

## IMMIGRANT RETENTION IN URBAN-RURAL SETTINGS

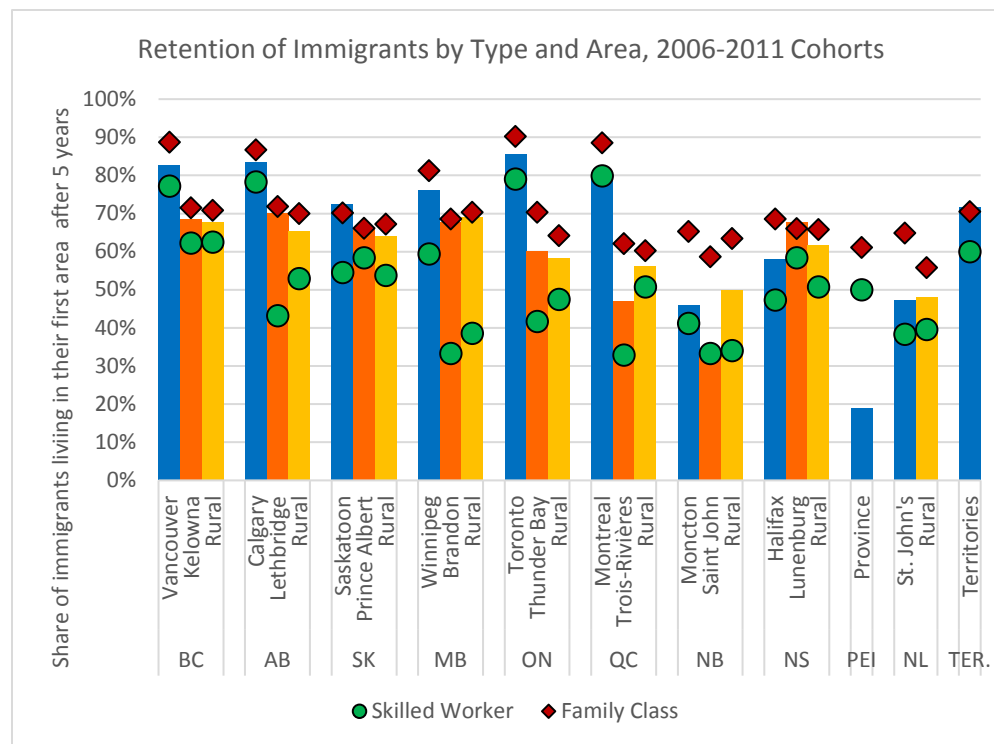
The Atlantic Provinces and Rural Canada have difficulty retaining high skilled immigrants. Regardless of jurisdiction, immigrants sponsored by family members are more likely to remain in an area after arriving.

The figure shows the average retention rate of immigrants admitted to Canada from 2006-2011, five years after being admitted. The retention rate is the percentage of immigrants still living in the area after being admitted, without moving away. Blue bars show the average retention rate of immigrants in urban areas, orange bars in mid-size cities, and yellow bars in rural areas. This average includes economic immigrants, immigrants sponsored by family members, and refugees. The red diamonds and green circles compare two types of immigrants against the average. Red diamonds represent immigrant children, spouses, parents, and other close family members sponsored by permanent residents or Canadian citizens. Green circles represent immigrants admitted to Canada on the basis of their official language skills, education, and professional experience.

High-skilled immigrants were generally the most “mobile” type of immigrant, showing the least attachment to a city or area. By contrast, family class immigrants were generally the most “sticky,” being the least likely to move away from an area after being admitted.

Governments focusing on population growth in certain areas should prioritize family ties and supporting Provincial Nominees.

Except for the Atlantic Provinces and parts of Quebec, large urban centres and mid-sized cities were more likely to retain immigrants than rural areas. Western Provinces tended to retain more immigrants than Eastern Provinces, with notable drop-offs in Atlantic Canada and parts of Quebec outside of Montreal. [Studies have shown](#) that higher retention rates of immigrants, including skilled workers and sponsored family members, may be attributed to stronger economies and employment opportunities, the presence of stronger ethnic communities, or availability of social services.



Source: Statistics Canada, Tables 43-10-0011-01 & 43-10-0010-01 and author’s calculations.

The Federal Government and certain Provinces have programs whose goal is to augment the population of Atlantic and rural Canada. For those areas, the programs should target family ties over skillsets. Additional spaces in the family sponsorship stream could be reserved for rural families. A revived “Assisted Relative” stream, a program that preferred skilled workers with family ties in Canada, could be tailored to applicants intending to live near family members residing in rural areas.

There are other options for areas where few immigrants live, who would normally “anchor” family members to a place. Provinces may nominate immigrants for permanent residency based on provincial selection criteria. These “[Provincial Nominees](#)” have generally better retention rates than skilled workers. A requirement to live and work in an area during a probationary period, under a provincially-supported work permit, could foster greater growth and retention in rural Canada.