



Towards a More Inclusive Economy: Barriers and Solutions for Newcomer Integration

Pathways to Prosperity 2025 National Conference

November 2025



Founded in 1974, WES is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change.



Our Vision

Everyone is able to put their education, experience, and skills to work **anywhere** in the world.



Our Mission

We help people **learn, work, and thrive** in new places. We help society **recognize the value** of people's education and experience.



Immigration in Canada by the Numbers



- Canada's population is an estimated **41.7 million**
 - Immigrants make up approximately **23% of Canada's population**
- Immigration accounts for almost **100% of labour force growth**
 - Immigration is projected to account for **100% of population growth by 2032**

Labour Market Dynamics



Immigration



Talent Shortage



Demography



Technology & Automation



Economic Instability

Current Context



Economic pressures
are affecting Canadians

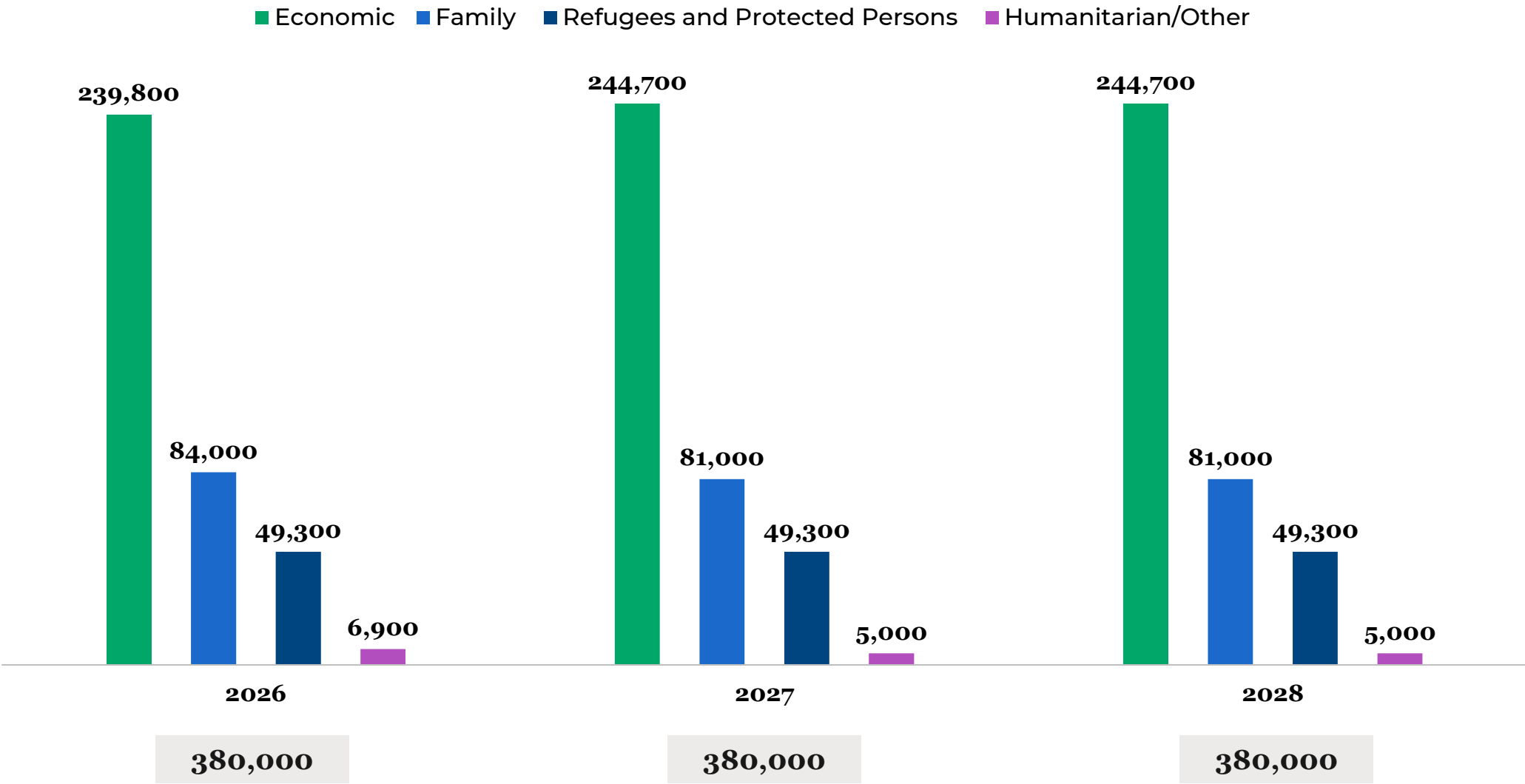


**Reduction of
temporary resident
levels** is a priority



Most Canadians think
**immigration levels
must be reduced**

Canada's Immigration Targets 2026—2028



Persistent Barriers to Newcomer Integration

Competency Recognition

60% of newcomers hold a bachelor's degree, yet 40% are employed in jobs that do not require their training.

The biggest gap is lack of recognition of lived experience, competencies, and transferable skills.

Tools not Designed for Inclusion

Many tools are being developed to assess skills, but they are not necessarily designed with inclusion in mind.

Lack of Access to Startup Ecosystems

Studies reveal that immigrant-owned businesses contribute 25% of net job creation, despite representing only 17% of all businesses.

Yet immigrants are often excluded from mainstream startup ecosystems.

New Tools for Driving Inclusion

Micro Internships



Technology & Virtual Reality



The Power of Partnership:

Spotlight on #ImmigrantsWork



Policy & Collaborative Solutions

Better Data Drives Better Policy:

We need better data sharing across sectors to track progress on mobility, retention, and advancement.

Centre Equity in Innovation:

We need to ensure that legislation, policies, and tools advance inclusion.

Focus on Systems-Level Change:

We must adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.



Insights from WES' National Roundtables:

- Immigration **IS** a nation-building strategy
- We must **refocus** on permanent residence
- We must **unlock** immigrant talent



Thank you!

Need more information?

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