

# Study: Changes in the regional distribution of new immigrants to Canada

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Almost half of all new immigrants to Canada in 2000 planned to settle in Toronto. By 2012, that proportion had fallen to less than one in three. The decade of the 2000s saw a rising share of new arrivals, instead, opting for other destinations, particularly locales on the Prairies.

There were several possible reasons for the shift, including changes in the programs through which immigrants entered Canada, changes in the source countries from which they arrived, as well as changes in relative regional economic performance.

The study specifically examined changes in both intended and actual settlement destinations of new immigrants. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of new immigrants intending to settle in Toronto declined from 48% to 33%, while the share intending to settle in Montréal increased from 12.5% to 16.6%.

In the West, the share intending to settle in Alberta increased from 6.3% to 11.6%, the share intending to settle in Manitoba increased from 2.0% to 5.6% and the share intending to settle in Saskatchewan increased from 0.8% to 2.7%. The share intending to settle in Vancouver declined from 14.6% to 13.3%.

Shifts in the actual destinations of new immigrants were broadly similar to shifts in their intended destinations.

The programs through which new immigrants entered Canada changed during the 2000s and had implications for settlement patterns. In particular, the share entering through Provincial Nominee Programs increased from less than 1% in 2000 to 13% in 2010, with this most evident in the western provinces. The source countries from which immigrants arrived also changed, with different groups varying in the extent to which they settled in locations such as Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver or other communities.

Between 2000 and 2010, changes in the use of immigration programs and in source countries accounted for approximately 40% of the decline in the share of new immigrants settling in Toronto. In Montréal, changing immigration programs reduced the share of new immigrants settling there, but this was offset by an increase associated with changing source countries.

Changing immigration programs, and particularly Provincial Nominee Programs, accounted for virtually all of the increase in the share of new immigrants settling in Winnipeg and Saskatchewan, and for much of the increase in smaller communities in Alberta. However, changing immigration programs and source countries did not account for much of the increases in the shares of new immigrants settling in Calgary and Edmonton.

Because of the small number of destinations that could be reliably examined, the effects of economic conditions and job growth could not be directly examined in the analysis, although they likely played a role in the changing shares of immigrants going to Alberta and Toronto.



**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5057](#).**

The research paper "Changes in the Regional Distribution of New Immigrants to Canada," which is part of the *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series* ([11F0019M](#)), is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

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