Immigration Report Update

MARCH 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BuildForce Canada wishes to acknowledge the members of our Steering Committee who represent various organizations within the construction sector and who provided input and direction into the format of this report and its guiding principles:

- Canada's Building Trades Unions
- Canadian Construction Association
- Canadian Home Builders' Association
- Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada
- Merit Canada

Assistance in drafting this report was provided by:

- Prism Economics
- Talent Without Borders

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Historically, the relationship between immigration and the construction industry in Canada has been symbiotic. Landed immigrants play a vital role in shaping and sustaining the sector. Their diverse skills and talents have enabled the industry to respond effectively to the rising demands for construction services across the country, while at the same time, helping to build out the homes, schools and other assets required to facilitate their integration into Canadian society. However, over the last 30 years, changes in immigration selection policy have left the industry with diminished access to the vast pool of international talent with the skills the industry requires.

Ensuring the construction sector can continue to access adequate numbers of newcomers with the skills the sector requires to remain competitive and achieve important public-policy imperatives will be critical. This is even more the case today as the industry contends with addressing Canada's housing crisis, including the construction of the required core public infrastructure to support the connection of these new homes to existing communities, the modernization and expansion of the country's trade-enabling infrastructure, as well as supporting the nascent electrification of the economy.

Canada's shifting age structure is already presenting labour force challenges. These challenges will intensify over the next decade as the remaining baby boomer generation of workers retires. With more retirees than young workers entering the workforce, competition for younger talent is increasing. While domestic recruitment is crucial, it alone may not meet the growing demand for a youthful workforce. Canada's immigration system must help bridge these gaps to maintain a robust working-age population.

Compared to other OECD countries, Canada has a different demographic profile. Most OECD nations have more elderly individuals than young ones, but exceptions, such as Luxembourg, Australia, and New Zealand, have leveraged immigration to counteract aging populations.

As G7 and OECD countries intensify efforts to attract immigrants, the competition for skilled newcomers is growing. This trend may worsen domestic recruitment challenges and lead to a drain of Canadian-born youth seeking opportunities abroad. Ensuring a smooth integration of skilled immigrants is crucial for Canada to remain an attractive destination.

Current immigration policy favours university-educated individuals, which may create challenges for industries relying on skilled trades. Limited representation of individuals with trade certificates raises concerns for sectors dependent on these skills. As competition for younger workers intensifies, these industries could face recruitment hurdles.

Even prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the construction sector had been grappling with skilled labour shortages. The changing career preferences of Canadian youth are partly responsible, as is the surge in overall demand for construction services. However, these shortages have been exacerbated by immigration policies that increasingly prioritize individuals with university educations and strong language proficiency. This, in turn, limits the capacity of sectors such as construction to supplement their domestic recruitment efforts with newcomers that hold apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship certificates. The sharp decline in admissions for individuals in the latter category has hindered the sector's capacity to leverage the immigration system for labour force development.

To remedy this challenge, the construction industry recommends the following principles be adopted for immigration reform:

1. **Addressing Educational Bias:** Reduce the bias towards highly educated individuals in the immigration system by expanding the Federal Skilled Trades Program and allocating additional points to qualified candidates in this program based on labour market needs.

2. **Federal-Provincial/Territorial Alignment:** Improve transparency in immigration planning by specifying provincial/territorial allocations, targets, and sector-specific goals.

3. **Industry Involvement:** Improve consultations with domestic industrial sectors when setting immigration targets and align selection policies with labour market needs. Prioritize immigrants endorsed by employers.

4. **Supporting Competency-based Assessments:** Encourage provinces/territories to adopt competency-based skills assessments for foreign credentials to better match individuals with job opportunities and improve overall productivity.

Adopting these principles and reforms can help Canada establish a more responsive immigration system that meets the needs of the construction industry, especially in addressing skilled labour shortages.

INTRODUCTION

For the past two decades, the construction industry has been grappling with acute episodic skilled-labour shortages. Driven by regional investment surges, these challenges first emerged in Western Canada in the early 2000s. They became more common over time, and now afflict the industry in nearly all provinces and territories.

Labour shortages are not unique to the construction sector, but they have been exacerbated to some degree by changes in immigration policy. As the selection criteria for landed immigrants focuses increasingly on individuals' post-graduate educations and strong proficiency in either of Canada's official languages, people with technical education or training and more modest language skills have struggled to qualify for permanent immigration.

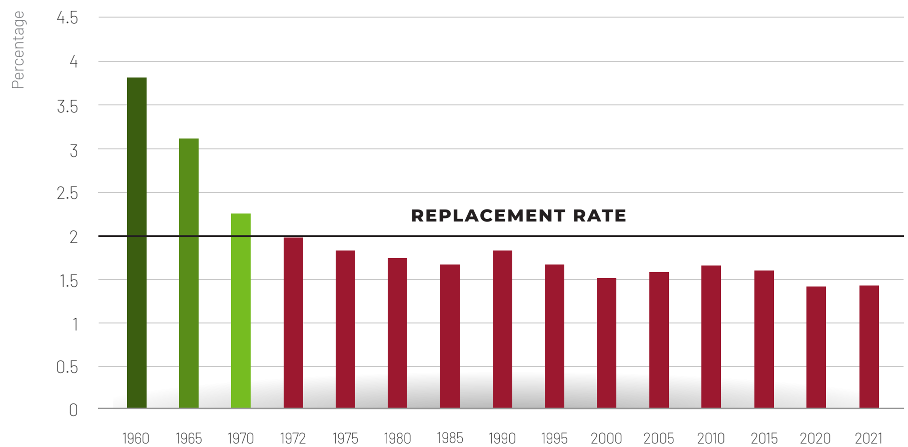
In recognition of the challenges the construction sector and other industries were facing in recruiting skilled trade workers, the federal government introduced the Federal Skilled Trades Program in 2013 as part of the Express Entry system. The Express Entry system uses a points scale to manage the intake of economic immigrants, including skilled workers, under three federal economic immigration programs. Despite the introduction of this new program, however, the construction sector continues to experience challenges recruiting the skilled trades it needs to keep pace with increasing demands.

Labour force challenges, however, are not unique to Canada. Increasingly, most G7 and OCED countries are grappling with changes in their population age structures that will mean fewer younger workers are available to replace those entering retirement. The competition for skilled talent around the globe that can help fill gaps in the domestic labour force is expected to increase over the coming decade. This competition will not only impact Canada's ability to attract talent but may also lead to a pull on domestic talent as other countries become far more engaged in immigration.

CANADIAN DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

From 1877 to 1917, Canada's population experienced an average growth of 24% per decade. This increase was attributed to both natural population growth and immigration. Over this period, the population doubled from 4 million to 8 million. Further growth, particularly in the post-World War Two era, followed. By its centenary, Canada's population had risen to 20 million.

FIGURE 1: CANADIAN FERTILITY RATES, 1961 TO 2021



Source: The World Bank. (2023, December 12). Fertility rate, total (births per woman) - Canada

This remarkable growth was driven by two factors: the post-War baby boom and rising levels of immigration. Combined, these trends helped to drive Canada's fertility rate[1] to 3.8 in 1960. That level was not to be sustained, however. As Figure 1 shows, the rate had dropped to 2 by 1972 – just below the replacement level of 2.1. It has never been as high since. In 2021, Canada's fertility rate was just 1.4.

Declining fertility rates have had significant demographic implications. In 1972, 47% of Canada's population was under 25 years of age. The baby boom generation ranged in age between 7 and 27 years. The labour force participation rate was 60%, and women accounted for 38% of the total labour force.

By 1991, the last of the baby boomers entered the core working age group of 25 to 64 years of age. The population under age 25 decreased to 35%, while the core working age population increased to 54%. The labour force participation rate rose to 64%, and the share of women in the labour force increased to 45%.

[1] The fertility rate is a demographic measure indicating the average number of children a woman is expected to have during her childbearing years.

In 2006, the first baby boomers began retiring. The share of Canadians under 25 declined further to 31%, while the core working age group increased to 56%. The labour force participation rate reached 65%, with women now comprising 47% of the labour force.

By 2021, individuals under 25 constituted 28% of the Canadian population, while the core working age group declined to 54% (with approximately 20% of those individuals aged between 50 and 64 years). Meanwhile, the share of individuals over 65 increased to 19%.

The impact of these demographic shifts in the years ahead will be significant. Simply, there are more individuals entering retirement in the next 15 years than there are youth available to replace them in the workforce. Figure 2 illustrates these trends.

When Canada's fertility rate dipped below 2 in 1972, immigration emerged as the primary catalyst for population growth. According to data from the 2021 Census, 8.4 million landed immigrants currently reside in Canada. Collectively, they account for 23% of the nation's population.

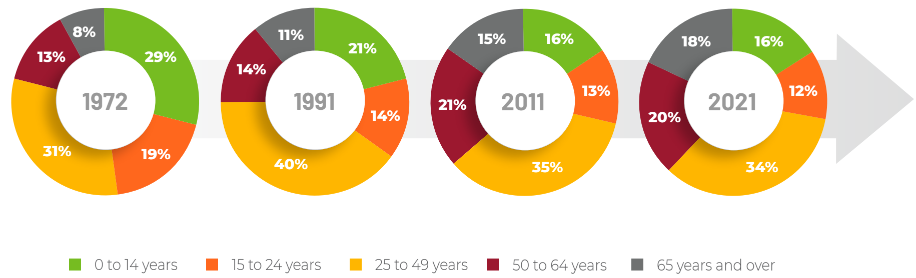
Figure 3 provides further evidence in support of the growing role of immigration as the primary driver of population growth in Canada.

GLOBAL DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Although many factors influence an individual's decision to emigrate, family or cultural ties to communities in the receiving country pull strongly. Economic opportunities within the home country and population demographics can also be strong push factors. For example, a high rate of youth unemployment may be a strong push factor. Conversely, a population pyramid that skews toward older individuals may persuade individuals contemplating immigration to remain in their home countries and wait for the older workers to leave the labour force, particularly if the population growth rate is in decline.

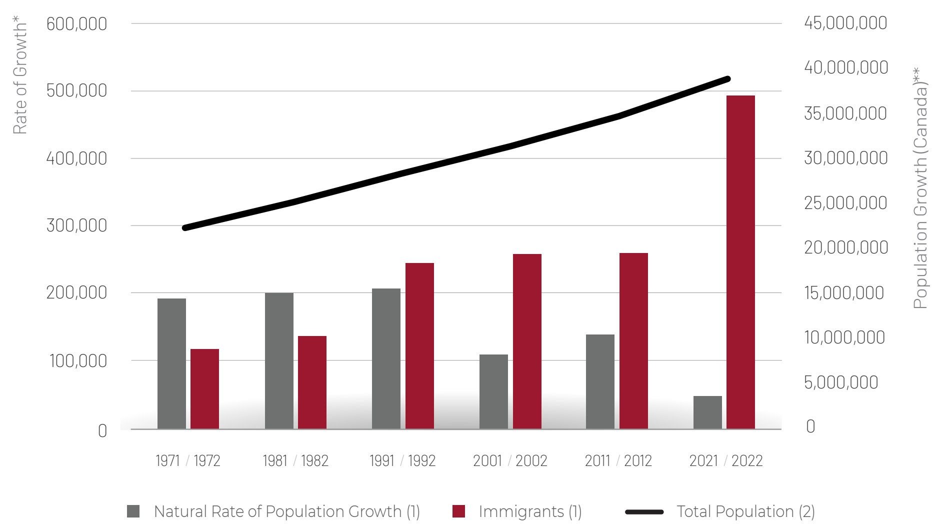
Canada is welcoming of newcomers. Indeed, there are very few countries around the globe without cultural ties to Canada. Ours is a very attractive country for would-be immigrants who are considering their immigration options. Since Canada is not alone in facing demographic challenges and labour shortages, the competition for would-be immigrants from many of our major trading partners is likely to increase significantly in the years to come. Indeed, nearly all G7 and OECD countries are presently struggling with demographic shifts.

FIGURE 2: CANADIAN DEMOGRAPHICS, 1972 TO 2021



* **Source:** Statistics Canada, Table: 17-10-0005-01

FIGURE 3: COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH, 1971-72 TO 2021-22



* **Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0008-01 Estimates of the components of demographic growth, annual
** **Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex

Table 1 helps illustrate this point. Most G7 countries share similar population structures to Canada. The United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada all have positive population growth numbers as all four countries have historically been immigrant receiving countries. Japan, Germany, and Italy all have negative population growth rates.

Population age structure is important to consider when evaluating immigration requirements. Countries with older age population structures place a greater burden on working age individuals to support retired citizens. The potential support ratio, i.e., the ratio of individuals in the working age cohort contrasted against those of retirement age, helps illustrate this point. Canada ranks second to the United States when evaluating this metric. Therefore, as the populations of G7 countries continue to age, many may turn to immigration to supplement their core working age populations.

Canada already ranks as one of the top immigrant-receiving countries in the G7. As its population continues to age over the next decade, the share of immigrants making up the Canadian population is expected to reach 30% by 2036.[2]

The trends found in the G7 are also present among OECD countries. Most OECD countries are facing similar demographic challenges that will require them to turn with increasing regularity to immigration to help sustain their labour forces.

Table 2 shows the population structure for all OECD countries, excluding G7 countries, which were reported in Table 1.

TABLE 1: G7 POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE - 2021

	AGE STRUCTURE							
	0-14	15-65	OVER 65	MEDIAN AGE	POTENTIAL SUPPORT RATIO	POPULATION GROWTH RATE	FERTILITY RATE	IMMIGRANTS SHARE OF POPULATION (2020)
G7								
Canada	15.7%	63.9%	20.5%	41.8	3.6	0.73%	1.57	21.3%
United States	18.2%	63.7%	18.1%	38.5	3.9	0.68%	1.84	15.3%
Japan	12.3%	58.5%	29.2%	48.6	2	-0.41%	1.39	2.2%
Germany	13.8%	63.0%	23.3%	47.8	2.9	-0.12%	1.58	18.8%
Italy	12.1%	64.6%	23.3%	46.5	2.7	-0.11%	1.29	10.6%
France	18.0%	60.5%	21.4%	41.7	2.9	0.31%	2.02	13.1%
United Kingdom	16.9%	64.0%	19.1%	40.6	3.4	0.49%	1.63	13.8%

Potential Support Ratio: The potential number of working-age people (ages 15-54) per one elderly person (ages 65+).
Source: CIA, The World Factbook, Country profiles, age structure, dependency ratios, median age, population growth rate, and total fertility rate. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ (November 2023)
Source: Immigrant share of pop. (2020), World Population Review, country rankings, immigration by country. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/immigration-by-country

[2] Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, News release, January 3, 2023, Canada welcomes historic number of newcomers in 2022.

TABLE 2: OECD POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE

	AGE STRUCTURE 0-14	AGE STRUCTURE 15-65	AGE STRUCTURE OVER 65	MEDIAN AGE	POTENTIAL SUPPORT RATIO	POPULATION GROWTH RATE	FERTILITY RATE	IMMIGRANTS SHARE OF POPULATION (2020)
OECD (excluding G7)								
Austria	14.1%	65.1%	20.8%	44.5	3.4	0.31%	1.51	19.3%
Belgium	17.0%	63.1%	19.9%	41.6	3.3	0.55%	1.77	17.3%
Czechia	14.7%	64.2%	21.1%	43.3	3.1	0.00%	1.50	5.1%
Denmark	16.2%	63.1%	20.6%	42.0	3.1	0.44%	1.77	12.4%
Estonia	15.6%	62.3%	22.2%	43.7	3.1	-0.74%	1.62	15.0%
Finland	16.3%	60.5%	23.3%	42.8	2.7	0.22%	1.74	7.0%
Greece	14.0%	62.7%	23.3%	45.3	2.8	-0.35%	1.40	12.9%
Hungary	14.2%	64.0%	21.8%	43.6	3.2	-0.31%	1.49	6.1%
Iceland	20.0%	63.4%	16.6%	37.1	4.5	0.89%	1.95	19.2%
Ireland	20.4%	65.0%	14.6%	37.8	4.4	0.91%	1.91	17.6%
Latvia	14.9%	63.4%	21.7%	44.4	2.9	-1.13%	1.55	12.7%
Lithuania	15.3%	63.1%	21.6%	44.5	3.1	-1.04%	1.61	5.3%
Luxembourg	16.7%	67.4%	15.9%	39.5	4.7	1.58%	1.63	47.6%
Netherlands	16.1%	63.1%	20.9%	42.8	3.2	0.36%	1.77	13.8%
Norway	17.8%	64.0%	18.2%	39.5	3.6	0.79%	1.83	15.7%
Poland	14.5%	64.9%	20.6%	41.9	3.5	-0.28%	1.41	2.2%
Portugal	12.9%	65.2%	22.0%	44.6	2.8	-0.17%	1.44	9.8%
Slovakia	14.9%	66.5%	18.6%	41.8	3.9	-0.12%	1.46	3.6%
Slovenia	14.6%	62.7%	22.7%	44.9	3.1	-0.08%	1.60	13.4%
Spain	13.4%	66.1%	20.5%	43.9	3.3	0.12%	1.29	14.6%
Sweden	17.3%	62.1%	20.7%	41.1	3.1	0.51%	1.67	19.8%
Switzerland	15.5%	65.1%	19.4%	42.7	3.5	0.64%	1.58	28.8%
Turkey	22.1%	68.6%	9.3%	32.2	8.1	0.64%	1.91	7.2%
Israel	26.0%	61.7%	12.4%	30.4	5	1.43%	2.54	22.6%
Australia	18.4%	64.9%	16.7%	37.5	3.9	1.19%	1.73	30.1%
New Zealand	19.2%	64.4%	16.5%	37.2	4.1	1.06%	1.86	28.7%
South Korea	11.5%	70.1%	18.4%	43.2	4.3	0.23%	1.11	3.4%
Mexico	23.8%	68.2%	8.0%	29.3	8.2	0.61%	1.73	0.9%
Chile	19.3%	67.6%	13.1%	35.5	5.4	0.63%	1.75	8.6%
Colombia	22.5%	66.7%	10.9%	31.2	8	0.54%	1.94	3.7%
Costa Rica	21.5%	68.6%	9.9%	32.6	6.5	0.98%	1.86	10.2%

Potential Support Ratio: The potential number of working-age people (ages 15-54) per one elderly person (ages 65+).
Source: CIA, The World Factbook, Country profiles, age structure, dependency ratios, median age, population growth rate, and total fertility rate. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ (November 2023)
Source: Immigrant share of pop. (2020), World Population Review, country rankings, immigration by country. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/immigration-by-country

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Since 1967, Canada's approach to economic immigration has focused on identifying newcomers with high human capital, primarily using a points system. This system awarded points based on age, education, work experience, and proficiency in English or French. In the early 2000s, the focus shifted to a hybrid model, but remained predominantly points-based. By 2015, to manage the overwhelming number of applications, Canada introduced the Express Entry system, further emphasizing a points-based approach.

Express Entry System

The Express Entry system was introduced to better manage immigration applications under Canada's principal Economic Class immigration programs. Candidates meeting the minimum criteria for the three principal federal programs and certain provincial programs may create Express Entry profiles. The following is a brief description of the eligibility criteria for each program. There are a number of additional economic programs that have been introduced over the past several years, however, the focus of this report will be on the four primary economic programs which are discussed below.

Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP)

To be eligible for admission under the FSWP, applicants must meet specific criteria, including factors such as education, work experience, language proficiency, and adaptability. Firstly, applicants are required to have at least one year of continuous full-time or equivalent part-time work experience in a skilled occupation in TEERs 0, 1, 2, or 3, as defined by the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system. Moreover, they must possess a valid Educational Credential Assessment report to demonstrate that their foreign educational credentials are equivalent to Canadian standards. Language proficiency in English or French is crucial, with proof of proficiency confirmed through language test results. Additionally, applicants are assessed on adaptability factors, which may include previous work or study experience in Canada, a valid job offer, or provincial/territorial nomination.

Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP)

The FSTP was introduced in 2013 to establish a dedicated application pathway for skilled trades workers within the Express Entry system. Eligible applicants must have at least two years of full-time work experience in a skilled trade within the past five years, or equivalent part-time experience in one of several NOC trade categories, and meet the job requirements for their specific skilled trade as set out in the NOC for the profession. They must also possess a valid job offer in Canada for at least one year or hold a certificate of qualification in their skilled trade issued by a Canadian provincial or territorial authority. Proficiency in English or French, demonstrated through language test results, is essential. Although there is no specific educational requirement for the program, individuals with post-secondary education will earn higher scores under the Comprehensive Ranking System.

Canadian Experience Class (CEC)

The CEC was introduced in 2008 to offer a pathway to permanent residency for individuals who have gained skilled work experience in Canada. To be eligible for admission, candidates must have at least one year of full-time (or equivalent part-time) skilled work experience in Canada within the last three years before applying. This experience should be in higher skilled occupations classified under NOC TEERs 0, 1, 2, or 3. Additionally, applicants are required to demonstrate proficiency in either English or French through language test results. The CEC is designed to recognize and reward individuals who have contributed their skills and talents to the Canadian workforce and wish to make Canada their permanent home.

All federal economic class programs are limited to NOC TEER categories 0, 1, 2, or 3. Individuals in so-called lower skilled occupations, e.g., NOC TEER 4 and 5 categories, are ineligible to apply. Importantly, a large proportion of the skilled trades workers that Canada needs would fall in NOC TEER 4 or 5 occupations.

Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)

The PNP was launched in 1998 with the goal of spreading the benefits of immigration across the country, and specifically outside major urban centres such as Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

Under the PNP, eligibility criteria for admission are set by the provincial or territorial governments, and can vary depending on the specific province or territory to which an individual applies. Generally, to be considered for the PNP, applicants must have a genuine intention to settle in a particular province or territory, for example by having a job offer in that province or territory. They should possess the skills, education, and work experience that align with the province's economic needs and priorities. Additionally, successful applicants need to receive a nomination certificate from the province or territory to which they apply. Meeting the specific criteria set by each province or territory, which can include language proficiency, work experience, and adaptability, is essential for being nominated through the PNP and selected for permanent residency.

The PNP is unique in that some applicants are processed through the Express Entry system, while others are processed outside it using paper-based applications. Individuals in NOC TEERs 4 and 5 may apply directly to a provincial government for selection under their non-Express Entry allocations. If accepted, they can obtain permanent residency, but the processing times for these applications are typically longer (e.g., 12-18 months) than for individuals processed under Express Entry (e.g., six months in 80% of cases).

Immigration Selection and Admissions

Applicants wishing to apply under the FSWP, FSTP, or CEC Economic Class programs must create an Express Entry profile and enter the pool. To receive an invitation to apply (ITA), a candidate must meet the criteria for one of the federal economic immigration programs or a PNP administered through Express Entry and achieve a high enough Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) score to be invited to apply.

Under Express Entry, candidates receive scores between 0 and 1,200 in the CRS. In the most recent Express Entry Year-end Report, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) lists the CRS score ranges for ITAs issued between 2020 and 2022. See Table 3.

TABLE 3: CRS APPLICATIONS AND RANKING OF APPLICANT SCORES BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL, 2020 TO 2022

COMPREHENSIVE RANKING SYSTEM SCORE DISTRIBUTION

Range	2020 #	2020 %	2021 #	2021 %	2022 #	2022 %
501-1,200	6,924	3%	7,883	2%	12,173	4%
451-500	71,232	27%	69,195	21%	76,504	24%
401-450	73,812	27%	86,626	27%	77,447	26%
351-400	72,129	27%	99,623	31%	93,621	29%
301-350	36,112	14%	50,759	16%	49,923	15%
1-300	6,449	2%	12,171	4%	9,160	3%
Total	266,658	100%	326,257	100%	318,828	100%

Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Express Entry Year-end Report 2022, September 2023

IRCC holds draws frequently, often several per month. These draws tend to have a specific focus, such as PNP draws, CEC draws, and all-program draws. As of June 2023, there are specific draws for targeted professions in high demand. Table 4 summarizes Express Entry draws since 2021.

The latest IRCC 2022 Express Entry Year-end Report shows that admissions in 2022 were down slightly from those in 2021. Between 2020 and 2022, PNP admissions accounted for 40% of total admissions, FSWP 35%, CEC 24%, and FSTP less than 1%. See Table 5.

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF EXPRESS ENTRY DRAWS, 2021 TO 2023

PROGRAM	# OF DRAWS	AVERAGE ITAs ISSUED PER INTAKE DRAW	AVERAGE MINIMUM CRS INTAKE SCORE
2021			
General	5	4,900	471
CEC	17	5,862	387
PNP	25	591	736
2022			
All Programs	11	3,250	515
PNP	13	830	756
2023			
All Programs	20	3,911	505
PNP	5	879	748
French	6	1,450	451
FSWP	1	3,300	489
Agriculture	2	500	493
Health	3	1,867	457
STEM	2	3,200	484
Trades	2	1,250	407
Transport	2	835	435

Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Express Entry Year-end Report 2022, September 2023

TABLE 5: ADMISSIONS UNDER EXPRESS ENTRY, 2020 TO 2022

EXPRESS ENTRY ADMISSIONS				
PROGRAM	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**TOTALS (%)**
CEC	24,971	130,465	28,327	54.7%
PNP	14,098	16,720	46,669	23.1%
FSWP	24,257	8,166	40,782	21.8%
FSTP	565	500	450	0.5%
Total	63,891	155,851	116,228	100%

Based on data reported in 2022 Annual Express Entry Year-End Reports

It is worth noting that provinces, through their PNPs, now account for the majority of admissions under the Express Entry system. The typical CRS score for PNP draws is also much higher than the average for other federal economic programs, in part because candidates nominated by a province receive additional CRS points. For PNP Express Entry selections, applicants must meet the criteria for one of the three federal economic programs; however, as mentioned earlier, provinces also have the latitude to create their own immigration streams and select individuals outside Express Entry. Data for these entries is not covered in either Tables 4 or 5.

Table 6, however, summarizes total admissions to Canada in 2023 under all immigration programs. The Other Economic category covers several regional and other programs, such as the Atlantic Immigration Program, Agri-food Pilot, Caregiver Pilots, Rural and Northern Immigration Pilots, Entrepreneur, Self-Employed, Start-Up Visa, and Temporary Resident to Permanent Resident Pathway programs.

TABLE 6: IMMIGRATION ADMISSIONS BY CATEGORY IN 2023

	FSWP	FSTP	PNP	OTHER ECONOMIC	FAMILY	REFUGEE	OTHER	TOTAL	% TOTAL
CA	61,475	105	97,505	92,095	101,560	68,315	13,300	434,360	100%
NL	40	-	2,635	1,065	255	1,005	40	5,040	1%
PE	20	-	2,320	590	135	130	20	3,215	1%
NS	255	-	5,140	2,570	1,075	1,380	75	10,490	2%
NB	490	-	4,995	2,975	555	1,175	35	10,225	2%
QC	28,640	-	-	5,935	9,680	5,055	880	50,190	12%
ON	23,905	15	20,465	50,655	52,265	35,930	8,340	191,570	44%
MB	365	5	14,165	2,215	3,165	2,600	245	22,760	5%
SK	235	-	18,345	1,190	2,110	1,405	60	23,345	5%
AB	3,450	5	13,535	5,475	15,630	12,875	1,210	52,185	12%
BC	4,040	80	15,905	18,605	16,490	6,715	2,365	64,200	15%
TERR	35	-	-	820	200	45	30	1,130	0%

Government of Canada. (2023, December 12). IRCC, Canada – Admissions of Permanent Residents by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category, January 15 to October 2023.

Federal Immigration Levels Plan 2024-2026

Annually and after consultations with Canadians, the federal government publishes its three-year targets for future immigration admissions. The current Immigration Levels Plan sets as a target the admission of 1.485 million newcomers as permanent residents by 2026. While this goal is ambitious, Canada's changing population age structure supports higher levels of immigration. This number does not include the many foreign nationals who are admitted to Canada each year as temporary residents, including tourists, businesspeople, and students.

A direct and formal mechanism for consulting industrial sectors on current and future labour force needs does not currently exist, though informal ad-hoc meetings do take place, often at the request of the sector.

Table 7 shows the targets for permanent immigration established by the federal government in its most recent Federal Immigration Levels Plan.

Through their PNP allocations, provinces have been granted nearly 50% of all economic class allocations. This trend has been growing over the past two decades and better enables provinces to use the immigration system to fill specific regional needs, often using selection criteria less onerous than the federal eligibility requirements.

Evolution of Immigration Policy

Federal immigration policy has been evolving over the past 50 years. While historically immigration was driven by policies designed to fill specific gaps in the Canadian labour force, since the 1990s, it has been driven by a move toward the selection of individuals with high levels of human capital.

Based on the reported data, there is clearly a bias in immigration selection policy towards individuals with higher levels of educational attainment. Of the 1.3 million principal applicant landed immigrants admitted between 1980 and 2021 still in the labour force, 69% held a bachelor's degree or higher. Individuals with apprenticeship certificates or non-apprenticeable trade certificates accounted for only 4% of total admissions. Looking just at individuals in the labour force, between 1980 and 1990, university-educated individuals made up 34% of total primary applicant admissions, while individuals with apprenticeship and non-apprenticeable trade certificates 9%. Between 2016 and 2021, the combined university educated primary applicants admitted accounted for 75% of primary applicant admissions, whereas non-apprenticeable and apprenticeship certificate holders had declined to just 2%.

Table 8 shows the number and percentage.

TABLE 7: FEDERAL IMMIGRATION LEVELS PLAN – 2024 TO 2026

Immigration Levels Plan (2024 to 2026)			
	2024	**2025**	**2026**
Overall plan numbers	485,000	500,000	500,000
Economic (federal high skilled)	110,770	117,500	117,500
Provincial nominee program	110,000	120,000	120,000
Other regional, business, pilot and Quebec programs	60,365	63750	63,750
Total economic	**281,135**	**301,250**	**301,250**
Family class	114,000	118,000	118,000
Refugee and protected persons	76,115	72,750	72,750
Humanitarian and compassionate and other	13,750	8,000	8,000

Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2023, December 12). Supplementary Information for the 2024-2026 Immigration Levels Plan.

TABLE 8: LANDED IMMIGRANTS BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT, PRINCIPAL APPLICANTS ONLY, 1980 TO 2021, 1980-1990, AND 2016-2021

	1980-2021		1980-1990		2016-2021	
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION	INDIVIDUALS	%TOTAL	INDIVIDUALS	%TOTAL	INDIVIDUALS	%TOTAL
No certificate of diploma	28,350	2%	8,310	11%	3,160	1%
Secondary school	103,580	8%	15,300	20%	20,740	6%
Non-apprenticeable trades certificate	28,655	2%	3,830	5%	5,015	1%
Apprenticeship certificate	20,370	2%	3,385	4%	3,225	1%
College/CEGEP	146,035	12%	15,800	21%	35,205	10%
Some university	63,130	5%	3,555	5%	15,395	5%
Bachelor's degrees	494,860	39%	15,490	21%	137,330	40%
Degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary	21,295	2%	1,370	2%	4,445	1%
Master's degree	289,840	23%	5,855	8%	102,940	30%
Doctorate	58,995	5%	2,480	3%	11,960	4%
Total	**1,255,115**	**100%**	**75,380**	**100%**	**339,420**	**100%**

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0441-01 Labour force status by period of immigration, admission category, highest level of education and location of study, for immigrants since 1980: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts

Further evidence of the bias in the selection criteria can be found in the 2022 Express Entry Year-end Report. In 2022, 46% of the candidates receiving ITAs held master's degrees, 40% had post-secondary credentials of three or more years, and 4% held PhDs. Of the top 15 professions receiving ITAs, software engineers received the greatest number of ITAs at 3,848. Despite the strong demand for healthcare and construction workers since 2020, no professions in demand in these sectors were found in the top 15. However, since 2020, 2,778 university professors and lecturers received ITAs; 955 alone were granted ITAs in 2022.

This bias towards university-educated applicants leaves industries dependent upon skilled tradespersons with a challenge. They must rely primarily on domestic recruitment to fill labour force gaps. This may create challenges for some industries as the impacts of Canada's changing demographics become more pronounced over the next 10 years as the majority of baby boom generation individuals retire. With fewer younger-age individuals available to replace those retiring, and limited access to immigration to help fill any gaps created, industries such as construction that depend upon skilled tradespersons may experience more chronic labour force issues if current policy persists.

As provinces increase their role in immigration selection, better alignment with national priorities will be critical. While each province will approach the question of immigration from its unique regional perspective, it will be important to ensure that provincial selection priorities remain consistent with overall national future labour market requirements.

Furthermore, better and more detailed consultations with industry would also be welcome. While IRCC conducts annual consultations with Canadians regarding immigration levels, more detailed consultations with the construction sector would be welcome to help ensure that immigration policies remain aligned with labour market needs. Current policy clearly favours university educated individuals over applicants with skilled trades experience. The FSTP was introduced to facilitate the entry of skilled trade workers through the Express Entry system; however, to date, despite overwhelming demand for skilled tradespersons, the number of admissions under the FSTP have been small and in decline. While the recent change in policy allowing for specific Express Entry draws for construction and transportation workers will help, these additional draws are limited to technical and general trades professions only. Construction trade helpers and labourers, in NOC TEERs 4 and 5, and which make up a substantial portion of the construction workforce, remain ineligible to apply under Express Entry rules.

THE CONSTRUCTION EXPERIENCE AND IMMIGRATION

The construction industry is among Canada's largest employers. Approximately one in every 13 Canadians derives their livelihood from this sector. Construction contributes significantly to Canada's GDP at 7.4%. This figure is poised to increase in the coming years due not only to rising demands created by population growth, but also to public policy imperatives to build additional housing; transition Canada's residential, commercial, and institutional building stock to electrical sources for heating and cooling; and build the core public, private and trade-enabling infrastructure required to support economic growth. Given the foundational role of the construction industry in the economy, ensuring the industry maintains a robust and adequate workforce will be of utmost importance to uphold Canada's global competitiveness.

While the industry continues to embrace the integration of new technologies, such advancements are unlikely to replace or diminish its reliance on seasoned, skilled, and well-trained workers in the next decade. To continue to deliver essential infrastructure such as homes, roads, highways, bridges, hospitals, schools, water systems, and industrial and commercial buildings, the construction workforce must expand significantly. It will therefore be critical for the industry to recruit skilled immigrants who are already equipped with the expertise required to meet current and future construction demands efficiently and effectively.

The Construction Labour Force

Construction is a complicated business. It is made up of numerous professions, including senior managers, designers, engineers, administrators, as well as the individuals that carry out construction using their skills and expertise to give life to architectural designs and turn these creations into the physical assets on which Canadians depend.

According to the latest Census data, there were 19.3 million individuals in Canada's labour force. Excluding individuals over 15 years of age that either never worked for pay or last worked prior to 2020, the total labour force was 18.82 million.

Table 9 breaks down the labour force as reported in the 2021 Census by broad National Occupation Classification (NOC) categories for all industries and the construction industry.

TABLE 9: CONSTRUCTION SHARE OF TOTAL ALL-INDUSTRIES LABOUR FORCE BY NOC CATEGORIES AND NOC CATEGORY SHARE OF CONSTRUCTION LABOUR FORCE

	ALL-INDUSTRIES TOTAL LABOUR FORCE	NOC % SHARE OF TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES LABOUR FORCE	CONSTRUCTION LABOUR FORCE BY NOC CATEGORY	NOC % SHARE OF TOTAL CONSTRUCTION LABOUR FORCE
Total	**18,823,485**	**100%**	**1,469,085**	**100%**
Management and finance (NOC 0 and 1)	3,557,945	19%	164,170	11%
Engineering, estimating, and instrumentation (NOC 2)	1,587,980	8%	87,280	6%
Trades, transportation & equipment operators (NOC 7)	3,239,500	17%	1,123,835	76%
Other NOC occupations	10,178,860	54%	97,640	7%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census by occupation - unit group - National Occupation Classification (NOC) 2021, Industry - Group

Based on these figures, the trades make up 17% of the total All Industries labour force. In the construction sector, this percentage is considerably higher. Trades account for 76.5% of the industry's labour force, and 34.7% of all trades in the All Industries labour force work in the construction sector. As such, the trades are the lifeblood of the construction sector and foundational to the efficient execution of construction projects.

Table 10 looks at trade usage as a share of the total labour force of other sectors of the economy. Clearly, the construction sector is the most dependant.

Given the importance of the skilled trades to so many Canadian industrial sectors, improving access to skilled immigrants will be essential over the next 10 years as most baby boom generation workers exit the labour force to retirement. With fewer younger workers available to replace those leaving for retirement, if admissions of immigrants with skilled trades experience are not increased, the acute labour shortages experienced by the construction sector over the past several years may become chronic.

As previously discussed, immigration selection policies have been shifting towards the selection of individuals with university degrees. The number of individuals with apprenticeship and non-apprenticeable trades certificates admitted to Canada through federal programs has been in decline. This trend has been ongoing for several years, and helps explain why the overall share of permanent residents in the construction labour force has not been keeping pace with overall construction demand growth. While the focus of this report is on the construction industry, similar challenges exist in other industrial sectors reliant on skilled tradespersons.

TABLE 10: TRADES, TRANSPORTATION & EQUIPMENT OPERATORS (NOC 7) BY NAIC

NORTH AMERICAN INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION (NAIC)	TOTAL LABOUR FORCE	NOC 7 SHARE OF SECTORAL LABOUR FORCE	% SHARE OF TOTAL SECTORAL LABOUR FORCE
All industries	**18,823,485**	**3,239,500**	**17.2%**
Construction	1,469,085	1,123,835	76.5%
Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	239,035	70,975	29.7%
Utilities	147,750	38,785	26.3%
Manufacturing	1,540,490	343,190	22.3%
Other services (excluding public administration	797,935	163,625	20.5%
Wholesale trade	610,300	106,040	17.4%
Transportation and warehousing	981,030	166,950	17.0%
Real estate and rental and leasing	343,940	57,970	16.9%
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation	792,600	105,050	13.3%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	434,800	35,265	8.1%
Information and cultural industries	400,460	30,140	7.5%
Public administration	1,188,915	83,110	7.0%
Remaining sectors	9,877,145	914,565	9.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, (2023, December 12), Beyond 20/20 Professional Browser – [E03629_Table1 – Occupations – Unit group – National Occupations Classification (NOC) 2021 (821), Industry – Groups – Nort.

Table 11 breaks down the construction trades workforce by segment.

Most of the trades listed in Table 11 are eligible under federal programs and PNPs. Trade helpers and labourers, which make up approximately 17% of the construction trades labour force, however, are ineligible to apply under Express Entry. While some PNPs will permit individuals in this important category to apply, they fall outside the Express Entry system and typically take much longer to be processed.

Trade helpers and labourers are foundational to the construction sector, and active in every sector of the industry. They are also the typical entry point for many wishing to pursue careers in the construction sector.

Table 12 shows where permanent residents are currently in the construction labour force.

Permanent residents make up just 19% of the total construction labour force, but 25% of the total Canadian labour force. As such, they are slightly under-represented in the construction industry. With the exception of the Natural and Applied Sciences (engineering professions), Health (small, specialized niche workforce), and in Manufacturing and Utilities, the sector has struggled to recruit adequate numbers of permanent residents into its labour force. This challenge is particularly stark when measuring permanent residents working in the trades. As trades make up 76% of the industry's total labour force, the 18% total presents a significant future challenge. Furthermore, many of the permanent residents currently in the labour force were landed at a time when immigration policies were more favourable to the admission of permanent residents with skilled trades qualifications. Unless current immigration selection policies are amended, current labour force recruitment challenges are likely to intensify.

TABLE 11: CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRADES LABOUR FORCE DISTRIBUTION BY SEGMENT, 2021

Construction industry				
PROGRAM	**RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS**	**NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS**	**HEAVY & CIVIL ENGINEERING**	**SPECIALTY TRADES**
Labour force share	342,480 (23.3%)	105,015 (7.1%)	178,375 (12.1%)	843,210 (57.4%)
NOC 7 trades distribution by sector				
Labour force share	269,125 (79.0%)	74,440 (71.0%)	126,375 (71.0%)	653,900 (78.0%)
20 largest trades distribution across construction segments				
Trade helpers and labourers (75)	61,910 (23.0%)	14,240 (19.1%)	32,095 (25.4%)	75,190 (11.5%)
Carpenters/cabinetmakers (72)	60,335 (22.4%)	13,265 (17.8%)	3,045 (2.4%)	69,575 (10.6%)
Contractors/supervisors (72)	14,845 (5.5%)	6,675 (9.0%)	18,025 (14.3%)	77,650 (11.9%)
All electricians (72)	2,150 (0.8%)	1,715 (2.3%)	690 (0.5%)	84,895 (13.0%)
Construction managers (70)	28,875 (10.7%)	19,905 (26.7%)	9,350 (7.4%)	15,390 (2.4%)
Home building/renovation mgrs. (70)	55,340 (20.6%)	20 (0.0%)	50 (0.0%)	200 (0.0%)
Heavy equipment operators (73)	4,355 (1.6%)	2,350 (3.2%)	23,320 (18.5%)	21,820 (3.3%)
Plumbers (72)	1,465 (0.5%)	650 (0.9%)	225 (0.2%)	45,280 (6.9%)
Painters and decorators (73)	3,090 (1.1%)	390 (0.5%)	275 (0.2%)	34,285 (5.2%)
Residential/commercial installers (73)	5,315 (2.0%)	610 (0.8%)	420 (0.3%)	26,080 (4.0%)
Transport truck drivers (73)	3,735 (1.4%)	1,100 (1.5%)	12,570 (9.9%)	14,890 (2.3%)
Plasterers/drywall/finishers/lathers (73)	4,660 (1.7%)	2,295 (3.1%)	70 (0.1%)	21,030 (3.2%)
Heating, refrigeration and air cond. (72)	400 (0.1%)	105 (0.1%)	30 (0.0%)	23,925 (3.7%)
Bricklayers (72)	2,415 (0.9%)	550 (0.7%)	105 (0.1%)	12,545 (1.9%)
Sheet metal workers (72)	1,210 (0.4%)	805 (1.1%)	65 (0.1%)	11,645 (1.8%)
Steamfitters/pipefitters/sprinkler (72)	460 (0.2%)	985 (1.3%)	1,500 (1.2%)	10,450 (1.6%)
Welders/related machine operators (72)	1,105 (0.4%)	1,515 (2.0%)	2,560 (2.0%)	7,020 (1.1%)
Roofers and shinglers (73)	55 (0.0%)	10 (0.0%)	1,765 (1.4%)	9,080 (1.4%)
Floor covering installers (73)	925 (0.3%)	165 (0.2%)	30 (0.0%)	9,375 (1.4%)
Ironworkers (72)	1,030 (0.4%)	1,470 (2.0%)	735 (0.6%)	5,455 (0.8%)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census by occupation - unit group - National Occupation Classification (NOC) 2021, Industry – Group

* A (70) designation equates to a middle management occupation classification
** A (72) designation equates to a technical trade classification, including contractors and supervisors
*** A (73) designation equates to a general trade classification
*** A (75) designation equates to a helper and labourer classification

TABLE 12: PERMANENT RESIDENTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION LABOUR FORCE BY NOC CATEGORY, 2021

Permanent residents in the construction labour force by NOC category	TOTAL LABOUR FORCE	TOTAL PRs IN LABOUR FORCE	PR % SHARE OF TOTAL LABOUR FORCE
All occupations	**1,469,085**	**285,425**	**19.4%**
0 Senior Managment	26,345	4,060	15.4%
1 Business, Finance and Administration	137,825	28,970	21.0%
2 Natural and Applied Sciences	87,280	25,240	28.9%
3 Health	1,380	420	30.4%
4 Education, Law and Social, Community & Government	4,910	1,060	21.6%
5 Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport	8,755	1,960	22.4%
6 Sales and Service	44,090	9,480	21.5%
7 Trades, Transport & Equipment Ops.	1,123,835	206,200	18.3%
8 Natural Resources & Agriculture	9,590	1,165	12.1%
9 Manufacturing & Utilities	25,070	6,865	27.4%

Source: Statistics Canada, Occupation - Unit group - National Occupational Classifications (NOC) 2021 (821), Industry - Groups

Growing Construction Demands

The construction sector plays a significant role in Canada's economy, accounting for 7.8% of the total labour force and 7.7% of the GDP. When combined with the Real Estate and Rental and Leasing sector, which contributes 13.2%, the collective impact on the GDP is 20.9%. If combined with other sectors heavily dependent on skilled trade workers, such as Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (5.2%), Utilities (2.1%), Manufacturing (9.9%), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (1.9%), and Transportation and Warehousing (3.9%), the overall GDP contribution rises to 43.9%.

These sectors rely heavily on skilled and unskilled trade workers for both the construction of new assets and the maintenance of existing ones. Moreover, they account for a sizable portion of annual investment totals in the Canadian economy. In the race to attract foreign direct investment, construction delays due to labour shortages could be a deciding factor for companies contemplating new capital investments in an increasingly globally competitive market where conditions in different countries and access to resources can often be interchangeable.

This lack of planning for current and future workforce needs is further exacerbated by the federal government's new focus on building more housing units and increasing housing affordability. To achieve this goal, the construction labour force must expand significantly, particularly in the civil and residential sectors to meet not only demand for new housing units but also the infrastructure (i.e., roads and utilities) required to support additional housing. (According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, this work is estimated at $107,000 per home.) Preliminary estimates to achieve these targets prepared by BuildForce Canada suggest that the residential labour force alone must expand by 200,000 workers by 2026, 437,000 workers by 2030, and 460,000 workers by 2033.

The federal government has also committed to accelerating the path to a 100% net-zero electricity future, the transition to zero-emission vehicles, and tapping into global capital to attract additional investment. The delivery of these important priorities all hinge on the adequacy of the construction labour force. Objectives like the electrification of the economy, the renewal and expansion of the country's trade-enabling infrastructure, and the expansion of housing stock to improve housing affordability, can only be met if the construction labour force is well-trained, experienced, and sufficient to respond promptly. Labour shortages not only contribute to construction delays but also pose a significant economic threat considering that 22% of the current labour force is anticipated to retire over the next decade.

BuildForce Canada is tracking more than $450 billion in projects across the country that are either currently under construction or slated to commence over the next several years. These projects include:

- new hospitals and healthcare facilities
- public transit projects in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia, the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, as well as in Montreal, Quebec City, Calgary, Edmonton, and Ottawa
- nuclear refurbishments in Ontario, as well as the construction of new capacity
- electric-vehicle battery manufacturing facilities in Ontario and Quebec
- hydrogen projects in Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador
- additional expansion of liquefied natural gas production capactiy in British Columbia
- mining projects in Northern Ontario and Saskatchewan
- wastewater treatment projects in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario
- several large highway and bridge projects in Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec

In addition, much of Canada's trade-enabling infrastructure is in need of significant repair and expansion. None of this can be achieved without an expansion of the domestic skilled trades workforce.

While the construction industry will always prioritize the recruitment of domestic workers, changing career preferences among youth has made it more challenging for the industry to recruit the workers it needs to keep pace with accelerating construction demands. Aligning immigration priorities more closely with the current and future needs of Canadian industries is therefore imperative.

Immigration must better support industries, such as construction, with access to the skilled workers it will need to maintain labour force efficiency. To that end, the industry recommends the following guiding principles be adopted as part of ongoing immigration selection policy reforms.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM

Immigration has always been important to the construction sector, enabling the industry to supplement its extensive domestic recruitment efforts during periods of surging construction demands. To effectively continue to meet the needs of the Canadian economy, current immigration policy must change. It needs to be based on a long-term plan that takes into consideration the volume, type and location of projects, and the workforce and skills needed. It must also be supported by timely, relevant data and flexible decision-making.

Based on the review of the data included in this report, and in particular the impact immigration policies are having on the sector, the following are some first principles the industry believes must be embodied in federal immigration policies to better support construction, and other key sectors of the Canadian economy, with the recruitment of skilled trades workers to Canada.

1. **Address educational bias in the Express Entry selection system.**

   The prevailing issue of bias in the current immigration selection system, particularly under Express Entry, has become evident. The system disproportionately favours individuals with high education. In so doing, it essentially excludes others with the valuable skills or the willingness to work in construction that Canada requires. Invitations to apply under Express Entry are predominantly directed towards candidates with the highest levels of university education. This undermines the ability of industries that depend on skilled and unskilled workers, such as construction, from better utilizing the immigration system to supplement domestic labour force development efforts.

   Express Entry selections should be informed by domestic labour force priorities. Eligibility to apply under the Federal Skilled Trades Program should be open, with additional selection points awarded based on domestic labour market demands. This would increase the Express Entry CRS scores of skilled and unskilled trade workers and improve the likelihood of their selection under general intakes, thereby better aligning the selection system with the needs of Canadian businesses experiencing labour force gaps.

2. **Better align federal and provincial immigration priorities and increase transparency.**

   Recognizing that immigration is a shared federal-provincial/territorial government responsibility, and with provincial selections now comprising more than 50% of annual selections, greater transparency is required in the annual federal Immigration Levels Plan. The plan should clearly delineate not only provincial PNP allocations, but also notional provincial targets for each Express Entry program. Annual levels estimates should also include any sector-specific targets to better enable Canadian industries to align their domestic training programs with the proposed inflow of permanent residents.

3. **Ensure industry involvement in labour market planning, analysis, and recruitment.**

   Beyond humanitarian considerations, the immigration system should be oriented to serve the needs of Canadian industry, helping to fill gaps in the domestic labour force with individuals looking to emigrate to Canada. The federal government should consult more broadly with Canadian industries when establishing national immigration targets and ensure that selection policies and priorities better align with domestic labour market requirements. This should be done as a supplement to the annual consultations with Canadians carried out by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

   The federal government should also better support the recruitment of immigrants by Canadian businesses. When individuals are selected and their credentials verified by employers, providing they have satisfied all additional statutory requirements, their processing should receive priority within the Express Entry system.

   Regular, timely, robust reporting on program goals and approved immigrants' characteristics is essential to better planning and adapting to changing market needs.

4. **Support competencies-based skills assessments for foreign credential recognition.**

   While credential recognition is within the purview of provinces in Canada, the federal government can and should play a leadership role enabling provinces to adopt competencies-based skills assessments of foreign credentials. Doing so will help ensure that individuals with foreign credentials are appropriately matched with job opportunities that align with their skills, thereby reducing skill mismatches and enhancing overall productivity.

CONCLUSION

Canada faces the pressing challenge of an evolving population age structure, intensifying the competition for younger workers within the labour force. While domestic recruitment strategies remain essential, they alone cannot meet the burgeoning demands of the Canadian economy. Consequently, Canada's immigration system assumes paramount importance in bridging the demographic gap and ensuring the presence of a robust and competent workforce.

Lessons drawn from other OECD countries, such as Luxembourg, Australia, and New Zealand, underscore the significance of adapting to population aging through well-crafted immigration policies. As G7 and OECD nations vie for skilled immigrants, Canada must compete effectively while minimizing the risk of domestic brain-drain.

However, the current immigration selection policies, which exhibit a bias towards university-educated individuals, present considerable challenges for industries, especially those dependent on skilled trades. The construction industry in particular grapples with acute skilled labour shortages that have been exacerbated by changes in immigration criteria.

To address these challenges and ensure that Canada's immigration system effectively supports industries such as construction, we propose a set of guiding principles for immigration reform. These guiding principles lay out a roadmap for modernizing the immigration system, aligning it with the needs of Canadian industries, and nurturing a diverse and skilled workforce.

Implementing these reforms will enable Canada to build a more adaptable and responsive immigration framework that effectively addresses the acute skilled labour shortages faced by industries like construction. Ultimately, these changes will contribute to the continued growth and prosperity of Canada's economy and society.

Immigration Report Update

MARCH 2024

220 Laurier Ave. W., Suite 1150, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5Z9
(613) 569-5552
info@buildforce.ca