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by Garnett Picot, Max Stick and Feng Hou

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This study was jointly conducted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Statistics Canada.

Abstract

This article examines the occupational outcomes of recent provincial nominees (PNs) who obtained permanent residence in Canada one to five years prior to the 2021 Census. Recent PNs—including principal applicants (PAs), spouses and dependants—were less likely to be employed in technical and skilled trades jobs and more likely to work in lower-skilled or labourer jobs than Canadian-born workers. Both groups were equally likely to hold professional jobs. At a more detailed level, PNs were significantly more likely to be employed as computer and information systems professionals and less likely to work in nursing, other professional health occupations and skilled trades compared with Canadian-born workers.

There was significant variation by province. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia were more likely to select PAs who worked in professional jobs than other provinces. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta had a greater percentage of PN PAs in lower-skilled and labourer jobs than other provinces.

At the aggregate level, there was little occupational mobility among PN PAs. The occupations they held 10 to 15 years after admission closely resembled those held during their first 5 years in Canada. However, there was a substantial cross-cohort change in occupational patterns. In 2021, recent PN PAs were significantly more likely to be employed in higher-skilled occupations—particularly as computer and information systems professionals—and less likely to be in medium-skilled occupations—especially the skilled trades—compared with their counterparts in 2011.

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Introduction

The Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) has admitted more immigrants than any other individual economic immigration program in most years since the mid-2010s (Picot et al., 2023). In 2023, 40% of economic immigrants were admitted through the PNP, compared with 13% through the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) and 15% through the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) (IRCC, 2025). The PNP was established with two main objectives: (1) to distribute more immigrants to regions and provinces outside the three largest cities and (2) to help meet labour market needs in these regions and provinces (IRCC, 2017).

This is the fifth article in a series focusing on the PNP.¹ It contributes to the series by examining several questions related to the occupational outcomes of provincial nominees (PNs).

First, how does the occupational distribution of PNs compare with that of Canadian-born workers? Given that one of the PNP's primary objectives is to meet labour market needs and address shortages, the two distributions are expected to differ. PNs are expected to complement, rather than replicate, the occupational distribution of the Canadian-born workforce.

Second, how do the skills and occupations of PNP principal applicants (PAs) differ from those of immigrants selected through other economic programs, particularly the FSWP and the CEC? While the FSWP and CEC are designed to select highly skilled immigrants to meet longer-term economic objectives, the PNP also targets immediate labour market needs. This distinction likely results in notable differences in occupational distributions across programs.

Third, how do the occupational distributions of PN PAs vary across provinces and territories? Since each province and territory applies its own selection criteria, differences in occupational outcomes are to be expected.

Fourth, how occupationally mobile are PN PAs over time? Do they remain in the same occupations they initially entered, or does their occupational distribution shift as they adapt to the Canadian labour market?

The PNP's contribution to the labour market extends beyond PAs to include their spouses and dependants. This paper analyzes the outcomes of both groups. Throughout, the term "PNs" refers to PAs and their accompanying spouses and dependants.

Data and methods

The 2021 Census is the primary data source, with the 2011 and 2016 censuses as secondary sources. The focus is on recent immigrants—those who obtained permanent residency one to five years prior to the census and aged 20 to 60 at the time of the census.

The study uses the 2016 National Occupational Classification (NOC) system for 2016 and 2021 and uses the 2011 NOC for 2011. The 2011 NOC very closely resembles the 2016 NOC, allowing an easy conversion to the 2016 system.

1. The previous four articles cover (1) the expansion of the PNP (Picot, Hou & Crossman, 2023), (2) differences among provinces in the PNPs (Picot, Hou & Crossman, 2024), (3) provincial retention rates of provincial nominees and (4) trends in earnings of provincial nominees (Picot, Crossman & Hou, 2023a, 2023b).

The occupations in which immigrants are employed are defined at two levels in this study. At the more detailed level, 30 occupations are used, as shown in tables 3 to 5.

At the less detailed level, five skill levels are employed. These skill levels are determined by the education and training required for an occupation and the tasks involved. The five levels are (1) management jobs (skill level A-0), (2) professional jobs (skill level A-1, typically requiring a university degree), (3) technical and skilled trades jobs (skill level B, usually requiring a college diploma or apprenticeship), (4) lower-skilled jobs (skill level C, usually requiring high school or job-specific training), and (5) labourers (skill level D, having no educational requirements and usually providing on-the-job training).

Comparisons based on occupational skill levels

Employment rates

The employment picture in 2021 of recent PNs was somewhat different from that of Canadian-born workers (Table 1). The comparison is made with Canadian-born individuals aged 25 to 45 years, since most PNs (83%) were in this age group. The full-time employment rate—the share of all workers who were employed full time—was lower among PNs (54%) than among Canadian-born workers (60%). As expected, PN PAs had a higher full-time employment rate (63%) than PN spouses and dependants (45%, Table 1).

Among all recent employed PNs, part-time employment was often significant, and the lower the skill level the higher the likelihood of being employed part time. Among professionals (skill level A-1), about one in five employed PNs had a part-time job. This increased to one in three among employed lower-skilled PNs (skill level C) and almost one in two among labourers (skill level D). The same pattern held among PN PAs. The share of employed individuals working part-time jobs increased from 14% among professionals to 40% among labourers.²

From this point forward, the analysis will focus on full-time employed workers.

Comparison of skill levels with Canadian-born workers

As noted in the introduction, ideally, many of the jobs held by PNs would complement those held by Canadian-born workers.

This analysis compares the occupational skill distribution of all employed recent PNs with that of Canadian-born workers.

There were notable differences between full-time employed recent PNs and Canadian-born workers. Recent PNs were less likely to be employed in level B technical and skilled trades jobs than Canadian-born workers (26% versus 36%, respectively) and more likely to be in lower-skilled level C or D jobs (41% versus 26%, respectively). Both groups were similarly represented in level A-1 professional jobs (about 25%) (Table 1).

2. The shares of employed recent PNs who were working part time in 2021 were 22% for skill level A-0, 19% for level A-1, 29% for level B, 34% for level C and 46% for level D. For PN PAs, the values were 20% for skill level A-0, 14% for level A-1, 23% for level B, 29% for level C and 40% for level D.

The skill distributions of the two components of the PN population were very different. A large proportion of PN PAs—the PNs selected by the provinces—were in professional jobs (about one-third), with about the same share in lower-skilled jobs (level C or D). Their spouses and dependants were much less likely to hold professional jobs, and over half were in lower-skilled jobs (Table 1).

Table 1
Skill level distribution by immigrant class and province or territory, immigrants admitted one to five years before the 2021 Census, aged 20 to 60 years at the time of the census

	Total	Distribution of skill levels among those employed full time					Employed full time	Employed part time	Not employed (did not work or was an unpaid family worker)	Self-employed	
		Employed full time	A-0	A-1	B	C					D
	count		percent						percent of total workers		
Canadian-born	13,552,070	7,503,300	13.3	22.0	34.8	22.5	7.6	55.4	20.7	13.3	10.7
Canadian-born (aged 25 to 45 years)	6,933,840	4,172,690	12.6	25.0	36.4	19.8	6.2	60.2	19.3	10.3	10.3
Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) principal applicants	45,450	28,860	10.6	32.0	26.7	24.5	6.2	63.5	19.1	7.3	10.2
PNP spouses and dependants	50,520	22,480	6.2	15.9	24.1	35.3	18.5	44.5	27.7	19.8	8.0
Total PNP	95,970	51,340	8.7	24.9	25.5	29.3	11.6	53.5	23.6	13.9	9.0
PNP principal applicants by province or territory											
Newfoundland and Labrador	170	130	x	17.0	40.6	24.9	x	77.4	14.6	x	x
Prince Edward Island	780	340	13.9	26.6	27.3	23.6	8.5	43.4	21.1	10.8	24.7
Nova Scotia	2,020	1,480	9.8	45.5	26.9	15.6	2.3	73.0	18.5	3.3	5.2
New Brunswick	1,620	1,110	4.9	47.3	21.3	22.8	3.7	68.8	15.4	5.0	10.9
Ontario	12,220	7,620	12.7	47.5	22.3	14.6	3.0	62.4	17.1	8.6	11.9
Manitoba	10,040	6,600	7.6	15.2	25.9	40.6	10.7	65.7	20.6	5.7	7.9
Saskatchewan	5,530	3,370	9.1	19.2	31.7	29.8	10.1	61.0	20.7	7.7	10.7
Alberta	3,960	2,360	11.2	19.9	29.0	32.6	7.3	59.6	24.2	6.7	9.6
British Columbia	7,970	5,190	13.7	37.4	30.0	14.9	4.1	65.1	16.3	7.8	10.8
Yukon and Northwest Territories	110	80	x	10.2	49.2	18.0	x	66.1	29.0	x	x
Canada											
Federal Skilled Worker Program principal applicants	87,830	58,770	13.3	46.0	22.2	15.9	2.6	66.9	18.2	7.1	7.8
Canadian Experience Class principal applicants	19,200	15,640	16.6	51.7	21.8	8.3	1.6	81.4	11.4	1.6	5.5
Other economic principal applicants (excluding PNP)	9,520	4,010	10.7	8.7	24.9	41.1	14.7	42.2	22.6	16.6	18.6
Spouses and dependants in the economic class (excluding PNP)	105,610	53,170	8.6	25.8	23.6	27.1	14.9	50.4	24.6	17.3	7.8
Total economic class (excluding PNP)	222,160	131,590	11.7	37.4	22.8	20.3	7.8	53.5	23.6	13.9	9.0
Refugee class	72,380	19,950	2.9	5.3	23.8	36.4	31.6	27.6	24.0	40.5	8.0
Family class	183,070	71,520	6.9	15.3	24.8	34.7	18.3	39.1	26.7	24.4	9.8

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Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Comparisons among immigrant classes

Different immigrant classes are associated with different objectives that can affect their occupational distributions. Economic class programs such as the FSWP and the CEC focus on high human capital immigrants who are selected to contribute to economic growth in the longer run. The PNP is designed in most provinces and territories to respond to more immediate labour market requirements. These requirements can include a perceived need for lower-skilled workers, although there is considerable debate regarding the extent to which that approach supports increased prosperity (Lange et al., 2022, Doyle et al., 2023; Mahboubi & Zhang, 2023; Sommerfield, 2023; Fortin, 2024).

There were significant differences in the occupations held by PAs across economic class programs. In 2021, about half of recent PAs in the FSWP and CEC were employed in professional occupations, compared with one-third of PN PAs. Conversely, 10% to 20% of FSWP and CEC PAs were employed in lower-skilled or labourer jobs, compared with 30% of PN PAs.

Comparisons with the family and refugee classes include all PNP immigrants—both PAs and their spouses and dependants—as there is no equivalent to PAs in those classes. As expected, a higher proportion of full-time employed immigrants in the family (53%) and refugee (68%) classes were in lower-skilled or labourer occupations, compared with all PNs (41%).

Comparisons among provinces

The full-time employment rate among recent PAs varied from 60% to 77% in most provinces, except for Prince Edward Island, which had a lower full-time employment rate (Table 1). Part-time employment was relatively high in some provinces, particularly in the Prairies. In 2021, one-fifth to one-quarter of recent PN PAs were employed part time in Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Note that since Quebec administers its own economic immigrant programs, it is not included in this study.

Different provinces tend to emphasize different types of occupational skill requirements. As a result, the selection criteria vary significantly by province (Picot et al., 2024), as do the types of jobs held by PN PAs.

Some provinces³ emphasize the professional skill level (A-1). Almost half of the recent PN PAs employed full time in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario worked in professional jobs in 2021, compared with about one-third for PN PAs in Canada as a whole (Table 1). By comparison, in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, fewer than 20% were in professional jobs, and 40% to 50% worked in lower-skilled and labourer occupations, likely recruited to fill shorter-term labour market demand.

3. The sample size for the territories was too small to have a reliable estimate of the occupational distribution (Table 1).

Occupational mobility of provincial nominees

Labour market integration for new immigrants may take time and possibly involve change in the types of occupations held. This process may result in considerable occupational mobility; the types of jobs held by recent immigrants 5 to 10 years after landing may be different from those held during the first few years.

To determine if that is the case, three different cohorts of PN PAs are selected: those admitted from 2006 to 2010, from 2011 to 2015 and from 2016 to 2020. Each cohort is tracked through successive censuses as it ages.

Table 2

Percent distribution of occupational skill levels among Canadian-born workers and provincial nominee principal applicants by entry cohort across three censuses

	Canadian-born workers			2006-to-2010 cohort		2011-to-2015 cohort		2016-to-2020 cohort	
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021	2016	2021	2021
	percent								
Level A-0	11.5	13.0	15.2	6.7	8.8	11.3	9.6	10.9	10.9
Level A-1	19.2	21.2	22.2	22.8	19.8	23.3	20.8	22.4	33.7
Level B	35.5	35.1	34.5	33.2	32.6	29.6	30.6	30.1	25.9
Level C	25.9	23.9	21.7	26.4	27.4	25.1	27.5	26.8	23.6
Level D	7.8	6.9	6.4	10.9	11.4	10.6	11.5	9.8	5.9

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 censuses of population, and 2011 National Household Survey.

There was relatively little change in the skill distribution as PN PAs acquired experience in Canada (Table 2). At the individual level, there may be movement from jobs in one skill level to another, but at the aggregate level there was little change. For example, among those employed full time in the 2006-to-2010 cohort, 23% were employed in professional-level jobs at both 1 to 5 years after admission (in the 2011 Census) and 11 to 15 years after admission (in the 2021 Census) (Table 2).

There was, however, a significant shift in the skilled distribution of recent PN PAs between the 2006-to-2010 admission cohort and the more recent 2016-to-2020 admission cohort. The share of those employed full time in higher-skilled jobs (skill levels A-0 and A-1) rose from 30% to 45%. Declines were seen in the proportion in technical and skilled trades jobs (skill level B, from 33% to 26%) and in lower-skilled and labourer jobs (skill levels C and D, from 37% to 30%).

This trend toward more PN PAs employed in higher-skilled jobs reflects the trend for the labour market as a whole. The share of full-time employed Canadian-born workers working in higher-skilled jobs (A-0 and A-1) rose from 31% in 2011 to 37% in 2021, while the share in lower-skilled and labourer jobs fell from 34% to 28% (Table 2). In most Western countries, employment growth has been considerably faster in high-skilled occupations and slower or negative in medium- and lower-skilled occupations. This pattern is driven largely by technological change and has been observed for a few decades. This results in long-term decreases in demand for lower-skilled workers and increases in demand for higher-skilled workers (Hötte et al., 2023).

Comparisons based on detailed occupations

This section explores the types of jobs held by PNs based on 30 occupations (tables 3 to 5). Such an approach provides a more detailed picture of employment trends. However, in the interest of brevity, this discussion focuses on 10 selected occupations of particular interest⁴ rather than examining trends across all 30 occupations. Eight of the 10 occupations are medium- or high-skilled occupations that had above-average job vacancy rates in 2023 and are on the list of “in-demand” occupations for some PNPs, as well as on the federal government’s Express Entry list of “eligible occupations” (Picot & Mehdi, 2024). Two lower-skilled occupations—sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade, and service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations—are included primarily because of the interest generated during and after the COVID-19 pandemic regarding perceived labour shortages.

Comparison with Canadian-born workers

When including all 30 occupations, the distribution among all PNs is somewhat different from that of Canadian-born workers.⁵

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4. The 10 occupations are engineers; computer and information systems professionals; professional occupations in nursing; nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates; professional occupations in health (except nursing); industrial, electrical and construction trades; maintenance and equipment operation trades; transport truck drivers; sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade; and service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations.
 5. The correlation coefficient between the two distributions is 0.53, a moderate correlation. If the two distributions were identical, the correlation coefficient would be 1.0.

Table 3
Percent distribution of occupations among full-time employed workers by immigrant class, immigrants admitted one to five years prior to the 2021 Census

	Total employed full time	Canadian- born workers	Total provincial nominees	Provincial nominee principal applicants	Provincial nominee spouses and dependants	Federal Skilled Worker Program principal applicants	Canadian Experience Class principal applicants
				percent			
Management occupations	13.1	13.3	8.7	10.6	6.2	13.3	16.6
Professional occupations in business and finance	4.2	4.2	5.2	6.1	4.0	12.0	8.0
Administrative occupations in finance, insurance and business	7.6	7.7	5.2	5.3	5.1	7.3	5.9
Office support and co-ordination occupations	5.9	5.9	5.3	4.6	6.2	4.5	2.7
Physical and life science professionals	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.9	1.2
Engineers	1.4	1.4	2.9	4.4	0.9	4.2	5.0
Architects and statisticians	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.6	1.0
Computer and information systems professionals	2.7	2.4	11.2	15.0	6.3	17.7	25.7
Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences	3.9	3.9	4.3	5.1	3.4	4.9	4.9
Professional occupations in nursing	2.2	2.2	0.7	0.7	0.7	2.0	0.3
Professional occupations in health (except nursing)	1.1	1.1	0.5	0.6	0.4	1.0	1.1
Technical occupations in health	2.2	2.2	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.4	0.5
Assisting occupations in health (except nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates)	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	x
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	1.4	1.4	3.3	2.1	4.7	2.2	0.3
Professional occupations in education services	5.5	5.6	1.5	1.5	1.4	3.0	3.8
Professional occupations in law and social, community and government services	3.5	3.6	2.0	2.3	1.6	4.1	4.6
Support occupations in law and social services	5.7	5.8	3.8	2.7	5.3	1.9	1.2
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sports	2.0	2.0	1.7	2.2	1.1	1.7	4.4
Sales and service supervisors	3.8	3.8	6.0	5.8	6.2	3.9	4.0
Sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.1	4.1	1.4	0.9
Service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations	2.9	2.9	5.6	5.0	6.5	4.3	2.3
Support occupations in sales and services	4.4	4.2	8.3	4.2	13.5	1.8	1.1
Industrial, electrical and construction trades	5.5	5.6	2.3	2.8	1.6	0.7	0.9
Maintenance and equipment operation trades	3.8	3.9	1.5	1.8	1.1	0.8	0.5
Transport and heavy equipment operators and servicers (except transport truck drivers)	3.5	3.4	3.2	2.4	4.2	1.2	0.6
Transport truck drivers	1.7	1.7	2.6	3.2	1.9	0.4	0.6
Trade helpers, construction labourers and related occupations	1.6	1.6	0.7	0.5	1.0	0.2	x
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	1.9	1.9	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.1	0.3
Machine operators and supervisors in manufacturing and utilities	2.3	2.3	3.2	3.0	3.5	1.0	0.8
Assemblers and labourers in manufacturing and utilities	2.0	1.9	3.7	2.4	5.4	1.1	0.6

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

In particular, recent PNs were more likely than Canadian-born workers to be employed full time in 2021 as engineers; computer and information systems professionals; nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associations; sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade; service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations; and transport truck drivers (Table 3). In particular, a large share of PNs were employed as computer and information systems professionals—15% of PAs and 6.3% of spouses and dependants, compared with 2.4% of Canadian-born workers. Both PN PAs and spouses and dependants were less likely than Canadian-born workers to be employed in professional occupations in nursing; professional occupations in health (except nursing); industrial, electrical and construction trades; and maintenance and equipment operation trades (Table 3).

Notably, very few PNs were employed in the skilled trades, including the industrial, electrical and construction trades, and maintenance and equipment operation trades (Table 3). Canadian-born workers were twice as likely as PN PAs to be employed in industrial, electrical and construction trades, and 3.5 times as likely as PN spouses and dependants.

Comparison with other immigrant classes

Although a significant proportion of recent PN PAs were computer and information systems professionals (15%), the proportion was even greater among recent FSWP workers (18%) and CEC workers (26%). Conversely, although relatively few PN PAs worked in the skilled trades or as transport truck drivers, almost none of the FSWP PAs and CEC PAs worked in these occupations (Table 3).

Provincial variation

There was significant variation by province. As noted above, PN PAs were much more likely to be in professional jobs in some provinces than in others. Meanwhile, some provinces focused on lower-skilled and labourer jobs. For example, one-fifth to one-quarter of PN PAs in New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia were employed as computer and information systems professionals. Conversely, the share employed in this occupation was below the Canadian average for PN PAs in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In these provinces, a large share (around 16%) were employed as sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade, services representatives and other customer and personal services occupations, or support occupations in sales and services. Very few PN PAs were employed in professional occupations in nursing (around 0.6%) or in other professional occupations health (around 0.4%) in any province. Also, the share of PN PAs in the industrial, electrical and construction trades or the maintenance and equipment operation trades was below that observed among Canadian-born workers in all provinces (Table 4).

Table 4
Percent distribution of occupations among full-time employed provincial nominee principal applicants, by province, recent immigrants admitted one to five years prior to the 2021 Census

	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
Total population	28,860	340	1,480	1,110	7,620	6,600	3,370	2,360	5,190
					count				
					percent				
Management occupations	10.6	13.9	9.8	4.9	12.7	7.6	9.1	11.2	13.7
Professional occupations in business and finance	6.1	0.0	16.4	11.9	8.2	4.7	3.5	3.6	3.6
Administrative occupations in finance, insurance and business	5.3	0.0	7.4	6.4	4.8	6.1	4.7	4.6	4.9
Office support and co-ordination occupations	4.6	x	4.2	4.7	3.7	6.4	4.9	4.9	3.2
Physical and life science professionals	0.6	x	x	0.0	0.8	x	x	x	0.8
Engineers	4.4	x	3.5	4.0	7.6	1.6	3.2	2.9	5.3
Architects and statisticians	0.5	x	x	0.0	0.8	x	x	x	1.0
Computer and information systems professionals	15.0	13.3	17.7	25.6	23.8	4.5	7.8	8.7	20.2
Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences	5.1	10.2	4.7	3.8	5.8	3.8	5.4	4.3	5.3
Professional occupations in nursing	0.7	x	3.1	x	0.5	0.5	x	0.8	0.7
Professional occupations in health (except nursing)	0.6	0.0	x	1.8	0.5	0.4	x	x	1.0
Technical occupations in health	1.3	x	x	0.0	0.7	2.4	1.1	2.1	0.8
Assisting occupations in health (except nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates)	0.2	0.0	0.0	x	x	0.4	x	x	x
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	2.1	x	2.4	2.2	0.6	4.3	4.0	1.7	0.6
Professional occupations in education services	1.5	x	1.3	x	1.4	1.7	1.2	0.9	2.0
Professional occupations in law and social, community and government services	2.3	x	2.4	2.1	3.6	1.2	2.3	1.8	2.2
Support occupations in law and social services	2.7	x	6.3	x	0.6	4.6	3.1	2.9	1.9
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sports	2.2	0.0	1.9	x	1.6	0.9	0.6	x	6.5
Sales and service supervisors	5.8	6.5	4.5	5.6	4.3	4.2	11.9	8.6	5.2
Sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade	2.1	x	x	x	1.3	2.3	4.5	3.1	1.7
Service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations	5.0	6.5	6.6	8.5	3.5	8.0	5.1	5.9	1.6
Support occupations in sales and services	4.2	5.8	2.3	2.6	2.0	5.9	7.8	5.9	3.1
Industrial, electrical and construction trades	2.8	x	x	2.0	2.9	2.9	2.0	2.5	4.1
Maintenance and equipment operation trades	1.8	x	x	x	1.2	2.4	2.0	2.5	1.6
Transport and heavy equipment operators and servicers (except transport truck drivers)	2.4	x	x	x	1.4	3.1	4.0	3.3	2.9
Transport truck drivers	3.2	x	x	4.4	2.0	5.2	1.4	4.8	3.5
Trade helpers, construction labourers and related occupations	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.7	1.1	x	x
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	1.2	x	0.0	x	0.4	1.4	4.4	1.6	0.5
Machine operators and supervisors in manufacturing and utilities	3.0	x	x	x	1.4	6.8	1.8	6.7	1.0
Assemblers and labourers in manufacturing and utilities	2.4	x	0.0	x	1.5	5.8	1.9	1.8	0.8

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Table 5
Percent distribution of occupations among Canadian-born workers and immigrants by entry cohort across three censuses (men and women)

	Canadian-born workers			2006-to-2010 cohort			2011-to-2015 cohort		2016-to-2020 cohort
	2011	2016	2021	2011	2016	2021	2016	2021	2021
	percent								
Management occupations	11.5	13.0	15.2	6.7	8.8	11.3	9.6	10.9	10.9
Professional occupations in business and finance	3.5	4.1	4.1	3.5	3.7	4.6	4.0	3.9	6.4
Administrative occupations in finance, insurance and business	7.3	7.7	8.3	3.2	3.0	4.0	3.4	4.0	5.2
Office support and co-ordination occupations	6.7	6.2	5.9	4.1	4.1	4.5	4.3	4.9	4.5
Physical and life science professionals	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6
Engineers	1.4	1.5	1.3	4.1	3.2	4.0	4.2	3.7	4.5
Architects and statisticians	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5
Computer and information systems professionals	2.0	2.0	2.3	4.2	3.8	4.8	4.9	7.2	15.7
Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.6	4.3	3.9	3.8	4.4	5.2
Professional occupations in nursing	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.7	3.1	3.5	2.0	1.9	0.8
Professional occupations in health (except nursing)	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.7	1.7	1.1	1.4	1.0	0.6
Technical occupations in health	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.7	1.3
Assisting occupations in health (except nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.8	2.4	2.4	3.0	2.2
Professional occupations in education services	5.1	5.6	6.2	3.3	2.0	2.4	1.7	1.8	1.8
Professional occupations in law and social, community and government services	2.9	3.4	3.7	1.4	1.2	1.7	1.5	1.9	2.5
Support occupations in law and social services	5.5	5.7	5.8	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.9	3.5	2.9
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sports	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.5	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.2	2.1
Sales and service supervisors	4.9	4.7	3.6	6.6	7.3	6.3	9.8	6.6	5.1
Sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade	3.9	3.0	2.4	1.9	1.5	1.6	2.6	1.9	2.0
Service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations	4.4	3.7	2.5	3.7	2.8	2.4	4.5	2.8	4.7
Support occupations in sales and services	4.7	4.0	3.7	7.4	7.2	6.6	8.5	6.5	3.8
Industrial, electrical and construction trades	6.1	5.6	5.2	9.8	9.0	7.2	6.3	5.5	2.7
Maintenance and equipment operation trades	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.2	3.5	3.4	2.7	3.2	1.6
Transport and heavy equipment operators and servicers (except transport truck drivers)	3.5	3.4	3.3	2.9	4.0	3.8	3.2	3.7	2.4
Transport truck drivers	1.5	1.6	1.9	3.1	4.1	3.4	3.0	3.7	2.5
Trade helpers, construction labourers and related occupations	1.4	1.3	1.3	0.9	1.2	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.5
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.3
Machine operators and supervisors in manufacturing and utilities	2.5	2.5	2.4	6.1	5.8	4.7	4.3	4.1	3.1
Assemblers and labourers in manufacturing and utilities	2.2	2.1	1.8	5.1	5.0	4.2	3.6	3.5	2.4

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 censuses of population, and 2011 National Household Survey.

Occupational mobility and changes across admission cohorts

The analysis based on 30 occupations indicates relatively little occupational mobility (Table 5). There was little within-cohort change in the occupational distribution as PN PAs acquired Canadian experience. For example, for the 2006-to-2010 admission cohort, the occupational distributions at 1 to 5 years after admission and 6 to 10 years after admission were virtually identical (Table 5), with a correlation coefficient of 0.95. The occupational distribution within that admission cohort changed very little over time. There was somewhat more change in the distribution between 1 to 5 years and 11 to 15 years after admission, but the correlation coefficient was still a very high 0.87.⁶

There was, however, a significant change in the occupational distribution across admission cohorts of PN PAs. The correlation coefficient between the occupational distributions of the admission cohorts in the 2011 and 2021 censuses was only 0.44.⁷

This change between 2011 and 2021 in the occupational structure of recent PN PAs was the result of a significant change in 5 of the 30 occupations (Table 5). Most importantly, the share of recent PN PAs as computer and information systems professionals increased dramatically among recent immigrants, from 4.2% in 2011 and 4.9% in 2016 to 15.7% in 2021 (Table 5). The share in professional occupations in business and finance also saw a significant increase among recent immigrants from 4.0% in 2016 to 6.4% in 2021.

Several occupations saw a decline among recent PN PAs in 2021. They included industrial, electrical and construction trades, which accounted for 9.8% of recent PNs in 2011, 6.3% in 2016 and 2.7% in 2021. There was a similar decline in maintenance and equipment operation trades⁸ and support occupations in sales and services.⁹

Conclusion

Both PN PAs and their spouses and dependants provide labour to the Canadian economy. Among recently admitted PNs in 2021, there were almost as many full-time employed spouses and dependants as there were PAs. Part-time employment was significant in many cases and more prevalent among lower-skilled than higher-skilled recent PNs.

The occupations held by full-time employed recent PNs (including spouses and dependants) differed somewhat from those held by Canadian-born workers or economic immigrants from other programs. In particular, PNs were more likely than Canadian-born workers to be employed in professional occupations in business and finance, as computer and information systems professionals, and as engineers. A higher share of PNs than Canadian-born workers worked in some lower-skilled jobs such as sales representatives and salespersons in wholesale and retail trade, service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations, and assemblers and labourers in manufacturing and utilities, particularly in the Prairies. PN PAs were also more likely than Canadian-born employees to work as service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations and assemblers and labourers in manufacturing and utilities. There is a debate regarding whether a focus on these lower-

6. A similar pattern was observed for the 2011-to-2015 admission cohort; the correlation coefficient between the occupational distribution at 1 to 5 years and 6 to 10 years after admission was 0.92.

7. The correlation coefficient between the occupational distributions of the admission cohorts for the 2016 and 2021 censuses was 0.62.

8. The share in this occupation was 4.2% in 2011, 2.7% in 2016 and 1.6% in 2021.

9. The share in this occupation was 7.4% in 2011, 8.5% in 2016 and 3.8% in 2021.

skilled occupations contributes to long-term growth by meeting short-term labour market requirements (e.g., Fortin, 2024; Doyle et al., 2023; Mahboubi & Zhang, 2023; Sommerfield, 2023).

Health care and skilled trades occupations have attracted considerable attention recently because of skill shortages. Employed PNs (and PN PAs) were more likely than Canadian-born workers to work as nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates and less likely to be in nursing and the skilled trades.

While labour market adjustment may take some time for recent PN PAs, at the aggregate level, there was little change in the occupational distribution as admission cohorts spent more years in Canada. The types of jobs held by PN PAs 6 to 15 years after admission were very similar to those held during the first 5 years.

Recent admission cohorts of PN PAs were less likely to work in the skilled trades and more likely to hold professional jobs than cohorts from a decade earlier. Overall, professional-level jobs in Canada have been increasing at a faster rate than lower-skilled jobs, and the selection of PNs appears to have adapted accordingly.

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