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Fare-Well: Is the migration buzz about demographics?
americans to Canada About politics or

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Introduction: Is the Americans to Canada migration buzz politics or demographics

- Since criteria for Canadian citizenship expanded with the passage of Bill C-3 of Canada's Citizenship Act, millions of Americans may become eligible to claim Canadian citizenship. The amendment reverses a "first-generation" limit imposed by Canada's Conservative government in 2009. With the change in criteria, there has been renewed 'buzz' about strong American interest in having what might be described as 'Canadian residency insurance'. It's a bit of a déjà vu as observed in the immediate aftermath of the elections of US President Trump in 2016 and again in 2024 there was much talk about Americans moving north. But there is an important gap between the purported high consideration of such exit and its actual reality.
- In effect, the numbers of permanent residents from the USA to Canada declined from approximately 10,800 Americans in 2023, 9,300 in 2024 and in 2025 at 7,520 becoming permanent residents. In 2023 US immigration data reported some 11,900 Canadians were admitted as permanent residents in that country (there are no updates since). Applications from American Citizens for PR status between 2024 and 2025 are down 10%-a reflection of a broader global decline in both admissions and applications. And the number of Americans on open work permits between 2024 and 2025 is also down-though not as much as the overall decline in open work permits. Rather than politics or ideology, economic motivation is the main driver in moves across the border by Americans and Canadians respectively.

Immigration from the USA to Canada down 20% over the first nine months of 2025

Admission of Permanent Residents to Canada Country of Citizenship Admission of Permanent Residents to Canada	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
United States of America	6,380	11,955	10,415	10,640	9,330	7,520
Total	184,605	406,055	437,635	471,820	483,655	393,750

Applications for permanent Residency Drop off rather substantially from 2024 to 2025 and for USA a near 10% drop from 2024 to 2025 but drop deepens when looking at January 2025 to 2026

Applications Received for Permanent Residency (in Persons) by Month, January 2023 to January 2026

	2023	2024	2025		2026	
			January	Total	January	Total
Total Canada	567,195	658,540	40,950	417,985	26,765	26,765
United States of America	10,550	10,110	805	9,080	295	295

There has been No increase over the past 18 months in the numbers of New Canadian citizens born in the USA

Source Countries (Country of Birth) - New Canadian Citizens (in Persons) by Month, January 2023 to January 31, 2026										
Country of Birth	2023	2024	2025 / 07	2025 / 08	2025 / 09	2025 / 10	2025 / 11	2025 / 12	2025	2026 Jan
Total	380,005	375,445							293,920	23,270
USA	8,620	9,610	890	655	955	1350	1020	675	9,490	630

As regards the numbers of TFW s from the USA there was a near 10 percent decline over the first three quarters of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024

Temporary Foreign Workers (intl Mobility Program) Country of Citizenship	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
United States	13 165	16 335	18 265	19 105	20 910	19,430
Total	246 480	333 190	466 555	761 645	715 295	582 665

While foreign student admissions are down substantially in the first three quarters of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, those coming from the USA are up nearly 25 percent

Canada – Study permit holders by country of citizenship and year in which permit(s) became effective, January 2015 - September 2025						
Country of Citizenship	2020 Total	2021 Total	2022 Total	2023 Total	2024 Total	2025 Total (January to September 30)
United States of America	4,235	8,190	6,915	7,695	6,795	7,025
Total	255,530	443,505	548,030	680,880	515,095	290,105

Both the USA and Canada have seen net negative migration in 2025

In its 250th year, is America, land of immigration, becoming a country of emigration? In 2025 the United States experienced something that hasn't definitively occurred since the Great Depression: more people moved out of the country than moved in. The Trump administration contended the move—negative net migration—as a function of increased deportations and the restriction of new visas. But the reality is American's own citizens are leaving in record numbers, replanting themselves and their families in lands they find more affordable (<https://people.com/americans-are-leaving-the-us-in-record-numbers-11915554>).

Among the 2,066 counties that grew between 2023 and 2024, nearly 8 in 10 saw their growth slow or reverse direction in 2025. In many cases, counties already in decline saw losses accelerate.

These shifts were largely due to lower levels of net international migration (NIM), which declined nationwide. Nine out of 10 U.S. counties experienced lower NIM levels between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, compared to the year prior.

Source: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2026/2025-popest-metro-micro-counties.html>

Canada also experiencing record migration outflow

Recent data indicates that Canadians—both citizens and permanent residents—are leaving the country in **record-high volumes**.

Statistics Canada (StatCan) reports that emigration hit a new historic peak in 2025, continuing a sharp upward trend that began several years ago.

Key Statistics on the Exodus

- **Total Departures:** Approximately **120,016 people** left Canada in 2025, a 3% increase from the previous year and the fourth consecutive year of growth.
- **Quarterly Records:** The first quarter of 2025 saw **27,086 people** move away, setting a record for net loss in a single Q1.
- **Primary Demographics:** More than half (53.9%) of those leaving are **prime-aged workers (25–49)**, often mid-career professionals in peak-earning years.
- **Senior Migration:** Seniors (55+) now represent nearly **one in seven** permanent departures, with 16,609 leaving in 2025—an 80.5% increase compared to a decade ago.

Where and Who is Leaving?

The exodus is not evenly distributed across the country, with high-cost provinces seeing the largest outflows:

- **Ontario:** Nearly half (48%) of all people who left Canada in 2024 were from Ontario, despite it being only 39% of the population.
- **British Columbia:** Residents here are **61% more likely** to leave the country than the average Canadian.
- **Highly Skilled Immigrants:** "Onward migration" is a significant factor; **one in five immigrants** leave Canada within 25 years, with highly skilled professionals (doctors, engineers, scientists) leaving at twice the rate of low-skilled workers.
- **Preferred Destination:** For Canadian-born citizens, the **United States** remains the top choice, with emigration south hitting a 10-year high.

Why are People Leaving?

While individual reasons vary, economic and social experts point to several systemic drivers:

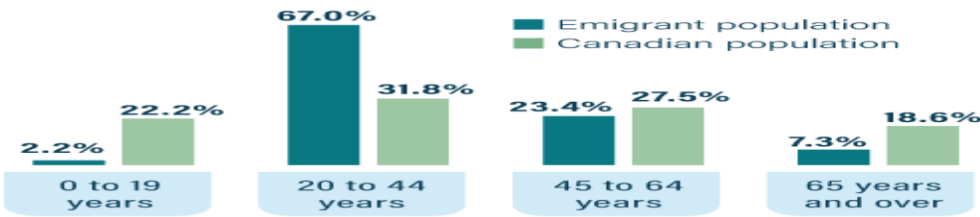
- **Cost of Living & Housing:** Sky-high real estate prices and rental costs in major hubs like Toronto and Vancouver are primary push factors.
- **Economic Opportunity:** Talent is increasingly seeking higher wages and lower tax environments abroad.
- **Retirement Affordability:** Many seniors are "cashing out" their home equity to retire in more affordable countries where their savings stretch further.

Are you considering **moving abroad** yourself, or are you looking for more details on **specific destinations** Canadians are choosing?

Portrait of Canadian Emigration

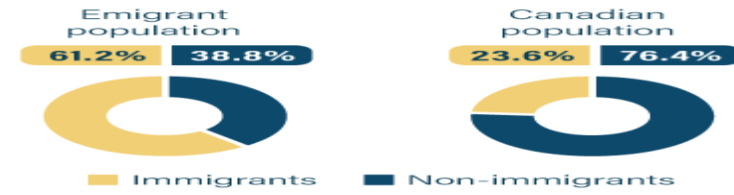
PORTRAIT OF CANADIAN EMIGRATION

In 2021, the majority of Canadian emigrants were between 20 and 44 years of age



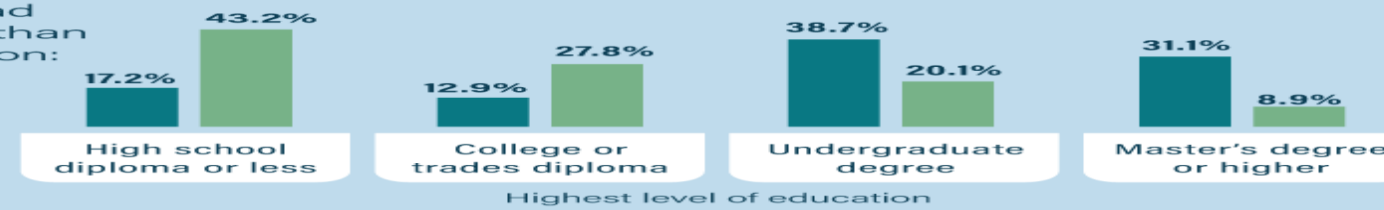
Although Canada is known as a country of immigration, thousands of Canadians move abroad every year. Here's a statistical portrait of the Canadian emigrant population.¹

Immigrants are more likely to emigrate
In 2021, they accounted for less than a quarter of the total Canadian population, but almost two-thirds of people who emigrated from Canada



The emigrant population had a higher level of education than the total Canadian population: in 2021, close to 70% of emigrants had at least a university degree

Emigrant population
Canadian population



Emigrants were more likely to work in applied science or finance

Occupational category	Emigrant population	Canadian population
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	22.9%	7.9%
Business, finance and administration	21.2%	17.4%
Education, law and social, community and government services	15.3%	12.4%
Sales and service	13.0%	25.0%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	8.0%	17.2%
Other ²	19.6%	20.1%

In 2020, the United States was the country of residence of the majority (61.4%) of Canadians by birth living abroad³

United States
793,897 (61.4%)

Country of residence of Canadians by birth living abroad (number and proportion)



- United Kingdom
100,538 (7.8%)
- Australia
58,843 (4.6%)
- France
29,442 (2.3%)
- Italy
25,202 (2.0%)
- Rest of the world
282,387 (29.1%)

1. "Emigrant population" and "emigrants" refer to Canadian citizens and immigrants to Canada with permanent residence who moved to another country and whose usual place of residence is in another country.
2. Includes health care; arts, culture, recreation and sport; natural resources, agriculture and related production; and manufacturing and utilities.
3. The data source used to derive emigrants' country of residence captures only Canadians by birth living abroad. The distribution of countries of residence may differ for emigrants who were born outside Canada.
Note: The demographic and employment information in this infographic is taken from a linkage between 2021 Census data and tax data. The information on the countries emigrants move to comes from the United Nations' *International Migrant Stock 2020* report.
Sources: Statistics Canada, 2021 T1 Family File and Census of Population, 2021; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migrant Stock 2020*.
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The Canadian born population in the united states; The Us attracts a highly educated and mobile group to its sunnier spots

There is growing concern about immigrant retention in Canada, with recent statistics suggesting that as many as one in five newcomers leave the country within five years of arrival. While some return to their countries of origin, others appear to be seeking destinations that offer stronger or more accessible economic opportunities. Historically, both immigrants and Canadian-born residents have often chosen the United States as a destination of choice, with the U.S. generally surpassing Canada in net migration flows between the two countries.

The recently released 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) provides timely and detailed insight into the Canadian-born population residing in the United States. The data shed light on key dimensions of economic status, educational attainment, geographic distribution, and other socio-demographic characteristics. The findings summarized in the first section of this report offer important perspectives on the factors that may be contributing to Canada's retention challenges, particularly as they relate to relative economic outcomes and opportunities.

While Canada does not yet have comparable population-level data for 2024, the second section of this analysis draws on the most recent available sources to provide a comparative assessment of economic outcomes. Using 2021 data from the American Community Survey and the Canadian census, we compare the Canadian-born population in the United States with the American-born population living in Canada. This cross-national comparison helps contextualize relative economic performance and integration patterns on both sides of the border. Finally, the third section examines Canadian immigration data through 2025 to assess recent trends in the number of Americans coming to Canada. It outlines the principal immigration categories under which Americans are admitted and analyzes how these flows have evolved in recent years, offering additional insight into the dynamics shaping bilateral migration between Canada and the United States.

Insights from the Canadian born in the USA for broader migrant retention challenges

There is growing concern about **immigrant retention in Canada**. Some recent analyses have suggested notable levels of out-migration among newcomers, particularly over longer time horizons. According to the 2024 *Leaky Bucket* report by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (produced with the Conference Board of Canada), roughly **18–20 % of immigrants who come to Canada ultimately leave within 25 years of arrival, and a substantial share of those departures occur in the first five years** after landing. Those who leave include both returnees to their country of origin and individuals moving on to a third destination.

This pattern is sometimes interpreted as a retention challenge, especially for highly skilled immigrants. That said, Statistics Canada reports that some **88% of immigrants were still filing taxes in their intended province five years after admission, roughly one in five immigrants leaves Canada within a quarter-century, the majority of immigrants remain in Canada long-term**, and traditional retention metrics for settlement usually show high domestic retention within provinces over five-year windows.

The recently released 2024 *American Community Survey* (ACS) provides detailed insight into the **Canadian-born population living in the United States**, including economic status, educational attainment, geographic distribution, and other socio-demographic characteristics. These data offer valuable perspectives on the economic and social outcomes of Canadians who relocate to the U.S., which can inform discussions about cross-border mobility and retention challenges

Comparing American born in Canada to Canadian born in the US and recent trends in americans coming to Canada

While Canada does not yet have directly comparable data for 2024, the second section of this analysis will use the **most recent available data (2021 ACS and the 2021 Canadian census)** to compare economic outcomes for the Canadian-born population in the United States with the U.S.-born population in Canada.

Finally, the third section examines **Canadian immigration data through 2025**, summarizing the number of Americans coming to Canada, the principal immigration categories under which they arrive, and how these flows have recently evolved

Over one in three Canadian born americans are over 65 compared to less than one in four americans

United States 2024	Birthplace	
	Other Americans	Canada
Under 15	14.9%	4.8%
15 to 24	12.1%	6.6%
25 to 34	11.7%	9.1%
35 to 44	12.2%	11.8%
45 to 54	11.6%	14.4%
55 to 64	13.7%	18.9%
65 to 74	13.5%	18.7%
75 & over	10.3%	15.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Florida reemerges as the top destination for the Canadian born population that arrived in the last five years

2024	Canadian born in the United States by state of residence and time of arrival					Total
	0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21+ years	
Massachusetts	4.0%	2.8%	2.0%	3.4%	3.1%	3.2%
New York	8.4%	9.5%	9.3%	9.3%	6.3%	7.3%
Michigan	2.2%	3.7%	3.6%	3.3%	4.0%	3.6%
Florida	21.2%	11.6%	8.6%	11.2%	11.8%	13.0%
Texas	7.5%	9.7%	10.1%	7.2%	5.3%	6.4%
Arizona	9.2%	4.7%	4.9%	3.6%	4.2%	5.0%
California	13.0%	15.6%	18.2%	16.8%	16.0%	15.7%
Washington	4.6%	4.9%	6.5%	6.3%	6.4%	6.0%

Educational Attainment amongst Canadian Born in the United States is considerably higher than average Americans

Educational Attainment United States 2024	Birthplace:Canada		Total
	Other	Canada	
High school or less	54.4%	32.0%	54.3%
1-2 years of college	17.5%	19.9%	17.5%
Bachelors/University degree	16.9%	25.5%	17.0%
University degree higher than bachelors	11.1%	22.6%	11.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Canadian Born immigrants that arrived over the previous five years are somewhat more educated than those other immigrants to the United States that arrived over the same period

2024	Less than 5 years in the United States and educational attainment	
	Other Immigrants	Canadian Born
High school or less	57%	41%
1-2 years of college	11%	19%
Bachelors/University degree	18%	23%
University degree or higher	14%	17%
Total	100%	100%

Draining Brains: who is doing better American born in Canada or Canadian born in the United States?

Canadians moving to the US are far more mobile/autonomous than are Americans moving to Canada

Making the permanent move across the border is easier said than done and evolving rules around migration make render such migration all the more difficult without a job offer or specific skills.

While Americans coming to Canada are more likely to look at Northern economic opportunities, many Canadians heading South of the border may seek a sunnier climate as a motivator in making such moves. **The economic mobility of cross border moves is all the more relevant owing to recent conversations about purported challenges in Canada's ability to retain global talent.**

At times, the move by Canadians to the United States has been described as brain drain as those who end up making the move are often those with higher overall rates of human capital (i.e. education and or dollars). As regards Americans coming to Canada there has been little attention directed at their socio-economic characteristics. In the ground-breaking work that follows we use data from the American Community survey for 2021 and the 2021 census of Canada to compare the socio-economic profiles of Americans that have moved to Canada and Canadians that have moved to the US. Even with controls in place, the data point to vast differences in education and income with the Canadian born in the US well ahead of the American born in Canada.

Canadians born in the United States are a fair bit older than are americans born in Canada with the percentage of the former over 65 at about 31% compared with 22% for americans born in Canada

Age groups	Canadian Census 2021		American Community Survey 2021	
	Born in US	Total	Born in Canada	Total
Under 15	15.8%	16.6%	4.7%	15.7%
15-24	14.2%	11.4%	6.3%	12.0%
25-34	11.1%	13.5%	9.8%	11.9%
35-44	10.5%	13.5%	12.3%	12.0%
45-54	11.5%	12.7%	15.8%	12.0%
55-64	14.7%	14.2%	20.0%	14.4%
65-74	13.7%	10.9%	17.2%	12.9%
75 and over	8.5%	7.1%	13.9%	9.0%

Canadians born in the United States are much more likely to earn over 100k than are Canada's American born population

Total Personal Income (CAD/USD)	Canadian Census 2021		American Community Survey 2021	
	Born in US	Total	Born in Canada	Total
Under \$20,000	23.1%	19.3%	24.1%	31.6%
\$20k to \$40k	25.1%	28.7%	18.9%	23.9%
\$40k to \$60k	17.3%	20.6%	14.3%	16.0%
\$60k to \$80k	10.9%	12.7%	10.5%	10.3%
\$80k to \$100k	7.7%	7.6%	7.0%	5.8%
\$100k to \$125k	6.0%	5.1%	6.7%	4.6%
\$125k to \$150k	2.5%	1.9%	4.2%	2.2%
\$150k to \$200k	3.2%	2.0%	4.9%	2.5%
\$200k to \$300k	2.0%	1.1%	4.3%	1.6%
\$300k and above	2.2%	0.9%	5.2%	1.6%
<i>Personal Income \$100, 000 and more</i>	<i>15.9%</i>	<i>11.0%</i>	<i>25.3%</i>	<i>12.5%</i>

When taking the working age into account (25-54) the Canadian born population in the US is far more likely to earn over 100 000 dollars than is the American born population in Canada

Total Personal Income (CAD/USD)	Canadian Census 2021		American Community Survey 2021	
	Born in US	Total	Born in Canada	Total
Under \$20,000	11.3%	6.6%	14.5%	20.7%
\$20k to \$40k	28.8%	23.0%	13.8%	22.9%
\$40k to \$60k	21.7%	26.8%	14.3%	19.3%
\$60k to \$80k	10.7%	18.8%	12.9%	13.2%
\$80k to \$100k	11.3%	11.7%	8.7%	7.7%
\$100k to \$125k	6.8%	7.1%	9.5%	6.3%
\$125k to \$150k	5.2%	2.8%	5.8%	2.8%
\$150k to \$200k	3.2%	2.6%	6.9%	3.1%
\$200k to \$300k	0.3%	0.3%	6.1%	2.0%
\$300k and above	0.6%	0.3%	7.5%	1.9%
<i>Personal Income \$100, 000 and more</i>	<i>16.1%</i>	<i>13.1%</i>	<i>35.8%</i>	<i>16.2%</i>

Americans born in Canada and Canadians born in the United States are considerably more educated than the overall population in each country but Canadian born americans are more educated than are American born Canadians

Education	Canadian Census 2021		American Community Survey 2021	
	Born in US	Total	Born in Canada	Total
High school or less	36.9%	42.9%	32.8%	55.5%
1-2 years of college	20.2%	30.6%	20.6%	17.9%
Bachelors/University degree	23.9%	17.5%	24.8%	16.1%
Post-graduate degree or higher	19.0%	8.9%	21.8%	10.5%

Canadian born in the United States are more likely than American born in Canada to own a home

Home Type	Canadian Census 2021		American Community Survey 2021	
	Born in US	Total	Born in Canada	Total
Owner	67.9%	71.3%	77.3%	70.6%
Renter	32.0%	28.5%	19.8%	24.5%
Not Available	0.2%	0.2%	3.0%	4.9%

American born in Canada somewhat more likely to be citizens by birth connection than are Canadians born in the United States

United States 2021	
Place of Birth Canada	
By birth (Born abroad of American parents)	15.3%
Naturalized citizen	45.7%
Not a citizen	39.0%
Total	100.0%

Canada 2021	
Place of Birth United States (373 380)	
By birth	24.4%
Naturalized citizen	40.4%
Not a citizen	35.2%
Total	100.0%

Over 80% of the Canadian born population in the United States speaks English as a first language

Language spoken at home United States 2021 American Community Survey	Born in Canada
N/A or blank	0.8%
English	82.1%
French	8.7%
Other	8.5%
Total	100.0%

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