

Immigration, Internal Migration and the Distribution of Canada's Population

by
Monica Boyd

Presented to the Population Change and Public Policy SSHRC cluster workshop,
February 3-4, 2005, London, Ontario

INTRODUCTION

With respect to migration, four questions exist: First, does migration work as an engine of change/stability with respect to demographic processes population growth or decline, and second, how effective is it. The answer seems to be “yes” to the first question but “not very” with respect to the second. This in turn raises the third question of the extent to which these demographic impacts are a *raison d'être* for migration policy. And finally, moving outside a purely demographic system analysis, a very major question is what is the impact of migration in terms of the lives of migrants, and the social and economic fabric of Canada. This paper examines the first two questions with respect to international migration and internal migration. I conclude that the processes of in and out migration, both at the international level and internally to Canada, are contributing to the specter of a demographic divide.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Population growth/decline

a) Direct impact of immigration

From 1901-2001, experts estimate that about a quarter of Canada's population growth is due to net international migration. However, this figure masks large fluctuations in the relative impact of immigration on population growth. During times of upswings in migration, the contribution is always more and during times of reduced migration (and high fertility) it is always less. Immigration represented 44% of population growth between 1901-1911; but this percentage was much lower in the decades of the 1930s (when there was a net loss of migration and also down in the 1950s (when of course fertility rates were high)

Recently, the contribution of net international migration has accelerated – between 1991-2001 net migration accounted for 60% of Canada's population growth.

b) Indirect – through natural increase

It is harder to obtain estimates since births are not tabulated by birthplace of parents. We do know that fertility of recently arrived groups, many of non-European origins, have tended to be higher than those of the Canadian born (although there is wide variability within the foreign born population). However, the most recent study (Belanger et. al in the Demographic Review) reports that levels converge over time. The geographic unit matters in these comparisons – Quebec has the lowest level of fertility among the provinces and about a one child difference exists between average number of children born to Quebec women and those who are foreign born, in favor of the latter (cited in Beaujot, 2003).

Compositional Impacts

Proportion Foreign Born: Percentages have varied over the twentieth century – generally the percentages, which reflect “stock data” are lagged in relation to the inflow numbers. For example, more than one in five Canadians were foreign born, as recorded by the 1911 census. This percentage remained relatively constant until the 1941 census even though net migration was lower during the 1920s and negative during parts of the 1930s. The persistence of the proportion reflects the fact that once immigrants arrived in Canada, for the most part they remained, aging in place long after the initial entry flows had ceased. Today, reflecting relatively high levels during the late 1980s and during the 1990s and beyond, the foreign born represents 18 percent of the Canadian population.

The next generation and beyond

The mirror opposite of the percentage foreign born is the percentage Canadian born. But this latter group includes the offspring of immigrants. The so called “second generation” refers to those persons born in Canada but with at least one foreign born parent. After a 30 year hiatus, the 2001 census asked respondents age 15 and older to indicate the birthplace of their parents, thereby permitting distinguishing among the Canadian born as to their generational status. Approximately 16 percent of the Canadian born age fifteen and older are second generation, sandwiched in between 22 percent who are foreign born and 61 percent who are at least three generations away from immigration (the so-called third-plus generation). If we consider the first generation and the second together, then nearly 4 out of 10 Canadians age 15 and over are close to the immigration experience.

Geographic Location

To talk of an overall proportion however is highly misleading. Immigration has always had an element of geographical clustering. In the late 1800s and early 1900s immigrants tended to settle either in the manufacturing cities of Montreal and Toronto or to fan westward as agricultural workers and farmers (Boyd and Vickers, 2000). Today, immigrants are highly concentrated in three provinces: Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia and primarily in three magnet cities: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. In 2001, 18.4%, 43.7% and 37.5 of the respective population in these cities was born outside Canada, in contrast to 18% for Canada overall. This trend of highly selective provincial and CMA concentration appears to be intensifying – almost nine out of ten immigrants arriving between 1991-2001 lived in the three core provinces.

Within other provinces the tendency also is for urban concentrations – in Alberta for example, migrants concentrate in Edmonton and Calgary, not in the proverbial wheat fields or in smaller towns. The internal migration of the foreign born also are to these magnet areas. The foreign born tend to leave smaller provinces for Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. Toronto remains a huge magnet for these internal movers (Boyd, 2002; Edmonston, 2002; Hou and Bourne. 2004).

This uneven geographical location of the foreign born has implications for uneven growth and decline in population of provinces and local communities. The three magnet cities can be expected to grow substantially as a result of immigration, mostly because immigrants initially settle there, but also because of the secondary internal migration of the foreign born. Internal migration of the Canadian born also is a factor (see below).

Age Composition

Most immigrants arrive either as children (the 1.5 generation) or as young adults. As a result, immigration could be viewed as a vehicle that either “youngens” the overall population or at least retards the aging of a population. In actual fact, immigration is a poor replacement for the far more powerful effects of high or even moderate fertility on the age structure. Numerous studies including those conducted in the United Nations Population Division show that immigration has weak effects on the average age of a population. In fact, when large scale net migration fluctuates dramatically, it can on occasion even increase the proportion of elderly at a later point in time. This occurs when large entry cohorts age. Another consequence of large net migration is that the composition of the elderly changes. During the 1980s, approximately one third of those age 65 and older were foreign born; by the 1991 census this proportion had declined to around 27 percent (need to check figures). The changes reflect the aging and then dying of large cohorts arriving during the first decade of the 20th century. Given the imprint of past migration flows on the elderly population, the upswing in net migration numbers during the 1990s and the changing origin composition (discussed below) it is not unreasonable to expect that the proportion of foreign born among the elderly will rise during the next 20-30 years and that the internal mix of the elderly will change as a result of a higher percentage of visible minorities. Again, if populations either age without moving from the place of settlement or if migration is in the direction of the larger provinces and cities, the proportions of foreign born and visible minority among the elder could be larger in the magnet provinces and magnet cities (but see the section on the possible counter effects of internal migration).

Origin Composition: Increasing Visible Minorities

Perhaps the most talked about composition shift associated with the last three decades of immigration has been the shift in origins, away from Europe (including the UK) and the United States, to Asia and to a lesser extent African and Latin American source areas. In conjunction with the development of terminology that arose with federal Employment Equity legislation, this shift has meant an explosion in the size and proportionate share of the visible minority foreign born population. Since the share of the overall population that is foreign born has increased in recent decades, this also means increases in the percentage of the visible minority population in the larger Canadian population. In 1981, less than 5% of the Canadian population was a member of a visible minority group; this percentage rose to 13.4 in 2001. All indications are that the percentages will increase in the future.

The increasing percentages of the population that are foreign born and visible minority again are not equally distributed across Canada’s geographical landscape. The visible minority population represents 13.6% of Montréal’s population, 36.8 percent of Toronto’s population, and 36.9 of Vancouver’s population. While the majority of the visible minority populations are foreign born, approximately 30 percent are Canadian born. Internally, the composition of the visible minority population varies, by location, age structure and generation. The Canadian born third plus generation consists primarily of the Black, Chinese and Japanese visible minority groups; among the foreign born, the Chinese, South Asian and Southeast Asian visible minority groups are the largest. The second generation is mixed, but also very young. Unpublished tabulations show that

among those age 15 and over, for whom the data were collected on generational status, at least half are under the age of thirty. This will pose challenges for those seeking to determine the structure of labour market insertion for these new groups, since many are still in school, or in school but working at a job that they will not have upon completing their education. And in some cases, the high knowledge occupations, for which many of these offspring are educated, have relatively flat earnings returns during the early stages of a career. In many cases it is extremely risky to take the usual 25-64 range to study the economic fortunes of immigrant offspring since comparisons inevitably will be made with a substantially older non-visible minority population

INTERNAL MIGRATION

A robust literature on internal migration exists, most in the form of demographic accounting of flows and updates. We know a fair bit about the volume of internal migration, and within the constraints of census data, some of the factors that underlie the direction. The population studied is threefold: 1) the entire Canadian population, sometimes with specified age boundaries; 2) comparisons of the migration of the foreign born and the migration of the Canadian born and 3) a focus solely on either the Canadian born or the foreign born.

The same questions raised with respect to net international migration can be raised with respect to internal migration. The major sites of positive in-migration during the 1990s are Ontario and Alberta, and to a lesser extent British Columbia (by the close of the 20th century, British Columbia net positive gain had become a net (or negative) loss (Demographic Review). From 1998 on, all other provinces experienced net negative outflows, accentuating a pattern that existed previously for most other provinces from the early 1970s on. These patterns are generally thought to reflect the variation in economic opportunities and expansion among the provinces.

These net gains and losses have an impact on the age structure of the “winners” and “losers.” And, since migrants reside in specific communities within the provinces, similar implications exist for those communities that gain populations from net internal migration and those which lose. A recent analysis of internal migration between 1991 and 2001 notes that communities with more active and growing local economies are particularly attractive to younger migrants while those communities with declining economic opportunities are likely to see younger populations depart at a faster rate than older individuals. Over time, these age specific processes accentuate the aging of populations in the source communities, and retard the aging of populations in the more economically dynamic communities (Moore and Pacey, 2003). One social consequence is that poorer communities are faced with a more rapidly aging population structure than are those economically growing communities, and as a result the former may be stretched to provide services to their elderly populations.

A longer time lens is provided in a recent examination of the population movement into and out of the three magnet cities for immigrants in Canada (Hou and Bourne, 2004). Analysis of the 1981-2001 censuses reveals that three cities received fewer working age internal migrations during the 1990s than in the 1980s although Toronto and Vancouver appear to have better retention rates in the 1990s in that these cities also have fewer out-migrants. During the 1990s both Toronto and Vancouver experienced a net loss of the Canadian born migrants among the less well educated and

the non-visible minority populations. Montreal tended to lose the Anglophone population. Growth in the immigrant population tended to be correlated with increased out-migration among the less well educated native born Canadians in these two cities. However, growth in the immigrant population does not appear to retard in-migration, suggesting that economic opportunities in Canada's largest cities exert a powerful pull on recent international arrivals and internal movers alike.

AN EMERGING DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDE?

The demographic consequences of these trends in net international migration and in internal migration are clear. Canada has already begun a demographic divide in which three magnet provinces and three magnet cities are destinations for most migrants. These trends go hand in hand with at least two significant shifts in population composition that further contribute to the divide. The first is sustained and continued growth of the visible minority population in Canada's largest cities contrasting with a non-visible minority population in other areas (it should be observed that most of the latter is a European origin population except in Saskatchewan where projections indicate that the major population several decades from now will be aboriginals). The second is the shifts in the age structure that so far have reduced the aging of the largest CMAs populations, but which also have contributed to graying of smaller communities that may be less economically able to offer services to the elderly. These trends show no signs of abating although specific fluctuations in the patterns do exist over time and space. Fifty years from now it may not be unreasonable for Canadian demographers to note large differences in the visible minority composition and age structure between the magnet provinces and cities and other areas.

Bibliography

Beaujot, Roderic. 2003. Effect of Immigration on the Canadian Population: Replacement Migration. University of Western Ontario: Population Studies Centre. Discussion Paper no. 03-03.

Boyd, Monica and Maureen Kelly. 2002. Internal Migration of Immigrants: Do Immigrant Characteristics, Class of Entry, and Context Matter?. Presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Atlanta, May 9-11.

Edmonston, Barry. 2002. Interprovincial Migration of Canadian Immigrants. Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM). Working Paper Series 02-10. Web site: riim.metropolis.net/research-policy/research-policy2/papers_e4.html.

Hou, Feng and Larry S. Bourne. 2004. Population Movement Into and Out of Canada's Immigrant Gateway Cities: A Comparative Study of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Statistics Canada. Analytical Studies Branch research paper series 11F0019 No 229.

Moore, Eric G and Michael A. Pacey. 2003. Geographic Dimensions of Aging in Canada: 1991-2001. SEDAP Research Paper No. 97.