Welcome Home: Immigration Trends in the Rainy River District

Commentary | September 2022

By: Karly Mabee and Mercedes Labelle

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Our main offices:

- Thunder Bay is on Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg and Fort William First Nation.

- Sudbury is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg as well as Wahnapitae First Nation.

- Kirkland Lake is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of Cree, Ojibway, and Algonquin Peoples.

- All are home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous people have to these territories. We recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening these communities, the province and the country as a whole.

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About the Authors

Karly Mabee

Karly Mabee recently graduated with her Master of Applied Politics after completing an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Leadership at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. During her studies Karly took a particular interest in data analysis, federalism, and environmental policy. During her Masters, Karly had the opportunity to work on a Northern Research Project with the Ontario Public School Board Association to conduct research and analysis regarding the challenges and opportunities for education delivery in Northern Ontario. This introduction to Northern Ontario inspired Karly to learn more and contribute further to the development of equitable policy in the North. In her free time Karly enjoys camping, hiking, and other outdoor activities.

Mercedes Labelle

Mercedes Labelle was born in Bilbao, Spain, and lived in the United States before moving to North Bay, Ontario. Mercedes attended McGill University, earning her B.A. in Political Science and Urban Systems and graduating in 2020. Through her role at NPI, Mercedes has worked on various projects related to population growth, demographics, and migration. In her free time, Mercedes enjoys running, hiking, and listening to podcasts. Mercedes is a Senior Policy Analyst at NPI and is located in Sudbury, Ontario.

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Several data sources were utilized in this report such as the Community Data Program. NPI is the data consortium lead for Northern Ontario under the name "Northern Ontario Data Consortium".

FedNor

NPI is pleased to have the support of FedNor for this important work to assess the impact of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot in Northern Ontario.

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Executive Summary

Ontario's northern, western, and central regions are facing labour shortages, as a result of an aging population, high levels of youth out-migration, and low fertility rates. The Rainy River District is no stranger to this issue, as it has experienced high average job vacancy rates of up to 33 per cent in some occupations. To combat the labour market impacts, the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) program has been implemented across all five of Northern Ontario's largest cities. The RNIP aims to spread the benefits of economic immigration to small communities with demonstrated need, by creating a path to permanent residence for skilled foreign workers who want to work and live in one of the participating communities.

To assess the effectiveness of the RNIP program in the Rainy River District, baseline immigration trends are needed to accurately identify which occupations are in need of economic stimulation, and which labour market skills are most beneficial to immigrant success in the community. If admission criteria is not aligned with community-based need, then labour market shortages will only continue to be exacerbated. Which is why evidence-based decision making is crucial to adequately plan for labour supply, demand for housing, and settlement service capacity.

The Rainy River District has experienced a decrease in immigration since 2010 with a decrease of approximately 17 per cent. Most immigrants have been accepted under the sponsored family class. The number of economic immigrants that did settle in the Rainy River District most frequently intended the National Occupation Codes (NOC) of registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses, managers in agriculture, and carpenters. Although these are the occupations immigrants were most frequently qualified for, the occupation vacancy rates suggest that there is the greatest need for administrative services managers, managers in health care, legislators and senior management, and security guards and related security service occupations to name a few. Given that the Rainy River District does not have a community participating in RNIP, there are no reported intended NOCs that the district was trying to attract.

This analysis finds that four recommendations are to be considered for the effective measurement of RNIP success.

1. Ongoing annual monitoring and assessment of community-level immigration tends;

2. Expanded analysis to include secondary and domestic migrants;

3. Strengthening the alignment between labour market shortages, targeted occupations, postsecondary institutional fields of study, and immigrant-intended occupations to maximize economic outcomes;

4. Undertaking welcoming community initiatives to welcome, attract, and retain immigrants and the existing population.

Introduction

Population trends in many of Ontario's northern, western, and central regions are characterized by high levels of youth out-migration and low fertility rates. A significant portion of the population is about to age out of the core working-age and labour shortages will emerge. There will not be an adequate supply of young workers to fill these gaps.

Without an adequate influx of immigrants, coupled with integration of the current domestic population into the labour market, shortages will continue to emerge (Ross 2020, 9). To combat this trend and engage in evidence-based decision making that will positively impact Northern Ontario communities, there must be a baseline understanding of current and future immigration demographic characteristics. Using the available data, groups—such as workforce planning boards, chambers, municipalities, employers, and immigration partners—can strategically plan for and fill labour shortages that will emerge.

The purpose of these commentaries is to establish baseline assessments of immigration trends in the 11 Census Divisions in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions— Algoma, Cochrane, Greater Sudbury, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and Timiskaming. These assessments can then be used to evaluate immigration pilot programs such as the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP), and potential future newcomer programs

The Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) is a community-driven program that is increasing immigration to northern and rural communities by creating a path to permanent residence for foreign skilled workers (Canada 2020c). The five Northern Ontario cities participating in the pilot are also its largest cities—North Bay, Greater Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay. There are six other communities outside Ontario participating in the pilot.

The data collected can be used to evaluate current federal initiatives and measure how communities in Northern Ontario are doing at attracting and retaining immigrants. It is crucial to have this information, identify the gaps, and pinpoint who is collecting that data. Additionally, it is important for the data to be collected and reported at the community level. With a more complete picture of immigration trends in Northern Ontario, communities can be compared against each other to assess the effectiveness of immigration, attraction, retention, and successes. Also, communities can self-assess by monitoring their progress, successes, and areas for improvement. Having this baseline immigration assessment will help communities continuously know which immigrants to target and attract to their communities.

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Methodology

Ideally, an immigration trend analysis would be done annually with a quick turnaround of results so communities could measure the impact of their decisions soon after they are made. Additionally, having baseline data provides a benchmark for assessing progress, or lack thereof, when compared with future reports. But there are limitations in attempting to annually update immigration trends at the community level.

The data sources used for this analysis include Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) admission data; the 2016 Census (and subsequent target group profiles obtained from the Community Data Program); Taxfiler Migration Estimates; Emsi Economic Modeling; and the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB). Notably, the data obtained from the census are updated once every five years (as per the frequency of release) and at the time of publishing, details of citizenship and immigration had not been released. The IMDB has an approximate two-year lag for data to be released and Taxfiler data have a one-year lag. IRCC does have monthly updates to its admission data, but the process for obtaining the data at the community level takes up to six months, and high levels of data suppression are present when requesting data at the community level. Finally, Emsi has economic modelling data updated monthly.

It is important to look at immigration trends in each community over time to see how they evolve, especially when evaluating the impact of a pilot program. But doing so with community-level data, specifically IRCC admission data, reveal that many years have few observations to report as data are suppressed for privacy reasons (see Appendix A).

Additionally, certain datasets are of all immigrants who arrived before 1981, while others are based on those who arrived before 1990. This creates a large group of immigrants that overshadows more recent inflows, which is specifically present when looking at census data. Thus, recent data from post-2000 can provide a more accurate picture of immigration trends and their evolution over time.

Analyzing change over time is particularly difficult in the case of non-permanent residents. The data available are largely organized by year of immigration and, technically speaking, non-permanent residents are not 'official' (i.e. landed) immigrants, according to Statistics Canada datasets (notably the census). Non-permanent residents refer to people from another country who had a work or study permit, or who were refugee claimants at the time of the census and had family members living with them in Canada.

Despite limitations surrounding the frequency of data updates, high levels of suppression, and obtaining this data at the community level, a thorough overview of immigration trends in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions was produced.

Finally, it is important to note the impact COVID-19 has had on Canadian immigration flows, labour market, industries, and so on. This analysis is primarily focused on data prior to the pandemic as that is what was available at the time of writing. To assess the impact of immigration programs in Northern Ontario, we need to know the pre-COVID picture of immigration in the regions.

Theme and Indicator Selection

Many of the indicators selected were aligned with pre-existing government immigration programs. For example, the Federal Skilled Worker (Express Entry) Program provides permanent residence to foreign skilled workers. There are minimum education, language, and work experience requirements. Applications are then further assessed based on age, education, work experience, job offers, official language skills, and adaptability (Canada 2020a).

The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) looks at an applicant's skills, experience, and education, specifically in-demand skills, language skills, and status as a recent Ontario graduate (Ontario 2019). The RNIP also creates a path to permanent residency for foreign skilled workers with work and educational experience in specific occupations (Canada 2020c).

As mentioned previously, limitations were present surrounding data availability. Ultimately, for the purpose of our analysis, eight themes were identified: economic outcomes, education, housing, immigrant characteristics,[2] immigration system, income, retention, and settlement service-providing organizations (SPOs).

Limitations

Economic outcomes, such as income and involvement in the labour market, typically differ depending on the immigration stream the immigrant followed. In terms of labour force participation rates and employment rates among all newcomers, principal applicants in the Economic stream fare best in the Canadian labour market. In fact, they perform better in these metrics than the Canadian-born population (de Chardon 2019, 6). Additionally, unemployment rates among principal applicants in the Economic stream are on par with Canadian-born citizens. Immigrants arriving under the Resettled Refugees and Protected Persons stream as well as the Sponsored Family stream usually fare worse.

Although these distinctions are important to note, it was not possible to obtain community-level data separated by immigration stream and period of admission for all indicators (see Appendix C). When possible, the immigration streams were divided; when not possible, total immigration numbers were assessed. Addressing these gaps is crucial in order to collect specific data to ensure immigrants are not treated as a homogenous group. When evaluating a work experience program that will potentially directly impact Economic migrants, it would be useful to have stream-specific data to better assess program impacts.

Analysis of immigration trends must continue through the years, especially when assessing a pilot program. A detailed methodology is needed to ensure that the trend analysis can be replicated in the future. Immigration trends should continue to be tracked throughout Ontario's northern, western, and central regions before, during, and after the end of the RNIP and other immigration initiatives.

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2 Service Usage data were only available for the Census Divisions (CDs) of Algoma, Greater Sudbury, Nipissing, and Thunder Bay.

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Immigrant Characteristics

The 2016 Census counted 1,005 immigrants in Rainy River. Immigrant, as defined by Statistics Canada, refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident (Statistics Canada, 2021a). Thus, these figures do not include temporary residents, such as study and/or work permit holders. Most immigrants in Rainy River immigrated before 1991 (780 immigrants)—the earliest data available. Since 1991, the city experienced the highest rate of immigration between 2006 and 2010, with levels rising then remaining relatively stagnant since 2001. Additionally, most immigrants are Sponsored Family (235), followed by Economic immigrants (140), and Refugees and Protected Persons (50). Since 2001, most immigrants to Rainy River have a university degree or diploma. Temporary residents are included in the 'non-permanent resident' category, of which there were 105 in Rainy River in 2016. Longitudinal data on non-permanent resident cohorts are not available from Statistics Canada. Non-permanent residents have no official 'period of landing' as they are not landed immigrants.

Figure 1: Immigrants by period of immigration in the Rainy River CD, 1991-2016
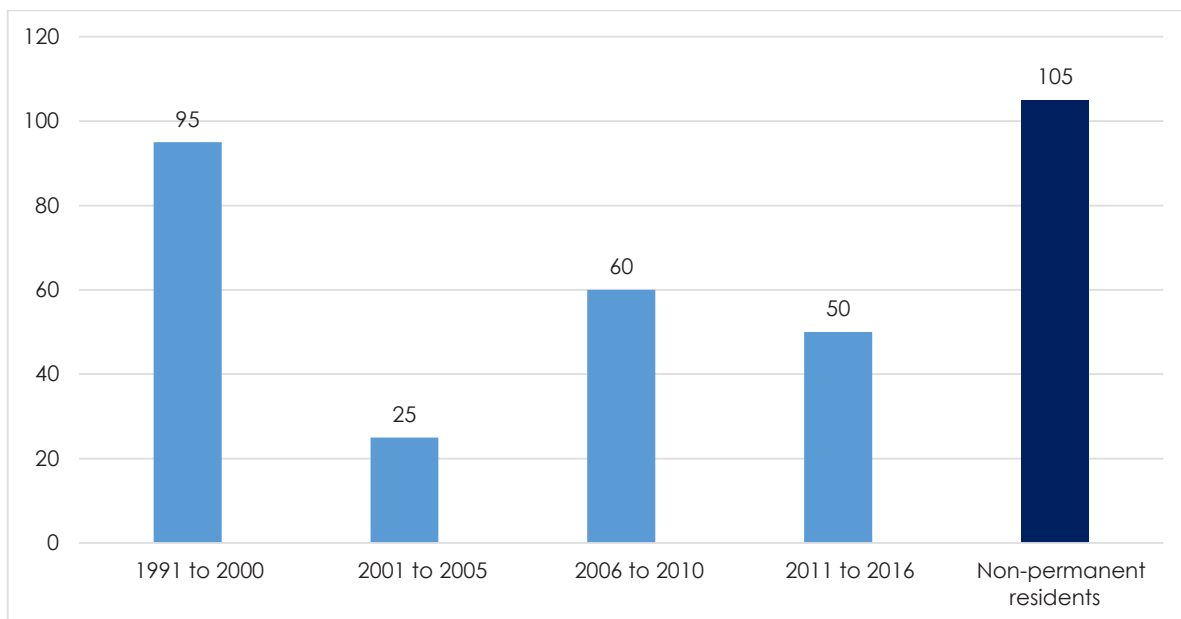
Source: Author's calculations, Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of the Population, Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001.

To capture the effect of non-permanent (temporary) residents in Rainy River, Taxfiler Migration Estimates can be used. Taxfiler data use tax records to estimate migration patterns. Taxfiler Migration Estimates of international in-migrants include those who file taxes and had a previous address (the year before) in a location outside Canada (Canada, 2021a).

Based on the Taxfiler definition of international in-migrants, Rainy River saw an increase in the past five years.[2] In the 2014-2015 tax year, there were seven international in-migrants. That number fluctuated over the years, reaching 48 in the 2017-2018 tax year, and falling again to 33 in the 2018-2019 tax year. Additionally, that same year, the female-male ratio of international in-migrants was imbalanced, with 61 per cent being male.

Most permanent residents who landed in Rainy River between 1998 and 2019 have citizenship from the United States of America. Other common countries of citizenship for landed immigrants include Switzerland, the Philippines, Iraq, and China. The number of United States citizens remained constant. Citizens from other countries have had less predictable migration patterns, with sporadic increases.

The largest age group at landing in Rainy River was 25 to 44.[3] The second largest group was 0 to 17, perhaps indicating the presence of family immigration. The smallest age group at landing was consistently those over 65.

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2 The last five years data are available – 2014 to 2019.
3 Age groupings done by IRCC are not uniform in age range. Age ranges are 0-17, 18-24, 25-44, 45-65, and 65+. Thus, 18-24 are underrepresented because of category groupings. The two groupings that have the largest age range are 25-44 and 45-65, which might overrepresent these categories in the data.

Figure 2: In-migrant age at landing by year in the Rainy River District, 2014-2019
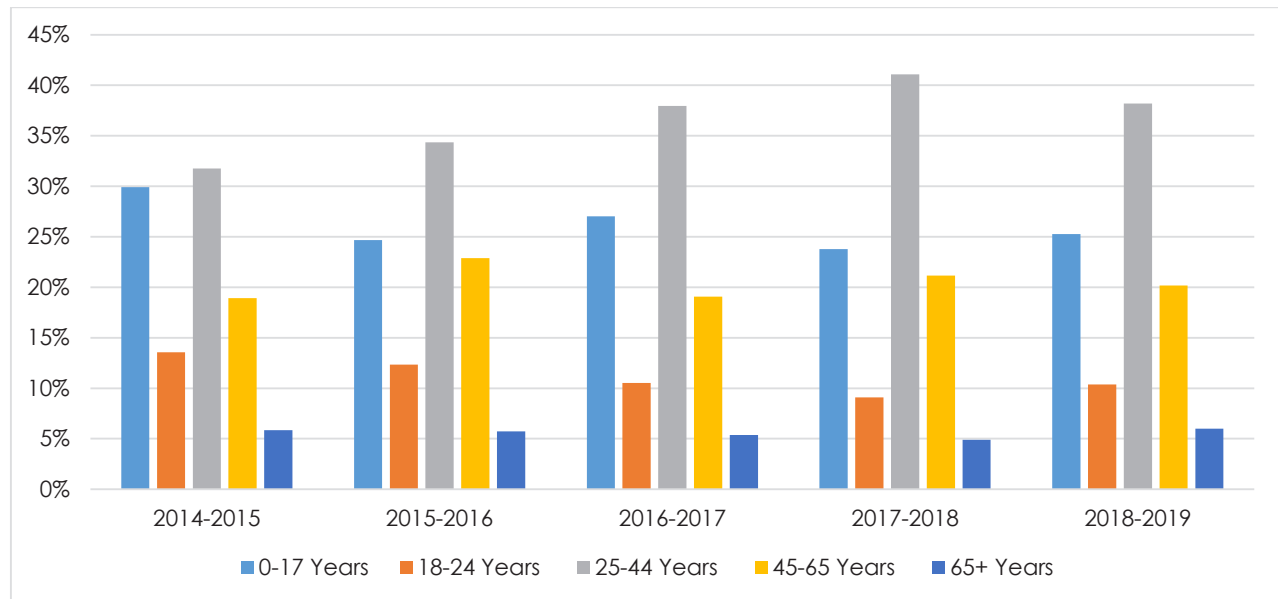
Source: Author's calculations, MIG: Migration Estimates from Taxfiler (T1FF), Table B: By Age Group, 2014-2019.

Language

Among permanent residents in Rainy River, the most prevalent language spoken is English,[4] perhaps due to the points allotted to English speakers in the federal Express Entry immigration program. Additionally, English is the primary language spoken in the United States—the most common country of citizenship for permanent residents. In fact, English is the most common language spoken by permanent residents in Northern Ontario's 11 districts and five largest cities. Other common languages include German, Chaldean, Tagalog, and Arabic.[5]

Notably, 10 Chaldean speakers gained permanent residence in Rainy River in 2017;[6] for all other years, there were no Chaldean speakers. The number of English-speaking permanent residents remained mostly consistent since 1998.

Stream

Between 2015 and 2019,[7] the number of permanent residents to Rainy River increased, starting at 10 in 2015, and plateauing at 25 from 2017 to 2019. Between 2015 and 2019, the most common immigration stream in Rainy River was Sponsored Family, with 50 people gaining permanent residence through that stream. The second most common stream in the past five years was Economic (15).

Identical to trends seen in the past five years, between 1998 and 2019, the most common immigration stream for permanent residents in the Rainy River District was Sponsored Family, followed by Economic, Resettled Refugees and Protected Persons, and 'All Other Immigration'. Sponsored Family and Economic immigrants predominantly know English; very few know any French.

In 2008, the number of Economic immigrants coming to Rainy River peaked at 15. The number of Sponsored Family immigrants had mostly remained consistent year over year since 1998, with six different years attracting 15 Sponsored Family immigrants—the highest number to date. The number of Resettled Refugees and Protected Persons peaked in 2016 at 10. The data were too limited to analyze the subcategory of immigrants between principal applicants and dependants.

4 Language spoken indicates an individual's mother tongue. Mother tongue is the native language of an individual upon entering Canada.
5 Tagalog is the basis of Filipino and is spoken in the Philippines.
6 Chaldean is a modern Eastern Aramaic or Syriac language that is now the language of a worldwide Assyrian diaspora.
7 The most recent years with full data available at time of writing. Captures data from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2019.

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Analysis

Characteristics such as age, education, and language spoken are weighted heavily in the various streams of the Express Entry application system. For example, higher levels of education, such as university degrees, are given more points in the program. Additionally, certain age groups, such as 18-24, are allotted more points, while other age groups (0-17) receive no points.

Despite French being an official language and French-speaking applicants being given points in the Express Entry system, French is not one of the common languages spoken among permanent residents in any of Northern Ontario's 11 districts or five largest cities. Perhaps French-speaking immigrants are not common within most Northern Ontario regions due to the benefits they receive if they locate in Quebec, such as prioritized credential recognition between France and Quebec (Quebec 2019). Additionally, the immigration target set by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada for French-speaking migrants to Canada (outside Quebec) is 4.4 per cent.
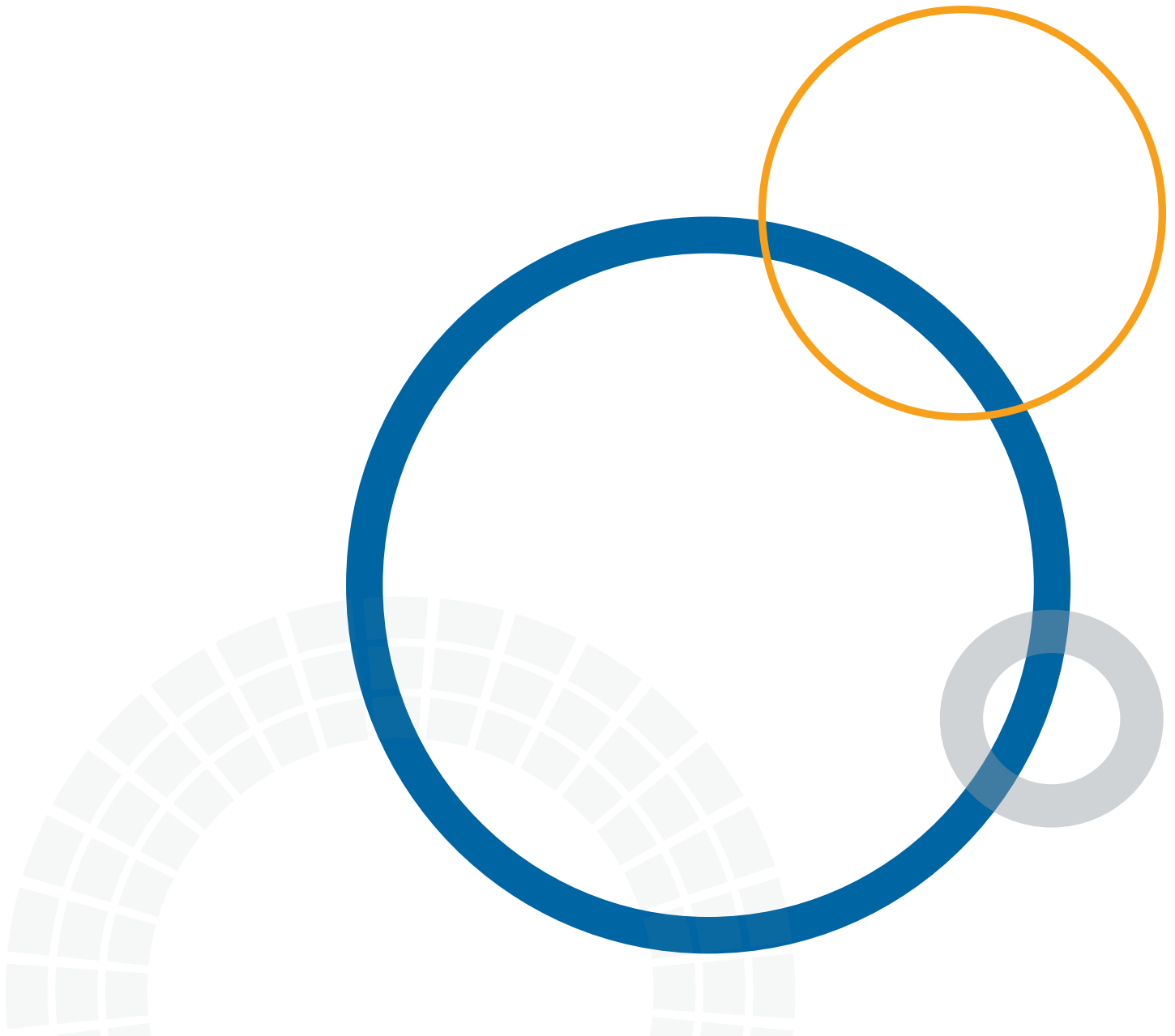
Economic Outcomes

Intended National Occupation Classifications (NOCs)

Measuring immigrants' intended occupations can help align labour supply with labour demand. To put it another way, strategically targeting immigrants with skills needed in the community, such as a specific labour shortage, can promote the vitality of the local labour force. National Occupation Classifications (NOCs) provide an organizational framework of occupations in the Canadian labour market.

Occupations are identified and grouped primarily based on the work usually performed, in other words, by the tasks, duties, and responsibilities of the occupation (Statistics Canada 2016).

In no particular order, the most frequent immigrant-intended NOCs in Rainy River between 1998 and 2019 were:

*   Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses

*   Managers in agriculture

*   Carpenters

It is worth noting that 'Other Intended Occupation' was the most selected NOC answer for every district in Ontario's northern and western regions. Thus, it is excluded from this analysis as to only include specific occupations.

Occupation Vacancy Rates

Occupation-specific vacancy rates[8] represent vacancies as a proportion of the total labour force for that occupation. Thus, vacancy rates can identify potential current labour market gaps.

The methodology for calculating vacancy rate mirrors that of the Northern Policy Institute's "Assessing Labour Market Shortages" series of reports on North Bay, Greater Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay (Ross, 2020). The series reflects trends from 2018, but this paper outlines updated calculations to reflect 2020 trends—the most recent full year with data available. A high job vacancy rate typically indicates a stronger labour market for job seekers, as it demonstrates that a higher proportion of the total labour market consists of vacant jobs needing to be filled (Lindzon, 2019).

The data used to calculate job vacancy rates were obtained from Emsi Economic Modellng, which were provided through a partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

According to Table 1, multiple management-related occupations appear to have the highest job vacancy rates (NOC Skill Level 0). Additionally, there were two Skill Level C occupations facing high vacancy rates:

*   Security guards and related security service occupations

*   Home care providers and educational support occupations

There was also one Skill Level A occupation category with a high vacancy rate, which is comprised of pharmacists, dietitians, and nutritionists and one Skill Level B occupation category with a high vacancy rate comprised of Office administrative assistants - general, legal, and medical. It should be noted that Rainy River had average job vacancy levels compared to other districts of similar size examined in Northern Ontario.

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8 The methodology the Northern Policy Institute uses to calculate vacancy rate is explained in the "Assessing Labour Market Shortages" paper series by Alex Ross (2020).

Table 1: Occupations with the highest average job vacancy rates, Rainy River District, 2020

NOC	Description	Total Labour Market 2020	Average Unique Job Postings 2020	Job Vacancy Rate
011	**Administrative services managers**	**50**	**17**	**32.91%**
065	Managers in customer and personal services, n.e.c.	16	4	24.63%
031	Managers in health care	29	7	24.33%
001	Legislators and senior management	34	7	20.88%
654	Security guards and related security service occupations	49	9	19.19%
071	Managers in construction and facility operation and maintenance	26	4	17.05%
073	Managers in transportation	18	3	16.77%
441	**Home care providers and educational support occupations**	**184**	**29**	**15.95%**
124	**Office administrative assistants - general, legal, and medical**	**156**	**23**	**14.70%**
313	Pharmacists, dietitians, and nutritionists	20	3	14.43%

Source: Author's calculations based on Emsi – economicmodeling.com.

Given that the Rainy River District does not have a community participating in the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP), there are no reported intended NOCs that the district is trying to attract. Though, it is beneficial to consider the average raw job vacancies to target occupations that have demonstrated active recruiting through job postings. The occupations bolded in Table 1 rank among the top ten highest job vacancy rates, and of those ten, three had the highest average job postings for 2020.

At first glance, vacancy rate might not seem indicative of immigrants' economic outcomes. Looked at in conjunction with intended occupations, vacancy rate can indicate if there is alignment between the occupations experiencing high vacancy rates and employment, unemployment, and participation rates among immigrants.

To attract immigrants to Rainy River, there should be an attempt to attract those with skills in the occupations with the highest vacancy rates or most positive LMIAs issued. Alignment of an immigrant's education, skills, and work experience, with in-demand occupations, can contribute to higher employment satisfaction, and thus, retention.

Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs)

When looking at the presence of work permit holders in a specific region, it is important to analyze the jobs they are filling. Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) are submitted by employers to gain approval, in most cases, to hire foreign workers. A positive LMIA will show that there is a labour shortage that cannot be filled by a Canadian worker or permanent resident, indicating a need for a foreign worker to fill the job (Canada, 2021d). It is worth noting that some foreign workers are exempt from needing a LMIA or work permit, such as those in the International Mobility Program.

For the lowest-skill and lowest-wage occupations in accommodation, food services, and retail trade sectors, LMIAs are only approved in regions that do not have high unemployment rates.

Reviewing positive and negative LMIAs is a way to measure, quantitatively, which occupations are experiencing labour shortages. LMIA information should be considered when identifying labour shortages in each community. Specifically, for the RNIP, communities select the occupations they will be 'targeting' each year.

In 2020, there was one occupation approved for LMIA in Rainy River, with one unique positive LMIA issued for 6211: Retail sales supervisors.

In most instances, an approved LMIA indicates that there is no Canadian talent available to fill the above position in Rainy River. As such, approved LMIA positions are a good indicator for decision makers of labour market gaps and occupations that could be targeted through the RNIP, post-secondary institutions, or through additional training and upskilling.

The Rainy River District has not had any denied LMIA applications between 2018 and 2020.

Denied LMIA applications do not necessarily indicate there is availability of Canadians to carry out the duties of the occupation. Instead, there are multiple reasons that contribute to whether an application is denied, including a company's experiences with the LMIA process (Canada, 2021b).

Between 2018 and 2020, there were a total of 19 LMIAs[9] approved in Rainy River. The occupations with the most approved positions were as follows:

Table 2: Occupations with most approved LMIAs in Rainy River, 2018-2020

NOC	Occupation	Skill Level	Approved Positions
3413	Nurse aides, orderlies, and patient service associates	C	8
6311	Food service supervisors	B	7
0631	Restaurant and food service managers	0	2
6211	Retail sales supervisors	B	1
6733	Janitors, caretakers, and building superintendents	D	1

Source: Open Data - Government of Canada, Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP): Positive Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) Employers List, multiple issues.

It should be noted that the positive LMIA issued in 2020 did not align with any of the occupations in Rainy River with the highest vacancy rates (Table 1). Additionally, the occupations in Rainy River with approved LMIAs between 2018 and 2020 did not align with the occupations that had the highest vacancy rates. With further alignment of in-demand occupations and vacancy rates, employers can better attract and retain (as permanent residents) immigrant employees to fill these gaps.
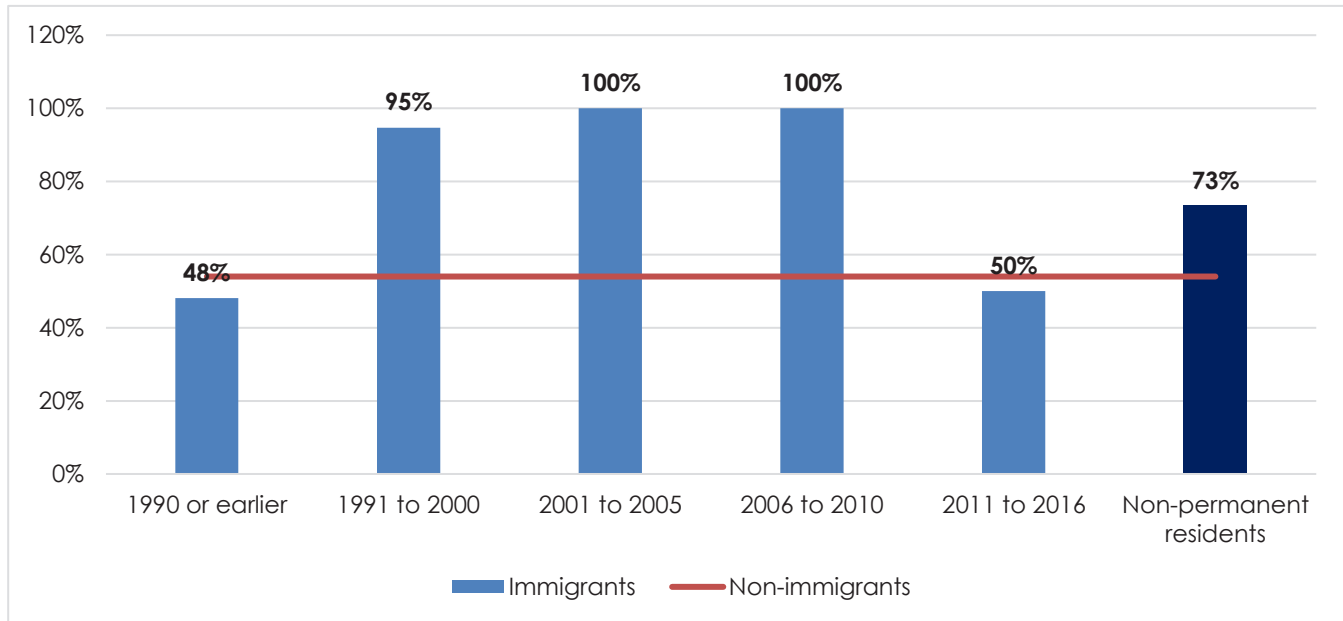
Employment/Unemployment/Participation

Given that only 335 immigrants arrived between 1991 and 2016, and 105 non-permanent residents arrived in 2016, the following numbers should be analyzed with caution, given the limited population size. Immigrants in Rainy River who immigrated before 1990, experienced lower employment rates than non-immigrants and non-permanent residents. Employment rates for immigrants who landed before 1990 are perhaps lower due to the age of these immigrants—many were perhaps aging out of the labour market. Established immigrants (1991 to 2010) in Rainy River had higher employment rates compared to recent immigrants and non-immigrants. For other cities in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions—notably North Bay, Timmins, and Kenora—recent immigrants also tended to have lower employment rates than more established immigrants.

Non-permanent residents in Rainy River had relatively high employment rates given that temporary residents may be in Canada with permits that have more work restrictions. For example, study permit holders who are enrolled full-time can, without a work permit, work on and off campus for up to 20 hours a week during school terms, which may make finding a job more difficult. Additionally, work permit holders can have either an open or closed work permit. Closed work permit holders are only able to work with the employer specified on their work permit, while open work permit holders can work for any eligible Canadian employer. These factors typically contribute to a higher rate of unemployment among non-permanent residents. However, this is not the case for the Rainy River District (Canada 2020d).

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9 Not all occupations are included in this table.

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Figure 3: Employment rates (%) in Rainy River by period of immigration, 2016
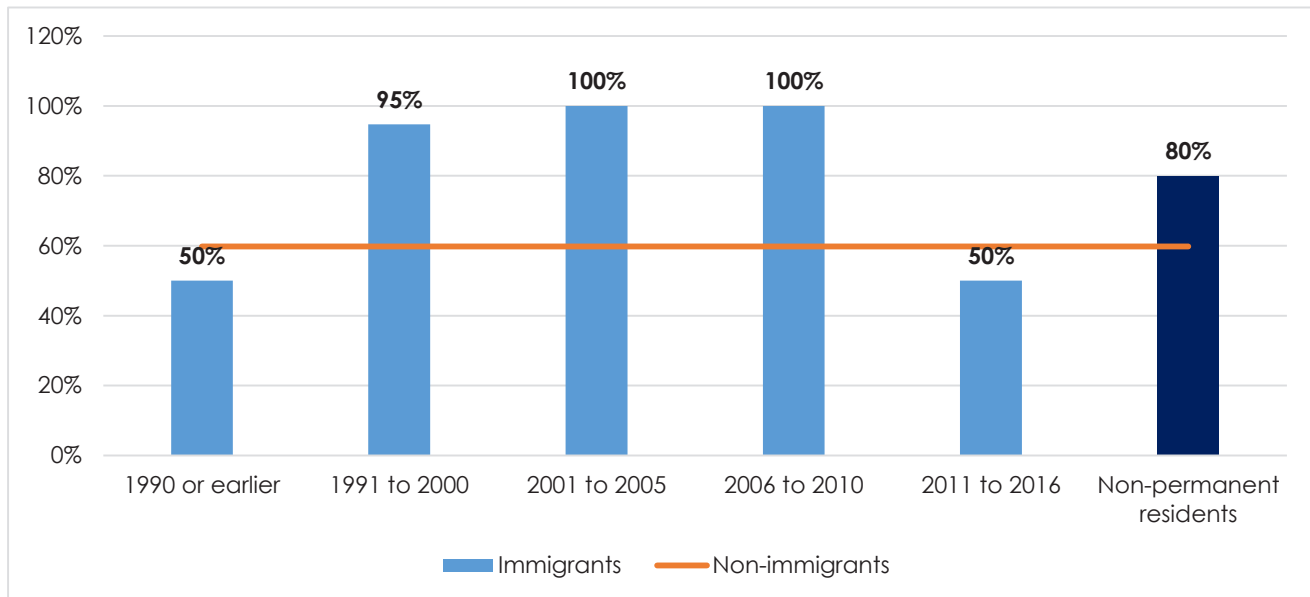

Source: Author's calculations; Community Data Program (CDP); Selected Language, Labour Force, Education, Income and Mobility Status Characteristics; Table EO2767-TBL7R.

Participation rate measures the total labour force, comprised of those who are employed and those unemployed, relative to the size of the working-age population. It is the share of the working-age population that is working or looking for work.

Measuring participation rate between immigrant cohorts quantifies the number of immigrants in each cohort actively participating in the labour force as employed or searching for employment.

Regions in Northern Ontario are facing an aging population, low birth rates, youth out-migration, and demographic shifts. Immigrant participation in the labour force is one way to maintain the current standard of living.

When discussing employment and unemployment, 'time since landing' is a large determinant in the measure of immigrants' labour market outcomes. For example, recent immigrants (defined above) face labour market hurdles that affect their integration into the labour market, such as lack of language proficiency, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, and inadequate familiarity with the Canadian labour market (Statistics Canada, 2003, 10). A high participation rate of immigrants in the workforce combined with a low unemployment rate indicates there are robust opportunities in the labour market.

Figure 4: Participation rate (%) in Rainy River by period of immigration, 2016

Recent immigrants in Rainy River had a lower participation rate than the more established immigrant cohorts that landed between 1991 and 2010. In fact, the recent immigrant participation rate was lower than the participation rate for non-immigrants. Even among non-permanent residents (temporary residents such as work or study permit holders), the labour market participation rates were higher than the non-immigrant population. That said, non-permanent residents had a lower participation rate than the other immigrant cohorts, except for those that landed in 1990 or earlier and 2011 to 2016.

Discussion

The federal Express Entry program prioritizes immigrants with certain jobs or NOCs. All federal Express Entry streams require work experience in NOCs 0, A, or B, which are jobs in management and/or requiring university or college credentials. Thus, the Express Entry program caters to high-skilled workers.

As seen with the Rainy River District's vacancy rates, the high-skilled workers category was not the only one in which there were labour market shortages. There was also a demand for NOC Skill Level C workers. Skill Level C includes intermediate jobs that usually call for high school and/or job-specific training such as transport truck drivers, home support workers and housekeepers (Canada 2020b).

In theory, communities targeting immigrants with specific occupational experience that aligns with their current labour market shortages should result in an increase in employment rates for recent immigrants.

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Housing

Housing tenure refers to the financial arrangements under which someone has the right to live in a house or apartment. Looking at immigrants' housing tenure can help measure financial security, especially if the dwelling is owned (Haan 2012, 3). House ownership may also signify an immigrant household's commitment to their new community and society (ibid) which may be a sign of retention.

In Rainy River, recent immigrants are more likely to be renters than non-recent immigrants. Both recent immigrants and non-recent immigrants are more likely to be homeowners than renters.

Figure 5: Immigrant households in Rainy River by housing tenure (owners vs. renters), 2016
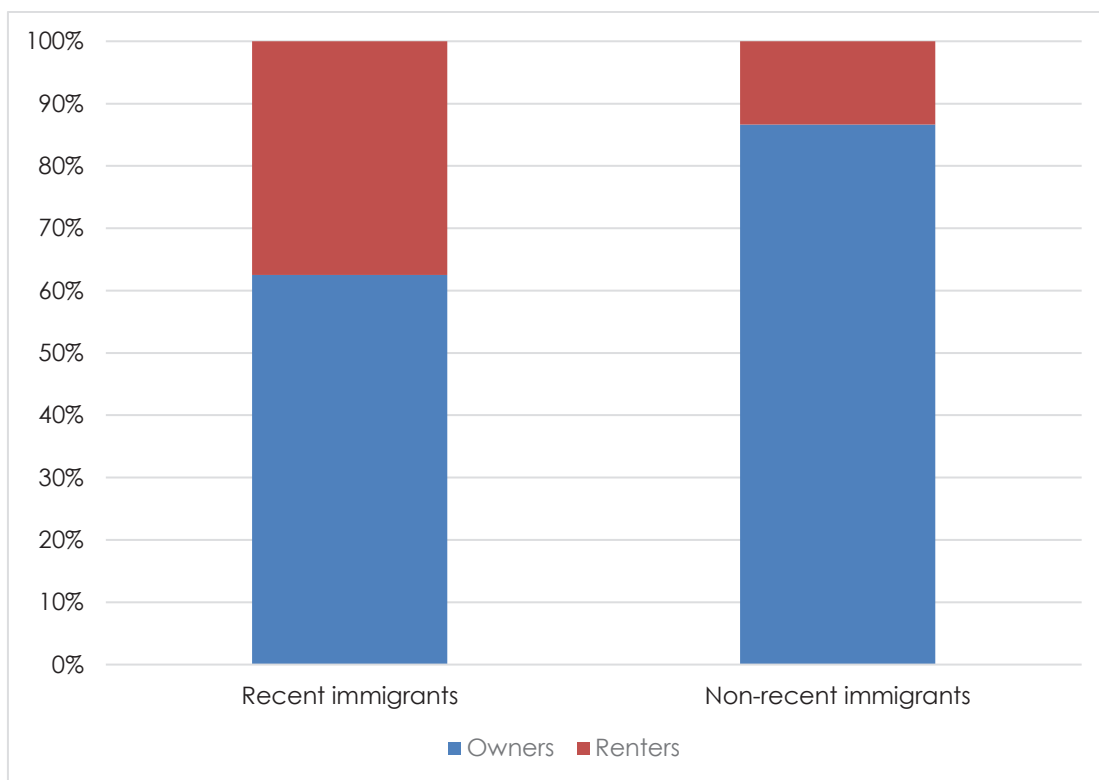
Source: Community Data Program (CDP), Target Group Profile of Recent Immigrant + Immigrant Population, Census 2016, retrieved August 5, 2021.

There are many factors that can influence housing tenure such as housing prices, discrimination, admission category, navigating the system, stable employment, access to credit, affordability/income, availability, and adequacy.

The distinction needed when looking at housing tenure is that between recent and non-recent immigrants. A recent immigrant refers to a person who obtained a landed immigrant or permanent resident status up to five years prior to a given census year. For the data used in this paper, a recent immigrant would be defined as someone who landed between 2011 and 2016. Non-recent immigrants landed before 2011.

Non-recent immigrants have had more time to settle into the community, find careers, and make connections. Recent immigrants, on the other hand, might not yet have stable careers—making it more difficult to qualify for a mortgage and/or build credit—community connections, or knowledge of the Canadian housing market.

Education

The most common field of study for immigrants in Rainy River was architecture, engineering, and related technologies. The second most common field of study was health and related fields. The third was business, management, and public administration.

Immigrants who studied in a high-skilled field such as health care, engineering, or architecture, were most prominent in Rainy River. The health and related fields of study aligned with one of the most intended occupations for immigrants to Rainy River between 1998 and 2019: Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses.

The District of Rainy River has three post-secondary institutions: Canadore College Fort Francis, and two campuses of Confederation College; Confederation College Lake of the Woods, and Confederation College Rainy River. Post-secondary institutions in the Rainy River District have had few to no international students. Confederation College Rainy River Campus had the only full-time registered international students, one in 2014-15 and another in 2015-16.

International students comprise an important pool of potential immigrants. They have recognized Canadian education credentials, knowledge of French or English, potentially Canadian work experience, familiarity with Canadian culture, and a connection to the community. For these reasons, international students are expected to integrate more quickly into the labour market and to society than other types of immigrants (Hagar 2019). This could be a potential area of growth for the Rainy River District.

Immigration System

Study Permit Holders

In the Census District of Rainy River, which houses Canadore College (Fort Francis), Confederation College (Lake of the Woods), and Confederation College (Rainy River), study permit holders between 1998 and 2019 were overwhelmingly citizens of the United States of America. This differentiates Rainy River from most of the other districts in Ontario. India was the most common country of citizenship for study permit holders in six of Northern Ontario's other 10 districts during this period. The limited number of study permit holders restricts the ability to analyze the data by year. Other common countries of citizenship for study permit holders include Germany, France, Australia, and Croatia.

Study permit holders who gained permanent residence in Rainy River between 1998 and 2019 did so equally through the Economic stream and Sponsored Family stream. There is insufficient data to identify the largest subcategory of permanent residents.

The discrepancy between the number of individuals who hold a study permit and the number of students at post-secondary institutions is due to a difference in definition by each data source. The number of international students at post-secondary institutions is based on full-time enrolment at institutions governed by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, not private institutions nor specific training schools. Study permit holders can study part-time or be enrolled at a private institution as per the definition from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, leading to a greater number of study permit holders than number of students at the post-secondary institutions noted above.

Work Permit Holders

An overwhelming number of work permit holders in Rainy River have citizenship in the United States of America. The United States is the most common citizenship held by immigrants for Northern Ontario's other 10 districts and five largest cities. Other common countries of citizenship include the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel.

Work permit holders who gained permanent residence in Rainy River between 1998 and 2019 did so primarily through the Economic immigrant stream and most of them came through the Canadian Experience and Skilled Worker subcategories.

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Discussion

Temporary residents—work permit and study permit holders—make up an important share of the Rainy River District's immigrant population; they contribute to the local economy and labour force.[10] International students pay tuition to local institutions and spend their money in the city (e.g. rent, groceries, transportation, textbooks, clothing), with additional indirect and induced economic impacts. Similarly, work permit holders fill in-demand jobs in the community and pay for rent/mortgage, groceries, transportation, and other necessities. It is important to measure their presence and assess their characteristics, as is done with permanent residents.

Income

Employment Income

Employment income is calculated among immigrants who receive employment income whereas total income includes both those with and without employment income. Despite total income also including income from government transfers and investments, employment income may be greater than total income.

In terms of both median and average employment income, immigrants who settled in the Rainy River District within the past 10 years had higher income levels than more established immigrants.[11] Given that employment income excluded government transfers and investments, many of the older population may have been collecting from both income sources. This may also explain why, compared to employment income, average and median total incomes for all immigrants was much greater.

Income levels among immigrants in Rainy River are inconsistent with trends identified in the literature. De Chardon emphasizes that typically, "annual earnings for high-skilled principal applicants surpass the Canadian average soon after landing and increase over time." (2019, 9) Immigrants and refugees often need time to settle in their new country and, as a result, number of years since migration generally corresponds with improved economic and social outcomes (Crossman 2013). This was not the case for recent immigrants in Rainy River.

Household Income

Factors that contribute to household income for immigrants include number of people in the household, pre-admission experience, knowledge of official languages, and category of admission (Statistics Canada, 2021b). Like other variables, if possible, it is important to look at immigrants based on their period of immigration. For average and median household income metrics, data were only available for the following groups: all immigrants and recent immigrants.

Household income levels for recent immigrants were higher than for all immigrants. Recent immigrants having higher average and median income levels (both total and after tax) were inconsistent with what the literature and other communities have experienced. This may be a result of the type of employment recent immigrants are engaging in and making higher wages from.

Table 3: Immigrant household income statistics in Rainy River, 2016

	Average total income	Median total income	Average after-tax income	Median after-tax income
Recent Immigrants	$98,875	$87,145	$84,500	$72,297
All Immigrants	$91,792	$78,702	$77,866	$69,413

Source: Author's calculations, Community Data Program (CDP), Household & Family TGP of the recent immigrant population, Census 2016, custom tabulation.

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10 See "Where are the international students? How COVID-19 could affect Northern Ontario's economy," Hilary Hagar, 2020.
11 At the time of the 2016 census, the past 10 years refers to 2006-2016.

Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs)

Low income cut-offs (LICOs) are income thresholds below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income to necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing than the average family. Statistics Canada calculates LICOs by looking at the income threshold at which families are expected to spend 20 percentage points more than the average family on food, shelter, and clothing (Statistics Canada 2015). As the purchase of necessities is done with after-tax dollars, after-tax income is used to determine LICOs. Given limited data availability, LICO information for the subcategories of immigrant cohorts in the Rainy River District is unavailable. Overall, however, in 2016, there were 45 immigrants and 735 non-immigrants below the LICO after tax.

Retention

Recent immigrants who immigrated between 2011 and 2016 have an average retention rate of 60 per cent after one year, and only a 20 per cent retention rate after five years. This means that approximately 80 per cent of immigrants are leaving Rainy River within their first five years of gaining permanent residence. Retention rates are higher and more consistent when considering all immigrants who moved to the community in any given year. The retention rate for all immigrants after one year was 95 per cent and dropped to 86 per cent after five years. As years since admission increase—otherwise known as time spent in a community—retention rates decrease, indicating immigrants are moving out of the community.

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Conclusion

When assessing immigration programs, both current and future, it is important to establish baseline assessments of immigration trends for the purpose of monitoring and assessing effectiveness. Without these baseline immigration trends, it would be much more difficult to understand the impact of changing demographics and of services provided in the community. As communities in the regions of Northern Ontario seek to attract more immigrants and retain the current population, these metrics will be important for predicting the success of new community members and identifying needed improvements at the local level.

Welcoming initiatives and sustainable economic growth (via immigrants filling labour market shortages) help the entire community. Thus, although the purpose of this paper is to establish a baseline assessment of immigration trends in the region for the purpose of monitoring and assessing the impact of welcoming initiatives and settlement programs, many other aspects need to be looked at in tandem. Having this baseline immigration assessment will help communities continuously know which immigrants to target and attract to their communities. Reflecting on the trends of the past can help guide communities with data for informed decision making about their futures.

Recommendations

Economic immigration is a valuable tool for communities to fill labour market shortages and counteract the effects of an aging population, low birth rates, and high levels of youth out-migration. For this process to be successful and meaningful for all parties involved, the following recommendations must be considered:

1. **Ongoing annual monitoring and assessment of community-level immigration trends in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions**

Now that baselines have been established for immigration trends in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions, this analysis should be used and built upon to monitor and assess trends in the regions year over year.

Not only should immigration trends be monitored and updated but so should labour market indicators such as vacancy rates in specific occupations. This analysis will aid in monitoring the impacts of the RNIP as well as other welcoming, attraction, and retention efforts undertaken by communities.

It should be noted that data availability and accessibility were a challenge, with long wait times for IRCC admission data. Additionally, there were high levels of data suppression when working at the community level. With the upcoming release of 2021 census data, as well as the continued updating of the IMDB and Taxfiler data, a more comprehensive picture of immigration trends can be provided moving forward.

2. Expanding the above analysis to also include domestic and secondary migrants to (and in) Northern Ontario communities

In terms of participation in the housing and labour markets, domestic and secondary migrants, and those already in the communities, shape the economic landscape. Once in the communities, to retain them, they need access to welcoming infrastructure, employers, and to the community as a whole.

A limitation to this extra layer of analysis is data availability. IRCC keeps admission records on international in-migrants and temporary residents based on intended destination. Domestic and secondary migration are not captured in these records. Thus, data sources are limited to the census and Taxfiler information.

3. Strengthening the alignment between labour market shortages, targeted occupations, post-secondary institutional fields of study, and immigrant-intended occupations to maximize economic outcomes

Available data should be used to align labour supply with labour demand, thus promoting a robust local labour market and contributing to sustainable economic growth. All involved—chambers, planning boards, post-secondary institutions, employers, immigration networks—can strategically target labour supply to fill current vacancies via targeted immigration.

To aid in attraction and retention of immigrants, as well as promote positive labour market outcomes for the community, more strategic alignment is recommended. Available data can and should be used to guide decision making alongside consultations with community partners and employers.

Migrants already in the community comprise a large source of labour. This population also needs to be considered. Are migrants participating in the labour force? Are they unemployed or underemployed? Are their (foreign) credentials and life experiences adequately acknowledged and compensated?

4. Undertaking welcoming community initiatives to welcome, attract, and retain immigrants and the existing population to/in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions

Beyond looking at the trends measured quantitatively using data gathered from IRCC, the census, Taxfiler estimates, and IMDB, there is a need to also measure attitudes and perceptions of people in the community. Communities participating in the RNIP are required to undertake community welcoming efforts. The implementation of community welcoming initiatives lead to positive benefits for everyone, not just those participating in the pilot.

The effects of these initiatives should be tracked on an ongoing basis, as should immigration trends generally. To do this, primary data collection must be deployed, likely in the form of focus groups and surveys. Important indicators to track include sense of belonging, meaningful employment, positive community interactions, and welcoming infrastructure (such as services available).

When looking at each community's labour market, the individual and community-wide benefits of immigration will be felt when there is alignment between the labour shortages in the community and the immigrants who are applying their skills to fill these gaps.

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Appendix A: Data Suppression

All values between zero and five are shown as '--' in requested datasets from IRCC. This is done to prevent individuals from being identified when IRCC data are compiled and compared to other publicly available statistics. All other values are rounded to the closest multiple of five for the same reason. Years with suppressed or rounded data are still significant because they represent a non-zero value. But there are challenges when working with small and suppressed data.
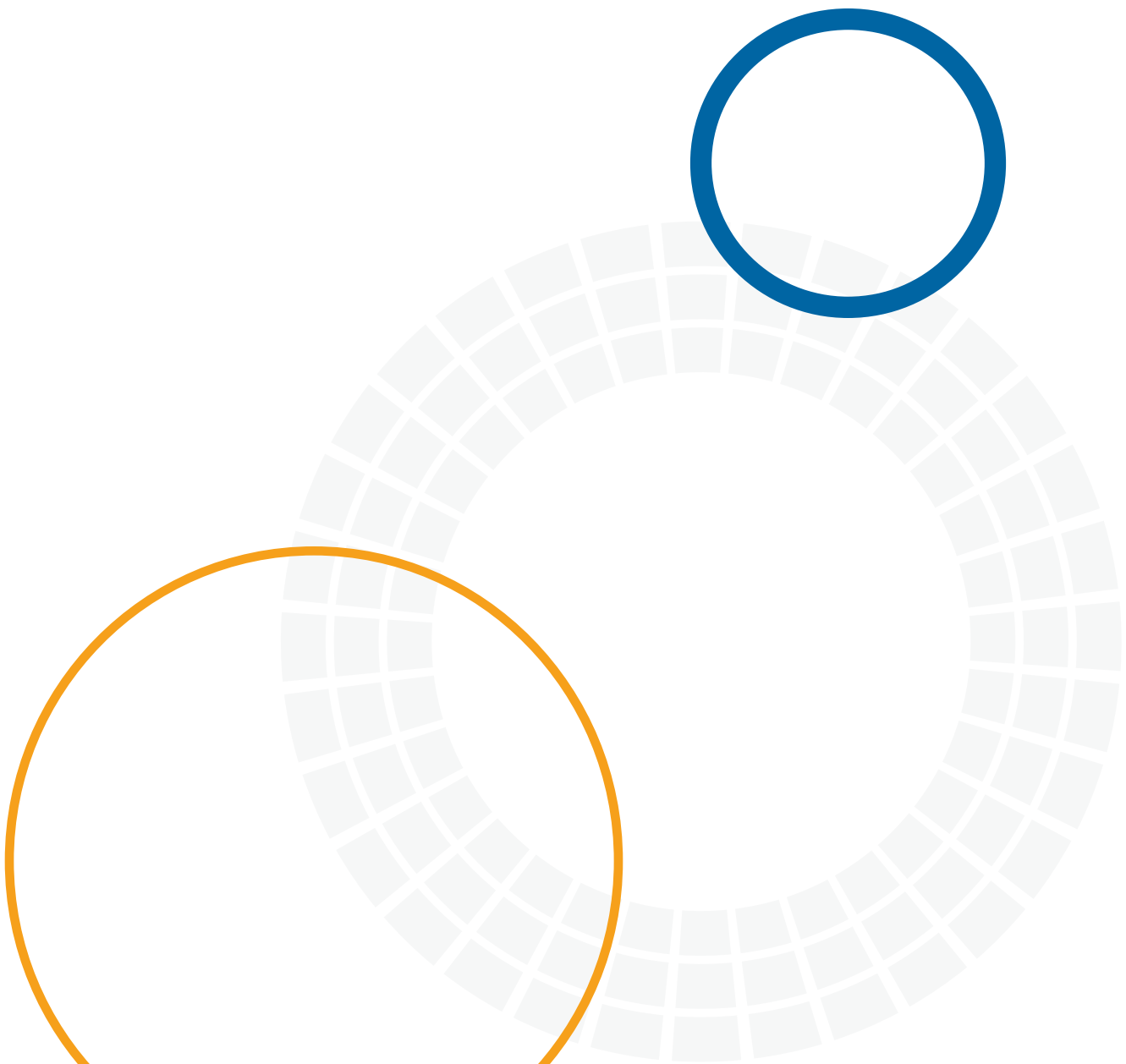
Appendix B: Definitions

Economic immigrants: Immigrants who have been selected for their ability to contribute to Canada's economy through their ability to meet labour market needs, to own and manage or build a business, to make substantial investment, to create their own employment, or to meet specific provincial or territorial labour market needs.

Sponsored Family immigrants: Immigrants who were sponsored by a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and were granted permanent resident status based on their relationship either as the spouse, partner, parent, grandparent, child, or other relative of this sponsor.

Resettled Refugees and Protected Persons immigrants: Immigrants who were granted permanent resident status based on a well-founded fear of returning to their home country.

Other immigrants: Immigrants who were granted permanent resident status under a program that does not fall under the Economic, Sponsored Family, or Resettled Refugees and Protected Persons categories.

Immigrant status: Refers to whether the person is a non-immigrant, an immigrant, or a non-permanent resident:

- Non-immigrants: Persons who are Canadian citizens by birth.
- Immigrants: Persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents. Such persons have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Also includes persons who are Canadian citizens by naturalization.
- Non-permanent residents: Persons who do not have Canadian citizenship and who are not landed immigrants or permanent residents. Includes those who have work, study, or temporary resident permits, or who are refugee claimants, and their family members sharing the same permit and living in Canada with them.

Recent immigrants: Individuals who obtained a landed immigrant or permanent resident status up to five years prior to a given census year. For the data used in this paper, a recent immigrant would be defined as one who landed between 2011 and 2016. Non-recent immigrants landed before 2011.

All immigrants: Individuals who are, or who have ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident.

Unemployed: Refers to persons who, during the week of May 1 to May 7, 2016, were without paid work or without self-employment work and were available for work and either:

a. Had actively looked for paid work in the past four weeks; or
b. Were on temporary layoff and expected to return to their job; or
c. Had definite arrangements to start a new job in four weeks or less.

Unemployment rate: Refers to the unemployed expressed as a percentage of the labour force during the week of May 1 to May 7, 2016. The unemployment rate for a particular group (e.g. age, sex, marital status, geographic area) is the unemployed in that group, expressed as a percentage of the labour force in that group.

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Appendix C: Indicator List

In total, 24 indicators were identified for trend tracking and analysis.[12]

Category	Indicator
Economic outcomes	Admission of permanent resident (PR) by intended occupation (NOC)
	Unemployment/employment/ participation rates
Housing	Housing tenure (renters vs. owners)
Education	Highest level of education
	Field of study for international students
	Field of study for the immigrant population
	Number of international students by post-secondary institute
Immigrant characteristics	Admission of PR by country of citizenship
	Gender of international in-migrants
	Age at landing
	Admission of PR by language spoken (mother tongue)
	Study permit holder by language spoken (mother tongue)
	Work permit holder by language spoken (mother tongue)
	PR by immigration stream and language
	PR by immigration stream and family status
	PR by country of citizenship
Immigration system	Study permit holders by country of citizenship
	Work permit holders by country of citizenship
Income	Percentage of low income cut-offs after tax (LICO-AT)
	Median and average total income by immigration status and time frame
	Median and average employment income by immigration status and time frame
	Median and average household income
Retention	Immigrant mobility – retention rates by years since admission
SPOs	Settlement service clients by service type

12 Not all indicators were available for each geography. Service Usage data were only available for the Census Divisions (CDs) of Algoma, Greater Sudbury, Nipissing, and Thunder Bay. Retention data were not available for the Parry Sound District.

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Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern Communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

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