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Analysis in Brief

Interprovincial Labour Mobility in Canada: An overview

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Interprovincial Labour Mobility in Canada: An overview

by Eyob Fissuh, Kodzo-Kuma Gbenyo and Yunfa Zhu

Introduction

Interprovincial labour mobility serves as an important mechanism for addressing regional labour market imbalances and promoting economic integration. By enabling workers to move across provinces and territories in response to variations in labour demand, labour mobility improves the allocation of human resources, and contributes to regional economic development (e.g., Greenwald et al., 1993; Sharpe et al., 2007; Gomez and Gunderson, 2002; Mahar, 2019). It can also allow firms to access scarce skills and adjust to changing economic conditions. However, barriers to mobility in Canada remain, particularly in regulated occupations, where differences in provincial and territorial licensing and certification requirements can limit worker movement. In the context of changes in international trade—primarily with Canada’s largest trading partner, the United States—recent initiatives have focused on expanding mutual recognition agreements to reduce these barriers. These efforts aim to improve the mobility of professional credentials and support more efficient labour market outcomes. Despite these efforts, the literature on the nature of interprovincial labour mobility in Canada remains limited, underscoring the need for research and analysis to better understand its underlying dynamics (Grady & Macmillan, 2007; Morissette, 2017).

This paper contributes to the discussion by providing an overview of interprovincial labour mobility in Canada. It presents a descriptive analysis of mobility patterns across demographic groups, regions, and occupations, using data from the 2021 Canadian Census of Population, the Longitudinal Worker File (LWF), and the Labour Force Survey (LFS). These data are used to document short- and medium-term mobility rates and occupation-specific patterns. To complement this supply-side analysis with demand-side, the paper also draws on the Canadian Survey on Interprovincial Trade (CSIT) to examine employer-reported challenges in hiring workers with credentials from other provinces or territories. The paper forms part of the [Canadian Internal Trade Data and Information Hub \(CITH\)](#), a joint initiative of Statistics Canada and the Privy Council Office under the Federal Action Plan to Strengthen Internal Trade.

Interprovincial labour mobility from the 2021 Census

Data from the Census 2021 long-form questionnaire are used to examine interprovincial labour mobility among employed individuals aged 18 to 64 during the census week in May 2021. The long-form questionnaire was administered to a sample of approximately 25% of private households in Canada, and all estimates presented in this paper are weighted to represent the target population. Interprovincial mobility is measured using two census questions on previous place of residence, which indicate whether respondents moved across provincial or territorial boundaries. The first measure, Mobility1, is based on the question: “Where did this person live 1 year ago, that is, on May 11, 2020?” The second measure, Mobility5, is based on the question: “Where did this person live 5 years ago, that is, on May 11, 2016?” Respondents reporting residence in a different province or territory are classified as mobile for the respective period. A binary variable is constructed for each measure, taking the value of 1 if the respondent lived in a different province or territory, and 0 if they remained in the same province.

The mobility rate for each reference period is calculated by taking the average of the corresponding variable across all respondents, representing the proportion of people who moved to a different province or territory during that time. Restricting the analysis to employed individuals allows for a reasonable interpretation that interprovincial moves are largely labour-market related. This assumption is broadly consistent with recent evidence from the 2022 Canadian Housing Survey, which identifies employment as the most frequently cited reason for interprovincial moves (Song et al., 2026). Other recent studies similarly find that employment is a key, though not exclusive, motivator for interprovincial migration (Thomas, 2019; Thomas, Gillespie, & Lomax, 2019).

In 2021, 0.8% of employed Canadians (approximately 150,000 individuals) were living in a different province or territory than they had a year earlier, while 3.1% (approximately 540,000) were living in a different province or territory than they had in 2016. These figures indicate that the vast majority of workers remain in the same province of residence over both short- and medium-term periods. Despite the disruptions associated with the COVID-19

pandemic, including travel restrictions and industry-specific impacts as well as increases in hiring people to work from home for an employer located remotely in another province or territory, the one-year interprovincial mobility rate remained relatively stable between the 2016 and 2021 censuses. In contrast, the five-year mobility rate was higher in 2021 Census (3.1%) compared to the 2016 Census (2.9%), indicating a modest increase in medium-term interprovincial movement.

In 2021, interprovincial mobility rates were highest in the territories where around 4.1% to 5.1% of employed residents had moved from another province within one year, and around 14.3% to 16.9% had done so over the previous five years. These high rates likely reflect employment opportunities in resource industries or the public sector. Quebec and Ontario recorded the lowest rates with a one-year rate of 0.4% in both provinces, and five-year rates of 1.2% in Quebec and 2.1% in Ontario. Despite these low rates, in absolute numbers, more workers moved into these provinces than into the territories due to their large work force. These patterns may suggest that smaller jurisdictions are relatively more likely to rely on interprovincial migrant workers to meet their labour market needs. Consistent with these mobility patterns, results from the [Canadian Survey on Interprovincial Trade \(CSIT\)](#) show that businesses in the territories were also much more likely than the national average to hire individuals with professional certifications or licences obtained from another province or territory. While 4.8% of businesses nationally reported hiring workers with out-of-province credentials, this share reached 23.0% in the Northwest Territories and 25.7% in Nunavut—approximately five times the national average. Yukon also reported a substantially higher rate (13.1%). These results indicate that jurisdictions with greater reliance on interprovincial migration are also more dependent on the recognition of external credentials to access skilled labour and fill local labour market gaps.

Table 1
Interprovincial labour mobility, by province and territory, 2021

Region	In 2021, lived in a different province 1 year ago (Mobility1)	In 2021, lived in a different province 5 years ago (Mobility5)
	percent	
Canada	0.8	3.1
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.4	4.4
Prince Edward Island	3.1	9.9
Nova Scotia	2.9	8.8
New Brunswick	2.1	6.9
Quebec	0.4	1.2
Ontario	0.4	2.1
Manitoba	1.4	3.1
Saskatchewan	1.2	4.1
Alberta	1.1	4.5
British Columbia	1.5	5.7
Yukon	4.1	16.9
Northwest Territories	5.1	16.5
Nunavut	4.1	14.3

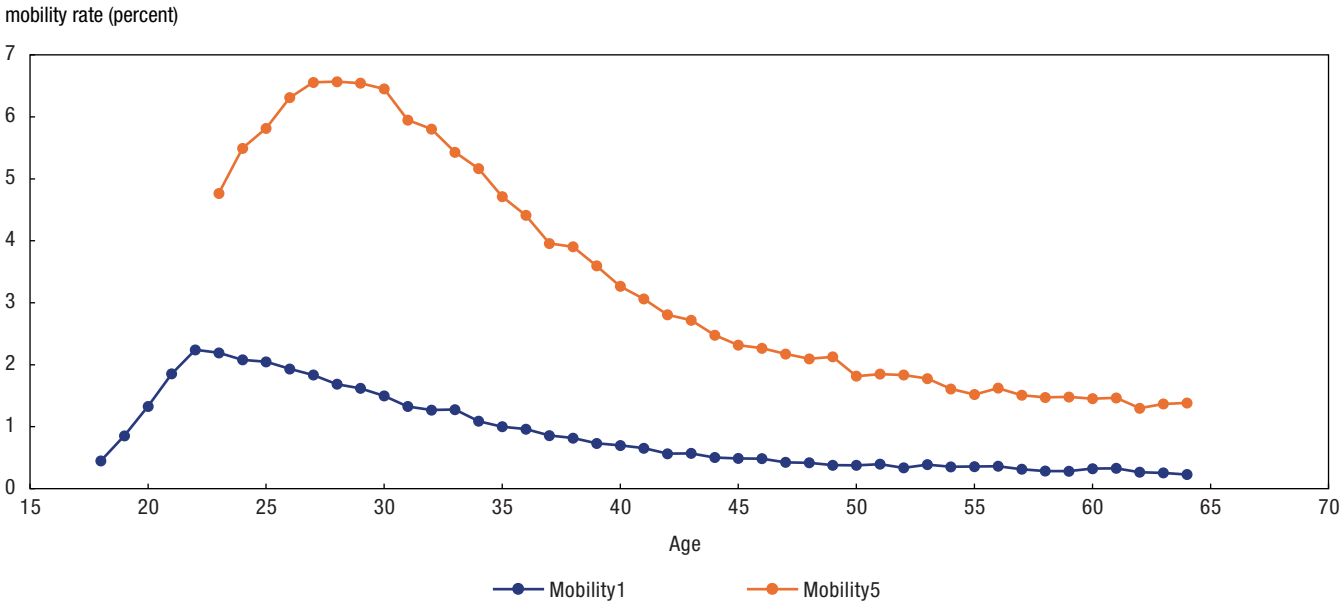
Source: [Tableau 98-10-0654-01](#).

Age and mobility

Not surprisingly, examination of the Census microdata reveal that age is a critical determinant of the propensity for interprovincial labour mobility. Chart 1 indicates that one-year mobility (Mobility1) peaks at approximately 2.2% amongst those aged 23 to 25 before steadily declining to below 0.3 % by age 64. Five-year mobility (Mobility5) also shows a similar pattern but at a higher level, rising sharply from 1.6% at age 18 to a peak of 6.5% between ages 28 and 30, before gradually decreasing to around 1.4% by age 64.¹ This pattern reflects typical life-cycle effects: younger individuals are more likely to relocate for early career opportunities, whereas older workers experience reduced mobility as family, social, and economic ties strengthen. The higher rates at all ages, and the peak observed in five-year mobility compared to one-year mobility indicates that medium-term mobility captures more gradual movements that accumulate over time, highlighting that a substantial proportion of mobility occurs outside of a single-year window.

1. Please note that for the youngest age groups, five-year mobility is less meaningful—since individuals aged 18 in May 2021 were only 13 in 2016, at the start of the five-year period, and mostly in school—and has therefore been excluded from the chart, making the effective starting age 23 in Figure 1.

Chart 1
Age and interprovincial labour mobility, Canada, 2021 Census

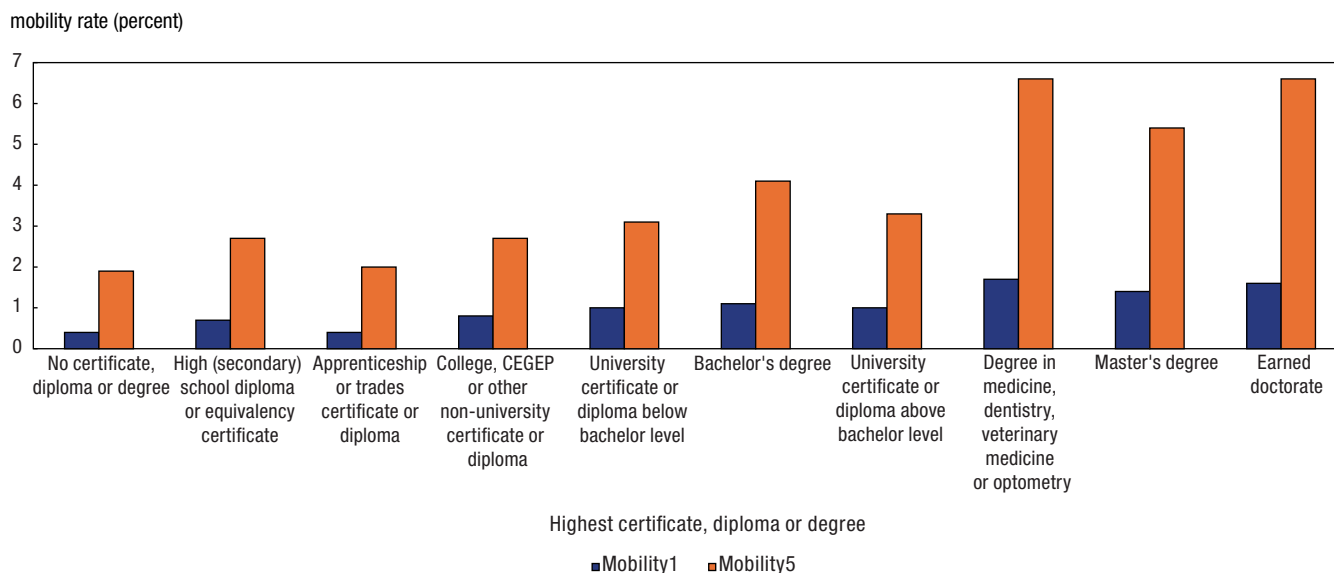


Source: Author's calculations based on Census 2021 Census.

Education level and mobility

Interprovincial labour mobility generally increases with educational attainment (Chart 2). It is the lowest among individuals with no certificate, diploma or degree (Mobility1 ~0.4%, Mobility5 ~2.0%) and rises among college and university graduates. Those with a bachelor's degree have mobility rates around 1.1% (one year) and 4.1% (five years), while holders of master's, doctoral, or professional degrees reach the highest mobility rates, between 1.4% to 1.7% (one year) and 5.4% to 6.6% (five years). These patterns may reflect that higher levels of education are linked to skills, qualifications, and employment opportunities that can facilitate mobility. Individuals with advanced degrees may have access to occupations that are more geographically flexible or in demand across provinces, which can contribute to higher mobility.

Chart 2
Education level and interprovincial labour mobility, Canada, 2021 Census

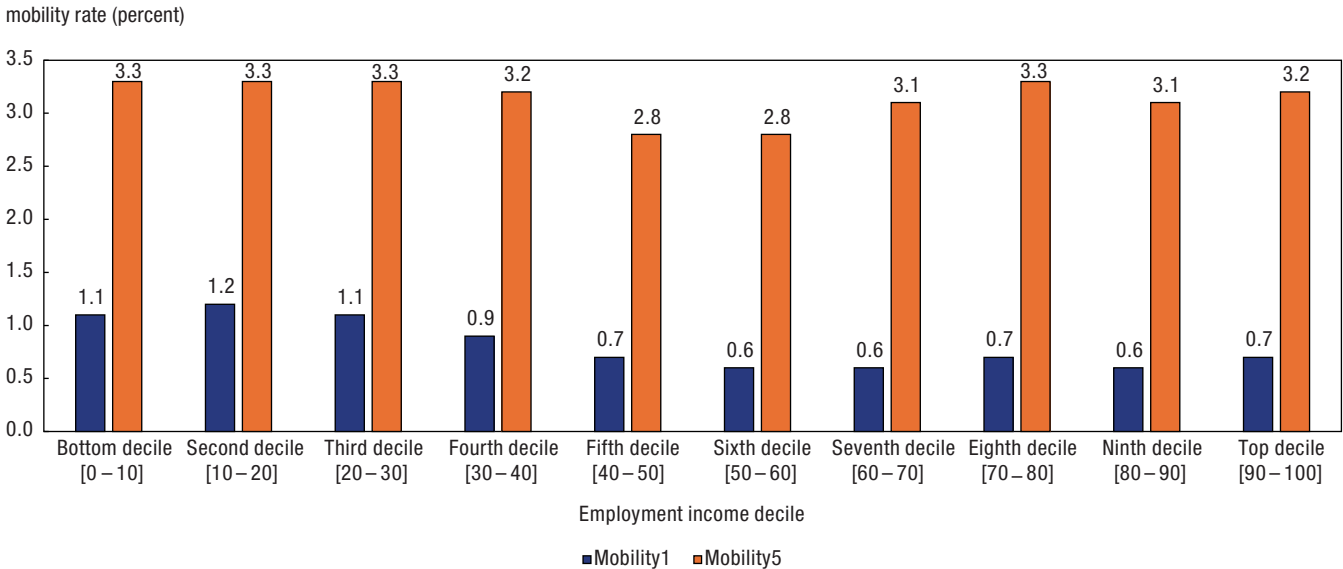


Source: Table 98-10-0653-01.

Employment income levels and mobility

Interprovincial labour mobility shows little variation across employment income distribution. One-year mobility is higher in lower-income deciles than in higher-income deciles. The five-year mobility rate is relatively similar across income deciles, with the exception of deciles 5 and 6. This pattern may reflect that lower-income workers are more likely to hold temporary, seasonal, or geographically flexible positions, or move in search of better-paying jobs. Lower-income workers may also be more sensitive to regional differences in housing costs or job opportunities, while higher-income workers often hold more stable or location-specific jobs. Further, most lower income jobs may face fewer provincial or territorial regulations, which can make interprovincial movement easier. Finally, the pattern may reflect confounding factors such as age, education, or occupation, which can also influence mobility.

Chart 3
Individual employment income and interprovincial labour mobility, Canada, 2021 Census



Source: Table 98-10-0654-01.

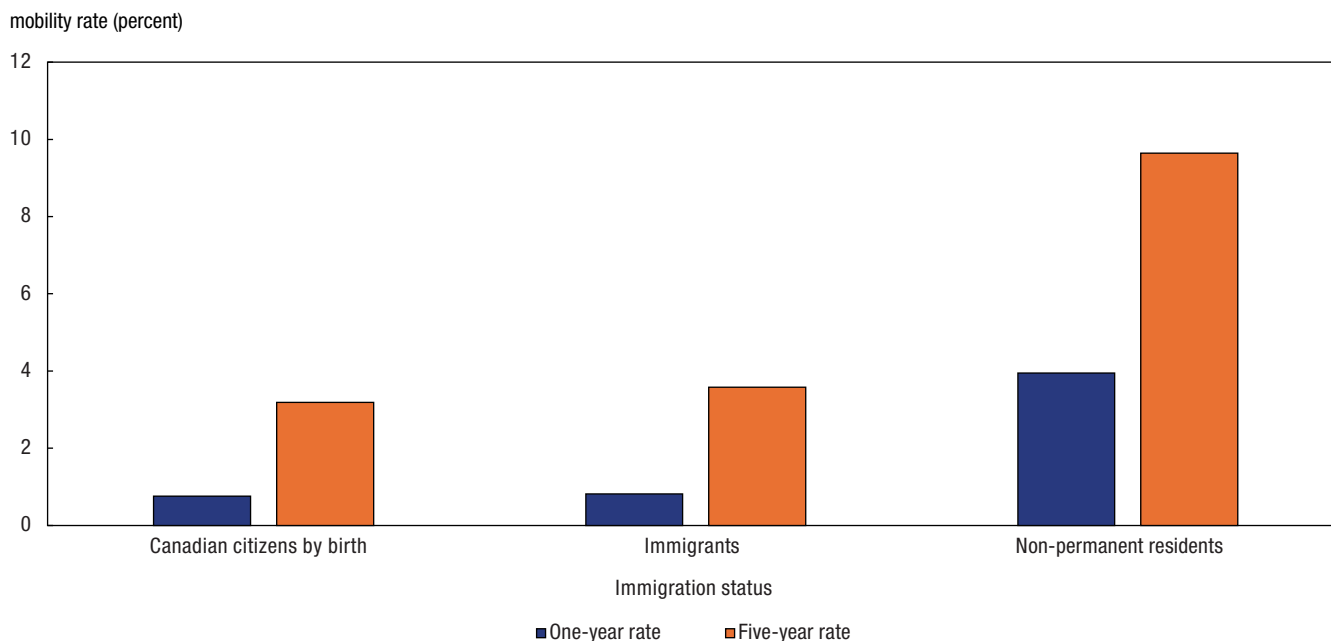
Immigrant status and first official language spoken at home and mobility

Immigrant status significantly affects mobility patterns. Non-permanent residents are the most mobile, with 4.0% moving within a year and 9.6% over a five year period, followed by immigrants (0.8%, for one year, and 3.6%, for five years).² A closer look into the data shows that among immigrants, the likelihood of moving declines with the number of years since arrival, suggesting that recent arrivals are more likely to relocate as they establish themselves in the labour market, whereas longer-settled immigrants become more rooted in their province of residence.

2. In the Census 2021, there are three classifications of immigrant status:

- a. Non-immigrant: persons who are Canadian citizens by birth.
- b. Immigrant: persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents. Such persons have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this category.
- c. Non-permanent resident: persons from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who have a work or study permit or who have claimed refugee status (asylum claimants). Family members living with work or study permit holders are also included, unless these family members are already Canadian citizens or landed immigrants/permanent residents.

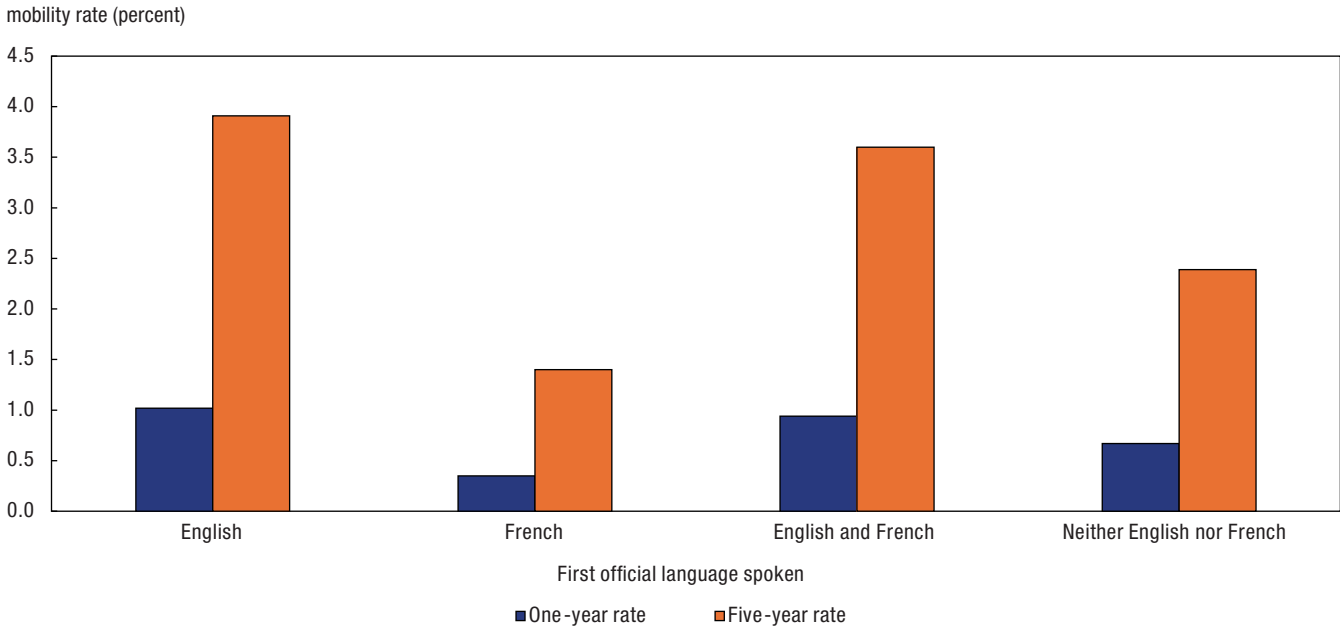
Chart 4
Immigration status and interprovincial labour mobility, Canada, 2021 Census



Source: Author's calculations based on 2021 Census.

Language proficiency, proxied by first official language spoken at home, further shapes labour mobility, but not always as expected. Looking at the official language spoken at home, English-only speakers have the highest one-year rate (1.0%) and five-year rate (3.9%), while French-only speakers have the lowest in both periods, respectively at 0.4% and 1.4% (Chart 5). The rates for bilingual individuals and those who speak neither official language fall in between. Interestingly, no clear difference in mobility is observed between bilingual and English-only speakers. This likely reflects that interprovincial labour markets are largely English-dominant, so English proficiency alone is sufficient for mobility. Bilingual individuals may already reside in regions where French is more prevalent or in urban labour markets, reducing the need or opportunity to move.

Chart 5
First official language spoken at home and interprovincial labour mobility, Canada, 2021 Census



Source: Author's calculations based on 2021 Census.

Interprovincial labour mobility by occupation

This section presents experimental estimates of inter-provincial labour mobility by occupation, focusing on periods between censuses. The methodology combines administrative data from the Longitudinal Worker File (LWF) and the Census of Population with the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LWF integrates multiple administrative sources, including the T1 and T4 files from the Canada Revenue Agency, the Record of Employment (ROE) from Employment and Social Development Canada, and the Longitudinal Employment Analysis Program (LEAP) from Statistics Canada. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive longitudinal view of individual employment histories, covering both paid and self-employed work. For methodology details, see "[Producing timely experimental estimates of inter-provincial labour mobility](#)" from the Economic and Social Report.

To produce timely occupation-specific estimates for periods between censuses, a two-step methodology is applied. First, using linked LWF–Census data for 2021–2022, a logit model is estimated to determine the likelihood of inter-provincial mobility between May 2021 and December 2022. The model controls for age, sex, and class of worker (self-employed versus paid worker) and produces adjusted mobility rates by 4-digit National Occupational Classification (NOC) occupation, subject to sample size constraints. In the second step, the parameters estimated from the LWF–Census data are applied to current year (t) of LFS data to generate predicted probabilities of moving for each occupation, from year t to year $t+1$. This approach allows the production of occupation-level estimates of interprovincial mobility for periods between censuses, which are not directly observable from either the LFS or LWF alone, while accounting for key demographic and employment characteristics from the most recent year. For this analysis, interprovincial labour mobility rates for 2025–2026³ are estimated by applying the patterns observed in 2021–2022 to the 2025 workforce (Table 2⁴).

3. Under the current approach, the methodology uses Census 2021 and tax data from 2022 to generate the β (subscript 2021,2022) response parameters based on the 2021–2022 data in the first step. In the second step, assuming that the estimated β response parameters remain constant in future years, the response parameter estimates are combined with the LFS values of the control variables observed in year t to obtain the average predicted probability that workers in occupation k change provinces from year t to year $t+1$. Since the full set of LFS values for 2025 is available, the 2025/2026 estimates represent the average predicted probability that workers in occupation k change provinces between 2025 and 2026. Although information from 2026 is not yet available, the predicted estimates rely only on the control variables observed in 2025.

4. Note that the 2025–2026 estimates are model-based predicted probabilities rather than observed mobility rates. As described above, the response parameters are estimated using the 2021 Census and 2022 tax data and are assumed to remain constant over the 2022–2025 period. These parameters are then applied to the LFS covariates observed in 2025 to generate the predicted probabilities. Thus, the 2025–2026 mobility rates rely solely on information available in 2025 and do not require observed mobility outcomes from 2026.

The estimated results for 2025 to 2026 show that interprovincial labour mobility rates in Canada vary considerably across occupational groups (Table 2). The highest mobility rates are observed in occupations in legal and public protection (with a mean estimate of 5.6%), university professors and post-secondary assistants (4.8%), transportation officers and controllers (4.7%), and selected engineering and professional roles such as natural resources engineers (4.3%). Athletes, coaches, referees, and related occupations (3.9%) also rank among the top 10% of occupations with the highest mobility rates. The observed mobility rates for these occupations appear to be in line with the specialized skills they require and the geographic scope of their labour markets, which often extend beyond provincial boundaries.

Table 2**Experimental estimates of interprovincial mobility rates for selected occupations, 2025 to 2026, Canada**

Occupation	NOC Code	Mean	Mobility Rate	
			95% confidence interval	
			Lower limit	Upper limit
			percent	
Assisting occupations in legal and public protection	4320	5.6	4.4	7.1
University professors and post-secondary assistants	4120	4.8	3.8	6.1
Transportation officers and controllers	7260	4.7	3.6	6.2
Natural resources engineers	2133	4.3	3.1	6.0
Athletes, coaches, referees and related occupations	5320	3.9	2.8	5.6
Mine and oil and gas drilling, services and related labourers	8511	3.9	2.6	5.8
Physicians and veterinarians	3110	3.5	2.7	4.6
Service supervisors	6202	3.5	2.7	4.5
Mathematicians, statisticians, actuaries and data scientists	2121	3.5	2.6	4.6
Other engineers	2139	3.3	2.3	4.7
Occupations in food and beverage service	6430	3.2	2.3	4.5
Cooks, butchers and bakers	6320	3.0	2.3	3.8
Taxi, personal service and delivery drivers	7520	3.0	2.3	3.8
Computer, software and web designers/developers	2123	2.9	2.3	3.7
Security guards and related security service occupations	6441	2.9	2.3	3.7
Secondary, elementary, and kindergarten teachers	4122	1.0	0.8	1.3
Managers in education	4002	1.3	0.9	1.8
Plumbers, pipefitters and gas fitters	7230	1.4	1.1	1.9
Carpenters and cabinetmakers	7231	1.3	1.2	1.5
Hairstylists and estheticians	6321	1.3	0.9	1.7
Automotive service technicians	7241	1.2	0.9	1.6
Machine operators (mineral and metal)	9410	0.8	0.5	1.1
Machine operators (chemical, plastic and rubber processing)	9411	1.2	0.8	1.8
Machine operators (pulp and paper)	9412	1.1	0.7	1.6
Managers in agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture	8002	0.8	0.5	1.1
Occupations in personal service	6420	1.2	0.7	1.9

Source: Author's own calculation based on Table [Table 14-10-0452-01](#).

Note: The confidence interval provides a measure of uncertainty associated with the estimated mobility rate. The mean estimated mobility rate represents the best single estimate, while the lower and upper confidence limits indicate the range of plausible values given the estimation approach. The confidence intervals should be interpreted as reflecting uncertainty within the estimation framework and are not intended to represent only survey-based margins of error. A narrower confidence interval indicates greater precision, whereas a wider interval reflects greater uncertainty.

At the bottom lower half of the spectrum are many education, trades, manufacturing, and personal service occupations, which generally show limited interprovincial movement. Education-related occupations record low mobility: secondary, elementary, and kindergarten teachers have a mobility rate of 1.0%, and managers in education have a mobility rate of 1.3%. Many of these occupations are subject to provincial certification. Skilled trades such as carpenters and cabinetmakers (1.3%), plumbers, pipefitters, and gas fitters (1.4%), and automotive service technicians (1.2%) also exhibit relatively limited movement. These patterns may suggest local anchoring, potentially reflecting regional labour demand, workplace attachment, or occupational certification and regulatory frameworks. Mobility among other regulated professions is mixed: physicians and veterinarians show relatively high mobility (3.5%), whereas other regulated health occupations—dentists, optometrists, and audiologists (1.6%); pharmacists and dietitians (1.4%); nursing and allied health professionals (1.5%); and medical technologists and technicians (1.4%) show relatively lower mobility. In contrast, some regulated public protection occupations, including assisting occupations in legal and public protection (5.6%), rank among the most mobile overall. It should be noted that our data does not allow us to distinguish regulated from unregulated occupations, which limits the ability to compare mobility rates across these groups.

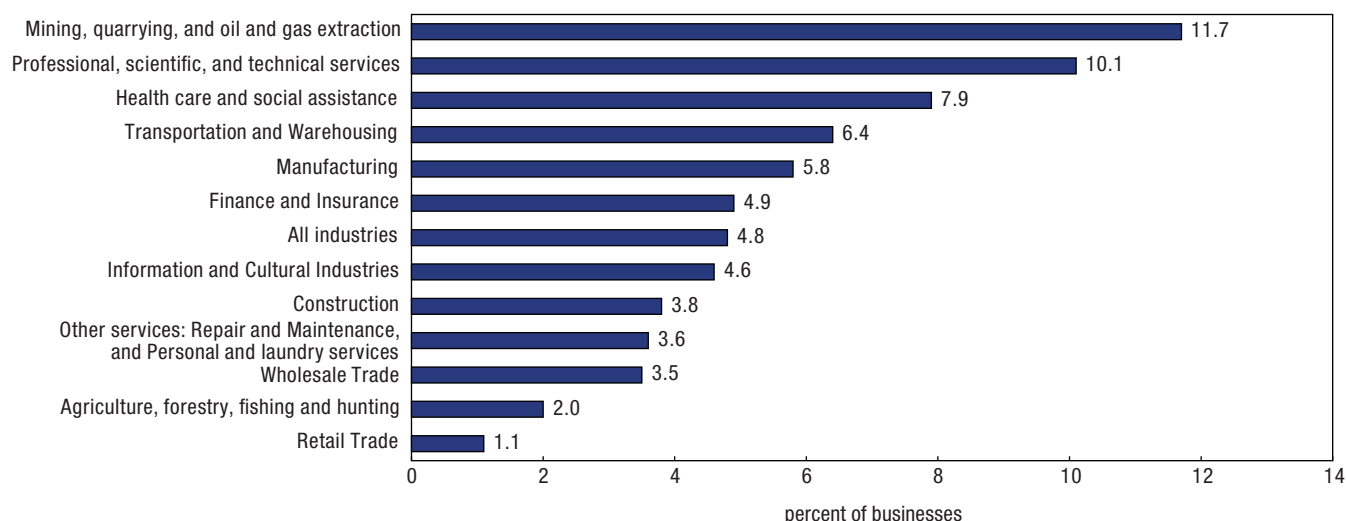
Results from the Canadian Survey on Interprovincial Trade, 2023

This section draws data from the 2023 Canadian Survey on Interprovincial Trade ([CSIT](#)). The survey collected information on the obstacles faced by businesses engaged in interprovincial trade activities, the reasons why other businesses choose not to trade goods or services across provincial or territorial borders, and the challenges associated with hiring individuals with certifications or licences granted by another province or territory. Over the 12 months preceding the survey, 4.8% of businesses reported hiring individuals holding a professional certification or license from another province or territory (Statistics Canada. [Table 33-10-0969-01](#)).⁵ Among these businesses, most of them had hired between one and four employees. In this context, this finding should be interpreted considering the sample composition of the CSIT, as small firms (5 to 19 employees) accounted for about three-quarters of businesses. The observed hiring pattern may therefore reflect, in part, the predominance of small firms.

The survey also highlights that firm size is a significant determinant of the probability of interprovincial hiring. About 3.2% of smaller businesses hired interprovincially, compared to medium-sized businesses (7.0%) and large-sized businesses (15.4%). The size of a firm is defined by the number of employees: small (5 to 19 employees), medium (20 to 99 employees) and large-sized firms (100 employees or more).

Hiring out of province also varies by industry (Chart 6). Firms in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (11.7%), as well as in professional, scientific, and technical services (10.1%), were the most active in hiring from outside the province. In these industries, approximately four-fifths of the businesses that engaged in interprovincial hiring recruited between one and four employees. By contrast, businesses in the retail trade industry (1.1%) and in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry (2.0%) hired the least from outside the province. These findings suggest that interprovincial recruitment is concentrated in industries requiring specialized or technical expertise, where the local labour supply does not fully meet demand.

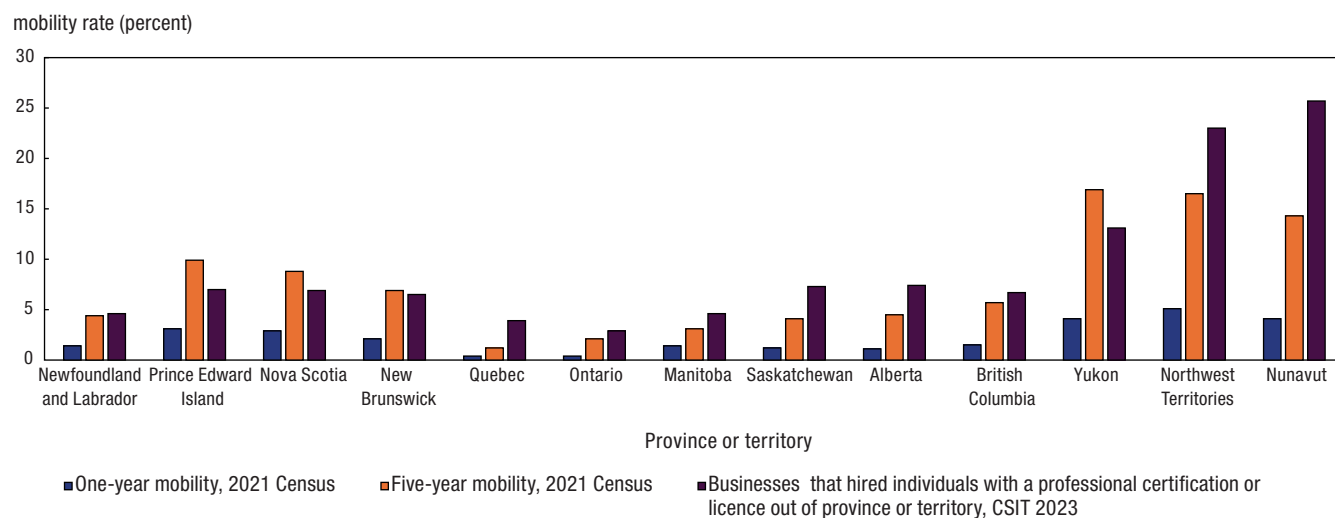
5. The survey was collected from June 18 to October 15, 2024. As a result, the 12-month reference period may vary across respondents, ranging from June 18, 2023, to October 15, 2024, depending on when the business completed the survey. Respondents were asked if the business hired or considered hiring individuals with a professional certification or licence from another province or territory outside of the hiring province. If they indicated that they did, they were asked the reasons for which the business hired or considered hiring such individuals.

Chart 6**Proportion of businesses that hired individuals with a professional certification or licence from another province or territory over the last 12 months, by industry, 2023**

Source: Table 33-10-0969-01.

Results from the CSIT also revealed substantial regional variation in the share of businesses hiring individuals with professional certifications or licenses obtained from another province or territory. These findings are consistent with the Census evidence presented earlier, which showed that smaller jurisdictions—particularly the territories—had the highest rates of interprovincial labour mobility. While 4.8% of businesses nationally reported hiring individuals with out-of-province credentials during the 12 months preceding the survey, this share was substantially higher in the territories, reaching 23.0% in the Northwest Territories and 25.7% in Nunavut, approximately five times the national average. Yukon also reported a relatively high rate of 13.1%. In contrast, Ontario and Quebec reported lower rates of hiring individuals with external credentials (2.9% and 3.9%, respectively), consistent with their lower Census-based mobility rates. The correlation between interprovincial mobility rates (both one-year and five-year measures) and the share of businesses hiring individuals with out-of-province credentials is approximately 0.84, indicating a strong positive relationship (Chart 7). This strong positive relationship is consistent with the complementary nature of the two data sources. The Census captures the supply side of interprovincial labour mobility through worker movements, while the CSIT captures the demand side through businesses' hiring of individuals with professional certifications or licences obtained from another province or territory.

Chart 7
Interprovincial labour mobility by province and territory



Source: Table 33-10-0969-01 and Table 98-10-0654-01.

Reasons for hiring out of province

The results from the survey also point to interprovincial hiring as a response to structural pressures in regional labour markets. The fact that 68.0% of businesses that hired or considered hiring individuals certified or licensed in another province or territory cited difficulty finding qualified workers within their own province or territory may suggest the presence of regional skills shortages or mismatches between labour supply and employer needs (Statistics Canada, [Table 33-10-0973-01](#)). In this context, hiring from outside the province or territory functions as an adjustment mechanism, allowing businesses to expand their recruitment beyond local labour market constraints. The pattern is even more pronounced among larger businesses: 80.4% of firms with 100 or more employees that hired or considered hiring from another province or territory reported local shortages as their primary motivation. It is possible that larger organizations often have more specialized skill requirements and greater capacity to conduct broader recruitment, making them more likely to rely on interprovincial labour mobility to address workforce gaps.

At the same time, mobility is not driven solely by shortage of quantity of labour, but also by consideration of the quality of labour supply. About one-third of businesses that hired or considered hiring individuals certified or licensed in another province or territory reported that the strongest candidates were located outside the hiring province or territory. This suggests that employers who tap into out-of-province labour markets are not merely trying to fill vacancies, but they are also seeking to optimize for higher skill levels or specialized expertise that may be unevenly distributed across regions. Together, these results may suggest that interprovincial hiring reflects both quantity constraints in local labour supply and qualitative differences in human capital, implying labour mobility could play a role in improving the match between employers and skilled workers across regions.

Obstacles faced in hiring out of province

Among businesses that hired individuals from outside the province or territory, more than three-fifths (62.7%) did not encounter obstacles when hiring workers holding a professional certification or license from another jurisdiction (Statistics Canada, [Table 33-10-0974-01](#)). However, as discussed in the previous section, roughly 5% of all businesses reported hiring such workers. Therefore, any generalization about the overall incidence of obstacle-free interprovincial hiring across the broader business population should be interpreted with caution. It is noteworthy that while barriers may not be widespread among firms that proceed with this type of hiring, interprovincial recruitment itself is relatively uncommon. The key takeaway is that these findings should be interpreted carefully, as they may understate the broader influence of regulatory and administrative barriers on employer behaviour, reflecting the experiences of firms that engaged in or considered interprovincial hiring rather than those that may have opted out altogether.

Among businesses that encountered at least one obstacle when hiring from outside their province or territory, the most frequently reported issue was the wait time required for individuals to obtain certification or a licence in the hiring jurisdiction (19.9%), followed by hiring-related costs (13.0%). These factors can be seen as transaction costs that impede the efficient allocation of labour across regions. Delays in credential recognition slow the movement of skilled workers from areas of relative labour surplus to regions experiencing shortages, effectively reducing the responsiveness of the labour market. Similarly, higher hiring costs—including fees, administrative requirements, or relocation expenses—may discourage firms, particularly smaller businesses with tighter budgets, from seeking talent beyond their immediate labour market.

Results from the CSIT also showed that hiring obstacles were not uniform across industries. Businesses in the health care and social assistance industry were the most likely to face obstacles (55.2%), followed closely by those in construction (52.5%). In health care and social assistance, wait times for certification or licensing were the dominant barrier (39.1%), which may reflect the highly regulated nature of many professions in this industry and the critical role of credential verification in maintaining quality and safety standards. In construction, on the other hand, hiring-related costs emerged as the primary challenge (18.6%), likely reflecting the project-based nature of the industry, the geographic mobility of worksites, and the financial burden associated with recruiting skilled tradespeople across provincial or territorial boundaries.

Conclusion

According to 2021 Census data, interprovincial labour mobility in Canada remains limited, with 0.8% of employed individuals (approximately 150,000) living in a different province or territory one year earlier, and 3.1% (approximately 540,000) over a five-year period. While the one-year mobility rate remains unchanged across the 2016 and 2021 census periods, the five-year rate increased slightly from 2.9% to 3.1% in 2021.

Mobility varies across regions, demographic groups, and occupations. One-year mobility rates range from 0.4% in Quebec and Ontario to over 4% in the territories, with five-year rates reaching 14% to 17% in the North. Mobility is highest among younger individuals and those with higher levels of education, with five-year rates rising from about 2.1% among individuals without a diploma to over 7.0% among those with advanced degrees. Differences across income groups are not clear, with one-year rates generally between 0.6% and 1.2%. Occupational mobility also varies considerably. For 2025–2026, estimated mobility rates exceed 4% in occupations such as legal and public protection (5.6%), university professors (4.8%), and transportation officers (4.7%), while remaining close to or below 1.5% in many education, trades, and personal service occupations.

From the demand side, 4.8% of businesses reported hiring individuals with a certification or license from another province or territory over a 12-month period in 2023. This share increases to 15.4% among large firms, compared with 3.2% among small firms. Among businesses that hire or considered hiring interprovincially, 68.0% cited difficulty finding qualified workers locally, while 19.9% reported certification delays and 13.0% reported hiring costs as obstacles.

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