

THIRTY YEARS OF IMMIGRATION AND GROWTH IN ATLANTIC CANADA



ATLANTIC IMMIGRATION SPOTLIGHT ON DATA

Population growth in Atlantic Canada has changed considerably over the past thirty years.

In 1994, natural increase was the main factor in population growth while immigration played a modest role; as of 2023, immigration plays a much bigger role while natural growth is the main cause of population decline.

This shift is contributing to a population that is increasingly diverse and born outside the Atlantic region. Programs and services that focus on integration are crucial to building bridges between newcomers, longer-term residents, and established ethno-cultural communities. The regional coordination of service providers and other interest holders can help build a robust and resilient sector that responds to the changing needs of newcomers.

WHAT IS THE DATA?

Figure 1 (see next page) shows key elements of population growth in Atlantic Canada. Data is combined for the four Atlantic provinces and includes:

- **Immigration.** The total number of permanent residents admitted to the Atlantic region in each year. This number does not include emigration or non-permanent/temporary residents. Figure 2 shows immigration for each Atlantic province.
- **Net non-permanent residents.** The difference between incoming and outgoing temporary residents in a given year (i.e. new temporary residents minus departing temporary residents). Temporary residents include migrant workers and international students.
- **Natural increase.** The difference between births and deaths in a given year (i.e. births minus deaths). Natural increase can have either a positive (increase) or negative (decrease) value.
- **Net interprovincial migration.** The difference between in-migrants and out-migrants from other provinces/territories. This number captures the movement of people who already reside in Canada.

POPULATION GROWTH IN ATLANTIC CANADA (1994 - 2023)

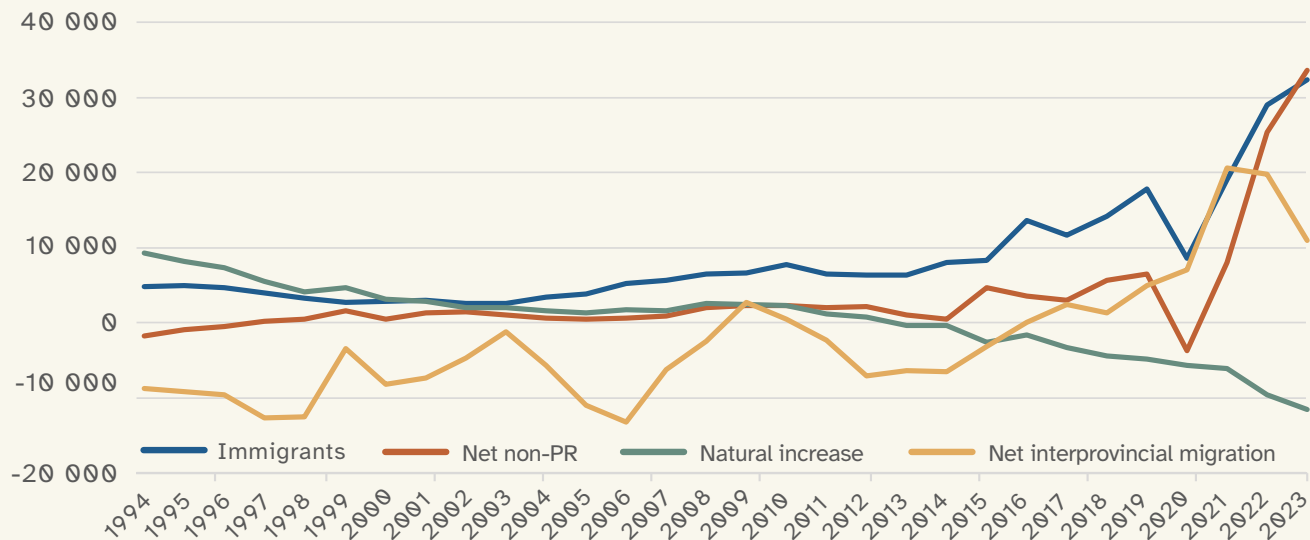


Figure 1: Population growth in Atlantic Canada, 1994 to 2023. Includes immigration, net non-permanent residents, natural increase, and net interprovincial migration.

IMMIGRATION IN THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES (1994 - 2023)

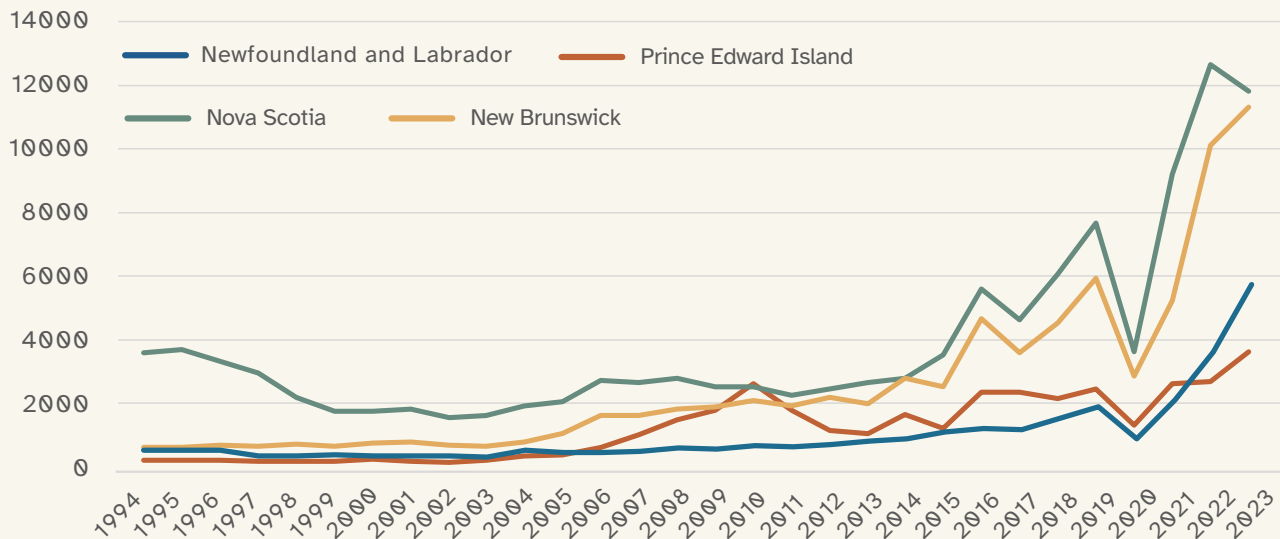


Figure 2: Immigration in the Atlantic provinces, 1994 to 2023.



WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

- **There has been a proportional decline in the Atlantic-born population with an increase in residents born outside Canada or in other provinces/territories.** In 1994, natural increase was the main contributor to population growth while interprovincial migration was the biggest factor in population decline. Immigration had a modest impact on growth while temporary residents had a mostly neutral effect. By 2023, the situation had changed considerably. Natural increase became the main cause of population decline while immigration, temporary residents, and interprovincial migration played the biggest roles in growth.
- Unlike natural increase, immigration does not change in a regular or predictable way. As such, **it can be difficult to identify longer-term trends or make reliable predictions about future patterns of immigration.** This is partly due to the fact that immigration responds to international events. For example, the spike in immigration in 2016 is largely a result of conflict in Syria while the sudden drop in 2020 is due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unpredictable immigration patterns can result in peculiar outcomes within or between years. In 2010, for example, Prince Edward Island admitted more permanent residents than any other Atlantic province (2,593 admissions, with Nova Scotia close behind at 2,397 admissions). It was only in 2021 that Prince Edward Island surpassed this record year with 2,613 admissions.

WHAT DOES THE DATA MEAN FOR SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION?

- **Services and programs are essential to supporting integration in the Atlantic region.** [Other research](#) shows that immigration is an important driver of ethno-cultural diversity in Atlantic Canada. As such, the recent rise in immigration and decline in natural growth is contributing to an increasingly diverse society. It will require concerted effort to build bridges between newcomers, longer-term residents, and established ethno-cultural communities in the region. Service providers can support this work through multicultural festivals, intercultural competency training, matching programs, and many Local Immigration Partnership initiatives.
- A robust settlement and integration sector that prioritizes cross-sectoral collaboration can help respond to unpredictable shifts in immigration. While there are peaks and valleys, immigration to Atlantic Canada never stops. Moreover, immigration does not follow regular patterns and it is difficult to predict when a surge in immigration will occur. A well-established infrastructure of services and programs will ensure newcomers receive the support necessary to adapt to life in Canada. In part, this requires changes to policy and funding that are beyond the control of service providers. However, **service providers can build a healthy and resilient sector through regional coordination** such as service mapping, knowledge sharing, and by building intersectoral partnerships with employers and other interest holders.

SOURCES:

Original data is from Statistics Canada's quarterly demographic estimates. Data has been combined for Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.

Statistics Canada. Quarterly demographic estimates, provinces and territories: Interactive dashboard.
DOI: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2019036-eng.htm>

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