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**PRESS RELEASE:**

**DECONSTRUCTING THE CANADA RUSH –**

**A STUDY ON MOTIVATIONS FOR NIGERIANS EMIGRATING TO CANADA**

**Weak Economy And Insecurity Identified As “Push Factors” for Canada Rush – New API Study**

**Abuja, Nigeria, March 3, 2020** – Today, Africa Polling Institute (API) has released its latest study report titled “Deconstructing the Canada Rush: Motivations for Nigerians Emigrating to Canada.” The #CanadaRush Study has identified Nigeria’s weak economy, heightened insecurity and perceived poor governance as the key “push factors” driving the recent trend of Nigerians seeking migration opportunities to Canada. In addition, on a flip side, favourable Canadian immigration policies appear to also constitute a key enabler and “pull factor” attracting prospective migrants.

**Methodology**

The study was conducted by Africa Polling Institute to investigate the motivations for Nigerians seeking to migrate to Canada, in order to identify the push and pull factors underlying the recent upsurge in the number of Nigerians exploring Canadian migration options, which we have termed “Canada Rush”. The study began with an extensive review of the extant literature on the concept of Who is a Migrant; Migration stocks and trends; Nigerian migrants in Canada; Canada migration pathways; Motivations, Drivers and Enablers of Migration; and Brain Drain, Brain Waste and Brain Gain. In addition, a semi-structured survey was designed on Google form and administered online, targeting two classes of respondents (a) prospective Nigerian migrants to Canada, and (b) actual Nigerian migrants living in Canada. Given the difficulty in identifying prospective or actual migrants, convenience sampling technique was employed to identify, and snowball off, personal contacts who are currently exploring the migration option and those who have already emigrated. Our researchers also disguised as prospective migrants in order to access WhatsApp and Telegram groups of prospective migrants, to be able to post the survey link and persuade members of such groups to complete the online questionnaire. In total, 877 respondents participated in the online survey. Of this number, only 772 had already migrated or was considering migrating. The analysis focused on the 772 individuals - including 490 males and 282 females - who have either migrated or are currently considering migrating out of Nigeria. The survey had more responses from prospective migrants (652 individuals or 84.4%), than from actual Nigerian migrants in Canada (120 individuals or 15.5%).

**Key Findings**

In the last few years, the number of Nigerians seeking to emigrate to Canada has maintained an upward trajectory. Canadian migration policies have also in the last few years made the country emerge as an attractive destination of choice for many Nigerians; compared to the United Kingdom, with its imminent pre- and post-Brexit implications, and the strict immigration policies of the current United States administration. The current trend of Nigerians emigrating to Canada appears to have taken a new dimension with respect to the calibre of Nigerians applying on the different Canadian migration schemes. There are anecdotal evidences to suggest that these categories of Nigerians are not the ordinary poor Nigerians, but they are the highly skilled, well educated, mostly employed and upwardly mobile group of individuals, who constitute the middle-rung of the socio-economic class of the country. And there is no doubt that the continued exit of this class of Nigerians would have significant effects on the country’s intellectual, manpower and skills base, with attendant impact on the country’s national development, as well as its social, economic and political wellbeing as a nation.

Based on the online survey conducted, the result showed clearly that the top 5 motivating “push factors” for Nigerians seeking migration opportunities to Canada are: the search for better career opportunities (75%), heightened insecurity and violence (60%), the desire to provide a better future for their children (55%), for further education (40%), and perceived poor governance in Nigeria (35%). In addition, other relatively fewer respondents identified the search for business prospects (12%), family reunification (3%) and the weather (1%) as less important driving factors for their intention or decision to migrate.

Interestingly, across age demography, the search for better career opportunities and educational advancement appeared to be a more important reason for emigrating amongst respondents aged 18-35years (82% and 45% respectively), than for older folks aged 36-60years (55% and 26%). On the other hand, “heightened insecurity and violence”, the desire to provide a “better future for my children”, and “poor governance” appeared to be of more concern to older respondents aged 36-60years (74%, 69%, and 39% respectively), compared to the younger folks aged 18-35years (55%, 50% and 33% respectively). A resounding theme from this study is that most individuals are migrating in search of opportunities, whether in the form of employment and career advancement, educational opportunities or for a safer and more secure future for their children. This highlights sentiments to suggest that these indicators seem somewhat elusive in the Nigeria of today. The results however suggest that migration is fueled more by the pursuit of opportunities, than by the fear of danger(s).

On the other hand, the favourable migration policy in Canada have also constituted an important pull factor attracting many Nigerians to consider applying through one migration scheme or the other. There is a general perception amongst actual and prospective migrants that Canada offers a good quality of life and good health care services (78%); Canada is a very safe country to live in (74%); there’s respects for human rights and dignity (73%); and Canada is a place where Nigerians and other immigrants can easily integrate into the society (71%). To buttress this point, almost 6 in 10 of actual migrants (59%) affirmed that in retrospect, they consider their decision to migrate to Canada an excellent decision. This was followed by 38% who said their experience has been okay so far, and 2% who were undecided. Only 1% of actual migrants expressed regret for their decision.

In addition, while about 55 percent of actual migrants indicated that though they had decent jobs in Nigeria, Canada offered a safe and secure environment for them to raise their children, hence, their decision to migrate because they were considering the future of their children first. More so, 50 percent indicated that they would have considered the United States as an option, but were concerned about the rise of populism and the strict immigration policies of the current US administration.

From the survey, most actual migrants now residing in Canada said they have permanent residency status (74%); compared to those hold are citizenship (13%), temporary workers (8%), students (3%) or refugees (2%) statuses. Also, amongst the different pathways primarily used to migrate to Canada, the Federal Skilled Workers Program known as Express Entry (56%), Studentship / Postgraduate Work Permit (25%), and the Provincial Nominee scheme (12%) came out tops as the most popular and widely used pathways by Nigerian migrants. Interestingly, 40 percent of these respondents indicated that they have some level of Canadian education. This suggests that asides the Federal Skilled Workers Program, Nigerian students in Canada are staying longer after graduating. Canada’s postgraduate work permit offers an easy route to the “holy grail of immigration” – permanent residency; and students are taking advantage of the program by staying back after their studies and going on to pursue permanent residency in Canada. The implication is that many students may not return to live in Nigeria during or after their studies, and possibly their entire productive years. Inadvertently, Nigeria is losing several generations of well-educated students and highly skilled workers in one swoop.

The survey also found that 81% of actual migrants make financial remittances to Nigeria frequently; and there is a strong connection between remittances and Family Upkeep (85%), Charity (39%), Business Investments (16%) and Building Projects (14%), which were identified as the major purposes for sending money back to Nigeria. Lastly, in spite of the enduring connection to Nigeria through remittances, most actual migrants are not particularly enthusiastic about returning to settle back in the country sometime in the future. In fact, 64% said had no such plans; and this finding of unwillingness to return to live in Nigeria presents a major challenge to the benefits of brain gain for the country.

**Summary**

In summary, the study highlights that “Canada Rush” stems from the weak Nigerian economy, coupled with the spate of widespread insecurity in the country (push factors). Simply put, Nigerians are not emigrating to Canada because they want to, they are going there because they do not believe Nigeria provides them any opportunities, and security, to thrive as citizens. However, on the other hand, favourable Canadian immigration policies (pull factors) are also making it easy for well-educated and highly skilled Nigerians to migrate; and this trend is not likely to abate soon. Our study highlights existential gaps in government’s inability to stimulate a strong thriving economy, galvanize an effective security architecture that delivers security to all citizens, and promote institutional reforms to deliver public goods to citizens.

Regardless, there is every need to strengthen current policies that stimulate economic growth and development in the country, which will make staying in Nigeria an attractive option. At the very least, the government needs to invest more in basic infrastructure and actively tackle corruption. Furthermore, the country can position itself to more actively take advantage of its youth bulge to be a hub for technology, industry and manpower development. The government should also strengthen policies and programs aimed at actively managing labour migration from the country by engaging with foreign partners. Canada had signaled interest to work with Nigeria in this direction with the visit of Canada’s Immigration Minister to Nigeria in May 2018, to engage support from Nigeria’s government to tackle irregular migration.

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