

Economic Profile Series: Seine River Region, Manitoba

Spring 2020

This series looks at select communities across Canada and highlights key labour market statistics and the role that immigration has played, or could play, to help these communities flourish. It is important to note that predicting future labour market demand can be challenging as economies are always evolving. This profile uses current population and labour market trends to give a profile of how immigration might play a role in this community.

Ensuring the Seine River Region's community continues to thrive: the role of immigration

Located southeast of Winnipeg, the Seine River Region (population 24,800) is made up of the rural municipalities of Taché, La Broquerie and Ste. Anne, as well as the town of Ste. Anne.

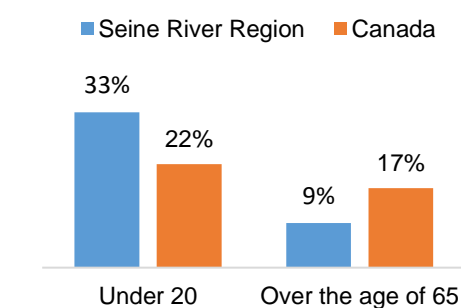
The Seine River Region in Manitoba has one of the youngest populations in Canada. At the time of the 2016 Census, the region's median age was only 34.2 years, compared to 41.2 across the country. One in three living in the area is under the age of 20—compared to 22% across Canada (Figure 1). At the same time, across Canada 17% of the population is over the age of 65, compared to only 9% in the Seine River Region.

Trends in immigration

Almost all of the recent population growth in the Seine River Region has come from natural population growth (births minus deaths) and people moving in from other municipalities around Manitoba. In the 2016 Census, there were 6,000 people living in the 4 communities that make up the Seine River Region who did not live there 5 years earlier (in 2011). Of these 6,000 inward migrants, 86% came from elsewhere in the province, 10% came from elsewhere in Canada and only 4% came from outside Canada. There were 3,120 immigrants (or 13% of the total population) living in the Seine River Region in 2016. As shown in Figure 2, there was a spike in immigration to the region between 2006 and 2010, but the numbers declined in the most recent Census period (between 2011 and 2016).

Germany has been the top source of immigrants to the region (980 in total), with more than half of them arriving between 2006 and 2010. Russia is the second largest source of immigrants (365), followed by Paraguay (345). The Paraguayans started arriving before 1981 and have continued to arrive in relatively small numbers since. In 2016, there were 215 immigrants from Kazakhstan living in the Seine River Region and most of them arrived after 2001. There has not been much immigration from French-speaking countries into the Seine River Region.

Figure 1: Population by selected age group (2016)

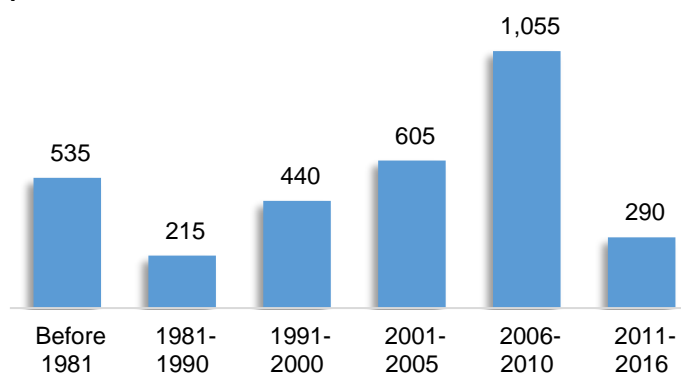


Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

Ensuring the Seine River Region has a strong talent pipeline

Despite strong population growth, there are indications the Seine River Region will need to attract considerably more, including French-speaking or bilingual persons, in the years ahead to ensure the region's important industries have the workers needed to foster growth. At the time of the Census, the region's unemployment rate was very low (less than 5%) and the participation rate—the share of the adult population in the workforce—was 71%, well above the national participation rate of 65.2%.

Figure 2: Immigrants living in the Seine River Region by period of arrival in Canada

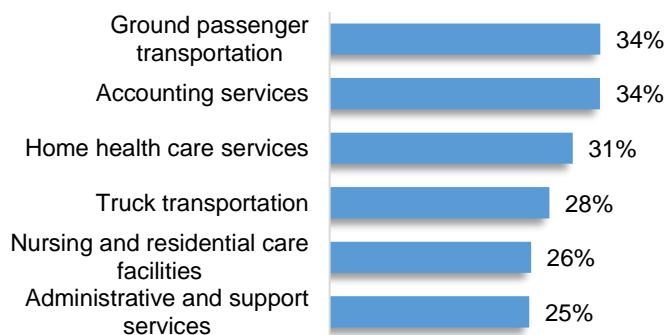


Source: Statistics Canada.

According to a forecast prepared by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council, Manitoba is heading towards a potential [agricultural labour crisis](#). By 2029, it is forecasted there will be a shortage of 5,300 unfilled jobs across the province, or nearly 20% of the entire agricultural workforce. In addition, the farm operator population is older and will need to attract a younger population in the coming years. At the time of the 2016 Census, 52% of all farm operators across the province were over the age of 55. The Seine River Region economy is dominated by agriculture. There are more than 360 farms and over 1,100 workers.

Beyond agriculture, there are other sectors of the Seine River Region economy that will need to attract a new generation of workers as a significant share of the workforce is over the age of 55 (Figure 3). The 2016 Census reported that 34% of workers in ground transportation and accounting services, 31% of home health-care workers, 28% of truckers and 26% of nursing home workers were over the age of 55. The region will need to attract a new generation of workers to ensure these important industries have enough workers to meet demand in the years ahead.









Figure 3: Share of the Division No. 2 workforce over the age of 55—selected industries*



*the Seine River Region is located in Division No. 2. Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census.

Table 1 reveals the industries for which the Seine River Region has a much higher concentration of firms compared to the rest of the country. As discussed above, the economy in the Seine River Region is anchored by farming and food processing. More than 17% of the workforce is employed in farms or manufacturing.

Table 1: The Seine River Region dominant industries: Concentration of firms relative to population size*

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|---|--|---|---|
|  | Cattle ranching—5 times as many |  | Firms involved in building—2 times more |
|  | Hog and pig farming—20 times more |  | Local credit unions—2.3 times |
|  | Food—twice as many |  | Golf courses—2.5 times as many |
|  | General freight trucking—2.7 times as many |  | RV parks and campgrounds—4 times |

*For example, adjusted for population size, the Seine River Region has twice as many firms involved in food manufacturing compared to the national economy.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Patterns (June 2019).

As shown in Table 1, there are 5 times as many cattle ranching operations compared to the country as a whole (adjusted for population size) and 20 times as many hog and pig farming operations. There are 8 food manufacturing firms in the region, or twice as many as the rest of the country, relative to population size.

The region also has a large construction sector with 180 firms¹ and more than 2,000 workers. Adjusted for size, there are twice as many firms involved in building construction located in the Seine River Region compared to the country overall. The region also has more trucking firms, credit unions, golf courses and campgrounds. Ensuring these strategically important industries have the workforce needed to meet demand in the future should be a priority of local stakeholders.

The Seine River Region's aging entrepreneurs

Immigrants are playing an important role as entrepreneurs across Canada. In the Census Division in which the Seine River Region is located, 1 in 3 business owners (self-employed) is over the age of 55, including 43% of farm owners, 37% in the transportation sector and 44% in the professional services sector. These business owners will be looking to transition into retirement in the near future. Where will the new generation of entrepreneurs come from?

Where will the future talent pipeline come from?

The Seine River Region is relatively young and has a track record of attracting talent from elsewhere in Manitoba and beyond. The tightening labour market creates employment opportunities for people who previously struggled to participate in the labour market, such as women re-entering the workforce, the Indigenous population or those with disabilities. Persons aged 55 and older who are not in the labour market could also be enticed back in by being offered flexible work and other benefits.

There is no doubt that one of the Seine River Region's greatest opportunities involves the attraction of young people and families to the region. Since 2013, across Canada, all net growth in the labour market has come from immigrants². There is a direct correlation between immigrant attraction and workforce growth. The communities with the highest immigration rates have, by far, the fastest labour market growth. No other province has benefitted as much as Manitoba. Since 2012, the number of people in the provincial workforce who were born in Canada has declined by 25,600 (Figure 4). Over the same period, nearly 50,000 immigrants joined the workforce.

¹ Firms with employees. Source: Statistics Canada Business Patterns (June 2019).

² The number of people born in Canada exiting the workforce is greater than the number of people born in Canada joining each year.

The Seine River Region has not attracted as many immigrants as other areas of Manitoba have. As shown in Figure 5, across the province 9% of the population in 2016 did not live in Canada 10 years earlier. In Winnipeg, 13% of the population were recent immigrants, whereas in the Seine River Region only 6% of the population were recent immigrants. In the years ahead, the region will need to attract more immigrants to ensure there are enough workers to meet labour market demand.

The Seine River Region: a strategically important, French-speaking region in Manitoba

There are more than 6,000 people who speak French living in the region, or 1 out of every 4 residents. The population of the Seine River Region has been expanding rapidly in recent years, up 32% between 2006 and 2016. However, the population with French as the mother tongue only increased by 5% over the 10-year period (from 21% of the total in 2006 to 17% in 2016) (Figure 6).

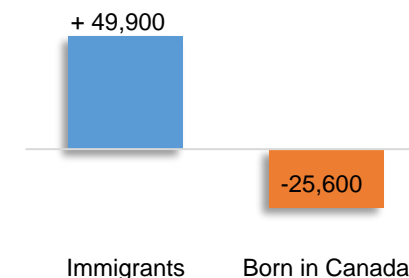
The population that speaks French rose by 21% over the decade, but this was below the overall population growth rate. As a result, the French-speaking population in the region declined from 28% of the total in 2006 to 25% in 2016³. Attracting French-speaking immigrants in the years ahead could help ensure this historically Francophone region continues to thrive.

There is also a demand for French-speaking or bilingual workers. According to the Census, around 1,600 workers use French in the workplace on a daily basis. In nearby Winnipeg, some 15,000 people speak French on a regular basis. French-speaking immigrants settling in the Seine River Region can work in local industries or commute to Winnipeg, where speaking French is an important asset. According to the 2016 Census, nearly 4,000 people living in the Seine River Region commute into Winnipeg each day for work.

Immigration: supporting the region's French-speaking community

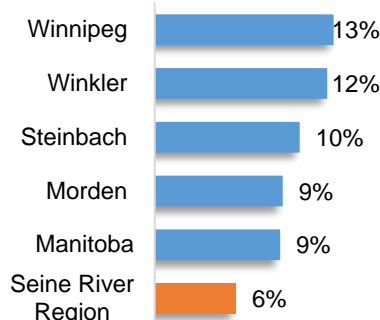
In addition to helping to fill labour market demand, attracting younger French-speaking or bilingual immigrants to the Seine River Region could help this important community sustain itself in the years ahead. A higher share of the population aged 65 and older can speak French compared to younger generations—for example, 37% of the population over the age of 75, compared to 23% of the population aged 25 to 44). Attracting young French-speaking immigrants could help address this imbalance.

Figure 4: Workforce growth by source, Manitoba (2012 to 2019)



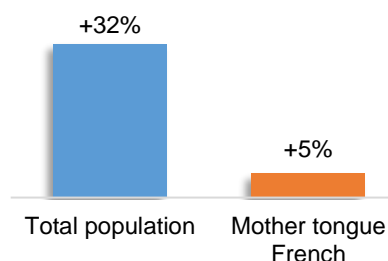
Source: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0083-01.

Figure 5: Share of the total population arriving in Canada between 2006 and 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

Figure 6: Population change by mother tongue (2006 to 2016)



Source: Statistics Canada.

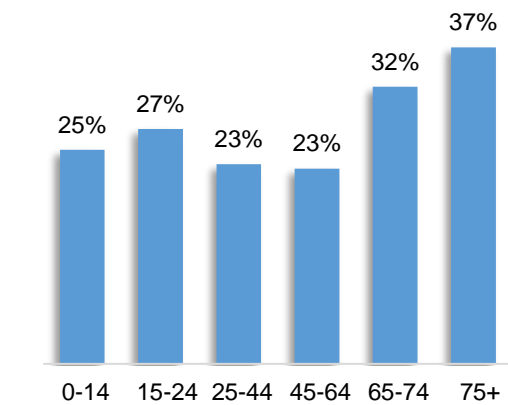
³ The number of people born in Canada exiting the workforce is greater than the number of people born in Canada joining each year.

The region has not attracted many French-speaking immigrants in recent years, but there is now a focused effort to do so. According to data published by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the number of French-speaking permanent residents settling in Manitoba rose from an average of 240 per year between 2013 and 2018, to 615 in 2019, an increase of 2.5 times in one year.

Why should the region focus on attracting French-speaking immigrants?

Attracting Francophone and French-speaking immigrants to the region will be beneficial in 2 ways. First, it will help address workforce demand in the region; and in addition it will ensure the French language and French-language institutions and culture continue to thrive in the Seine River Region.

Figure 7: French-speaking population by age group (share of the total), Seine River Region



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

The Seine River Region has been selected as a [Welcoming Francophone Community](#) to help French-speaking and bilingual newcomers feel welcomed and integrated in Francophone minority communities outside Quebec.

Helping to grow the local economy

There are many other benefits from attracting immigrants. Attracting more in the coming years would create new demand for local products and services. Every 100 new immigrant families with an average household income directly generate over \$8 million worth of new household expenditures, much of this spending in the local community⁴.

Statistics show that these 100 immigrant families would spend:

- \$1.6 million per year on housing costs, such as mortgage payments, electricity and property taxes,
- \$1.3 million each year on transportation costs, such as vehicle purchases and maintenance, and
- \$830,000 on food expenditures at local grocery stores and restaurants.

These 100 new families would also generate some \$2.2 million worth of taxes per year for local, provincial and federal governments.

Other positive effects

Attracting more immigrants, including French-speaking or bilingual immigrants, to the Seine River Region could help support a vibrant economic and social life in many other ways. Civic and business groups would have a growing pool from which to draw members. Youth sports clubs and leagues around the region would benefit from an increasing population of young residents.

Retaining and integrating newcomers

Retention will be critical to long-term population growth. It is important that newcomers are welcomed into our social life and develop a strong sense of Canadian identity and social cohesion. The community will need to foster a welcoming environment for newcomers.

⁴ Assumes the new household spending conforms to the current spending pattern in Manitoba.

Helping to sustain high quality public services

There is a direct relationship between economic growth and provincial and local government capacity to provide high quality public services and public infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals. A growing economy and population in the Seine River Region could lead to a greater public investment in services and infrastructure.

Older residents play an important role in the community

Residents of all ages contribute to the well-being of their communities and their province by working, paying taxes and giving back through volunteer and charitable activities. As residents of the Seine River Region retire and move into a new stage in life, it creates new economic opportunities in health care, personal services and recreation industries.

But these should not be considered a replacement for the region's important export-oriented industries such as agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. In the years ahead, the community can and should benefit from the economic opportunities arising from more retirees, as well as the opportunities arising from attracting and growing the younger workforce.

The Seine River Region in 2035

So, what will the Seine River Region look like in 2035? Will it continue to be one of the fastest growing regions of Manitoba? Will it continue to have thriving agriculture and food processing industries? Will the workforce be there to ensure the region can take advantage of new opportunities? Will the Seine River Region's French-speaking population continue to grow?

In the years ahead, the Seine River Region is poised to make important contributions to the provincial economy through agriculture, tourism and other industries. Immigration, including French-speaking or bilingual immigrants, may be key to ensuring the region lives up to its economic potential.

By significantly increasing immigration, the Seine River Region may be better positioned to thrive in the years ahead. Attracting more Francophone and French-speaking immigrants might also help the region's economy and ensure an important minority community continues to prosper.

For more information on how immigration matters across Canada, visit canada.ca/immigration-matters.