

The Canadian Immigration System: An Overview



Workshop on German and European
Migration and Immigration Policy from
a Transatlantic Perspective:
Challenge for the 21st Century

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Outline of Presentation: The Canadian Immigration System

- History of Canada's Immigration Policy - Where is it headed?
- Immigration in Canada Today: A General Picture
 - Immigration levels
 - Regions of origin
 - Types of immigrants
 - Where immigrants settle
- Policy Challenge: Immigrant's skills and credentials are not utilized

History of Canada's Immigration Policy:



Canada's immigration policy has not always been an open door, it is best summarized in eight periods

Period One: 1867 –1913

- Immigration part of a general set of national policies
- Main goals
 - securing farmers, farm workers and female domestics
 - populate, farm and settle the Canadian West
- Search for farmers was concentrated in Britain, the U.S. and Northwestern Europe
- Demand for labour high, source countries begin to include Eastern and Central Europe
- Head tax on Chinese immigrants in West doubled, to \$100
 - tax increased again to \$500, then immigration outlawed in 1923

Period Two: 1919 – 1929

- 1919: Immigration Act revised
 - literacy test for all immigrants
 - government may limit the numbers of immigrants
 - word ‘nationality’ added to ‘race’ to define the origin of immigrants.
- First official division of source countries into preferred and non-preferred groups
 - preferred countries included Britain, the US, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, Australia and New Zealand
 - applicants from northern and western Europe were treated similarly; those from eastern, southern and central Europe faced stricter regulations.
- Formal acknowledgement of “short-term absorptive capacity”

Period Three: 1930s and 1940s

- 1931: Canadian unemployment rate over 11%
 - Effectively ended six decades of active immigrant recruitment
 - Door closed to most newcomers except those from Britain and the US.
- Family reunification remained a priority; immediate family members admitted into the country

Period Four: 1946 – 1962

- Two main events: large influx of displaced persons from Europe, establishment of clear ethnic and economic goals for immigration policy
- 1947: Prime Minister Mackenzie King stated that immigration had purpose of population growth and improved Canadian standard of living
 - immigration should not change the basic character of the Canadian population
- 1952: New Immigration Act allows refusal of admission on the grounds of nationality, ethnic group, geographical area of origin, peculiar customs, habits and modes of life, unsuitability with regard to the climate, probable inability to become readily assimilated, etc.

Period Five: 1962 – 1973

- 1962: Canada abandoned its all white racist immigration policy
 - Admission to be based on individual personal characteristics; not nationality
- 1967: Point system created to facilitate and encourage the flow of skilled migrants
- Family class was still prioritized
- Additional immigration posts were opened in third world areas; resulting shift in region of immigrant origin

Period Five: 1962 – 1973

- In the 1950s, 84.6% of immigrants were European by birth
- By the mid 1980s immigrants born in Europe slipped to 28.6 %
- Now it is about 15%

Source Region (2005)	
Africa and the Middle East	18.8%
Asia and Pacific	52.6%
South and Central America	9.4%
United States	3.5%
Europe and the United Kingdom	15.6%
Source area/category not stated	0.04%

Period Six: 1974 – 1985

- A period of big swings in the business cycle; immigration inflows were adjusted accordingly.
- 1976: New Immigration Act defines the 3 main priorities of the immigration policy:
 - Priority 1: family reunification
 - Priority 2: humanitarian concerns
 - Priority 3: promotion of Canada's economic, social, demographic and cultural goals

These goals/priorities still form the core of our immigration policy

Period Seven: 1986 – 1993

- 1985: Report to Parliament on future immigration levels
 - fertility in Canada had fallen below replacement levels
 - economic component of the inflow should be increased but not at the expense of social and humanitarian streams
- 1992: Family class was reduced; government committed to stable inflows of about 1% of the current population
- 1993: Size of the inflow increased to 250,000 in spite of poor labour market – a major break from the absorptive capacity policy

Period Eight: 1993 –

- The switch to long term goals and the desire to increase the numbers of skilled workers continued through the 1990s
- 2002: 1976 Immigration Act replaced
 - A few changes to the skilled workers category in order to attract younger bilingual and educated workers
 - More points to applicants with a trade certificate or a second degree; more points for language (French and English); fewer points for experience with greater weight on first two years of experience; and changes in age factor
 - Common-law partner in the family category
 - More powers of detention
 - Undocumented protected persons category eliminated

Immigration in Canada Today: A General Picture

Three admissible categories

- Family class: spouse, common-law partner, dependent child and parents
- Convention refugees and persons in need of protection class
- Economic class: skilled workers, entrepreneurs, investors and self-employed

Selection Grid for Economic Immigrants (Points)	
Factor One: Education	Maximum 25
Factor Two: Official Languages	Maximum 24
1st Official Language	Maximum 16
2nd Official Language	Maximum 8
Factor Three: Experience	Maximum 21
Factor Four: Age	Maximum 10
Factor Five: Arranged Employment In Canada	Maximum 10
Factor Six: Adaptability	Maximum 10
Total	Maximum 100
Pass Mark	67

Selection Factor: Adaptability

Factor Six: Adaptability	Maximum 10 points
Spouse's or common-law partner's education	3 - 5
Minimum one year full-time authorized work in Canada	5
Minimum two years full-time authorized post-secondary study in Canada	5
Have received points under the Arranged Employment in Canada factor	5
Family relationship in Canada	5

Canadian Immigration in 2005: By Admissible Category

Canadian Immigration in 2005	
Economic	56.1%
Family	28.5%
Refugee	12.8%
Other	2.6%
Total number of immigrants	262,157 (100%)

Canadian Immigration in 2005: Source Country

SOURCE COUNTRIES	Number of immigrants 2005
China	42,291
India	33,146
Philippines	17,525
Pakistan	13,576
United States	9,262
Columbia	6,031
United Kingdom	5,865
South Korea	5,819
Iran	5,502
France	5,430
Romania	4,964
Sri Lanka	4,690
Russia	3,607
Taiwan	3,092
Hong Kong	1,784
Yugoslavia (former)	272
Top 10 source countries	144,447
Other	117,789
Total	262,236

Where do Permanent Residents settle in Canada?

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	2005	
Nova Scotia	1,929	0.7%
Other Atlantic provinces*	1,918	0.7%
Quebec	43,308	16.5%
Ontario	140,533	53.6%
Manitoba	8,097	3.1%
Saskatchewan	2,106	0.8%
Alberta	19,399	7.4%
British Columbia	44,767	17.1%
Territories**	160	0.06%
Province or territory not stated	19	> 0.001%
Total	262,236	

* Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island

** Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut

The Canadian Constitution, Immigration and Quebec

- Immigration is a concurrent power between the federal and the provincial levels of government - for much of our history the federal government dominated this policy area
- In the 1960's, provinces, especially Quebec, came to feel that authority in this area could be useful
 - Quebec is the province most deeply involved in immigration affairs
- 1991: Canada-Quebec Accord gave full responsibility for the selection of its economic immigrants to Quebec
 - Quebec has also the full responsibility for reception, linguistic, cultural and integration services as well as economic integration services

Policy Challenge: Immigrants' Skills Are Underutilized

- Immigrants tend to start at a significant earnings disadvantage,
 - In 1980, the income of male immigrants represented 89% of the income of workers born in Canada
 - In 2000, the income of immigrants fell to 77% relative to the income of workers born in Canada
- Unemployment rate shows the same trend
 - In 1981, the unemployment rate of immigrants (7.1%) was lower than the unemployment rate of Canadians (7.9%)
 - 20 years later, the unemployment rate of immigrants is 12.7% compare to 7.4% for workers born in Canada
- The economic condition of newcomers in the country has worsened; the immigrants who are most affected belong to racial minorities
- Annual cost of this problem: \$2 billion

Policy Challenge: Immigrants' Skills Are Underutilized

- Principal cause: the non-recognition of foreign education and foreign experience
- Canadian workers are increasingly educated, employers have access to a qualified workforce and prefer to hire Canadian-educated workers with domestic experience
- Professional associations are often accused of placing too many barriers in front of otherwise qualified immigrants
 - Even with a work authorization given by a professional association, there is still an earnings gap of 15% between newcomers and the Canadian-born – limited access to senior/management positions
- The earnings gap for workers outside the knowledge economy (mostly regulated by professional association) represents a 30% difference
- Most newcomers will not be part of the knowledge economy

Potential Solutions

- The Canadian government has recently announced that it will increase immigration – yet, most of our newcomers today are visible minorities
- To help mitigate possible social tensions, governments (federal, provincial and municipal) have a role to play in establishing coherent policy
- Some potential initiatives include:
 - Better sources of information for immigrants, before and after arrival
 - Bridge-training programs to “top-up” immigrants’ skills or fill in the gaps
 - Subsidized workplace internship and mentoring programs
 - More support for credential assessment services to improve labour market effectiveness
 - Improved public awareness of the problems faced by skilled immigrants in integrating into the Canadian labour market and the consequences for Canadian society