



## IS THERE 'MASS MIGRATION' IN CANADA?

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Immigration in Canada has been a topic of great debate in recent years. Canadian public opinion polls have raised problematic issues around immigration and the increasing diversity of the Canadian population. Some feel that Canada accepts far too many immigrants from diverse backgrounds, too many refugees from crisis-ridden parts of the world and allows large numbers of asylum seekers from the United States.

Do we have so-called 'Mass Migration' in Canada? No. Canada is one of the few countries in the world with a well-planned and managed immigration program. Canada's immigration program is designed to meet its economic, social, and humanitarian responsibilities. In the global competition for talent, developing countries – mainly non-European countries – have an advantage due to their higher population growth and supply of highly skilled labour.

Canada needs immigration to ensure its demographic growth and to bridge the gaps in the labour market for skilled labour. Globalization requires a highly skilled workforce and promoting the entry of skilled migrants and supporting their integration is key to ensuring that there are no gaps in the labour force (OECD, 2019)

Immigration is needed to offset the generally low fertility rates in the country and the ageing Canadian born population (Statistics Canada, 2018). Immigration in Canada is under federal jurisdiction. Canadian immigration is guided by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of 2002, which is based on the Immigration Act of 1976, and considered to be the cornerstone of present-day immigration policy (Government of Canada, 2019). A point system, which screens potential applicants based on characteristics such as education and training, personal qualities, demand for the individual's occupation in Canada, occupational skill, knowledge of English or French, and arranged employment was introduced for non-discriminatory selection of immigrants to Canada.

The Act of 1976 required the Minister of Immigration to present 'Annual Immigration Plans' to parliament after mandatory consultations with provincial governments and the private and voluntary sectors. As a result of this, the federal government entered into agreements with provincial governments in relation to immigration. The most extensive of these was the Canada-Quebec Accord of 1991, according to which Quebec is responsible for selecting its immigrants; however, once they become residents, they have all the rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (George, 2017).

Immigrants are admitted to this country under three distinct categories: Economic Class; Family Class; and Protected Persons, Refugees, Humanitarian and Compassionate (H&C). Over the years, the number of immigrants admitted in each of these categories has changed mainly on the basis of the evolving needs of the labour market, with economic immigrants in recent decades consistently representing the majority of immigrants (see Table 1.) (IRCC, 2013; IRCC, 2014; IRCC, 2015; IRCC, 2016a; IRCC, 2016b; IRCC, 2017; IRCC, 2019).

	Economic	Family	Refugees, Humanitarian & Compassionate, Protected Persons, and Other	Total
2002	137,863 (60%)	62,292 (27%)	28,893 (13%)	229,048
2003	121,047 (55%)	65,121 (29%)	35,181 (16%)	221,349
2004	133,747 (57%)	62,275 (26%)	39,802 (17%)	235,824
2005	156,312 (60%)	63,374 (24%)	42,555 (16%)	262,241
2006	138,250 (55%)	70,517 (28%)	42,875 (17%)	251,642
2007	131,245 (55%)	66,242 (28%)	39,267 (17%)	236,754
2008	149,071 (60%)	65,582 (27%)	32,595 (13%)	247,248
2009	153,491 (61%)	65,204 (26%)	33,477 (13%)	252,172
2010	186,913 (67%)	60,220 (21%)	33,548 (12%)	280,681
2011	156,121 (63%)	56,446 (23%)	36,181 (15%)	248,748
2012	160,819 (62%)	65,008 (25%)	32,059 (12%)	257,887
2013	148,181 (57%)	81,831 (32%)	28,941 (11%)	258,953
2014	165,089 (63%)	66,661 (26%)	28,654 (11%)	260,404
2015	170,384 (63%)	65,490 (24%)	35,971 (13%)	271,845
2016	155,994 (53%)	78,004 (26%)	62,348 (21%)	296,346
2017	159,262 (56%)	82,470 (29%)	44,747 (16%)	286,479

**Table 1. Breakdown of permanent resident admissions by immigration category (2002-2017)**

Currently, the Immigrant, Refugee, and Citizenship (IRCC, formerly Citizenship and Immigration Canada) select the economic class for their ability to fill the gaps in the labour market and to contribute to the growth of Canadian economy which includes skilled workers, business investors, provincial and territorial nominees, and live-in caregivers. The changes in 2015 moved permanent residency in Canada toward a new structure called ‘Express Entry’ based on Canada’s economic need.

Refugees to Canada can be either sponsored refugees (by government or private sponsors) or asylum seekers. Sponsored refugees (those brought to Canada) are entitled to all the rights of permanent residents. Asylum seekers (those who present themselves at a port of entry into Canada) are not granted the rights of a permanent resident. They have to go through an appeal process with the Immigration and Refugee Board, during which they are allowed or denied admission. Asylum seekers who are unable to provide sufficient identification documents are either deported or detained. The Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement limits the number of asylum seekers from the U.S. as the United States is considered to be a safe country for those who in need of protection.

For the first time, the Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced a three-year immigration plan in 2017, which was reviewed and updated in the fall of 2018. “The 2019-2021 plan renews the three-year time frame and is designed to contribute to an immigration system that strengthens the Canadian middle class through economic growth, supports diversity and helps build vibrant, dynamic and inclusive communities while maintaining border integrity to preserve the safety and security of Canadians” (IRCC, 2018). It is expected that in 2021 the new admissions (350,000) will be equal to roughly 1% of the Canadian population. Canada has a well thought out immigration system that will support Canada to remain competitive on a global scale for years to come.

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