

The internal migration of the immigrant and native-born populations in Canada between 1976 and 1996[☆]

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Abstract

This research looks at the internal migration patterns, within and between provinces, of international immigrants in Canada and compares them to those of the Canadian-born population. The study uses data from the four Canadian censuses of 1981, 1986, 1991, and 1996. Immigrants are less mobile than the Canadian-born, except at the local level, but are more mobile than Canadians who still live in their province of birth. Immigrants and Canadian-born respond in different ways to some of the variables that determine mobility. Immigrants tend to leave in larger proportions than the Canadian-born the provinces where there are few immigrants.

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1. Introduction

Immigration is rapidly changing the shape of the Canadian society. Not only is the ethnic and cultural distribution of the population being significantly modified, but the geographical dispersion is being altered as well. Immigrants tend to locate in the larger metropolitan areas, such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, very often because there are already members of their ethnic communities in those areas, but also because there are more economic opportunities. There are also immigrants who establish themselves in the less populated regions and they are often encouraged to do so, but many of them do not stay where they originally arrived and move to the

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large metropolitan areas. Of course, other Canadians move to the same areas, with the consequence that the Canadian population is becoming more and more concentrated geographically.

To assess the impact of immigration on Canada and its regions, it is important to understand the mobility behavior of immigrants and native-born Canadians. The purpose of this paper is to look at the internal migration patterns of immigrants after they arrive in Canada and to compare them to those of the Canadian-born population, using four Canadian censuses covering mobility by 5-year interval between 1976 and 1996. The questions to be addressed include: How do immigrants and native-born Canadians compare in terms of their propensity to move and do they both contribute to increasing geographic concentration? Do the immigrants and native-born respond to the same factors in their moving decisions, and in particular how does the behavior change with years since migration? Was there any change over time in moving behavior?

There are important policy issues related to internal migration in Canada. A lot of resources and efforts have been invested to develop the Canadian regions and to encourage people to remain and to move to the less developed areas. Those include industrial investment and transfer programs, such as the Employment Insurance program whose benefits are more generous to people who live in high unemployment areas. In Canada, people are allowed to migrate freely between regions and the governmental programs can only provide incentives to move or to remain in certain regions. International immigrants are also free to move once they are in Canada, but some special provisions may apply to them. For instance, some immigrants enter into Canada with the understanding that they will reside in a certain region where immigrants are few and where the government would like to see more. However, those immigrants cannot be forced to stay where they are and they may eventually move to regions where there is already a concentration of immigrants. In Canada, in spite of the efforts to induce immigrants to locate in remote regions, three quarters of them live in the three largest metropolitan areas of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver ([Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001](#)). The analysis of the factors that influence the mobility of immigrants done in this study may help understand better why policies to attract immigrants in non-traditional destinations have failed.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 is a brief review of past studies on the internal migration of immigrants in the United States and Canada. Section 3 introduces the conceptual framework, the data and the modeling strategy. Section 4 presents descriptive statistics. Section 5 presents results of multivariate binary and ordered probit analysis. Section 6 is the conclusion.

2. Review of previous studies

There is a large economic literature that deals with the economic integration of international immigrants, and there is also an abundant literature that considers internal migration in general, but there is only a small interaction between the two. In the United States, the issue whether or not immigrants disperse themselves after their arrival and whether or not they move to the same places as the native-born population has been the subject of some attention. It is known that immigrants tend to concentrate in a few states, such as California, Florida and Texas. [Bartel and Koch \(1991\)](#) used dispersion indices with data from the 1980 census and found little evidence that immigrants became more geographically dispersed through time. [Newbold \(1999\)](#) also found, using the 1990 census, that internal migration did not change much the geographical concentration of immigrants. There was, however some variation across national origin groups. A key variable is the existence of ethnic networks. [Kritz and Nogle \(1994\)](#) considered the impact of nativity concentration and found that it deterred migration between states, but not necessarily mobility within a state. [Rogers and Henning \(1999\)](#) used multiregional life table methodology to examine the influence of place

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