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# Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada

## Progress and Challenges of New Immigrants in the Workforce

2003



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Statistics Canada  
Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division

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## Symbols

The following standard symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0<sup>s</sup> value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- p preliminary
- r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

## Acknowledgments

This report has been written by Tina Chui and Kelly Tran, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada.

Sincere thanks are extended to the immigrants who took the time to participate in the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC). The information that they provided to the survey will further immigration research and contribute to policy development.

A number of key individuals made this study possible and their contributions must be acknowledged: Johanne Denis, Chantal Grondin, Patrice Dion, Owen Phillips and Dominic Grenier of the LSIC team for their leadership in managing the project, ensuring the data quality and the timely processing of the data; and Peter Smith for his technical support.

Many thanks also go to the various individuals, including Grant Schellenberg, Jessie-Lynn MacDonald and colleagues from Citizenship and Immigration Canada for their review and comments on the study.

## Note to readers

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### Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada

This release contains the first results from the second wave of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC). The LSIC was designed to study how new immigrants adjust over time to living in Canada. During the first wave of the LSIC, about 12,000 immigrants representing 164,200 people aged 15 and over were interviewed between April 2001 and May 2002, about six months after their arrival. During the second wave of the LSIC, about 9,300 immigrants from the first wave representing 160,800 people were interviewed again in 2003, approximately two years after their arrival. These were individuals who remained in Canada for two years and whom Statistics Canada was able to locate. The third wave of the LSIC is currently in the field, and collects information from these same immigrants four years after their arrival.

Results from the first wave of the LSIC<sup>1</sup> showed that labour market integration is a particularly critical aspect of the immigrant settlement process. This release therefore focuses on this issue. The release addresses questions such as: how long does it take new immigrants to get their first job? How many of them find employment in their intended occupation? And what obstacles do they encounter when looking for work?

Given the focus on labour market integration, the analysis is limited to the 6,000 immigrants who were in the prime working-age group of 25 to 44 years, representing 106,600 people. Immigrants who were aged 15 to 24 or aged 45 or older are excluded in order to remove the effects of students, late labour market entrants and retirees from the analysis.

Moreover, particular emphasis is placed on principal applicants in the skilled worker category, since these individuals are admitted to Canada because of their high level of labour market skills. Finally, labour market integration is examined over the first two years in Canada, broadly defined as the 24 to 28 months between landing and the time of the second LSIC interview.

### Immigration categories

Canada's immigration policy has been guided by three broad objectives: to foster a strong viable economy in all regions of Canada, to reunite families, and to fulfill the country's international obligations and humanitarian tradition with respect to refugees.

These objectives are reflected through the three main immigration categories under which people are admitted to Canada as permanent residents: economic immigrants, family-class immigrants and refugees.

People admitted through the economic category include principal applicants and accompanying spouses or dependants of skilled workers, business immigrants and provincial/territorial nominees. Skilled worker principal applicants are selected based on a number of criteria including their education, language ability and employment skills. These immigrants are deemed to be more likely to succeed in the labour force and contribute to the Canadian economy. Spouses and dependent children of skilled worker principal applicants are admitted without an evaluation of their skills.

The largest share of immigrants aged 25 to 44 in the LSIC (76%) were admitted under the skilled worker category — 47% as principal applicants and 29% as accompanying spouse or dependents. About three-quarters (76%) of the principal applicants are men, while slightly more than eight in ten (82%) of the spouses or dependents are women. The vast majority (87%) of the principal applicants in the skilled worker category have a university degree.

1. Chui, Tina. *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, Progress and Prospects*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-611-X, Ottawa, 2003. *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada— A Portrait of Early Settlement Experiences*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-614-X, Ottawa, 2005.

Immigrants in the family category accounted for 15% of immigrants aged 25 to 44 in the LSIC, while refugees accounted for 5%. The remaining 5%<sup>2</sup> was mainly comprised of business class immigrants and provincial nominees.

Across all immigration categories, more than two thirds (68%) of all prime working-age immigrants arrived in Canada with a university degree.

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<sup>2</sup> Due to rounding, percentages may not add up exactly to 100%.

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## Highlights

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- The vast majority (80%) of prime working-age immigrants found employment during their first two years in Canada, and most worked for more than one year. Of those who found employment, 42% obtained a job in their intended occupation. This was the case for about half (48%) of principal applicants in the skilled worker category.



# Analysis

## Most immigrants had worked and many found jobs soon after arrival

For many newcomers, obtaining employment is a key facet of establishing a new life in Canada. Though the process can take some time, 80% of immigrants aged 25 to 44 had worked in at least one job during their first two years in Canada.

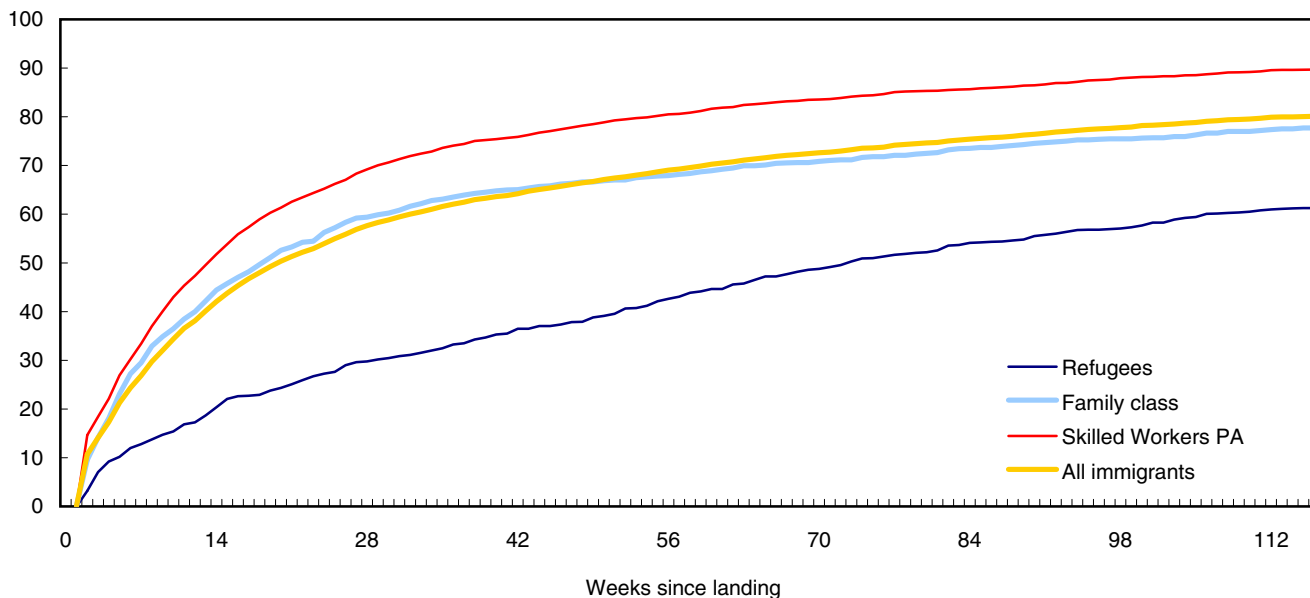
Most principal applicants in the skilled worker category (skilled worker PAs — 90%) found employment during this initial two-year period, while this was the case for 78% of immigrants in the family category and 62% of refugees.

Many immigrants found work quite soon after arrival. Of all those who found employment in Canada, 70% started their first job within six months of arrival, 15% did so 7 to 12 months after arrival and 15% did so more than one year after arrival.

Similarly, most skilled worker PAs found employment early on in the settlement process. Of those who found employment, 75% did so within six months of arrival, while 14% did so 7 to 12 months after arrival and 11% did so after one year.

Chart 1

Immigrants aged 25 to 44: Proportion who had any employment, by weeks since landing, for selected immigration categories



## Many new immigrants worked throughout their first two years in Canada

Not only had many new immigrants found employment quite soon after arrival, a considerable share had sustained employment throughout their first two years in Canada.

Of the 8 in 10 that had any employment during this period, 58% worked for 18 months or more. Another 17% were employed for approximately 13 to 17 months, while the remaining 25% were employed for 12 months or less.

Sustained employment was most prevalent among principal applicants in the skilled worker category. Of those with employment, 64% worked for 18 months or more, 16% worked for 13 to 17 months, and 20% worked for 12 months or less.

Among immigrants in the family category who had employment, 59% worked for 18 months or more while 24% worked for 12 months or less. And among refugees with employment, 39% worked for 18 months or more while 37% worked for 12 months or less.

## **Employment rates moved towards the national average**

The gains that immigrants aged 25 to 44 made in the labour market during their first two years in Canada can be gauged by comparing their employment rates at certain points to those of all Canadians in the same age group.

At 26 weeks after arrival, 50% of immigrants aged 25 to 44 were employed. This was 30 percentage points lower than the employment rate among all persons aged 25 to 44 in Canada over the same period of time (80%). This gap is not surprising given that immigrants had a limited amount of time to get established in the labour force and many settlement activities to deal with.

At 52 weeks after arrival, the employment rate among prime working-age immigrants was 58% — 23 percentage points lower than the national rate among this age group over the same period (at 81%). At 104 weeks after arrival, the employment rate among prime working-age immigrants was 63%, 18 percentage points lower than the national rate over the same period (at 81%).

Overall, the employment rate of prime working-age immigrants moved towards the national average as they resided in Canada for a longer period of time.

Considering skilled worker PAs in the 25 to 44 age group, the difference between their employment rate and the national average narrowed from 20 percentage points 26 weeks after arrival, to 12 percentage points 52 weeks after arrival, to 8 percentage points 104 weeks after arrival.

Among all prime working-age persons, employment rates are highest among those who have a university degree. In this context, it should be noted that the vast majority (87%) of skilled worker PAs aged 25 to 44 have a university degree, compared with 25% of all Canadians in that age group, as reported by the Labour Force Survey.

## **Most immigrants followed through on their intention to work in Canada**

Six months after immigrants' arrival in Canada, an estimated 100,100 prime working age immigrants (94%) intended to work. Of those who expressed this intention, 83% found employment during their first two years in the country. Of those who did not intend to work, 44% took employment during this period.

## **Half of immigrants held only one job during their first two years in Canada**

Of the 85,600 prime working-age immigrants who had employment during their first two years in Canada, one-half (42,900) held only one job. Of these single job holders, 59% (25,200) had held that job for more than one year and were still working in that job at the end of the two year period. Most men (89%) and women (72%) who held only one job worked full-time in that position.

The other 42,700 prime working-age immigrants with employment held more than one job during their first two years in Canada. Most held two jobs (26,700), while fewer had three jobs (10,700) or four or more jobs (5,200).<sup>1</sup>

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1. Due to rounding, the sum of the components may not add up exactly to the total.

Of the skilled worker principal applicants who had any employment, 52% held two or more jobs. This was the case for 54% of immigrants in the family category and 40% of refugees who had employment.

For some immigrants, a change from one job to another involved a transition from part-time to full-time employment. Of the 42,700 immigrants with two or more jobs, 7,700 (18%) worked part-time in their first job but full-time in their most recent job. For this group, part-time work may have been a stepping stone towards greater labour market integration. Very few individuals moved in the opposite direction, as only 2,700 (6%) moved from full-time hours in their first job to part-time hours in their most recent job. Finally, 29,300 (69%) worked full-time in both their first and most recent jobs, while 3,000 (7%) worked part-time in both jobs.

Job changes also involved occupational mobility in many cases. Of the 42,700 immigrants with two or more jobs, 14,300 were employed in a sales or service occupation in their first job. Three in ten of these immigrants (30%) were subsequently employed in other occupations typically characterized by higher skill requirements, specifically, natural and applied science and related occupations, occupations in health, and occupations in business, finance and administration.

### **Some modest gains in finding employment in intended occupations**

As noted at the outset, most prime working-age immigrants (80%) were successful in finding employment of some sort during their first two years in Canada.

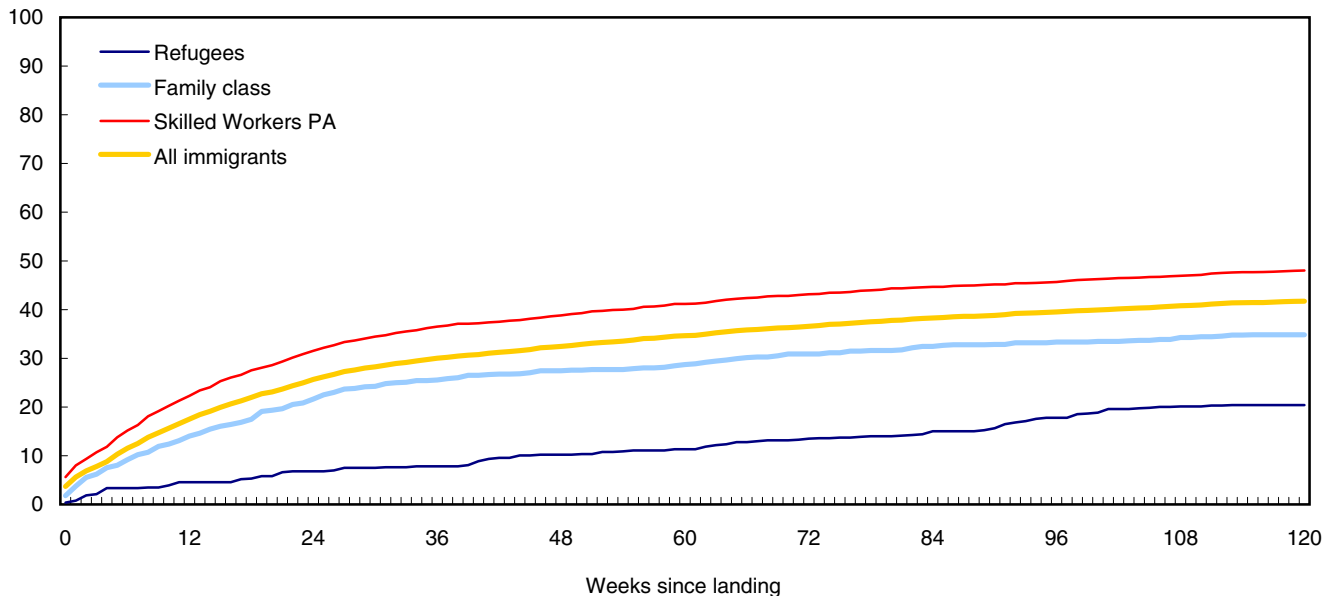
Of those who found employment, about four in ten (42%) found a job in their intended occupation. One-third (33%) did so during their first year in Canada, while another 9% did so during their second year. The remaining 58% did not find employment in their intended occupation.

Among skilled worker PAs who were aged 25 to 44, the vast majority (90%) found employment during their first two years in Canada. Of those with employment, just under half (48%) found a job in their intended occupation. Four in ten (40%) did so during their first year in Canada, while another 8% did so during their second year. The remaining 52% found a job, but not in their intended occupation.

Of the approximately 45,000 skilled worker principal applicants who found employment in Canada, almost half (47%) had intended to find work in natural and applied sciences and related occupations. About half (49%) of this group actually did so by the end of the two year period.

Chart 2

**Employed Immigrants aged 25 to 44: Proportion who had employment in intended occupation, by weeks since landing, for selected immigration categories**



**One-fifth of immigrants had not worked at all since arriving in Canada**

One-fifth (20%) of prime working-age immigrants had not had any employment after two years in Canada. In absolute terms, this represented approximately 21,000 individuals. The majority of these individuals were women (74%), many of whom were spouses or dependents of immigrants in the economic category or immigrants in the family category.

One in ten skilled worker PAs (10%) had not taken employment by the end of their second year. Many of these individuals were enrolled in education or training programs (56%) or trying to enter the workforce by looking for work or by starting a business (20%).

Considering other immigrant categories, 22% of immigrants in the family category and 38% of refugees had not worked during their first two years in Canada. Of immigrants in the family category who had not had employment, 68% were homemakers or providing care to family members and 24% were enrolled in education or training. Of the refugees who had not had employment, 49% were enrolled in education or training and 41% were homemakers or providing care to family members.

**Lack of Canadian work experience still critical to immigrants**

After six months, the most serious problem prime working-age immigrants faced when trying to find employment was their lack of experience in the Canadian workforce. This was still the most serious problem after two years.

Among the 65,600 prime working-age immigrants who looked for employment 6 to 24 months after landing, 71% (or 46,500) encountered at least one problem. Of these individuals, about one out of four (26%) cited a lack of Canadian work experience as the most serious problem they encountered, while about one-fifth (21%) said the most serious problem was lack of acceptance or recognition of their foreign work experience or qualifications. Language barriers were the most serious problem for 15%, while another 14% cited a shortage of jobs.

Skilled worker PAs who encountered problems most often cited lack of Canadian work experience (26%) or lack of acceptance of their foreign experience or qualifications (23%). Another 16% said there were not enough jobs available and 9% cited language barriers as the most serious problem they faced.

Of the refugees who reported problems finding employment, 28% cited language barriers as the most serious problem they faced while 25% cited lack of Canadian work experience. Among immigrants in the family category, the most serious problems encountered were lack of Canadian work experience (30%), language barriers (15%), not enough jobs available (15%) and lack of recognition of foreign experience and credentials (15%).

### **Overall, many were satisfied with their job in spite of the challenges**

Despite these challenges, the share of newcomers who said they were satisfied with their job increased from 74% six months after landing to 84% two years after landing. Job satisfaction was higher for those who were able to use their training, who worked in their intended occupation or who worked full-time.

Furthermore, newcomers generally had favorable assessments of their first two years in Canada. When asked about their overall experience, 73,900 prime working-age immigrants (70%) said their experience had either met or exceeded their expectations.

### **Looking ahead – the research potential of the LSIC**

This article has laid out some of the employment experiences of newcomers to Canada. However, employment dynamics are complex and individuals have many different experiences over time. Further analysis is needed to understand this complexity. For example, to what extent do improvements in language skills, Canadian training and Canadian work experience translate into employment gains over time? How do the labour market trajectories of immigrant men and women differ, particularly given the responsibilities for homemaking and family care undertaken by immigrant women?

The LSIC also examines topics such as housing, education, foreign credential recognition, income, the development and use of social networks, language skills, health, and values and attitudes.

There is now information on the experiences of immigrants two years after arrival. When the third wave of the LSIC is completed, information will be available to understand the settlement process and progress of immigrants over their first four years in Canada.

## Related products

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### Selected publications from Statistics Canada

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89-611-X	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, progress and prospects
89-614-X	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada - A portrait of early settlement experiences

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### Selected surveys from Statistics Canada

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4422	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada
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## Survey objectives

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The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) is a survey designed to study the process by which new immigrants adapt and integrate into Canadian society, including the various stages of the integration process, and the factors that help or hinder integration. The survey also examines how the socio-economic characteristics of immigrants influence the process by which they integrate into Canadian society.

The respondents are interviewed at three separate stages after their arrival in Canada: six months, two years and four years after arrival. This will allow the LSIC to compile a dynamic picture of the experiences of these newly arrived people.

## Survey methods

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The target population for the survey consists of immigrants who arrived in Canada from abroad between October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 and September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and were 15 years or older at the time of arrival. The target population accounts for approximately 169,400 of the 250,000 persons admitted to Canada during this period.

Individuals who applied and landed from within Canada are excluded from the survey. These immigrants may have been in Canada for a considerable length of time before officially "landing" and would therefore likely demonstrate quite different integration characteristics from those who recently arrived in Canada. Refugees claiming asylum from within Canada are also excluded from the scope of the survey. Coverage of the survey included all Census Metropolitan Areas and non-remote Census Agglomerations.

The population of interest consists of immigrants in the target population who still reside in Canada at the time of a given wave. During the six months between arrival and the first interview, and the period between the first and second interviews, some immigrants left Canada to return to their country of origin, or to another country. These individuals are excluded from the population of interest. At wave one, the population of interest was estimated at about 164,200 immigrants; and at wave two, it was estimated to be 160,800.

The sample is made up of 12 independent monthly samples selected over consecutive months. Collection was completed separately for each month of landing. Interviews were done in 1 of 15 languages, including English and French. The majority of wave one interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted on average 90 minutes; for the second wave, about half of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted about 65 minutes.

In total, 20,322 immigrants were selected from the target population; 12,040 responded to the survey in the first wave and were followed in wave two. Of these, 9,322 responded to the wave two interview.

Each respondent in the survey has been assigned a specific weight, which estimates the number of other immigrants represented by this respondent in the population of interest. As a result of the complexity of the sample design and adjustments to account for non-response, it is important to use the survey weights in order to generate unbiased and reliable statistics.

The estimates presented in this paper are based on the 5,994 immigrants who were in the prime working-age group of 25 to 44 years when they landed in Canada, and who participated in the wave two interview. This sample is representative of the wave two population of interest (for this age group) through the use of the wave two longitudinal weights. The characteristics of the wave two population of interest six months after arrival in Canada may differ somewhat from published estimates for the wave one population (see *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, Progress and Prospects*,<sup>1</sup> for example), as the wave two population represents a subset of the wave one population.

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1. Chui, Tina. *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, Progress and Prospects*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 89-611-X, Ottawa, 2003.



## Data limitations

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The figures appearing in this report are weighted estimates based on the data collected from the sample of wave two respondents and are subject to potential error. In all surveys, error can be divided into two components: sampling and non-sampling error.

Sampling error is the difference between an estimate derived from a sample and the one that would have been obtained based on information from everyone in the population using the same collection procedures. The size of the sampling error can be estimated from the survey results. Indications of the magnitude of the sampling error for the estimates must be provided. If the estimated sampling error is greater than 33.3% of the estimate, it is considered too unreliable to publish. Although not considered unreliable to publish, values with an estimated error between 16.6% and 33.3% of the related estimate should be used with caution. In this report, all values had sampling errors lower than 16.6% of the related estimate.

All other types of errors—such as coverage, response, processing and non-response—are considered non-sampling errors. Many of these errors are difficult to identify and quantify. Coverage errors arise when there are differences between the target population and the surveyed population.

Of the 12,040 immigrants followed for the wave two interview, 9,322 participated (respondents); 1,370 chose not to participate (non-respondents); and 200 were found to be no longer in the population of interest (out of scope). Additionally, 1,148 immigrants could not be located, and thus their status was unresolved.

To the extent that non-responding immigrants differ from immigrants who were unresolved and—more importantly—from immigrants who responded to the survey, separate weight adjustments were introduced in the final weights in order to compensate for the non-completed questionnaires.

While there were some partially completed questionnaires and non-response items, such omissions were in general infrequent. However non response was higher for questions on family and household income amounts. Hence imputation methods were used to correct these errors.

For more details about the LSIC sample design, use of weights, non-response adjustments and imputation, please refer to the Microdata User Guide – Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada – Wave 1<sup>1</sup> (a wave two user guide will be available in November 2005).

1. *Statistics Canada. Microdata User Guide – Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada – Wave 1, 2003*, [http://www.statcan.ca/english/sdds/document/4422\\_D1\\_T1\\_V1\\_E.pdf](http://www.statcan.ca/english/sdds/document/4422_D1_T1_V1_E.pdf).