

Atlantic Canada experiences a recent uptick in retaining skilled immigrants

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Monday, December 12, 2022

Tracking immigration settlement patterns within Canada is a key part of immigration policy development, especially in the context of a shrinking workforce and [skills shortages in the five primary sectors](#) concentrated in different parts of the country. The need for skilled workers to fill regional labour force gaps is [especially critical in the Atlantic provinces](#).

Using the 2021 Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) released on December 5, this release examines how the five-year retention rate of the provinces and territories changed among immigrants admitted from 2010 to 2015. It also highlights the short-term achievements of the Atlantic provinces in retaining skilled workers and tradespersons.

The IMDB is a comprehensive source of data that plays a key role in better understanding the integration experiences of immigrants and non-permanent residents. It is the result of a collaboration between Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and the provinces.

Five-year retention rate in Ontario remains highest, while Prince Edward Island experiences the greatest increase

Among immigrants admitted from 2010 to 2015, those who intended to reside in Ontario, British Columbia or Alberta were the most likely to stay in those provinces five years after their arrival. The five-year retention rates of these three provinces were relatively consistent over time, with the exception of Alberta, where there was a drop from 88.9% among immigrants who arrived in 2014 to 84.5% among those who arrived in 2015.

Although Prince Edward Island had the lowest five-year retention rate, it also had the largest increase among recent admission cohorts.

In contrast, retaining immigrants five years after admission has become more challenging for Manitoba and Saskatchewan, both provinces' retention rates decreased by more than 10 percentage points from the 2010 admission cohort to that of 2015.



Table 1
Five-year retention rates, by admission year and province or territory

	Admission year					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	%					
Newfoundland and Labrador	53.8	51.0	49.5	51.2	46.2	47.8
Prince Edward Island	15.6	15.7	25.3	39.9	28.1	28.0
Nova Scotia	65.4	68.5	65.8	61.7	62.8	55.2
New Brunswick	48.7	47.7	47.3	48.3	42.4	48.0
Quebec	84.6	81.1	80.7	82.1	79.1	80.4
Ontario	90.8	91.0	91.8	93.2	93.7	92.0
Manitoba	78.9	78.2	75.2	74.9	72.7	67.7
Saskatchewan	78.2	79.9	72.3	66.1	62.7	62.9
Alberta	90.4	90.4	91.5	90.3	88.9	84.5
British Columbia	86.5	87.1	87.2	90.1	89.7	86.5
Territories	76.3	69.1	73.0	62.7	67.1	66.7

Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database 2021 (5057), table 43-10-0018-01.

The five-year provincial retention rates of immigrant women and men were similar for those admitted from 2010 to 2015.

Pre-admission work experience is an important factor in retaining immigrants. Among those admitted from 2010 to 2015 and who only had a work permit prior to admission, over 89% filed taxes in their province or territory of admission five years after admission.

In contrast, those who only had a study permit prior to admission had the lowest provincial retention rates. The retention rate of this group was 82.5% among those admitted in 2010 and fell to 74.7% among those admitted in 2015.

The five-year retention rate trend also varied by admission category. Immigrants admitted under the economic category are selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy. Among economic immigrants admitted in 2015, 79.5% remained in their province or territory of destination five years after admission, a drop of 4.3 percentage points from those admitted in 2010. The biggest decrease in economic immigrants' five-year retention rate was observed in Saskatchewan, from 79.3% among the 2010 admission cohort to 61.7% among that of 2015.

Immigrants sponsored by family had the highest five-year provincial retention rates. Among immigrants admitted in 2010, 92.6% of those sponsored by family remained in their province or territory of admission five years after admission, compared with 92.3% among those admitted in 2015. The five-year provincial retention rate of refugees was 86.1% among the 2010 admission cohort and increased slightly to 87.4% among that of 2015.

A higher share of skilled workers and skilled trades immigrants admitted to Atlantic Canada remain in their province of admission

In response to the low retention rates and the shrinking labour force in the Atlantic provinces, the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program (AIPP) was launched in 2017. This program focuses on collaboration between governments, employers, communities and settlement agencies to address these issues. In addition to recruiting skilled foreign workers and international graduates, employers work with settlement service provider organizations to facilitate the settlement and retention of immigrants and their families.

An [evaluation conducted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) concluded that the AIPP was more effective in retaining immigrants one year after admission compared with the Provincial Nominee Program. This same trend can be observed in the 2021 IMDB data, where AIPP is a subcategory of the skilled workers and skilled trades admission categories.

Three years into the AIPP, the one-year retention rate of skilled workers and skilled trades categories had risen substantially in all Atlantic provinces. However, such trends were not observed in most other provinces during the same period.

Nova Scotia's retention rate had the biggest increase; the one-year retention rate of immigrants admitted as skilled workers and skilled tradespersons in 2019 (67.6%) was more than three times higher than that of their counterparts admitted in 2016 (21.5%), before the AIPP was introduced.

New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador's one-year retention rates were also notably higher, each increasing by about 22 percentage points in four years.

Table 2
One-year retention rates of immigrants admitted under skilled workers and skilled trades categories, by province or territory

	Admission year			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
	%			
Provinces participating in Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program				
Newfoundland and Labrador	31.3	41.7	47.5	53.6
Prince Edward Island	..	40.0	69.7	63.5
Nova Scotia	21.5	51.5	63.0	67.6
New Brunswick	50.0	50.0	63.7	72.0
Provinces and territories not participating in Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program				
Quebec	86.3	83.4	84.6	85.1
Ontario	87.2	88.9	85.6	83.7
Manitoba	36.5	46.5	40.6	43.6
Saskatchewan	42.6	47.8	34.2	42.6
Alberta	69.4	77.7	70.8	69.8
British Columbia	72.3	76.1	64.0	66.3
Territories	50.0	66.7	66.7	..

.. not available for a specific reference period

Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database 2021 (5057), table 43-10-0018-01.

The results of the AIPP led to the [establishment of the permanent Atlantic Immigration Program in 2022](#). The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot program, a similar program with a geographic focus on smaller and rural communities, was [launched in 2019](#) and [expanded in 2022](#). Short- and long-term retention outcomes of these newly designed programs may be explored in future releases of IMDB data.

Note to readers

The Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) is a comprehensive source of data that plays a key role in better understanding the economic behaviour of immigrants and non-permanent residents. It is the only annual Canadian dataset that allows users to study the characteristics of immigrants to Canada at time of admission and the economic outcomes and regional mobility of immigrants over a period of more than 35 years.

The IMDB is the result of a partnership between Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and the provinces. The IMDB combines administrative data files on immigrant admissions and non-permanent resident permits from IRCC with tax files from the Canada Revenue Agency. IRCC's administrative records contain extensive information on immigrants admitted to Canada since 1952. They also include information on non-permanent residents who have been granted a temporary resident permit since 1980. Tax records for 1982 and subsequent years are available for immigrant taxpayers.

The IMDB links short-term and long-term outcomes to characteristics at admission, such as immigrant admission class, country of origin and knowledge of official languages. The IMDB also provides information on pre-admission experience in Canada and citizenship acquisition since 2005. The IMDB is updated annually, with slight changes that occur in data processing from year to year.

For additional information regarding the data coverage and data quality of the IMDB, users should refer to the 2021 Longitudinal Immigration Database technical report.

Economic immigrant admission categories include immigrants who were selected for their ability to contribute to Canada's economy through their ability to meet labour market needs, to own and manage or to build a business, to make a substantial investment, to create their own employment, or to meet specific provincial or territorial labour market needs.

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program was launched in 2017 as a pathway to permanent residence for skilled foreign workers and international graduates from a Canadian institution. It is an employer-driven program to fill labour needs in the region. In 2022, the [Atlantic Immigration Program](#) replaced the Pilot program.

Immigrant sponsored by family categories include immigrants who were sponsored to come to Canada by a family member who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.

Refugee categories include immigrants who were granted permanent resident status on the basis of a well-founded fear of returning to their home country. These include government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, protected persons in Canada, and their dependents.

Immigrant taxfilers are immigrants who have filed a tax return for a given taxation year.

The province or territory of admission is the province or territory of intended destination according to immigration application.

Retention rate is the percentage of immigrant taxfilers who filed taxes in their intended destination geography.

Available tables: [43-10-0017-01](#), [43-10-0018-01](#), [43-10-0022-01](#) and [43-10-0024-01](#).

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

The Longitudinal Immigration Database 2021, including the wages and salary module (1997 to 2021), is now available upon request.

The "[Longitudinal Immigration Database \(IMDB\) Technical Report, 2021](#)" is now available as part of the series *Analytical Studies: Methods and References* ([11-633-X](#)).

The data visualization tools "[Longitudinal Immigration Database \(IMDB\) Interactive Application: Economic Outcomes](#)" and "[Longitudinal Immigration Database \(IMDB\) Interactive Application: Mobility](#)" are now available as part of the series *Statistics Canada - Data Visualization Products* ([71-607-X](#)).

The products are available on the [Immigrant and Non-Permanent Resident Statistics](#) portal. The Portal was designed to provide easy and free access to immigrant and non-permanent resident data and publications. Information is organized into broad categories, including analytical products, data products, reference materials and interactive applications.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).