

## **Immigration in Nova Scotia: Who comes, who stays, who leaves and why?**

An on-going study conducted by:

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### **Study Description**

Over the past ten years, the annual immigrant inflows to the province of Nova Scotia have been higher than before, attributed largely to deliberate attempts at government and community levels. Main motivation behind these attempts has been to reverse the population growth decline, and population aging, both of which can result in slowing down of economic activity in the province.<sup>1</sup> A 2012 paper, published by the Government of Nova Scotia, predicts that by 2020 the province's labour market can require additional labour supply of up to 8,000 through immigration. Hence, the Province's immigration strategy, Welcome Home to Nova Scotia, aims at providing the workers it needs to grow the economy and communities. By 2020, the immigration strategy aims to increase the total number of immigrants admitted annually by 7,200, including 3,600 new nominees and their family members, and another 3,600 individuals through the federal immigration streams.

Most immigrants who come to Canada tend to gravitate towards larger provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec where there are large resident immigrant communities and more diversified labour markets. Smaller provinces, such as Nova Scotia, face difficulty in retaining immigrants who arrive here. In order to address this issue, governments, immigrant settlement organizations and communities have adopted several initiatives to make immigrants feel welcome in the province and also to disseminate information about the availability of economic opportunities in the province and other social and natural attributes it has to offer. These initiatives are showing results as immigrant retention has increased over the past ten years. However, retention continues to be lower than provinces outside of Atlantic Canada.

A systematic research to identify the causes of lower retention of immigrants can provide useful information that can form a basis of future policy design and planning in Nova Scotia which wants to attract and retain immigrants. Hence, the objectives of present research are threefold. It will attempt to: 1) uncover the reasons for international immigrants choosing Nova Scotia as the province of destination, 2) identify their reasons to stay in the province and 3) identify the reasons that cause new arrivals to leave the province for other parts of Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2016 Canadian Population Census recorded a 5 % increase in Canadian population since 2011. In Nova Scotia, the population rose by only 0.2%. The census also recorded that about 17% of all Canadians and 20% of Nova Scotians were aged 65 and over.

An understanding of the role of the factors determining Nova Scotia as the destination province, making it home, and also causing some to leave, is important if Nova Scotia is to attract professional and innovative immigrants and ensure that they get the support they need to make Nova Scotia their home.<sup>2</sup>

The study will be divided into three parts (activities). The first part will be based on two sub-parts. One will analyze immigrant landings data, to be obtained from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), on annual immigrant arrivals in the province, over the past ten years, and their demographic and labour market characteristics. The second sub-part will be based on 2016 Canadian Population Census data to analyze some demographic characteristics of interprovincial migrants in Nova Scotia.

The remaining part of the study will be based on a survey questionnaire that will be administered for those who were i) destined for Nova Scotia at the time of arrival, including those who actually arrived there and stayed or have left and ii) initially destined for other provinces but are either living in Nova Scotia now or have lived in there in the recent past but are now living elsewhere in Canada. Only those who arrived in Canada during 2011 – 2018 are included in the sample. Detailed questions exploring the reasons for i) choice of Nova Scotia as destination province, ii) the reasons for why the respondent was still residing in the province, and iii) why he/she decided to leave, will be asked. Responses will be analyzed using statistical tools of analysis. We aim to administer the questionnaire to 5000 respondents.

Several focus group interviews will also be conducted with immigrants in Nova Scotia and those who have moved from Nova Scotia to Alberta and Ontario, the top two destinations of immigrant outmigrants from Nova Scotia.

The project will culminate in a report that will be presented to the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada. Results of the study will also be released to the general public.

For further information, please contact the principal investigator: Professor Ather H. Akbari via email at [IRCC.NS@SMU.ca](mailto:IRCC.NS@SMU.ca) or by phone at 902-420-5670.

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<sup>2</sup> These are also the objectives of current Immigration Strategy of The Province.