TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF IMMIGRATION IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Demographic Change, Labour Market Integration, and Long-Term Settlement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SOME DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

After decades of population stagnation driven by outmigration and population aging, Atlantic Canada experienced renewed population growth during the past decade. Increased international immigration, combined with positive net migration from other parts of Canada, more than offset the region's negative natural increase, where deaths exceed births. In 2024, immigration accounted for approximately 60 percent of population growth, while net migration from the rest of Canada contributed nearly 16 percent. Excluding non-permanent residents, immigration was responsible for all net population growth in the region.

While interprovincial migration has contributed to recent population gains, it remains sensitive to economic conditions and changing work arrangements. As a result, long-term population growth in Atlantic Canada will depend primarily on attracting and retaining immigrants. Immigration has therefore become a demographic necessity rather than simply a source of population diversification.

OVERVIEW OF IMMIGRATION IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Immigration has transformed the demographic landscape of Atlantic Canada. Between 2001 and 2021, the immigrant population grew by 86.6 percent, increasing its share of the region's population from 3.5 percent to 7.0 percent. Growth occurred across all four provinces, although Nova Scotia continued to receive the largest number of immigrants for most of the period.

Economic immigrants accounted for the majority of admissions, with the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) becoming the dominant pathway. More recently, the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) has emerged as an increasingly important component of regional immigration policy, reflecting a stronger emphasis on employer-driven recruitment and settlement.

The composition of source countries has also changed significantly over the past 25 years. Traditional source countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States have become less prominent, while India, China, the Philippines and several emerging source countries (such as Nigeria in NS and NB, South Korea in NS, Afghanistan and Ukraine in NL, Vietnam and Jamica in PEI) now account for a growing share of arrivals. Emergence of Cameroon and Morrocco in NB is also noteworthy as it reflects federal and provincial initiatives to attract French speaking immigrants outside of Quebec. These changes have increased the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region's immigrant population.

Despite rising immigration levels, retention remains one of the most significant challenges facing Atlantic Canada. Retention rates vary considerably across provinces and immigration categories, with Nova Scotia achieving the strongest long-term outcomes. Family-class immigrants generally exhibit the highest retention rates, while economic and refugee immigrants are more likely to leave the region.

The findings suggest that attracting immigrants is only the first step toward addressing demographic and labour market challenges. Long-term success depends on creating conditions that encourage newcomers to remain in the region. Employment opportunities, housing affordability, access to health care, credential recognition, settlement supports, and a sense of community belonging all play important roles in retention. Evidence indicating stronger retention among participants in the Atlantic Immigration Program highlights the value of employment-driven pathways that combine labour market integration with settlement support.

IMMIGRANTS IN THE LABOUR FORCE OF ATLANTIC CANADA

Labour Force Growth

Immigration has become a critical source of labour force growth in Atlantic Canada. Between 2006 and 2024, growth in the non-immigrant labour force was modest in population centres and negative in many rural areas. In contrast, the immigrant labour force expanded rapidly across both urban and rural regions, with particularly strong growth among recent immigrants.[1]

These trends demonstrate that immigration is helping offset the effects of population aging and slower growth among the Canadian-born population. During the most recent years of the study, immigrants accounted for a substantial share of labour force growth, reinforcing their importance to the region’s economic sustainability.

Continued investment in settlement and integration services, particularly in rural communities, will be important for sustaining these gains and improving retention outside major urban centres.

Gender Distribution

The analysis reveals important regional and gender differences in labour market outcomes. Male and female immigrants are more evenly represented in rural labour markets than in population centres, while unemployment patterns vary across regions and demographic groups.

These findings suggest that labour market challenges are not solely related to immigrant status but are also shaped by geography, industry structure and gender. Place-based and occupation-specific approaches may therefore be more effective than broad, one-size-fits-all policies. Better data on rural labour markets would also improve the evidence base for policy development and program evaluation.

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[1] Throughout this study, recent immigrants are considered those whose period of arrival is 5 years or less.

Industry and Occupation Distribution

Immigrants are concentrated in several key industries, including health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, professional, scientific and technical services, and finance and insurance. Recent immigrants are particularly likely to be employed in accommodation and food services and other sectors that often serve as entry points into the labour market.

The occupational evidence suggests that labour market integration remains uneven. While the regional economy has experienced occupational upgrading over time, many immigrants continue to face challenges in securing employment that fully reflects their education and skills. Strengthening credential recognition processes, professional licensing systems and employer engagement initiatives could improve the utilization of immigrant talent and enhance the economic returns to immigration.

Labour Market Performance

Recent immigrants generally demonstrate strong labour force participation rates, reflecting the increasingly employment-driven nature of immigrant selection. Participation rates remain higher among recent immigrants than among both established immigrants and non-immigrants.

Unemployment outcomes have also improved over time, particularly among immigrants admitted through employer-linked programs. Nevertheless, differences persist across gender groups and regions, indicating that barriers to labour market integration have not been fully eliminated.

Income trends reveal a more complex picture. While immigrants historically earned incomes comparable to or higher than those of non-immigrants, this advantage has diminished over time. Recent immigrants continue to experience earnings gaps, although some evidence suggests improvements in labour market matching during the most recent years. These findings underscore the importance of policies that strengthen the connection between immigrant selection, skills recognition and regional labour market needs.

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

The evidence indicates that immigration contributes positively to economic growth in Atlantic Canada and across Canada more broadly. Immigrants enhance labour supply, support business expansion, and contribute to productivity growth through their skills and experience.

The analysis also suggests that post-secondary educated immigrants generate particularly strong economic benefits in smaller provinces, highlighting the importance of attracting and retaining skilled workers. At the same time, weaker economic returns among some highly educated workers may reflect challenges related to credential recognition, occupational matching and the time required for newcomers to fully integrate into local labour markets.

These findings reinforce the importance of policies that facilitate labour market integration and ensure that immigrant skills are utilized effectively.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

International students have become an increasingly important component of Atlantic Canada's demographic and economic landscape. New student arrivals increased substantially between 2001 and 2024, despite the temporary disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of this growth occurred during the most recent years of the study period.

The source-country composition of international students has also evolved, with India becoming the dominant source country in recent years. At the same time, students from countries such as the Philippines, Ghana, Nigeria and Bangladesh have become increasingly important contributors to enrolment growth.

International students represent a valuable source of future immigrants and skilled workers. Their successful transition from education to employment and permanent residency can contribute to both population growth and labour market development. The findings also highlight the importance of diversifying recruitment markets, expanding programs aligned with labour market needs, strengthening career supports, and improving access to affordable housing.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that immigration has become a central driver of population growth, labour force expansion and economic development in Atlantic Canada. In a region facing population aging, low fertility rates and persistent labour shortages, immigration is increasingly essential to long-term demographic and economic sustainability.

At the same time, the report identifies important challenges. Retention remains uneven across provinces and immigration categories, while barriers related to credential recognition, occupational matching and earnings continue to limit the full economic contribution of some newcomers. These challenges are particularly important because attracting immigrants alone is insufficient if a significant share subsequently leaves the region.

The findings further demonstrate the growing importance of employer-driven immigration pathways and the potential role of international students as a future source of skilled workers and permanent residents. Policies that strengthen labour market integration, improve settlement outcomes, support family establishment and enhance retention will be critical to maximizing the benefits of immigration.

Overall, the success of Atlantic Canada's immigration strategy will depend not only on the number of newcomers it attracts, but also on its ability to create the economic and social conditions that encourage them to build their futures in the region.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The reduction in permanent resident admission targets, the cap on international student permits, and measures aimed at slowing the growth of temporary resident populations are expected to reduce the pool of potential newcomers available to Atlantic Canada. These changes increase the importance of maximizing the economic and demographic contributions of those who are admitted. In a lower-growth immigration environment, retention and integration become even more critical policy priorities.

Retention should remain a central objective. While admission levels increased substantially during the past decade, many immigrants continue to leave the region after arrival. Improving retention will require a coordinated approach that extends beyond immigration policy itself. Access to suitable employment, affordable housing, timely health care, quality education, and opportunities for community participation all influence newcomers' decisions to remain in the region. Attention should be paid to supporting immigrant families and facilitating their long-term settlement.

Labour market integration also warrants continued policy attention. The evidence indicates that many immigrants experience challenges in securing employment that fully utilizes their education and skills. Strengthening credential recognition processes, reducing licensing delays, expanding employer engagement, and increasing access to bridging programs and professional development opportunities would help improve job matching and earnings outcomes. Programs such as the Atlantic Immigration Program and the Atlantic Immigrant Career Loan Fund demonstrate the value of linking immigration, settlement, and workforce development policies and should be strengthened. Furthermore, focusing on PNP and Canadian Experience Class to recruit high skilled immigrants can address the issue of low income among immigrants. The fact that more of the new immigrants have university degrees, the possibility of any employer discrimination should also be investigated and addressed.

Given the growing importance of smaller communities in addressing regional labour shortages, efforts to attract and retain immigrants outside major urban centres should continue. Expanding settlement services in rural areas, improving access to language training, and supporting community integration initiatives can help strengthen retention in locations experiencing population decline and labour shortages. With lower national immigration targets, competition among provinces for newcomers may intensify, making local retention strategies increasingly important.

The changing policy environment also reinforces the need to improve the effectiveness of immigrant selection. Employer-driven pathways that align immigration admissions with regional labour market needs may become increasingly important as admission levels become more constrained. Greater emphasis on occupational matching, credential recognition, and career progression can help maximize the economic contribution of newcomers already admitted to the region.

International students represent another important policy opportunity, although recent federal caps on study permits may slow future growth in enrolment. As a result, Atlantic Canada's universities, colleges, employers, and governments may need to place greater emphasis on retaining the international students who are already studying in the region. Strengthening pathways from education to employment and permanent residence, improving access to housing and career services, and enhancing connections with employers can increase the likelihood that graduates remain in Atlantic Canada after completing their studies.

Finally, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of immigration programs will be essential. Better and more timely data on retention, labour market outcomes, occupational mobility, and regional settlement patterns would improve evidence-based policymaking and help ensure that immigration continues to support the region's long-term prosperity.

Overall, the evidence suggests that Atlantic Canada's immigration strategy is entering a new phase. During the past decade, policy efforts focused largely on increasing admissions and attracting newcomers. In a period of lower immigration growth and tighter international student policies, future success will depend increasingly on retention, labour market integration, and the effective utilization of immigrant talent already present in the region. The ability to attract newcomers will remain important, but the ability to retain and successfully integrate them will become even more critical to Atlantic Canada's long-term economic and demographic sustainability.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, Atlantic Canada has faced significant demographic challenges. Population aging, low fertility rates, and rising mortality have resulted in negative natural population growth, with deaths consistently exceeding births across much of the region. Although net interprovincial migration has periodically contributed to population growth, these gains have been volatile and insufficient to offset longer-term demographic decline.

Population growth is a critical determinant of economic growth because it supports labour force expansion, human capital development, innovation, investment, and consumer demand. Sustained population growth also helps maintain the relative representation of provinces in the House of Commons. Recognizing these challenges, provincial governments in Atlantic Canada and the federal government increasingly turned to immigration during the twenty-first century as a key policy instrument for addressing demographic decline and supporting economic development.

Historically, immigration policy in Atlantic Canada has pursued both demographic and economic objectives. Demographically, immigration has been viewed as a means of slowing population aging, offsetting negative natural population growth, and stabilizing the population base of communities facing long-term decline. Economically, immigration has been expected to alleviate labour shortages, expand the labour force, support entrepreneurship, attract investment, and contribute to regional economic growth. As the evidence presented throughout this report demonstrates, immigration has become increasingly important in achieving both objectives and is now the principal driver of population growth in the region.

While immigration remains under federal jurisdiction, provincial governments have assumed a more active role through provincial nominee programs, regional immigration initiatives, and participation in federal immigration planning. Programs such as the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) were specifically designed to address the unique demographic and labour market needs of Atlantic Canada and to improve the attraction and retention of immigrants in the region.

Recent federal policy changes have introduced a new dimension to the immigration debate. The federal government's decision to reduce immigration levels and slow the growth of temporary resident populations—including international students and temporary foreign workers—represents a significant shift in Canada's immigration policy environment. Because Atlantic Canada has become increasingly dependent on immigration to sustain population growth and labour force expansion, these changes may have more pronounced demographic and economic consequences in the region than elsewhere in Canada. Understanding the historical contribution of immigration to Atlantic Canada's population growth, labour markets, and economic performance is therefore particularly important as governments assess the implications of a lower-growth immigration environment.

This report is one of five studies examining the role of immigration in Atlantic Canada. Four reports focus on individual provinces, while the present report adopts a regional perspective to assess the contribution of immigration to demographic sustainability, labour market development, and economic growth across Atlantic Canada as a whole.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of immigration in shaping the demographic and economic development of Atlantic Canada. Specifically, the study:

- Compiles and analyzes data on immigration to Atlantic Canada from 2001 to 2024;
- Examines the demographic, geographic, and labour market dimensions of immigration and their implications for regional development;
- Assesses the contribution of immigrants to population growth, labour force expansion, and economic performance; and
- Identifies research gaps and data limitations that should be addressed to support evidence-based immigration policy and effective immigrant attraction, integration, and retention strategies.

The present report focuses on Atlantic Canada as a region where all four provinces share similar demographic challenges and many common labour market and economic characteristics. A regional perspective is particularly important because major immigration initiatives, such as the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), are designed and administered at the regional level and implicitly treat Atlantic Canada as an integrated labour market. Provincial-level analyses alone cannot fully capture the regional dynamics of immigrant attraction and retention that underpin many federal and provincial immigration initiatives. In addition, interprovincial migration frequently occurs both among the Atlantic provinces and between Atlantic Canada and the rest of Canada. A regional approach also improves statistical reliability, provides a common benchmark for comparison, and highlights demographic and labour market challenges shared across the region.

Based on findings from the Atlantic overview and four provincial reports, a comparative summary is also provided at the end of this report.

Methodology

The term *immigrant* is used in this study to refer to foreign-born individuals who have obtained permanent resident status in Canada. Recent immigrants are defined as those who obtained permanent resident status within five years preceding the relevant Census or Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The analysis draws primarily on data obtained from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and Statistics Canada.

- **IRCC** provides information on immigrant admissions and immigration inflows to Canada and its provinces.
- **Statistics Canada** provides information on resident immigrant and non-immigrant populations, labour force characteristics, and socioeconomic outcomes.

The study uses data obtained from publicly available sources as well as specialized datasets acquired through other channels. Some immigration data were accessed through data-sharing agreements between IRCC and the Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity (ARGEIAD). Additional Statistics Canada data were obtained through customized tabulations and specialized data requests.

Despite extensive efforts to acquire the necessary information, some data were unavailable because of confidentiality restrictions, small sample sizes, or limitations in provincial-level reporting.

The analysis relies primarily on descriptive statistical methods to document trends and patterns in immigration, population change, labour market outcomes, and economic performance.

The study covers the period from 2001 to 2024. Immigration inflow data are based on IRCC landing records and are available throughout the study period. Population data are drawn primarily from the Census of Population conducted every five years between 2001 and 2021. Labour market data are derived from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, which began collecting information on immigrant status in 2006 and provides annual observations through 2024. Additional information is drawn from the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), which permits analysis of selected economic outcomes of immigrants over time.

Organization of the Report

The remainder of the report is organized as follows. Section II examines demographic trends in Atlantic Canada since 2001 and highlights the growing importance of immigration as the primary source of population growth in the region. Section III analyzes immigration inflows, admission categories, settlement patterns, and source-country composition. Section IV presents the statistical profile of immigrants in the labour force and compares their characteristics and labour market outcomes with those of non-immigrants. Section V evaluates the contribution of immigrant labour to economic growth. Section VI examines trends in the international student population and its potential role as a source of future skilled immigrants. Finally, Section VII summarizes the main findings, discusses policy implications, and identifies priorities for future research.

II. SOME DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

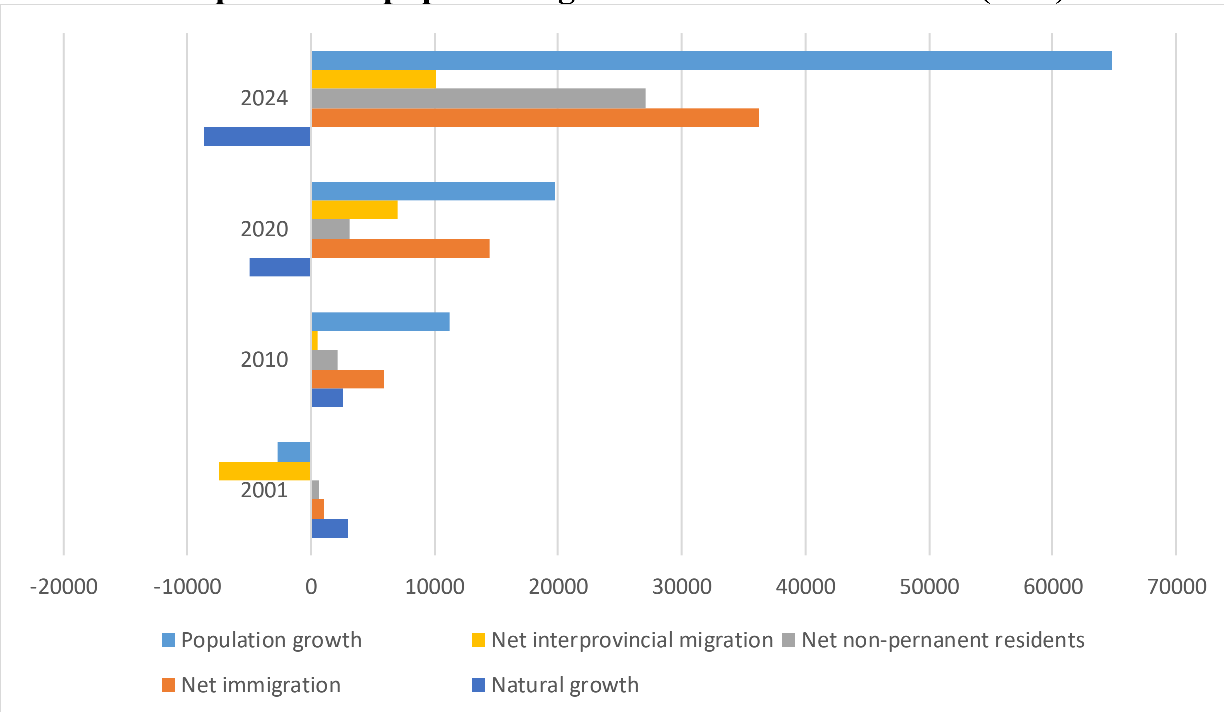
- *Population growth in Atlantic Canada turned negative in the early 2000s, largely because outmigration from the region exceeded both interprovincial and international in-migration. At that time, immigration contributed only marginally to population growth.*
- *Although outmigration slowed relative to in-migration in subsequent years, population growth remained constrained as natural increase turned negative. Over the past decade, the number of deaths has increasingly exceeded the number of births, resulting in a natural population decline.*
- *As efforts to attract and retain immigrants gained momentum, population growth returned to positive territory and reached a historic high of 4.8 percent in 2024.*
- *Sustained population growth cannot rely solely on interprovincial migration, which is highly sensitive to economic cycles. Moreover, the growing tendency of employers to require employees to reside in the province where they work has reduced the long-term viability of remote-work-driven migration to the region.*

Population growth in Atlantic Canada turned negative during 2001–2006, as the region's population declined largely because out-migration exceeded both interprovincial and international in-migration[2]. Natural population increase remained positive, although modest, throughout the first decade of this century, as the number of births continued to exceed the number of deaths.

This pattern changed during the middle of the past decade. Natural population growth turned negative as deaths began to outnumber births. Despite this, the region's population continued to grow, primarily because of positive net migration from other parts of Canada and increasing international migration. Although net interprovincial migration has shown some signs of slowing in the post-COVID-19 period, international migration has continued to rise, as reflected in the growing contribution of net migration shown in Chart 1.

[2] Akbari, A.H. 2008. Socioeconomic and Demographic Profiles of Immigrants in Atlantic Canada. https://canadacommons.ca/artifacts/1222103/socioeconomic-and-demographic-profiles-of-immigrants-in-atlantic-canada/1775179/

Chart 1: Components of population growth in Atlantic Canada ('000)



Source: Statistics Canada. Annual interprovincial migration flows were constructed by summing quarterly origin–destination migration events with rest of Canada from Statistics Canada based on Table [Table 17-10-0045-01 Estimates of interprovincial migrants by province or territory of origin and destination, quarterly] All other components were obtained by adding the data for each province based on [Table 17-10-0008-01 Estimates of the components of demographic growth, annual]. Net migration= immigration minus emigration plus returning emigrants (Table 1).

In 2024, Atlantic Canada's population grew by 64,848 persons. Immigration accounted for approximately 59 percent of this increase, while net interprovincial migration contributed about 16 percent (Table 1). The population increase of 64,848 persons in 2024 included 27,129 net non-permanent residents, representing approximately 42 percent of total growth. Excluding non-permanent residents, the contribution of immigration to population growth rises to approximately 101 percent. The large increase in non-permanent residents is partly attributable to the unprecedented growth in international student enrolments during the early 2020s, which will be discussed later in Charts 10 and 11.

Recent federal measures to reduce admissions of permanent residents, temporary foreign workers, and international students are expected to slow the growth of non-permanent residents in the region. Consequently, the sharp increase in both permanent and non-permanent international migration observed between 2020 and 2024 should not necessarily be interpreted as a long-term trend.

Table 1: Detailed components of population growth in Atlantic Canada, 2024.

Component	Number
Births (1)	18,969
Deaths (2)	27,614
Immigration (3)	38,220
Emigration (4)	3,243
Net temporary emigration (5)	...*
Returning emigrants (6)	1,220
Net non-permanent residents (7)	27,120
Net interprovincial migration (8)	10,176
Population Growth (9) = (1) - (2) + (3) - (4) - (5) + (6) + (7) + (8)	64,848
Immigrants in population growth % = (3) of (9)	58.9
Net international immigration in population growth % = [(3) – (4)] of 9	53.9

Source: Statistics Canada. Annual interprovincial migration flows were constructed by summing quarterly origin–destination migration events with rest of Canada from Statistics Canada based on Table 17-10-0045-01 All other components were obtained by adding the data for each province based on Table 17-10-0008-01.

Population growth is critical to Atlantic Canada because it supports labour force expansion, economic growth, provincial tax revenues, and the realization of economies of scale in the provision of public services. Many public expenditures contain substantial fixed-cost components that are largely independent of the number of users. Examples include transportation infrastructure such as highways and bridges, national defence, research and development, foreign aid, and national parks and historic sites. As population declines, the costs of these services must be spread across a smaller number of residents, resulting in higher per capita expenditures. Immigration can help offset this effect by expanding the population base over which these fixed costs are distributed, thereby reducing upward pressure on per capita public expenditures.

The costs of capital-intensive infrastructure projects do not decline proportionately with population. Consequently, their per capita costs increase as population falls.

III. AN OVERVIEW OF IMMIGRATION TRENDS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

- *Between 2001 and 2021, the immigrant population in Atlantic Canada increased by 86.6 percent, representing a gain of 65,755 individuals. As a result, the share of immigrants in the region's population nearly doubled, rising from 3.5 percent in 2001 to 7.0 percent in 2021*
- *Growth in the immigrant population occurred across all four Atlantic provinces, although immigrants remain underrepresented relative to their share of Canada's population. Provincial population shares in 2021 were 7.5 percent in Nova Scotia, 5.8 percent in New Brunswick, 7.8 percent in Prince Edward Island, and 2.8 percent in Newfoundland and Labrador.*

Table 2 presents census data on the resident population of Atlantic Canada by immigrant status at five-year intervals between 2001 and 2021. During this period, the number of immigrants residing in the region increased by 65,755 persons. As a result, the share of the population consisting of immigrants rose from 3.4 percent in 2001 to 6.0 percent in 2021. These figures refer only to permanent residents and do not include non-permanent residents.

Although immigrants now account for a larger share of the region's population than in the past, they remain substantially underrepresented relative to Canada as a whole. According to the 2021 Census, immigrants represented approximately 23 percent of Canada's population, nearly four times their share in Atlantic Canada. This underrepresentation is evident across all four Atlantic provinces. Immigrants accounted for 7.5 percent of Nova Scotia's population, 5.8 percent of New Brunswick's, 7.8 percent of Prince Edward Island's, and 2.8 percent of Newfoundland and Labrador's population. ((Statistics Canada, *Special Interest Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Profile of Interest: Immigration*; 2021a URL: Special Interest Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Profile of interest: Immigration - Geography: Canada [Country]).

Table 2: Immigrant Status of Population in Atlantic Canada, 2001-2021.

Year	Total Population	Non-Immigrants	Immigrants	Immigrants in total population
2001	2,258,740	2,177,240	75,955	3.36%
2006	2,257,555	2,165,190	84,755	3.75%
2011	2,286,650	2,181,060	92,990	4.07%
2016	2,290,980	2,161,110	110,505	4.82%
2021	2,367,635	2,182,065	141,710	5.99%

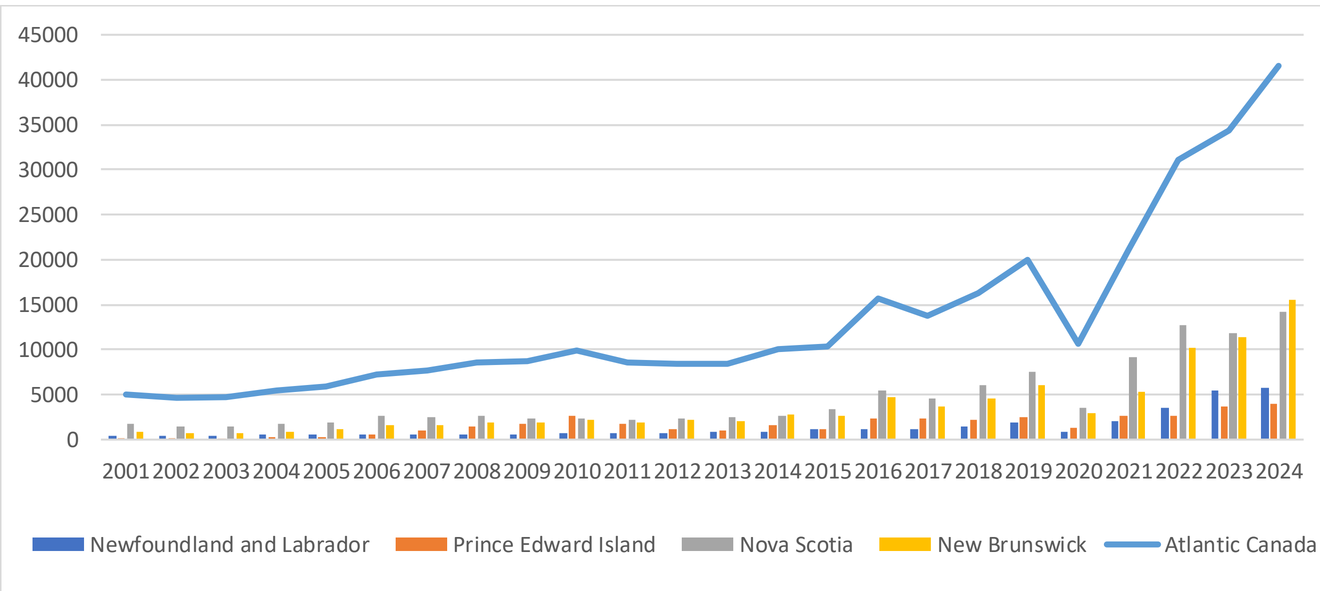
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021.

III.1 Growth in Permanent Resident Admissions

Nova Scotia led the region in immigrant admissions for much of the period; however, New Brunswick surpassed Nova Scotia in 2024, reflecting the province's early and proactive use of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, which was introduced in 2017.

Growth in immigration has occurred across all four Atlantic provinces. Chart 2 presents annual permanent resident admissions to Atlantic Canada between 2001 and 2024. Immigration levels remained relatively modest during the first decade of the century but began accelerating during the mid-2010s.

Chart 2: Annual permanent resident admissions to the Atlantic provinces.



[Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-Canada - Admissions of Permanent Residents by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category]

One notable exception during the earlier period was Prince Edward Island, which experienced a temporary surge in immigrant admissions around 2010. This increase was largely attributable to the province's intensive use of the Provincial Nominee Program between 2005 and 2010. As applications approved under that program were processed, admissions rose sharply and peaked around 2010.

Another important trend shown in Chart 2 is the changing provincial distribution of immigrant admissions. Nova Scotia traditionally received the largest number of immigrants among the Atlantic provinces. In recent years, however, New Brunswick has overtaken Nova Scotia. New Brunswick was the earliest and most intensive adopter of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot following its introduction in 2017. The province moved quickly to designate employers under the program and actively recruited immigrants from overseas, particularly in Francophone Africa and the Middle East.

III.2 The Composition of Immigrants by Entry Class

- *Economic-class immigrants constitute most immigrants admitted to Atlantic Canada. Their admissions increased dramatically after 2015 and reached record levels by 2024.*
- *Family-class immigration has grown steadily but remains substantially smaller than economic-class immigration.*
- *Refugee admissions fluctuate more than other categories because they respond to international humanitarian events and government resettlement commitments.*

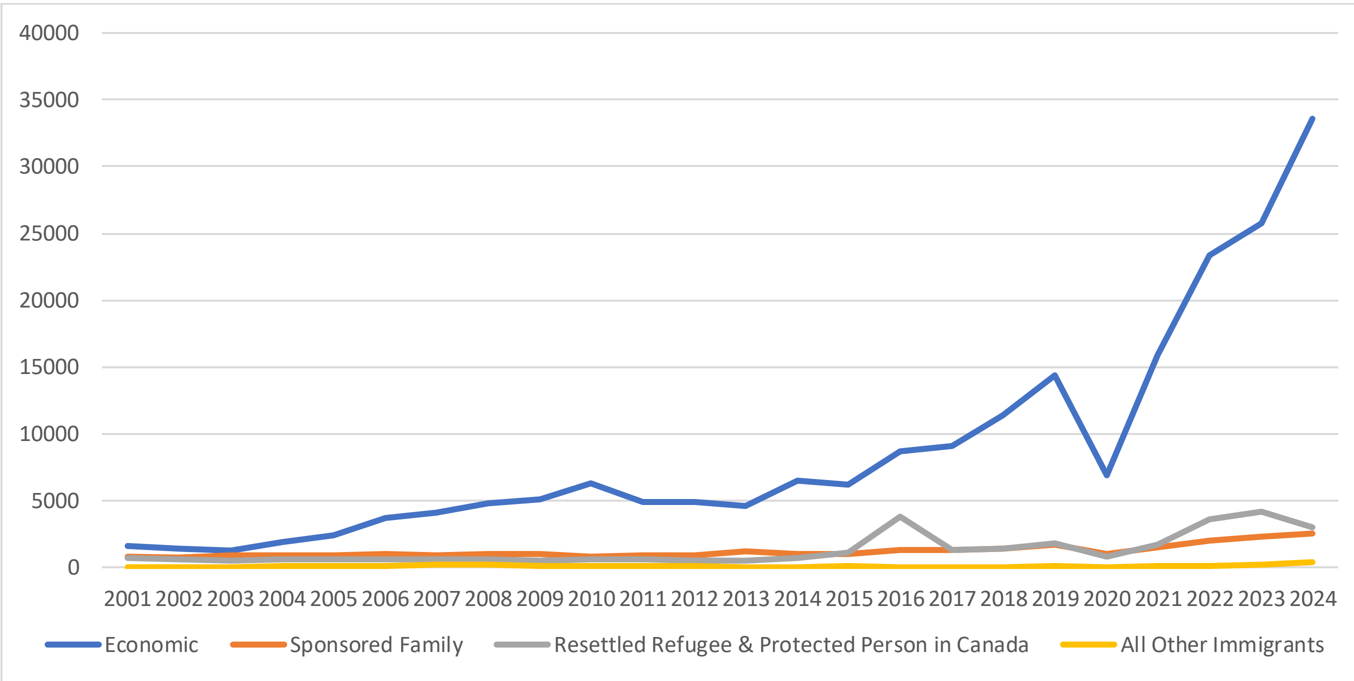
Permanent residents admitted to Canada enter through one of three broad immigration streams: Economic, Family Reunification, and Refugees and Protected Persons.

Economic-class immigrants are selected primarily because of their expected contribution to the Canadian labour market and economy. Family-class immigrants are admitted to facilitate family reunification by joining close relatives already residing in Canada. Refugees and protected persons are admitted on humanitarian grounds because they face persecution, conflict, or other serious risks in their countries of origin.

The overwhelming majority of immigrants destined for Atlantic Canada arrive through economic-class programs. Annual admissions under this category remained below 5,000 for most years prior to 2013 but have increased steadily since then. Following a temporary decline in 2020 due to COVID-19-related disruptions to immigration processing, economic-class admissions rebounded sharply and reached 33,580 in 2024, more than five times their level a decade earlier.

Admissions under family and refugee categories also increased over the study period, although at a slower pace than economic-class immigration. Family-class admissions generally remained similar in size to refugee admissions. Refugee admissions, however, have exhibited greater volatility because they are strongly influenced by global humanitarian crises. The increase observed in 2016 was largely associated with Canada's response to the Syrian refugee crisis, while the rise since 2022 reflects admissions linked to humanitarian crises in Ukraine Nova Scotians encouraged to 'open their hearts and their homes' to Ukrainian refugees | CBC News and Afghanistan (ca.news.yahoo.com › 265-afghan-refugees-arrive).

Chart 3: Immigrants Destined for Atlantic Canada by Immigration Category.



Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)- Canada - Admissions of Permanent Residents by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category.
Note: The definition of Immigration category is according to Statistics Canada Classification of admission category.

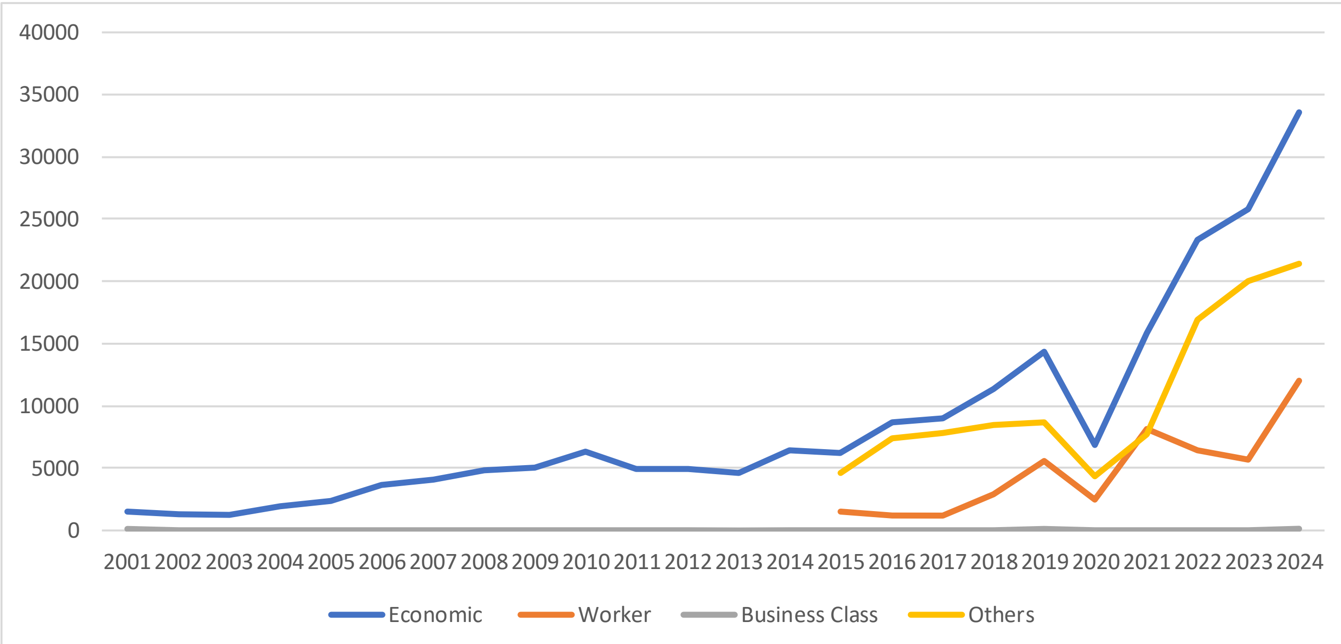
III.2.1 Economic-Class Immigrants by Subcategory

Within the economic stream, federally administered skilled worker programs constitute the largest single category of admissions. The share of economic-class immigrants entering through the skilled worker category increased from approximately 25 percent in 2015 to 38.2 percent in 2024.

Business-class immigration, another federally administered category, has remained relatively stable over the period and represents only a small proportion of economic immigrants destined for Atlantic Canada.

The remaining economic-class admissions consist primarily of Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) applicants, Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) applicants, Canadian Experience Class immigrants, caregivers, and other federal economic streams. Collectively, these categories accounted for approximately 64 percent of economic-class admissions in 2024.

Chart 4: Economic Immigrants Destined for Atlantic Canada by Subcategory.



Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Admissions of Permanent Residents by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category.

III.2.1.1 Provincial Nominee Program and Atlantic Immigration Program

- *The PNP remains the dominant economic immigration pathway to Atlantic Canada.*
- *Provincial nominees accounted for more than half of all immigrants admitted to the region in 2024.*
- *The AIP has expanded rapidly since its launch and has become an important source of labour force growth.*
- *Both programs are designed to address regional labour shortages, although the AIP places greater emphasis on newcomer settlement and retention.*

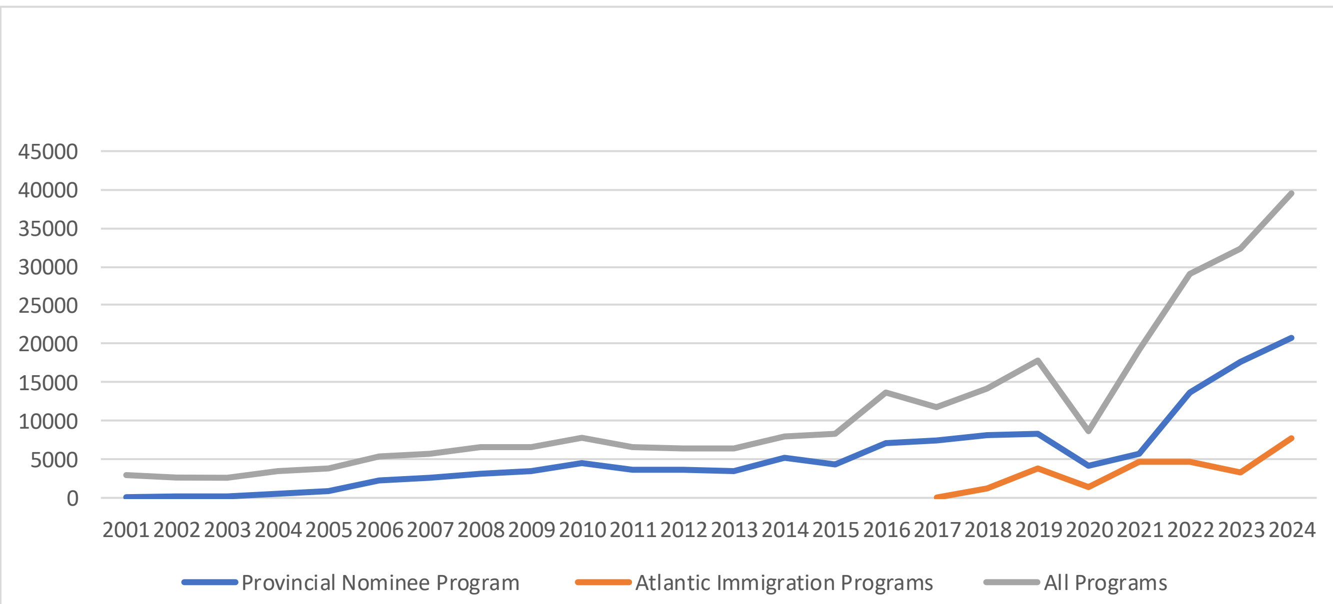
The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) has been the principal pathway for economic immigrants to Atlantic Canada throughout most of the past 25 years. Since 2017, immigrants destined for the Atlantic provinces have also entered through the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), which was initially introduced as the Atlantic Immigration Pilot and became a permanent program in 2022.

In 2024, Atlantic Canada admitted 20,065 immigrants through provincial nominations. These admissions represented 61.8 percent of all economic-class immigrants and 52.5 percent of all immigrants admitted to the region. The importance of the PNP has increased considerably over time. Prior to the mid-2010s, provincial nominees rarely accounted for more than one-quarter of total immigration to Atlantic Canada. In recent years, however, they have consistently represented more than half of all admissions.

The Atlantic Immigration Program has also become an increasingly important component of regional immigration. In 2024, 7,740 immigrants were admitted through the AIP, more than six times the number admitted during the program's first full year of operation in 2018.

A key distinction between the AIP and the PNP is the AIP's emphasis on settlement and retention. Applicants must obtain a job offer from a designated employer, and participating employers are required to support newcomers' integration into their communities through settlement planning and referrals to settlement services. This employer-driven approach is intended to improve both labour market integration and long-term retention.

Chart 5: Provincial nominees and Atlantic Immigration Program immigrants destined for Atlantic Canada.



Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)- Canada - Admissions of Permanent Residents by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category

III.3 Age Distribution

- *The non-immigrant population is aging rapidly.*
- *Recent immigrants are disproportionately concentrated in prime working ages.*
- *Nearly two-thirds of immigrants admitted during 2021–2024 were between 25 and 44 years of age.*
- *Immigration has become an important mechanism for mitigating population aging and supporting labour force growth.*

Immigration has played an important role in moderating population aging in Atlantic Canada. Table 3 compares the age distributions of recent immigrants and non-immigrants aged 15 years and older at five-year intervals between 2006 and 2024.

The data reveal a clear aging trend among the non-immigrant population. The proportion of non-immigrants aged 65 years and older increased from 16.3 percent in 2006 to 28.4 percent in 2024. At the same time, the shares of non-immigrants in the younger age groups declined steadily.

In contrast, recent immigrants have become increasingly concentrated in younger working-age categories. In 2024, 64.4 percent of immigrants admitted during 2021–2024 were between the ages of 25 and 44, compared with only 26.6 percent of non-immigrants. Conversely, only 1.2 percent of recent immigrants were aged 65 years and older, compared with 28.4 percent of non-immigrants.

These differences largely reflect Canada's immigration selection system, which assigns greater weight to younger applicants and prioritizes labour market participation. Consequently, immigration has become an increasingly important source of labour force renewal in Atlantic Canada.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Recent Immigrants and Non-Immigrants

Table 3: Age distribution of recent immigrants and non-immigrants

Age	Immigrants arriving 2001-05	Non-immigrants in 2006	Immigrants arriving 2006-10	Non-immigrants in 2011	Immigrants arriving 2011-15	Non-immigrants in 2016	Immigrants arriving 2016-20	Non-immigrants in 2021	Immigrants arriving 2021-24	Non-immigrants in 2024
15 - 24	15.57	16.03	17.71	14.91	17.27	13.32	21.11	12.28	18.37	12.22
25 - 44	57.49	32.53	54.17	29.55	54.24	27.43	59.17	26.58	64.40	26.64
45 -64	22.16	35.18	23.61	37.35	26.06	36.96	17.72	34.76	15.98	32.70
65+	5.39	16.25	4.86	18.21	2.73	22.29	1.85	26.38	1.24	28.44
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: 2001-2016: Percentages calculated based on Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey customized data.

III. 4 Where Do Immigrants Come From?

- *The source-country composition of immigrants has shifted significantly over the past 25 years.*
- *The United Kingdom and the United States were major source countries during the first decade but no longer appear among the leading source countries.*
- *India has been the largest source country since 2016.*
- *China has remained a major source country throughout the period.*
- *Nigeria has emerged as an important source country in recent years.*
- *International student recruitment has contributed to changes in the composition of immigrant source countries.*

The countries of origin of immigrants destined for Atlantic Canada have changed substantially over the past 25 years. Table 4 presents the five leading source countries of immigrants during successive periods between 2001 and 2024.

During the first decade of the century, China, the United States, and the United Kingdom were among the region's principal source countries. This pattern was consistent with earlier immigration trends documented for Atlantic Canada. Beginning in the mid-2010s, however, both the United States and the United Kingdom disappeared from the list of top source countries. Since then, immigrants have increasingly originated from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

India has been the leading source country since 2016 and has widened its lead substantially in recent years. The Philippines has consistently ranked among the top source countries, while China has remained a significant contributor throughout the period, although its ranking has fluctuated. Nigeria has emerged as an increasingly important source country since 2016.

The top five source countries collectively accounted for between 45 and 52 percent of all immigrants destined for Atlantic Canada during most of the period under study.

The changing source-country composition reflects evolving labour market needs, immigration policies, international student recruitment patterns, and broader global migration dynamics. European migrants increasingly have alternative migration opportunities within Europe and elsewhere in North America, while labour market and educational pathways have strengthened migration flows from Asia and Africa. The growing number of international students from India, the Philippines, China, and Nigeria has also contributed to changes in the source-country mix because many eventually transition to permanent residency.[3]

Table 4: Top 5 source countries of immigrants (Principal Applicants) destined towards Atlantic Canada.

Rank	2001-2005		2006-2010		2011-2015		2016-2020		2021-2024	
1	China*	1,600	China*	7,180	China*	7,145	India	10,570	India	36,120
2	UK**	1,110	Korea****	3,065	Philippines	3,855	China*	9,500	Philippines	13,945
3	USA***	1,340	UK**	2,775	UK**	1,965	Philippines	7,110	China*	5,900
4	Jordan	545	USA***	2,105	India	1,925	Syria	5,755	Nigeria	5,630
5	Egypt	525	Iran	1,690	Vietnam	1,210	Nigeria	2,720	Afghanistan	3,740
Total, Top 5 Countries		5,120		16,815		16,100		35,655		65,335
Atlantic Canada Total		15,610		32,080		35,630		66,190		120,080

Source and Notes: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-Custom Data-Permanent Residents.
* China, People's Republic of, **United Kingdom and Overseas Territories, *** United States of America, ****Korea, Republic of.

III. 5 Retention Rates

- *Retention remains one of the most significant challenges facing immigration policy in Atlantic Canada.*
- *Fewer than half of immigrants admitted in 2012 remained in the region ten years later.*
- *Approximately one-half of immigrants admitted in 2017 remained in the region five years later.*
- *Continued immigration growth alone is insufficient to address demographic challenges unless newcomers remain in the region over the long term.*
- *Family class immigrants have the highest retention rate, followed by refugees and economic classes.*

The data presented thus far demonstrate that Atlantic Canada has experienced substantial growth in immigration during the current century. This growth reflects broader federal efforts to achieve a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants across Canada. The Atlantic Canada

[3] These countries also have large populations of youth (16-30 years of age) who tend to be more mobile than those in the other age groups.

Opportunities Agency (ACOA) has played a central role in advancing this objective through initiatives such as the Atlantic Growth Strategy and its support for immigration attraction and retention programs.[4]

Despite attracting increasing numbers of immigrants, Atlantic Canada continues to face significant retention challenges. Immigration contributes to long-term economic and demographic sustainability only when newcomers remain in the region. Consequently, retention rates are a critical indicator of the effectiveness of immigration policies and programs.

Statistics Canada's Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) makes it possible to estimate retention rates by linking immigrants' admission records with subsequent tax filing province. The most recent data available at the time of writing are for the 2022 tax year as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Immigrant retention rates in Atlantic Canada by class.

Admission year 2012										
Immigrant admission category	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total, immigrant admission category	70.2	65.2	60.1	56.2	53.0	50.7	49.0	48.1	47.5	45.6
Immigrant sponsored by family	88.0	84.3	80.9	78.7	78.4	75.5	75.9	76.2	76.1	75.2
Economic Immigrant	67.0	60.6	54.8	51.2	47.5	45.9	44.5	43.5	42.8	41.0
Skilled worker and skilled trades	64.8	61.2	56.3	52.4	50.5	49.5	44.8	45.7	43.0	42.2
Canadian experience class	92.0	86.9	83.3	84.0	78.3	79.2	79.2	79.2	79.2	77.3
Provincial/territorial nominee	66.9	60.7	54.9	50.6	46.7	44.5	43.1	42.4	41.8	40.1
Refugee	71.9	73.1	70.4	63.9	56.9	53.3	48.0	45.4	46.8	43.6
		Admission year 2017								
Immigrant admission category						2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total, immigrant admission category						68.7	61.7	58.6	55.3	52.3
Immigrant sponsored by family						87.4	85.2	84.0	82.2	80.8
Economic Immigrant						64.7	56.9	53.5	50.0	46.7
Skilled worker and skilled trades						57.6	55.2	52.2	51.5	48.6
Canadian experience class						62.4	56.7	49.4	47.2	47.2
Provincial/territorial nominee						65.7	57.3	54.1	49.9	46.8
Refugee						81.2	75.2	69.7	66.0	64.3

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 43-10-0017-01 Interprovincial migration of immigrant tax filers, by pre-admission experience and tax year, for Canada and provinces.

Retention rate represents the percentage of immigrant tax filers continuing their residence in the province of destination, in year X. This does not consider immigrants migrating in from another province of destination.

[4] One reference to ACOA's collaborative role can be found here: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2021/12/permanent-atlantic-immigration-program-to-attract-workers-and-drive-economic-growth.html

The evidence indicates that retention remains relatively low. Of immigrants admitted to Atlantic Canada in 2012, only 53.0 percent remained in the region five years later, and only 45.6 percent remained ten years later. Similarly, only 52.3 percent of immigrants admitted in 2017 remained in the region five years after arrival.

These figures indicate that more than half of immigrants initially admitted to Atlantic Canada relocate elsewhere in Canada within their first decade after arrival.

III.5.1 Retention by Immigration Class

Retention rates vary substantially across immigration categories.

Family-class immigrants consistently exhibit the highest retention rates. Among immigrants admitted in 2012, approximately 75 percent of family-sponsored immigrants remained in the province of initial destination ten years later. In contrast, retention rates among economic-class immigrants and refugees were substantially lower.

Higher retention among family-class immigrants likely reflects the fact that mobility decisions are often made jointly within households. Family networks, social support systems, and family reunification objectives increase the likelihood that sponsored immigrants will remain in their destination province.

Economic-class immigrants are generally more mobile because they are selected primarily for their labour market potential. Their skills are transferable across regions, allowing them to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere in Canada when economic returns are perceived to be higher.

Among economic immigrants, retention outcomes differ across program streams. Immigrants admitted through the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) exhibited higher retention than provincial nominees among the 2012 admission cohort. However, this relationship reversed for the 2017 cohort, reflecting significant changes in provincial nominee programs following the expansion of provincial allocations and increased emphasis on employer-driven selection.

Atlantic Immigration Program is another sub-category of economic immigration. This is a federal program designed specifically for Atlantic provinces, first as a pilot in 2017 and then adopted as a permanent program in 2022. The program is employer driven and designated employers in the program are mandated to have a settlement program for the newcomers. This mandate is aimed at increasing the retention rate of newcomers. In 2020, the IRCC conducted an evaluation of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program which concluded that the AIP achieves significantly higher newcomer retention in Atlantic Canada than the Provincial Nominee

Comment Box no. 1: Immigrant retention rates in the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, Provincial Nominee Program and Provincial Nominee Program-Express Entry for 2017 tax year.

Province	AIP	PNP	PNP-Express Entry
One-year after arrival			
NL	84%	84%	91%
PE	94%	89%	78%
NS	95%	82%	88%
NB	94%	87%	90%
Two-years after arrival			
NL	74%	68%	----
PE	68%	80%	61%
NS	80%	84%	73%
NB	82%	71%	79%

Source: IRCC (2020). Evaluation of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/eval-atlantic-immigration-pilot.html

Data are based on 2020 survey of AIP applicants and 2018 survey of Express Entry applicants. **AIP** is for Atlantic provinces only, employer-driven, no CRS score. **PNP** is Provincial programs outside Express Entry, not points-based. **PNP–Express Entry** is Provincial nomination *inside* Express Entry, CRS-based with +600 points (fastest processing).

IRCC reported that of those who planned to stay in their Atlantic Province of residence, about half reported that they liked the community / city (61%), the cost of living is affordable (60%), and that they liked their job (52%). About one-third reported that they had family and /or friends in the community/province. Of those who did not plan to stay in their Atlantic Province of residence, half reported that they could make more money elsewhere and 40% indicated lack of alternative job opportunities. Similar findings were reported for Nova Scotia immigrants (all classes combined) by a 2020 study conducted for immigrant retention in Nova Scotia by Akbari https://www.smu.ca/webfiles/3StayersandLeaversSurveyReportFinalOctober23.pdf

Program (PNP), largely because AIP is employer-driven, includes mandatory settlement planning, and selects candidates more likely to stay in the region.[5] Text box 1 presents the data.

Refugees also demonstrate lower retention than family-class immigrants. Although many initially settle in communities that provide sponsorship and support services, some subsequently relocate in search of employment opportunities, educational opportunities, or larger ethnocultural communities.

Overall, the retention patterns observed in Atlantic Canada reflect long-standing economic and demographic realities. The region has historically experienced out-migration among both immigrants and Canadian-born residents seeking broader employment and career opportunities elsewhere in Canada.

Immigration has become the principal source of population growth in Atlantic Canada and an increasingly important contributor to labour force renewal. Over the past two decades, the region has experienced substantial increases in immigrant admissions, greater diversity of source countries, and growing reliance on economic-class immigration programs. Nevertheless, retention remains a central challenge. While initiatives such as the Atlantic Immigration Program have improved outcomes, many newcomers continue to relocate elsewhere in Canada. The long-term success of immigration as a demographic and economic development strategy will therefore depend not only on attracting immigrants but also on strengthening the economic opportunities, settlement supports, and community connections that encourage them to remain in the region.

IV. IMMIGRANTS IN THE LABOUR FORCE

A primary objective of the immigration strategies adopted by the Atlantic provinces is to prevent labour force decline resulting from negative natural population growth and population aging. A shrinking labour force can have significant economic consequences for the region by constraining economic growth, reducing government revenues, increasing fiscal pressures, and undermining the long-term sustainability of public services.

Analyzing the role of immigrants in the labour force is therefore important because it allows policymakers to assess whether immigration is contributing not only to population growth but also to labour force expansion and long-term economic development.

[5] IRCC, 2020. Evaluation of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot.

IV.1 Labour Force Growth by Immigrant Status

- *In 2022–2024, recent immigrants accounted for 32.2 percent of labour force growth in Atlantic Canada.*
- *The contribution of recent immigrants to labour force growth has increased substantially over time, reflecting both rising immigration levels and improved retention.*
- *During the period of labour force decline between 2011 and 2016, immigration helped mitigate losses that would otherwise have been larger.*
- *Since 2017, immigration has become an increasingly important source of labour force growth throughout the region.*

Table 6 shows that Atlantic Canada's labour force grew by approximately 86,200 persons between 2001 and 2011. However, the labour force declined between 2011 and 2016. This decline reflected several factors, including the retirement of baby boomers, weak or negative net interprovincial migration, and the continued out-migration of young and prime-working-age individuals to provinces offering stronger labour market opportunities, particularly Alberta and Ontario.

During this period, international immigration was insufficient to fully offset these losses because immigration levels remained relatively modest and immigrant retention rates were relatively low. Nevertheless, immigration helped moderate the decline by contributing approximately 7 percent of the labour force that otherwise would have been lost. (Chart 1, Table 7 and https://www.saltwire.com/prince-edward-island/atlantic-canadas-labour-force-decreasing-despite-immigration-277546).

Provincial labour force trends varied within the region.[6] Newfoundland and Labrador experienced the most pronounced decline, while New Brunswick recorded a steady reduction in labour force size. Nova Scotia experienced a more gradual decline, whereas Prince Edward Island's labour force remained relatively stable. Concerns regarding labour force decline contributed to the expansion of provincial immigration initiatives and the introduction of programs such as the Atlantic Immigration Pilot in 2017.

Since 2016, labour force growth has resumed across Atlantic Canada, driven primarily by migration. As noted earlier in Chart 1, the region's net migration exchange with the rest of Canada became positive after 2016. At the same time, immigration increasingly contributed to

[6] Each individual province's data has been discussed in provincial reports.

labour force expansion. Between 2017 and 2024, recent immigrants accounted for approximately 42,600 additional labour force participants. During the most recent period (2022–2024), recent immigrants contributed 32.2 percent of total labour force growth in Atlantic Canada.

Table 6: Contribution of Recent Immigrants to Labour Force Growth in Atlantic Canada.

Period	Total growth of labour force (‘000)	Growth owed to recent immigrants (‘000)	Growth without recent immigrants (‘000)	Immigrants' contribution to labour force growth (Absolute, %)	
	{1}[1]	{2}	{3}	4(a)[2] = {2}/ {3}x100	4(b)[3] = {2}/ {1}x100
2001-2006	44.7	6.575	38.125	17.25	14.71
2007-2011	41.5	8.2	33.3	24.62	19.76
2012-2016	-25.3	1.8	-27.1	-6.64*	-7.11*
2017-2021	40.6	18.9	21.7	87.10	46.55
2022-2024	73.7	23.7	50	47.40	32.16

[1]Attributed to natural growth and net interregional migration. [2]Measures percentage recent immigrants caused labour force to increase by virtue of their presence. [3]Measures percentage of labour force growth contributed by recent immigrants.
*Absolute value measures percentage of labour force decline averted by new immigrants.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001,2006 data tables used for 2001-2006. Custom data on labour force characteristics used for the later period -Table on Selected characteristics by immigrant status, gender, and population centre and rural areas.

IV. 2 Geographic Distribution of the Labour Force

- *Immigration-driven labour force growth has occurred in both population centres and rural areas.*
- *Population centres have captured the majority of immigrant labour force growth.*
- *The recent immigrant labour force grew approximately thirteen times in population centres between 2006 and 2024.*
- *Immigration has partially offset labour force decline in rural Atlantic Canada.*

The contribution of immigrants to labour force growth differs significantly between population centres and rural areas.

Between 2006 and 2024, the non-immigrant labour force increased by approximately 3 percent in population centres but declined by nearly 2 percent in rural areas. In contrast, the immigrant labour force more than quadrupled in population centres and nearly doubled in rural communities during the same period.

Growth among recent immigrants was particularly striking. The number of recent immigrants participating in the labour force increased approximately thirteen-fold in population centres and more than fourfold in rural areas.

These trends indicate that immigration has become an increasingly important source of labour force renewal in both urban and rural Atlantic Canada, although its impact has been substantially stronger in population centres.

IV. 3 Labour Force Characteristics

- *Immigrants are substantially more concentrated in population centres than non-immigrants.*
- *More than 90 percent of recent immigrant labour force participants reside in population centres.*
- *Gender composition varies across immigrant and non-immigrant labour force groups.*
- *Differences in geographic and gender distribution reflect both immigration selection mechanisms and labour market demand.*

Immigrants are considerably more concentrated in population centres than non-immigrants.

In 2024, approximately 59 percent of the non-immigrant labour force resided in population centres. In comparison, 84.5 percent of all immigrants and 91.4 percent of recent immigrants lived and worked in population centres. (Table 7).

Table 7: Rural Areas -Population centres breakdown of labour force in Atlantic Canada.

	2006		2011		2016		2021		2024	
	Rural areas	Population centres	Rural areas	Population centres	Rural areas	Population centres	Rural areas	Population centres	Rural areas	Population centres
Total (‘000)	515.8	677.8	548.2	696.3	509.6	722.3	524.1	745.5	518.6	841.6
% growth			6.28	2.73	-7.04	3.73	2.85	3.21	-1.05	12.89
Recent Immigrants (‘000)	1.4	4.1	3.1	10.6	1.7	12	3.4	30.9	6.3	52.5
% growth			121.43	158.54	-45.16	13.21	100.00	157.50	85.29	69.90
Immigrants (‘000)	12.4	26	14.5	35.8	12.8	41.5	18.5	75.8	23.5	113
% growth			16.94	37.69	-11.72	15.92	44.53	82.65	27.03	49.08
Non-Immigrants (‘000)	501	643.7	530.7	649.1	493.6	666.9	501.6	640.3	490.2	663.3
% growth			5.93	0.84	-6.99	2.74	1.62	-3.99	-2.27	3.59

Source: -Statistics Canada, Custom data on Labour force characteristics-Table on Selected characteristics by immigrant status, gender, and population centre and rural areas. Total labour force may not equal the sum of the Immigrant and Non-Immigrant categories, as it includes Non-Permanent Residents.

Gender composition also differs across groups. Women represented approximately one-half of the non-immigrant labour force in population centres. Among immigrants, females accounted for 44.3 percent of the labour force, while among recent immigrants they represented 42.6 percent.

In rural Atlantic Canada, females constituted approximately 48 percent of the non-immigrant labour force, 51 percent of the immigrant labour force, and 42 percent of the recent immigrant labour force.

These differences reflect both immigration selection patterns and the occupational composition of immigrant employment, which remains concentrated in industries and occupations that often exhibit different gender balances than those observed among the Canadian-born population.

Table 8: Labour force and unemployment rates, immigrants and non-immigrants by rural and population centres and gender, Atlantic Canada, 2024.

	Rural areas			Population centres			Regional total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Labour Force ('000)	270.2	249.7	519.9	424.0	404.8	828.8	694.2	654.6	1,348.8
Immigrants	11.7	11.8	23.5	62	51	113	73.7	62.8	136.5
Recent Immigrants	3.2	3	6.3	28.8	23.7	52.5	32	26.8	58.7
Non-Immigrants	255.3	234.9	490.2	333.2	330.1	663.3	588.5	565	1153.5
Unemployment rate (%)									
Immigrants	7.7	6.8	7.2	6.8	8.4	7.5	6.8	8.1	7.5
Recent Immigrants	x	x	9.5	7.6	10.5	9	7.8	10.4	9.0
Non-Immigrants	10.2	6.6	8.5	7.9	5	6.4	8.9	5.7	7.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Custom data on Labour force characteristics-Table on Selected characteristics by immigrant status, gender, and population centre and rural areas. 'X' refers to data not available.

IV. 4 Unemployment Rates

Labour market outcomes also differ across immigrant groups and geographic areas.

Available data indicate that unemployment rates among immigrant males are generally higher than those among immigrant females in rural areas. Among immigrants residing in population centres, however, males tend to experience lower unemployment rates than females. A similar pattern is observed among recent immigrants.

For non-immigrants, unemployment rates are generally higher among males than females in both population centres and rural areas.

These findings suggest that labour market integration outcomes vary by gender, immigrant status, and location. Differences may reflect variations in occupational concentration, industry employment patterns, labour force attachment, and local labour market conditions.

Because detailed breakdowns for rural immigrant populations are limited, these results should be interpreted with caution.

Comment Box 2: Immigrants in labour markets of Atlantic Canada

Immigration has become an increasingly important source of labour force growth in Atlantic Canada. While it played only a modest role in labour force expansion during the early 2000s, its contribution has increased substantially in recent years. Immigration has helped offset the effects of population aging, retirements, and historical out-migration, thereby supporting labour force renewal across the region.

The impact of immigration has been particularly evident since 2017, when labour force growth resumed following several years of decline. Recent immigrants have accounted for a significant share of labour force expansion, especially in population centres, where they have become an important component of workforce growth.

Although labour market outcomes continue to vary by gender, immigrant status, and location, the evidence suggests that immigration is making an increasingly important contribution to the economic sustainability of Atlantic Canada. Continued success, however, will depend not only on attracting immigrants but also on retaining them and facilitating their successful integration into regional labour markets.

IV. 5 Educational Attainment of Immigrants and Non-Immigrants

Educational attainment is one of the most important factors considered in Canada's immigrant selection system. Canadian immigration policy views education as a key predictor of an immigrant's potential economic success and labour market integration. Education also plays a critical role in expanding the skilled labour force, which is essential for productivity growth, innovation, and long-term economic development.

Labour Force Survey (LFS) data obtained from Statistics Canada allow educational attainment to be examined at both lower and higher levels of education, including individuals with a high school diploma or less and those holding a university degree.

Charts 6 and 7 compare the educational attainment of recent immigrants and non-immigrants in Atlantic Canada at five-year intervals from 2001 to 2021, with an additional observation for 2024. It should be noted that the 2001 estimates are derived from Census data, whereas the remaining years are based on the Labour Force Survey. Consequently, the 2001 figures may not be fully comparable with later years because the LFS did not begin collecting immigrant status information until 2006.

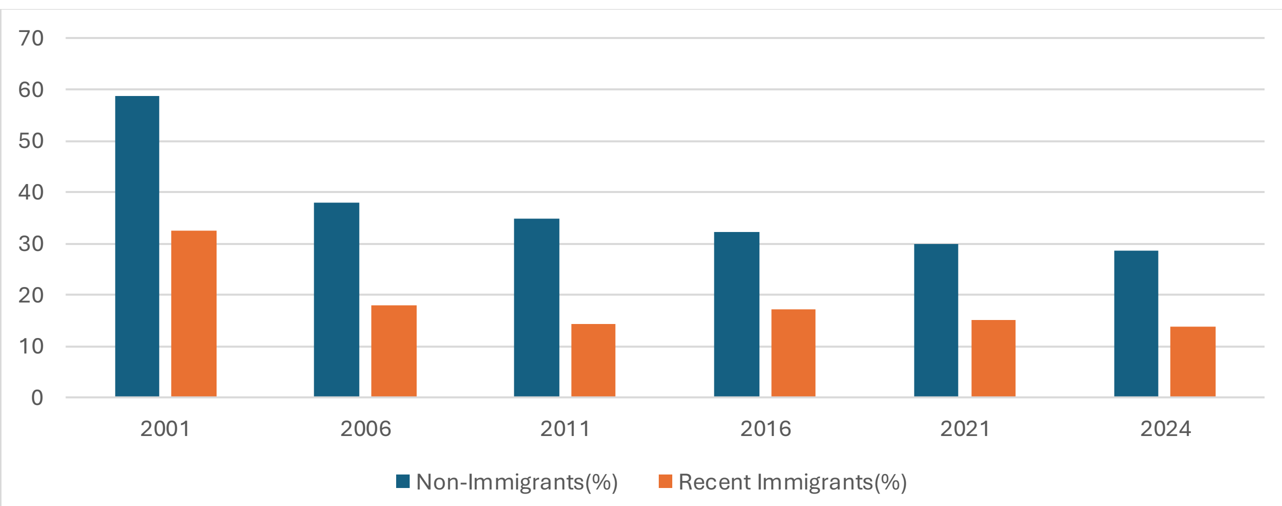
IV. 5. 1 Individuals with High School Education or Less

- *The proportion of workers with a high school education or less has declined among both immigrants and non-immigrants.*
- *Recent immigrants are consistently less likely than non-immigrants to have only a high school education or less.*
- *The educational profile of recent immigrants has improved over time as immigration policies increasingly emphasize education and skills.*

Chart 6 shows a steady decline in the proportion of both non-immigrants and recent immigrants in the labour force whose highest level of education is a high school diploma or less.

The decline is observed for both groups throughout the period under study, reflecting the increasing educational attainment of the labour force. The chart also shows that recent immigrants consistently exhibit lower proportions of individuals with high school education or less than non-immigrants. This pattern reflects Canada's growing emphasis on selecting immigrants with higher levels of human capital and labour market skills.

Chart 6: Non-Immigrants and Recent Immigrants in the Labour Force with High School Education or Less, Atlantic Canada, 2001–2024



Source: Statistics Canada -The percentage for 2001 is calculated using Census data table BO-0293, 2001 Target Group Profile, with the total educated population of each group as the denominator. For 2006–2024, custom Labour Force data are used, with the total educated labour force in each group as the denominator.

IV. 5. 2 Individuals with a University Degree

- *University degree attainment increased among both immigrants and non-immigrants during the period under study.*
- *Recent immigrants consistently exhibit higher levels of university education than non-immigrants.*
- *By 2024, recent immigrants were approximately twice as likely as non-immigrants to hold a university degree.*
- *Immigration has become an increasingly important source of highly educated labour in Atlantic Canada.*

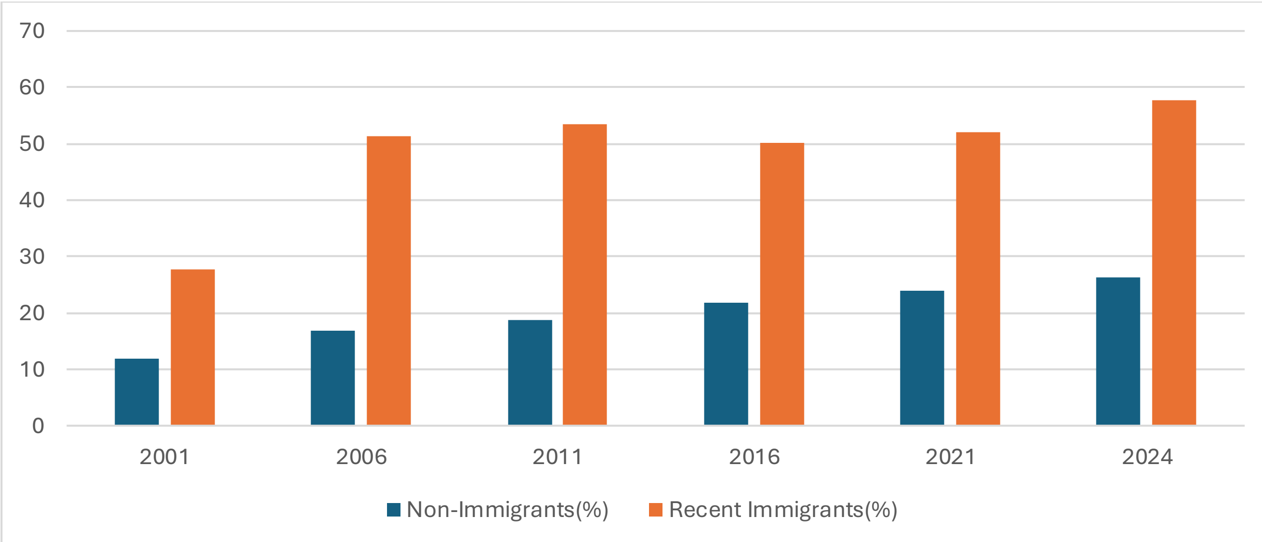
The trend is reversed when educational attainment is measured by university degree completion.

Chart 7 shows that the proportion of both non-immigrants and recent immigrants holding a university degree increased substantially between 2001 and 2024. However, the increase has been considerably more pronounced among recent immigrants.

Throughout the period, recent immigrants consistently exhibited higher rates of university degree attainment than non-immigrants. By 2024, recent immigrants in Atlantic Canada were approximately twice as likely as non-immigrants to possess a university degree.

These findings highlight the increasingly important role of immigration in augmenting the supply of highly educated workers in the region.

Chart 7: Non-Immigrants and Recent Immigrants in the Labour Force with a University Degree, Atlantic Canada, 2001–2024



Source: Statistics Canada -The percentage for 2001 is calculated using Census data table BO-0293, 2001 Target Group Profile, Table 2: Recent Immigrants with the total educated population as the denominator. For 2006–2024, custom Labour Force data is used, with the total educated labour force in each group as the denominator.

IV. 5. 3 Factors Contributing to Rising Educational Attainment

The growth in university degree attainment among both immigrants and non-immigrants reflects several long-term economic, social, and policy developments.

First, the expansion of the knowledge-based economy has increased demand for highly educated workers, particularly in sectors such as health care, education, information technology, engineering, and professional services. Second, access to post-secondary education has expanded considerably through student financial assistance programs, scholarships, and initiatives aimed at increasing participation among women, mature students, and individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Third, federal and provincial immigration programs have increasingly prioritized education and skills as selection criteria, resulting in the admission of immigrants with higher levels of formal education. Fourth, programs that support credential recognition, skills upgrading, and professional integration have helped newcomers improve their educational and occupational outcomes after arrival.

One example is the Atlantic Immigration Career Loan Fund (AICLF), which provides microloans to newcomers seeking to upgrade their education, obtain professional licensing, or acquire additional training needed for labour market integration. Such programs help immigrants fully utilize their human capital and improve their employment prospects in Atlantic Canada.

The growing presence of international students has also contributed to the rising educational attainment of immigrants in Atlantic Canada. International students who complete post-secondary education at Atlantic Canadian colleges and universities acquire Canadian credentials, gain familiarity with local labour markets, and often transition to permanent residency through economic immigration pathways. As a result, they represent an increasingly important source of highly educated workers for the region.

IV. 6 Industrial Distribution of Immigrant Employment

Understanding the industrial distribution of immigrant employment is important for assessing how effectively immigrants are being integrated into the labour market and whether they are helping address labour shortages in key sectors of the economy. The distribution of immigrant workers across industries also provides insights into the extent to which immigrants are concentrated in particular sectors. Excessive concentration in a small number of industries—especially those characterized by lower wages, seasonal employment, or economic volatility—may increase vulnerability to economic downturns, technological change, or shifts in public policy.

Table 9 presents the industrial distribution of employment among non-immigrants, all immigrants, and recent immigrants in Atlantic Canada in 2024.

Overall, Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employer of both non-immigrants and immigrants. Approximately 15 percent of workers in each group are employed in this sector. Although Health Care and Social Assistance is also one of the largest employers of recent immigrants, recent immigrants are slightly more likely to be employed in Accommodation and Food Services than in any other industry.

These findings highlight the important role immigrants play in supporting key sectors of the Atlantic Canadian economy, particularly those experiencing persistent labour shortages.

IV.6.1 Differences Between Non-Immigrants and Immigrants

Several industries employ a larger share of non-immigrants than immigrants.

Construction employs 9.2 percent of non-immigrant workers compared with 5.3 percent of immigrant workers. Similarly, Public Administration accounts for 8.6 percent of non-immigrant employment but only 5.7 percent of immigrant employment. Retail Trade also employs a larger share of non-immigrants (11.9 percent) than immigrants (8.4 percent).

In contrast, immigrants are more heavily represented in several other industries. Accommodation and Food Services employs 11.3 percent of immigrant workers compared with only 4.9 percent of non-immigrant workers. Similarly, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services accounts for 10.6 percent of immigrant employment compared with 5.3 percent among non-immigrants. Finance and Insurance also employs a larger proportion of immigrants (5.5 percent) than non-immigrants (3.2 percent).

These differences suggest that immigrants play a particularly important role in both high-skilled professional occupations and service-sector industries that face ongoing recruitment challenges.

IV. 6.2 Recent Immigrants Compared with All Immigrants

- *Health Care and Social Assistance sector is the largest employer of both immigrants and non-immigrants, accounting for approximately 15 percent of employment in each group.*
- *Recent immigrants are slightly more likely to work in Accommodation and Food Services than in any other industry.*
- *Construction, Public Administration, and Retail Trade employ larger proportions of non-immigrants than immigrants.*
- *Accommodation and Food Services, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, and Finance and Insurance employ larger proportions of immigrants than non-immigrants.*
- *Recent immigrants are more concentrated than the overall immigrant population in Accommodation and Food Services, Retail Trade, and Finance and Insurance.*
- *Recent immigrants are less concentrated in Health Care and Social Assistance and Educational Services than the overall immigrant population.*

The industrial distribution of recent immigrants differs somewhat from that of the overall immigrant population.

The most notable difference is found in Accommodation and Food Services, where approximately 14.5 percent of recent immigrants are employed compared with 11.3 percent of all immigrants. Recent immigrants are also more likely than the overall immigrant population to work in Retail Trade (9.5 percent versus 8.4 percent) and Finance and Insurance (6.6 percent versus 5.5 percent).

By contrast, recent immigrants are less likely than all immigrants to be employed in Health Care and Social Assistance (13.8 percent versus 15.2 percent) and Educational Services (4.4 percent versus 7.2 percent).

These differences likely reflect the labour market adjustment process experienced by many newcomers. Recent immigrants often enter industries with lower barriers to entry before transitioning to occupations that more closely match their education, skills, and work experience.

Industries not discussed above exhibit relatively small differences in employment shares across immigrant and non-immigrant groups.

Table 9: Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Employment by Industry, Atlantic Canada, 2024 ('000)

Total, all industries	Non-immigrants	All immigrants	Recent immigrants
Health care and social assistance	182.9	20.7	8.1
Accommodation and food services	56.3	15.5	8.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	61.1	14.5	5.6
Retail trade	137	11.5	5.6
Educational services	92.3	9.8	2.6
Manufacturing	73.7	9.6	4.5
Public administration	99.1	7.8	2.9
Finance and insurance	36.8	7.5	3.9
Construction	106	7.2	3.3
Transportation and warehousing	52.4	7	3.3
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	34.1	4.8	2.2
Other services (except public administration)	45.3	4.4	1.7
Wholesale trade	30.1	3.3	1.2
Real estate and rental and leasing	15.4	2	0.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation	24.4	2	0.8
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	37	1.8	0.7
Information and cultural industries	15.7	1.3	x
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	20.2	0.9	x
Utilities	11.4	0.8	x
Unclassified industries	22.3	3.9	2.1

Source and notes: - Statistics Canada: Custom Labour Force data. 'x': Data not available.

IV. 6. 3. Some Interpretations and Limitations

The industrial distribution of employment suggests that immigrants contribute to both traditional and emerging sectors of the Atlantic Canadian economy. Their relatively strong representation in professional and technical industries reflects the increasingly high educational attainment of immigrants, while their concentration in Accommodation and Food Services highlights their role in addressing labour shortages in service industries.[7]

The differences observed between recent immigrants and the broader immigrant population also suggest that labour market integration occurs gradually. Many newcomers initially enter industries that offer immediate employment opportunities and subsequently transition into occupations and industries that more fully utilize their qualifications and experience.

As immigration continues to contribute to labour force growth, understanding the industrial distribution of immigrant employment will become increasingly important for workforce planning and labour market policy.

One limitation of this analysis is the inability to examine industrial employment patterns by immigrant admission category because such data are not currently available in LFS. Information on employment outcomes by admission class (e.g., Provincial Nominee Program, Atlantic Immigration Program, family class, or refugee class) would provide valuable insights into how different immigration pathways contribute to addressing labour shortages across industries and could help improve the design of future immigration policies.

IV. 7. Occupational Distribution of the Immigrant Labour Force

Employment and industry-level data provide information on how many immigrants are participating in the labour market and the sectors in which they are employed. Equally important is understanding the types of occupations immigrants hold and whether those occupations are commensurate with their educational qualifications. Such analysis provides valuable insights into the extent to which immigrants are being successfully integrated into the labour market and whether their skills are being fully utilized. These issues are central to labour market policy, immigration policy, and immigrant retention strategies.

Labour Force Survey (LFS) data on occupational distribution are classified according to the Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) framework developed by Employment and Social Development Canada. TEER classifies occupations based on the level of education, training, experience, and responsibility typically required for employment. A summary of the classification system is presented in Table 10.

[7] The construction, healthcare, and technology sectors are among the hardest hit by labor shortages in Atlantic Canada. https://immigration.ca/labour-shortage-in-atlantic-canada-deepens-amidst-federal-immigration-cuts/

Table 10: Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) Classification

Level	Description	Typical requirement
0	Managerial	University degree or college diploma **plus** significant work experience
1	Professional	University degree
2	Technical	College diploma (1–3 years), **or** Apprenticeship training (2–5 years), **or** Supervisory experience in a related occupation
3	Intermediate	College diploma (less than 2 years), **or** Apprenticeship training (less than 2 years), **or** More than 6 months of on-the-job training
4	Labour occupations	Secondary school completion, **or** several weeks of on-the-job training
5	Elemental occupations	Minimal or none

Source: Based on https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810044301 Note: Extensive experience in occupations with a TEER level that is one higher is often a substitute for the education typically required of occupations at a particular TEER level.

IV.7.1 Occupation Distribution of Labour Force by Immigrant Status

- *The number of recent immigrants in the labour force increased more than eleven-fold between 2006 and 2024.*
- *The occupational distribution of non-immigrants shifted from lower-skilled occupations toward middle- and higher-skilled occupations.*
- *Recent immigrants experienced a shift away from higher-skilled occupations and toward middle-skilled occupations.*
- *Occupational distributions have become increasingly similar between immigrants and non-immigrants over time.*
- *The occupational composition of recent immigrants has remained relatively stable during the past three years.*
- *Despite increasingly high levels of educational attainment among recent immigrants, many continue to be employed outside higher-skilled occupations.*

Table 11 presents the occupational distribution of recent immigrants and non-immigrants in Atlantic Canada's labour force between 2006 and 2024.

The number of recent immigrants participating in the labour force increased dramatically over the period, rising from approximately 5,100 in 2006 to 58,700 in 2024—an increase of more than eleven-fold. In contrast, the size of the non-immigrant labour force remained relatively stable.

In 2006, more than one-half of recent immigrants were employed in higher-skilled occupations classified as TEER 0 and TEER 1. By comparison, only about one-fifth of non-immigrants worked in these occupational categories. At the lower end of the occupational distribution (TEER 4 and TEER 5), approximately one-third of recent immigrants and about 40 percent of non-immigrants were employed.

By 2024, the occupational distributions of the two groups had become considerably more similar. Approximately one-quarter of both recent immigrants and non-immigrants were employed in TEER 0 and TEER 1 occupations. Employment in middle-skilled occupations (TEER 2 and TEER 3) increased substantially for both groups. Among recent immigrants, the share employed in TEER 2 and TEER 3 occupations increased from approximately 14 percent in 2006 to 38 percent in 2024. Among non-immigrants, the corresponding increase was from 36 percent to 42 percent.

At the lower end of the occupational distribution, recent immigrants experienced only a modest decline in the proportion employed in TEER 4 and TEER 5 occupations, from approximately 34 percent in 2006 to 32 percent in 2024. Among non-immigrants, the share employed in these occupations declined more noticeably, from approximately 35 percent to 29 percent.

These trends suggest that the occupational composition of non-immigrant employment has shifted upward from lower-skilled occupations toward middle- and higher-skilled occupations. In contrast, recent immigrants have experienced a movement away from higher-skilled occupations toward middle-skilled and, to a lesser extent, lower-skilled occupations.

The occupational distributions of the two groups have remained relatively stable during the most recent years of the analysis. Overall, however, occupational patterns among immigrants and non-immigrants have become more similar than they were in 2006.

Table 11: Recent Immigrants and Non-Immigrants in Atlantic Canada's Labour Force by TEER Classification, 2006–2024

Table 11: Recent and Non- Immigrants in Atlantic Canada’s labour force by their major skill classifications, 2006-2024.

	2006		2011		2016		2021		2024	
Occupation	Recent Immigrants	Non-Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Non-Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Non-Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Non-Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Non-Immigrants
TEER 0	0.8	91.1	1.4	93.4	0.9	74.5	1.8	70.7	2.9	86.7
TEER 1	1.9	150.7	3	164.6	3.3	180	6.9	192.3	12	214.6
TEER 2	0.7	246.6	2.6	275.1	1.8	281.9	6.2	284.7	11.8	291.4
TEER 3	x	180.1	1.4	189.1	2.4	198.8	5	200.9	10.6	198.1
TEER 4	1	250.7	2	227.4	1.8	205.2	6.6	191.5	9	184.6
TEER 5	0.7	202.8	2.5	202.7	2.9	192.6	6.2	165.9	10.3	156
NCE	x	22.6	0.8	27.6	0.6	27.5	1.5	36	2.1	22.3

Source: Statistics Canada -Custom Labour Force data. NCE: Not classified elsewhere. Totals may be slightly different from Table 8 due to NCE occupations on which data are not available.

IV.7.1.2 Some Interpretations and Conclusions

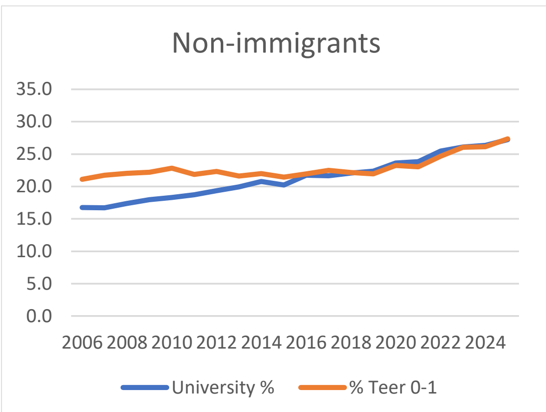
The convergence in occupational distributions suggests that immigrants are becoming increasingly integrated into the broader labour market of Atlantic Canada. More recent immigrants are now represented across all TEER categories than was the case in 2006.

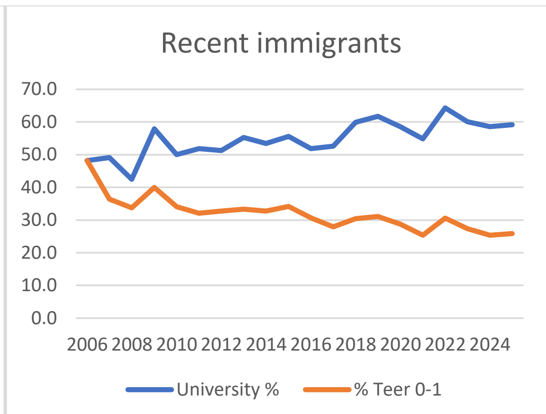
However, the shift among recent immigrants from higher-skilled occupations toward middle-skilled occupations warrants closer examination. Earlier evidence presented in the chapter on educational attainment showed that an increasing proportion of recent immigrants arrive with university degrees. Under these circumstances, the movement toward middle-skilled occupations may indicate that many immigrants are unable to fully utilize their educational qualifications within the labour market.

This pattern may reflect challenges associated with credential recognition, occupational licensing requirements, limited Canadian work experience, employer preferences, and difficulties accessing professional networks. To the extent that highly educated immigrants are employed in occupations requiring lower levels of education, the result is a loss of potential productivity and a less efficient use of human capital. Consequently, improving the alignment between immigrants' educational qualifications and occupational outcomes remains an important policy objective for Atlantic Canada. Addressing barriers to credential recognition, strengthening employer engagement, expanding professional bridging programs, and improving pathways into regulated occupations could help reduce this mismatch and enhance the economic contribution of highly educated immigrants. Improving the match between educational attainment and occupational outcomes would increase productivity, strengthen economic growth, improve immigrant retention, and enhance the long-term benefits of immigration for the region. Although many settlement services have been introduced in this regard by federal and provincial governments, the IRCC 2020 survey of AIP immigrants showed that many were unaware of their availability. Hence, there is a need to develop and implement a strategy to increase awareness of these programs/services.

Comment Box 3: How well are labour markets in Atlantic Canada absorbing university educated immigrants in higher skilled/earning jobs?

LFS data show that the proportion of both non-immigrants and recent immigrants holding university degrees increased substantially between 2006 and 2024. However, the labour market outcomes of the two groups have diverged. Among non-immigrants, the proportion employed in higher-skilled occupations (TEER 0 and TEER 1) increased alongside rising educational attainment. Among recent immigrants, however, the proportion holding university degrees increased while the proportion employed in TEER 0 and TEER 1 occupations declined. The result is a widening education–occupation mismatch among recent immigrants.





Several interconnected factors may explain this pattern:

1. **Growth in the supply of highly educated immigrants has exceeded the growth of accessible high-skilled employment opportunities.** While educational attainment has increased among both groups, the number of immigrants entering the labour market has grown more rapidly than the availability of high-skilled positions that they can readily access.
2. **Barriers to labour market integration remain significant.** Credential recognition requirements, professional licensing processes, employer preferences for Canadian work experience, and limited professional networks continue to affect many immigrants.
3. **Recent immigration has increasingly responded to labour shortages outside TEER 0–1 occupations.** Many newcomers are recruited into sectors such as accommodation and food services, transportation, caregiving, retail trade, and other occupations that do not necessarily require university-level qualifications.
4. **Credential inflation has increased competition for higher-skilled occupations.** As educational attainment rises throughout the labour force, university degrees alone may no longer guarantee access to professional or managerial occupations.
5. **Limited labour market opportunities.** Opportunities for highly specialized professional employment may be less abundant.

IV.7.3 Labour Market Performance by Immigrant Status

- *Labour force participation rates (LFPRs) have declined among non-immigrants as population aging and retirements have reduced labour market attachment. In contrast, participation rates among immigrants have increased in recent years as larger numbers of younger newcomers have entered the labour force.*
- *In all immigrant-status groups, females exhibit lower labour force participation rates than males.*
- *Overall immigrants generally experience unemployment rates like or lower than those of non-immigrants, reflecting the increasing importance of employer-driven immigration programs.*
- *Among non-immigrants, females tend to have lower unemployment rates than males. The opposite pattern is observed among immigrants and recent immigrants.*
- *Prior to the 2020s, immigrants generally earned more than non-immigrants. This advantage declined over time and disappeared by 2021. Recent immigrants also experienced a decline in relative earnings after 2006.*
- *The earnings gap between recent immigrants and non-immigrants narrowed somewhat in 2024, potentially reflecting improved labour market matching through programs such as the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) and the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP).*
- *Economic immigrants admitted through the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) tend to earn higher incomes than those admitted through the Provincial Nominee Program.*

The previous two sections examined the industrial and occupational distribution of immigrant employment in Atlantic Canada. Additional insights into the economic contribution of immigrants can be obtained by examining their labour market performance. Such analysis helps determine whether immigration is contributing not only to population growth but also to labour force utilization, economic development, and long-term prosperity.

This section focuses on three key indicators of labour market performance: labour force participation rates, unemployment rates, and earnings.

IV.7.3.1 Labour Force Participation Rates

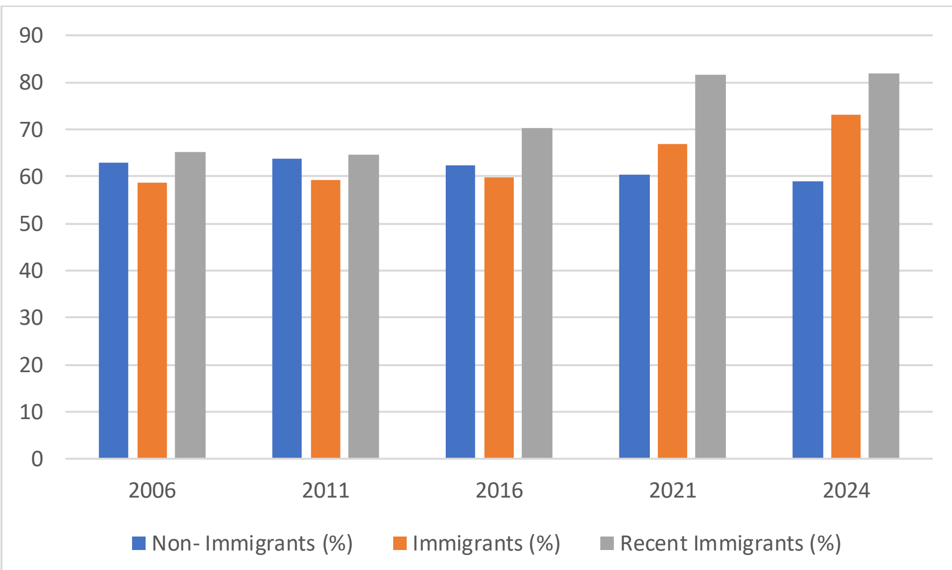
Labour force participation rates measure the proportion of the working-age population (aged 15 years and older) that is either employed or actively seeking employment.

Chart 8 presents labour force participation rates for non-immigrants, all immigrants, and recent immigrants between 2006 and 2024.

The participation rate among non-immigrants has declined since 2011, reflecting population aging and the retirement of baby boomers. In contrast, participation rates among immigrants have increased as larger numbers of younger immigrants entered Atlantic Canada during the second half of the past decade.

Recent immigrants exhibit the highest participation rates of all three groups. This pattern reflects both the age composition of recent immigrants and the growing importance of employment-driven immigration programs such as the Atlantic Immigration Program and the Provincial Nominee Program. Because many recent immigrants arrive specifically to participate in the labour market, they tend to enter employment or actively seek work shortly after arrival.

Chart 8: Labour Force Participation Rates by Immigrant Status, Atlantic Canada (%)



Source and notes: LFS - Customized data.

The rising participation rates among immigrants suggest that immigration is making an increasingly important contribution to labour force renewal in Atlantic Canada. At a time when population aging is reducing labour force participation among the Canadian-born population, immigration is helping offset these demographic pressures.

Labour Force Participation Rates by Gender

A gender-based analysis provides additional insight into labour market integration and helps policymakers better understand the experiences of immigrant women and men.

Table 12 presents labour force participation rates by immigrant status and gender in 2024.

Both male and female immigrants exhibit substantially higher labour force participation rates than their non-immigrant counterparts. Among non-immigrants, participation rates were 61.9 percent for males and 56.3 percent for females. Among immigrants, the corresponding rates were 77.9 percent and 68.0 percent. Recent immigrants exhibited the highest participation rates, at 88.4 percent for males and 75.5 percent for females.

Females in each group participate in the labour force at lower rates than males. However, the gender gap is larger among immigrants than among non-immigrants.

Table 12: Labour Force Participation Rates by Gender and Immigrant Status, Atlantic Canada, 2024

	Male	Female
Non-immigrants	61.9	56.3
All immigrants	77.9	68
Recent immigrants	88.4	75.5

Source and notes: Statistics Canada: Custom Labour Force data based on LFS. Recent Immigrants are Immigrants, landed 5 years or less earlier.

The lower participation rates among non-immigrant women partly reflect a larger proportion who are retired, engaged in caregiving responsibilities, managing long-term health conditions, or pursuing education.

The relatively high participation rates among immigrant women likely reflect the labour market orientation of Canada's immigration selection system, which increasingly prioritizes employment potential and economic integration. Economic necessity may also play a role, as many newcomer households rely on multiple earners during the settlement process.

It is important to recognize that high participation rates do not necessarily imply favourable labour market outcomes. Assessments of immigrant integration should also consider employment, employment quality, occupational match, hours worked, and earnings.

IV. 7. 3. 2 Unemployment Rates

Table 13 presents unemployment rates for non-immigrants, immigrants, and recent immigrants between 2006 and 2024.

Overall immigrants consistently experienced unemployment rates below those of non-immigrants throughout most of the period. Recent immigrants also had lower unemployment rates than non-immigrants in most years, although this pattern changed in 2024.

In 2024, the unemployment rate among recent immigrants reached 9.0 percent, compared with 7.3 percent among non-immigrants and 7.5 percent among all immigrants. This represented the first year in which recent immigrants experienced a noticeably higher unemployment rate than both comparison groups.

Table 13: Unemployment Rates by Immigrant Status, Atlantic Canada

Year	Non- Immigrants (%)	Immigrants (%)	Recent Immigrants (%)
2006	10.3	6	8.9
2011	10.4	7.2	10.9
2016	10.3	7.4	9.5
2021	10	8.1	9.3
2024	7.3	7.5	9

Source: 2006-2024: Custom Labour Force data.

The relatively favourable unemployment outcomes observed among immigrants over much of the study period likely reflect the increasing use of employer-driven immigration pathways, including the PNP and AIP.

The deterioration in unemployment outcomes among recent immigrants in 2024 may indicate that immigration selection is responding to medium-term labour market needs rather than immediate local vacancies. Processing and arrival lags can result in newcomers entering labour markets whose conditions have changed since their selection.

This issue warrants further research, particularly as immigration levels continue to rise and labour market conditions evolve.

Unemployment Rates by Gender

Table 14 presents unemployment rates by immigrant status and gender.

Among non-immigrants, males consistently experienced higher unemployment rates than females. In contrast, unemployment rates among immigrant women generally exceeded those of immigrant men.

The same pattern is observed among recent immigrants, particularly in recent years. In 2024, unemployment rates among recent immigrant females reached 10.4 percent, compared with 7.8 percent among recent immigrant males.

Table 14: Unemployment Rates by Gender and Immigrant Status, Atlantic Canada.

Year	Non- Immigrants (%)		Immigrants (%)		Recent Immigrants (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2006	12	8.5	5.7	6.3	x	x
2011	12.1	8.5	6.4	8.1	10.3	11.9
2016	12.8	7.6	7.4	6.9	10.4	8.3
2021	11.9	8	7	9.3	6.8	12
2024	8.9	5.7	6.8	8.1	7.8	10.4

Source and notes: Custom Labour Force data. A 'x' value indicates data not available.

The higher unemployment rates among immigrant women may reflect a combination of factors, including occupational concentration, childcare responsibilities, barriers to credential recognition, language challenges, and difficulties accessing professional networks.

The temporary increase in unemployment among immigrant men observed around 2016 may also be related to the effects of the commodity price collapse, which disproportionately affected male-dominated industries such as construction, transportation, manufacturing, and resource extraction.

These findings highlight the importance of considering both immigrant status and gender when evaluating labour market outcomes.

IV. 7. 3. 3 Earnings

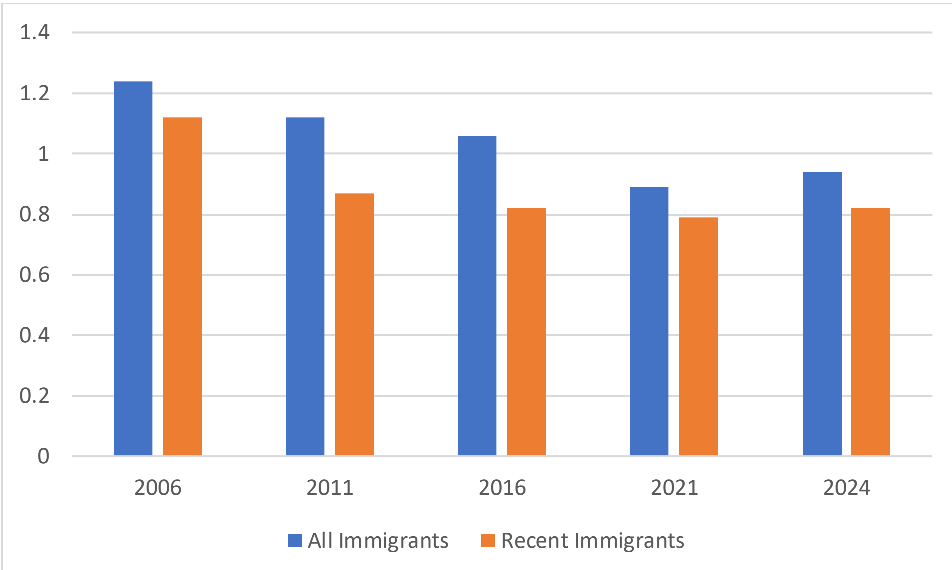
Average weekly earnings provide another important measure of labour market integration. To facilitate comparisons over time, Chart 9 presents immigrant earnings relative to those of non-immigrants. An earnings ratio greater than one indicates that immigrants earned more than non-immigrants, while a ratio below one indicates lower earnings.

Prior to the 2020s, immigrants generally earned more than non-immigrants. However, this earnings advantage declined steadily over time and disappeared by 2021. Recent immigrants experienced an even more pronounced decline. While they earned more than non-immigrants in 2006, their relative earnings fell thereafter.

Several factors may help explain this trend.

First, the source-country composition of immigrants has changed significantly over time. Differences in educational systems, occupational structures, and labour market experience may affect the transferability of skills and credentials to the Canadian labour market.

Chart 9: Average Weekly Earnings of Immigrants Relative to Non-Immigrants, Atlantic Canada



Source: Custom Labour Force data. A ratio higher than 1 means an average immigrant's earning was higher than that of an average non-immigrant. A lower than 1 ratio means the opposite.

Second, selective out-migration may play a role if higher-earning immigrants are more likely to relocate to other provinces.

Third, changes in immigration program composition may have increased admissions into occupations characterized by lower wage levels, particularly in sectors experiencing labour shortages.

Despite these challenges, the earnings gap narrowed somewhat in 2024. Recent immigrants earned approximately 82 percent of the earnings of non-immigrants, similar to their relative earnings position in 2016. This improvement may reflect better labour market matching and increased employer engagement through programs such as the PNP and AIP.

Overall, immigration is helping to address labour force shortages and demographic pressures in Atlantic Canada. However, improving employment matching, reducing barriers to labour market integration, and enhancing earnings outcomes remain important priorities if the region is to retain newcomers and fully realize the economic benefits of immigration.

IV. 7. 4 Earnings Outcomes of Economic Immigrants

- *Canadian Experience Class immigrants reported the highest median earnings among economic immigrant categories.*
- *Skilled Worker and Skilled Trades immigrants also achieved relatively strong earnings outcomes.*
- *Provincial nominees earned somewhat less than CEC immigrants but remained close to the average earnings of economic immigrants.*
- *Caregivers earned substantially less than other categories of economic immigrants.*
- *Earnings differences across immigration categories reflect variation in education, work experience, occupational concentration, and program selection criteria.*

Median earnings provide an important indicator of immigrants' economic integration and labour market success. Table 15 compares the median earnings of principal applicants admitted through various economic immigration programs to Atlantic Canada, using data from Statistics Canada's Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB). The reported earnings are averages of provincial median earnings across the four Atlantic provinces.

Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) immigrants are selected by the province in which they intend to reside, while the remaining categories are administered primarily through federal immigration programs.[1]

IV. 7. 4. 1 Earnings by Immigration Category

Among economic immigrants, those admitted through the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) earned the highest median incomes in 2022, followed by immigrants admitted under the Skilled Worker and Skilled Trades programs.

This outcome is not surprising given the design of the CEC program. Applicants are selected based on prior Canadian work experience and have already demonstrated their ability to succeed in the Canadian labour market. As a result, they typically experience smoother labour market integration and require less time to establish themselves economically after obtaining permanent residence.

Skilled Worker and Skilled Trades immigrants also report relatively high earnings. These immigrants are selected primarily based on education, work experience, language proficiency, and occupational skills. Many are employed in occupations classified within TEER 0, TEER 1, and TEER 2 categories, which generally offer higher earnings and stronger career advancement opportunities.

Provincial nominees earned somewhat less than CEC and Skilled Worker immigrants but remained close to the average earnings of economic immigrants overall. Because many provincial nominees are selected to address specific labour market needs and are often recruited through employer-driven pathways, they may have fewer opportunities for occupational mobility during their initial years after arrival.

One notable feature of Table 15 is the decline in earnings among the 2018 Canadian Experience Class cohort relative to adjacent cohorts. Several explanations may account for this pattern. First, higher-earning members of the cohort may have subsequently relocated to other provinces, reducing the median earnings of those who remained in Atlantic Canada. Second, some members of this cohort may have been employed in industries disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including hospitality, personal services, and certain skilled trades. Employment disruptions reduced working hours, and slower wage recovery in these sectors could have contributed to lower earnings observed in 2022. These explanations remain speculative and warrant further investigation using longitudinal data.

Caregivers report the lowest median earnings among economic immigrant categories. This outcome largely reflects the occupational characteristics of caregiving work, which is concentrated in lower-paying occupations generally classified within TEER 4 and TEER 5. The caregiving workforce is also predominantly female and is frequently employed in private households and personal care settings, sectors that historically offer relatively modest earnings.

Table 15: Median Earnings of Economic Immigrants by Admission Category, Principal Applicants, Atlantic Canada, 2022

Admission Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	Median income in 2022 $				
Economic Immigrant, principal applicant	$56,925	$55,925	$49,375	$49,225	$43,975
Skilled worker and skilled trades, principal applicant	$58,225	$56,900	$49,700	$49,050	$44,400
Canadian experience class, principal applicant	$79,375	$67,200	$71,650	$56,825	$52,700
Provincial/territorial nominee, principal applicant	$55,325	$54,925	$46,325	$48,075	$41,975
Business programs, principal applicant	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Caregiver, principal applicant	$21,125	$29,275	$10,800	0	NA
Other economic immigrant, principal applicant	NA	NA	NA	NA	$40,575

Source and Notes: - Statistics Canada. Table 43-10-0026-0 Income of Immigrant tax-filers, by immigrant admission category and tax year, for Canada and provinces, 2022 constant dollars. Numbers are averages of provincial medians. 'NA' refers to data not available. Income includes wages, salaries, commissions, and self-employment income.

Comment Box 4: Labour market performances of Economic Immigrants: AIP, PNP, PNP-Express Entry streams, 2020.

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) was designed as an employer-driven immigration program to address labour shortages in Atlantic Canada while improving immigrant retention. One of the program's distinguishing features is the requirement that applicants obtain a job offer from a designated employer before applying for permanent residence.

Results from a 2020 IRCC evaluation indicated that about 77 percent of employers found the AIP was useful to their organization in responding to labour needs compared to other economic immigration programs. Immigrants admitted through the program exhibited higher employment rates than those admitted through either the PNP or PNP–Express Entry streams.

Employment Rates of Surveyed Principal Applicants

Program	Overall surveyed population	First year in Canada	Second year in Canada
Atlantic Immigration Pilot	96%	97%	95%
PNP	79%	79%	79%
PNP-Express Entry	78%	75%	81%

Source: IRCC. 2020. Evaluation of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (Table 3).

The higher employment rates among AIP immigrants reflect the employer-driven nature of the program and the fact that participants typically arrive with employment already secured.

Despite stronger employment outcomes, surveyed AIP immigrants reported lower average earnings than immigrants admitted through PNP and PNP–Express Entry streams.

Self-reported income of surveyed economic principal applicants

Program	Overall surveyed population	First year in Canada	Second year in Canada
Atlantic Immigration Pilot	$43,060	$43,638	$40,710
PNP	$49,322	$46,678	$50,755
PNP-Express Entry	$49,920	$47,571	$53,886

Source: IRCC. 2020. Evaluation of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (Table 4)

Although lower than those reported for PNP and PNP–Express Entry immigrants, AIP earnings were broadly consistent with the average employment income in Atlantic Canada at the time (as reported by IRCC).

One explanation for these differences is occupational composition. The IRCC evaluation found that AIP immigrants were more likely to be employed in NOC C occupations (broadly corresponding to lower and intermediate TEER levels), whereas PNP–Express Entry immigrants were more heavily represented in managerial and professional occupations. Consequently, AIP participants achieved stronger employment outcomes but not necessarily higher earnings.

IV. 7. 4. 2 Some Interpretations and Conclusions

The evidence presented in this section highlights the importance of immigration program design in shaping labour market outcomes.

Programs such as the Canadian Experience Class tend to generate stronger earnings outcomes because applicants already possess Canadian work experience and labour market knowledge. Employer-driven programs such as the Atlantic Immigration Program, on the other hand, appear particularly effective in facilitating rapid labour market entry and reducing unemployment.

These findings suggest that labour market success should not be evaluated solely based on earnings. Employment rates, occupational matching, retention outcomes, and long-term career progression are equally important measures of economic integration.

Economic immigrants in Atlantic Canada generally achieve favourable labour market outcomes, although outcomes vary considerably across admission categories. Canadian Experience Class immigrants earn the highest incomes, while provincial nominees and Atlantic immigration participants appear to benefit from stronger labour market attachment and employment opportunities. Caregivers continue to experience the weakest earnings outcomes, reflecting the occupational characteristics of the sectors in which they are employed.

Overall, the evidence suggests that immigration programs emphasizing Canadian work experience, employer engagement, and labour market matching are associated with stronger economic outcomes. Continued monitoring of earnings and employment trajectories across immigration streams will be important for assessing the long-term effectiveness of Atlantic Canada's immigration strategy.

IV. 8. Impact of Immigrant Labour on Economic Growth

- *The combined contribution of immigrant and non-immigrant workers to provincial GDP growth is positive across all educational levels.*
- *When non-immigrant workers are examined separately, their estimated impact on GDP growth in larger provinces is negative when immigrant labour and capital stock are held constant. In smaller provinces, this pattern is observed only among workers with post-secondary, non-university education.*
- *These findings suggest that immigrant labour enhances the productivity of non-immigrant workers in larger provinces. In smaller provinces, this complementary relationship appears strongest among workers at higher and lower skill levels but not among those with intermediate levels of education.*
- *Immigrant workers have a positive impact on provincial GDP growth in larger provinces across all educational categories. In smaller provinces, positive effects are concentrated among immigrants with post-secondary education.*
- *The strongest economic impact is observed of immigrants who have post-secondary, non-university education, many of them are selected through employment-driven immigration programs.*
- *The relatively smaller contribution of university-educated workers—both immigrants and non-immigrants—may reflect skill underutilization, education–occupation mismatch, or slower labour market absorption among newcomers.*

In July 2016, the Government of Canada, through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), and the Atlantic provincial governments jointly introduced the Atlantic Growth Strategy (AGS) as a regional initiative to strengthen and accelerate economic growth across Atlantic Canada. Immigration was identified as one of the strategy's central pillars because of its potential contribution to labour force growth, productivity, innovation, and long-term economic development. (https://www.canada.ca/en/atlantic-canada-opportunities/atlanticgrowth.html)

Immigration can influence economic growth through several interrelated channels. By increasing the working-age population, immigrants expand labour supply and help alleviate labour shortages in sectors such as health care, construction, transportation, accommodation and food services, and caregiving. As documented earlier in this report, immigrants arriving in Atlantic Canada increasingly possess post-secondary education and specialized skills that contribute to the region's stock of human capital.

Many economic immigrants are selected through programs such as the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), and the Canadian Experience Class

(CEC), all of which place significant emphasis on education, skills, and labour market potential. In addition to contributing directly to production, immigrants stimulate demand for housing, consumer goods, and local services, generating multiplier effects throughout the economy.

Immigration also contributes to public finances through taxation and helps sustain communities facing population aging and out-migration. In the longer term, immigration can enhance innovation, entrepreneurship, international trade linkages, and economic competitiveness. Taken together, these mechanisms make immigration an important driver of both short-term economic activity and long-term economic growth.

IV. 8. 1 Analytical Framework

To assess the relationship between immigration and economic growth, this study examines the impact of immigrant and non-immigrant labour on provincial GDP at different levels of educational attainment.

The analysis employs a Cobb–Douglas production function estimated using econometric techniques commonly applied in the economic growth literature. Provincial panel data covering the period 2006–2024 are used. Labour inputs are derived from Labour Force Survey (LFS) data and are separated by immigrant status and educational attainment. Capital stock is included as an additional explanatory variable to isolate the contribution of labour to economic growth.

Because of data limitations, separate estimations for individual Atlantic provinces do not yield sufficiently robust results. Consequently, provinces are grouped into two categories:

Larger provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec

Smaller provinces: Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan.

The three territories are excluded because of data limitations.

Three educational categories are considered:

1. **High school education or less**, broadly correspond to occupations classified in TEER 5.
2. **Post-secondary, non-university,** broadly correspond to TEER 3–4 occupations.
3. **University degree**, broadly correspond to TEER 0–2 occupations.

The estimated coefficients represent the percentage change in provincial GDP associated with a one percent increase in employment within the specified educational and immigrant-status category, holding capital stock constant.

IV. 8. 2 Combined Impact of Labour Force on Economic Growth

The first set of estimates examines the combined impact of immigrant and non-immigrant workers.

As shown in Table 16, workers at all educational levels contribute positively to GDP growth in both larger and smaller provinces. The strongest effect is observed among workers with post-secondary, non-university education.

In larger provinces, a one percent increase in employment among workers in this educational category is associated with a 0.61 percent increase in GDP. In smaller provinces, the corresponding effect is even larger, at 0.68 percent.

These results highlight the importance of workers employed in technical, trades, and intermediate-skilled occupations for economic growth.

IV. 8. 3 Impact of Non-Immigrant Workers

The second set of estimates examines the impact of non-immigrant workers while holding immigrant labour and capital stock constant.

In larger provinces, the estimated impact of non-immigrant labour on GDP is negative across all educational categories. When considered alongside the positive combined results reported above, this finding suggests that immigrant labour and non-immigrant labour are complementary inputs in production.

One possible explanation is the phenomenon economists refer to as **capital dilution**. If the supply of non-immigrant labour expands while capital stock remains unchanged, the amount of capital available per worker declines, reducing productivity. When immigration occurs simultaneously, however, immigrants may complement existing workers by bringing skills, experience, and labour market flexibility that increase overall productivity and mitigate the effects of capital dilution.

In smaller provinces, the results differ. Non-immigrant workers with high school education or less and those with university degrees continue to have positive effects on GDP growth. Only workers with post-secondary, non-university education exhibit a negative effect when considered independently of immigrant labour.

These findings suggest that, in smaller provinces, many non-immigrant workers continue to contribute positively to economic growth even in the absence of increases in immigrant labour.

IV. 8. 4. Impact of Immigrant Workers

The final set of estimates examines the impact of immigrant labour on GDP growth.

Immigrant workers exhibit positive effects across all educational categories in larger provinces. Moreover, their estimated contributions are generally larger than the corresponding combined labour-force effects reported earlier.

In smaller provinces, the impact of immigrant labour is positive for workers with post-secondary education and university degrees. The only negative effect is observed among immigrants with high school education or less.

Several factors may explain this result. Lower-skilled immigrants constitute a relatively small share of immigration flows to smaller provinces and may face slower labour market integration. Some may be older workers, refugees, or individuals employed in part-time or seasonal positions. As a result, their short-term contribution to measured GDP growth may be more limited.

The strongest economic impact is observed among immigrants with post-secondary, non-university education. These workers are frequently employed in skilled trades, technical occupations, transportation, health support occupations, and other occupations experiencing persistent labour shortages. Many are selected through employment-driven immigration programs specifically designed to address workforce needs.

Interestingly, the estimated GDP impact of university-educated workers is lower than that of workers with post-secondary, non-university education for both immigrants and non-immigrants. This finding may reflect skill underutilization, education–occupation mismatch, credential recognition challenges, or slower labour market absorption among newcomers.

Table 16: Impact of Labour on Provincial GDP Growth by Immigrant Status and Educational Attainment.

Results	Education level of workers		
	High school or less	Post Secondary non-university	University degree
Overall			
Larger provinces	0.40	0.61	0.33
Smaller provinces	0.42	0.68	0.33
Non-immigrants			
Larger provinces	-0.27	-1.12	-0.13
Smaller provinces	0.55	-0.32	0.26
Immigrants			
Larger provinces	0.67	1.82	0.43
Smaller provinces	-0.11	1.05	0.05

Source: Derived from estimates of a Cobb-Douglas production function, in logarithmic form, based on LFS panel data for provinces, 2006-24. Variables included GDP, employed labour (immigrant and non-immigrant separately) and capital stock in each province. Each value in the table shows the percentage change in provincial GDP resulting from a one percent change in labour with corresponding immigrant status and education level. Larger and smaller provinces are described in the text.

IV. 8.5 Interpretation of results and Conclusions

Several important conclusions emerge from the analysis of this section.

First, labour force growth contributes positively to economic growth regardless of educational level. Second, immigration appears to complement the productivity of non-immigrant workers, particularly in larger provinces. Third, workers with post-secondary, non-university education generate the strongest GDP impacts, reflecting the importance of technical and intermediate-skilled occupations in the modern economy.

Finally, the relatively modest GDP effects observed among university-educated workers suggest that labour markets may not be fully utilizing the skills of highly educated workers, particularly immigrants. This finding is consistent with the education–occupation mismatch documented earlier in this report.

The evidence indicates that immigration contributes positively to economic growth in Canada and that immigrant workers play an important role in enhancing provincial economic performance.

The strongest economic impacts are associated with immigrants possessing post-secondary, non-university education, many of whom are selected through employment-driven immigration programs and employed in occupations experiencing persistent labour shortages.

The results also suggest that immigrant labour complements non-immigrant labour, particularly in larger provinces, thereby enhancing overall productivity and economic growth. At the same time, the relatively smaller impacts observed among university-educated workers point to continuing challenges related to credential recognition, occupational matching, and the utilization of human capital.

Overall, the findings support the view that immigration is not only contributing to population growth but is also making an important contribution to economic growth, labour market performance, and long-term economic sustainability.

V. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

International students are an important component of the economic and demographic strategies of Atlantic Canada's provinces. They contribute to regional economies during their studies and may continue to do so after graduation if they remain in Canada as permanent residents.

Post-secondary institutions themselves represent a significant economic sector, generating employment and economic activity through teaching, research, and student expenditures. Universities and colleges also produce knowledge spillovers through research partnerships, innovation, technology transfer, and collaboration with industry.

International students are particularly valuable because they represent a well-established pathway to permanent residency. Having acquired Canadian credentials, language proficiency, and familiarity with Canadian society, they often transition more easily into the labour market than immigrants educated abroad. Their employers also face less uncertainty regarding the quality and recognition of their credentials.

From a public finance perspective, international students contribute significantly through tuition fees, which are generally much higher than those paid by domestic students. These fees help support institutional operations and infrastructure while reducing financial pressures on provincial governments and domestic students.

If they remain in Canada after graduation, former international students enter the labour market during their prime working years, contributing to economic growth, tax revenues, and labour force renewal. They can also facilitate future trade, investment, and cultural connections between Canada and their countries of origin.

V.1. Growth in International Student Entries

- *International student entries increased nearly fourfold between 2001 and 2024.*
- *The most rapid growth occurred after 2020.*
- *COVID-19 caused a temporary decline in international student entries.*
- *Federal caps introduced in 2024 reduced admissions but did not return them to pre-pandemic levels.*

Chart 10 presents annual entries of new international students to Atlantic Canada between 2001 and 2024. These data represent new study permit holders entering the region and should not be interpreted as the total stock of international students enrolled in a given year.

International student entries increased steadily during most of the study period. Between 2001 and 2015, entries nearly doubled. Growth accelerated further between 2015 and 2019, increasing by approximately 62 percent.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted this trend. International student entries declined by approximately 44 percent in 2020 because of travel restrictions and disruptions to international mobility. Following the easing of restrictions, entries rebounded sharply. Between 2020 and 2023, the number of new international students tripled, reaching a record high of 36,143.[8]

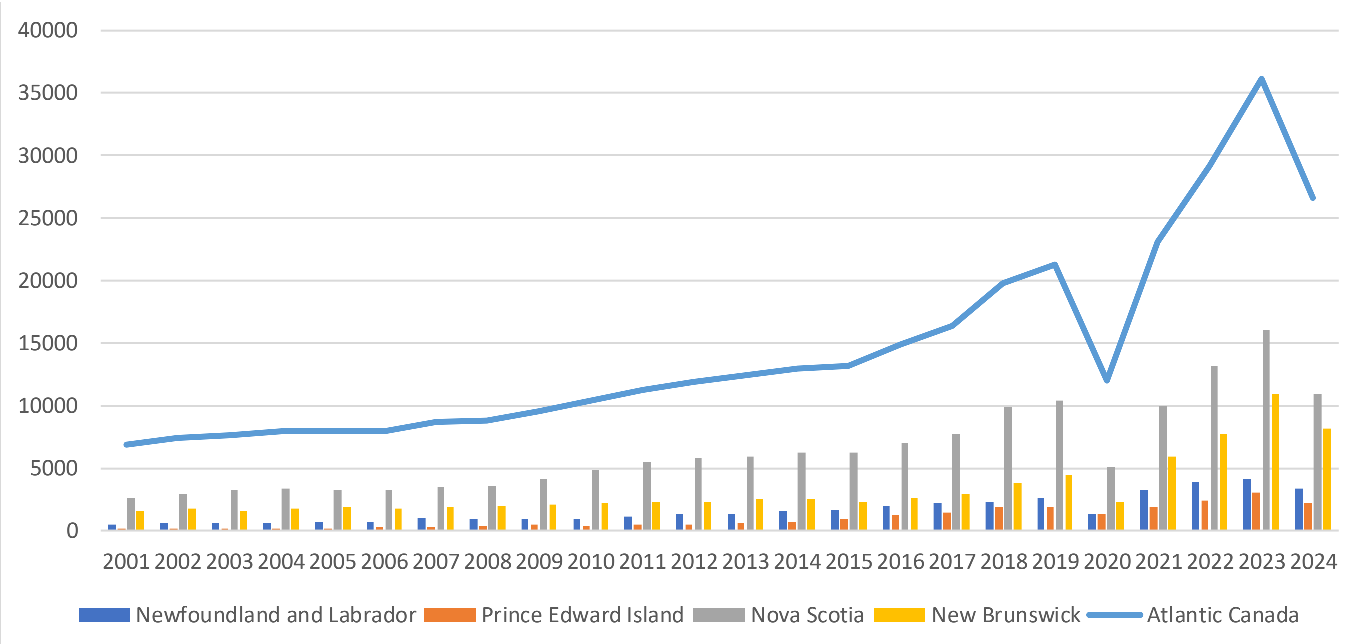
Several factors contributed to this increase. Students who had initially studied online from abroad were required to enter Canada as institutions returned to in-person instruction. Immigration processing backlogs were reduced, study permit approvals increased, and demand for Canadian education remained strong. Atlantic universities and colleges also expanded their international recruitment efforts during this period.

In January 2024, the federal government introduced a cap on new international student admissions. As a result, entries declined by approximately 27 percent to 26,584. Although lower than the 2023 peak, this level remained substantially higher than pre-pandemic levels.

A second federal cap was introduced in January 2025. Its impact on Atlantic Canada will become clearer once additional data become available.

[8] As an example, student enrolments at Cape Breton University more than doubled in the 2022-23 academic year, compared to 2021-22 (from 3,054 to 8,287), due to international students. (https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/cape-breton-university-reports-more-than-50-per-cent-increase-in-student-enrolment-for-fall-2023-100901505)

Chart 10: Annual Entries of International Students, Atlantic Canada, 2001–2024



Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-Custom Data--Canada – Study Permit Holders by Province/Territory of Destination, Country of Citizenship, Study Level, and Year in which Permit(s) became effective, 2000 - December 2024.

V. 2. International Students by Level of Study

- *Most international students come to Atlantic Canada for post-secondary education.*
- *Post-secondary students account for most of the economic and labour market benefits associated with international education.*
- *Secondary-level enrolment increased rapidly after 2019.*
- *Admissions declined in 2024 following federal policy changes.*

Chart 11 presents new international student entries by level of study.

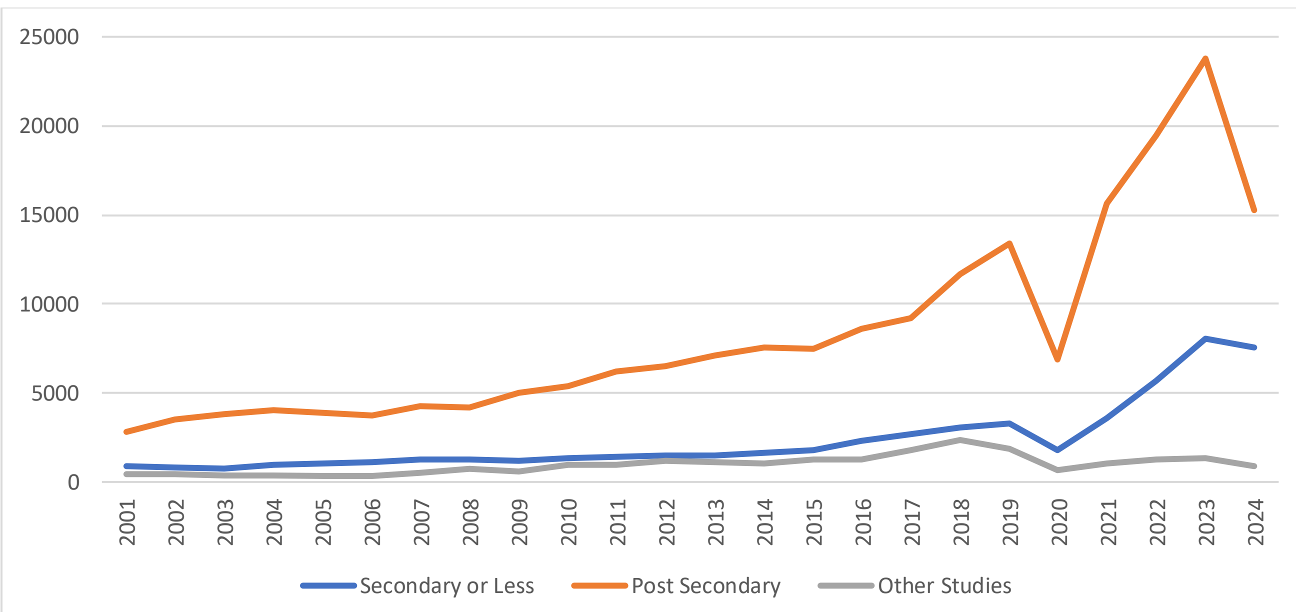
Most international students come to Atlantic Canada to pursue post-secondary education. This is particularly important because many of the economic benefits associated with international students arise at the post-secondary level. These students contribute to research, innovation, and knowledge creation while also representing a major source of future skilled workers and permanent residents.

The number of students pursuing post-secondary education increased substantially over the study period. However, growth was not limited to this group.

International student enrolment at the secondary-school level and below also expanded rapidly. In 2019, approximately 3,285 international students entered Atlantic Canada for primary or secondary education. By 2023, this number had increased to 8,045—approximately two and a half times higher. As with overall admissions, enrolment declined in 2024 following the introduction of federal caps.

Students pursuing other forms of study have consistently represented a relatively small share of total international student admissions.

Chart 11: International Students in Atlantic Canada by Level of Study, 2001–2024



Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-Custom Data--Canada – Study Permit Holders by Province/Territory of Destination, Country of Citizenship, Study Level, and Year in which Permit(s) became effective, 2000 - December 2024.

V.3. Source Countries of International Students

- *India is now the leading source country for international students in Atlantic Canada.*
- *China remains an important source country but has declined in relative importance.*
- *Nigeria, Ghana, Bangladesh, and the Philippines have emerged as significant new source countries.*
- *The composition of source countries has become more diverse over time.*
- *Diversification reduces vulnerability to policy changes and economic shocks in any single source country.*

Table 17 presents the top five source countries of international students studying in Atlantic Canada.

China was the leading source country for much of the study period and remained among the top five sources throughout. However, its relative importance declined over time. China ranked first until 2016 but fell to second place in 2021 and third place by 2024.

India experienced the opposite trend. Prior to 2011, India did not rank among the five leading source countries. Since then, it has become the dominant source country, rising to first place by 2021 and maintaining that position in 2024.

Saudi Arabia, which ranked among the leading source countries in 2006 and 2011, disappeared from the top five list in later years. A major reason was the reduction in funding for overseas scholarship programs. This experience highlights the vulnerability of institutions that rely heavily on government-sponsored student programs and underscores the importance of maintaining a diversified portfolio of source countries.

Nigeria, Ghana, Bangladesh, and the Philippines have emerged as increasingly important sources of international students in recent years. These countries have rapidly growing youth populations and strong demand for international educational opportunities. In addition, Canada's immigration pathways and opportunities for permanent residency have increased the attractiveness of Canadian institutions.

The disappearance of the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Republic of Korea from the top five list reflects broader changes in recruitment strategies and immigration policies. Increasing emphasis has been placed on attracting students who are more likely to pursue permanent residency and contribute to long-term demographic and labour market objectives.

Table 17: Top Five Source Countries of International Students in Atlantic Canada, Selected Years, 2001–2024.

Rank	2001		2006		2011		2016		2021		2024	
1	China*	825	China*	1610	China*	2525	China*	4040	India	5095	India	5405
2	USA**	495	Korea****	650	Saudi Arabia Total	1855	Saudi Arabia	755	China*	2685	Nigeria	3240
3	UK***	275	USA**	370	Korea****	470	India	650	Nigeria	1050	China*	2250
4	Korea****	245	Mexico	275	India	380	Nigeria	465	Bangladesh	900	Philippines	1140
5	Japan	240	Germany	250	USA**	365	Korea****	425	Philippines	810	Ghana	1120
Total (Top 5 countries)		2080		3155		5595		6335		10540		13155
Province Total		4870		5910		9280		6335		21080		24560

Source: Province/Territory of Destination, Country of Citizenship, Study Level, and Year in which Permit(s) became effective, 2000 - December 2024. *China, People's Republic, **United States of America, *** United Kingdom, ****Korea, Republic of.

V.4. Earnings of Former International Students

One of the principal arguments in favour of international student recruitment is that many students eventually transition to permanent residency and become members of the labour force.

Table 18 presents the median earnings of former study permit holders during their first five years after becoming permanent residents in Atlantic Canada. All earnings are reported in 2022 constant dollars and are therefore adjusted for inflation.

The data indicate that earnings are generally modest during the initial years following the transition to permanent residency. Median annual earnings are often below $20,000 during the first several years after admission. Although earnings generally increase over time, the pace of growth varies across admission cohorts.

Several factors may explain these relatively modest earnings.

First, graduates in fields associated with higher earnings may be more likely to leave Atlantic Canada for larger labour markets elsewhere in Canada. Their departure reduces the median earnings of those who remain in the region.

Second, many former international students initially accept employment below their educational qualifications in order to gain Canadian work experience, meet immigration requirements, or repay debts incurred during their studies.

Third, some transition through Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) pathways or employer-supported immigration programs that may limit job mobility during the early stages of their careers.

Finally, former international students are disproportionately employed in sectors such as accommodation and food services, retail trade, health support occupations, and personal services, which tend to offer relatively modest wages and slower earnings progression.

Table 18: Median income earned in the first five years by former study permit holders who became permanent residents, Atlantic Canada (2022 dollars).

Admission year	Years since arrival				
	1	2	3	4	5
2012	13,225	11,900	17,225	12,050	12,675
2013	4,925	6,925	9,850	16,500	12,850
2014	3,025	5,100	7,800	8,975	9,700
2015	12,950	15,425	14,100	13,775	23,275
2016	9,450	16,100	12,800	13,975	12,325
2017	9,600	9,900	12,450	16,775	13,825

Source and Notes: -Statistics Canada. Table 43-10-0026-01 Income of Immigrant tax-filers, by immigrant admission category and tax year, for Canada and provinces, 2022 constant dollars. Income values are adjusted to 2022 constant dollars. Averages of median incomes across provinces are reported.

V. 4. 1 Some Interpretations and Conclusion

The earnings trajectories shown in Table 18 suggest that former international students often experience a gradual transition into the labour market rather than immediate access to higher-paying professional employment.

While these earnings outcomes may appear modest, they should be interpreted within the broader context of labour market integration and career development. Many former international students are still at the beginning of their professional careers and may require additional time to move into occupations that fully utilize their education and skills.

Future research should examine the role of field of study, industry of employment, occupational mobility, and interprovincial migration in shaping earnings outcomes among former international students.

International students have become an increasingly important component of Atlantic Canada's economic and demographic development strategy. Their numbers have grown substantially over the past two decades, particularly since 2020, and they represent an important source of future immigrants, skilled workers, and taxpayers.

The composition of source countries has changed significantly, with India emerging as the dominant source country and several African countries becoming increasingly important contributors. These shifts highlight both the opportunities and risks associated with international student recruitment and underscore the importance of maintaining diversified recruitment strategies.

Although earnings among former international students remain relatively modest during their early years as permanent residents, they generally increase over time. Given their Canadian education, language skills, and familiarity with local institutions, international students remain one of the most promising pathways for addressing labour shortages, supporting population growth, and strengthening long-term economic development in Atlantic Canada.

VI. CONCLUSIONS, POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This report examined immigration trends in Atlantic Canada over the past quarter century and assessed their implications for population growth, labour force development, labour market outcomes, international student recruitment, and economic growth. Drawing on data from Statistics Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and other sources, the report documented the growing importance of immigration in addressing the region's demographic and economic challenges.

The analysis began by noting that Atlantic Canada faces demographic circumstances that differ significantly from those of Canada as a whole. Between 2001 and 2021, Canada's population increased by approximately 23 percent, while Atlantic Canada's population grew by only 4.7 percent. At the same time, natural population growth in the region turned negative as deaths began to outnumber births. Consequently, population growth and labour force expansion have become increasingly dependent on migration.

The evidence presented throughout this report demonstrates that immigration has become the principal source of demographic growth in Atlantic Canada. Immigration has helped offset population aging, labour force decline, and historical out-migration, while contributing to economic activity, labour market renewal, and community sustainability. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain, particularly with respect to immigrant retention, labour market integration, utilization of human capital, and the long-term sustainability of international student recruitment.

VI. 1. Population Growth and Demographic Sustainability

One of the central findings of this report is that immigration has become indispensable to population growth in Atlantic Canada.

Migration exchanges with rest of Canada have made a positive contribution to population growth during the current decade. However, they remain highly sensitive to economic cycles and changing labour market conditions. The growth of remote work following the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily strengthened migration into Atlantic Canada, but more recent evidence suggests that these trends may be moderating.[9] A recent study published by the Fraser Institute shows that migration to and from Atlantic Canada is returning to its pre-pandemic level but with outflows of young age people and inflows of older Canadians.[10]

For these reasons, interprovincial migration should be viewed as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, international migration. Sustained population growth and labour force renewal will require continued attraction and retention of immigrants and international students.

Policy Consideration

Atlantic Canada's governments should continue to advocate for immigration policies that recognize the region's unique demographic circumstances. Immigration targets based solely on national averages may not adequately reflect the region's aging population, negative natural growth, and relatively small immigrant population.

VI. 2. Immigration, Labour Force Growth, and Retention

The report documented substantial growth in immigrant admissions over the study period. Immigration has become increasingly important in supporting labour force growth and addressing labour shortages across a wide range of industries.

However, attracting immigrants is only the first step. Retention remains one of the most significant challenges facing the region. Family-class immigrants exhibit considerably higher retention rates than economic immigrants and refugees, reflecting the importance of family and community ties in long-term settlement decisions.

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[9] A Statistics Canada study shows a declining trend to work from home n Canada for an employer located in another province or abroad. Statistics Canada. Research to insights: Working from home in Canada, 2024 Cat # 11-631-X

[10] https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/out-young-and-old-patterns-interprovincial-migration-and-atlantic-canada-2001-2025

Policy Consideration

Retention strategies should extend beyond labour market considerations and by adopting a broader community-development perspective. This is particularly important in the context of recent reductions in immigration targets and caps on international student admissions. As attracting large numbers of new newcomers becomes more challenging, greater emphasis should be placed on retaining those already in the region. Policies that improve housing affordability, facilitate credential recognition, strengthen settlement services, and enhance community integration are likely to enhance long-term retention and maximize the economic and demographic benefits of immigration. A survey-based 2021 Nova Scotia study showed that these factors mattered in immigrants' choice of Nova Scotia as a home and in their retention.[11]

Newcomers often rely on settlement agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations for information about employment, training, and financial supports, such as the microloan programs. This means their awareness of such programs may vary depending on their engagement with settlement services and community networks. More formal provision of such information before arrival may increase program uptake, reduce financial barriers to labour market entry, and contribute to stronger economic outcomes and retention among newcomers.

[11] https://www.smu.ca/webfiles/3StayersandLeaversSurveyReportFinalOctober23.pdf

Comment Box 5: Microloan Programs and Immigrant Retention

Microloan programs in Atlantic Canada can be an important support mechanism for immigrants and newcomers who face barriers accessing traditional financial institutions due to limited Canadian credit history, lack of collateral, or unfamiliarity with the Canadian banking system. These programs provide small loans—often combined with mentoring, settlement support, and entrepreneurship training—to help immigrants start businesses, obtain professional certification, purchase work-related equipment, or transition into the labour market.

Two major such programs include the Windmill Microlending program and the Atlantic Immigrant Career Loan Fund.

Windmill Microlending: This non-for-profit organization provides microloans up to $15,000 to skilled immigrants and refugees, helping them achieve career success and economic prosperity. They offer funding for Canadian licensing or training, and clients receive mentorship and support. This is a national program available in all Canadian provinces. https://www.windmillmicrolending.org/

Atlantic Immigrant Career Loan Fund (AICLF): This program is designed to meet specific needs of immigrants who settle in Atlantic Canada. The program helps internationally trained immigrants overcome financial barriers to upgrade their skills and obtain licenses or certifications. It requires no collateral, no previous credit history, and can be paid back early without penalty. The Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) is the primary organization responsible for administering the AICLF across Atlantic Canada in collaboration with other settlement agencies. Loans are distributed through the Royal Bank of Canada. https://www.innovatingcanada.ca/diversity-and-inclusion/supporting-canadian-newcomers-2026/how-the-aiclf-helps-immigrants-achieve-career-goals/

Both programs are funded through federal and provincial governments, credit unions and financial institutions, non-profit and community organizations.

Microloan programs support retention indirectly through stronger economic integration. When immigrants obtain professional employment, establish local labour market networks, and experience upward mobility, they are more likely to remain in the province and contribute to regional economic development. In this sense, career loan programs can be viewed not only as financial assistance mechanisms, but also as strategic labour market and population-retention tools within Atlantic Canada’s broader immigration strategy.

Data on the outcomes of the microloan programs are limited. A systematic collection of these data is essential for assessing whether the programs achieve their intended objectives of improving immigrant labour market integration and retention, especially in Atlantic Canada.

VI.3. Human Capital and Labour Market Integration

A recurring theme throughout the report is the strong educational profile of immigrants.

Recent immigrants consistently exhibit substantially higher rates of university education than non-immigrants. At the same time, occupational data reveal evidence of persistent education–occupation mismatch. While non-immigrants increasingly moved into higher-skilled occupations during the study period, recent immigrants experienced a shift toward middle-skilled occupations despite rising educational attainment.

This pattern suggests that Atlantic Canada's labour market is not fully utilizing the skills and qualifications of many highly educated immigrants.

The findings from the economic growth analysis reinforce this conclusion. The strongest GDP impacts were associated with immigrants possessing post-secondary, non-university education, while the economic contribution of university-educated workers appeared smaller than expected. This likely reflects slower labour market absorption, credential-recognition barriers, and occupational mismatch.

Policy Consideration

Reducing the time required for immigrants to transition into occupations that match their qualifications should be a policy priority. Greater coordination among employers, professional regulatory bodies, educational institutions, and settlement organizations could help accelerate labour market integration and improve productivity outcomes.

VI. 4. Rural Communities and Regional Development

The analysis showed that immigrants contribute not only to population growth in major urban centres but also to labour force renewal in rural communities.

Although immigrant populations remain concentrated in population centres, immigrant participation in rural labour markets has increased over time. This growth has helped offset labour force losses associated with retirements, population aging, and out-migration among non-immigrants.

Programs such as the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), and ACOA-supported workforce initiatives have contributed to these outcomes by supporting industries facing persistent labour shortages.

Policy Consideration

The long-term success of rural immigration depends on the availability of stable employment opportunities, housing, transportation, and community supports. Policies designed to strengthen rural economic development should be viewed as complementary to immigration policy, helping maximize the demographic and economic benefits of a smaller inflow of newcomers.

Comment Box 6: Regional Economic Growth Through Innovation

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's (ACOA) support for labour force development through place-based economic and workforce development initiatives—most notably Regional Economic Growth through Innovation (REGI)—helps strengthen the capacity of rural regions to attract and retain workers, including both non-immigrant and immigrant workers. While REGI does not directly target immigration outcomes, it prioritizes sectors that dominate rural Atlantic Canada and face persistent labour shortages, supporting them through recruitment and training initiatives, workforce planning, modernization, and skills development. These sectors are also major users of the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) and Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) streams. By improving firm viability, reducing recruitment and onboarding costs, and modernizing workplaces, REGI indirectly supports sustained employer demand for immigrant labour in industries and regions where attraction and long-term retention are often most challenging. It is important to create greater awareness of such programs among employers and rural communities.

VI. 5. International Students as a Strategic Asset

The report highlighted the growing importance of international students to Atlantic Canada's economic and demographic future.

International students contribute directly through tuition expenditures, consumer spending, and support for post-secondary institutions. More importantly, they represent a highly promising source of future immigrants because they possess Canadian credentials, language proficiency, and familiarity with local labour markets.

Recent federal caps on international student admissions raise concerns regarding both the financial sustainability of post-secondary institutions and the future supply of skilled workers available to Atlantic employers.

The changing composition of source countries further underscores the importance of diversification in international student recruitment.

Policy Consideration

Given the current federal caps on international student permits and recent reductions in immigration targets, Atlantic universities and colleges should focus on attracting and retaining students who are most likely to meet regional labour market needs and remain in the region after graduation. Strengthening alumni networks, expanding co-op programs, internships, and employer partnerships, and seeking policymakers' cooperation in improving pathways from study to employment and permanent residency can help maximize student outcomes and support long-term retention within the constraints of lower intake levels.

Comment Box 7: Economic Impact of Federal Caps on International Students' Enrolments

In October 2024, the Atlantic Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) published a report that examined the economic contribution of international students in Atlantic provinces based on the 2023/24 and the 2024/25 international students' enrolments (estimated to be 26,220 and 23,237, respectively – a 11.4 percent drop) that were subject to the IRCC policy caps.[1] The report estimated the shortfall in international student enrolments to result in estimated losses in the region of: $163.4 million in spending (direct output), $164.51 million in provincial GDP, $93.94 million in provincial income, 2,231 jobs (FTE, direct and indirect), 21.98 million in provincial taxes and $16.78 million in federal taxes collected.

Source: *The Economic Impacts of Canada's International Student Cap in Atlantic Canada for 2024/25* 024 (https://www.atlanticuniversities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GP-Report_AAU-IRCC-Impacts-2024.pdf

VI. 6. Some Directions for Future Research

Several important questions emerged from this study that warrant further investigation:

- To what extent are immigrants employed in occupations that match their educational qualifications and fields of study?
- How do labour market outcomes differ across immigration admission categories such as AIP, PNP, CEC, family class, and refugee programs?
- What factors explain the lower earnings observed among former international students during their early years as permanent residents?
- How do labour market outcomes differ between rural and urban immigrants over time?
- What specific factors contribute most strongly to immigrant retention in each Atlantic province?
- How do employer practices influence the speed with which newcomers integrate into higher-skilled occupations?

Addressing these questions would improve understanding of how immigration contributes to economic development and helps policymakers design more effective attraction, retention, and integration strategies.

Comprehensive and timely data collection is critical for understanding whether immigration is achieving its economic, demographic, and population-retention objectives in Atlantic Canada. Detailed longitudinal data on labour market outcomes, earnings, settlement experiences, and interprovincial mobility can help identify which policies and programs are most effective in attracting and retaining newcomers. As immigration growth slows under recent federal policy changes, evidence-based decision-making supported by high-quality data will become increasingly important for maximizing the contribution of each newcomer to the region's long-term prosperity.

FINAL REMARKS

The evidence presented in this report indicates that immigration has become a cornerstone of Atlantic Canada's demographic and economic development strategy. Immigration now serves as the principal source of population growth, an increasingly important source of labour force renewal, and a significant contributor to economic growth.

At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that the benefits of immigration depend not only on attracting newcomers but also on retaining them and ensuring that their skills are fully utilized. The region has achieved considerable success in expanding immigration through initiatives such as the Provincial Nominee Program, the Atlantic Immigration Program, and international student recruitment. The next phase of policy development should focus increasingly on retention, human capital utilization, and long-term integration.

Given the region's aging population, negative natural population growth, and continuing labour market challenges, immigration will remain essential to Atlantic Canada's future prosperity. Policies that strengthen attraction, retention, labour market integration, and community inclusion will be critical to ensuring that immigration continues to support sustainable economic and demographic growth in the decades ahead.

APPENDIX: Comparative Profile of Immigration, Labour Markets and Retention in Atlantic Canada

Based on findings from the Atlantic overview and four provincial reports.

Dimension	Similarities Across Provinces	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Prince Edward Island	Newfoundland and Labrador
Demographic trends	All provinces face population aging and increasingly rely on immigration for population and labour force growth.	Strong population growth since 2016 driven by immigration and interprovincial migration.	Population growth accelerated after 2016, reversing earlier stagnation.	Fastest growth relative to population size; highly dependent on immigration.	Aging and outmigration pressures remained strongest; immigration partly offset decline.
Immigration trends	Immigration increased substantially across all four provinces.	Largest immigrant destination in Atlantic Canada.	Rapid growth following AIP and PNP expansion.	Highest immigrant share relative to population size.	Smallest immigrant population but growing steadily.
Source countries	India, Philippines, Nigeria and China became increasingly important sources.	Strong growth from India, Nigeria, Philippines and China.	Growth from India, Philippines, Nigeria and francophone Africa.	Increasing concentration from India, China, Philippines and Nigeria.	Growing arrivals from India, Philippines, Nigeria and China.
Retention	Retention improves with stronger labour markets and settlement supports.	Highest retention in Atlantic Canada.	Improved substantially over time.	Improved but remains a significant challenge.	Generally lower than Nova Scotia; constrained by labour market opportunities.
Labour force composition	Immigrants increasingly contribute to	Diversified labour force with growth in professional	Growth in health care, manufacturing,	Concentrated in tourism, agriculture, food	Concentrated in health care, construction,

	labour force renewal.	services, health care and services.	transportation and services.	processing, services and health care.	public services and resource sectors.
Labour market outcomes	Recent immigrants generally experience weaker outcomes than established immigrants.	Higher participation but persistent job-matching challenges.	Participation improved but gaps remain.	Outcomes have improved with years since arrival.	Outcomes sensitive to labour market conditions.
Human capital	Immigrants possess high educational attainment but skills utilization remains a challenge.	Highest concentration of university-educated immigrants.	Highly educated immigrants but credential recognition issues persist.	International graduates and skilled immigrants contribute significantly.	Educational attainment exceeds provincial averages but utilization is uneven.
International students	Important source of future immigrants and skilled labour.	Largest international student population in Atlantic Canada.	Growing role in immigration growth.	Particularly important relative to population size.	Memorial University is a major attraction and retention mechanism.
Rural vs urban settlement	Settlement is concentrated in major urban centres.	Halifax dominates newcomer settlement.	More geographically dispersed but concentrated in major cities.	Charlottetown attracts most newcomers.	St. John's dominates newcomer settlement.
Policy engagement	All provinces rely on AIP, PNP and settlement services.	Broad use of immigration pathways and settlement supports.	Strong emphasis on AIP, PNP and francophone immigration.	Immigration central to demographic strategy.	Focus on attraction, retention and labour shortages.

Overall Conclusion Emerging from the Above Table:

Nova Scotia emerged as the region's principal immigration hub, combining the largest immigrant inflows, strongest retention rates, largest international student population, and strongest labour market outcomes. New Brunswick experienced the most rapid immigration expansion following the Atlantic Immigration Pilot. Prince Edward Island remained the most immigration-dependent province relative to its population size, while Newfoundland and Labrador continued to face the greatest demographic and retention challenges despite recent gains.