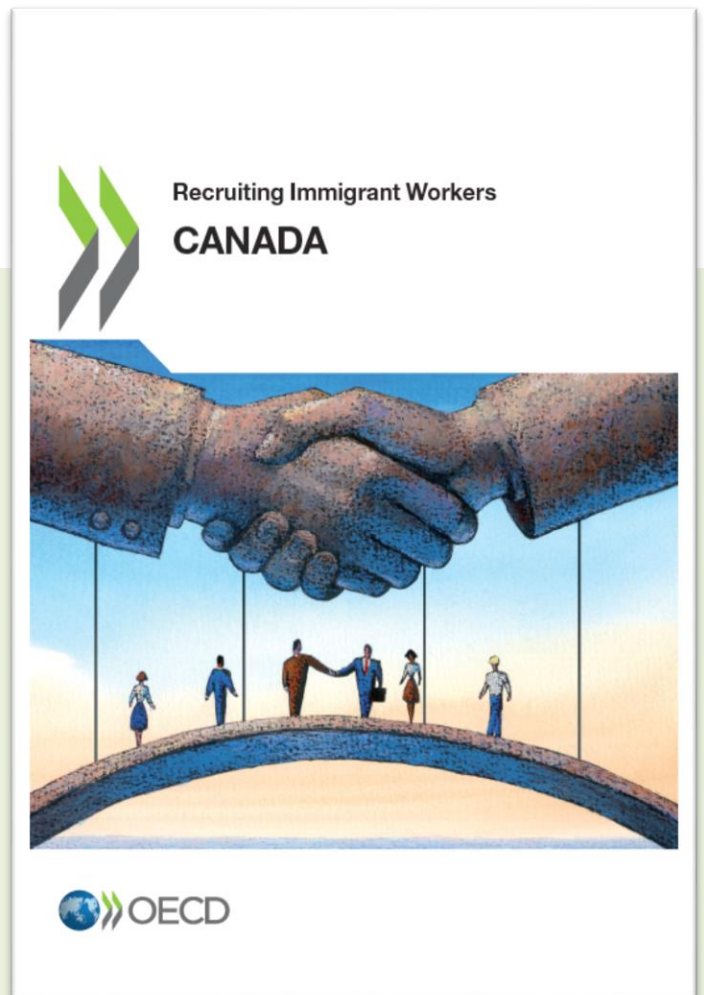


OECD Review

**Recruiting Immigrant Workers:
Canada 2019**

Key findings &
Policy recommendations

August 13, 2019
Toronto



Key findings

- *Canada has the largest and longest-standing skilled labour migration programme and the highest educated immigrant population in the OECD.*
- *Most indicators and research suggest that labour migration has been largely beneficial to Canada.*
- *Policy-based research and consistent monitoring of outcomes are key strengths of the Canadian system, coupled with ongoing experimentation in new pilots.*
- *There is significant ministerial discretion, which should, however, be used parsimoniously.*
- *The new two-tiered Express Entry system for selection of migrants based on expressions of interest has greatly improved the management of labour migration.*
- *Express Entry is the most elaborate selection system in the OECD.*
- *Most remaining shortcomings of the system in place for the selection of permanent labour migrants have been addressed through recent reforms but consistency between admission and final selection could be improved by applying aligned criteria to pool entry and selection.*
- *Express Entry allows selection of skilled tradespersons but the primary route is not via the Federal Skilled Trades pathway, which should be abolished. A single refined entry grid, based on minimum criteria of the Comprehensive Ranking System, would ensure common standards for all federal high-skilled labour migrants. The core factors of the Comprehensive Ranking System should serve as a basis for this entry grid, rather than the current Federal Skilled Worker points system. This would simplify the system and ensure common language and education standards for all federal labour migrants. Consequently, the current separate pathways for Federal Skilled Worker, Federal Skilled Trades and Canadian Experience Class could be merged into one pathway.*
- *Some fine-tuning to the Comprehensive Ranking System would further improve selection and the administrative burden lowered by replacing the labour market impact assessment with integrity checks.*
- *The recognition of foreign qualifications is a key challenge, exacerbated by Canada's federal nature. Incentives could encourage potential migrants to start licensing processes in regulated professions before landing, and methods facilitating pre-arrival licensing should be tested.*
- *There has been a strong growth in regional migration to Canada over the past two decades, although most regionally selected migrants are in urban areas within these provinces and territories (PTs).*

- *Migrants selected by provinces and territories have a lower skills profile than federally selected migrants but boast better initial labour market outcomes and high retention, suggesting that the federal and PT-streams are complementary. Although initial outcomes of PT-selected labour migrants are good, there is a need for continued monitoring and future growth in provincial nominations should come through Express Entry.*
- *The introduction of a regional temporary pilot would allow PTs to better respond to regional cyclical or seasonal labour needs that are not met otherwise, without the need to resort to permanent migration through provincial nomination.*
- *Canada has become a world leader in pre-arrival integration services, but take-up is still low. The link between integration and retention in the Atlantic Immigration Pilot is a promising one and could be extended further.*
- *Onshore transitions are less common than elsewhere, in spite of growing numbers. Temporary labour migration to Canada is high, but largely for other purposes than specific labour market needs.*
- *Little is known about the labour market impact of temporary labour migrants with open work permits and stronger monitoring is therefore recommended.*
- *International students have favourable conditions to work and stay and Canada experienced one of the largest growth in international students among OECD countries in recent years.*
- *The Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is extensive and encourages migration through permanent rather than temporary channels, especially for higher wages. Although the recent implementation of Canada's Skill Strategy provides simpler and faster procedures for some subgroups, the overall set-up remains complex and simplifications should be considered, notably for renewals in the higher-paid category.*
- *Given that most caregivers leave the occupation after permanent residency, longer durations for transition should be considered.*
- *The strong migration management framework in place and quick reaction times to new developments is the core strength of the Canadian system.*

Policy recommendations

Further strengthen the consistency and selection of permanent labour migration

- Align the pool entry requirements with the core selection criteria in Express Entry. Raise the minimum entry requirement for the first official language to CLB 7, as is currently the case for Federal Skilled Workers. Likewise, introduce a minimum qualification requirement for entry into the Express Entry pool.
- With such common minimum requirements, consider to merge the Canadian Experience Class with the Federal Skilled Workers Program into a single entry pathway.
- Abolish the Federal Skilled Trades Program.
- Consider awarding points for Canadian work experience (in the core factor) based on the relative wage of the last Canadian job instead of on the duration of the work experience and the occupational classification.
- In the skill transferability factor, award the maximum interaction points for Canadian work experience after three years only, thereby aligning it with the period for maximum points in foreign work experience.
- Avoid frequent changes in the allocation of bonus points and be aware that these can drastically alter the composition of candidates selected.
- For migrants intending to work in regulated occupations, enhance information on the process.
- Enable and provide incentives for applicants intending to work in regulated professions to initiate the licensing process before landing in Canada, including by the introduction of a specific visa for foreign credential recognition.
- Continue to promote standardisation and harmonisation of foreign credential recognition and systematically collect and share data on foreign credentials recognition between the different stakeholders and federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions involved. Require licensing bodies to take the initial qualification assessment for migration as a starting point in the licensing procedure.
- Consider awarding full skills transferability points to any candidate having a licence in a regulated profession in their intended province of landing.
- Monitor the occupations immigrants actually take up in addition to the occupation they intend to work in, to be able to identify and address possibly discrepancies, notably regarding over-qualification of labour migrants.
- Consider abolishing the labour market impact assessment (LMIA) for permanent migration and replacing it with integrity checks, or provide for a differentiated points scale with and without LMIA.
- Further investigate whether the separate points' calculation for migrants with partners deters such migrants from bringing their family along; consider corrective action if this were the case.

Better target the management of temporary labour migration

- Consider to provide facilitations in the LMIA process for the renewal of temporary permits, notably for high-wage temporary foreign workers.
- Consider introducing a specific trusted employer scheme for those companies making heavy use of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, building on the experiences of the Global Skills Strategy.
- Explore linking temporary work visas with specific occupations and provinces rather than employers.
- Consider requiring a longer work period in the profession in Canada before granting caregivers access to permanent residence.
- Monitor the labour market impact of temporary migration, especially under the International Mobility Program.

Improve coherence in the provincial/territorial elements of migration management

- Base future growth of PNP primarily on Express Entry, ensuring standard processing times and common educational and language minimum standards.
- Continue to monitor outcomes of PT-selected permanent residents.
- Enhance efforts to support settlement outside major cities, building on the experience of the rural and Atlantic pilots.
- Monitor the outcomes of new pilot programmes designed to settle migrants in Atlantic Provinces and rural areas within the PTs.
- Consider introducing regional temporary labour migration pilot programmes.

Further information: www.oecd.org/migration

Contact: Thomas.Liebig@oecd.org or Elisabeth.Kamm@oecd.org