



Immigration in Canada's North

Technical Report



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Project methodology

In this research, we used descriptive analyses of national and regional Statistics Canada data to examine the need for immigration in Canada's North and profile the impact of immigration on regional labour markets. Our definition of Northern and Southern Canada follows the Northern Development Ministers' Forum definition of Canada's North. As seen in the map below, Northern Canada includes the three territories along with the northern portions of seven provinces. Southern Canada includes the portions of the provinces that fall below the red line. Our analysis focused on the following regions of Canada's North: Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Northern Ontario, and Côte-Nord, Quebec.



Sources: Signal49 Research; Northern Development Ministers Forum, 2001.

The following were key questions in our analyses:

- Is immigration needed in these regions of Canada's North?
- What skills do immigrants and non-permanent residents bring to regional labour markets?
- Are immigrants filling in-demand jobs in the labour market?
- What are some of the challenges with retention and integration of foreign workers into the labour market?



We used national and regional data from the following Statistics Canada surveys in our analysis:

- 2021 Census of Population
- Annual Demographic Estimates
- Longitudinal Immigration Database
- Job Vacancy and Wage Survey

We used Signal49 Research's territorial forecasting model (TFM) and provincial medium-term forecasting model (PMTFM) with occupational-demand scenarios to estimate the demand for skill level and occupation type in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Northern Ontario labour markets.

We also reviewed federal and provincial policy documents related to immigration and immigration pathways in our study regions.

Defining Northern Ontario

We defined Northern Ontario using the geographical boundaries from Statistics Canada and the Government of Ontario. This definition includes the census divisions of Algoma, Cochrane, Greater Sudbury, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and Timiskaming. However, this definition of Northern Ontario differs from the one used by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, which also includes Muskoka.

Northern Ontario was also broken down into Northeastern and Northwestern Ontario using the geographical boundaries defined by Statistics Canada and the Government of Ontario. Northeastern Ontario includes the census divisions of Algoma, Cochrane, Greater Sudbury, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Sudbury, and Timiskaming. Northwestern Ontario includes the census divisions of Kenora, Rainy River, and Thunder Bay.

Definition of urban areas

Urban areas for each study region include all census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations within the region as defined by Statistics Canada. The exception is Nunavut, where there are no CMAs or census agglomerations. Instead, Iqaluit was used as the urban boundary for the territory.

Immigrants and non-permanent residents

In our analysis, we distinguish between immigrants, non-permanent residents, and non-immigrants based on Statistics Canada's definitions. Immigrants include persons who are or have been landed immigrants or permanent residents and have been granted the right to live in Canada by immigration authorities. The immigrant category in our analysis includes all immigrants to the region, regardless of how they were selected.



Non-permanent residents include persons from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who have a work or study permit or who have claimed refugee status. Non-immigrants include persons who are Canadian citizens by birth.

Admission class

We examined the immigrant admission class category using data from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population. Admission class was defined based on Statistics Canada's definitions. **Economic immigrants** include immigrants who were selected to come to Canada to contribute to its economy through their ability to meet labour-market demands, to own or manage a business, to make substantial investments, to create their own employment, or to meet specific provincial or territorial labour-market needs. **Immigrants sponsored by family** include immigrants who were sponsored by a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and were granted permanent resident status based on their relationship to the sponsor as either a spouse, partner, parent, grandparent, child, or other relative. **Refugees** include immigrants who were granted permanent resident status based on a well-founded fear of returning to their home country. Finally, **other immigrants** include all immigrants who were granted permanent residency under a program that does not fall under any of the previously mentioned categories.

We also examined the economic immigrant admission class category using data from the 2021 Census. **Economic immigrants selected under worker programs** include those chosen for their ability to meet labour-market needs and are assessed based on their skills and work experience. **Economic immigrants selected under business programs** include those chosen for their skills and their potential to own, manage, or build a business, make substantial investments, or create their own employment. Finally, **economic immigrants selected under provincial or territorial nominee programs** include those nominated by a province or territory for their ability to contribute to the local economy and meet specific labour-market and economic development needs.

Job vacancy rates

We looked at the job vacancy rate adjusted for seasonality in each of our study regions between 2020 and 2024 using data from Statistics Canada's Job Vacancy and Wage Survey.¹ The job vacancy rate is defined as the proportion of all jobs in the labour market that are vacant. The annual vacancy rates for 2021, 2022, and 2023 were calculated as the average of the vacancy rates for the four quarters in the given year. However, the 2020 vacancy rate is based on fourth-quarter data from that year, given disruptions in data collection in the second and third quarters due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For 2024, the average was taken across the first three quarters because at the time of production, fourth-quarter data was unavailable.

For Côte-Nord, QC, we present the vacancy rates for the combined economic regions of Côte-Nord, QC and Nord-du-Québec. Statistics Canada combines these two economic regions to improve the data quality of its job vacancy estimates.

¹ Statistics Canada, "Job Vacancy and Wage Survey."



Factors of population growth

We examined the factors contributing to population growth between 2014–15 and 2023–24 using data from Statistics Canada’s Annual Demographic Estimates for our study regions.²

We defined all factors affecting population growth using Statistics Canada’s definitions.

Natural increase captures the change in the population over a given time period that is the result of differences between the number of births and deaths. **Net international migration** represents the change in population that can be attributed to the change in the number of immigrants and non-permanent residents over a given time period. **Net interprovincial migration** represents the difference between the number of people leaving a region or territory for another province or territory and the number of people moving to the region or territory from another province and territory. **Net intraprovincial migration** represents the difference between the number of people moving to a region from within the same province or territory and the number of people leaving the region but moving to another region in the same province or territory. **Net total change in population** refers to the total change in population over a given time period.

Skill level and occupation type

The occupations of immigrants and non-permanent residents were derived from data collected in the 2021 Census. Occupations were defined using the 2021 National Occupational Classification (NOC) system.³ The five-digit occupations were categorized by skill level based on NOC 2021 training, education, experience, and responsibilities (TEER) levels (see Table 1). We also categorized the five-digit occupations by type at the one-digit level (see Table 2).

Business ownership

In our analysis, we examined business ownership among immigrants and non-permanent residents and the industry of their businesses using data from the 2021 Census. Business owners are defined based on Statistics Canada’s definition and include persons who are self-employed and whose job mainly involves operating a business, farm, or professional practice, alone or in partnership. The business can be unincorporated or incorporated and with or without paid help. The industries where immigrants and non-permanent residents own businesses were defined using the 2017 Northern American Industry Classification System (NAICS).⁴

Alignment of skills of immigrants with demand

To determine whether immigrants are filling in-demand jobs in each region’s labour market, we compared recent immigrants’ skill level and occupation type with in-demand skill levels

² Statistics Canada, “Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories”; “Annual Demographic Estimates: Subprovincial Areas.”

³ Statistics Canada, “National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Version 1.0.”

⁴ Statistics Canada, “North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2017 Version 3.0.”



and occupation types in the regional labour markets. In our analysis, recent immigrants include persons who were landed immigrants or granted permanent resident status in Canada between 2016 and 2021.

Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Northern Ontario

We used the findings from recent Signal49 Research forecasts with occupational-demand scenarios to estimate demand for skill levels and occupation types in the labour markets in Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Northern Ontario.

As part of these forecasts, we developed occupational-demand scenarios based on the forecasting assumptions and economic outlooks. These occupational scenarios forecast the number of job openings in a given occupation using the NOC system.⁵ Job openings are the combined number of expansion demand and replacement demand openings.

For this project, we used projected occupational demand from the baseline forecasting scenario for each region. We examined the skill level and occupation type of the top 50 in-demand occupations between 2025 and 2034 from each regional forecast. For the forecasts in Yukon, Northern Ontario, and Nunavut, the 2021 NOC system was used to organize the five-digit occupations by skill level and occupation type (see Tables 1 and 2). For Northwest Territories, the 2016 NOC system (version 1.0) was used to organize the four-digit occupations by skill level and occupation type.⁶ Please refer to the section below on the forecasting methodology for more information.

In Northwest Territories, the 2016 NOC system (version 1.0) was used to classify the skill level and occupation type of the top 50 in-demand occupations from the forecast, while the 2021 NOC system was used to classify the skill level and occupation type of recent immigrants. To compare the skill level of occupations among recent immigrants with the forecasted labour-market demand, we combined the college/apprenticeship training category and the occupational training category from the 2021 NOC system for the recent immigrant classification into one college/apprenticeship training category. This reclassification best aligned the skill-level categories of occupations among recent immigrants with the skill-level categories of the top 50 in-demand occupations from the forecast.

Signal49 Research's economic forecasts

We used Signal49 Research's territorial forecasting model (TFM) to produce economic forecasts for Nunavut and Yukon from 2024 until 2045 and for Northwest Territories from 2021 until 2040. We used the provincial medium-term forecasting model (PMTFM) and a custom regional model to generate forecasts for Northern Ontario from 2024 until 2045. For each region, we developed forecasts for baseline, high, and low cases. For each scenario, we developed projections for both real GDP and employment by industry, defined using the 2017 NAICS.⁷

⁵ Statistics Canada, "National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Version 1.0"; "Introduction to the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016 Version 1.0."

⁶ Statistics Canada, "Introduction to the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016 Version 1.0."

⁷ Statistics Canada, "North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2017 Version 3.0."



For each forecast, additional assumptions used in these models were developed through engagement with our project partners, including post-secondary institutions, Indigenous organizations, and provincial and territorial government stakeholders, and through reviews of publicly available information on the status of projects and investments in the Northern regions.

The forecasts for Yukon, Nunavut, and Northern Ontario were completed in September 2023 and are available on our [website](#). The forecast for the Northwest Territories was completed in June 2021 and can also be found on our [website](#).

Please refer to our forecasting publications for more information on the results of the forecasts and the methodology.

Côte-Nord, Quebec

Forecasts were not available to estimate the demand for skill level and occupation type in the Côte-Nord, QC labour market. Instead, we used regional data from Statistics Canada's Job Vacancy and Wage Survey on the skill level and occupation type of job vacancies from the fourth quarter of 2023.⁸ Job vacancies represent the number of unfilled jobs in the regional labour market.

We present the job vacancies for the combined economic regions of Côte-Nord, QC and Nord-du-Québec. Statistics Canada combines these two economic regions to improve the data quality of its job vacancy estimates.

We examined the skill level and occupation type of job vacancies using the 2021 NOC system.⁹ The five-digit occupations were categorized by skill level based on the training, education, experience, and responsibilities (TEER) levels from the 2021 NOC system (see Table 1). We also categorized the five-digit occupations by type at the one-digit level (see Table 2).

Retention rates

We used data from Statistics Canada's Longitudinal Immigration Database to look at one-year and five-year retention rates of immigrants in our study regions.¹⁰ These represent the proportion of immigrant tax filers who remain in the geographical area of their intended destination one year and five years after landing.

We also distinguish between one-year and five-year retention rates for all immigrants in a given region and for economic immigrants. Due to the availability and quality of data, retention rates were calculated for Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut combined.

⁸ Statistics Canada, "Job Vacancy and Wage Survey."

⁹ Statistics Canada, "National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Version 1.0."

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, "Longitudinal Immigration Database."



Housing suitability

We analyzed the housing suitability of immigrants, non-permanent residents, and non-immigrants using data from the 2021 Census. Our definition of housing suitability was based on Statistics Canada's definition. Suitable housing includes households where the required number of bedrooms, based on the National Occupancy Standard, does not exceed the reported number of bedrooms in the dwelling, while overcrowded housing includes households where the required number of bedrooms exceeds the reported number of bedrooms.

Overqualification rate

We examined differences in the proportion of immigrants, non-permanent residents, and non-immigrants who were overqualified for their current occupation using data from the 2021 Census. The overqualification rate was defined as the proportion of persons who have a post-secondary education and are working in an occupation that does not require it. We also examined whether the overqualification rate differed by post-secondary field of study, as defined by Statistics Canada's Classification of Instructional Programs, Canada 2021.¹¹

Data suppression and rounding

In some instances, data was suppressed to meet Statistics Canada's confidentiality guidelines. In the 2021 Census, Statistics Canada suppresses values where the number of individuals corresponding to a category or geography falls below 10. In addition, it randomly rounds all raw counts either up or down to a multiple of five.

For further details on these guidelines, including thresholds for geographic area suppression and additional privacy measures, refer to the 2021 Census of Population Guide and related Statistics Canada documentation.¹²

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employment and education estimates in Canada

The COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted employment estimates in the 2021 Census. This includes the pandemic's impact on data collection in Indigenous and Northern communities and the impact of lockdowns on employment.¹³ The response rate for Indigenous and Northern communities to the 2021 Census was 85.6 per cent, down from 92 per cent in 2016.¹⁴

¹¹ Statistics Canada, "Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Canada 2021 Version 1.0."

¹² Statistics Canada, "Guide to the Census of Population, 2021."

¹³ Statistics Canada.

¹⁴ Indigenous Services Canada, "An Update on the Socio-Economic Gaps."



Appendix A

National Occupational Classification system

Table 1

Skill levels derived from the training, education, experience, and responsibilities (TEER) levels in the 2021 National Occupational Classification (NOC) system

Skill level	Education/training required
TEER Level 0 Management	These occupations are characterized by a high level of responsibility, accountability, and subject matter expertise. Expertise can be acquired either through formal education or extensive occupational experience.
TEER Level 1 University degree	Occupations that usually require a university degree (i.e., a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate)
TEER Level 2 College/apprenticeship training	These occupations usually require college education or apprenticeship training of two or more years.
TEER Level 3 Occupational training	These occupations usually require college education, apprenticeship training of less than two years, or more than six months of on-the-job training.
TEER Level 4 On-the-job training	These occupations usually revolve around on-the-job training and do not require post-secondary education.
TEER Level 5 Short-term work demonstration	These occupations usually need short-term work demonstration and no formal education.

Note: Five-digit occupations were sorted based on the skill level derived from the TEER in the 2021 National Occupational Classification system. Each skill level represents the training, education, experience, and responsibilities required to enter into and work in an occupation.

Sources: Signal49 Research; 2021 National Occupation Classification system.



Table 2

Occupation types at the one-digit level derived from the 2021 National Occupational Classification system

Occupation category	Description
Management occupations	These occupations are considered to be at the top of the organizational hierarchy of workplaces or businesses. Decision-making that affects the organization as a whole, or departments within organizations, is undertaken by management.
Business, finance, and administration occupations	This category contains occupations that are concerned with providing financial and business services, administrative and regulatory services, and clerical supervision and support services.
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	This category contains professional and technical occupations in the sciences, including physical and life sciences, engineering, architecture, and information technology.
Health occupations	This category includes occupations concerned with providing healthcare services directly to patients and occupations that provide support to professional and technical staff.
Occupations in education, law, and social, community, and government services	This skill-type category includes a range of occupations that are concerned with law, teaching, counselling, conducting social science research, developing government policy, and administering government and other programs.
Occupations in art, culture, recreation, and sport	This skill-type category includes professional and technical occupations related to art and culture, including the performing arts, film and video, broadcasting, journalism, writing, creative design, libraries, and museums. It also includes occupations in recreation and sport.
Sales and service occupations	This skill-type category contains sales occupations, personal and protective service occupations, and occupations related to the hospitality and tourism industries.
Trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations	This skill-type category includes construction and mechanical trades, trades supervisors and contractors, and transportation and heavy equipment operators. These occupations are found in a wide range of industrial sectors, with many occurring in the construction and transportation industries.
Natural resources, agriculture, and related production occupations	This category contains supervisory and equipment operation occupations in the natural resource-based sectors of mining, oil and gas production, forestry and logging, agriculture, horticulture, and fishing. Most occupations in this category are industry-specific and do not occur outside of the primary industries.
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	This category contains supervisory and production occupations in manufacturing, processing, and utilities.

Note: Five-digit occupations from the occupational scenarios were aggregated up to the one-digit occupation type from the 2021 National Occupation Classification system.

Sources: Signal49 Research; 2021 National Occupation Classification system.



Appendix B

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