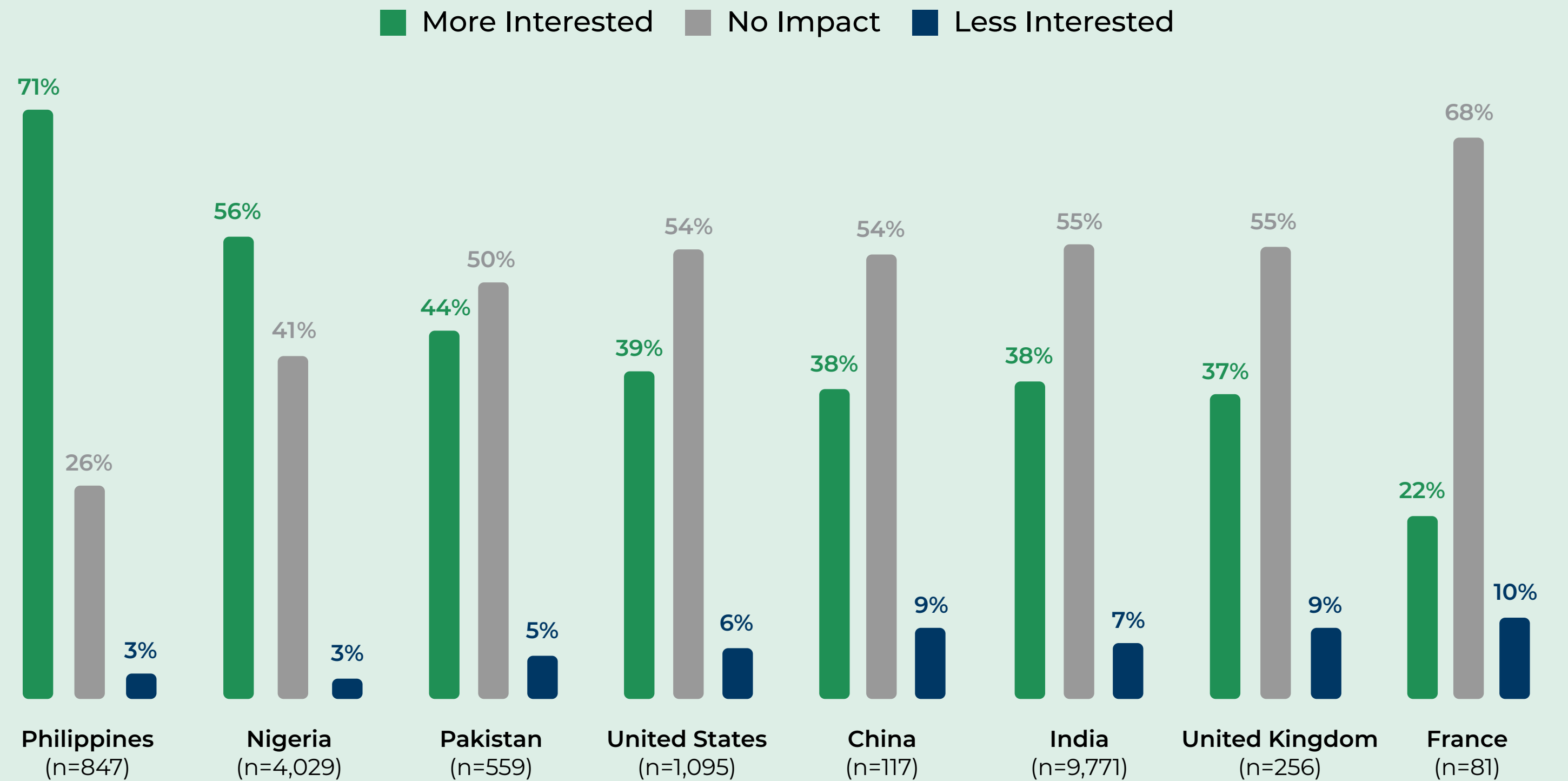
Interest in immigrating from top source countries has continued or increased

Aggregate results from the survey distributions between April and August reveal that respondents from top source countries were either as interested or more interested in immigrating to Canada since the pandemic began.

Over 70% of respondents from the Philippines indicated increased interest.

No more than 10% of respondents from any top source country reported that they were less interested in immigrating.

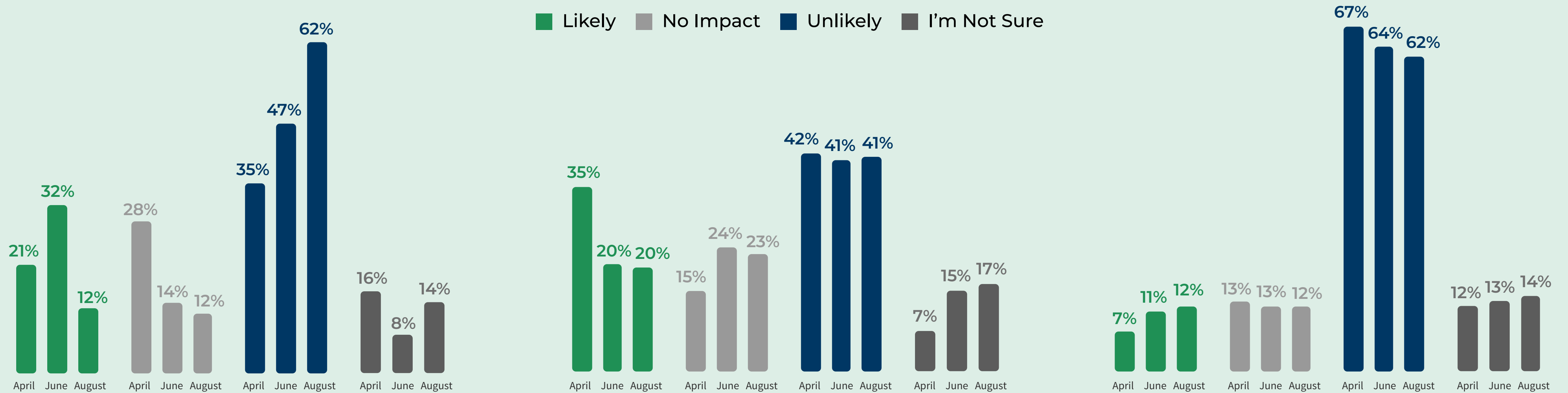
Interest in Immigrating to Canada by Top Source Countries of Admitted Permanent Residents



Q: "How has COVID-19 influenced your interest in immigrating to Canada?"
 Note: Based on IRCC data for top source countries in 2018.

In August, only 12% of respondents were considering delaying immigration to Canada, a drop from 32% in June

As a result of COVID-19, how likely are you to consider the following?



Delaying immigration to Canada to a future date

The number of respondents who said they were unlikely to delay immigration increased sharply from April (35%) to August (62%).

Remaining in or returning to my home country for the foreseeable future

In April, over a third indicated that they were likely to remain in or return to their home country. This fell to 20% in June and August.

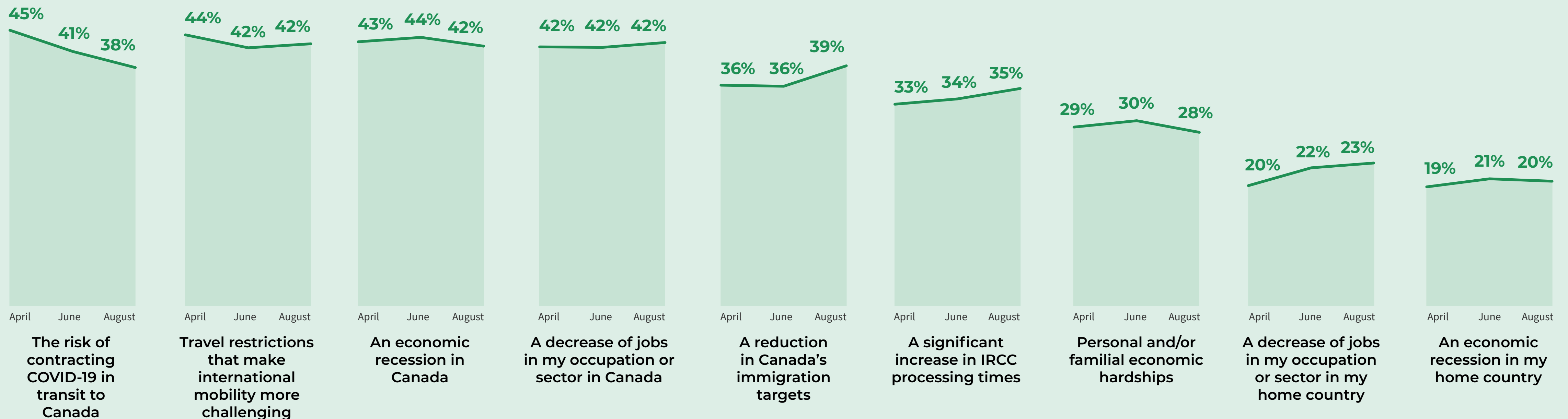
Immigrating to a country other than Canada

Those considering immigrating to a country other than Canada increased slightly from 7% in April to 12% in August. Canada's international travel ban and related policies may be having an impact on respondents' choice of immigration destinations.

Top factors for reduced interest in immigrating for those considering delay

Top concerns of those less interested in immigrating and considering postponing their immigration plans included a decrease in the number of jobs in their occupation/sector in Canada, economic recession, and travel restrictions. Those citing the risk of contracting COVID-19 in transit to Canada decreased from April (45%) to August (38%).

The percentage of respondents citing travel restrictions impacting international mobility, a decrease in the number of jobs in their occupation/sector in Canada, and economic recession in Canada and in an applicant's home country show little change from April to August.





Part V:

Appendix

	April	June	August	Total
Total Invitations	62,197	206,689	211,936	480,822
Total Responses Collected	6,613	13,818	16,452	36,883
Response Rate	10.6%	6.7%	7.8%	7.7%
Valid Responses	4,615	10,598	12,717	27,930
Completion Rate	69.8%	76.7%	77.3%	75.7%

Survey Metrics

- **Sampling method:** Stratified random sampling
- **Data collection period:**
 - April 15 – 21, 2020
 - June 15 – 23, 2020
 - August 17 – 26, 2020
- **No incentive offered**
- **Reporting:**
 - Some incomplete but valid responses were included in the analysis.
 - Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- **Surveys comprised 12–14 questions.**
- **“Not applicable” responses were excluded from the analysis. Percentages have been recalculated to reflect this change for all graphs included in this report.**

Authors and Researchers



Faiza Mehboob

Policy Advisor,
Strategy, Policy,
and Research



Joan Atlin

Associate Director,
Strategy, Policy,
and Research



Mikaela Santos

Team Lead/Senior Data
Analytics Associate



Ning Luo

Senior Data
Analytics Associate



Paul Schulmann

Director,
Research



WORLD EDUCATION SERVICES

World Education Services is a non-profit social enterprise whose mission is to foster the integration of internationally educated persons into academic and professional settings.

Find us on **Facebook**, **LinkedIn**, and **Twitter**.

Subscribe to our **newsletter**.

wes.org/ca

research@wes.org