



# Seizing Our Advantage

NATIONAL SCORECARD ON CANADA'S  
GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

KEY INSIGHTS  
AND ACTIONS

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition  
**2023**



## A message from the CEO and the Board of Directors



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Chief Executive Officer



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## The time is now for Canada to seize our advantage

From major conflict in Europe and climate-related disasters to an unpredictable economy and out-of-control cost of living increases, we live in an uncertain world. It is a world also increasingly suspicious of “others,” fuelling nationalist and isolationist sentiment across the globe. While Canada is not immune to these sentiments, our commitment to stability and inclusion, coupled with our history of welcoming newcomers, means we have a tremendous social and economic advantage, if we are bold enough to seize it.

The need to seize that opportunity is urgent. Despite economic uncertainty, thousands of jobs remain unfilled across the country. And, with our aging population and a birth rate that is at its lowest in over a hundred years, Canada’s ability to sustain high-quality public services — including health care — and secure our longer-term prosperity is at risk.

Century Initiative was founded on the understanding that increased immigration is the central way to grow our population, fuel our economic growth and build a bigger, more prosperous country for all in the decades to come. We also recognize that, for Canada to grow well, we need to think longer term and develop and implement the policies that allow us to grow in a more sustainable manner and maintain the strong support Canadians have historically shown for and to immigrants.

Our third annual *National Scorecard on Growth and Prosperity* provides a holistic look at Canada’s progress across 39 indicators, comparing our performance to similar countries or against goals set nationally utilizing reliable data, including from

OECD and Statistics Canada. What separates the *Scorecard* from other tools is that we are in it for the long haul. It focuses on Canada’s progress over the decades ahead to ensure we are making the policy decisions and investments that not only will allow Canada to grow and prosper but also ensure that an even greater number of Canadians can share in that prosperity.

This year’s *Scorecard* highlights several areas — including infrastructure investments, productivity, housing affordability and climate performance — where Canada’s progress is slipping. These pose threats not only to our prosperity today and in the future but to the support Canadians have for immigration. We know what is required to grow and prosper. We just need to ensure that we seize the advantage we have as a country and take the right actions. Our success is dependent on our collective ability to think beyond the next decade — and design the Canada of the future and invest and plan for growth.

The *Scorecard* has been designed to help key actors in the public, private and non-profit sectors discuss and identify the factors that will allow Canada to grow well. Century Initiative encourages everyone to utilize the *National Scorecard* as a shared tool to drive systems change. Through long-term thinking and planning, improved performance across the 39 indicators of the *National Scorecard* can support Canada to grow well into the future.



# Tracking progress toward a bolder Canadian future

## Scoring approach: Direction Canada is Trending

### Leading

Canada is a leader on this indicator, either ranking or rating among the best internationally or performing well against national goals.

### On track

Canada has either met the target identified for the indicator or is expected to meet the target in the near-term.

### Needs attention

Canada has not met the target identified for the indicator but is within a range where it could meet the target in future years with intervention and support.

### Falling behind

Canada is lagging compared to similar countries or failing to meet the target identified for the indicator and significant work is needed to meet the target in future years.





## KEY INSIGHTS

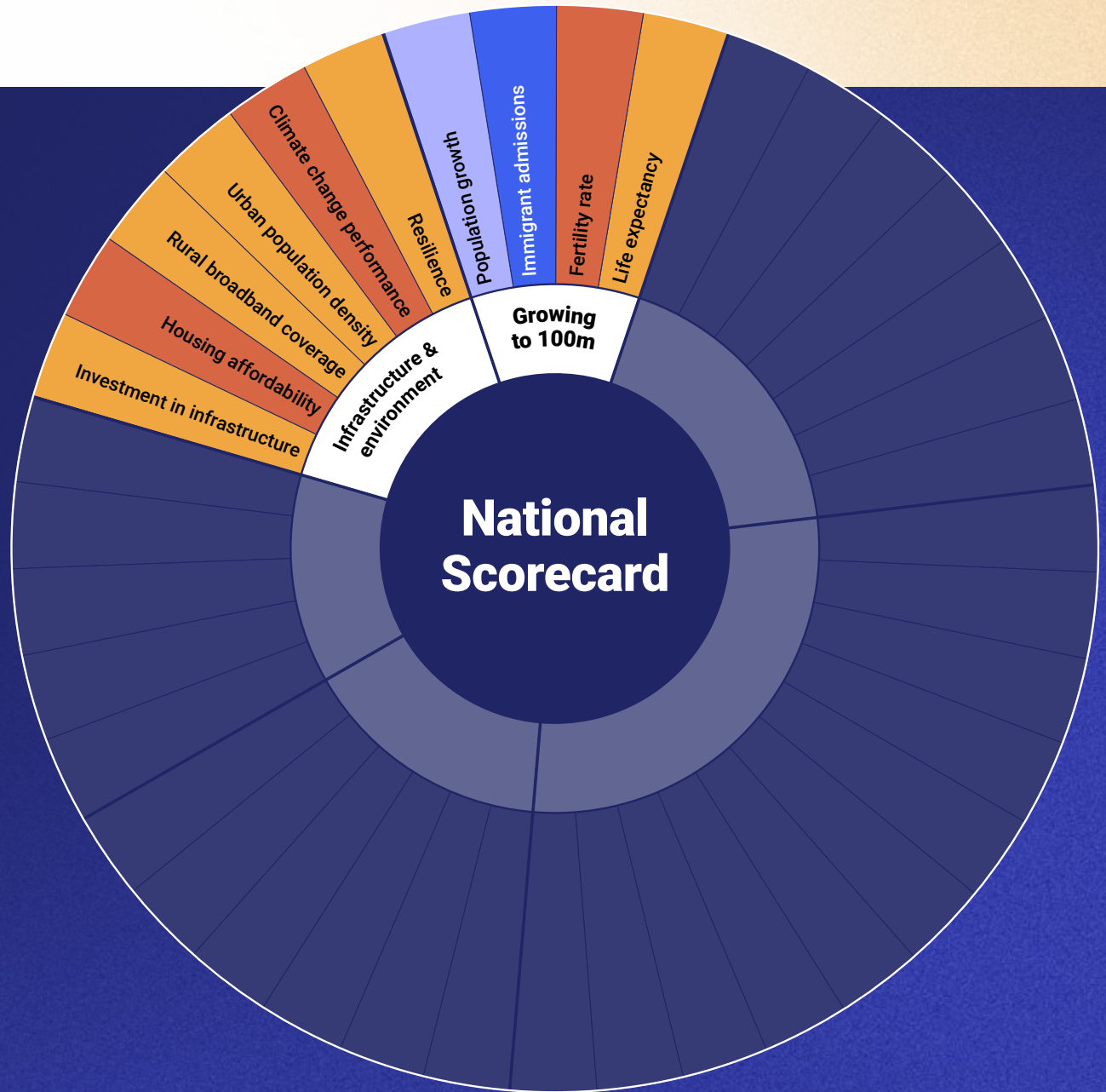
# Safeguarding our future

### KEY INSIGHT #1:

Century Initiative has assessed for the first time that Canada is on track to achieve the goal of 100 million Canadians by 2100. But administrative backlogs, rising cost of living, lack of investment in infrastructure, housing affordability and global competition for talent threaten Canada's ability to grow well and realize our full economic and social potential. Our ambition to grow sustainably is possible but threatened by factors that we must confront with smart policy.

### FINDINGS AT A GLANCE:

- | Canada experienced significant growth in **immigrant admissions**.
- | The pandemic had a negative impact on Canada's **life expectancy**.
- | **Investment in infrastructure** has declined in recent years and stagnated overall.
- | **Housing affordability** slightly improved with pandemic supports but costs have escalated and ownership rates declined.
- | **Population density of metropolitan areas** has increased in Canada but is below peer countries.
- | Canada ranks poorly among peer countries on **climate change performance**.





# Building a sustainable, resilient 21<sup>st</sup>-century economy

## KEY INSIGHT #2:

Canada's future depends on higher productivity, supported by increased R&D spending, increased capital investment, and improved supports for children and families. A larger, more prosperous country will mean we have more power globally to influence the issues that will impact our future. We are on track for sustainable growth towards 100 million, but we can only do so if our economic fundamentals are strong.

## FINDINGS AT A GLANCE:

- Canada's **early-stage entrepreneurship** activity is growing in strength, but **business spending on R&D** in Canada remains well below peer countries.
- Canada's **productivity** has fallen at a faster rate compared to peer countries. **GDP per capita** increased amid pandemic recovery but growth has been slow.
- Continuing to build on the **strength of the Indigenous economy** is critical.
- Canada continues to rank among countries with the highest levels of **household debt**.
- Child and youth poverty** significantly declined due to pandemic supports, but improvement will likely not be sustained. Challenges to **youth well-being** were exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Diversity in leadership** has improved though progress remains slow.
- Childcare participation** remains stagnant as challenges to access persist.
- The **employment rate for mothers** has rebounded with pandemic recovery but remains low compared to other groups.





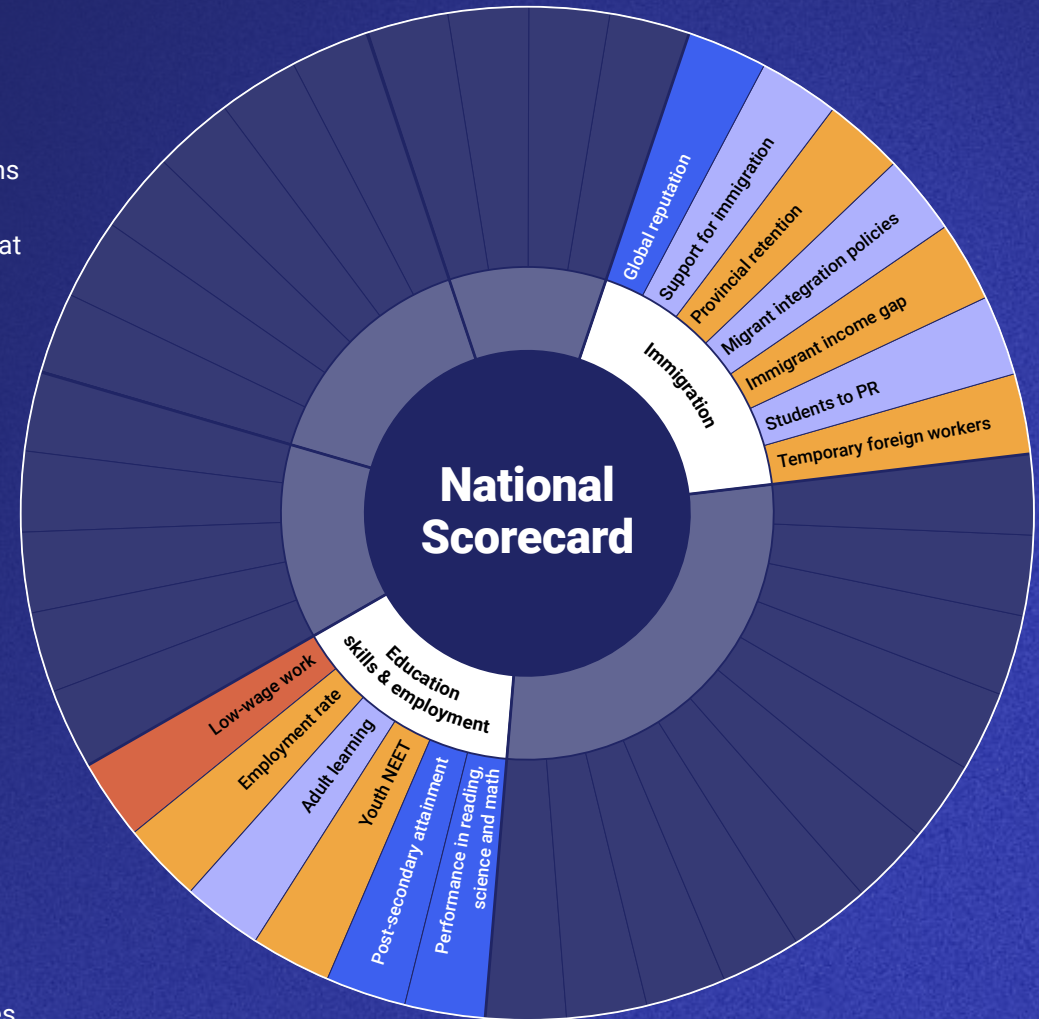
# Creating a world-class, future-ready labour and talent pool

## KEY INSIGHT #3:

Canada's greatest resource is our people. Our human capital is improved dramatically by the arrival of immigrants who bring skills, talents, knowledge, labour and networks. Immigrants can be key drivers of innovation, entrepreneurship and productivity in the years ahead, but Canada needs to do a better job leveraging immigrants' talents and skills. At the same time, Canadians need the skills that tomorrow's economy requires if we're to compete and prosper globally. Canada must improve its life-long learning opportunities so that the workforce can keep up with technological and labour market changes.

## FINDINGS AT A GLANCE:

- | Canada's **global reputation** ranks among the best in the world.
- | **Public support for immigration** continues to increase among Canadians.
- | Canada is a leader in **post-secondary attainment** but access remains a challenge for some Canadians.
- | Canada leads in **reading, science and math among 15-year-olds**, but pandemic impacts could hurt future performance.
- | The rate of **youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)** worsened from early pandemic levels.
- | Canada's **employment rate** increased, but economic slowdowns create future risk.
- | Canada has high rates of **low-wage work** and wages have not kept pace with inflation.
- | **Provincial retention of immigrants** has improved, but variation remains across the country.
- | Some progress has been made on the **immigrant income gap**, but challenges remain.
- | Canada has increasingly relied on **temporary foreign workers** in recent years.





# Key actions required

## SAFEGUARDING OUR FUTURE

1. **Policymakers must be proactive in monitoring and nurturing support for immigration to Canada, both at home and abroad.**

A more prosperous future for more Canadians requires that we commit to growing our population. Canada's ambitious immigration-level plans and continued public support for immigration have played key roles in growing Canada's population. But this support cannot be taken for granted.

2. **Canada should accelerate programs that support Indigenous economic self-determination around education, employment, and infrastructure, and co-develop policies with Indigenous peoples.**

Increased immigration must coincide with significant policy and systems changes to close gaps in educational opportunity, employment and infrastructure frequently experienced by Indigenous peoples.

3. **Canadian governments should do more to address infrastructure gaps in cities and smaller communities.**

Ambitious targets around population growth must be matched by programs and investments that make communities of all sizes sustainable and affordable. Increased density in cities and growth in smaller communities is possible with better policies around housing, transportation, and public services.

4. **Canada's climate adaptation plan must be implemented and funded properly.**

Scaling Canada's population requires ambitious emissions reductions and investment in critical climate adaptation infrastructure to mitigate the impact of fires, floods and other climate-related events. Climate change is impacting how and where we should build to accommodate sustainable population growth.

5. **Canada must plan for a future of climate migration.**

As the impacts of climate change accelerate and are amplified, there will be more migrants forced to find new homes. Climate modelling and forecasts should be part of our immigration planning, helping us respond to humanitarian crises in ways that support migrants and benefit Canada.





## **BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY ECONOMY**

### **6. Canada must focus on increasing productivity as a path to higher wages and incomes.**

Canadians are facing rising costs of living and mounting household debt, which is harming well-being and leading to hardships for many who have arrived recently. Canada's under-performance on productivity measures is long-standing and well-known and we can no longer simply document the problem – we must finally move to address it.

### **7. Canadian governments must do more to support our homegrown success stories, including procuring goods and services from them.**

Canada is seeing positive economic developments, including growing early-stage entrepreneurial activity and an increasing number of “unicorn” companies positioned to scale. But low business investment in R&D and capital has been a long-standing issue. As part of any new industrial policy, governments must find ways to support Canadian businesses without being offside our allies and trading partners.

### **8. All institutions must take the steps necessary to support economic growth, businesses, and wealth creation in Indigenous communities.**

Emerging Indigenous economic strength is having a transformational effect on Canada's economy. Many Indigenous communities are exercising financial control of their own resources in ways consistent with self-government. This economic autonomy and power are having positive effects on Indigenous communities, the Canadian economy and must continue to be supported.

### **9. Continued actions from all levels of government and through multiple election cycles are needed to ensure successful transformation of child care.**

A Canada-wide system for early learning and child care is starting to be implemented, and there are signals that it may already be improving support for mothers of young children to access employment. We know that a good child care system is good economic policy. We cannot lose momentum and we must continue to drive effective delivery of the system.



## CREATING A WORLD-CLASS, FUTURE-READY LABOUR AND TALENT POOL

### **10. Canadian governments, educational institutions, and businesses must work to close opportunity gaps and reduce inequalities in education and skills development.**

Canadians need the skills that tomorrow's economy requires if we're to compete and prosper. While Canada's education systems remain among the best in the world, our investments and programs to support life-long learning and upskilling trail our peers. We need to continue to build the evidence base about which programs work and invest in training, skills building and career navigation interventions that have been shown to have strong returns.

### **11. Employers and regulatory bodies must improve recognition of international experience and credentials, and build improved hiring practices to eliminate criteria and rules that are implicitly biased.**

Canada has a strong track record of successful settlement and integration for immigrants, but a less stellar record on fully allowing immigrants to use their human capital in the labour market. This is a missed opportunity for immigrants and for Canada. We must continue our official work around easier credential recognition, while also funding programs that connect employers and immigrants pre-arrival and eliminating employer habits that demonstrate implicit bias or even racism, like discounting non-Canadian education and work experience.

### **12. To attract dynamic entrepreneurs to grow businesses here, Canada needs bolder proactive talent attraction and retention.**

We must develop proactive incentives to attract and retain skilled immigrants and entrepreneurs in the global competition for talent. As other countries roll out the red carpet, Canada can't afford to rest solely on its good reputation. Government-led incentives are particularly important for entrepreneurs – where there is no employer to lead the attraction.

### **13. Canada must ensure that its immigration system is based on permanent immigration.**

While there are many reasons for a modern immigration system to admit individuals on temporary status, such as short-term labour market needs or for study, long-term challenges require long-term solutions. Canada must improve opportunities to transition to permanent residence for all temporary workers, drawing from experiences with pathways for international students.



For more information, visit:  
[www.centuryinitiative.ca](http://www.centuryinitiative.ca)





# Century Initiative | Initiative du Siècle

## ABOUT CENTURY INITIATIVE

**Century Initiative is a national, non-partisan charity with a mission to enhance Canada's long-term prosperity, resiliency and global influence by responsibly growing the population of Canada to 100 million by 2100.**

Century Initiative delivers its mission by leading, enabling and partnering on initiatives that support long-term thinking and planning in immigration; infrastructure and environment; economy, entrepreneurship and innovation; support for children and families; and education, skills and employment. Century Initiative takes a network approach, prioritizing inclusion of diverse perspectives to inform and advance its work.

[www.centuryinitiative.ca](http://www.centuryinitiative.ca) | [info@centuryinitiative.ca](mailto:info@centuryinitiative.ca)

2 St Clair Ave E #300, Toronto, ON M4T 2T5 Canada

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