

Provincial variation in the retention rates of immigrants, 2022

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Immigration is a key contributor to Canada's population growth, as the Canadian [population continues to age](#) and the [fertility rate hit a record low](#). Understanding the extent to which immigrants remained in their intended destination provinces and territories can help develop policy to attract and retain newcomers. This can also help provinces and territories provide necessary services and infrastructure.

Using data from the 2022 Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), this release examines the provincial and territorial immigrant retention rates—the percentage of immigrant taxfilers who filed taxes in the province or territory where the immigrant intended to live in Canada, as indicated in their application for permanent residence—one year and five years after admission. Examining the one-year and five-year retention rates sheds light on the short- and medium-term settlement patterns of successive immigrant admission cohorts.

This release highlights variations in retention rates of immigrants by geography and admission category, with the focus on comparisons among the most recent admission cohorts available in the 2022 IMDB. The IMDB is the result of a collaboration between Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and the provinces.

The Prairie provinces and the territories experience declines in five-year retention rates, while those of Atlantic provinces are on the rise

Among immigrants admitted from 2012 to 2016, those who intended to reside in Ontario, British Columbia or Alberta were the most likely to stay in those provinces five years after their admission. Specifically, among immigrants admitted in 2016, the five-year retention rate was 93.1% in Ontario, 87.3% in British Columbia and 84.5% in Alberta. Quebec was not far behind, with a five-year retention rate of 81.0% among the 2016 admission cohort. While the five-year retention rates remained relatively consistent over time in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec, Alberta experienced a drop of 7.0 percentage points from 91.5% for the 2012 admission cohort.

Most of the other provinces and territories also experienced a decline in the five-year retention rate of immigrants admitted from 2012 to 2016. The Prairie provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, along with the territories, experienced the largest drops in the five-year retention rate of immigrants. In Saskatchewan, the five-year retention rate was down by 14.3 percentage points from the 2012 admission cohort (72.2%) to that of 2016 (57.9%). In Manitoba, the five-year retention rate fell by 11.0 percentage points, from 75.1% among immigrants admitted in 2012 to 64.1% for those admitted in 2016.

In the territories, 64.3% of immigrants admitted in 2016 were still filing taxes in the territories five years later. This was a decrease of 8.7% from 73.0% for the 2012 admission cohort.

In the Atlantic region, both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island experienced an uptick in the five-year retention rate for immigrants who were admitted in 2016. New Brunswick (56.0%) reached its highest five-year retention rate for immigrants admitted in 2016, after being relatively stable for immigrants admitted from 2012 to 2015. Prince Edward Island (30.9%) had the lowest retention rate in Canada for immigrants admitted in 2016, but this was 5.7 percentage points higher than the rate of the 2012 cohort (25.2%). During the same period, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador had relatively stable trends in the five-year provincial immigrant retention rate, with some fluctuations.



Table 1
Five-year retention rates, by province and territory and admission year, 2012 to 2016

	Admission year				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	%				
Newfoundland and Labrador	49.5	51.2	46.2	47.8	46.2
Prince Edward Island	25.2	39.9	28.1	28.0	30.9
Nova Scotia	65.8	61.5	62.5	55.0	62.7
New Brunswick	47.4	48.0	42.4	48.0	56.0
Quebec	80.7	82.1	79.1	80.4	81.0
Ontario	91.8	93.2	93.7	92.0	93.1
Manitoba	75.1	75.0	72.7	67.6	64.1
Saskatchewan	72.2	66.0	62.6	62.9	57.9
Alberta	91.5	90.3	88.9	84.5	84.5
British Columbia	87.1	90.1	89.6	86.5	87.3
Territories	73.0	62.7	67.1	66.7	64.3

Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database 2022 (5057), table 43-10-0018-01.

The five-year retention rates of family-sponsored immigrants and refugees remain high

The five-year provincial and territorial immigrant retention rates varied by admission category. Among immigrants admitted from 2012 to 2016, those sponsored by family consistently had the highest five-year retention rate, followed by refugees. For the 2016 admission cohort, 91.7% of immigrants sponsored by family and 86.4% of refugees filed taxes in their intended destination province or territory five years after their admission.

Retaining economic immigrants has always played a key role in relieving regional labour shortages. As a whole, the five-year retention rate of economic immigrants admitted from 2012 to 2016 trended downward; it dropped 4.2 percentage points, from 82.1% for the 2012 cohort to 77.9% for that of 2016. A similar trend was found among economic immigrants admitted through the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) and skilled workers and skilled trades (hereafter referred to as "skilled immigrants"). Skilled immigrants' five-year retention rate dropped by 5.8 percentage points, from 83.5% for the 2012 cohort to 77.7% for that of 2016. Meanwhile, economic immigrants admitted through the PNP experienced a more significant drop in the five-year retention rate (-8.1 percentage points), from 79.6% for the provincial and territorial nominees admitted in 2012 to 71.5% for their counterparts admitted in 2016.

In contrast, economic immigrants admitted as caregivers or through the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) continued to have high five-year retention rates across the observed admission cohorts. Among immigrants admitted as caregivers in 2016, 94.9% still filed taxes in their intended destination province or territory five years later, while this was the case for 88.1% of immigrants from the CEC.

Table 2
Five-year retention rates, by admission category and admission year, 2012 to 2016

	Admission year				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	%				
Immigrant sponsored by family	93.0	93.6	93.1	92.3	91.7
Economic Immigrant	82.1	82.6	81.7	79.5	77.9
Skilled worker and skilled trades	83.5	84.8	81.2	75.8	77.7
Canadian experience class	90.8	91.5	90.9	88.8	88.1
Provincial/territorial nominee	79.6	78.5	75.1	76.1	71.5
Caregiver	95.0	95.4	95.3	95.3	94.9
Refugee	86.8	87.1	86.4	87.4	86.4

Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database 2022 (5057), table 43-10-0018-01.

A glimpse into the short-term retention rate by province or territory of intended destination of the latest immigrant cohorts

While the five-year retention rate gives a sense of how many immigrants stayed in their province or territory of intended destination in the medium term, the one-year retention rate offers a glimpse into the short-term retention for the latest immigrant cohorts and may contrast with the trends observed in the five-year retention rate.

The trends of the one-year retention rate for immigrants admitted from 2016 to 2020 show that the Prairie provinces, specifically Alberta and Manitoba, were more stable than what was observed for the five-year retention rates. The one-year retention rate for Alberta fell by 2.3 percentage points from the 2016 admission cohort (88.0%) to that of 2020 (85.7%). In Manitoba, the one-year retention rate fell 3.5 percentage points, from 78.4% for immigrants admitted in 2016 to 74.9% for those admitted in 2020. In contrast, in Saskatchewan, the one-year retention rate fell from 75.7% for the 2016 admission cohort to 64.6% for that of 2020, representing an 11.1 percentage point drop and a similar downward trend to that of the five-year retention rate.

In the Atlantic provinces, the one-year retention rate trended upwards in Newfoundland and Labrador and was fairly stable in Nova Scotia. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the one-year retention rate grew by 11.4 percentage points, from 55.0% for the 2016 admission cohort to 66.4% for that of 2020. In New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, there were no clear trends for the one-year retention rates of immigrants admitted from 2016 to 2020.

Table 3
One-year retention rates, by province and territory and admission year, 2016 to 2020

	Admission year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	%				
Newfoundland and Labrador	55.0	60.5	60.3	63.4	66.4
Prince Edward Island	60.2	53.2	61.8	58.3	50.5
Nova Scotia	72.9	74.5	72.4	76.7	73.4
New Brunswick	70.1	67.9	72.9	72.2	66.1
Quebec	85.1	84.3	84.6	86.0	91.0
Ontario	94.9	95.9	94.1	93.2	92.8
Manitoba	78.4	79.3	76.9	77.5	74.9
Saskatchewan	75.7	71.4	66.2	67.6	64.6
Alberta	88.0	91.2	89.8	87.8	85.7
British Columbia	90.8	91.5	89.3	90.1	91.3
Territories	73.5	72.5	66.3	71.3	75.5

Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database 2022 (5057), table 43-10-0018-01.

The one-year retention rate for skilled immigrants admitted in the Atlantic provinces is on the rise

Historically, the Atlantic provinces have had lower rates of retaining newly admitted skilled immigrants compared with the rest of Canada. A look at the one-year retention rate of the latest cohorts of skilled immigrants in the Atlantic provinces shows that this changed with the 2017 admission cohort, which corresponds to the launch of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program (AIPP).

Overall, the one-year retention rate for skilled immigrants in the Atlantic provinces for the 2020 admission cohort was higher than the rate prior to the launch of the AIPP. Nova Scotia experienced the highest increase to the retention rate of skilled immigrants (+42.4 percentage points), up from 21.5% for the 2016 cohort to 63.9% for that of 2020. The one-year rate of retaining skilled immigrants admitted in 2020 was 65.8% in New Brunswick, up 15.8 percentage points from the 50.0% admitted in 2016. Newfoundland and Labrador's one-year retention rate increased by 18.7 percentage points, from 31.3% for skilled immigrants admitted in 2016 to 50.0% for those admitted in 2020. For Prince Edward Island, the one-year retention rate for skilled immigrants admitted in 2020 was 30.0 percentage points higher than that of the 2017 admission cohort (40.0% in tax year 2018). With the exception of Prince Edward Island, all of the Atlantic provinces experienced slight declines in retaining skilled immigrants admitted in 2020 compared with the 2019 admission cohort.

Table 4
One-year retention rate of skilled workers and skilled trades by province and territory and admission year, 2016 to 2020

	Admission year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	%				
Newfoundland and Labrador	31.3	41.7	47.5	53.6	50.0
Prince Edward Island	..	40.0	70.6	63.5	70.0
Nova Scotia	21.5	51.5	62.4	67.5	63.9
New Brunswick	50.0	50.0	63.7	71.5	65.8
Quebec	86.3	83.4	84.5	84.9	91.4
Ontario	87.3	88.9	85.6	83.7	81.9
Manitoba	36.5	46.5	42.0	44.3	44.4
Saskatchewan	42.6	47.8	33.8	42.6	39.3
Alberta	69.4	77.5	70.8	69.7	63.4
British Columbia	72.3	76.0	63.9	66.2	67.4
Territories	50.0	66.7	66.7	..	100.0

.. not available for a specific reference period

Source(s): Longitudinal Immigration Database 2022 (5057), table 43-10-0018-01.

This release focused on the provincial and territorial retention rates of immigrants. Main immigrant gateways, such as Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec, continued to have relatively stable and high five-year and one-year retention rates. Declines in both the one-year and five-year retention rates were seen across the Prairie provinces, but they were smaller for the one-year retention rates of the most recent immigrant cohorts. The five-year retention rate remained highest among family-sponsored immigrants and refugees and lowest among economic immigrants, where variations were found by admission program. The one-year retention rate of skilled immigrants also showed an upward trend in Atlantic Canada, particularly with the introduction of the AIPP in 2017.

An article using data from the 2022 IMDB on [immigrants' economic outcomes in the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) was published on January 22, 2024.

Did you know we have a mobile app?

Get timely access to data right at your fingertips by downloading the [StatsCAN app](#), available for free on the [App Store](#) and on [Google Play](#).

Note to readers

Definitions and concepts

The Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) is a comprehensive source of data that plays a key role in 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 40 years.

Data are available in tables [43-10-0017-01](#), [43-10-0018-01](#), [43-10-0022-01](#) and [43-10-0024-01](#).

The IMDB is the result of a partnership between Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and the provinces. The IMDB combines administrative 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 taxfilers.

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.

It is to be noted that the IMDB is updated annually. From year to year, there have been changes to data processing. Each yearly update is independent.

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.

Canadian Experience Class includes immigrants who have been selected by the federal government and were granted permanent resident status on the basis of their Canadian work experience.

Caregiver includes immigrants who were granted permanent residence after providing care for children or care for seniors, people with disabilities, or people with chronic disease—in Canada and for a determinate period of time.

Provincial Nominee Program includes immigrants who have been nominated by a province or territory for their ability to contribute to the local economy and meet specific labour market and economic development needs.

Skilled workers and skilled trades (also referred to as "skilled immigrants" in this release) includes immigrants who have been selected for their ability to meet specific labour needs as skilled workers or in specific trades. They were assessed on the basis of selection criteria such as their education, language abilities and work experience in management, professional, technical jobs or qualifying skilled trades jobs.

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 category includes 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.

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

Retention rate represents the percentage of immigrant taxfilers who filed taxes in the geographical area (province or economic region as designated) where the immigrant intended to live in Canada, as indicated in their application for permanent residence for a given tax year.

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

For a more detailed description of the immigrant admission classes, see the [IRCC Glossary](#).

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

The Longitudinal Immigration Database 2022, including the wages and salary module (1997 to 2022), is now available upon request.

The "[Longitudinal Immigration Database \(IMDB\) Technical Report, 2022](#)," 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).