All Roads Lead Home: Immigration Flows into North Bay and What this Means for RNIP Impacts

Research Report | April 2022
By: Mercedes Labelle

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Land Acknowledgement

NPI would like to acknowledge the First Peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work. NPI is grateful for the opportunity to have our offices located on these lands and thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land.

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 Author

Mercedes Labelle

Mercedes Labelle graduated from McGill University in 2020 with an Honours Bachelor of Political Science and Urban Systems. During her studies, she focused on Canadian politics and public policy processes, specifically researching the uneven distribution of benefits and services between urban and rural communities. At McGill, Mercedes provided analysis on Canadian Politics for the McGill Journal of Political Studies (MJPS). Through her involvement with MJPS, Mercedes developed a deeper understanding of the diverse interests and needs of the Canadian population. Having grown up in Canada, the United States, and Spain, Mercedes is eager to return to Northern Ontario, where her family now resides. In her free time, Mercedes enjoys listening to podcasts, cooking, and reading.

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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. North Bay, Ontario is no stranger to this issue, as it has experienced high average job vacancy rates of up to 39 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 North Bay, 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.

North Bay has experienced a decline in immigration since 2010 with a decrease of approximately 26 per cent. Most immigrants have been accepted under the Family Sponsorship pathway. The limited number of economic immigrants that did settle in North Bay most frequently intended the National Occupation Codes (NOC) of home childcare providers, social and community service workers, and university professors and lecturers. Although these are the occupations immigrants were most frequently qualified for, the occupation vacancy rates suggest that there is the greatest need for managers in customer and personal services, corporate sales managers, administrative services managers, and other installers, repairers and servicers, to name a few. North Bay has also has targeted NOCs which they hope to attract, however, none of the 35 NOCs are consistent with occupation vacancy.

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

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

2. Community-specific ongoing assessment of the impact of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) before, during, and after the program;

3. Expanded analysis to include secondary and domestic migrants;

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

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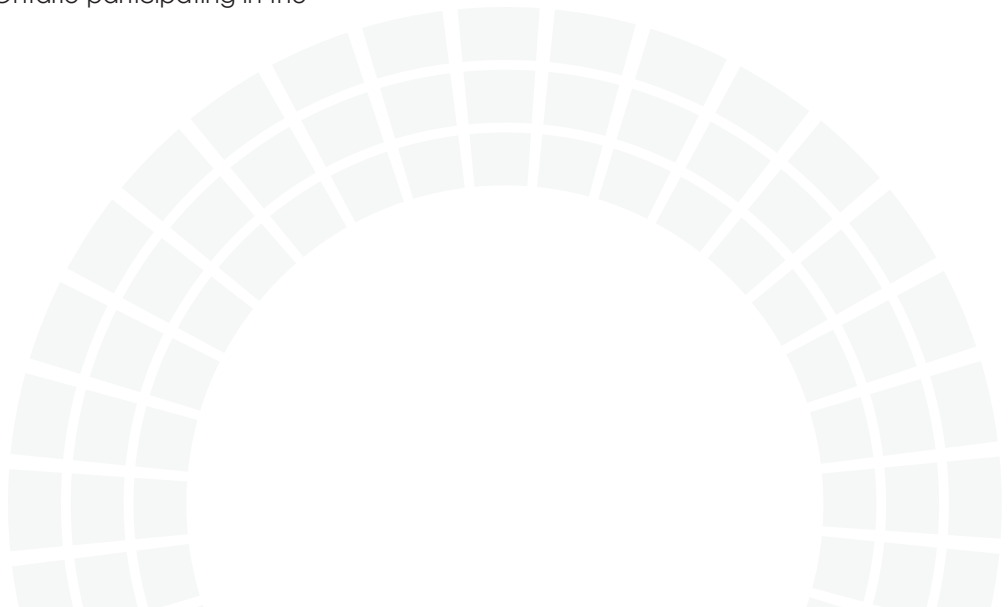
Introduction

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. Add to that the fact that 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, there must be a baseline understanding of current and future immigration demographic characteristics to engage in evidence-based decision-making that will positively impact Northern Ontario communities. Using the available data, actors—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 reports is to establish a baseline assessment of immigration trends in each of the five largest cities in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions—North Bay, Greater Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay. These assessments can be used to evaluate immigration pilot programs, such as the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, 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 cities participating in Northern Ontario are also its largest cities— North Bay, Greater Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay. There are six other communities outside of Ontario participating in the pilot.

In addition to evaluating current federal initiatives, the data can be used to evaluate, more generally, how communities in Northern Ontario are doing at attracting and retaining immigrants. It is crucial to identify the immigration information that is being collected, the gaps, and 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, different 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 time so communities can 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 can only be updated once every five years (as per the frequency of release) and at the time of publishing, details of citizenship and immigration have not been released. The IMDB has an approximate two-year lag for data released and Taxfiler data has 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, reveals that many years have few observations to report, meaning the data are suppressed for privacy reasons (see Appendix A).

Additionally, certain datasets group all immigrants that arrived before 1981 together while others group them together 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.

For non-permanent residents, change over time is difficult to analyze since the data 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 refers 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 in Canada with them.

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. Plus, as mentioned earlier, to assess the impact of the RNIP pilot, we need to know the picture of immigration before/at the start of the program in Northern Ontario.

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Theme and indicator selection

Many indicators selected were identified based on alignment 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. Then, applications are further assessed based on age, education, work experience, job offers, official language skills, and adaptability (Canada 2020a).

The Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program looks at an applicant's skills, experience, and education. Specifically, in-demand skills, language skills, and status as a recent Ontario graduate (Ontario 2019). Finally, the RNIP Program 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, seven themes were identified: immigrant characteristics, economic outcomes, housing, education, immigration system, income, and retention.[1]

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1 Retention data were only available for the Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) of Greater Sudbury and Thunder Bay.
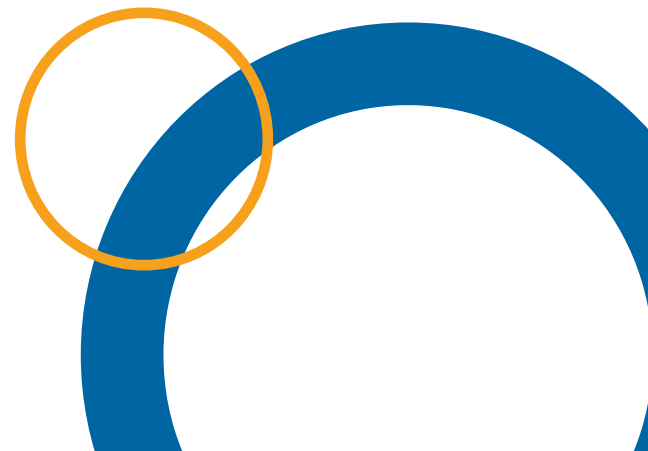
Limitations

Economic outcomes, such as income and involvement in the labour market, typically differ depending on the immigration stream the immigrant followed. Among all newcomers, principal applicants in the Economic stream fare best in the Canadian labour market in terms of labour force participation rates and employment rates. 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. Resettled Refugees and Protected Persons and Sponsored Family stream immigrants usually fare worse.

Although these distinctions are important to note, it was not possible to obtain community-level data separated by stream of immigration and period of admission for all indicators (see Appendix C). When possible, the immigration streams were divided; when not, total immigration numbers were assessed. Addressing these gaps is crucial in getting more specific data to ensure immigrants are not treated as a homogenous group. When evaluating a work experience-based 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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Immigrant Characteristics

The 2016 census counted 3,410 immigrants currently residing in North Bay. 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 North Bay immigrated before 1991—the earliest time frame with available data. Since 2000, the time frame with the most immigration to the city was 2006 to 2010 (330). North Bay experienced a slight decrease in the number of immigrants between 2011 and 2016 (215).

Additionally, an equal number of current immigrants came through the Economic and Sponsored Family streams (670), followed by the Resettled Refugees and Protected Persons stream (165). The majority of immigrants to North Bay since 2001 have a university degree. Temporary residents are included in the 'non-permanent resident' category, of which there were 70 in North Bay in 2016. Longitudinal data are not available from Statistics Canada on non-permanent resident cohorts. They have no official 'period of landing' as they are not landed immigrants.

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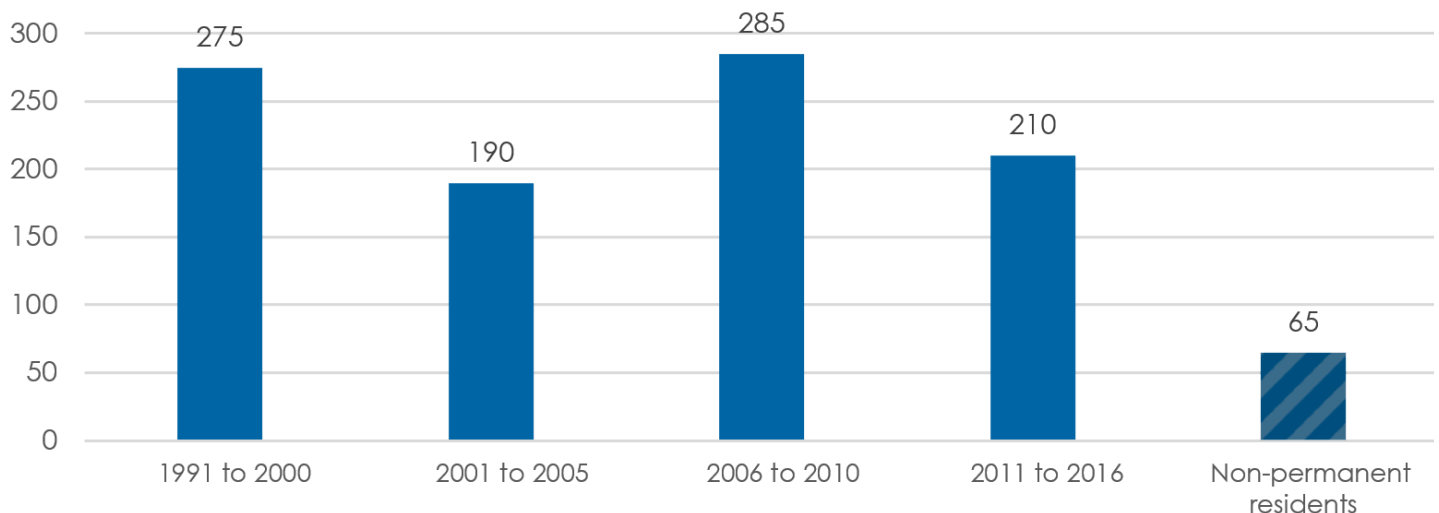
Source: Author's calculations, Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of the Population, Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001.

To capture the effect of non-permanent (temporary) residents in North Bay, 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, North Bay has seen an increase from 54 in the 2014-2015 tax year to 139 in 2018-2019. In the 2018-2019 tax year, 52.5 per cent of immigrants were male.

The majority of permanent residents in North Bay that landed between 1998 and 2019 have citizenship from the United States. Other common countries of citizenship for landed immigrants include India, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, and China.

The largest age group of immigrants at landing has mainly been 25 to 44 (an average of 33 per cent).[2] In earlier years, starting in 2013, the second largest age group was 0 to 17 but it has shifted to the 45 to 65 demographic.

2 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 North Bay CA, 2014-2019
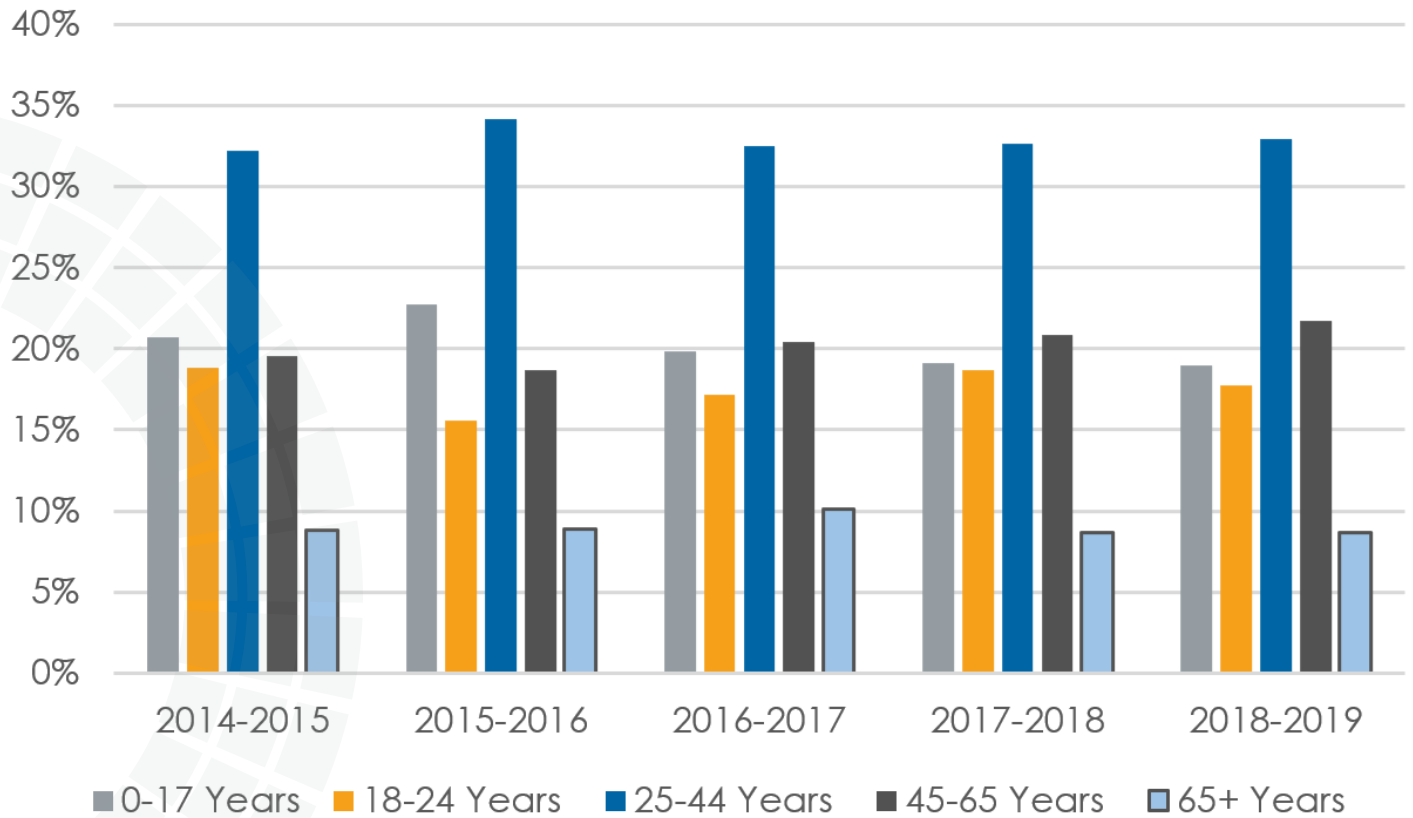
Source: Author's calculations, MIG: Migration Estimates from Taxfiler (T1FF), Table B: By Age Group, 2014-2019.

Language

Immigrants in North Bay most commonly use information and orientation services provided by settlement service-providing organizations (SPOs). Employment-related services were only used in 2013 and 2014. The second most common service is needs assessment and referrals, but the use of that service has been decreasing as the use of community connections has been increasing.

The most prevalent language spoken[3] among permanent residents in North Bay is English, 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. The number of English-speaking immigrants that gained permanent residence in North Bay peaked at 45 in 2010. English is the most common language spoken by permanent residents in all 11 Northern Ontario districts and its five largest cities. Other common languages include Chinese, Tagalog[4], Spanish, and Arabic.

Service Usage

Immigrants in North Bay most commonly use information and orientation services provided by settlement service-providing organizations (SPOs). Employment-related services were only used in 2013 and 2014. The second most common service is needs assessment and referrals, but the use of that service has been decreasing as the use of community connections has been increasing.

Stream

Between 2014 and 2019[5], the number of permanent residents to North Bay increased gradually, starting at 50 in 2014 and peaking at 70 in 2019. Between 2014 and 2019, the most common immigration stream among permanent residents in North Bay was Sponsored Family, with 140 people gaining permanent residence through that stream. Economic was the second most common immigration stream between 2014 and 2019, with 115 gaining permanent residence in the city.

Between 1998 and 2019, the most common immigration stream for permanent residents coming to North Bay was Sponsored Family, followed by Economic and then Resettled Refugee and Protected Persons. Economic immigrants predominantly know English, although there are some who know neither official language. Sponsored Family immigrants are primarily English speakers, with a portion not knowing either official language. North Bay saw a significant increase in Resettled Refugee and Protected Persons in 2016, of which most did not know either official language. Economic permanent residents, specifically principal applicants, comprise approximately half of the Economic immigrant total, with spouses and/or dependents comprising the other half.

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5 The most recent years with full data available at time of writing.

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3 Language spoken indicates the mother tongue of individuals. The mother tongue is the native language of an individual upon entering Canada.
*4 Tagalog is the basis of Filipino and is spoken in the Philippines*

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Analysis

Characteristics such as age, education, and language spoken all are weighted heavily in the Express Entry program stream. 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 also being an official language, and points being given in the Express Entry program stream to French-speaking applicants, 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 districts due to the benefits French-speakers receive if they locate in Quebec, such as prioritized credential recognition between France and Quebec (Quebec 2019). But the immigration target set by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada for French-speaking migrants to Canada (outside Quebec) is 4.4 per cent.
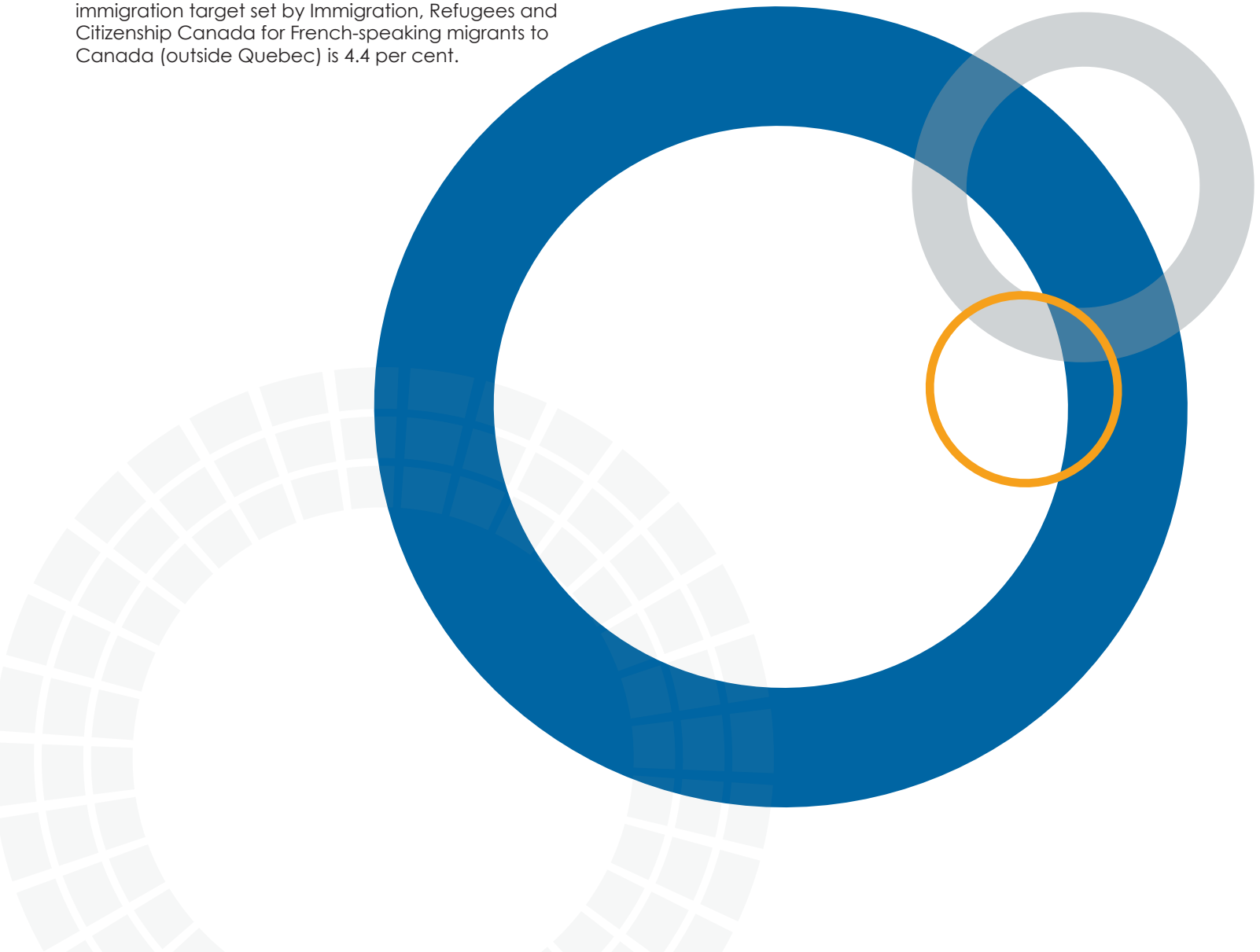
Economic Outcomes

Intended 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 between 1998 and 2019 were:

- Home childcare providers

- Social and community service workers

- University professors and lecturers

It should be noted that 'Other Intended Occupation' was the most selected NOC answer for every district and the five largest cities in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions. Thus, it is excluded from this analysis to focus on specific occupations.

Occupation vacancy rates

Occupation-specific vacancy rates 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 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). That series reflects trends from 2018, but this paper has updated the 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[6] were obtained from Emsi Economic Modeling, 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 high job vacancy rates (NOC Skill Level 0). There is one Skill Level C occupation with a high vacancy rate, which is other installers, repairers and servicers. Finally, there are three occupations that are Skill Level A:

- 312 – Optometrists, chiropractors and other health diagnosing and treating professionals

- 313 – Pharmacists, dietitians and nutritionists

- 314 – Therapy and assessment professionals

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6 *The methodology Northern Policy Institute uses to calculate vacancy rate is explained in the "Assessing Labour Market Shortages" paper series by Alex Ross (2020).*
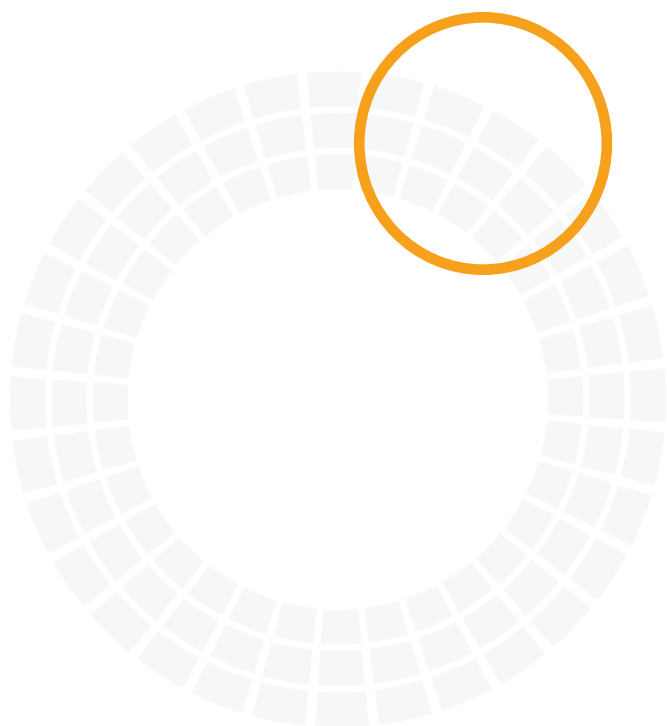
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Table 1: Occupations with the highest average job vacancy rates, North Bay CA, 2020

NOC	Description	Total Labour Market 2020	Job Vacancy Rate
065	Managers in customer and personal services, n.e.c.[7]	40	39.5%
060	Corporate sales managers	41	39.4%
011	Administrative services managers	172	29.0%
744	Other installers, repairers and servicers	160	20.2%
051	Managers in art, culture, recreation and sport	34	19.6%
001	Legislators and senior management	77	17.3%
031	Managers in health care	82	11.9%
312	Optometrists, chiropractors and other health diagnosing and treating professionals	116	11.0%
313	Pharmacists, dietitians and nutritionists	115	10.8%
314	Therapy and assessment professionals	172	10.4%

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

It is worth noting that there is no overlap between the most common immigrant-intended NOCs and the occupations facing the highest vacancy rates in North Bay (Table 1).

Additionally, the RNIP Program requires communities to target specific occupations that could be seen as in demand that immigrants could fill. These occupations are identified at the community level, largely through consultations with community employers. In the first year of the RNIP Program, North Bay is targeting multiple three- and four-digit NOCs, including the following (See Appendix D for full list):

• 2173: Software engineers and designers

• 2271: Air pilots, flight engineers

• 4152: Social workers

• 4212: Social and community service workers

• 7511: Transport truck drivers

There is no overlap between North Bay's RNIP targeted NOCs for Year 1 and the occupations with the highest vacancy rates in 2020. Additionally, North Bay only targets one management occupation: 0213 – Computer and information systems managers. But six of the top 10 occupations with the highest vacancy rates (Table 1) are at the management level (Skill Level 0). It is important to note, however, that North Bay does have an 'Open NOC' category, which means they can accept occupations outside of their initial list, if approved by the Community Selection Committee.

Vacancy rate, at first glance, might not seem to be indicative of immigrants' economic outcomes. But when looked at in conjunction with intended and targeted occupations, vacancy rate can indicate whether there is alignment between the occupations experiencing high vacancy rates and employment, unemployment, and participation rates among immigrants.

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7 N.e.c. refers to 'not elsewhere classified.'

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 should be noted that some foreign workers are exempt from needing a LMIA or work permit, such as those in the International Mobility Program.

LMIAs are only approved in regions without high unemployment rates, specifically for lowest skill and lowest wage occupations in accommodation, food services, and retail trade sectors.

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

Negative LMIAs are not inherently indicative of the position's ability to be filled by Canadians or permanent residents. It can also indicate that the employer requesting the work permit has provided false, misleading, or inaccurate information in the past two years (Canada, 2021b).
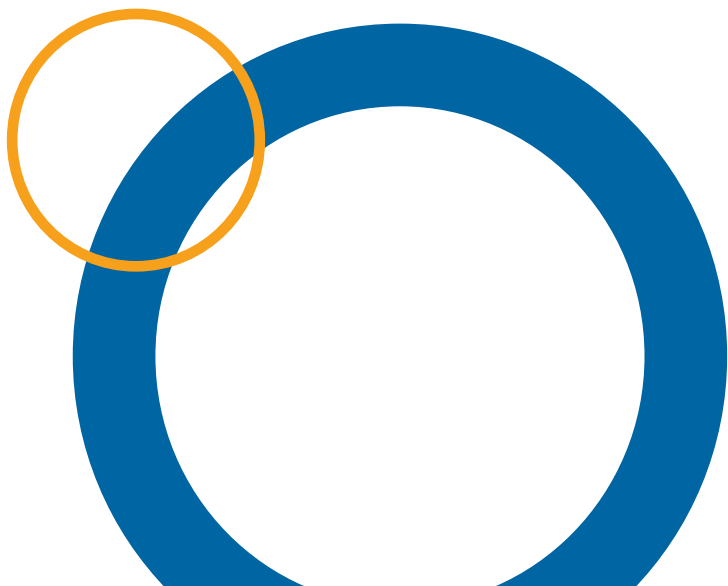
In 2020, there were six occupations **approved** for LMIAs in North Bay, with a total of 10 unique positive LMIAs issued:

- 7612 – Other trades helpers and labourers (1)

- 6322 – Cooks (2)

- 1221 – Administrative officers (1)

- 6311 – Food service supervisors (3)

- 0632 – Accommodation service managers (2)

- 7372 – Drillers and blasters – surface mining, quarrying and construction (1)

As mentioned, an approved LMIA indicates that there is no Canadian talent available to fill the above positions in North Bay. As such, approved LMIA positions are a good indicator for decision-makers of labour market gaps and occupations that could be targeted through the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, postsecondary institutions, or through additional training and upskilling.

North Bay had one LMIA application **denied** in 2020: 6211 – Retail sales supervisors.

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

Between 2017 and 2020, there were a total of 16 LMIAs approved in North Bay. They are as follows:

Table 2: Occupations with approved LMIAs in North Bay, 2017-2020

NOC	Occupation	Skill Level	Approved Positions	Included in RNIP Y1 NOCs?
6322	Cooks	B	3	No
6311	Food service supervisors	B	3	No
0632	Accommodation service managers	0	2	No
0212	Architecture and science managers	0	1	No
3012	Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses	A	1	**Yes**
3111	Specialist physicians	A	1	**Yes**
4011	University professors and lecturers	A	1	No
4151	Psychologists	A	1	No
1221	Administrative officers	B	1	No
7372	Drillers and blasters - surface mining, quarrying and construction	B	1	No
7612	Other trades helpers and labourers	D	1	No

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

It is worth noting that there was no overlap between positive LMIAs issued from 2017 to 2020 and occupations with high vacancy rates in 2020. There were two approved LMIAs for occupations that were also targeted in North Bay's Year 1 RNIP: registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses and specialist physicians. It is important to note that North Bay does have an 'Open NOC' category, which means they can accept occupations outside of their initial list, if approved by the Community Selection Committee. With further alignment of in-demand occupations and the RNIP Program, employers can better attract and retain (as permanent residents) immigrant employees to fill these gaps.
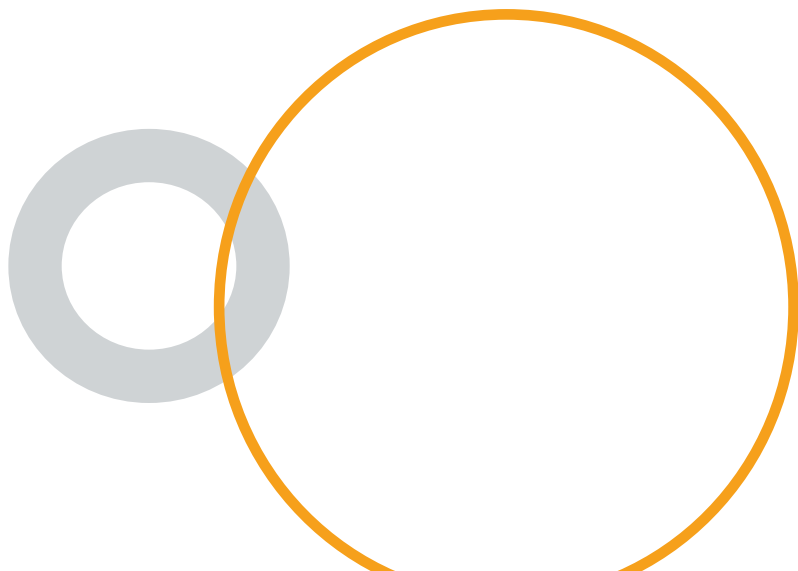
Employment/ unemployment/participation

Immigrants in North Bay who arrived between the years of 1991 and 2010 experience, on average, higher 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 may be aging out of the labour market. For more recent immigrants (2011 to 2016), employment rates may be lower due to lack of Canadian work experience, securing credential recognition, and other factors associated with integrating into a new community, such as establishing a social network. Employment rates increase among immigrants in line with time spent in North Bay.

Unemployment rates are higher among recent immigrants, specifically those who immigrated between 2011 and 2016. Unemployment rates were lower among immigrants who had been living in Canada for more than 10 years at the time of the 2016 census. Unemployment rates are comparable for non-immigrants and immigrants who arrived in 1990 or earlier. Non-permanent residents have the highest unemployment rate.

Non-permanent residents, also known as temporary residents, may be in Canada with permits that have more work restrictions. For example, study permit holders who are enrolled full-time are able to work on- and off-campus without a work permit for up to 20 hours a week during school terms, which could 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 workers can work for any eligible Canadian employer. These factors could contribute to the higher rate of unemployment among non-permanent residents (Canada 2020c), as

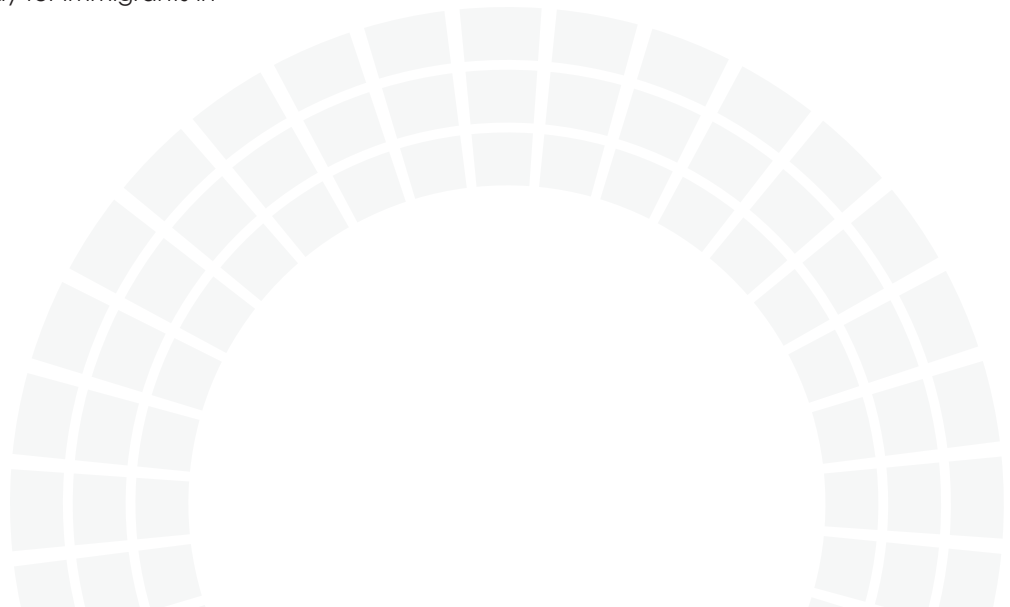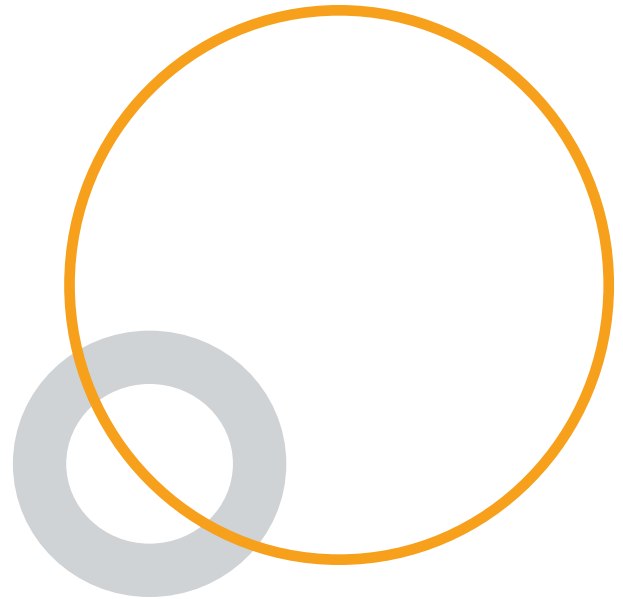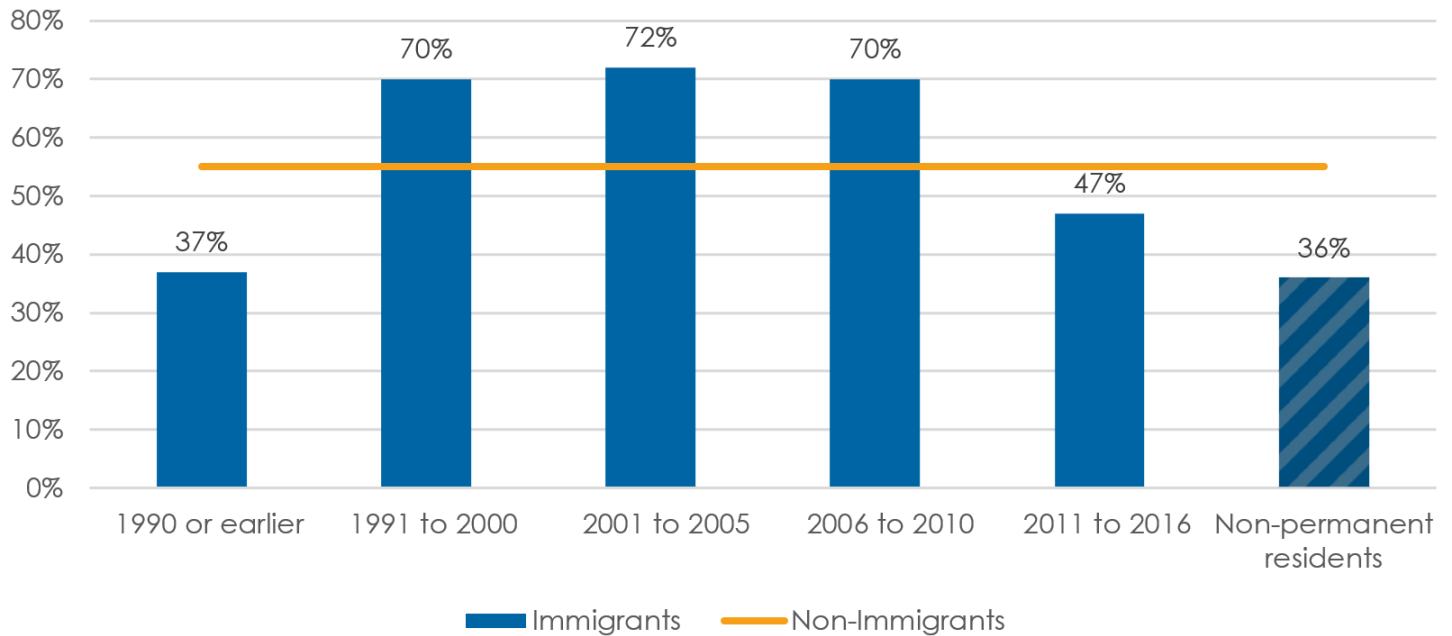The most common field of study for immigrants in

Figure 3: Employment rates (%) in North Bay 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.
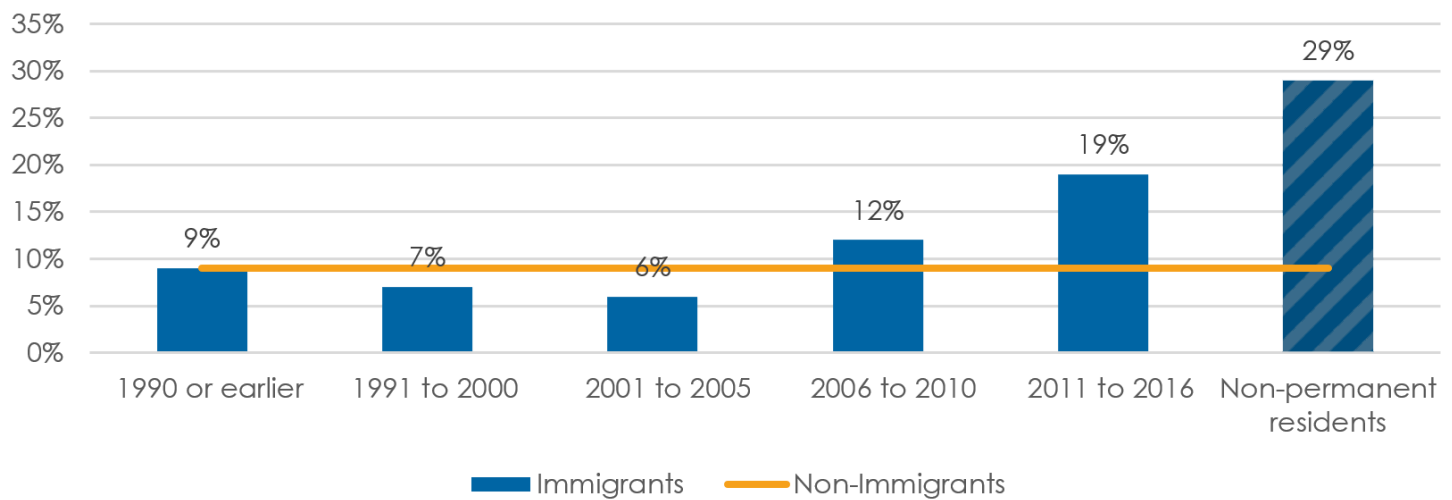
Figure 4: Unemployment rates (%) in North Bay by period of immigration, 2016

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

Measuring participation rates between immigrant cohorts indicates the number of immigrants in each cohort actively participating in the labour force, either by being employed or searching for employment. As regions in Northern Ontario are facing an aging population, low birth rates, and youth out-migration, immigrant participation in the labour force is one way to maintain the current standard of living as demographics shift.

The participation rate measures the total labour force, comprised of those who are employed and unemployed, combined, 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.

As mentioned when discussing employment and unemployment, time since landing is a large determinant of immigrants' labour market outcomes. For example, recent immigrants 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 combined with a low unemployment rate indicates robust opportunities in the labour market.

Recent immigrants to North Bay have a lower average labour market participation rate than more established immigrant cohorts, with the exception of those that landed in 1990 or earlier. But the participation rate is comparable between recent immigrants and non-immigrants. The participation rate for non-permanent residents (temporary residents with study or work permits) is lower than that for the other immigrant cohorts and for non-immigrants. The explanation for the lower participation rate coincides with the previously mentioned rationale regarding employment and unemployment rates: many of these temporary residents are study permit holders with employment limitations.

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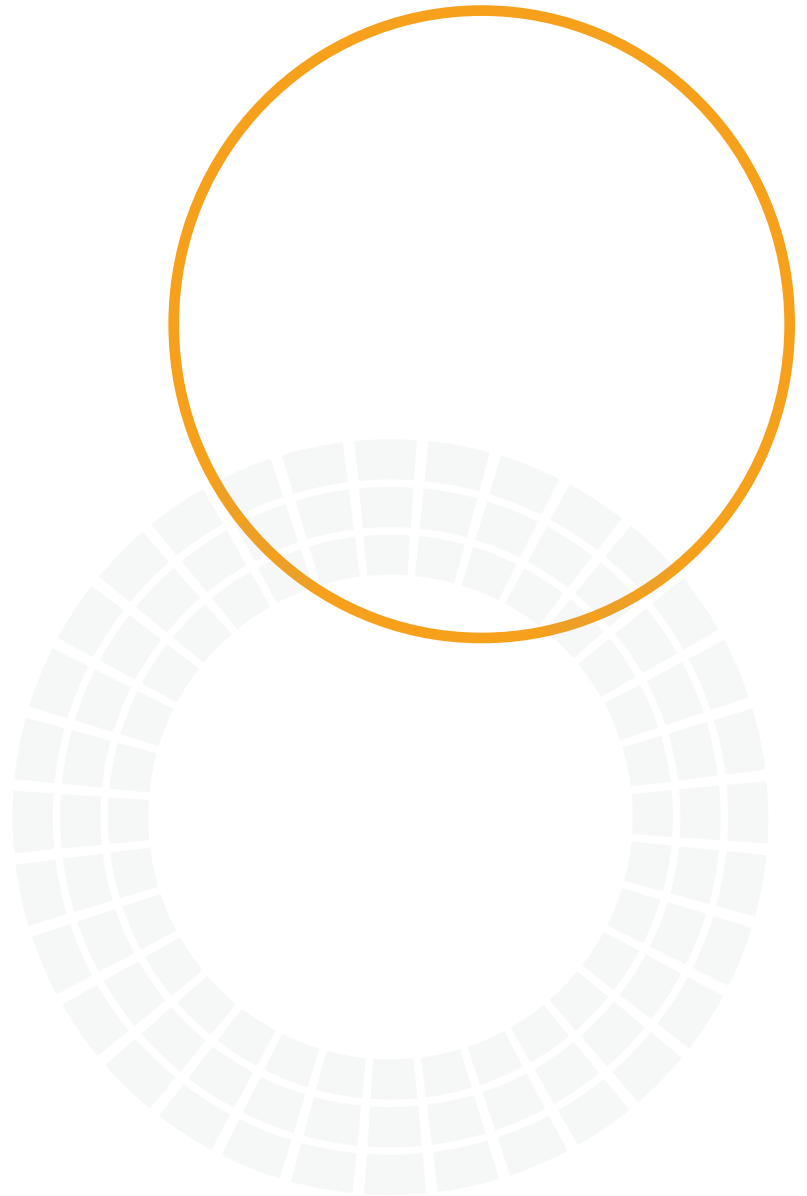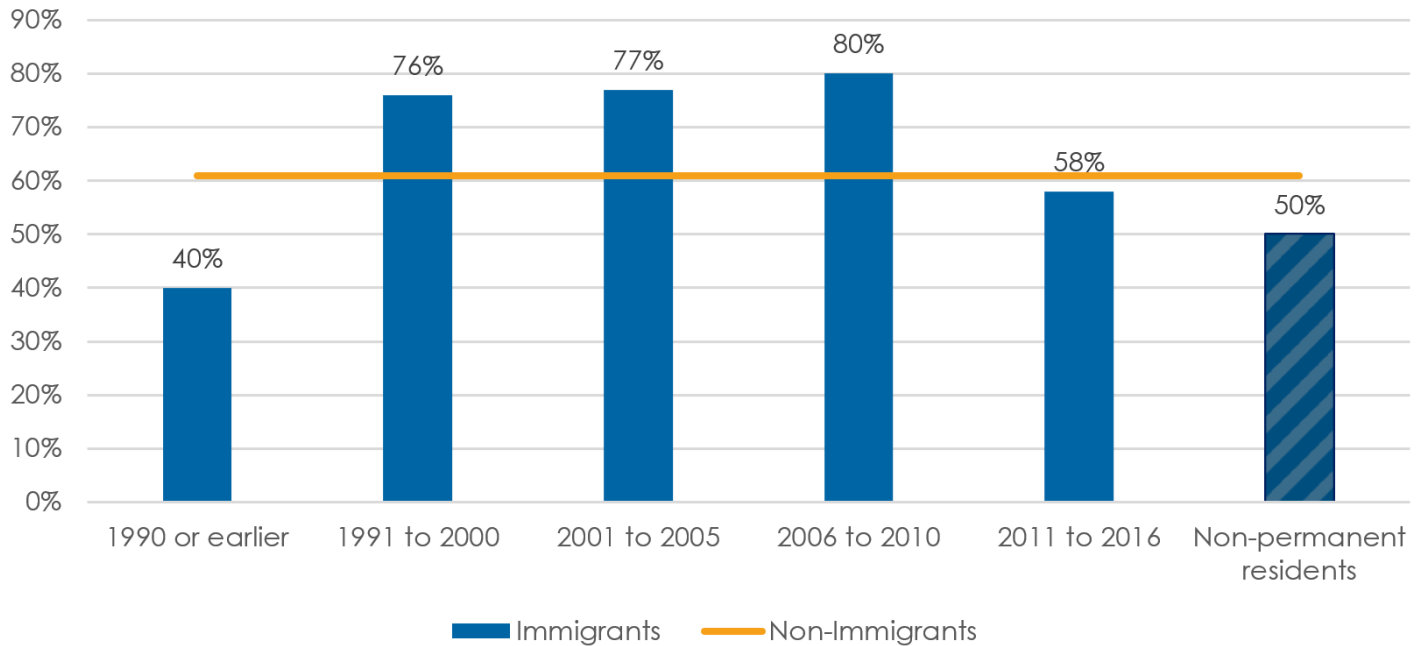
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## Figure 5: Participation rate (%) in North Bay by period of immigration, 2016

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

Discussion

The federal Express Entry program prioritizes immigrants with certain jobs or NOCs. In fact, 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 in the labour market analysis for North Bay, high-skilled workers are not the only NOC categories facing labour market shortages. There is a demand for NOC Skill Level C. This skill level includes intermediate jobs that usually call for high school and/or job-specific training, such as residential and commercial installers and servicers and transport truck drivers.

In theory, communities targeting immigrants with specific occupational experience as it aligns with their current labour market shortages should result in an increase in employment for recent immigrants. Further contributing to positive labour market outcomes, a requirement of RNIP is that the potential immigrant have a permanent job offer, further cementing employment upon arrival.
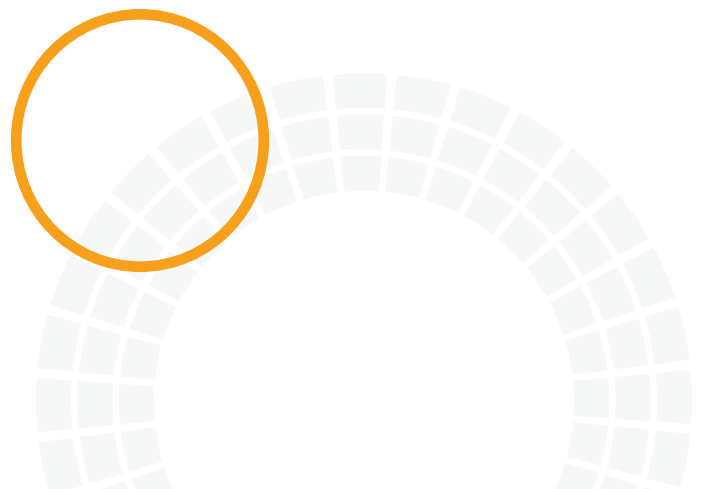
Housing

Looking at immigrants' housing tenure can help indicate financial security, especially if the dwelling is owned (Haan 2012, 3). Owned housing can also signify an immigrant household's commitment to their new community and society (ibid), which can indicate retention.

In North Bay, recent immigrants are more likely to be renters than non-recent immigrants. Non-recent immigrants—those who have obtained permanent residence more than five years ago—are more likely to be homeowners.

Figure 6: Immigrant households in North Bay by housing tenure (owners vs. renters), 2016
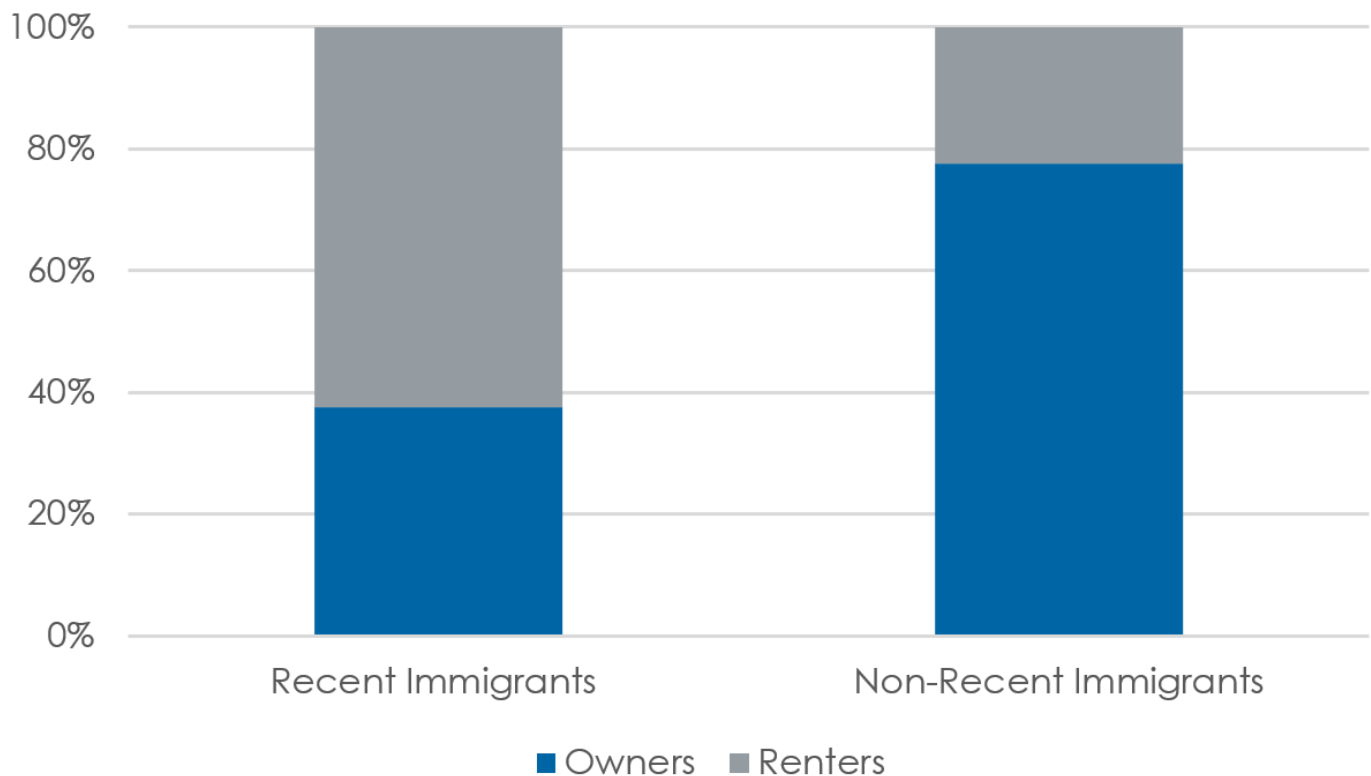
Source: Community Data Program (CDP), Target Group Profile of Recent Immigrant + Immigrant Population, Census 2016.

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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.

Also, 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.
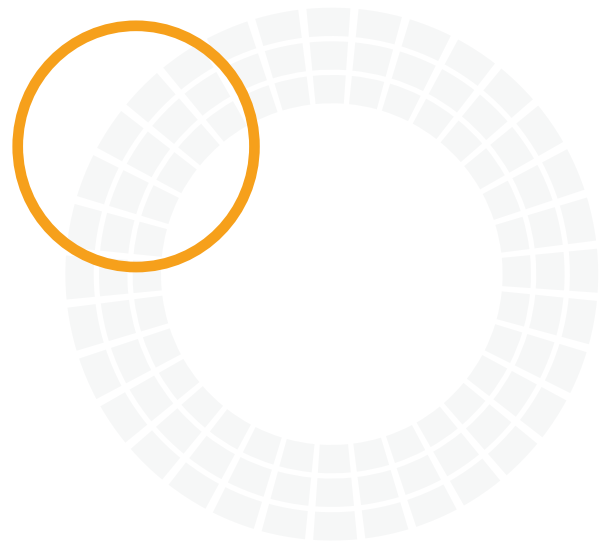
Education

North Bay is architecture, engineering, and related technologies. The second most common is health and related fields, followed by business, management, and public administration.

Immigrants that studied in a high-skilled field, such as health care, engineering, or architecture are most common in North Bay. The most prominent field of study groupings also align with future labour market shortages, specifically in engineering, management, and health-related sectors (Ross 2020, 9).

North Bay has two postsecondary educational institutions: Canadore College and Nipissing University. The number of international students at Canadore College has been increasing since 2012-2013, with 261 international students enrolled in 2017-2018.
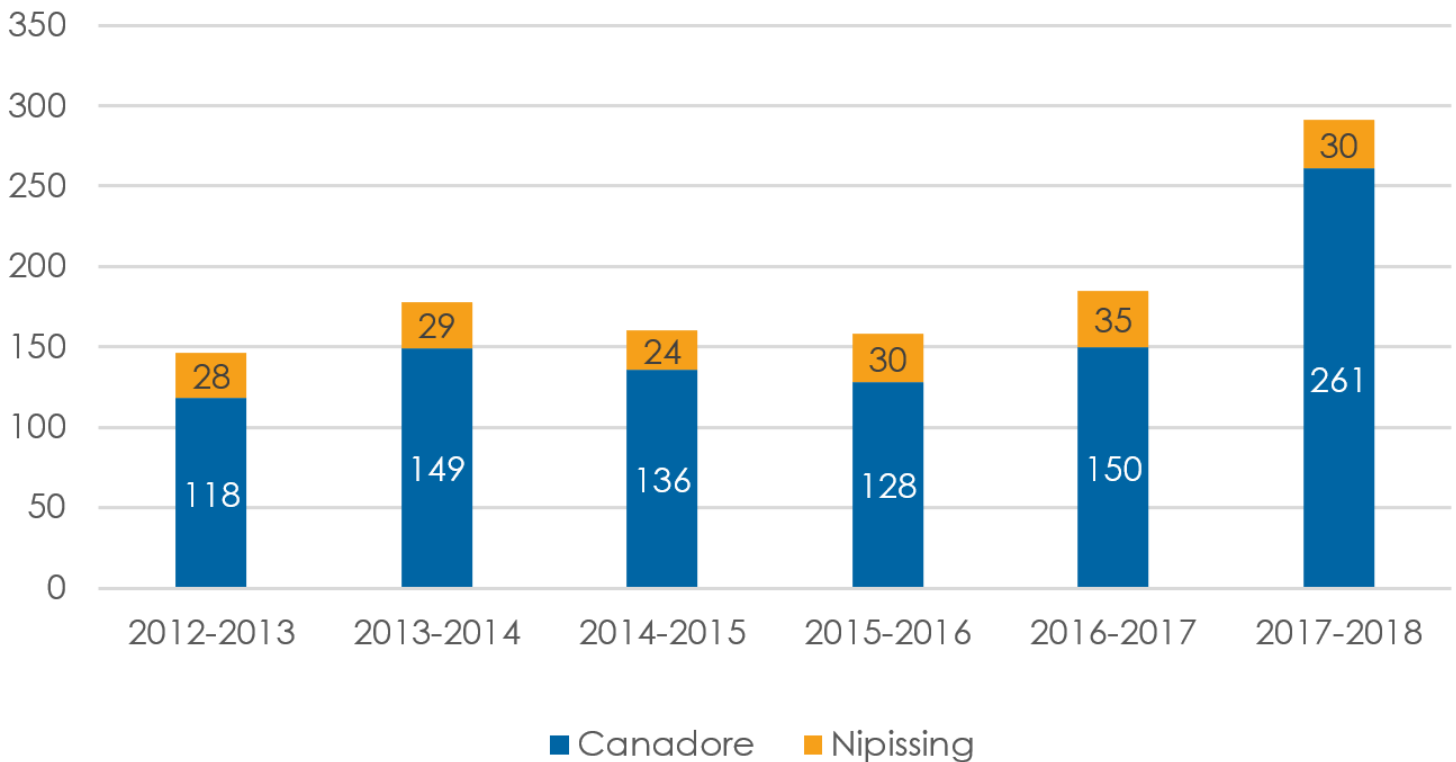
Nipissing University has a much smaller number of international students; only 30 were enrolled in 2017-18. In fact, Nipissing had the lowest percentage of international students among all Northern Ontario universities between 2016-2017 (1 per cent).

Work permit holders in North Bay mainly have citizenship

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Figure 7: International students enrolled in North Bay by postsecondary institution, 2012-2018

Source: Author's calculations, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), Enrolment Data - International and Domestic Full-time Headcounts.

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 quicker into the labour market and society than other types of immigrants (Hagar 2019).

Immigration System

Study permit holders

In North Bay, which has Nipissing University and Canadore College, study permit holders are predominantly citizens of India. The same is true in all the Big Five cities in Northern Ontario. It should be noted that, in 2016, there was a large increase in the number of study permit holders from India. Other common countries of citizenship for study permit holders include China, Mexico, the Philippines, and the United States.

Study permit holders that gained permanent residence in North Bay between 1998 and 2019 are primarily divided between the Economic and Sponsored Family immigration streams. Within the Economic stream, the primary pathway was the Skilled Worker Program. Within the Sponsored Family category, Sponsored Spouse or Partner made up the largest sub-category of permanent residents. Study permit holders most commonly speak Punjabi or Chinese in North Bay. Other common languages spoken include Spanish, English, and Hindi.

Work permit holders

in the United States. The United States is, significantly, the most common country of citizenship for work permit holders in Northern Ontario's 11 districts and five largest cities. Other common countries of citizenship for work permit holders in North Bay include China, India, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom.
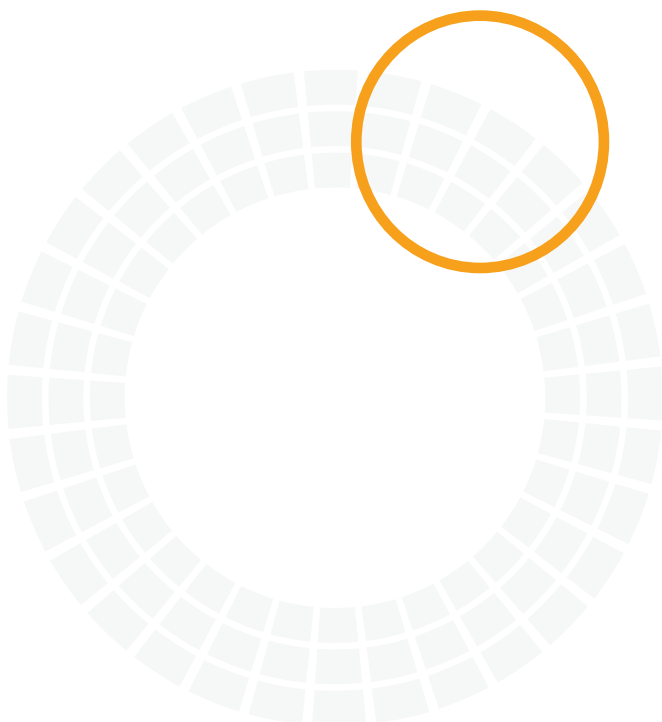
Work permit holders that gained permanent residence in North Bay between 1998 and 2019 came mostly through the Federal Skilled Worker Program under the Economic stream; the Canadian Experience and Federal Skilled Worker subcategories are the most prevalent. There were only two years (with suppressed data) when a work permit holder gained permanent residence through the Business – Economic stream. There were also a few instances between 2009 and 2020 when work permit holders gained permanent residency through the Provincial Nominee Program. Additionally, there were some cases of sponsored spouses and partners gaining permanent residency under the Sponsored Family category.[8] English is significantly the most common language spoken among work permit holders in all 11 districts and the five largest cities in Northern Ontario. Other common languages include Chinese, Punjabi, Spanish, and Tagalog.

Discussion

Temporary residents—work permit and study permit holders—make up a large share of North Bay's immigrant population; they also contribute to the local economy and labour force.[9] 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. As such, it is important to measure their presence, and assess their characteristics, as is done with permanent residents.

8 Definite numbers not available. See Appendix A.
9 See "Where are the international students? How COVID-19 could affect Northern Ontario's economy," Hilary Hagar, 2020.

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Income

Employment income

Employment income is calculated among immigrants who receive employment income, whereas total income includes both those with and without income. This can result in higher employment income numbers, despite total income also including income from government transfers and investments.

In terms of both median and average employment income, immigrants in North Bay who settled before 2005 have higher incomes than non-immigrants. Median and average employment incomes for immigrants who landed after 2006 are lower than those of non-immigrants and more established immigrants.

It appears that as immigrants become more established, they earn higher incomes. Income levels among immigrants in North Bay are consistent with the literature. De Chardon states, "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 some time to settle in their new country and, as a result, years since migration generally corresponds with improved economic and social outcomes (Crossman 2013).

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). Similar to other variables, it is important to look at immigrants based on their period of immigration, if possible. For average and median household income metrics, data were only available for all immigrants and recent immigrants.

Household average and median income levels for recent immigrants are lower than those of all immigrants. The reason for lower average and median income levels (both total and after-tax) are comparable to those listed previously: recent immigrants need time to settle into their new communities, gain stable employment, have recognized credentials, complete training, and so on.

Table 3: Immigrant household income statistics in North Bay, 2016

	Average total income	Median total income	Average after-tax income	Median after-tax income
Recent Immigrants	$73,076	$50,184	$62,180	$47,368
All Immigrants	$92,320	$67,995	$76,359	$61,167

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

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 for 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.

Immigrants that came to North Bay before 2010 have LICO levels consistent with, or below, non-immigrants. But recent immigrants who have been settled for less than five years and non-permanent residents have significantly higher rates of LICOs than non-immigrants and non-recent immigrants. As previously stated, non-permanent residents include both study and work permit holders. Study permits often restrict the number of hours a permit holder can work per week to 20. Thus, it is not surprising this demographic would be driving up the incidence of LICOs among non-permanent residents.

Figure 8: Percentage of low income cut-offs after tax (LICO-AT) in North Bay by period of immigration, 2016
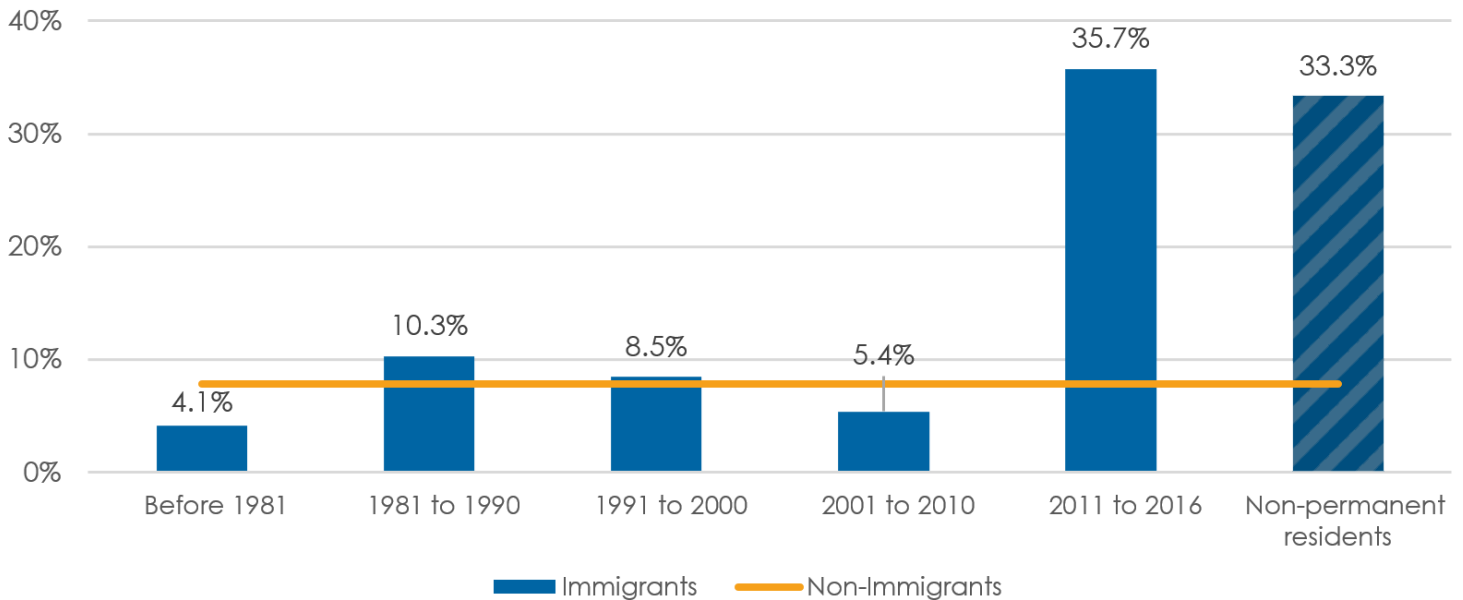
Source: Author's calculations; Community Data Program (CDP); Selected Language, Labour Force, Education, Income and Mobility Status Characteristics; Table EO2767 - TBL7R.

What the above data show is that having lower income levels as a recent immigrant is not a long-term phenomenon. Income levels appear to increase, and LICO levels decrease, in correspondence with time spent in the community. As noted, factors such as immigration stream, knowledge of an official language, and employment situation all greatly affect income levels. Additionally, when more recent data are available, income levels will reflect what is happening in the economy at time of landing for the most recent immigrant cohort. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic will likely impact employment, income, and LICO levels among recent and non-recent immigrants alike.
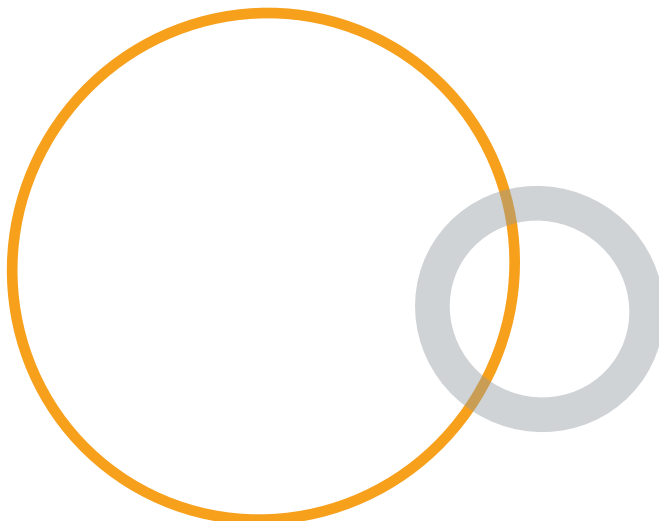
Conclusion

When assessing the economic Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) Program, the governing principles are grounded in labour market success for principal applicants. For example, trends related to the labour market participation and employment of recent immigrants would be influenced by the fact that RNIP applicants must have a valid job offer in the community. Also, applicants must have either a Canadian postsecondary degree or experience in the field in which they are applying, which would influence income levels. When looking at housing, the previously discussed effects of having stable employment, coupled with more points being given to those who have lived in the community, aid in the search and ownership of housing.

But the impacts of the RNIP are not limited to those directly participating in the pilot. 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 RNIP and other programs, many other aspects need to be looked at in tandem.
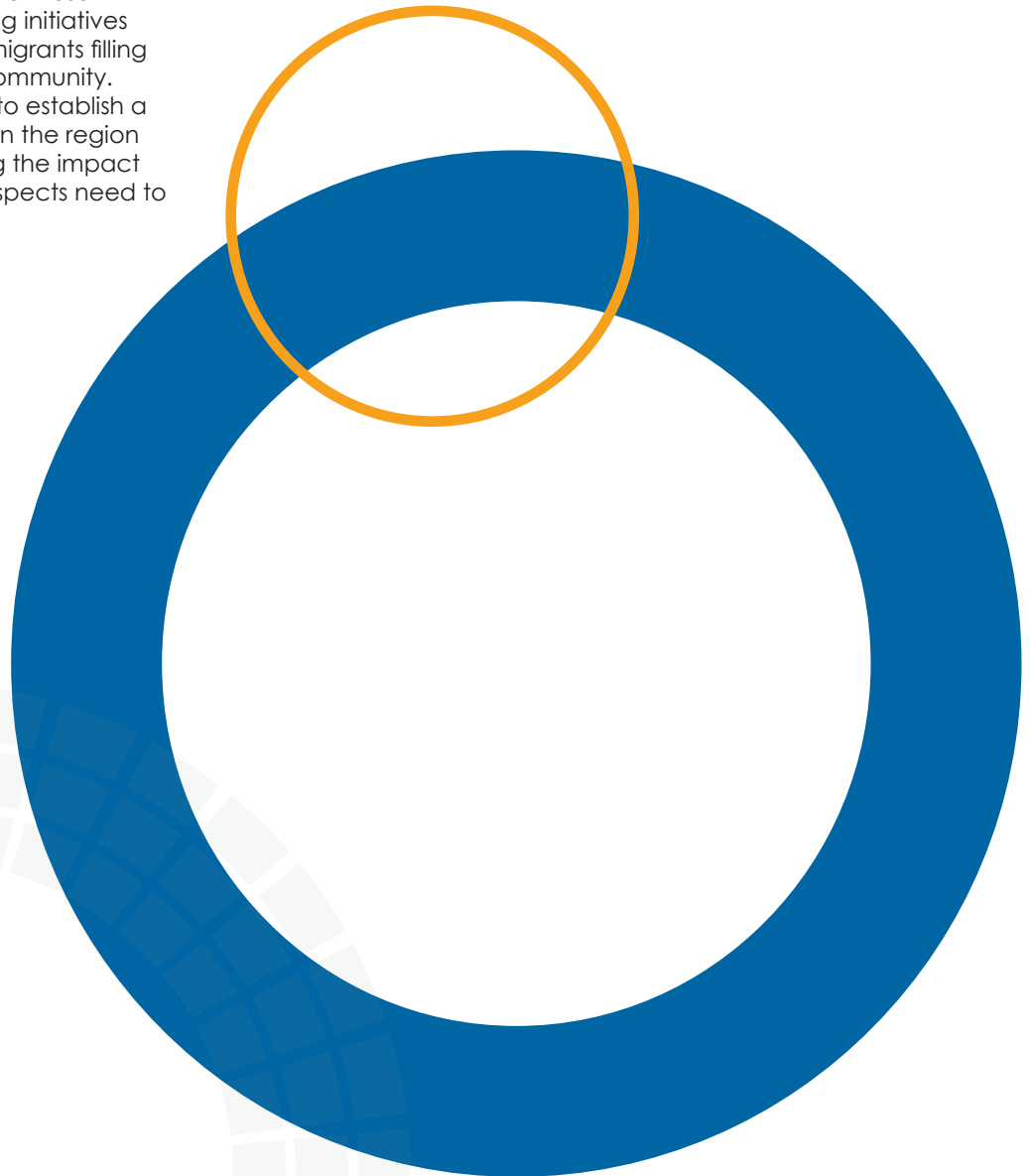
Recommendations

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 not only successful but also meaningful for all parties involved, the following recommendations must be considered:

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

Now that a baseline is established for immigration trends in Ontario's northern, western, and central regions, this analysis should be used and built on, year-over-year, to monitor and assess trends in the regions.

Not only should immigration trends be monitored and updated but also labour market indicators, such as vacancy rates in specific occupations. This analysis will aid in monitoring the impacts of the RNIP Program, 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. (1b) Community-specific ongoing assessment of the impact of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) before, during, and after the program

Although 100 recommendations were available to communities in the first year of the pilot, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly hindered the arrival of immigrants to Canada, as well as the initial rollout of the pilot in some communities. Thus, the number of community recommendations issued in the first year of the pilot was low. This is cited to highlight the difficulties in obtaining RNIP candidate-specific data for Year 1.

Northern Policy Institute has partnered with three RNIP communities in Northern Ontario—Thunder Bay, Timmins, and Greater Sudbury—to monitor and assess RNIP-specific immigration trends and outcomes. The goals of the RNIP are to fill community-specific labour market needs while promoting a welcoming community for all participants, ultimately resulting in high retention levels. Thus, the social and economic benefits of the pilot in each community should be analyzed.

This partnership was offered to all RNIP communities in Northern Ontario, and the data-sharing and analysis partnership remains open. Communities that are interested in community-level RNIP assessments, but do not have formal partnerships, are welcome to partner with Northern Policy Institute for this analysis.

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

Domestic and secondary migrants, and those already in the communities, also shape the economic landscape in terms of participation in the housing and labour market. Additionally, they need access to welcoming infrastructure, employers, and the community as a whole to retain them once they are in the communities.

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. Secondary and domestic migration are not captured in these records. Thus, data sources are limited to the census and Taxfiler information.

4. Strengthening the alignment between labour market shortages, targeted occupations, postsecondary 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 actors involved—chambers, planning boards, postsecondary institutions, employers, immigration actors—can strategically target labour supply, via targeted immigration, to fill current vacancies.

Most communities analyzed do not have overlap between occupations with high vacancy rates and those under the Year 1 RNIP targeted occupations. 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.

Additionally, those already in the community comprise a large source of labour. Similar to the preceding point, this population also needs to be assessed. Are people already in the communities participating in the labour force? Are they unemployed or underemployed? Are their (foreign) credentials and life experiences adequately acknowledged and compensated?

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

Beyond the trends that can be measured quantitatively, using data gathered from IRCC, the census, Taxfiler estimates, and IMDB, there is a need to also measure attitudes and perceptions of those in the community. A requirement for participating RNIP communities is to undertake welcoming community efforts. Undoubtedly, the effects of implementing welcoming community initiatives will positively benefit people beyond those participating directly in the pilot.

The effects of these initiatives should, similar to immigration trends more generally, be tracked on an ongoing basis. To do this, primary data collection, likely in the form of focus groups and surveys, must be deployed. 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 an alignment between the labour shortages in the community and the immigrants who are applying their skills to fill these gaps.
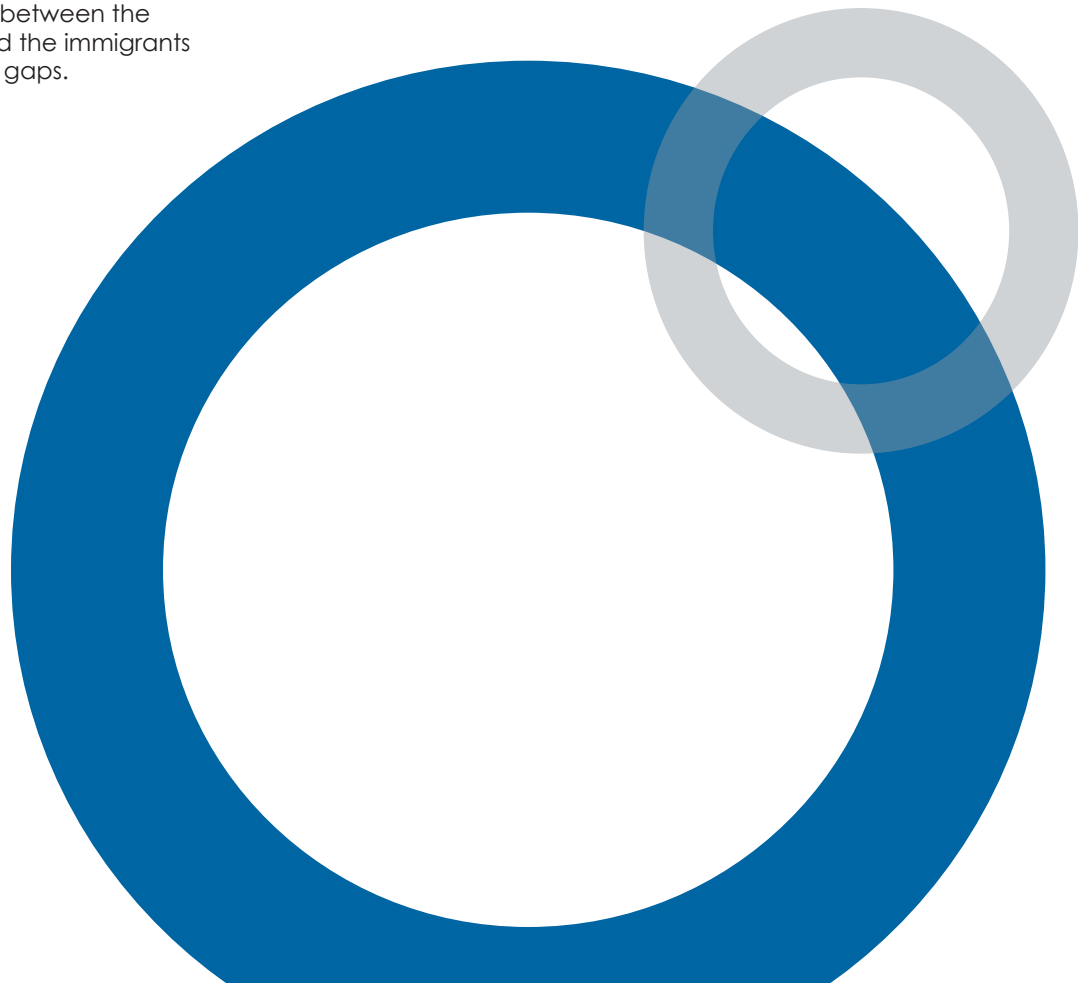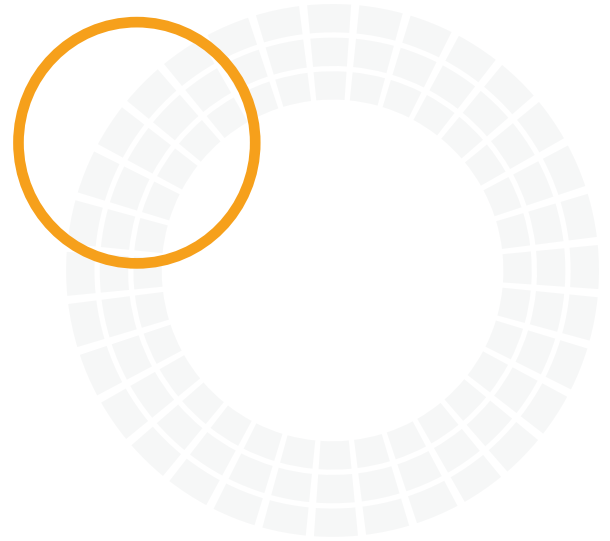
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Appendix

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.
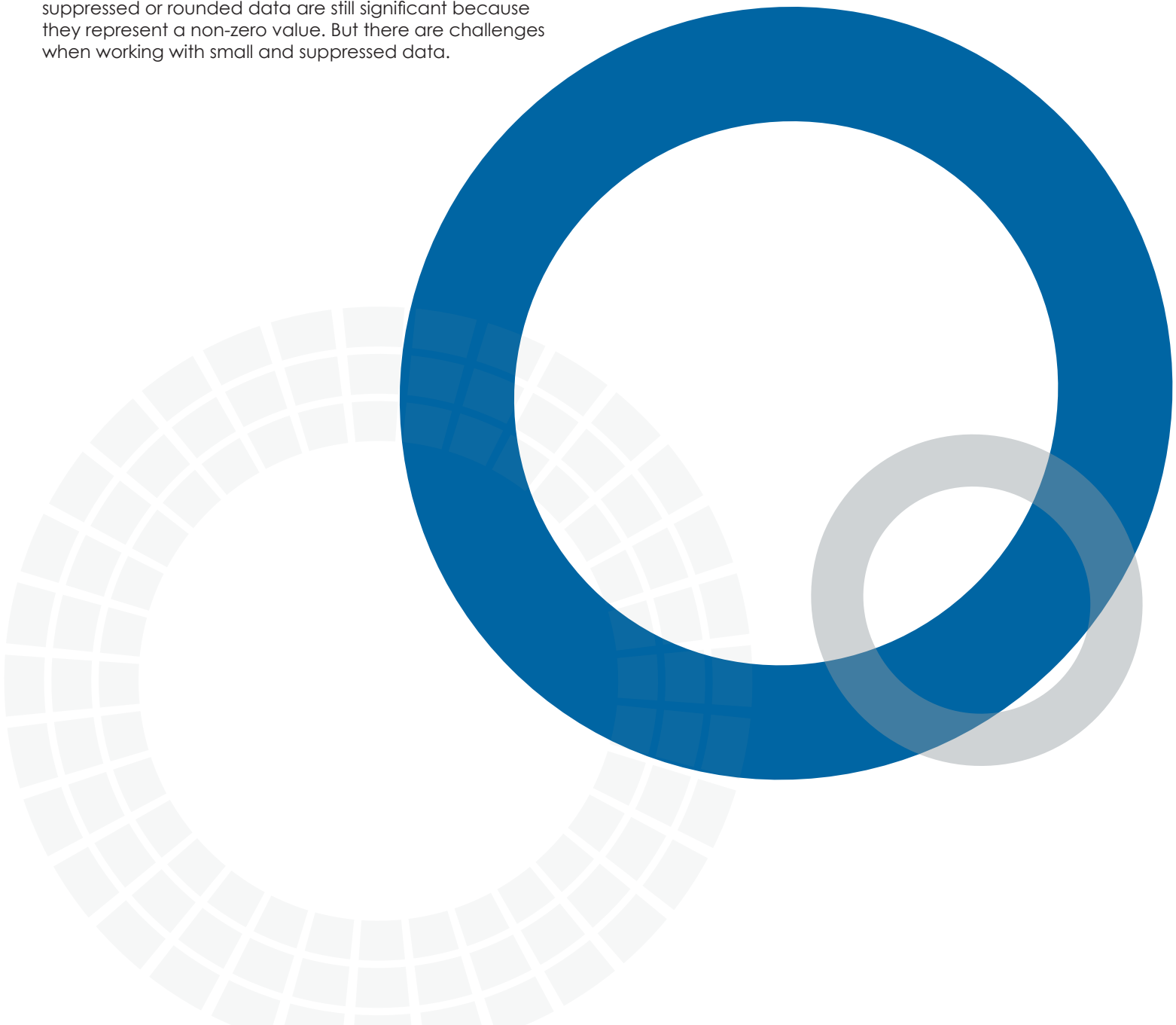
Appendix B: Definitions

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 those 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 in North Bay (retention rates are only available for the CMA of Greater Sudbury and Thunder Bay).

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

Appendix D: North Bay RNIP - Year 1 Targeted NOCs

- 0213: Computer and information systems managers

- 111: Auditors, accountants and investment professionals

- 121 Administrative services supervisors

- 1242: Legal administrative assistants

- 1311: Accounting technicians and bookkeepers

- 2147: Computer engineers

- 2151: Architects

- 2171: Information systems analysts and consultants

- 2172: Database analysts and data administrators

- 2173: Software engineers and designers

- 223: Civil, mechanical, industrial engineering, technologists and technicians

- 2244: Aircraft instrument, electrical and avionics mechanics, technicians

- 2251: Architecture, technologists and technicians

- 2271: Air pilots, flight engineers

- 3012: Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses

- 3111: Specialist physicians

- 3112: General practitioners and family physicians

- 3233: Licensed practical nurses

- 3413: Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates

- 4152: Social workers

- 4212: Social and community service workers

- 4214: Early childhood educators and assistants

- 4412: Home support workers, housekeepers and related occupations

- 7237: Welders and related machine operators

- 7241: Electricians

- 7251: Plumbers

- 7271: Carpenters

- 7311: Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics

- 7312: Heavy duty equipment mechanics

- 7315: Aircraft mechanics and aircraft Inspectors

- 7321: Automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers

- 7511: Transport truck drivers

- 7521: Heavy equipment operators

- 7535: Other automotive mechanical installers and servicers

- 7611: Construction trades helpers and laborers

- **OPEN NOC** (10 allocations)

About Northern Policy Institute

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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