

ATLANTIC IMMIGRATION SPOTLIGHT ON DATA



BUSINESS OWNERSHIP AMONG IMMIGRANTS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Immigrants are more likely than non-immigrants to be business owners.

As of 2021, 15.4% of immigrants in Atlantic Canada were business owners in comparison to 11.6% of non-immigrants.

Service providers can support immigrant entrepreneurs and business owners through mentorship programs, leadership training, and training in business management. Since most immigrant business owners do not arrive in Canada through business pathways, service providers should broadly promote these programs and services among clients and by engaging with local businesses and community organizations. Moreover, by integrating diversity training into their business programs, service providers can increase workforce inclusion for all Canadians.

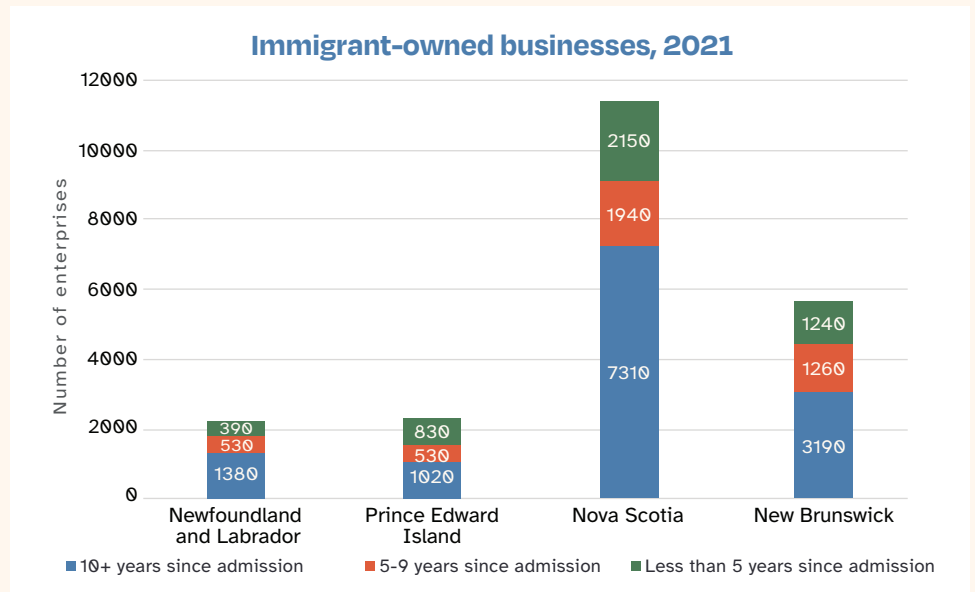


Figure 1: Immigrant-owned businesses in Atlantic Canada as of 2021.

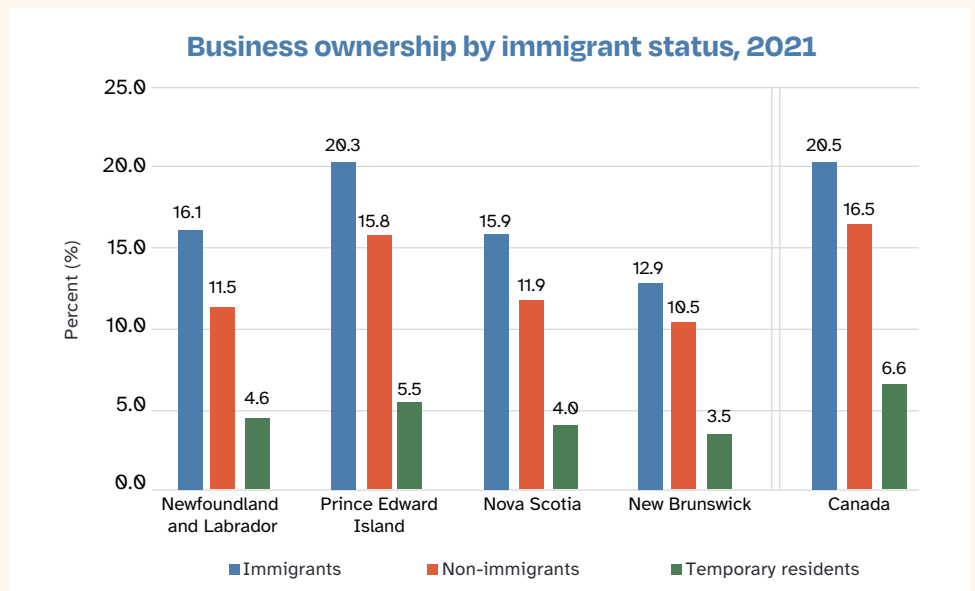


Figure 2: Rate of business ownership among immigrants, non-immigrants, and temporary residents as of 2021.

What is the data?

Figure 1 shows the total number of immigrant-owned businesses in Atlantic Canada as of 2021. Data is disaggregated for the amount of time since the owner was admitted to Canada: less than five years, five to nine years, and ten or more years.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of immigrants who are business owners as of 2021, with corresponding data for non-immigrants (i.e. Canadian-born) and temporary residents. These rates were calculated by dividing the number of businesses by the size of the corresponding population, according to the 2021 Census. For example, the number of immigrant-owned businesses in Nova Scotia (11,390) divided by the total number of immigrants in the province (71,565) is 15.9%.

What does the data say?

Immigrants are more likely to own businesses than non-immigrants. For the entire Atlantic region, 15.4% of immigrants were business owners in comparison to 11.6% of non-immigrants. This trend is consistent for every Atlantic province and for Canada more broadly, where 20.5% of immigrants are business owners in comparison to 16.5% of non-immigrants. The difference is similar (4-5%) for Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia, with a somewhat smaller difference (2.4%) in New Brunswick.

The majority of immigrant business owners in Atlantic Canada have been in the country for more than a decade. Of the 21,780 immigrant-owned businesses in the region, 59% of owners were admitted to Canada ten or more years ago. Nevertheless, this means that **a large minority of business owners were admitted more recently.** In particular, more than a fifth (21%) of immigrant business owners were admitted less than five years ago.

Most immigrant business owners do not come to Canada through business pathways, such as the [start-up visa program](#) or as a [self-employed person](#). For the five-year period from 2017 to 2021 (i.e. the period overlapping with the business-ownership data), only about 250 permanent residents were admitted to Atlantic Canada through a business pathway ([Open Government, Permanent Residents](#)). In other words, the vast majority (more than 90%) of recent immigrant business owners were admitted to Canada through non-business pathways. It is unlikely that these patterns have changed much in recent years. In 2024, more than 39,000 permanent residents were admitted to the Atlantic provinces but only about 135 came through a business pathway; in 2025, more than 27,000 were admitted but only about 40 were through business pathways.

What does the data mean for settlement and integration?

Programs for entrepreneurs and business owners can help prepare immigrants to start new businesses or lead existing ones. Relevant initiatives include programs or training that support immigrant entrepreneurs with business planning, marketing, human resources, etc.; mentorship programs for entrepreneurs and business owners; distributing or supporting with loans and micro-loans; and programs that prepare newcomers to be community leaders.

Business and entrepreneurship programs should be accessible to all immigrants regardless of immigration pathway. Since most immigrant business owners do not arrive in Canada through business pathways, service providers can increase

program impact by ensuring all clients are aware of available programs and services. Outreach can be further supported by engaging with local businesses, chambers of commerce, professional associations, educational institutions, and community organizations to promote relevant programs.

Immigrant-owned businesses can be an ideal place to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion within the workforce. While all businesses benefit from EDI and intercultural competency training, immigrant business owners may be especially receptive to receive training and implement changes. Integrating diversity training into business and entrepreneurship programs and services can contribute to greater workforce inclusion for all Canadians.

SOURCES: Business ownership data is available from Statistics Canada's [Business Ownership Diversity Dashboard](#) and related products. Data on immigrant-owned businesses is from Statistics Canada, [Table 33-10-0840-01 Number of enterprises in Canada, by geography and immigrant status of owner](#), <https://doi.org/10.25318/3310084001-eng>.

