DO IMMIGRANTS WHO LAND IN ATLANTIC CANADA WITH FAMILY STAY?

Howard Ramos, Dalhousie University
Mark Bennett, Dalhousie University

PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada

VOIES VERS LA PROSPÉRITÉ
Promouvoir des communautés accueillantes au Canada

*Correspondence to: Howard Ramos, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University, Box 15000, Halifax, B3H 4R2.   E-mail: howard.ramos@dal.ca

Immigrant retention in Atlantic Canada has tended to lag behind the rest of the country with lower retention rates than other regions. To date, most of the focus on retaining immigrants has looked at individual-level characteristics such as their age, level of education, or whether they hold a job or not. Often over looked is the role that family members play as anchors in a community. The need to understand the role of the family in the immigration experience is considered critical (see Arat-Koc, 2006; Ellis and Wright, 2005; Kustec, 2006; Rumbault, 1997). Research, moreover, shows that presence of family in the process of immigrant settlement is important and family members play crucial supporting roles of immigrants (see VanderPlaat, Ramos, and Yoshida 2012). Family often help principal applicants by providing child care, working as unpaid labour in small businesses, or offering emotional and psychological support. They are largely overlooked in the current Canadian and provincial immigration systems and pathways to migrate to the country (see Dobrowolsky and Ramos 2014). Most research and policy, however, focuses on immigrants as individuals overlooking the impacts of family on settlement. This is especially the case for large scale studies using quantitative analysis.

For these reasons, this report examines how retention is affected by whether or not immigrants who land in the region come with or without family members.

As a result, this report examines the impact family have on retention by looking at whether economic immigrant taxfilers landing in an Atlantic Canadian province between 2000 and 2009 are more likely to stay in the same province if at the time of landing they settle with a family member, including children and/or spouses and partners. The report also offers an overview of how immigrant landing families can be constructed through administrative immigrant landing records and taxfiles.

METHODS

The data used in this report were taken from the Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB), 2016 release with data up to the 2015 tax year, which is constructed by Statistics Canada and is comprised of the immigration landing database and T1 tax files, back to the year 1982. The landing database provides information pertaining to expected residence and accompanying family at the time of landing in Canada, in addition to immigrant classifications (such as: economic, family, or refugee). The T1 tax records consolidate the taxes submitted by people who immigrated and have detailed information on economic earnings, location of filing, and reported or imputed family structure.

The sample used in the report includes those who landed in Atlantic Canada (Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia) as permanent residents between the years 2000 and 2009. These data were then split into two cohorts, those who landed between 2000-2004 and those who landed between 2005-2009. This was done to compare cohorts against each other and detect any temporal changes based on year of landing, with retention being assessed at three and five years after landing. Because of the focus on retention, we do not examine those who land 2010 or later. This is because focusing on that later cohort would not allow an examination of retention.

Specific conditions had to be met to define a person who has 'landed' in a particular province based on their intended destination at landing, in addition to the first year of filing tax in a given province. For a person to be defined as landed in a province, they had to have claimed the province in question as their intended destination and filed tax either the same year as landing (T0), or one year after (T1) in the same destination province. If T0 was not present, T1 was then used as the first filing year. Retention calculations were then analyzed to examine retention of Economic pathway Principal Applicants. The focus on the Economic pathway was done because immigrants landing in this category make-up 48% and 70% in 2000-2004 and 2005-2009

respectively, of all immigrants landing in the region and because Statistics Canada disclosure restrictions to maintain confidentiality limited what could be released for immigrants from other pathways in the Atlantic region. Furthermore, Principal Applicants were used as family connections are identified within the data using the relationship to the Principal Applicant. Retention for this project is defined as a person who has landed in a province and filed taxes the same year or one year after landing and then subsequently filed taxes in the same province three years or five years after the landing tax file.

Our report focuses on two main variables that may affect rates of retention: family structure and occupation. Family structure at time of tax filing was extracted from the data and each Principal Applicant was determined to have a child at landing or not, using tax records at landing as well as having a spouse or partner or not. This provides the ratio of those who stayed based on presence/absence of a child as well as spouse or partners at time of landing. We do this by analysis of family type, though four groups of immigrants, including: No Family; having a child, having a partner, have a child and partner

Family Type	Partner	Child
No Family	NO	NO
Child	NO	YES
Partner	YES	NO
Child and Partner	YES	YES

We discuss additional issues with family classifications in the IMDB in Appendix A. In addition, we examined the impact of occupation as well as urban versus rural residency, however, we found that lower skill categories suffered low frequency counts and this has led to unreliable results. We also found that the numbers of people in regions were too small to offer reliable results. For additional information on those results, please contact the lead author of the report. In the rest of the report we examine retention rates in Atlantic Canadian provinces by family structure and occupation.

DOES HAVING FAMILY IMPROVE RETENTION?

We begin our analysis by looking at retention of economic pathway immigrants to Atlantic

Canadian provinces by family types. Those who landed in Nova Scotia as Economic immigrants for

the 2000-2004 cohort had varying rates of retention based on family classification. Those who

landed with both a partner and child were retained at 78% in year three, which then dropped to

69% in year five. Those who landed with a partner were retained a similarly high rate of 77% in

year three, but this had a decline to 60% in year five. For those who landed with at least one child,

there was a steady rate of retention in both year three and five of 75%. Lastly, those who landed

with no family had the lowest rate of retention of years three and five, with 65% and 54%

respectively.

Retention of Economic Immigrants, with and without Family (2000-2004 cohort)
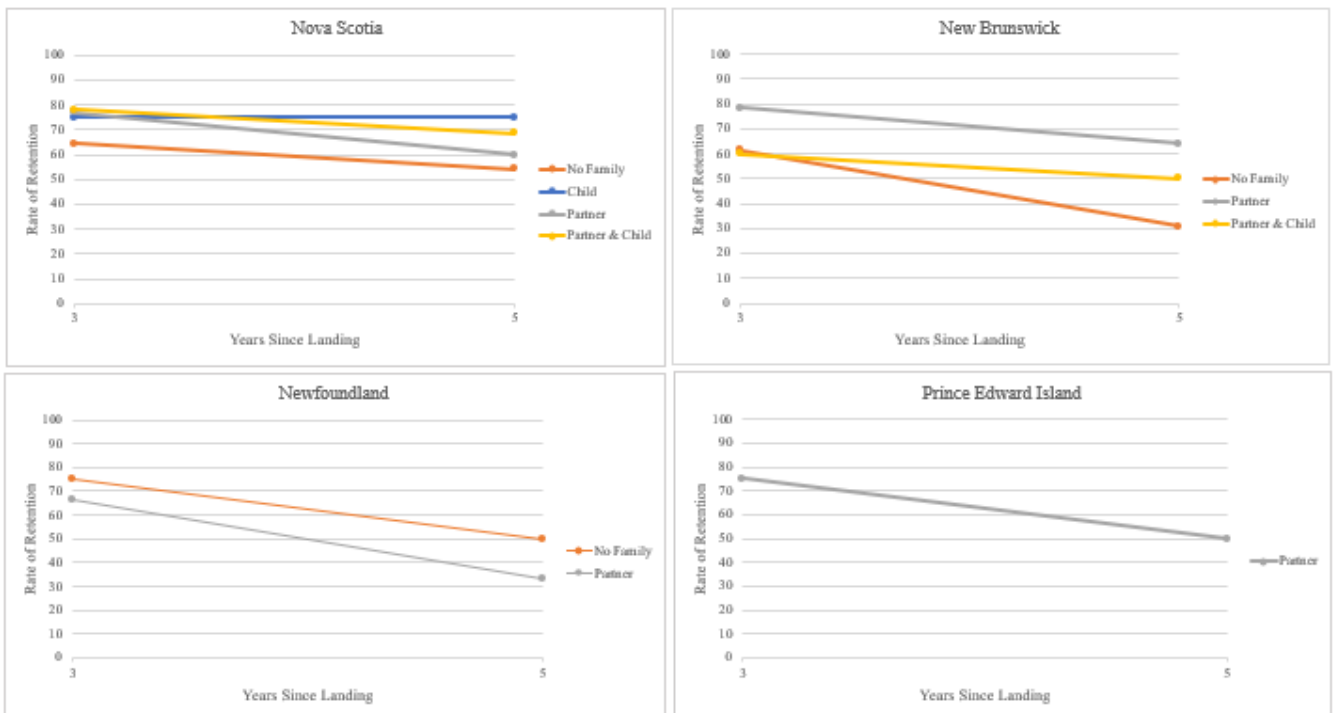
New Brunswick had similar three-year rates of retention as Nova Scotia but suffered greater rates of decline by year five. Those who landed with a partner had a retention rate of 79% in year three with a decrease to 64% by year five. Those with both a partner and child had a lower three-year rate of 60%, and although the five-year rate was lower than partner only, at 50%, the rate of decline is slightly slower when compared to partner only. As seen in Nova Scotia results, the no family group had both a low three-year retention rate at 61% and a larger five year decline leading to 31% at that time. The result of those who landed with children only were suppressed due to small counts that were suppressed ensure statistical validity and confidentiality.

Both Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador have low numbers of immigrants in these cohorts, and for this reason we cannot report on all combinations as done for Nova Scotia. Economic immigrants to Newfoundland and Labrador with no family at the time of landing had three-year retention rate of 75% but this dropped to 50% by year five. This matched the partner only category, which had a higher retention rate of 67% in year three, but a 33% retention rate in year five. The Prince Edward Island trend of Economic immigrants with a partner was similar to Newfoundland and Labrador at year three with a 75% retention rate, but had a slightly smaller decline to 50% by year five. Compared to other provinces, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest retention rates and biggest decreases from year three to five. Overall, however, the 2000-2004 cohort shows that Economic immigrants than land with family, wither with a spouse or partner or children or both have higher retention rates than those who arrive alone.

We next examine the 2005-2009 landing cohort across the same provinces using the same measure. For Nova Scotia, those landing with a partner and child again had the highest rates of retention at 73% three years after landing and 63% and the five-year mark. Those landing with a partner mirrored this pattern with 72% in year three, but had a lower five-year retention rate than child/partner families, with a rate of 60%. Those who landed with a child only, initially had a lower

three-year rate of 63%, but had no further decrease in retention by year five. Those who landed with no family exhibited a similar rate decrease from year three to year five but a lower three-year rate of 64%, which dropped to 55% in year five. As with the earlier cohort, those with family have higher rates of retention than those who land without family.

The 2005-2009 New Brunswick cohort had the same pattern as Nova Scotia. Again, those landing with a spouse or partner only had the highest rate of retention in both year three and five, with 78% and 66% respectively. Economic Principal applicants with a partner and child had a three-year retention of 76%, and a similar decrease as spouses or partner only landers, with a rate of 60% at year five. Those who landed only with at least one child had a similar pattern to those coming with a partner and child with 71% retention in year three to 57% in year five. Landers with no family had the second lowest three-year rate of 73%, but had the biggest decrease to 53% retention in year five.

Retention of Economic Immigrants, with and without Family (2005-2009 cohort)
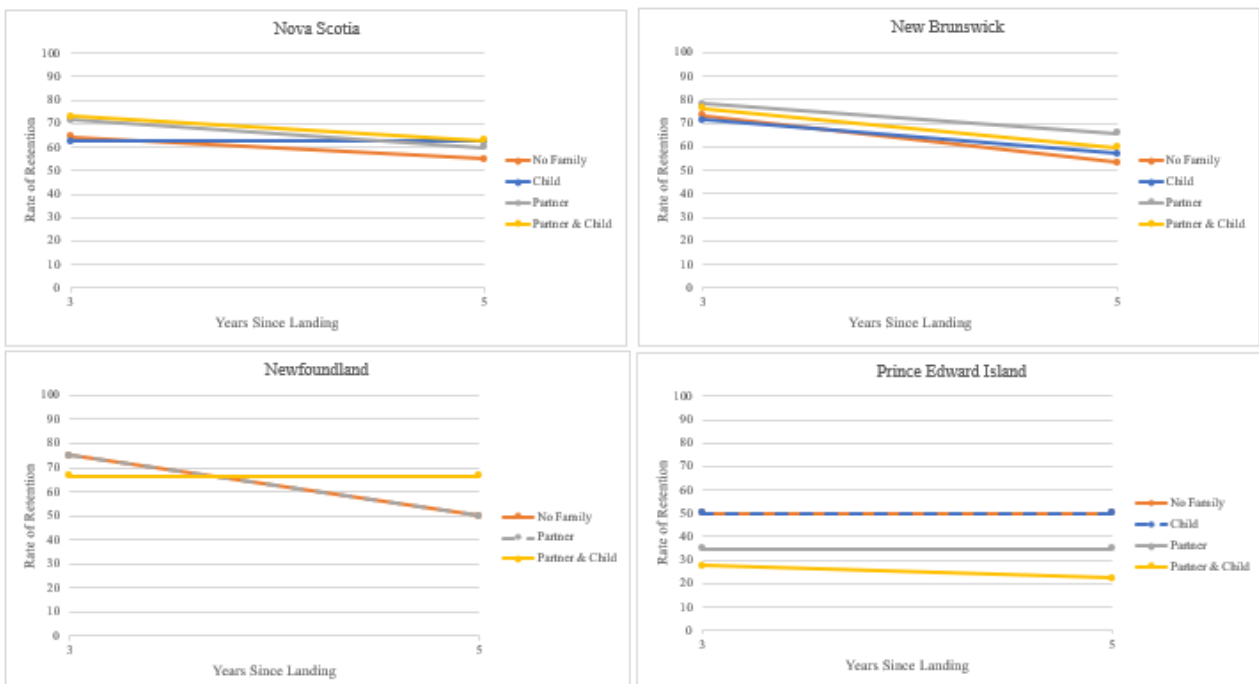
Prince Edward Island had low retention overall in this cohort but did have more people landing overall than the earlier cohort examined allowing us to report more detail. Those landing with no family or a child only had the same retention in both years, with 50% retention in both years three and five. Those landing with a partner had a lower three-year retention at 35% lost no further people in year five with 35% retention in that year. Interestingly, immigrants with partner and child had both the lowest rate of retention and largest decrease in retention, with a three-year retention of 28% and a drop to 23% in year five.

Newfoundland and Labrador also had an increase in people who landed and a smaller decrease in retention for year three to five. People who landed with either no family or a partner only had the same rates of retention and decrease between years, with 75% in year three and 50% in year five. These two groups had the largest decrease compared to those who landed a partner and child. Economic immigrants with a partner and child had a lower rate of retention compared to the other groups in year three, but retention remained steady from year three to five. Both years had a retention rate of 67% showing greater retention over time. Although the numbers are smaller in Newfoundland and Labrador, the province follows the same trend as other Atlantic provinces with higher retention overall between the two cohorts and generally retention rates are higher for immigrants that land with family compared to those who land alone.

Recommendations

Overall, analysis shows that economic immigrant taxfilers to Atlantic Canadian provinces that land with family are more likely to stay. This is especially the case for those landing with a spouse or partner and the anchoring effect is more pronounced in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Landing with children is less clear cut. The report also offers proof of concept in looking at families using administrative data and shows that it is worth looking at 'landing families' as a unit of analysis over looking at individuals alone. In terms of policy, this leads to a number of recommendations:

- Attracting immigrants with spouses or partners may lead to higher rates of retention;

- Provincial Nominee Programs could be enhanced by considering how pathways could be opened for spouses and partners;

- When offering settlement support to immigrants, it is important to also consider the support of the family members that arrive with them;

- When generating data it is important to create linkages of records across family members to better capture the full settlement experiences of immigrants to Canada.

References

Arat-Koc, Sedef. 2006 "Whose social reproduction? Transnational motherhood and challenges to feminist political economy" Pp, 75-92 in K, Bezanan, and M, Luxton, eds,, *Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neoliberalism*, Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Dobrowolsky, Alexandra and Howard Ramos. 2014. "Expanding the Vision: Why Nova Scotia Should Look Beyond Econoocentric Immigration Policy. *Canadian Centre For Policy Alternative,* Nova Scotia (May).

Ellis, Mark, and Richard Wright. 2005. "Assimilation and differences between the settlement patterns of individual immigrants and immigrant households." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 102 (43): 15325-15330.

Rumbaut, Ruben G. 1997.   "Ties that bind: Immigration and immigrant families in the United States", Pp, 3-46 in A, Booth, A,C, Crouter and N, Lander eds,, *Immigration and the Family: Research and Policy on U,S, Immigrants*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

VanderPlaat, Madine, Howard Ramos and Yoko Yoshida. 2012. "What do Sponsored Parents and Grandparents Contribute?" *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 44(3): 79–96.

Additional Considerations for IMDB Family Classifications based on 2016 release of the IMDB

A challenge when working with the IMDB, especially releases prior to 2019, is the ability to distinguish families as an identifiable unit. The landing records, for example, report a person's 'family status,' defined as the relationship they hold to the Principal Applicant at landing. Although, as far as we know, there were no linking variables that connected a person back to the landed Principal Applicant (i.e. the landing record may state the person is a child, but not of whom). In order to elucidate the family make-up, the tax records must be examined for information pertaining to family as a unit. From the tax records we can decipher families, and their relationship to their kin with numerical identifiers.

A number of family related variables exist in the IMDB tax records and the primary key for familial identification is the "Family identification number" (FIN). This number is assigned based on information reported in the tax files yet the value itself is taken from the landing record and assigns all members of the same family with the IMDB ID of the eldest family member. This may cause confusion as the eldest family member may not be the Principal Applicant, which is the status that family relationships are built from in the landing record. Based on the FIN, other information is derived by Statistics Canada using filing linkages and imputed values if required.

After the FIN has been determined Statistics Canada creates a "Family flag" that specifies where each individual was matched within the family unit. As Table 1 shows, there are 12 potential values that can be taken on with this variable and they include information on whether the status was imputed or matched exactly. Based on these values, it becomes clear the complications associated with the FIN concept of "family", where 'family' as defined by tax information are those within wedlock, common law, or children from partnership. Moreover, this flag is dependent on those who have filed tax, had the ability to be imputed, or has claimed family

11

members within their tax record. Lastly, the longitudinal nature of the data raises interesting question as to what happens to both the FIN and family flag in the event of a young child marrying as they mature in Canada. Given these considerations the family flag stands as the only family status a person holds within their FIN grouping.

Family Flag Values

Value	Definition
0	Unmatched filer
1	Married couple
2	Declared married, filers living at the same address
3	Widowed/deceased, one of the spouses is deceased
4	Married couple, neither person lists a spousal SIN, filers matched by address
5	Formerly married
6	Tax-filing child
7	Non-filing spouse, imputed record
8	Non-filing child, imputed record
9	Common-law couple with at least one spouse reporting
10	Deceased/deceased couple, deceased filer matched with deceased filer
11	Deceased/couple, deceased filer matched with a spouse who has remarried.

The last derived variable is based on both the FIN and family flag, is the "Family type" which is again assigned to each person and denotes the type of family they are grouped within. These values can include both living and deceased family members (as can the family flag) and can be one of 15 types of families, shown in Table 2 –below. Although the name specifies 'family' the variable appears to predominantly report the martial status of a family, or the martial status of a child's parent (in the case of a child's tax record). Statistics Canada provides some ability to trace family connections after a death has occurred with the use of this variable, in addition to likely success with respect to analysis pertaining to remarriage or separation. Other than these linkages there is no other family information provided with the variable.

In addition to the three main family variables mentioned above - family identification number, family flag, and family type – there are a few remaining variables to provide further information about family structure. Firstly, one variable reports the number of total children, and

another set of variables provides the number of children for each age 1 to 18, and 19 or older. The definition of a child within the tax records is someone who is single and living with one or both of their parents, regardless of age. Secondly, a family size variable reports the number of people within the same FIN, which presumably will include deceased spouses/parents based on the previous family type/family flag variable. A last notable variable relevant family is the introduction of the "same-sex flag" introduced in the year 2000, allowing same-sex couples to claim a common-law partnership on their tax records, as this was five years before same-sex marriages became legal in Canada.

Table 2 Family Type

Imputed or filing children possible?	Value	Definition
Y	1	Husband-wife family: each spouse files a return.
Y	-1	Husband-wife family: 2 living spouse filers and a deceased filer.
Y	2	Husband-wife family: one spouse files a return
Y	-2	Husband-wife family: one living spouse filer and a deceased filer
Y	3	Lone-parent family: The lone parent files a return
Y	-3	Lone-parent family: 1 living filer and a deceased filer
N	4	Non-family person: The non-family person files a return.
N	-4	Non-family person: 1 living filer and a deceased filer
Y	5	Common law family. Each common-law partner files a return
Y	-5	Common-law family: 2 living filers and a deceased filer
N	-6	Non-family person: imputed spouse of a deceased tax filer
N	-7	Non-family person: 1 deceased filer.
Y	8	Common-law family: 1 filer. Available since 1992.
N	-9	Husband-wife family: 2 deceased filers.

Based on the variables related to marriage-based family identification, noted above, the tax records can provide interesting, time-dependent information about family structure, although at the present time there appear to be two main caveats when deciphering family structure with the IMDB. The first concern is the lack of information within the landing record, or time of landing, which limits the understanding of the types of families that land, and the potential use of family structure as a predictor of retention. Our solution to this problem is to define a family unit at

landing by using the first available tax record (either T0 or T1), and then assume the structure remained stable since landing, and focusing on a partner and child claimed. We consider this the "landing family." This does capture family not present in tax record and it does not capture changes between landing and tax filing, which is compounded by the number of families that can take over T1 time to file a tax record.

An additional concern is the lack of family indicators referring to immediate relatives in both the landing record and tax files, although the FIN appears to provide the opportunity to work around this. When grouped by the FIN it could be assumed that two individuals classified as a child to the Principal Applicant, within the same FIN group would be considered siblings. However, if these siblings happened to land at the same time with their own respective spouses, there would be no information that indicates a family connection. In regard to income and household earnings of families, this becomes less of an issue, though remains as a problem when analyzing factors present at landing that may influence retention.

Issues arising from the use of administrative data for research are not new, yet still present challenges to overcome when using these rich data sources to better our understanding of Canadian immigration. It is our hope that we have offered both some problems and solutions when using the IMDB in a research capacity. Given the limited literature on the impact of family composition towards Atlantic retention, it is important to understand the gaps in the current data, and potential methods of improvement moving forward. As it currently stands, the IMDB remains a useful resource for Canadian Immigration research and will continue to benefit from strong research and academic investment.