

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF IMMIGRATION IN NOVA SCOTIA

(A STATISTICAL REVIEW)

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SOME DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

- Since 2016, the natural growth of Nova Scotia's population has been negative as the number of births have been below the number of deaths. In 2024, the number of births fell short of the number deaths by about 28 percent.
- The interprovincial migration has gone through 3 different phases over the past 25 years: net losses in 2000s, some small gains in 2010s and sustained gains in 2020s. Despite turning positive recently, interprovincial migration can not be relied upon for sustained population growth for two important reasons: First, it was caused in part by the remote-work trend that developed after Covid-19, which is now showing a declining trend. Second, besides many being in their working-age, migrants from other provinces also include many seniors. **Policy implication:** interprovincial migration can only be viewed as a supplement of population growth strategy. International migration and immigrant retention are vital to population growth.
- Immigration contributed about 41 percent of population growth in 2024. The 2021 census revealed immigrants' share in resident population to be about 7.5 percent, up from 4.6 percent in 2001.
- The province receives a tiny fraction (under 3 percent in 2024) of annual immigrant inflows to Canada which makes population growth highly vulnerable to changes in federal immigration policy. **Policy implication:** There is a strong need for the province to remain actively engaged in future immigration target planning of the federal government and allocations under various immigration programs.

IMMIGRATION TRENDS

- NS remained the top destination of immigrants in Atlantic Canada until 2024, when it was overtaken by New Brunswick which received about 9 percent more immigrants than NS. NB had more quickly designated a larger number of employers for the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP), while NS relied more heavily on its PNP and international students initially, which delayed AIP scaling relative to NB.
- Most immigrants enter Nova Scotia as economic class immigrants. They have been rising steadily (except during the pandemic). In 2024, their number hit a record high of 11,680, nearly six times their number ten years ago.
- Refugees and protected persons also rose. Prior to 2013, their annual numbers were typically below 100. In 2016, they exceeded 1,000 and again each year since 2022. Their annual arrivals exhibit volatility driven by global events.
- The source country mix of immigrants has changed over the past 25 years. While UK and US were among the top five list of source countries throughout the first decade in present century, both have not appeared in the list since the middle of last decade. China has been a consistent member of the top five source countries, although its ranking in the list keeps changing. Philippines has also been in the list since 2011-16. India has occupied the top ranking since

2016. Nigeria has also been in the list since 2016. South Korea entered the list for the first time in 2021-24 period.

- The share of top five source countries in total arrivals has been rising over the past 25 years. This means immigration in Nova Scotia is increasingly concentrated towards a few countries. In 2021-24, immigrants from the top five source countries accounted for 61 percent of all arriving immigrants.
- Most immigrants tend to settle in the largest population centre of Halifax, which in 2021 was home to 76 percent of all immigrants, and 84 percent of recent immigrants. However, recent immigrants are also settling in smaller communities some of which have seen the share of immigrants in their population exceeding 5 percent, approaching the provincial average of 7.1 percent. Their settlement in smaller areas is largely due to employment driven immigrant admission programs. **Policy implication:** To grow and retain immigrant population, smaller areas would need stronger settlement services.
- Immigrant retention rates in Nova Scotia remain low (65 percent in five years and 60 percent in ten years). Economic and refugee class immigrants are more likely to leave the province than the family class immigrants who are more tied to the place as movement is based on joint decisions in the family. **Policy implication and research questions:** To retain immigrants, the factors that can improve the competitiveness of the province over other provinces should be carefully studied. Some of these factors could include providing employment opportunity information, career counseling, faster credential recognition, better housing affordability, health care, community belonging and inclusion. Greater admission of immigrants who are young, have families and can become productive members of labour force quickly upon arrival should be the focus of immigration policy.

IMMIGRANTS IN THE LABOUR FORCE

- Immigration either contributed to the increase in the labour force or softened any decline. The softening of the decline was especially pronounced in the 2012-16 period, when a 2.7 percent of the decline in province's labour force was averted by immigration. In the recent 2022-2024 period, 37.2 percent of the growth in labour force came from immigration.
- Over the past 25 years, non-immigrant labour force: i) grew by 1 percent in population centres (urban areas), where immigrant labour force quadrupled and ii) fell by 1 percent in rural NS where the immigrant labour force nearly doubled. In 2024, the unemployment rate for non-immigrants was higher in rural areas than in population centres, while reverse was true for immigrants, largely due to their employment driven settlements. Provincial unemployment was lower for non-immigrant females than for males, but the reverse was the case for immigrants.
- Labour force participation of immigrants has been consistently higher than that of non-immigrants. This may be due to the increasingly larger proportion of recent immigrants who are younger, their employer-driven entry, and motivation to perform well in their destination country. Women tend to have lower labour force participation rates than men among both immigrants and non-immigrants.

- Recent immigrants (who were admitted within 5 or less years of a Labour Force Survey) have been more likely to have acquired a university degree, and less likely to have only high school or less education, when compared to non-immigrants.
- Unemployment rate for immigrants became higher than that of non-immigrants in 2024. It was the highest for recent immigrants, bringing into question the alignment of newly introduced employment-driven admissions with provincial or medium-term needs.
- The largest share of immigrant workers works in accommodation and food services, where one in five workers are immigrants, followed by professional, scientific and technical services where their share is about 12 percent. These findings pose two important **research questions of policy relevance**: 1) Do immigrants displace non-immigrants in industries? 2) Do immigrants work in industries where non-immigrants do not want to work? A finer breakdown of immigrant employment data by industrial sectors will allow for addressing these questions meaningfully.
- Immigrants are more likely to be found working, than non-immigrants, in Accommodation and Food Services, Finance and Insurance, and in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services. Recent immigrants, who arrived 2019-2024, are even more likely to work in these industries. More jobs that are classified as highly skilled (TEER 0-2) are filled by recent immigrants than was the case in previous years. This is consistent with the finding that recent immigrants landing in NS are increasingly likely to have a university degree and reflects on the programs designed to expedite foreign credential recognition. However, the absolute numbers of immigrants have increased in each TEER category with the rise in immigrant population.
Policy implication: immigration programs and settlement services must be skill focused. For their successful integration in labour markets, high-skilled immigrants require faster credential recognition, professional licensing and employer engagement in regulated professions. Low-skilled immigrants need skills upgrading and language training linked to work that can help them advance to higher skill levels.
- Labour market earning of all immigrants was above non-immigrants until 2016 but has been below since then which appears to be due to the low earnings of recent immigrants who are arriving in larger numbers. After 2016, the gap between earnings of recent immigrants and non-immigrants has been shrinking which could be reflecting their greater job matching through the PNP and AIP. Economic immigrants have the highest earning among all classes, however lower than non-immigrants. This could be due to the outmigration of higher earners to other provinces. **Research questions of policy relevance**: Are immigrants earning lower because of labour market discrimination based on their ethnicity? Is it because of employers' lack of information about the quality of their foreign credentials? Do those working in professional industries work in low-skill, low-paid jobs? Are the lower observed earnings because of their lower productivity or because of the outmigration of higher skilled / higher earners to other provinces? A finer industrial and occupational breakdown of data will be needed to answer these questions.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- After a drop in the entry of international students in 2020, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the province experienced a steep rise in their numbers. In fact, there had been an upward trend in their enrolments even before the pandemic.

- International students have been providing a buffer to the province's post secondary institutions against the drop of domestic students, resulting from the drop in university-aged population. This has allowed the institutions to maintain some of the economies of scale they enjoy due to the large amount of fixed costs. The current IRCC cap on the inflows of international students have raised concerns that this advantage will be lost.
- A report published by the Association of Atlantic Universities estimates that the shortfall in international students' enrolments resulting from the recent IRCC caps will result in an estimated loss to the province of \$234.24 million in spending (direct output), \$152.09 million in provincial GDP, \$87.54 million in provincial income, 2,140 jobs (FTE, direct and indirect), \$20.78 million in provincial taxes and \$15.59 million in federal taxes collected in the province. A 2025 nation-wide study published in Canadian Public Policy points to the precariousness of jobs that international students take during their studies. **Policy implications:** Provincial government and educational institutions must remain active in promoting the province's post-secondary institutions and the benefits of declaring the province home. Providing co-op or internship access for international students during their studies and faster process to obtain post-graduation work permit could help avoid some of the scarring effects of job precariousness during study.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, Nova Scotia has experienced negative natural growth in its population (number of births falling below number of deaths). While population gains through net interprovincial migration remain volatile, the province risks experiencing a contraction in its population size. Population growth can support Nova Scotia's economic growth as human capital is the main driver of innovation, investments and labour force growth. Population growth is also necessary to maintain the province's representation in the Canadian House of Commons, relative to other provinces. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the turn of the current century, the provincial government began to recognize the need to boost immigration which has now become the main driver of population growth in the province. Immigration remains under federal jurisdiction, but the province now actively participates in federal immigration levels and programs. The current federal limits on immigration will have disproportionately large impacts on the province because it relies much more on immigration—and especially international students and temporary foreign workers (TFWs)—to offset demographic decline. It is therefore important to examine Nova Scotia's experience with immigration over the past 25 years considering the province's vulnerability to federal immigration cuts and their implications for labour supply and population sustainability.

Our primary focus in this research is to understand the role of immigration in promoting economic growth and development in the region through population and labour force growth.

Objectives of the study

To understand the role of immigration in shaping the demographics and economy of Nova Scotia, this study:

- Collects and tabulate data on immigration to Nova Scotia for the period 2001 - 2024, with a focus on the economic objectives of immigration
- Provides a descriptive analysis of the data to understand the demographic and geographic dimensions of immigration to Nova Scotia as they relate to the economic objectives of immigration
- Poses some research questions by identifying some gaps in research that can provide necessary information for an informed public policy discussion on immigration and to implement immigrant attraction, integration and retention strategies in the province.

Methodology

The term “immigrant” is used in this study to refer to all foreign-born individuals who are permanent residents of Canada. “Recent immigrants” are those who were granted permanent resident status within the past five years of the population census or Labour Force Survey (LFS). The primary data sources for this study were

- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): source for data on immigrant inflows to Canada
- Statistics Canada: source for data on resident immigrants and non-immigrants in Canada (based on population census and LFSs).

Some data used in this study was obtained from the websites of the above government sources. However, much of the required data is not available in the public domain and had to be acquired through different channels. Some data was made available to the authors under the specific data sharing agreements of the Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity (ARGEIAD) with IRCC. Some Statistics Canada data were accessed through their online resources, and some were purchased as customized requests.

While we acquired most required data through different channels, we could not obtain all, due partly to the unavailability of some provincial data and partly to the confidentiality constraints that apply to cases where there are insufficient observations.

The analysis of data in this report is based primarily on descriptive tools of statistical analysis.

The period of analysis of this study is 2001-2024. The IRCC data is available for the entire period of analysis. Some of Statistics Canada data are drawn from the five-year population censuses but most are based on customized tabulations from the annual LFS as obtained from Statistics Canada. The LFS added questions on immigrant status from 2006. Finally, some data was also obtained from the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) of Statistics Canada which is based on the merged IRCC's inflow and Canada Revenue Agency's taxation data.

The report is organized as follows. Section II reviews some demographic trends in the province of Nova Scotia since the start of the 21st century, highlighting the importance that immigration occupies in its population growth. Section III presents some trends in immigration inflows to the province, their entry classes, settlement patterns and source country mixes. Section IV reviews the statistical profile of immigrants in the province's labour force and compares them with non-immigrants. Their contributions to labour force growth, industrial and occupational breakdown, and key labour market performance indicators are reviewed based on data extracted from LFS of Statistics Canada. Section V analyzes the trends in the international student population of Nova Scotia which represents a potential pool of highly skilled immigrants in the province. Section VI

provides conclusions, some policy implications of the statistical review and some directions for future research.

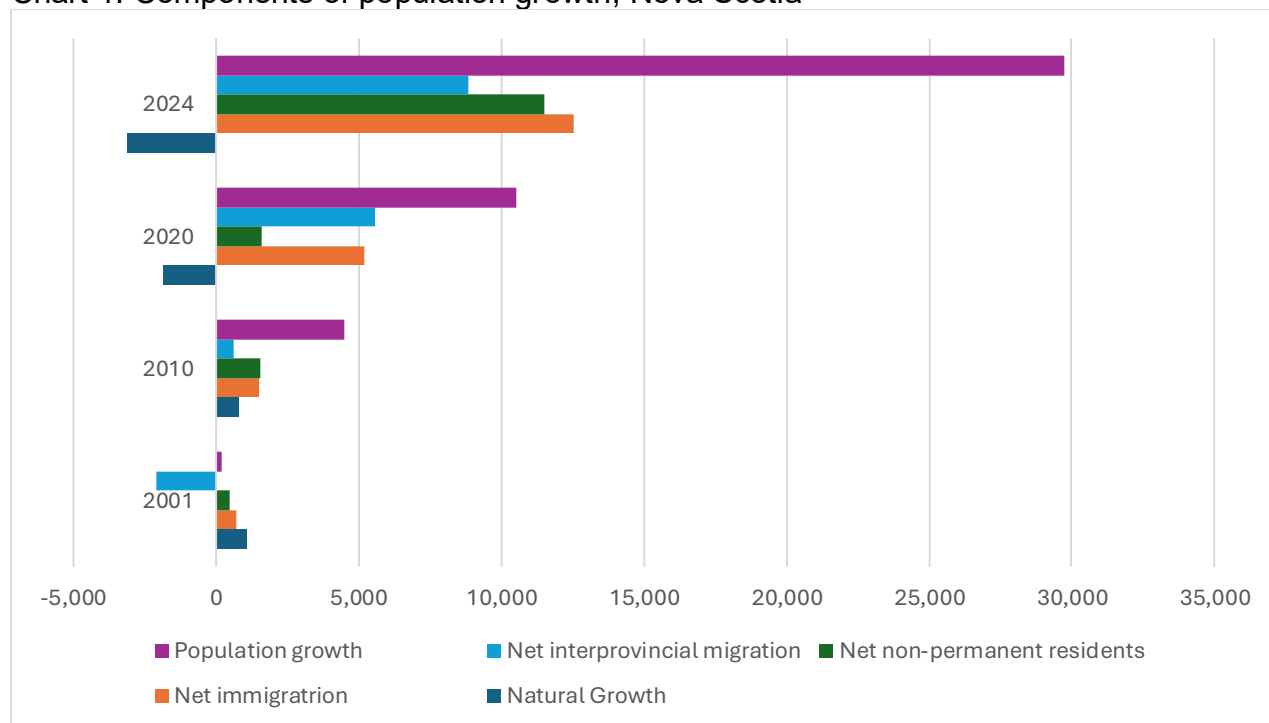
II. SOME DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN NOVA SCOTIA AND THEIR POTENTIAL ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

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- *In 2001, the population of Nova Scotia grew by only 189 persons. In 2024, the population grew by more than 29,000 persons, largely because of positive net interprovincial migration and immigration of permanent and non-permanent residents from abroad.*
 - *Natural increase in population was slow at the turn of current century and turned negative over the past decade.*
 - *Until the turn of current century, Nova Scotia lost more people to other provinces than it received from them. The trend reversed over the past decade with net interprovincial migration accounting for about 30 percent of population growth in 2024. Improved economy, housing affordability, pandemic-enabled remote work, and return/retirement migration were the main causes.*
 - *In 2024, net migrations of permanent and non-permanent residents each contributed to about 38 percent of population growth.*
-

Until the second half of the previous century, population growth in Nova Scotia was primarily driven by natural growth that resulted from the number of births consistently exceeding the number of deaths. However, alongside this natural growth was persistent net outmigration that reduced the population growth rate. It is worth noting that Nova Scotia has recorded a significant exodus of its young cohort in the prime of their contributions to the work force and the provincial economy to other provinces in search of more lucrative employment opportunities and more rewarding careers. This story is well-captured in a previous version of this report (see Akbari, 2012).

However, as Chart 1 shows, Nova Scotia's population growth patterns have shifted considerably since the beginning of the current century. After weak growth in the first decade, the province's population has consistently increased, reaching a record growth level of more than 29,000 people in 2024.

Chart 1: Components of population growth, Nova Scotia



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0008-01 Estimates of the components of demographic growth, annual.

The source of Nova Scotia's population growth has also changed. It is now purely attributed to net migration into the province, interprovincial and international, rather than natural population growth. In fact, the province's natural population growth is now negative, as the number of deaths in the province have begun to exceed the number of births in recent years. In 2024, the province registered 3,129 more deaths than births. This means the province's population would have fallen by 3,129 persons in 2024, had there been no net in-migration.

One contributor to the positive net migration to Nova Scotia is the reversal of the traditional outmigration from Nova Scotia to other provinces of Canada over the past 15 years. This reversal started prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, with Nova Scotia gaining 612 persons from interprovincial migration as far back as 2010. The trend accelerated in the 2020s. In 2020 alone, 5,567 more persons moved to Nova Scotia from elsewhere in Canada than from Nova Scotia to elsewhere in Canada. This pattern was not confined to the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, as the province's growth from interprovincial migration has continued to accelerate. In 2024, the province gained 8,841 more persons

from interprovincial migration than it lost. This constituted about 30 percent of population growth in the province for that year.

Beyond interprovincial migration, Nova Scotia's recent population growth has also been driven by an increase in the number of international migrants that the province receives. This increase has been in both permanent and non-permanent migrants. Permanent migrants are foreign-born individuals who have received permanent residency in Canada, while non-permanent migrants are also foreign-born but are in Canada on a temporary permit. Temporary Foreign Workers and international students are major groups of non-permanent migrants.

In 2001, fewer than 1,000 net international migrants had moved to Nova Scotia in each of the permanent and non-permanent migration categories. By 2020, net permanent migration was 5,219 persons, and net non-permanent migration was 1,592 persons. Since then, the contribution of international migration to the province's population growth has increased even further. Net permanent migration more than doubled between 2020 and 2024, and net non-permanent migration increased more than five-fold during the same time frame. In 2024, net migrations of permanent and non-permanent residents each contributed to about 38 percent of population growth. About 40.5 percent of population growth in the province was due to international in-migrants.

The high level of net non-permanent migration that followed the Covid-19 pandemic is in part attributable to the unprecedented growth in international student numbers during the early 2020s that will be shown later in Charts 11 and 12 of this report. Recent measures adopted by the federal government to limit the admission of permanent residents, temporary foreign workers and of international students at Canadian post-secondary institutions are expected to decrease non-permanent international migrant growth in Nova Scotia. Hence, the sharp increase in permanent and non-permanent international migration between 2020 and 2024 should not necessarily be interpreted as indicative of a long-term trend. Table 1 provides detailed components of population growth in 2024.

Table 1: Detailed components of population growth in Nova Scotia, 2024

Component	Number
Births (1)	7,936
Deaths (2)	11,065
Immigration (3)	13,765
Emigration (4)	1,849
Net temporary emigration (5)	...*
Returning emigrants (6)	637
Net non-permanent residents (7)	11,499
Net interprovincial migration (8)	8,841

Population Growth (9) = (1) - (2) + (3) - (4) - (5) + (6) + (7) + (8)	29,764
Immigrants in population growth % = (3) of (9)	46.2

Source: - Statistics Canada. [Table 17-10-0008-01 Estimates of the components of demographic growth, annual](#). *Shows data not available for a specific reference period. Release date Sep 24, 2025.

The growth in population of Nova Scotia is attributed, in part, to deliberate policy measures aimed at reversing the effect of its natural decrease through attraction of international immigrants. Mitigating population decrease is important because many public expenditures have a substantial fixed component that is largely independent of the number of users. Examples include national defence, public infrastructures like highways and bridges, research and development, foreign aid, and national and provincial parks and historic sites. A decrease in the size of Nova Scotia's population would mean that the expenditures *per person* would increase. Immigration can help amortize those expenditures over a larger population, thereby keeping expenditures per person from rising. A decrease in population also adversely affects the economic growth through labour force contraction and a weaker demand for goods and services that can hamper the incentives for investments.

Costs of capital-intensive projects do not fall as population falls. Hence, their per capita costs rise.

III. AN OVERVIEW OF IMMIGRATION TRENDS IN NOVA SCOTIA

Table 2 presents data on resident population by immigrant status for census years at five-year intervals between 2001 and 2021. The number of immigrants residing in Nova Scotia increased by 30,245 persons over the two decades. This number shows only the growth in permanent residents and does not include non-permanent residents. As a result, the share of the province's population that consists of immigrants has increased from 4.6 percent in 2001 to 7.5 percent by 2021, the latest census year.

While immigrants represent larger share of Nova Scotia's population than they used to, they remain under-represented in Nova Scotia compared to Canada as a whole. About 23 percent of Canada's population consisted of immigrants as of the 2021 Census (Statistics Canada 2021a), three times more than Nova Scotia's share of immigrants. The under-representation of immigrants in Nova Scotia in comparison to

Canada is consistent with the other three Atlantic Provinces. As of the 2021 Census, immigrant's share of the population was 5.8 percent in New Brunswick, 7.8 percent in Prince Edward Island, and 2.8 percent in Newfoundland and Labrador (Statistics Canada 2021a).

Table 2: Immigrant Status of Population in Nova Scotia, 2001-2021

Census Year	Total Population	Non-Immigrants	Immigrants	Immigrants in total population
2001	897,570	853,655	41,320	4.6%
2006	903,090	854,495	45,190	5.0%
2011	906,175	851,035	48,275	5.3%
2016	908,340	842,760	55,675	6.1%
2021	955,860	861,945	71,565	7.5%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2021 Data tables. All foreign-born individuals who are granted permanent resident status in Canada, except those born to Canadian citizens abroad, are viewed as immigrants.

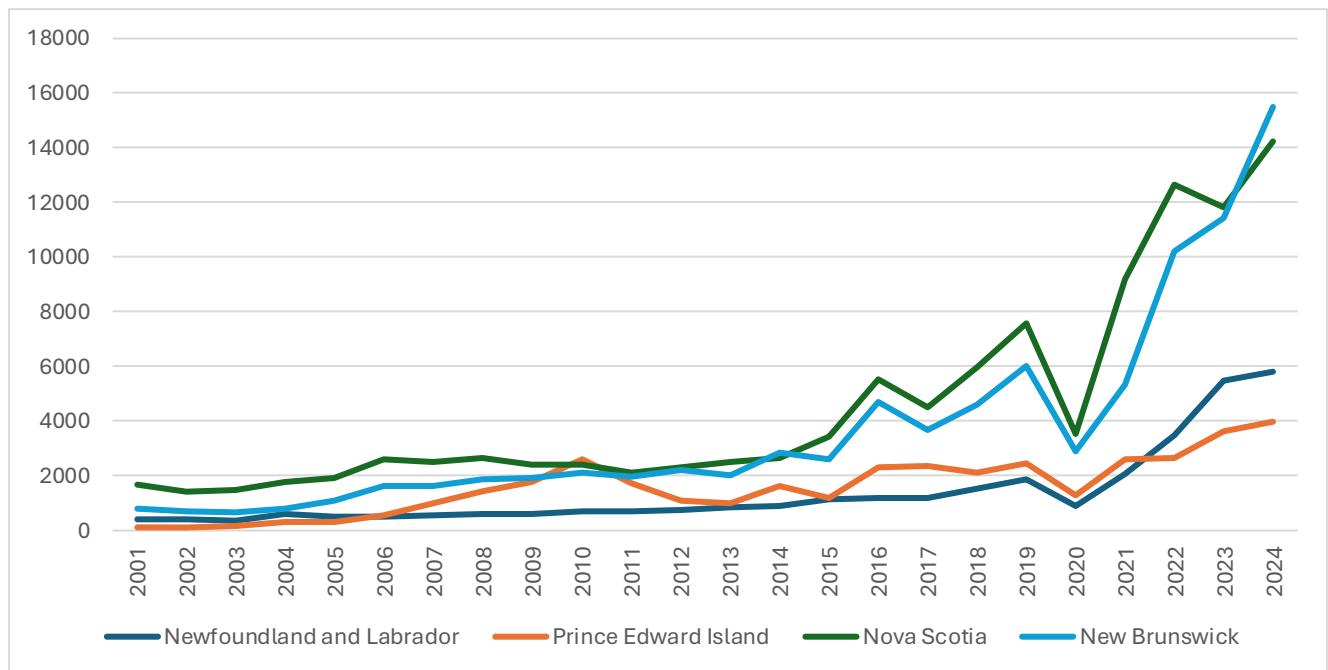
Nova Scotia's growth in immigration numbers is also consistent with the trend throughout Atlantic Canada. Chart 2 shows new permanent residents to Canada who landed in each of the four Atlantic Provinces annually since 2001. Immigration in Atlantic Canada has been traditionally low, but began accelerating during the mid-2010s, with this tendency being observed in all four Atlantic provinces. One outlier in the early years of this data is Prince Edward Island, which saw a temporary spike in immigration in 2010 because of its aggressive use of the Provincial Nominee Program in the 2005-2010 period. The sharp rise in its landings was observed once these cohorts were processed, peaking around 2010.¹

Although immigration numbers throughout the Atlantic region decreased in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, accelerating immigration growth has continued since the pandemic, with all four provinces experiencing their highest recorded level of immigration in recent history in 2024. Another interesting aspect of Chart 2 is that although Nova Scotia has traditionally been the region's largest recipient of immigrants, it has recently been overtaken by New Brunswick. New Brunswick was the earliest and most intensive adopter of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot when it launched in 2017. The province designated a larger number of employers more quickly than Nova Scotia and actively recruited overseas (notably Francophone Africa and the Middle East).² Nova Scotia, on the other hand, relied more heavily on its PNP and international students initially, which delayed AIP scaling relative to New Brunswick.

¹ See the following news report: [\\$200M in single year for P.E.I immigrant program | CBC News](#)

² See the following news report: [Immigration boosts New Brunswick population to record level | CBC News](#)

Chart 2: Immigrants destined for the Atlantic provinces, 2000-2024



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

The composition of immigrants by entry class

Most immigrants came as economic class immigrants, followed by family class and resettled refugees. As economic immigrants, the majority entered under the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) and the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP). Nearly 60 percent of all economic immigrants came under the PNP. Since its introduction in 2017, the number of AIP immigrants has increased ten-fold.

Most immigrants to Canada, who migrate as permanent residents, come through programs that fall into one of three broad streams: Economic, Sponsored Family, and Resettled Refugees & Protected Persons. Economic immigrants are admitted through labour market-related programs and are selected for immigration because they are expected to make valuable contributions to the Canadian economy. Sponsored Family

immigrants are individuals who have close familial ties with individuals already residing in Canada, and they are admitted facilitating family reunification. Resettled Refugees & Protected Persons are admitted to Canada for humanitarian reasons, since they have reason to fear for their well-being in their country of origin.

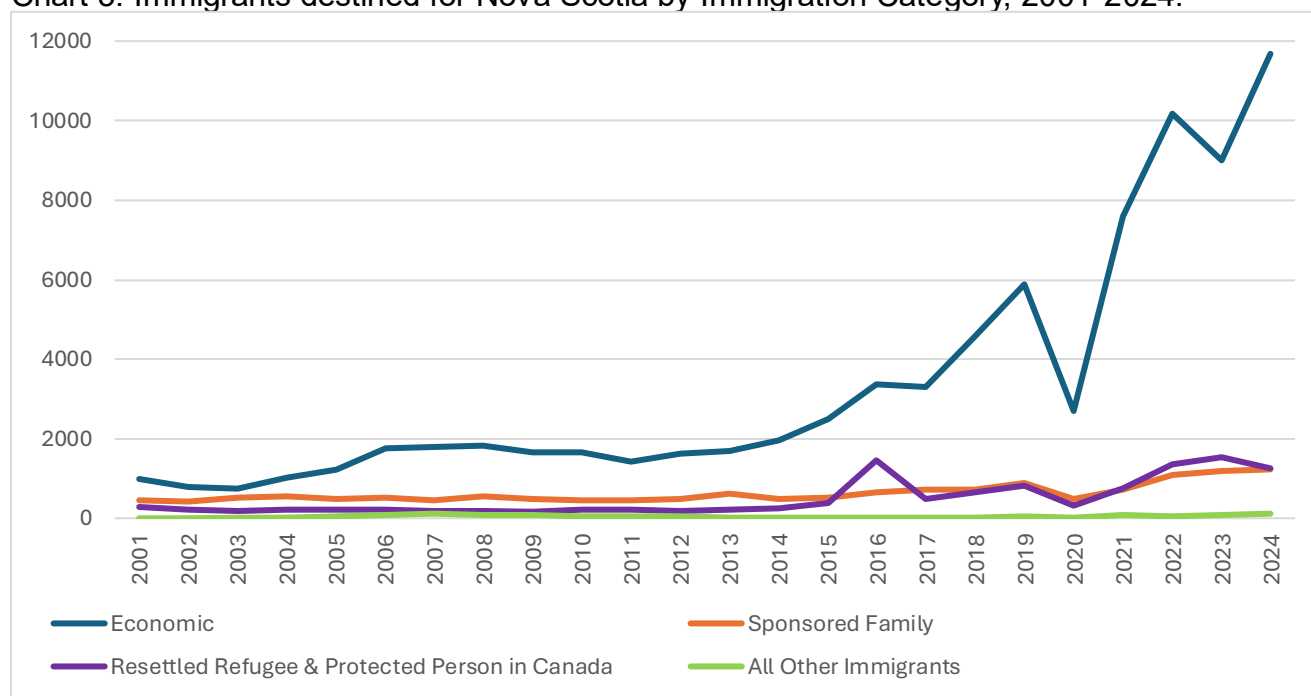
The overwhelming majority of immigrants landing in Nova Scotia come through economic class streams, which includes family members of principal applicants. The annual number of landings in the province under this class was under 2,000 every year until 2015 but has not fallen below 2,000 since then. In 2024, their number hit a record high of 11,680, nearly six times the 1,950 figure from one decade earlier in 2014.

Sponsored Family immigration to Nova Scotia has also increased in recent years. The annual number of sponsored family migrants typically fell in the range of 400-600 persons during the first decade. This increased to between 1000 and 1500 persons annually so far during the 2020s. While a notable increase, the growth rate of sponsored family migration has been smaller than the growth rate of economic class migration. Sponsored family migration to Nova Scotia in 2024 was 1,230 persons, approximately 2.6 times higher than the 470 sponsored family migrants landing in Nova Scotia ten years ago.

Resettled Refugee numbers in Nova Scotia have also increased in recent years. This figure was typically below 100 annually prior to 2013 but has usually been at least several hundred persons since then. In 2016, they exceeded 1,000, and this has been the case again every year since 2022. Annual refugee numbers exhibit volatility that is driven by global events. The previously unprecedented number of refugees landing in Nova Scotia in 2016 was a direct result of the Syrian refugee crisis, while the increase since 2022 is largely driven by an increase in refugee numbers from Ukraine³ and Afghanistan (CBC News 2021).

³ See the following news report: [Nova Scotians encouraged to 'open their hearts and their homes' to Ukrainian refugees | CBC News](#)

Chart 3: Immigrants destined for Nova Scotia by Immigration Category, 2001-2024.



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

Charts 4 and 5 divide Economic class landings in Nova Scotia since 2001 into their sub-programs of entry. One common federally administered program of entry is The Federal Skilled Workers program. This program admits immigrants who have at least one year of paid work experience in an occupation that is categorized by the federal government as being a skilled occupation. Applicants under this program must also be awarded a minimum number of points based on other criteria including their education, their proficiency in English and/or French, and whether they already have paid employment arranged in Canada at the time of application (Government of Canada, 2025a).

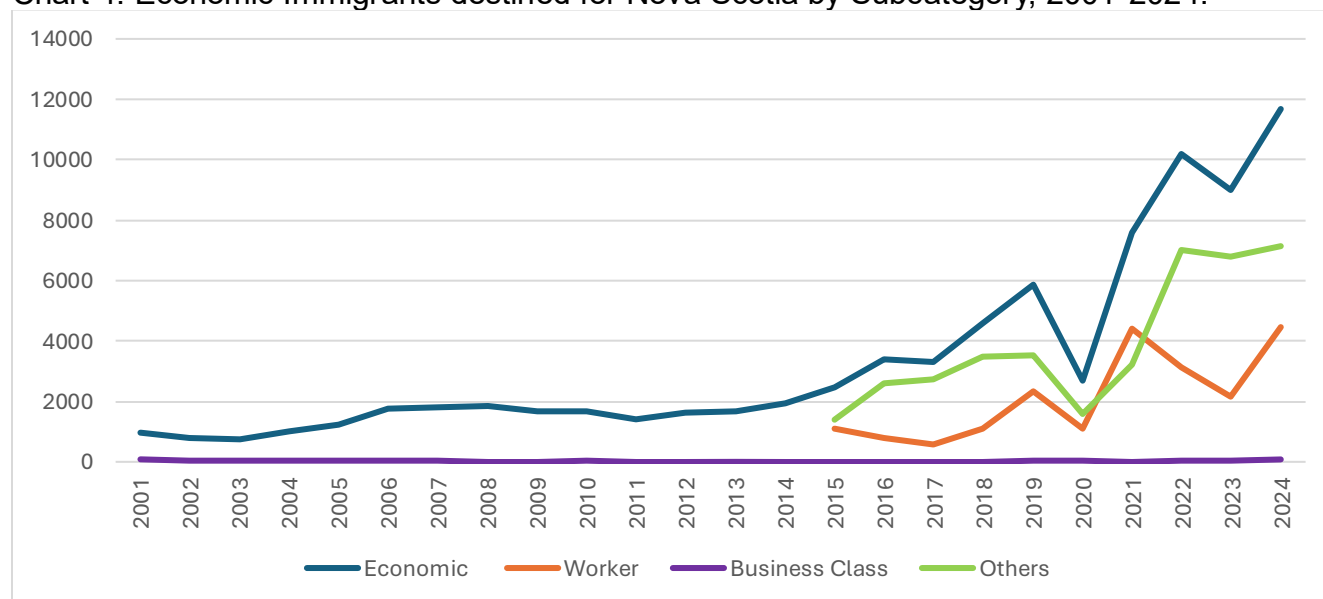
Business Class program is another sub-category of federally administered economic programs that are designed for prospective immigrants who intend on becoming entrepreneurs in Canada. There are presently two sub-streams of the business class program. One sub-stream is intended for applicants with self-employment experience in cultural occupations, while the other is intended for applicants who have a qualifying business and have satisfied minimum investment criteria. Applicants through business class programs must also satisfy experience and adaptability requirements that are similar to those of their Skilled Worker counterparts (Government of Canada 2025b).

Other economic class programs include the Atlantic Immigration Program and the Provincial Nominee Program. To be admitted through the Atlantic Immigration Program,

immigrants must be either a skilled worker or a recent graduate from a Canadian post-secondary institution. They must also have a job offer from an employer based in one of the four Atlantic Provinces (Government of Canada 2025c). Provincial nominees are admitted after being nominated by the province in which they intend on residing (Government of Canada, 2025d). In Nova Scotia, the provincial nominee program is designed to prioritize applicants who have work experience in occupations that have a shortage of workers in the province, such as construction and healthcare-related occupations (Live in Nova Scotia, 2025).

Skilled Worker applicants and their dependents are a major subcategory of economic immigration to Nova Scotia. This has been the case since the first recorded year, 2016, shown in Chart 4 and remains true as of 2024. In that year, 38.2 percent of Economic class immigrants and 31.3 percent of all immigrants were admitted through the Federal Skilled Worker program. Business class immigrants have always been a very small proportion of immigrants to Nova Scotia, consistently averaging under 100 persons per year. However, like other immigration categories, 2024 was also an all-time high year for business class immigration with 80 persons immigrating through this category.

Chart 4: Economic Immigrants destined for Nova Scotia by Subcategory, 2001-2024.

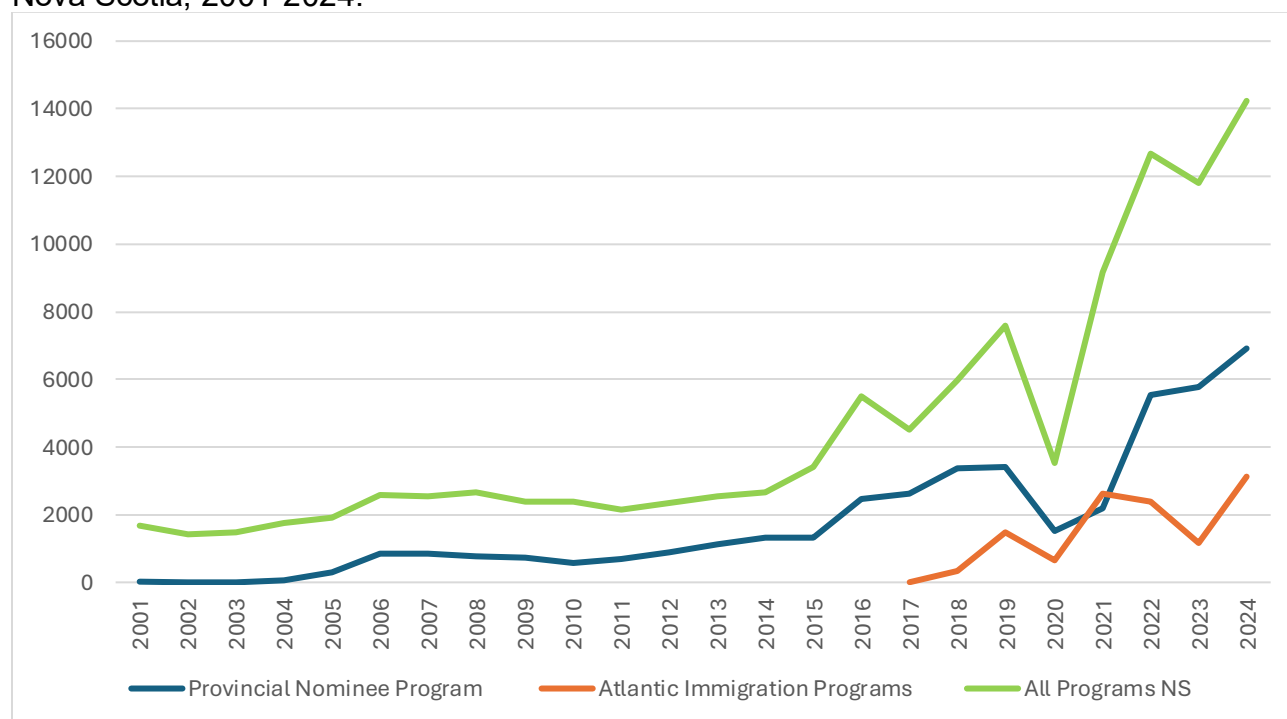


Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)- Canada - Admissions of Permanent Residents by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category. Data for Worker total and Others are available only from 2015-2024. Others include not specified elsewhere and calculated as: Economic minus Worker minus Business class.

The Provincial Nominee Program has recently been the single largest entry program for immigrants moving to Nova Scotia. In 2024, there were 6,915 immigrants who landed in Nova Scotia after being nominated by the province. This represented

59.2 percent of economic immigrants to Nova Scotia that year and 48.6 percent of immigrants across all categories. As a percentage of overall immigration to the province, the Provincial Nominee Program has grown in importance over the years. Prior to the mid-2010s, the provincial nominees rarely accounted for more than one-third of all immigrants to Nova Scotia. This contrasts with approximately half of all immigration to the province in recent years. The Atlantic Immigration Program has also been a major program of entry for immigrants to Nova Scotia. Although the program was launched in 2017 as a pilot, it picked up only after 2020 – when it became a permanent program. In 2024, there were 3,125 persons admitted to Nova Scotia through this program which was about five times more than the number of persons admitted in 2020.

Chart 5: Provincial nominees and Atlantic Immigration program immigrants destined for Nova Scotia, 2001-2024.



Source and Notes: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)- Admissions of Permanent Residents by Provincial Nomination/AIP to Total All Programs.

In Chart 4, AIP and PNP were included in “Others” category.

Age distribution among recent immigrants

-
- *Since 2006, most of the recent immigrants have been in the 25-44 age group. Close to three quarters of those over 15 in this age group came during 2016-21. Non-immigrants in this age group have been consistently falling – from 32.1 percent in 2006 to 27.1 percent in 2024.*
 - *In 2006, 16.2 percent of non-immigrants who were over 15 were aged 65 and over. In 2024, 26 percent were aged 65 and over.*
-

Table 3 shows the age distribution of new working age immigrant residents landing in Nova Scotia within five years of each LFS, starting 2006. Age distribution of resident non-immigrant Nova Scotians is also shown.

As seen, the non-immigrant population of Nova Scotia has aged considerably in recent years. In 2010, there were 18.3 percent of non-immigrants aged 65 or over. By 2024, this percentage increased to 28.0 percent of the 15+ population. This increase in the percentage of non-immigrant seniors in the province has been accompanied by a decrease in their percentage aged 15-24, which has dropped from 15.4 percent of the population in 2010 to only 12.2 percent by 2024. In summary, there was nearly a 3 percentage difference among non-immigrant Nova Scotians aged 15-24 and those aged 65+ in 2010. By 2024, this gap had increased to 14 percent – the province now has less than half as many youth as seniors in its population.

There has also been a decline in the share of non-immigrant Nova Scotians found in their prime working age group, 25-44. In 2010, they were 29.1 percent of the 15+ non-immigrant population, while by 2024 they were only 27.7 percent of this group.

The aging non-immigrant population has labour market implications for Nova Scotia. In addition to the higher demand for health care services, the aging population has the potential to create labour shortages in key sectors of the economy.

In contrast with the non-immigrant population, immigrants landing in Nova Scotia are disproportionately young upon arrival. It is consistently true that more than half of landed immigrants moving to the province in the five-year period preceding each census are between the ages of 25 and 44. Non-negligible shares of immigrants are also in the 15-24 age category. Immigrants aged 65 and over, on the other hand, have been 5 percent, or less, of all new immigrants landing in the province. The fact that close to two-thirds of immigrants arriving since 2016-2021 period were in the 25-44 age group appears to be the result of employment-driven immigration during this period under the AIP and PNP. The data confirms that it is primarily the young who migrate.

Table 3: Age distribution, non-immigrant and immigrant populations aged 15 and over.

Age group (years)	Immigrants Arriving 2006-10	Non-Immigrants 2011	Immigrants Arriving 2011-15	Non-Immigrants 2016	Immigrants Arriving 2016-21	Non-Immigrants 2021	Immigrant Arriving 2021-24	Non-Immigrants 2024
15 to 24	18.5	15.5	17.0	13.8	14.3	12.7	17.4	12.2
25 to 44	55.2	29.1	53.6	27.3	62.0	27.1	65.1	27.7
45 to 54	15.6	19.6	17.7	17.6	14.8	15.2	11.7	14.3
55 to 64	5.6	17.4	6.9	19.2	6.2	19.2	3.8	17.8
65 & over	5.0	18.3	4.7	22.2	2.7	25.8	2.0	28.0
Total	100.00	100.0	100.00	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.0

Source: LFS.

Where immigrants come from?

The source country mix of immigrants has changed over the past 25 years. While UK and US were among the top five countries of origin throughout the first decade, both did not appear in the list by the middle of last decade. China has been a consistent member, although its ranking in the list has changed. Philippines has also been in the list since 2011-16. India has occupied the top ranking since 2016. Nigeria has also been in the list since 2016. South Korea entered the list in 2021-24.

The countries of origin for immigrants landing in Nova Scotia have changed over time in the current century. Table 4 provides data on immigrants destined for the province by five-year periods and according to each of their top five source countries.

During the first decade of the 21st century, China, the United States, and the United Kingdom were among the most common countries of origin for immigrants to Nova Scotia. Particularly for the latter two countries, this is consistent with trends noted in Akbari (2012) during the later decades of the 20th century. The first decade of the current century was also characterized by considerable variation in immigrants' countries of origin, as no single country was ever the source of more than slightly over one-eighth of all new immigrants to the province. During this period, the top five countries collectively accounted for less than half of all new immigrants landing in Nova Scotia.

Middle Eastern countries have been in the list of common source countries of immigrants landing in Nova Scotia for a long time. Prior to 2020, at least one of them was among the top five source countries, although the specific countries in the list have varied. The trend started in early 1990s in the aftermath of the first Gulf war of 1991 and picked up more with the second Gulf War that took place in 2001(Akbari, 2012). The emergence of Israel in the list during 2011-15 appears community-driven but could not be ascertained for this report.

Since 2011, notable shifts in immigrants' countries of origin have been observed. China remains a common source country, and in fact the absolute number of immigrants from China increased every five-year period shown in Table 4. By the 2020s, the United States, United Kingdom, and Middle Eastern countries no longer featured among the top five source countries of immigrants. They have been replaced by Philippines, Nigeria, and India who, in fact, featured in the top five source countries since at least 2016. The shift is especially notable in the case of immigrants from India, who numbered 5,835 persons between 2016 and 2020, and 18,790 persons between 2021 and 2024. The latter number comprised 39.3% of all immigrants landing in Nova Scotia

between 2021 and 2024, a share that is higher than that previously observed for the most common source countries. The list also included Republic of Korea in 2024, for the first time, whose students have been in the list of top five source countries of international students that will be presented later.

The source country shift is mainly the result of changing labour-market needs, and global migration dynamics, which now dominate over the cultural or historical ties. European migrants, who had been the traditional migrants, have alternative destinations in the European Union, or within Canada, and are less responsive to regional economic streams such as the AIP. On the other hand, political and economic conditions in countries of Asia, Africa, South and Central America are the “push” factors responsible for emigration of their population. Growth of international students at universities and colleges could also be a factor as their retention as permanent residents is one part of the province’s immigration strategy. It is disproportionately immigrants from India, Philippines, China and Nigeria who are reshaping the source country mix of immigrants to Nova Scotia.

Table 4: Top 5 source countries of immigrants (Principal Applicants) destined towards Nova Scotia, 2001-2024.

Rank	2001-2005		2006-2010		2011-2015		2016-2020		2021-2024	
1	China*	720	UK	1,710	Philippines	1,665	India	5,835	India	18,790
2	USA***	690	USA	1,095	UK	1,215	China	3,185	Philippines	3,795
3	UK**	605	Iran	1,030	India	1,175	Philippines	2,340	China	3,550
4	Jordan	515	China	990	China	1,035	Syria	2,260	Nigeria	1,690
5	Egypt	475	Philippines	570	Israel	825	Nigeria	1,390	Korea****	1,430
Top 5 total		3,005		5,395		5,915		15,010		29,255
Province Total		8,290		12,550		13,085		27,125		47,865

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

Where immigrants settle in Nova Scotia?

76 percent of all immigrants and 84 percent of recent immigrants lived in Halifax as per the 2021 census, where about 12 percent of residents were immigrants. The rest of immigrant population, overall and recent, was thinly distributed across other counties. In those counties, more popular among overall immigrants are Kings and Lunenburg, with just under 5 percent of the population consisting of immigrants in each case. Among recent immigrants, Kings and Colchester counties were the most popular counties of residence after Halifax.

Nova Scotia' recognizes the importance of a wide distribution of immigrants across the province, including in urban and rural areas, although newcomers are not bound to go to specific locations in the province. A more recent example includes the launching of Rural Immigration Pilot project (<https://www.visaverge.com/news/nova-scotia-launches-new-permanent-residency-pathway-via-rural-immigration-pilot>). Employer-driven selection under AIP and PNP, regional labour market demand and settlement and retention strategies facilitate immigrant settlements outside the main city of Halifax. A review of immigrant distribution is essential to determine whether immigration can contribute to balanced demographic renewal across the province or reinforcing existing urban–rural disparities. In the context of an aging population, persistent population decline in many regions, and localized labour shortages, where immigrants settle—and whether they remain—has direct implications for economic performance, service delivery, and fiscal sustainability.

Table 5 provides an understanding of where the immigrant population of Nova Scotia resides by showing the number of immigrants who resided in each one of Nova Scotia's 18 counties at the time of 2021 census – the latest available data source on resident population. Separate data are also presented for those who arrived within the five years of the census. It is important to note that the immigrant population that is represented by these figures consists of landed and/or permanent residents, who may also now be citizens, but it does not include non-permanent residents such as temporary foreign workers or international students. For comparison purposes, the non-immigrant population data are also included in the table.

Halifax County was home to the largest population of Nova Scotia residents, about 45 percent of the province's population resided there in 2021. Cape Breton County had the second largest population in the province, at about 10 percent. Less than 6.5 percent of the province's population resided in any of the remaining 18 counties. This overall population distribution is largely determined by non-immigrants.

Immigrants tend to be even more concentrated in Halifax than non-immigrants, as in 2021 it was home to 76 percent of immigrants, and 84 percent of recent immigrants. The rest of the immigrant population, overall and recent, was thinly distributed across other counties. More noticeable among overall immigrants are Kings and Lunenburg counties with just under 5 percent of the population consisting of immigrants in each of these counties. Among recent immigrants specifically, Kings and Colchester counties were the most popular counties after Halifax.

Table 5: Geographic distribution of immigrants in Nova Scotia, 2021.

<u>Census Division/County</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Non-immigrants</u>	<u>Immigrants</u>	<u>Immigrants who arrived 2016 - 2021</u>
<u>Shelburne</u>	<u>13,510</u>	<u>13,060</u>	<u>420</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>Yarmouth</u>	<u>24,540</u>	<u>23,610</u>	<u>780</u>	<u>115</u>
<u>Digby</u>	<u>16,780</u>	<u>15,940</u>	<u>760</u>	<u>125</u>
<u>Queens</u>	<u>10,345</u>	<u>9,830</u>	<u>485</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>Annapolis</u>	<u>20,915</u>	<u>19,405</u>	<u>1,405</u>	<u>115</u>
<u>Lunenburg</u>	<u>47,765</u>	<u>44,565</u>	<u>2,970</u>	<u>400</u>
<u>Kings</u>	<u>61,720</u>	<u>57,600</u>	<u>3,270</u>	<u>545</u>
<u>Hants</u>	<u>44,720</u>	<u>43,055</u>	<u>1,535</u>	<u>235</u>
<u>Halifax</u>	<u>435,540</u>	<u>367,975</u>	<u>50,600</u>	<u>17,955</u>
<u>Colchester</u>	<u>50,580</u>	<u>47,730</u>	<u>2,250</u>	<u>470</u>
<u>Cumberland</u>	<u>29,700</u>	<u>28,635</u>	<u>955</u>	<u>150</u>
<u>Pictou</u>	<u>42,915</u>	<u>41,310</u>	<u>1,420</u>	<u>295</u>
<u>Guysborough</u>	<u>7,275</u>	<u>7,050</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Antigonish</u>	<u>19,825</u>	<u>18,490</u>	<u>1,040</u>	<u>205</u>
<u>Inverness</u>	<u>16,960</u>	<u>16,150</u>	<u>670</u>	<u>190</u>
<u>Richmond</u>	<u>8,795</u>	<u>8,450</u>	<u>310</u>	<u>60</u>
<u>Cape Breton</u>	<u>96,640</u>	<u>92,120</u>	<u>2,185</u>	<u>405</u>
<u>Victoria</u>	<u>7,320</u>	<u>6,965</u>	<u>320</u>	<u>50</u>

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

It is also important to analyze the immigrants' share in total population, given the small population size of each county. Such analysis will help understand the demographic impact of immigrants on each county's labour force, schools, and cultural landscape. It will also highlight the importance of settlement program needs in each county. We turn to this analysis now.

The highest share of immigrants was found in Halifax County where immigrants comprised 11.6 percent of the population while their provincial share is only 7.5 percent. Kings, Lunenburg, Colchester, and Cape Breton counties also have immigrant populations numbering more than 2,000 persons. As percentages of the population, after Halifax County the next highest shares are Annapolis (6.7 percent), Lunenburg (6.2 percent), Kings (5.3 percent), and Antigonish (5.2 percent) counties. No other county had more than 5 percent of its population consisting of immigrants as of the 2021 Census.

Halifax County not only has both the highest number and share of immigrants in the province, but it also has by a wide margin the highest share of its population consisting of recent immigrants. About 4.1 percent of the county's population consisted of immigrants who had landed within the five years of the census year 2021. In fact, 83.9 percent of all immigrants in Nova Scotia who landed during this period resided in Halifax County, well above Halifax County's 45.6 percent share of the total provincial population. Rest were thinly divided across other counties. The only counties besides Halifax that had more than 1 percent of their 2021 population consisting of recent immigrants were Inverness (1.1%) and Antigonish (1%) counties.

To understand the economic motivation of immigrants settling outside of Halifax, Table 6 lists adjacent counties, grouped by regions and their potential sources of attraction, that account for most of the growth in immigrant settlement outside Halifax Regional Municipality since about 2016.

Table 6: Areas of immigrant concentration outside of Halifax Regional Municipality

Region	Major Communities	Potential source of attraction
Sydney	Cape Breton Regional Municipality	Health care, Cape Breton University and the Atlantic Immigration Program
Annapolis Valley	Kentville, Wolfville, Greenwood	Agriculture, food processing and military-related jobs; Acadia University
South Shore	Bridgewater, Lunenburg, Liverpool	Manufacturing, seafood processing, and long-term care facilities are major employers
Northern NS	Truro, New Glasgow, Amherst	Logistics hubs, agri-food processing, and regional hospitals draw workers

Source: Based on authors' collection of information from different sources.

In summary, while Halifax is home to more than three-quarters of immigrants in Nova Scotia, their composition in the populations of several smaller counties also approaches 5 percent or slightly more compared to the provincial average of 7.1

percent. Their composition of each county's population reflects several factors that include immigration programs, such as the Atlantic Immigration Program targeting employer-driven rural labour market needs and presence of major employers. As well, they may be the cause of family sponsorships and community attraction.

Retention of immigrants

About 65 percent of immigrants who arrived in 2012 were still in the province five years later and 60 percent remained ten years after arrival. From those who arrived in 2017, about 62 percent remained five years later. Economic class and refugee immigrants are more mobile compared to family class.

Data presented in this report have shown that immigration in Nova Scotia increased significantly in the current century. This has mainly been the result of several immigrant attraction initiatives adopted by the provincial government and local communities. However, smaller provinces like Nova Scotia offer fewer economic opportunities and have smaller immigrant communities compared to larger provinces. These economic opportunities and better-established immigrant communities become major factors driving new immigrants' movement to larger provinces such as Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec (Canadian Charter of Rights allows all residents to reside in any province of their choice). Analyzing immigrant retention rates is important because immigration can contribute to the province's long-term prosperity only if newcomers stay. Such evidence is vital for improving program design and strengthening the province's position in federal immigration policy discussions. The Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), which links an immigrant's arrival year and intended destination province in Canada to the province where they file their income tax returns, allows Statistics Canada to calculate immigrants' retention rates by their year of arrival. At the time of writing this report, the latest available data were for the 2022 tax filing year and are reported in Table 7. The top panel of the Table shows annual rates for the 2012 entry cohort for each of the following ten years. The bottom panel shows the annual rates for the 2017 entry cohort for five years. The rates are also reported for immigrants entering under different entry classes.

As shown in the top panel of Table 7, only 59.2 percent of immigrants who had landed in Nova Scotia in 2012 still resided in the province ten years later. This means that more than 40 percent of immigrants who initially migrated to the province left within their first decade of arrival. Sponsored family migrants have higher retention rates than immigrants admitted through other streams. Economic immigrants and refugees have comparatively low retention rates.

There is also considerable variation in retention rates across immigrants admitted through different economic class sub streams. The retention rate of migrants admitted through the skilled worker and skilled trades program is extremely low, only 39.1 percent of them resided in the province 10 years later. This points to barriers for the successful integration of immigrants in the skilled worker and skilled trades program to the active Nova Scotian workforce such as impediments to transferable skills, lack of recognition of international work experience, and hurdles associated with credential recognition. Those admitted through business programs, the Canadian Experience Class or through the Provincial Nominee Programs had much higher retention rates, slightly above 60 percent after ten years, but still considered low. This is particularly noteworthy for the provincial nominees, who were admitted to Nova Scotia specifically to address the province's labour market needs and yet almost 40 percent of these immigrants left the province within 10 years.

For immigrants admitted in 2017, their retention rates each year after arrival are on average slightly lower than those who arrived in 2012. Only 62.1 percent of immigrants who had landed in 2017 remained in the province five years later, while this was true for 65 percent of immigrants who arrived in 2012.

The lower retention rates among the more recent 2017 economic class immigrants also hold when looking at each economic class program individually. Among other entry classes, 2017 refugees were slightly less likely to remain in Nova Scotia after five years than 2012 refugees. Sponsored family immigrants were the only category of immigrants for whom provincial retention rates were higher for the 2017 cohort than for the 2012 cohort.

The higher retention rates for the 2012 cohort, compared with 2017 cohort, could be because this cohort was smaller and more dominated by the less mobile family-class and less by the more mobile economic immigrants. Other reasons could include structural differences in labour market conditions and migrant composition rather than underperformance of specific immigration programs. Immigrants admitted after 2016 benefited from stronger national labour demand and greater interprovincial mobility, while the cohort also included a higher proportion of younger permanent migrants with higher geographic flexibility. Housing affordability pressures and limited upward occupational mobility further increased exit incentives by 2022. Finally, the 2012 cohort exhibits higher observed retention due to positive selection effects associated with longer settlement under weaker economic conditions.

Family class immigrants are more likely to stay in their province of arrival because their decision to move to Nova Scotia was made jointly with their family members. They also are likely to reside close to their sponsoring relatives for any immediate support they may need. Economic immigrants are more mobile because they are selected purely based on their potential labour market contribution making them more employable across regions. Hence, they are apt to maximize the potential benefits of their immigration to Canada by choosing the place where their skills are best used. Refugees are also more mobile than family class immigrants. They initially stay in the

community sponsoring them but tend to move later in search of better economic opportunities.

Finally, for both the 2012 and 2017 entry cohorts, data on Caregivers and Other Immigrants show very high degree of retention. Caregivers often work in private homes or health settings, building close relationships locally. Many caregiver pathways require Canadian work experience before PR, which makes them less mobile. For Business immigrants, data are only available for 2012 cohort which show some fluctuations in their retention, showing their in and out movement. Retention is high in initial years. They invest money, start businesses, or buy assets locally, which ties them to the province. However, their smaller numbers (as shown in a previous table) may also be making their data unreliable.

Table 7: Retention rates by admission type of economic immigrants, 2012 and 2017 admissions, Nova Scotia.

	Retention rate (%) (Admission year 2012)									
Admission category	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total All Immigrants	79.6	74.7	70.8	68	65.5	63.3	63.2	61.7	60.8	59.2
Economic Immigrants	76.1	70	65.1	62.6	60.2	58.1	58.2	57	56.3	55.3
Skilled worker and skilled trades	67.3	56.9	50	48.5	45.3	43.9	42.4	40.9	40.3	39.1
Canadian experience class	83.3	66.7	66.7	53.8	50	50	58.3	58.3	58.3	63.6
Provincial/territorial nominee	78.8	74.6	71.1	68.4	66.4	64.7	64.7	64.2	62.8	61.4
Business programs	100	100	66.7	75	75	75	60	60	60	60
Caregiver	100	75	75	75	75	75	75	100	100	75
Immigrant sponsored by family	85.2	82.7	80.2	78.5	76.9	75.3	76	75	75	73
Refugee	88	88.5	85.7	78.6	75	65.5	64.5	61.3	58.1	54.8
Other immigrants	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	50	50	100
	Retention rate (%) (Admission year 2017)									
Admission category						2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total All Immigrants						74.5	69.7	66.6	64.4	62.1
Economic Immigrants						70.1	64.3	60.9	58.6	55.9
Skilled worker and skilled trades						51.5	44.1	41.2	42.9	41.7
Canadian experience class						64.1	51.4	48.6	48.6	43.2
Provincial/territorial nominee						72.2	66.7	63.3	60.5	57.8
Business programs						..	0	0	..	.
Caregiver						83.3	83.3	84.6	84.6	84.6
Immigrant sponsored by family						85.7	83.3	83.8	82.1	82.1
Refugee						89.1	84.2	79.7	75	72.6
Other immigrants						50	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 43-10-0018-01 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, excluding immigrants migrating in from another province of destination.

IV. IMMIGRANTS IN THE LABOUR FORCE

The main goal of immigration strategy of each Atlantic province is to prevent the shrinkage of its labour force following the decline in natural growth of population. A fall in the labour force will be especially harmful for the province because it can trigger a chain reaction that will negatively affect economic growth, public finances, services, and long-term sustainability. Overall, the analysis of immigrants in the labour force can be instructive for policymakers to understand if immigration is not only increasing the province's population but also strengthening its economy in a sustainable way.

Labour force growth

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- *Over the past 25 years, the non-immigrant labour force grew by 1 percent in population centres of Nova Scotia and fell by 1 percent in rural Nova Scotia. Immigrant labour force quadrupled in population centres and nearly doubled in rural areas. Recent immigrants in the labour force grew more than 10 times in population centres and 3 times in rural Nova Scotia.*
 - *Between 2022 and 2024, immigrants contributed 37.2 percent of labour force growth, more than double immigrants' contribution to labour force growth between 2001 and 2006. In 2024, while about 59 percent of non-immigrants resided in population centres, this was true for 84.5 percent of all immigrants and 91.4 percent of recent immigrants. Females comprised about half of the non-immigrant labour force in population centres, but 44.3 percent of the immigrant labour force and 42.6 percent of the recent immigrant labour force. In rural Nova Scotia, about 48 percent of the non-immigrant labour force, 51 percent of the immigrant labour force and 42 percent of the recent immigrant labour force comprise of females.*
 - *Overall and recent immigrants had higher unemployment rates in 2024 than non-immigrants. Non-immigrant females had lower rates than non-immigrant males, but this was reversed in the case of overall and recent immigrants which appears to have driven the overall unemployment rates for male immigrants up.*
-

Table 8 shows that the provincial labour force grew by approximately 33,500 between 2001 and 2011, before beginning to rapidly decline. The decline in the size of the labour force between 2012 and 2016 could be because Nova Scotia experienced low or negative net interprovincial migration in much of this period as youth and prime-age workers continued to leave for stronger labour markets (notably in Alberta and

Ontario). International immigration also did not help much due to very low retention at the time to offset these losses.

Since 2016, growth in the province's labour force has resumed mainly due to migration. As was noted in Chart 1, the net interprovincial migration turned positive in the middle of the decade. However, a sizeable portion of the province's labour force growth since 2017 is due to immigration causing the labour force to rise by about 20,400. In the last three years (2022 to 2024), immigration accounted for 37.2% of the province's labour force growth.

Table 8: Contribution of recent immigrants to the growth of provincial labour force, Nova Scotia, 2001-2024.

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}	$4(a)^2 = \frac{\{2\}}{\{3\}} \times 100$	$4(b)^3 = \frac{\{2\}}{\{1\}} \times 100$
2001-2006*	18.7	3.5	15.2	22.7	18.5
2007-2011	14.8	2.8	12.0	23.3	18.9
2012-2016	-21.5	0.6	-22.1	2.7	2.8
2017-2021	33.1	8.9	24.2	36.8	26.9
2022-2024	30.9	11.5	19.4	59.3	37.2

*First row (2001-2006) based on data from census 2001,2006

¹Attributed to natural growth and net interprovincial migration. New immigrants are those who arrived during the listed period.

²Measures percentage recent immigrants caused labour force to increase by virtue of their presence.

³Measures percentage of labour force growth contributed by recent immigrants.

*Measures percentage of labour force decline averted by new immigrants. Absolute values are used in calculations.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001,2006 data tables & Custom data on Labour force characteristics-Table on Selected characteristics by immigrant status, gender, and population centre and rural areas.

Distribution of labour force in rural and population centres

As discussed earlier, one of the goals of the province's immigration strategy is to achieve greater geographical distribution of newcomers so that the economic benefits are not limited to only larger population centres. Programs like the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program (NSPNP) and the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) aim to encourage settlement outside the largest urban centre of Halifax.

Starting in 2011, Statistics Canada dropped the use of the term “urban area” and replaced the same with “population centre.” A population centre (POPCTR) has a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 persons or more per square kilometre, based on population counts from the current Census of Population. All areas outside population centres are classified as rural areas. Population centre population includes all population living in the cores, secondary cores and fringes of census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs), as well as the population living in population centres outside CMAs and CAs. As of the 2021 Census, Nova Scotia contained a total of 37 population centres (Statistics Canada 2024). These population centres range in size from 348,634 persons in the Halifax population centre to 1,030 persons in the Port Williams population centre.

Table 9 provides an indication of how the growth of the Nova Scotia’s labour force has been distributed between the population centres and rural parts of the province. The province’s labour force has become increasingly urbanized since 2006. The rural labour force increased by less than 6,000 persons between 2006 and 2024, a growth rate of only 2.9 percent over 18 years. Furthermore, nearly all this growth in the size of the rural labour force occurred in the last three years of this timeframe (2021-24). The labour force in population centres, on the other hand, increased by 72,300 persons between 2006 and 2024, a 25.4 percent increase. Overall, the labour force in Nova Scotia’s population centres grew more in recent years than the rural labour force in both number and percentage terms.

The last row of Table 9 shows that the size of the non-immigrant labour force in rural parts of the province has decreased slightly since 2006, while increasing slightly in population centres. Nearly all of the growth in the labour force that was observed in recent years in Nova Scotia was because of immigration.

The immigrant labour force in rural Nova Scotia nearly doubled from 5,600 to 10,600 between 2006 and 2024. Recently, this increase has been disproportionate. While it increased by only 2,100 in the first 15 years (2006-21), it increased by 2,900 persons in the last three years (2021-2024). Overall, in rural parts of the province, labour force growth has been slow.

While immigration has caused a mild growth in the rural labour force, it has contributed much more to labour force growth in population centres where immigrant labour force nearly quadrupled since 2006 - from 14,400 persons to 57,300 persons. This growth has been steady throughout the period unlike in the rural labour force.

The increase of recent immigrants in the labour force in population centres has been even more pronounced, going from 2,500 persons in 2006 to 25,600 persons by 2024, about a ten-fold increase. In rural parts of the province, the number of recent immigrants in the labour force tripled from 800 to 2,400.

Table 9: Labour Force by rural areas and population centres (POPCTR) in Nova Scotia, 2006-2024

	2006		2011		2016		2021		2024	
	Rural areas	POPCTR	Rural areas	POPCTR	Rural areas	POPCTR	Rural areas	POPCTR	Rural areas	POPCTR
Total ('000)	194.4	285.2	226.8	274.3	181.4	301.1	194.2	326.0	200.0	357.5
% growth			16.7	-3.8	-20.0	9.8	7.1	8.3	3.0	9.7
Recent Immigrants ('000)	0.8	2.5	1.0	4.6	0.6	5.8	1.0	15.0	2.4	25.6
% growth			25.0	84.0	-40.0	26.1	66.7	158.6	140.0	70.7
Immigrants ('000)	5.6	14.4	7.3	18.8	5.3	20.8	7.7	41.0	10.6	57.3
% growth			30.4	30.6	-27.4	10.6	45.3	97.1	37.7	39.8
Non-Immigrants ('000)	188.0	266.6	217.9	250.5	175.3	273.5	185.0	268.6	187.0	269.5
% growth			15.9	-6.0	-19.6	9.2	5.5	-1.8	1.1	0.3

Source: -Statistics Canada, Custom data on Labour force characteristics-Table on Selected characteristics by immigrant status, gender, and population centre and rural areas.

Notes: -Total may not equal the sum of the Immigrant and Non-Immigrant categories, as the Total Labour Force also includes Non-Permanent Residents

Table 10 shows a more detailed breakdown of immigrants and non-immigrants in Nova Scotia's labour force, split by gender and urban/rural status in the year 2024. Although the majority of Nova Scotia's non-immigrant labour force resided in population centres (59%), this was even more true for immigrants (84.5%), and especially recent immigrants (91.4%).

It's also worth noting that there are some gender differences between the immigrant and non-immigrant shares of the labour force between rural areas and population centres. In population centres, 135,300 out of 269,500 non-immigrant labour force participants were females. This represented about half of the total non-immigrant labour force in population centres. However, only 44.3 percent of immigrants and 42.6 percent of recent immigrants residing in population centres were females.

In rural areas, the non-immigrant and recent immigrant labour forces contain slightly smaller proportions of females (47.8 percent and 41.7 percent, respectively). Recent immigrant women in both areas are less likely to be in the labour force than non-immigrants. This is slightly different for rural area's total population of immigrant women. A slight majority (50.9 percent) of rural immigrant labour force participants are females.

Regarding unemployment, immigrants in Nova Scotia had a higher unemployment rate in 2024 than their non-immigrant counterparts. 7.1 percent of immigrants were unemployed compared to only 6.1 percent of non-immigrants. The unemployment rate was even higher for recent immigrants, who had an unemployment rate of 8.6 percent.

Beyond this, the gender difference in unemployment rates shows a very different pattern between immigrants and non-immigrants. Among non-immigrants, the

unemployment rate is much lower among women than it is among men, at 4.9 percent vs. 7.2 percent. However, among immigrants this gap is reversed, with immigrant women having an 8.1 percent unemployment rate that is higher than the 6.2 percent unemployment rate among immigrant men. This differential is even more pronounced among recent immigrants, as 11.9 percent of women among them were unemployed in 2024, compared to only 6.8 percent of recent immigrant men.

Regarding the population centre versus rural differential in unemployment rates, there is limited information available on rural unemployment rates for immigrants due to small sample sizes. The information that is available for non-immigrants suggests that their unemployment rates are higher in rural parts of the province than in population centres, while this is opposite in case of immigrants. This may be because immigrant settlement in rural areas is more employer-driven (as under the AIP). Rural employment is largely in healthcare, agriculture or fishing industries.

Overall, the unemployment numbers in Table 10 show that immigrants have recently had greater difficulty in finding employment than non-immigrants. This is almost entirely driven by the experience of immigrant women in Nova Scotia. Recent immigrant women in the labour force are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as non-immigrant women. Among men, this differential is not that stark, with recent immigrant men having unemployment rates that are comparable to, and in fact slightly lower than, those of non-immigrant men.

Table 10: Labour force and unemployment rates, immigrants and non-immigrants by gender in rural areas and population centres, Nova Scotia, 2024.

	Rural areas			Population centres			Provincial		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Labour Force ('000)									
Immigrants	5.1	5.4	10.6	31.9	25.4	57.3	37	30.8	67.8
Recent Immigrants	1.4	1	2.4	14.8	10.9	25.6	16.2	11.8	28
Non-Immigrants	97.7	89.3	187	134.2	135.3	269.5	231.9	224.6	456.6
Unemployment rate (%)									
Immigrants	x	X	6.6	6	8.7	7.2	6.2	8.1	7.1
Recent Immigrants	x	X	x	6.1	11.9	8.6	6.8	11.9	8.6
Non-Immigrants	7.9	5.6	6.8	6.8	4.5	5.6	7.2	4.9	6.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Custom data on Labour force characteristics-Table on Selected characteristics by immigrant status, gender, and population centre and rural areas.

Human capital of immigrants

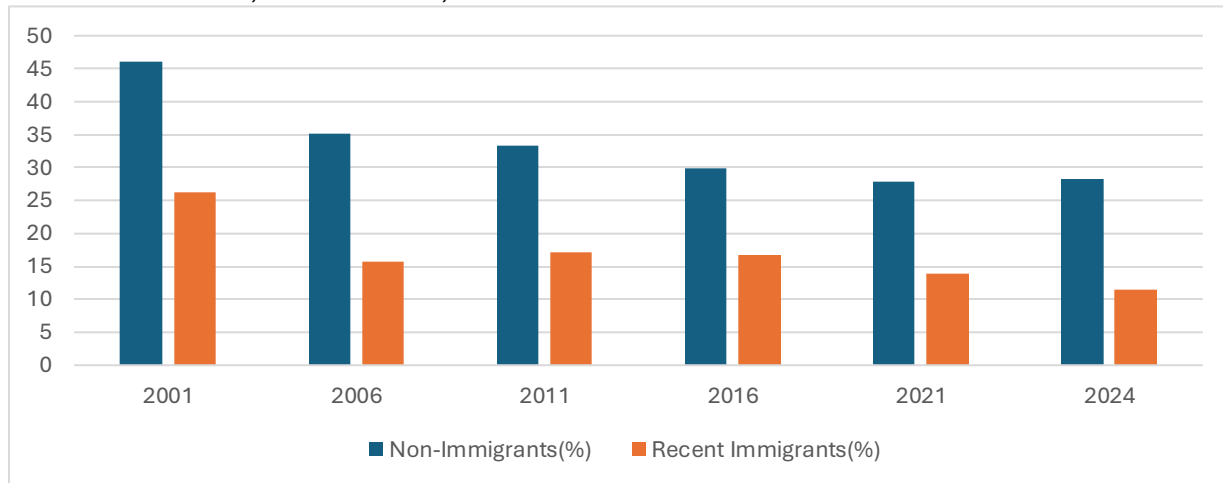
Over the past 25 years, percentages of immigrants arriving with only a high school or less education have been falling and have consistently been below the percentages of corresponding non-immigrants. The percentages of immigrants with university degrees have been rising and have been above the percentages of corresponding non-immigrants with university degrees.

Educational attainment is one of the key factors in immigrant selection. Canadian immigration policy views education as an important predictor of an immigrant's economic performance in the country. Education is also the key to expanding the skilled labour force which is essential for economic growth. Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, as obtained from Statistics Canada, can be used to obtain cross tabulations at the lower educational level (high school or less) and at the higher educational level (university degree).

Charts 6 and 7 show the educational attainments of non-immigrants and recent immigrants with five-year intervals until 2021 and then for the year 2024. It should be noted, however, that the 2001 data may not be comparable to later years as they are based on census while data for rest of the years are based on LFS. (LFS added question on immigrant status from 2006).

In Chart 6, declining percentages of non-immigrants and recent immigrants in the labour force who have only high school or less education are observed. The Chart also shows lower percentages of recent immigrants at this educational level than non-immigrants.

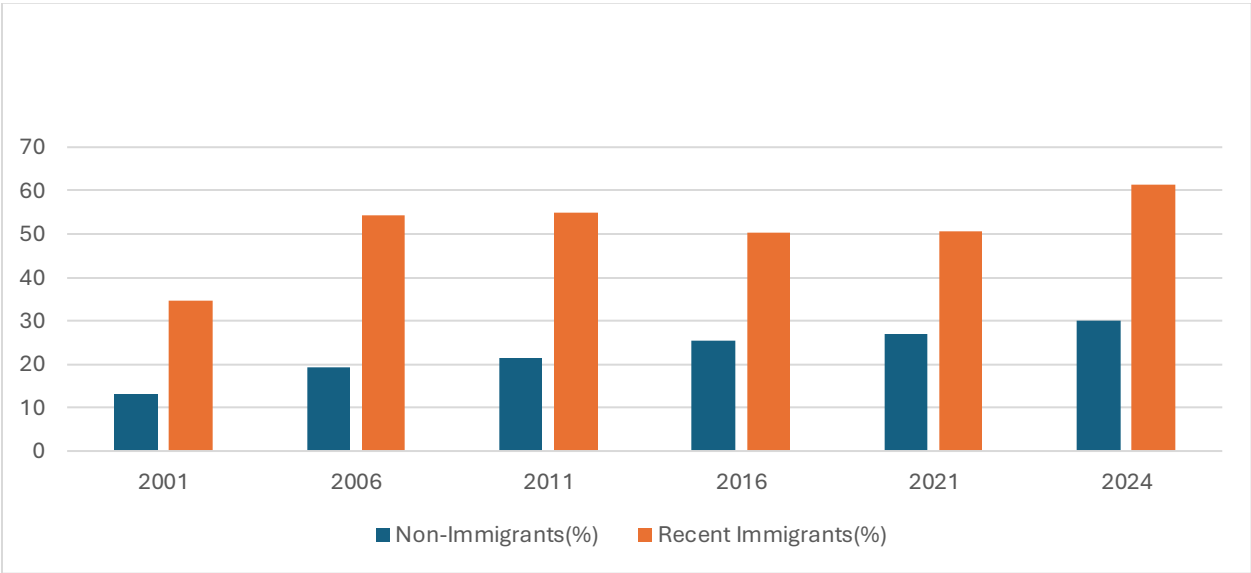
Chart 6: Recent Immigrants and Non-Immigrants in the labour force with high school education or less, Nova Scotia, 2001-2024.



Source: Statistics Canada -The percentage for 2001 is calculated using Census data table BO-0293, 2001 Target Group Profile, Table 2 (Total population of recent Immigrants is used in the denominator). The 2006–2024 data are LFS based.

On the other hand, Chart 7 (next page) shows that the percentage of non-immigrants and recent immigrants who have university degrees has been on the rise during the 25-year period. Also, higher percentages of recent immigrants possess university degrees than do non-immigrants. Overall, recent immigrants in Nova Scotia are about twice as likely to have completed a university degree as non-immigrants in Nova Scotia.

Chart 7: Recent immigrants and non-immigrants in the labour force with university degree, Nova Scotia, 2001-2024.



Source: Statistics Canada -The percentage for 2001 is calculated using Census data table BO-0293, 2001 Target Group Profile). The 2006–2024 data are LFS based.

The increasing levels of education among new waves of immigrant landings in Nova Scotia has been occurring continuously, but it has accelerated in recent years. As recently as 2021, only about 51 percent of recent immigrants in the province had a university degree, 3 years later this percentage rose by nearly 11 percentage points as employer-driven programs (NSPNP and AIP) took effect.

Rising numbers of non-immigrants and recent immigrants in Nova Scotia acquiring university degrees in the current century is a reflection of several factors including expansion of the knowledge-based economy (growth in health care, education, information technology, and professional services), greater access to post-secondary education (especially among women, mature students and those with special needs), federal and provincial immigration programs increasingly prioritizing education and skills, and international students transitioning to permanent residence status.

Sectoral distribution of the labour force

-
- *Immigrants are more likely than non-immigrants to work in Accommodation and Food Services, (11.8 percent of the immigrant workforce vs. only 5.1 percent of the non-immigrant workforce), in Finance and Insurance, (7.2 percent vs. 3.6 percent) and in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (11 percent vs. 5.9 percent).*
 - *15.6 percent of recent immigrants work in Accommodation and Food Services, compared to only 11.8 percent of overall immigrants in the labour force. Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (2.2 percent vs. 1.6 percent) and Finance and Insurance (9.4 percent vs. 7.2 percent) also employ more recent immigrants than the overall immigrants. Recent immigrants are also less likely to work in the Education Services (4.3 percent) than overall immigrants (7.4 percent).*
-

Understanding the sectoral distribution of immigrant labour force helps understand whether immigrants are being absorbed in the economy and if they are fulfilling the labour market demand. It also reveals if immigrants tend to concentrate in low-wage or cyclical industries that can make them and the provincial labour market vulnerable to economic downturns, policy changes, or automation.

Table 11 shows the sectoral distribution of non-immigrants, immigrants, and recent immigrants. Overall, more immigrants in Nova Scotia work in healthcare and social assistance than in any other sector. This is also true for non-immigrants in Nova Scotia. However, although healthcare and social assistance sector is a dominant employer of recent immigrants as well, they are more likely to work in the accommodation and food services than in any other sector.

Regarding differences between the sectors that non-immigrants and immigrants work in, there are a few select sectors that stand out as being more likely to employ non-immigrants. Most notable among these is Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting. Although a relatively small percentage of non-immigrants in Nova Scotia (3.1%) work in this sector, immigrants are only one-tenth as likely to work in this sector than non-immigrants. Another sector in which immigrants are under-represented is Retail Trade, which employs only 7.3 percent of immigrants compared to 12.2 percent of non-immigrants. Construction (8.7% vs. 5.6%) and Public Administration (7.7% vs. 5%) are also sectors in which immigrants are under-represented in comparison to non-immigrants.”

There are also several sectors in which immigrants are over-represented in comparison to non-immigrants. Immigrants are more than, or about, twice as likely as

non-immigrants to work in Accommodation and Food Services, (11.8 percent of the immigrant workforce vs. only 5.1 percent of the non-immigrant workforce), in Finance and Insurance, (7.2 percent vs. 3.6 percent) and in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (11 percent vs. 5.9 percent).

There are a few sectors that *recent* immigrants are more likely to be employed in than immigrants overall. As previously noted, 15.6 percent of recent immigrants work in Accommodation and Food Services, compared to only 11.8 percent of overall immigrants in the labour force. Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (2.2% vs. 1.6%) and Finance and Insurance (9.4% vs. 7.2%) also employ more recent immigrants than immigrants on the whole. Recent immigrants are also less likely to work in the Education Services (4.3%) than overall immigrants (7.4 %).

Table 11: Immigrant and non-immigrant labour force by industry sector of employment, Nova Scotia, 2024 ('000)

	Non-immigrants	All immigrants	Recent immigrants
Total, all sectors	456.5	67.9	27.6
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	14	0.2	x
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2.4	0.1	x
Utilities	4	0.3	x
Construction	39.8	3.8	1.7
Manufacturing	31	4.5	1.7
Wholesale trade	14	1.8	0.7
Retail trade	55.5	4.9	2.3
Transportation and warehousing	18.5	3.4	1.5
Information and cultural industries	8.3	0.7	x
Finance and insurance	16.4	4.9	2.6
Real estate and rental and leasing	6.5	1.3	0.6
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.1	7.5	2.7
Management of companies and enterprises	x	x	x
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	14.3	2.8	1.2
Educational services	37.5	5	1.2
Health care and social assistance	71.5	9.7	3.2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	10.7	1.1	0.6
Accommodation and food services	23.2	8	4.3
Other services (except public administration)	18.7	2.5	1
Public administration	35	3.4	1.2
Unclassified industries	8.1	2	1.1

Source and notes: - Statistics Canada: Custom Labour Force data. 'x': Data suppressed by the source.

Occupational distribution of labour force

More jobs that can be classified as high-skilled (TEER 0-2) tend to be filled by recent immigrants than before. This is consistent with the finding that recent immigrants landing in Nova Scotia are increasingly likely to possess high levels of education.

Employment and industrial sector distribution data help us understand how many immigrants are working in the labour market and where they are working. Understanding what *kinds* of jobs that they do also helps understand how well they are being integrated in the labour market. Such understanding is central to effective labour market, immigration, and retention policy.

LFS data on occupational distribution of labour force are based on Training, Education, Experience and Responsibility (TEER) classifications which were developed by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). TEER classifies occupations based on the level of education or experience that they typically require. A summary is provided in Table 12.

Table 12: Training, Education, Experience and Responsibility (TEER) level 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

Note: Based on ESDC classifications. 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.

Table 13 data show that among non-immigrants, the number of persons working in TEER 4 & 5 occupations, that require relatively little education or training, has decreased significantly in recent years. Between 2006 and 2024, their participation in TEER 4 occupations decreased by 28 percent, or nearly 30,000 persons. Most of this decrease occurred between 2006 and 2016. Similarly, the number of non-immigrants who worked in TEER 5 occupations decreased by nearly 25 percent from 2006 to 2024, a decrease of 19,000 persons. These decreases have been very recent, mostly since 2016. They may be attributed to the non-immigrant population increasingly reaching retirement age. However, they could also be due to the greater tendency among Canadians to acquire post-secondary education as is reflected in growth of TEER 1 to 3 occupations that require post-secondary education. In 2006, more than 60,000 non-immigrants worked in TEER 1 occupations requiring a university education. By 2024, this percentage rose by over 50 percent to 91,400 non-immigrants. The number of non-immigrants working in TEER 2 & 3 level occupations that typically require some form of post-secondary education has also increased, although to a lesser extent than for TEER 0 or TEER 1 occupations.

In recent years, more recent immigrants are found working in occupations of every TEER category than there had been in earlier years. However, this is primarily because there are far more immigrants residing in Nova Scotia today than there used to be. It is therefore more informative to discuss how the *percentage* of recent immigrants in occupations of different TEER levels has changed over the years. Unfortunately, the number of recent immigrants working at each TEER level is incomplete prior to 2021 due to Statistics Canada reporting limitations. So, we can discuss the distribution of only those who arrived since 2021.

During the short three-year period from 2021 to 2024, the percentage of recent immigrants who work in TEER categories 0-2 has increased from 46.7 percent in 2021 to 53.2 percent in 2024. Since the numbers shown in Table 10 include only recent immigrants, this also indicates that 1) either immigrants have been finding jobs in these occupations within a few years of their arrival or 2) they had these job offers in hand before arrival in the province as a part of their employment-driven admission program. It is also worth noting that declining percentages of recent immigrants are observed in TEER 3 – 4 occupations, while there was no change in their representation in TEER 5 category.

In summary, more jobs that can be classified as highly skilled (TEER 0-2) tend to be filled by recent immigrants than before in Nova Scotia. This is consistent with the finding in Chart 7 of this report, which shows that recent immigrants landing in Nova Scotia are increasingly likely to possess high levels of education. Table 10 data is evidence that recent immigrants' higher levels of education are facilitating their integration into high-skilled occupations within a few years of landing in Canada than immigrants from earlier years. Nova Scotia offers several provincial programs, and also participates in federal programs, to expedite the recognition of foreign credentials for skilled immigrants. One provincial program includes the International Qualifications Recognition program (<https://novascotia.ca/lae/rpllabourmobility/iqr.asp>), which supports the recognition of education and work experience from outside Canada. The Foreign

Credential Recognition Program is a federal program which facilitates credential recognition processes for internationally trained professionals and tradespersons (<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/foreign-credential-recognition-program.html>), These two programs aim to facilitate absorption of immigrants in their chosen fields in Nova Scotia labour markets. The changing occupational distribution of recent immigrants presented in this section of the report point to the success of such programs.

Table 13: Recent immigrants and Non-Immigrants in by major skill Level, 2006-2024 ('000).

	2006		2011		2016		2021		2024	
Level	RI	NI	RI	NI	RI	NI	RI	NI	RI	NI
TEER 0	0.5	38.6	x	39.2	X	32	0.8	27.5	1.5	35.1
TEER 1	0.9	60.6	1.1	69.9	1.8	77.9	3.3	81.1	6.5	91.4
TEER 2	x	96.2	1.3	104.1	0.7	104.9	3	111.3	6.3	110.4
TEER 3	x	69.5	0.6	72.9	1.2	75.5	2.7	81.4	4.4	77.4
TEER 4	0.6	104.1	1.1	92.6	0.5	75.7	3	75.4	3.9	75
TEER 5	0.5	78.2	0.8	78.5	1.5	72.5	2.4	63	4.3	59.2
Unclassified	x	7.4	x	11.2	X	10.2	0.7	14	1.1	8.1

Source: Statistics Canada -Custom Labour Force data. RI = Recent immigrants, NI = Non-immigrants.

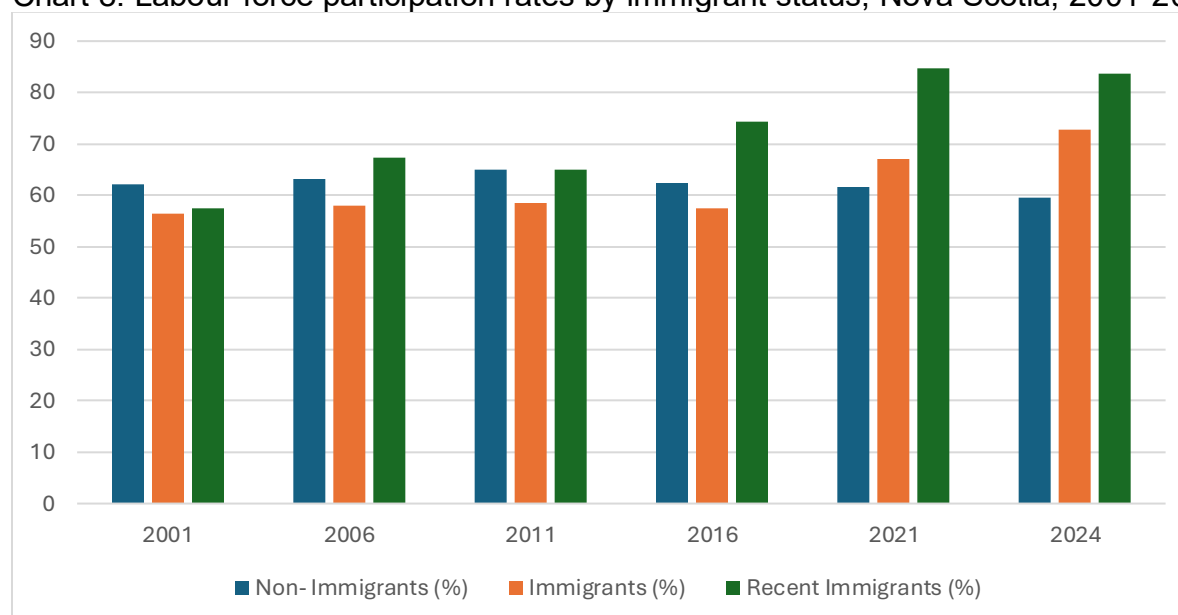
Labour market performance

- Overall and especially recent immigrants, have higher labour force participation rates than non-immigrants. This appears to be due to their employment-driven admissions since 2016.
 - Overall, the immigrant population had lower unemployment rates than non-immigrants until recently. This trend reversed in 2024. Recent immigrants are more likely to be unemployed than the overall immigrants and non-immigrants, perhaps questioning if the employment-driven admissions are often aligned with national or medium-term labour needs and not always with immediate, province-specific job vacancies.
 - For non-immigrants, the unemployment rates are lower for females than for males. This is reversed for most of the period in case of the overall and recent immigrants. This may indicate barriers to employment faced by immigrant women who are in the labour force to support their family income.
 - Recent immigrants earned more than non-immigrants in 2001 but started to lose this advantage since then. Shifts in their source country composition towards countries which offer education and labour market training that are different from Canadian labour market requirements are possible reasons. Their earning disadvantage has been falling since 2016 which could reflect their better job matching in recent years through the NSPNP and AIP. In 2024, they earned about 89 percent of what a non-immigrant earned compared to only 80 percent in 2016.
 - Economic immigrants tend to earn the most compared to those who entered under other admission classes. Lower earnings of some admission cohorts could be the consequence of outmigration of high earners to other provinces or the scarring effect of COVID-19.
-

The previous two sections analyzed the industrial and occupational distributions of immigrant labour force. Further information on immigrants' role in the labour force can be obtained through an analysis of their performance in the labour market. In short, analyzing immigrant labour market performance is instructive for provincial policymakers who like to determine if immigration is not only increasing population numbers but is also moving the province towards the path of long-term growth. Three important indicators of labour market performance that are analyzed in this report are labour force participation rates, unemployment rates and earnings.

Chart 8 shows the labour force participation rates of non-immigrants as well as previous and recent immigrants. The labour force participation rate is the percentage of working age (aged 15+) persons who are either working or actively seeking work. The rate among non-immigrant Nova Scotians has been relatively steady over the years, at approximately 60 percent.

Chart 8: Labour force participation rates by immigrant status, Nova Scotia, 2001-2024.



Source and notes: 2001: Statistics Canada: Census Catalogue – 97F0009XCB2001041
2006-2024: Custom Labour Force data. Recent Immigrants are Immigrants, landed 5 years or less earlier.

For immigrants, the labour force participation rate in the first decade shown in Chart 9 was always below that of non-immigrants. In 2001, only 56.4 percent of working age immigrants were in the labour force, compared to 62 percent of non-immigrants. A similar differential was consistently observed until the 2020s after which the immigrant labour force participation rate began exceeding that of non-immigrants. In 2021, 67.1 percent of working age immigrants were labour force participants, compared to only 61.5 percent of non-immigrants. By 2024, this gap grew further as 72.7 percent of immigrants were labour force participants compared to only 59.6 percent of non-immigrants.

In 2001, recent immigrants in Nova Scotia were slightly less likely to be labour force participants than non-immigrants. At that time, only 57.4 percent of recent immigrants were part of the labour force. In the past decade, immigrants landing in Nova Scotia have become far more likely to be labour force participants during their initial years in the country than immigrants who landed during earlier years. By 2016, 74.4 percent of recent immigrants were labour force participants. This increased further to 83.6 percent of recent immigrants by 2024. The labour force participation rate among recent immigrants has always exceeded that of all immigrants in the labour force of the province.

The differences in labour force participation rates between the three groups can be explained by differences in their age distributions. Recent immigrants are younger than the rest of the population and hence are more likely to be members of the labour force – either working or looking for work. The rising participation of recent immigrants

(which also pulls up the participation for all immigrants) also appears to be the result of their selection through employment-driven programs.

Gender breakdown of labour force participation is provided in Table 14 for 2024. A gender breakdown of data is undertaken to understand if the labour market analysis reflects the full diversity of immigrant experiences and helps Nova Scotia design policies that better utilize the skills of both immigrant men and women. Both male and female immigrants are far more likely to be in the labour force than their non-immigrant counterparts. Slightly more than two-thirds of the female immigrant population, aged 15 and above, participates in the labour force. This is compared to only 56.2 percent of non-immigrant women. The labour force participation rate is even higher among recent immigrant women of whom nearly three-quarters are labour force participants. For men, 77.3 percent of male immigrants are labour force participants compared to only 61.8 percent of non-immigrant men. Among recent immigrant men, the labour force participation rate is extremely high, at 91.5 percent.

It is also worth noting from Table 14 that although both male and female immigrants are more likely to be labour force participants than non-immigrants, the gender gap in labour force participation rates is higher for immigrants than it is for non-immigrants

Non-immigrant women include a larger share who are permanently out of the labour force due to early retirement, long-term caregiving, or disability. Higher participation rates among immigrant women reflect their strong selection and necessity to be employed to supplement family income rather than better labour market outcomes. Higher participation does not necessarily imply good job quality—making it important to also study their employment type, hours, and earnings.

Table 14: Labour force participation rates by gender and immigrant status, Nova Scotia, 2024*.

	Male	Female
Non-immigrants	62.5	56.9
All immigrants	78.1	67.4
Recent immigrants	91.5	74.7

Source and notes: Statistics Canada: Custom Labour Force data. Reported for population aged 15 and over.

Table 15 shows unemployment rates of immigrants and non-immigrants. Overall, the immigrant population had lower unemployment rates than non-immigrants until 2021. This trend reversed in 2024. Recent immigrants have mostly been more likely to be unemployed than the other two groups. Their rising composition in the overall immigrant population may also have pulled the unemployment rate for the overall immigrant population above that of non-immigrants. The higher unemployment rate for recent immigrants, despite them being largely admitted through employment-driven programs, pose the question if these programs are more aligned with national or

medium-term labour needs and not always with immediate, province-specific vacancies. An in-depth study is needed to investigate this possibility.

Table 15: Unemployment rates in Nova Scotia, immigrants and non-immigrants, 2001-2024.

Year	Non- Immigrants (%)	Immigrants (%)	Recent Immigrants (%)
2001	11.1	7.1	11.5
2006	8.3	6	x
2011	9.1	6.9	10.7
2016	8.4	7.3	9.4
2021	8.9	6.8	8.1
2024	6.1	7.1	8.6

Source 2001: Census Catalogue – 97F0009XCB2001041. 2006-2024: Custom Labour Force data. 'x'= Data not available.

Table 16 shows the gender breakdown of unemployment rates. For non-immigrants, the unemployment rates are lower for females than for males. This is reversed for most of the period in case of the overall and recent immigrant populations. This may indicate barriers to employment faced by immigrant women who are in the labour force to support their family income.

Table 16: Unemployment rates in Nova Scotia, immigrants and non-immigrants, by gender 2001-2024.

Year	Non- Immigrants (%)		Immigrants (%)		Recent Immigrants (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2006	9.9	6.6	6.3	6.7	X	x
2011	10.6	7.6	6.2	7.8	X	x
2016	10.4	6.4	7.8	6.7	X	X
2021	10.3	7.4	5.8	8.1	5.2	10.9
2024	7.2	4.9	6.2	8.1	6.8	11.9

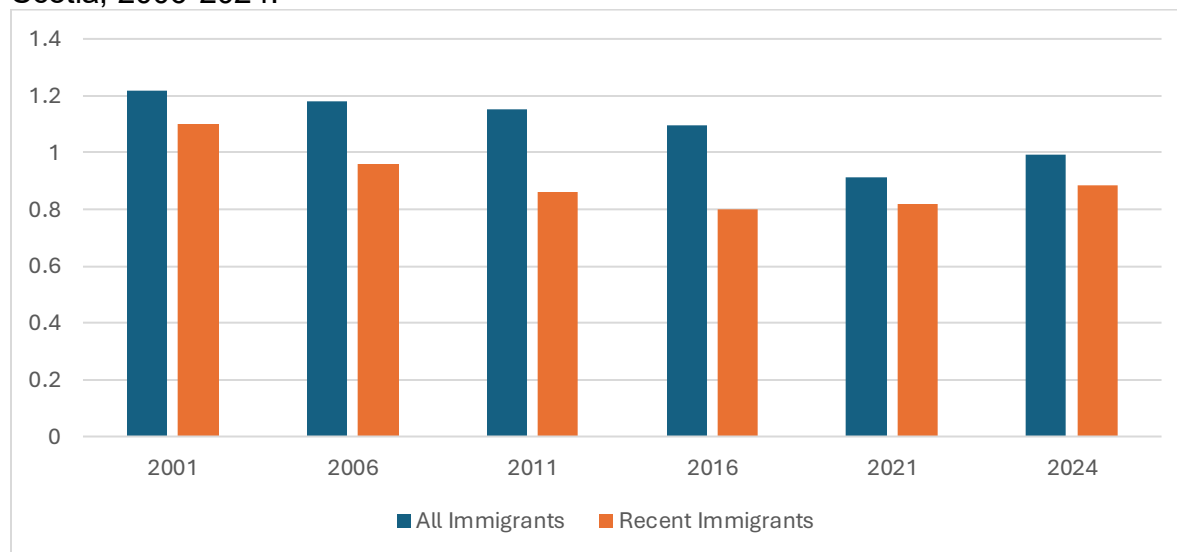
Source and notes: Custom Labour Force data. A 'X' value indicates data suppressed by Statistics Canada to meet confidentiality requirement.

Finally, the average weekly earning data of overall immigrant population and recent immigrants are presented relative to non-immigrants, in Chart 9 (next page). It is more meaningful to analyze the relative rather than the absolute earnings since the latter includes the effect of inflation over time. Values higher than 1 indicate that immigrants' earnings are higher, while values less than 1 indicate the opposite is true.

Prior to the 2020s, immigrants earned more than non-immigrants, but this advantage has been declining over time and was reversed by 2021. Recent immigrants

earned more than non-immigrants in 2001 but started to lose this advantage since then. The reason could be the shift in their source country composition towards countries which offer education and labour market training that are different from Canadian labour market requirements, hence requiring more time for them to adjust. Their earning disadvantage has been falling since 2016 which could reflect their greater job matching in recent years through the Provincial Nominee Program and Atlantic Immigration Program. In 2024, they earned about 89 percent of what a non-immigrant earned compared to only 80 percent in 2016.

Chart 9: Average Weekly wage rate of immigrants relative to non-immigrants, Nova Scotia, 2006-2024.



Source: 2001: Statistics Canada, Census Catalogue – 97F0009XCB2001041. 2006-2024: 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 is true.

Earnings of economic immigrants

Table 17 compares the median earnings of different categories of economic immigrants to Nova Scotia based on the IMDB tax filers' data. The first row shows the average earnings of immigrants across all economic class categories. The second row shows this for skilled workers and those in skilled trades who apply for admission through the Federal Skilled Workers program. The Canadian experience class is a sub-category of this program designed for applicants who have at least one year of Canadian work experience in a skilled occupation before applying for permanent residency. Provincial/territorial nominees are individuals nominated by the province in which they intend to reside. Caregivers are individuals who apply for permanent residency through a federal program designed for individuals with experience in the caregiving profession.

Table 17 data show that caregivers earn the least of all other economic class immigrants. Caregiver occupations are primarily classified within TEER 4 and TEER 5. The low earnings of caregivers are closely linked to the gendered nature of both

caregiving work and the immigration pathway, as the majority of caregivers are women. Their private-household employment may also be an important factor limiting their earning growth. These possibilities may be explored in future research focusing on caregiving stream of economic immigration. Research should also explore any mismatch between their education levels and job requirements.

At the opposite end, the highest earners are those who migrated through the Canadian experience class program. Provincial nominees and federal skilled class and those in skilled trades earn in between those admitted through the two aforementioned programs. In recent years, the earnings of provincial nominees tended to slightly exceed those of skilled worker and skilled trades migrants. Jobs under these programs are usually classified as TEER 1 and TEER 2 requiring higher levels of education than others.

Lower earnings observed for some pre-2019 entry cohorts in 2022 could be because some high-earning members have left Nova Scotia for other provinces thereby lowering the median income of those who stayed. These cohorts also had more years of labour market exposure when COVID-19 hit. If they were disproportionately employed in sectors heavily affected by lockdowns (hospitality, personal services, certain trades), they may have experienced job loss, reduced hours, or slower wage recovery—lowering observed earnings even years later. These possibilities can be investigated in future research.

Table 17: Median income of economic immigrants by their types, principal applicants, Nova Scotia, 2022.

Admission Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	Median income in 2022 dollars				
Economic Immigrant, principal applicant	\$66,900	\$65,400	\$53,200	\$50,600	\$46,700
Skilled worker and skilled trades, principal applicant	\$62,100	\$67,100	\$49,400	\$46,600	\$40,300
Canadian experience class, principal applicant	\$79,300	\$78,600	\$80,200	\$67,100	\$57,700
Provincial/territorial nominee, principal applicant	\$68,100	\$63,400	\$50,400	\$49,400	\$46,900
Caregiver, principal applicant	\$43,700	\$38,900	\$43,200	...	...
Other economic immigrant, principal applicant	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$41,700

Source and Notes: Statistics Canada. Table 43-10-0026-01 (tax filers data) Income of Immigrant tax-filers, by immigrant admission category and tax year, for Canada and provinces, 2022 constant dollars. 'NA' refers to data not available or observations suppressed due to insufficient data. "..." are reported as zeros in original data. Income is the sum of wages, salaries, commissions, and self-employment income.

V. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN NOVA SCOTIA

The number of international students entering Nova Scotia annually ranged between 2,500 to 4,000 prior to 2010. Since then, their annual entries have been above 10,000, except during the Covid-19 lockdown, and exceeded 16,000 in 2023. The current federal cap on their entries brought their number down to about 11,000 in 2024.

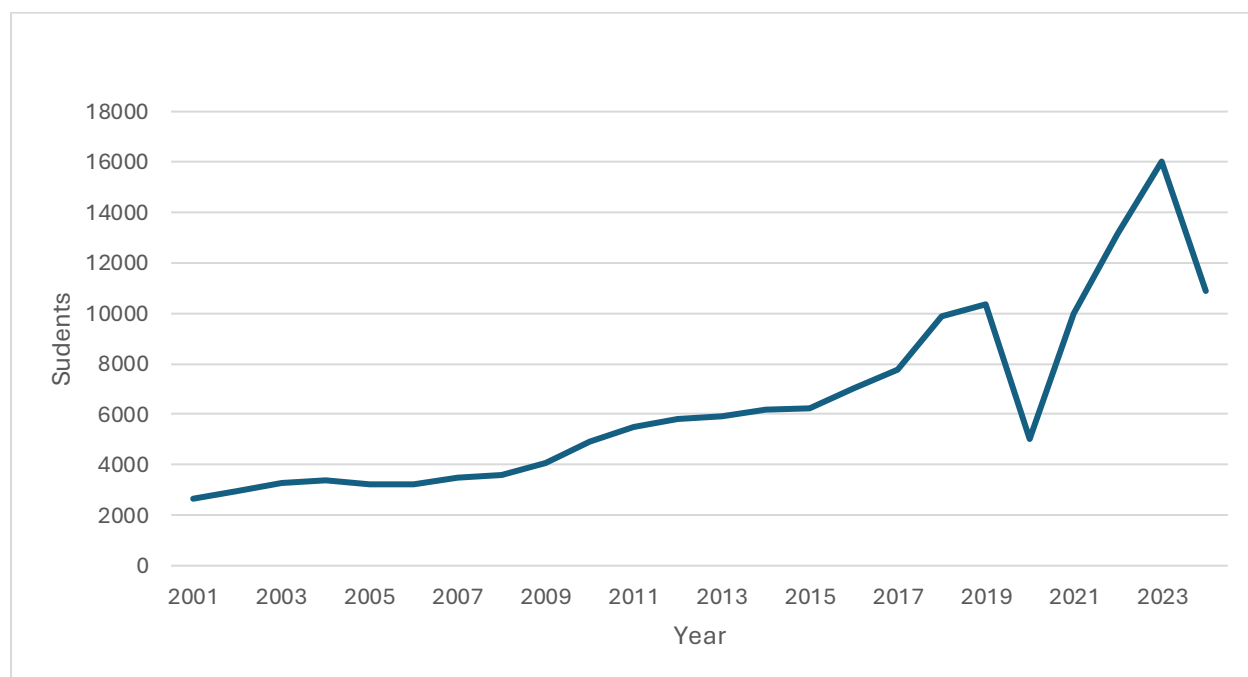
International students are an important component of immigration strategy of the province as they can help boost the economy of Nova Scotia. Universities and Colleges that provide education to international students are in a “clean or green industry” fostering well-paying jobs in that industry. Education fosters knowledge spillovers to other sectors through various means such as links between education institutions and industry as well as research and development activities. Upon graduation, international students often are on an important pathway into permanent residency given their language skills, experience with the Canadian economy and their credentials, thus avoiding the difficult task for their potential employers to evaluate foreign credentials. When international students enter an institution in Canada, their earlier pre-arrival education has been paid for in their home country. When they enter a post-secondary institution, their high international tuition cross-subsidizes Canadian students. They also help finance the fixed infrastructure costs at post-secondary institutions. If they enter the labour market after graduating, they are in the peak years of their professional careers when they tend to pay taxes and not draw on social services and can mitigate the labour shortages associated with Canada’s aging workforce. Whether they remain in Canada or return to their home country, they can facilitate trade and interactions with their home country.

Chart 10 shows the annual numbers of new international students who began attending educational institutions in Nova Scotia since 2001. It is worth noting that these data show the number of new entries of international students, and not the total number of international students in the province which also includes some international students who arrived in previous years.

In the first decade, the number of new international students moving to Nova Scotia numbered between 2,500 and 4,000 per year. Their entries have persistently increased throughout the second decade, exceeding 10,000 by 2019. This was followed by a short drop to half this number in 2020 that was largely a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in closure of Canadian visa offices overseas. Since then, international student entries have increased to previously unseen levels, numbering an all-time high of 13,165 by 2022. This high number was then exceeded the following year

when 16,020 international students entered. It is worth noting, that the two peaks in international student arrivals in Nova Scotia included a double cohort that represented transitioning to in person learning from the previous phase of online learning in their home countries. In 2024, when new federal caps were introduced on admissions of international students, their new numbers declined by approximately one-third to 10,890 students.

Chart 10: Annual entries of international students, Nova Scotia, 2001-2024.



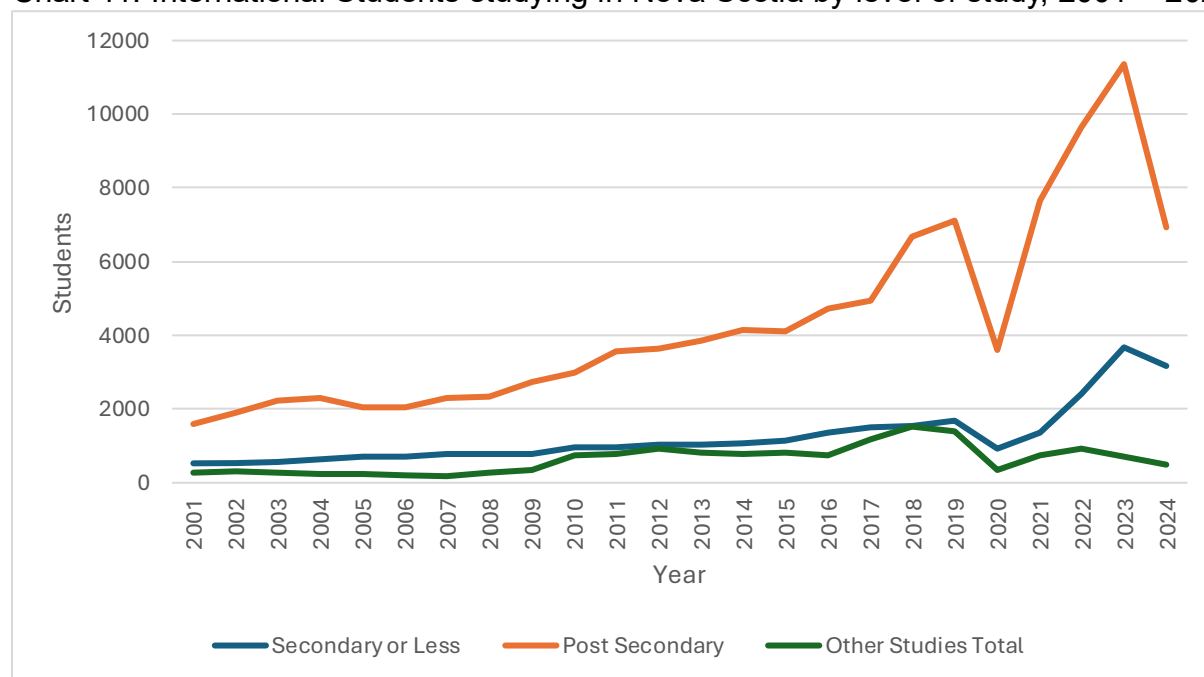
Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-Custom Data--Canada – Study Permit Holders by Province/Territory of Destination, Country of Citizenship, Study Level, and Year in which Permit(s) became effective, 2000 - December 2024.

Chart 11 provides a breakdown of the new international student entries by the level of education. Most international students come to pursue post-secondary education. This is important since that is the level associated with most of the positive benefits from international students discussed previously. Knowledge spillovers are the most prominent at this level as STEM can foster innovation and growth, they are more likely than those studying at pre-secondary level to obtain permanent residency faster with their credentials and mitigate the skill shortages associated with Canada's aging workforce.

However, their numbers at the secondary level have also increased substantially in recent years. In 2019, only 1,395 new international students came to Nova Scotia to pursue a secondary education. By 2023, this number more than doubled to 3,675.

Between 2023 and 2024, however, their numbers also decreased as did the overall entry of international students under the new federal regulations. International students pursuing other types of education have always been few.

Chart 11: International Students studying in Nova Scotia 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

Source countries of international students

- *Until 2016, China remained among the top or second source country. Since 2021, India has occupied the top place. Philippines, Nigeria, and Ghana were also among the top five list of international students in 2024.*
- *Changing diplomatic relationship of Canada with China and Saudi Arabia, that resulted in falling entries of students from those countries, highlights Nova Scotia's vulnerability to sponsor-driven enrolment volatility and also underscores why diversification of source countries should be a policy priority.*

Table 18 shows the top five source countries of international students. China has consistently been a common source country for international students. It has always been either the top or second largest source country. However, the number of international students coming from China declined since 2016. This decline appeared in the aftermath of changing diplomatic relationship between the two countries and the recent cap on international student inflows in Canada.

As has been the case for new immigrants, shown earlier in Table 4, there has been a significant rise in the number of international students from India in recent years. Prior to 2011, India was not among the top five source countries of international students. They numbered only 260 in 2011 in Nova Scotia. By 2016, their admission rose to 400, but accelerated considerably thereafter, increasing to 3,310 in 2021 and 3,360 in 2024. Nigeria, Ghana, and the Philippines have also recently been in the top five source countries of international students.

One other noteworthy observation from Table 18 is that during the 2010s, Saudi Arabia was a major source country for international students studying in Nova Scotia. They numbered 1,340 persons in 2011, before declining to 615 by 2016 and subsequently dropping out of the top five list. Saudi students dropped out of the list mainly because of exogenous funding cuts to Saudi overseas scholarships. This highlights Nova Scotia's vulnerability to sponsor-driven enrolment volatility and underscores why diversification of source countries should be a policy priority. In addition, provincial policies and institutional strategies also evolved toward retention, PR transition, and long-term demographic impact thereby focusing on countries whose students are more likely to be retained after study.

South Korea and the United States had also historically been major source countries of international students, but they no longer feature among the top five. This is because to meet its changing demographic needs, the province moved towards attracting students with different profiles—larger cohorts, degree-seeking students, and higher PR transition potential.

Table 18: Top five source countries of international students studying (Year in which Permit became effective) in Nova Scotia, 2001,2006, 2011, 2016, 2021 & 2024.

2001		2006		2011		2016		2021		2024	
China*	255	China*	830	China*	1,580	China*	2,545	India	3,310	India	3,360
UK**	225	Korea, Republic	400	Saudi Arabia	1,340	Saudi Arabia	615	China*	1,860	China*	1,525
USA***	225	Germany	200	India	260	India	400	Korea, Republic	380	Nigeria	1,280
Korea, Republic	190	USA***	170	Korea, Republic	260	Korea, Republic	310	Nigeria	325	Ghana	510
Mexico	170	**UK	165	USA***	175	Japan	270	Bangladesh	295	Philippines	350
Japan	165										
Total (Top 5 countries)	1230		1,765		3,615		4,140		6,170		7,025
Province Total	2655		3,210		5,500		7,025		9,965		10,890

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.

*China, People's Republic, **United Kingdom, ***United States of America

Earnings of former international students

Median earnings of former international students, who transitioned to permanent resident status and resided in Nova Scotia, have been below the Canadian median earnings. This could be because of: 1) the outmigration of higher earners, 2) some graduates accepting jobs below their qualification level to secure Canadian experience or meet immigration requirements, 3) transition through employer-supported pathways (e.g., PGWP) that initially restrict job mobility, 4) scarring effects as international students are heavily concentrated during their studies in accommodation and food services, retail trade, health support, and other personal services, which are structurally low-wage industries.

Table 19 shows the median income earned by former study permit holders who subsequently became permanent residents and resided in Nova Scotia. These data are based on IMDB database on income tax filers. Median incomes are presented in 2022 constant dollars, and therefore not subject to inflationary pressures. In their first years after becoming permanent residents, former international students' median annual earnings are generally low, well below 20,000 dollars. However, their incomes tend to

rise, over time. Of note is that former international students who became permanent residents in 2014, or later, saw much higher income growth over their first five years as permanent residents than those who were admitted in 2012 or 2013.

Former international students who became permanent residents in 2017 had median income of \$25,200 by the year 2022. For comparison purposes, the median income among all Nova Scotia residents in 2022 was \$40,200 (Statistics Canada 2025). This indicates that despite the significant earnings growth of these former international students during their early years in Canada, within five years their earnings remain well-below those of the median Nova Scotian worker.

Several factors can explain the lower earning of former international students in Nova Scotia and can be the subject of future research: 1) If those graduating from fields that are prerequisites for high paying jobs (e.g., STEM or specific business fields) tend to leave the province then the median earnings of those left behind is lowered. 2) Some graduates accept jobs below their qualification level to secure Canadian experience or meet immigration requirements. 3) Many former international students transition through Post Graduate Work Permits (PGWPs) or employer-supported pathways that initially restrict job mobility. Limited ability to switch employers reduces wage bargaining power and delays movement into higher-paying firms or occupations. 4) Former international students are likely to be heavily concentrated in accommodation and food services, retail trade, health support, and other personal services. These are structurally low-wage industries. Many remain in the same industries where they worked while studying, leading to limited earnings progression after graduation.

Table 19: Median income earned in the first five years by former study permit holders who became permanent residents, Nova Scotia (2022 dollars).

Admission year	Years since arrival				
	1	2	3	4	5
2012	13,700	13,100	15,200	15,000	16,900
2013	9,800	17,400	12,100	20,500	14,400
2014	8,400	14,900	19,000	24,000	26,800
2015	17,500	20,900	25,200	18,200	20,800
2016	18,100	21,900	24,700	19,300	27,500
2017	13,400	17,100	21,200	25,800	25,200

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.](#)

VI. CONCLUSIONS, SOME POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research presented in this report reviewed some immigration trends in the province of Nova Scotia over the past 25-year period. Data were analyzed on changing demographic composition of the province's population and how immigration is shaping the population growth, the trends in immigrant arrivals, their human capital, role in labour markets and the increasing importance of international students for the province.

With natural growth of population turning negative since 2016, the province relies heavily on net interprovincial and international migration to grow its population and labour force. Without population growth, the province risks a shrinking of the labour force, declines in markets for goods and services, increases in the per capita cost of public goods (major among them being roads, public parks, research and development), and a fall in its proportionate representation in the Canadian House of Commons.

The interprovincial migration in the province has gone through 3 different phases in the current century: net losses in the first decade, some small gains in the second decade and sustained gains in the current decade. Although it has turned positive recently, interprovincial migration can not be relied upon for sustained population growth for two important reasons. First, it is vulnerable to economic cycles, and the remote-work trends developed after Covid-19. A LFS based study has shown declining trend of work from home in Canada for an employer located in another province or abroad (Statistics Canada, 2024). This trend can reverse the interprovincial flow of migrants. Second, besides working-age people, migrants from other provinces also include retirees whose numbers are growing throughout Canada. Hence, the issue of population aging may not be addressed by interprovincial migration alone. It can only be viewed as a supplement to population growth strategy. A sustainable approach requires attraction and retention of international migrants as well.

The province receives a tiny fraction (under 3 percent in 2024) of annual immigrant inflows to Canada which makes population growth highly vulnerable to changes in federal immigration policy. Hence, there is a strong need for the province to remain actively engaged in future immigration target planning of the federal government.

While immigrants have been arriving in larger numbers to the province, their retention rate remains low. Although the low retention rate reflects parallel trends in the four adjacent Atlantic provinces, it is the highest among all four provinces. Furthermore, a low retention rate among young Nova Scotian non-immigrants is also ascertained since they tend to migrate to other provinces in pursuit of more lucrative job opportunities and career advancement (Helio Urban Development, 2026). Economic and refugee class immigrants are more likely to leave the province than the family class immigrants. This is because mobility decisions among family class immigrants are

based on benefits to the family as a whole and not just to an individual member of the family. Hence, family class immigrants are more tied to the place where they currently stay. In its immigration strategy, the province should pay greater emphasis on attraction of family class immigrants who are young and can become productive members of labour force quickly upon arrival. On the broader side, to retain immigrants in all admission classes, the factors that can increase the competitiveness of the province over other provinces should be carefully studied. Some of these factors could include facilitating job search for new arrivals, career counseling, faster credential recognition, better housing affordability, health care, community belonging and inclusion. A survey-based 2021 study (Akbari, 2021) showed that these factors matter in immigrants' choice of Nova Scotia as a home and also in retention.

While most immigrants tend to settle in the largest population centre of Halifax, they are also settling in rural and smaller communities. This provides a buffer against their population decline thereby helping a continuation of rural public services such as hospitals and education and sustain food and seafood industries. However, the risk of them leaving smaller places after a few years remains and needs to be addressed.

In 2024, immigrants contributed 37.2 percent of labour force growth. However, they comprised only 16 percent of the provincial labour force, much smaller than the national average of 28 percent. They are found largely working in hospitality, finance and insurance, and in professional, scientific and technical service sectors which are not among major employers of non-immigrants. This finding poses two important questions future research can address: Do immigrants displace non-immigrants in industry? Do immigrants work in industries where non-immigrants do not want to work? A finer industrial breakdown of immigrant employment will allow addressing these questions meaningfully.

In recent years (2021 to 2024), the percentage of recent immigrants who work in TEER categories 0-2 has risen. Declining percentages are found in TEER 3-4 and no change in TEER 5. This is because immigrant selection favours higher human capital. Federal and provincial economic programs (e.g., Express Entry) heavily weigh university education, high language skills and professional work experience when prioritizing which prospective immigrants to admit. On the other hand, many TEER 3-4 occupations require Canadian certification, provincial licensing and apprenticeship completion which make it difficult for employers to recruit them directly into TEER 3-4 jobs from abroad, even when demand is high. Employers will be facilitated in their recruitment efforts through faster credential recognition and professional licensing in TEER 3-4 jobs.

The concentration of immigrants in hospitality and professional, scientific and technical industries poses two important questions for future study: i) do university-educated immigrants cluster in hospitality industries, and ii) are these immigrants and those employed in professional industries working in their field or in survival jobs. For their successful integration in labour markets, low-skilled immigrants need skills

upgrading and language training linked to work that can help them advance to higher skill levels.

After a drop in the entry of international students in 2020, the province experienced a steep rise. In fact, there has been an upward trend in their enrolments even before the pandemic. International students have been providing a buffer to the province's post secondary institution against the drop of domestic students, resulting from the drop in university-aged population. This has prevented the institutions maintain some of the economies of scale they enjoy due to the large amount of fixed costs. The current IRCC cap on the inflows of international students have raised concerns that this advantage will be lost.

In addition, international students also contribute to the local economy. In October 2024, the Atlantic Association of Universities (AAU) published a report entitled that examined the economic contribution of international students in Atlantic provinces based on the 2023/24 and the 2024/25 international students' enrolments that were subject to the IRCC policy caps (Atlantic Association of Universities 2024). The report estimated the shortfall in international student enrolments to result in an estimated loss of \$234.24 million in spending (direct output), \$152.09 million in provincial GDP, \$87.54 million in provincial income, 2,140 jobs (FTE, direct and indirect), \$20.78 million in provincial taxes and \$15.69 million in federal taxes collected in the province. These are huge losses for a small province like Nova Scotia. At the same time, the enrolment caps and difficulties in obtaining visas are discouraging new international applicants who now look for other western destinations (<https://thepienews.com/top-study-destinations-outside-the-big-four-in-2024>). Provincial government and educational institutions must remain active in promoting the province's post-secondary institutions and the benefits of declaring the province home. A recent survey of international students in Atlantic Canada found that, prior to their admission, they learn about their institutions through their personal connections. Hence, it is important for the educational institutions to develop an international alumni network. It is also important to provide a satisfying experience to students during their studies. (Akbari 2024).

Another Canada-wide study published recently has shown that international students tend to be working in precarious employment more than domestic students do during their studies. (Spring and Vosko 2025). This could be due to their lack of information about local labour markets coupled with the need to support the higher tuition fees they face and also the urgency to remit money to their families in home country. Their time spent in precarious jobs could have a long-term scarring effect on their future labour market outcomes (slower career progression, higher probability of continued precarious employment and occupational downgrading or mismatch) because employers often interpret early job histories as signals of future productivity. Lower earnings observed in this study for former study permit holders could be a reflection of this scarring effect. Providing co-op or internship access for international students

during their studies and accelerated faster process for obtaining a post-graduation work permit could help avoid some of the scarring effects of job precariousness.

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