SETTLEMENT AND RETENTION OF IMMIGRANTS IN NON-GATEWAY CITIES: TRENDS SINCE THE 2000S

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Steering immigrants away from traditional gateway cities of Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver may help balance the geographic distribution of immigrants and counter declining populations and labour shortages in smaller cities. However, a large-scale analysis on immigrant retention in smaller cities is limited. Using the Longitudinal Immigration Database, we analyze the geographic distribution of recent immigrant cohorts (2000-2014 arrivals) by city size. We find smaller cities, especially those in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, are less successful in retaining newcomers. However, the geographic distribution of an immigrant cohort is fairly stable over time, suggesting immigrants who initially settled in smaller cities are likely to relocate to other smaller cities, staying away from the gateway cities. Thus, if non-traditional destinations like Atlantic Canada, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are able to increase the number of entering immigrants through specific immigration selection programs like the Provincial Nominee Programs, they will likely remain in smaller cities.

L'éloignement des immigrants des villes d'accès traditionnelles, telles que Toronto, Montréal ou Vancouver, peut aider à équilibrer la répartition géographique des immigrants et à contrer le déclin de la population et la pénurie de main-d'œuvre dans les petites villes. Cependant, une analyse à grande échelle sur la rétention des immigrants dans les petites villes est limitée. À l'aide Banque de données longitudinales sur les immigrants (BDIM), nous analysons la répartition géographique des cohortes d'immigrants récents (arrivées entre 2000 et 2014) par taille de ville. Nous constatons que les petites villes, en particulier celles du Canada atlantique et du Québec, réussissent moins bien à retenir les nouveaux arrivants. Cependant, la répartition géographique d'une cohorte d'immigrants est assez stable dans le temps, ce qui suggère que les immigrants qui se sont initialement installés dans des villes plus petites sont susceptibles de s'installer dans d'autres villes plus petites, et d'éviter les grandes villes d'entrée. Ainsi, si des destinations non traditionnelles comme le Canada atlantique, le Manitoba et la Saskatchewan sont en mesure d'augmenter le nombre d'immigrants entrants grâce à des programmes de sélection d'immigration spécifiques tels que le Programme des candidats des provinces, ces immigrants resteront probablement dans des villes plus petites.

Steering immigrants away from traditional gateway cities of Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver may help balance the geographic distribution of immigrants and counter declining populations and labour shortages in smaller cities (Hou 2007). Using the Longitudinal Immigration Database, we analyze the geographic distribution of recent immigrant cohorts (2000-2014 arrivals) by city size. We examine where these immigrants intended to settle and actually settled, and how immigrant retention varied by region and admission category. Further, we look at the trends in geographic distributions of new arrivals over time.

COMPARISON OF INITIAL AND INTENDED DESTINATIONS

We look at six categories of urban areas defined by population size: Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver; secondary cities including Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Ottawa, Quebec City, and Winnipeg; small Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs including Halifax, Moncton, St. John's, etc.); and small urban areas including Census Agglomeration (CAs) - areas surrounding a core with a population of at least 10,000. We also examine immigrants through four groups of admission categories: Provincial Nominees; other economic immigrants; family class immigrants; and refugees. Table 1 presents our findings. It shows the percentage of adult immigrants who landed in Canada in 2000-2014 and who initially settled in their intended urban areas by city size. The percentages for Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are relatively high at 87 percent, 91 percent, and 90 percent, respectively. However, as city size declines, so does the percentage of immigrants who actually settled in their intended destination. The percentage for secondary cities is 86 percent, followed by small CMAs at 78 percent and small urban areas at 72 percent.

When these percentages are broken down by admission category, we find that family class immigrants are more likely to settle in their intended destinations than other immigrants. There is also a large variation in the rate of immigrants settling in their intended destination across regions. In Atlantic Canada, only 55 percent of immigrants who intended to settle in small urban areas in the region actually settled there, compared to 78 percent in Alberta.

TABLE 1: PERCENT OF ADULT IMMIGRANTS INITIALLY SETTLED IN THEIR INTENDED URBAN AREAS. 2000 TO 2014

	Montreal	Toronto	Vancouver	Secondary Cities	Small CMAs	Small Urban Areas
All	**87.1**	**90.9**	**90.1**	**85.8**	**78.2**	**72.1**
By Immigration Class						
Provincial Nominees	84.1	88.0	92.7	87.7	77.8	69.7
Other Economic Immigrants	86.1	87.0	86.0	80.9	70.1	68.7
Family Class	94.5	95.6	94.5	91.1	84.7	76.8
Refugees	86.7	92.4	90.6	81.9	79.0	72.9
By Intended Regions						
Atlantic					72.0	55.0
Quebec	87.1			80.1	69.9	70.6
Ontario		90.9		80.0	78.0	69.9
Manitoba/Saskatchewan				84.7	81.7	76.7
Alberta				89.7		78.4
British Columbia			90.1		83.2	73.9

Source: Statistics Canada. Longitudinal Immigration Database 2016

IMMIGRANT RETENTION BY CITY SIZE

Once immigrants settle in a specific urban area, it is important to also ask how likely they are to remain there over time. Table 2 shows that immigrants who first settled in small cities are less likely to stay in their initial destination. Five years after arrival, 86 percent, 74 percent, and 65 percent of immigrants remain in the initial destinations if they settle in secondary cities, small CMAs, and small urban areas, respectively. After ten years, the retention rates of immigrants in these three urban areas further drop to 81 percent, 65 percent and 52 percent, respectively. By contrast, nine out of ten immigrants who originally settled in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver remain there five years after arrival.

TABLE 2: PERCENT OF IMMIGRANTS STAYING IN THEIR INITIAL URBAN AREAS 5 AND 10 YEARS AFTER IMMIGRATION

		Montreal	Toronto	Vancouver	Secondary Cities	Small CMAs	Small Urban Areas
				5 years after immigration			
All		**89.0**	**91.3**	**91.7**	**86.0**	**73.6**	**64.9**
By Immigration Class	Provincial Nominees	90.3	90.8	93.8	86.0	73.6	64.9
	Other Economic Immigrants	80.3	89.2	90.9	84.5	67.9	63.5
	Family Class	91.1	93.4	92.2	88.3	79.1	68.7
	Refugees	85.5	93.0	89.7	84.4	73.6	57.5
By Initial Regions	Atlantic					64.9	49.8
	Quebec	89.1			79.9	55.8	59.2
	Ontario		91.3		81.6	73.9	62.7
	Manitoba/Saskatchewan				84.6	79.3	70.1
	Alberta				89.5		68.5
	British Columbia			91.8		80.3	67.3
				10 years after immigration			
All		**84.3**	**88.3**	**89.2**	**80.5**	**65.1**	**52.4**
By Immigration Class	Provincial Nominees	88.1	87.6	92.6	77.1	56.7	46.7
	Other Economic Immigrants	71.0	86.3	88.4	79.1	58.6	51.1
	Family Class	86.7	90.6	89.7	84.3	73.1	58.7
	Refugees	79.1	90.0	87.5	79.3	64.8	44.0
By Inital Regions	Atlantic					57.4	45.4
	Québec	85.8			74.7	50.0	50.2
	Ontario		88.5		76.2	65.8	48.9
	Manitoba/Saskatchewan				77.0	67.2	47.9
	Alberta				87.2		57.0
	British Columbia			89.8		72.2	56.6

Source: Statistics Canada. Longitudinal Immigration Database 2016

When we further break down the retention rates by admission category, several notable patterns emerge. First, the retention rates of refugees in small urban areas and other economic immigrants in small CMAs five and ten years after arrival are notably low. The trend is also seen in Montreal. Second, family class immigrants' retention rates are relatively high across cities of all sizes. Third, the Provincial Nominees' retention rates in small CMAs and small urban areas drop rapidly after the five-year mark. Ten years after arrival, less than 60 percent of those who initially settled in these small cities remain in their initial destination. Smaller cities in Atlantic Canada and Quebec have the lowest retention rates of newcomers. Five years after arrival, 65 percent of immigrants who initially settled in small CMAs or small urban areas in Atlantic Canada still remain in the initial destination. Ten years after arrival, the rates drop to 57 percent (small CMAs) and 45 percent (small urban areas). Similar trends are observed in Quebec.

TRENDS IN GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS

So far, we find that smaller cities are less successful in retaining immigrants than the largest metropolitan centres. Does this mean immigrants eventually leave smaller cities and move to big cities? Table 3 examines these issues and illustrates two trends worth noting. First, the geographic distribution of an immigrant cohort is fairly stable over time across city sizes.

For example, 8.1 percent of immigrants who arrived in Canada in 2000-2004 initially settled in small CMAs. This percentage rose slightly to 8.4 percent and 8.5 percent five and ten years after arrival, respectively. Second, across the entering cohorts, the proportion of immigrants who initially settled in Toronto is rapidly declining (44 percent for the 2000-2004 arrival; 31 percent for the 2010-2014 arrival), while the share of secondary cities as the initial destination is on the rise (14 percent for the 2000-2004 arrival; 22 percent for the 2010-2014 arrival). The increase in new immigrants in Western Canadian CMAs, namely Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg, is in particular contributing to this upward trend.

TABLE 3 : DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANTS BY ARRIVAL COHORTS (PERCENTAGE)

	Intended Destination	Initial Destination	5 Years after Immigration	10 Years after Immigration
			2000-2004 Arrivals	
Montreal	15.0	14.9	13.6	13.0
Toronto	46.3	44.2	43.0	42.8
Vancouver	14.0	14.3	14.4	14.2
Secondary Cities	13.4	14.2	15.8	16.7
Small CMAs	7.3	8.1	8.4	8.5
Small Urban Areas	2.2	2.4	2.8	2.9
Rural Areas	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.1
			2005-2009 Arrivals	
Montreal	16.4	15.8	14.6	
Toronto	37.5	36.8	36.4	
Vancouver	14.4	14.5	14.5	
Secondary Cities	16.2	17.4	18.9	
Small CMAs	9.1	9.1	9.0	
Small Urban Areas	3.7	3.9	3.9	
Rural Areas	2.8	2.6	2.7	
			2005-2009 Arrivals	
Montreal	17.3	15.7		
Toronto	31.2	31.3		
Vancouver	12.1	12.6		
Secondary Cities	20.9	22.3		
Small CMAs	9.8	9.8		
Small Urban Areas	5.2	5.1		
Rural Areas	3.6	3.2		

Source: Statistics Canada. Longitudinal Immigration Database 2016

IMMIGRANTS TO SMALL URBAN DESTINATIONS MOVE TO OTHER SMALL CITIES

The size of initial destination matters. If newcomers initially settle in smaller cities, they will mostly stay away from larger metropolitan areas, although they may move between smaller cities. If non-traditional destinations like Atlantic Canada, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are able to increase the number of entering immigrants/refugees through targeted immigration selection programs such as the Provincial Nominee Programs and refugee private sponsorship, these newcomers will likely remain in smaller cities.

Finally, one cautionary tale is that the rising proportion of entering immigrants in Western Canadian cities (e.g. Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon) may be attributed to regional economic conditions. The boom in resource industries in Alberta and

Saskatchewan over the 2000s and early 2010s might have attracted new immigrants, accelerating the geographic redistribution of recent arrivals (Bonikowska et al. 2017). Although the present study offers an optimistic picture of the geographic dispersion of immigrants, it may not be a long-term trend as the resource sectors experience slowdown in the second half of the 2010s.

REFERENCES

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