According to polls, about a quarter of Canadians believe that immigration increases crime. But does it? Well here's what the research says. **Most research from** Canada and the US suggests that not only is it wrong to suggest that immigrants increase the crime rate, they can actually bring it down. **One of the major Canadian studies on this issue** followed two generations of teens in Toronto which, by the way, is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world. It found that if they'd immigrated as kids or teenagers they were less likely to commit a crime than other Canadians. Even those kids who were the first generation of their family to be born here were still less likely to commit a crime than kids whose parents were born in Canada, and **those conclusions are backed up by major American research** too. The authors of the study tried to figure out why. Their answers: commitment to school and strong family bonds, both of which made it less likely that teens would engage in risky behavior. **Another Canadian researcher took a look at** property crime rates across the country. She found that new immigrants didn't have an effect but those who had been here longer, five years or more, well... they were actually associated with a drop in the property crime rate. **That same researcher argues that** it's not just a case of more law-abiding people diluting the number of criminals around, she argues that immigrants can actually change the characteristics of a neighborhood or the behavior of the people in it. She calls it a "spillover effect" that can result in a long- term decrease. **One group of researchers in the United States dug through the statistics there and found that** immigrants are less likely to engage in criminal behavior and less likely to wind up behind bars. In fact, over the course of a couple of decades, **while the percentage of** foreign-born people in the United States has gone up, the violent crime rate has taken a plunge. **Some researchers argue that** this isn't just a coincidence, that immigration is part of the reason for that drop. **One Canadian professor summed it all up** this way: *"In just about every country immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than the people who were there before them"*. For more coverage on issues surrounding immigration in Canada, visit *cbcnews.ca*.