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Labour Statistics at a Glance

Labour market experiences of recent working-age immigrants and non-permanent residents, 2019 to 2024

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Labour market experiences of recent working-age immigrants and non-permanent residents, 2019 to 2024

by **Vincent Hardy**¹ (Centre for Labour Market Information)

Introduction

From July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024, more than 1.4 million new immigrants were admitted to Canada, among which 59.9% were in the core working-age group of 25- to 54-year-olds.² The number of non-permanent residents (NPRs)—including temporary foreign workers, international students, asylum claimants and protected persons, and other permit holders—also grew rapidly, increasing from 1,306,000 in the third quarter of 2021 to a record high of 3,002,000 in the third quarter of 2024 (+129.9%).³

This increase took place in the context of a surge in job vacancies recorded after the lifting of COVID-19-related public health restrictions, creating unique circumstances for the integration of newcomers into the Canadian labour market.

To better understand the circumstances and experiences of immigrants and NPRs who arrived during this period, a supplement to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) was collected in the third quarter of 2024. This supplement fills a data gap by providing information not otherwise available from other sources about key aspects of their labour market integration. Aspects examined in this LFS supplement include difficulties encountered in finding a first job and the recognition of foreign credentials and work experience.

Mostly using data from this LFS supplement, the present report provides insights into the labour market experiences of this recent cohort of immigrants and NPRs. The analysis focuses on those who had arrived in the five years prior to the third quarter of 2024 and were of core working-age (25 to 54 years).

Methodology

The study focuses on core-aged immigrants and NPRs who had arrived less than 5 years earlier and were at least 20 years old at the time of their arrival. This group is less likely to have done part of their primary or secondary schooling in Canada. As such, the results capture the experience of a group of working-age newcomers who were more likely to have completed their schooling and to have participated in the labour market upon their arrival. Comparable results for two cohorts of more established immigrants are also provided; immigrants who arrived from 5 to less than 10 years earlier, and immigrants who arrived from 10 to less than 15 years earlier.⁴ The results focus on differences which are significant at the 95% confidence level.

NPRs are not identified directly in the core LFS questionnaire. Instead, they represent the majority of a larger residual group which also includes Canadian citizens born abroad. In contrast, the LFS supplement included questions about immigration and citizenship status, allowing for NPRs to be identified more explicitly. For the purpose of the analysis, NPR refers to respondents who were usual residents of Canada at the time they completed the survey, were not born in Canada, were not Canadian citizens, and had never been landed immigrants.

The analysis is based on a sample of approximately 2,200 immigrants and 600 NPRs. The status of immigrants and NPRs was identified at the time of data collection. As such, the category “recent immigrants” includes some individuals who may have arrived as NPRs and later became permanent residents, as well as persons who were

1. The author would like to thank Brittany Etmanski, Yue Xing, Jessica Gill, Julian Alvarez, Adam Abdille and Marton Lovei for contributing in various ways to the analysis. In addition, many thanks to André Bernard, Nicolas Bastien, Feng Hou, Athanase Barayandema, Isabelle Marchand, and Sébastien Larochelle-Côté (Statistics Canada), as well as Georgina Chuatico and Stéphane Arabackyj (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) for their helpful comments.

2. See [Table 17-10-0014-01 Estimates of the components of international migration, by age and gender, annual](#).

3. [Estimates of the number of non-permanent residents by type, quarterly](#).

4. Immigrants aged 30 to 59 who arrived in Canada from 5 to less than 10 years previously and immigrants aged 35 to 64 who arrived in Canada from 10 to less than 15 years earlier.

already permanent residents before they arrived in Canada. While other surveys and administrative data sources typically classify immigrants based on the year of admission, this analysis focuses on the year of arrival. This approach more explicitly reflects the labour market integration of newcomers in relation to actual time spent in Canada.

NPRs are a diverse group, comprising persons who hold various work or study permits, their family members and asylum claimants. While each group can have distinct labour market characteristics,⁵ results for all categories of NPRs are combined in this study due to the size of the sample. It should be noted that the study focuses on recent immigrants and NPRs who were aged 25 to 54, a population that includes fewer international students. For more information on the year of arrival concept and the population covered in the analysis, see text box: “**Recent immigrants and non-permanent residents: definitions and sample restrictions**”.

Recent immigrants and non-permanent residents: definitions and sample restrictions

The analysis of results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) supplement focuses on the circumstances of two groups: landed immigrants who arrived in Canada less than five years earlier and non-permanent residents (NPRs).

The year of admission refers to the time when a person became a permanent resident, while the year of arrival refers to the time when a person first came to Canada to live. In a context where more immigrants first arrive in Canada as NPRs, and acquire labour market experience before becoming permanent residents, data based on the year of arrival provide additional information to understand the integration of NPRs and immigrants in the labour market.

The analysis focuses on recent immigrants and NPRs who were aged 25 to 54 at the time of the survey (in the third quarter of 2024) and were at least 20 years old when they arrived. The cohort of recent immigrants is compared to cohorts of more established immigrants who arrived in Canada at a similar age, namely:

- Immigrants aged 30 to 59 in the third quarter of 2024 (who arrived in Canada from 5 to less than 10 years previously and were at least 20 years old when they arrived).
- Immigrants aged 35 to 64 in the third quarter of 2024 (who arrived in Canada from 10 to less than 15 years previously and were at least 20 years old when they arrived).

Moreover, the sample of NPRs was restricted to those who had arrived in the five years prior to the third quarter of 2024, when the data was collected. This group already represented the vast majority of NPRs in the sample. Nonetheless, this restriction allows more meaningful analysis of the labour market experiences of NPRs relative to those of recent immigrants.

Together, the three cohorts of immigrants will be referred to in the text as “working-age immigrants” while NPRs covered in the analysis are referred to as “working-age NPRs”.

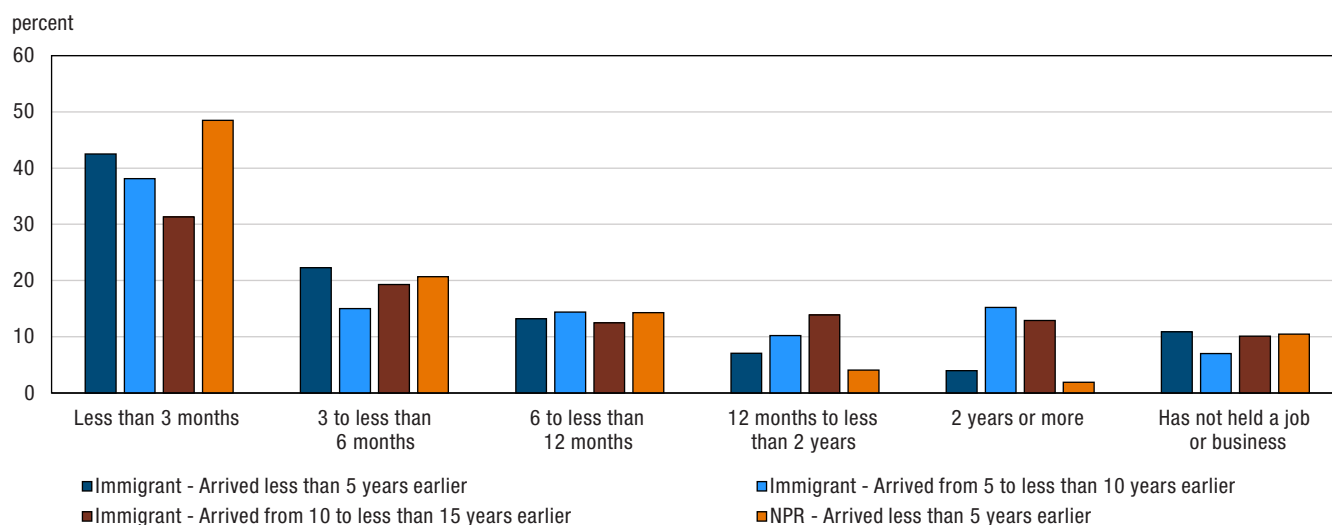
Over 4 in 10 recent working-age immigrants and NPRs who had not secured a job before arriving were able to obtain their first job within 3 months

Coinciding with the tight labour market conditions observed during the post-COVID recovery, immigrants who arrived in the five years prior to the third quarter of 2024 found their first job more quickly compared with previous cohorts.

5. Tuey, C. & Bastien, N. (2023). *Non-permanent residents in Canada: Portrait of a growing population from the 2021 Census. Insights on Canadian Society*. Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

Chart 1

Compared with previous cohorts, recent working-age immigrants who had not secured a job before arriving were more likely to have found one in less than three months



Notes: Excludes people who found a job before arriving or never looked for work in Canada. See text for a detailed description of the four groups of immigrants and NPRs used for this analysis.
Sources: Labour Force Survey (3701), and Labour Market and Socio-economic Indicators (5377), third quarter of 2024, custom tabulation.

In the third quarter of 2024, among recent working-age immigrants who had not secured a job before coming to Canada and looked for work after arriving, over 4 in 10 (42.5%) reported obtaining their first job or starting their first business in less than three months. This was 11.2 percentage points higher than the corresponding proportion for immigrants who had arrived from 10 to less than 15 years earlier (31.3%).

Further, slightly less than half of working-age NPRs (48.5%) who had not obtained a job prior to arriving in Canada were able to obtain their first job within three months of their arrival. Mirroring the requirements of several types of visa programs, such as the International Mobility Program, a sizable share of NPRs who looked for work had secured their first job in Canada prior to their arrival (20.3%). In comparison, 11.0% of recent working-age immigrants had secured a job prior to arriving in Canada.

About 3 in 10 recent working-age immigrants and NPRs experienced problems or difficulties finding their first job or starting their first business in Canada

Although the length of time taken to find a first job was shorter relative to previous cohorts, recent immigrants continued to report experiencing a range of difficulties as part of finding their first job.⁶ In the third quarter of 2024, about 3 in 10 recent working-age immigrants (31.7%) and NPRs (27.1%) indicated that they had faced difficulties finding their first job or starting their first business. This was comparable to the experience of previous cohorts of immigrants. For example, 34.0% of working-age immigrants who had arrived from 5 to less than 10 years earlier reported experiencing difficulties as part of finding their first job.

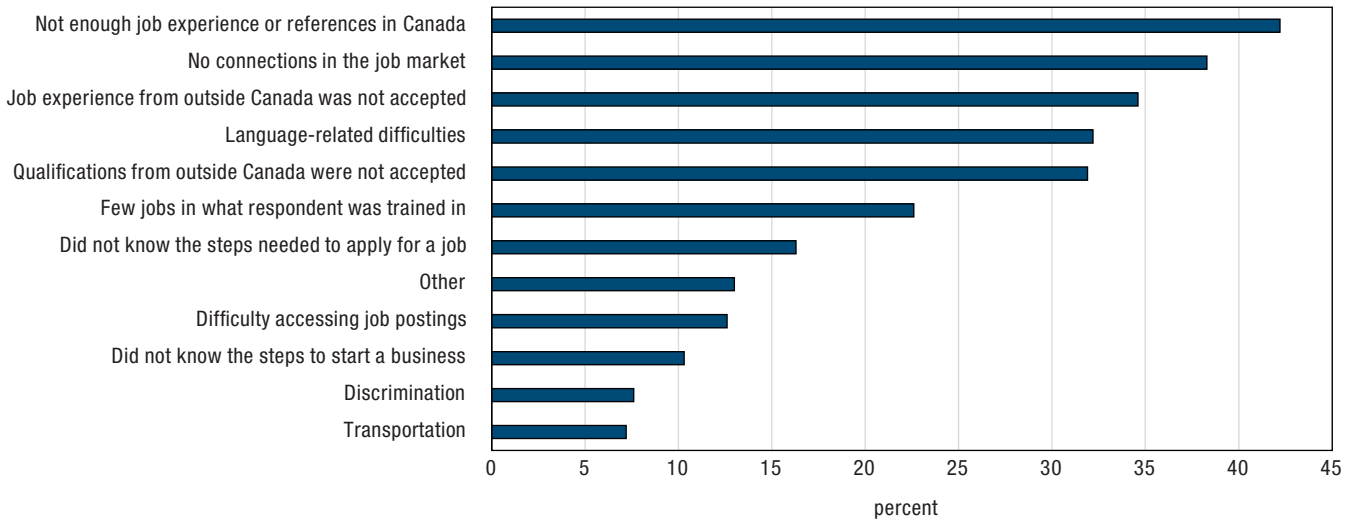
While the likelihood of encountering difficulties as part of finding a first job was similar overall, difficulties associated with the recognition of foreign experience were less common among the most recent cohort of working-age immigrants. Among those who experienced difficulties, a smaller share of recent working-age immigrants (34.6%) cited “not having their job experience from outside Canada accepted” as a main difficulty compared with immigrants who had arrived from 10 to less than 15 years previously (49.2%).

Nonetheless, “not having enough job experience or references in Canada” remained one of the most common obstacles, and over 4 in 10 recent working-age immigrants (42.2%) who experienced difficulties identified it as a main difficulty. This proportion was 53.0% among immigrants who had arrived from 10 to less than 15 years

6. Excludes people who never looked for work after arriving in Canada.

earlier. Other common difficulties persisted at similar rates for recent working-age immigrants, including having no connections in the labour market (38.3%), language-related difficulties (32.2%), and not having qualifications from outside Canada accepted (31.9%).

Chart 2
Types of difficulties encountered as part of finding a first job among recent working-age immigrants who experienced difficulties, third quarter of 2024



Notes: Excludes people who never looked for work in Canada. Reflects the percentage of people who experienced a specific difficulty out of those who experienced at least 1 difficulty.
Sources: Labour Force Survey (3701), and Labour Market and Socio-economic Indicators (5377), third quarter of 2024, custom tabulation.

Notable wage gap between NPRs and persons born in Canada

At the time the LFS supplement was collected in the third quarter of 2024, the employment rate—the proportion of the population who are employed—was 75.5% among recent working age immigrants and 75.8% among working-age NPRs. In-line with long-standing patterns, the employment rate of working-age immigrants and NPRs was lower compared with the rate for core-aged persons born in Canada (85.4%).

In the third quarter of 2024, the average hourly wage of working-age NPR employees was \$26.15, 33.4% lower than the average wage of core-aged employees born in Canada (\$39.29). In comparison to their counterparts who were born in Canada, the average hourly wage of recent working-age immigrants was 23.7% lower (\$29.97).

For more information on labour market indicators over time available from the main LFS questionnaire, see text box **“Recent trends in the labour market situation of recent immigrants from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) based on the year of admission”**.

Recent trends in the labour market situation of recent immigrants from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) based on the year of admission

In the years which immediately followed the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, core-aged immigrants (aged 25 to 54) who had become permanent residents in the previous 5 years saw notable improvements in their labour market situation compared with previous cohorts.

From 2020 to 2021, the employment rate of recent immigrants—the proportion of the population who are employed—grew 7.0 percentage points to 76.3% and surpassed its 2019 pre-pandemic level (71.0%). The gap between the employment rate of recent immigrants and that of persons born in Canada also narrowed to 7.8 percentage points in 2021, the smallest difference observed since the beginning of the data series in 2006.⁷ The gap remained close to this record low but had widened slightly to 8.5 percentage points by 2024.

Other indicators also highlight improvements in the labour market situation of recent immigrants. In 2022 and 2023, the gap in the average hourly wage of employees between recent immigrants and persons born in Canada was also at its lowest since the beginning of the 2006 data series. The narrowing of the gap was the result of a trend that had started in 2017 but became more evident after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The favourable labour market outcomes of recent immigrants observed from 2021 to 2023 coincide with a period of labour market tightness and record-high job vacancies. However, changes in the characteristics of immigrants may also have been a contributing factor. Previous research has shown that growing numbers of immigrants gain Canadian work experience as NPRs before becoming permanent residents—a factor which is associated with improved labour market outcomes after admission.⁸

Most recent working-age immigrants with postsecondary qualifications had acquired professional experience prior to their arrival in Canada

Over the last several decades, the federal and provincial governments have implemented various immigration programs designed to attract skilled workers, such as the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) and Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs). Changes in immigration programs have coincided with higher rates of postsecondary attainment among immigrants and NPRs⁹ and a long-term shift in the labour market towards occupations that typically require postsecondary education.¹⁰

Among recent working-age immigrants and NPRs with postsecondary qualifications from outside Canada,¹¹ a large majority had gained some work experience in their field before their arrival. In the third quarter of 2024, over 4 in 5 recent working-age immigrants (84.2%) and NPRs (83.6%) with postsecondary qualifications had acquired at least one year of work experience related to their highest diploma or degree before arriving in Canada. These proportions were largely aligned with previous cohorts, including working-age immigrants who arrived from 10 to less than 15 years previously (79.3%) and those who arrived from 5 to less than 10 years earlier (78.7%).

For recent working-age immigrants with foreign postsecondary credentials, relevant experience acquired abroad translated into a higher probability of being employed. In the third quarter of 2024, the employment rate was higher among recent working-age immigrants with at least 5 years of foreign experience related to their highest qualification (86.8%) than for those with no foreign experience or less than five years of experience (73.0%). There was little difference in employment rates based on years of foreign experience in more established cohorts, suggesting that the advantage conferred by having professional experience from outside Canada may wane as immigrants gain more experience in the Canadian labour market.

7. In 2021, the unemployment rate gap between recent immigrants and persons born in Canada was also the smallest observed since 2006 and remained near this record low in 2022 and 2023.

8. See [Earnings of one-step and two-step economic immigrants: Comparisons from the arrival year](#).

9. The share of recent immigrants and NPRs with a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree (acquired either abroad or in Canada) increased between 2016 and 2021 based on Census of Population data. Among recent immigrants aged 25 to 54, this proportion increased from 76.5% to 79.9%, while it increased from 78.0% to 81.6% among core-aged NPRs. Results from the LFS supplement are aligned with the trend towards higher educational attainment, and show that in the third quarter of 2024, 82.2% of recent working-age immigrants and 86.3% of working-age NPRs had a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree when they first arrived in Canada.

10. According to results from the LFS, from 2006 to 2024, the share of jobs that typically require a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree increased from 53.5% to 62.1%.

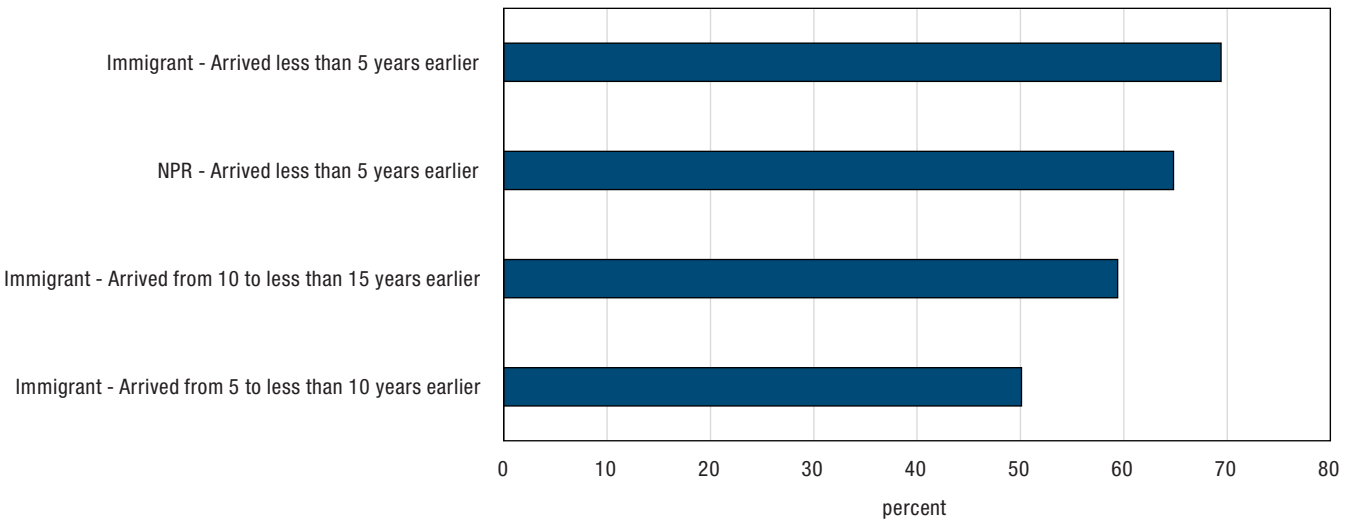
11. This includes those who later obtained another certificate, diploma or degree in Canada.

In their first job, recent working-age immigrants were more likely to have had an employer that took their foreign experience into consideration

With the high proportion of recent immigrants and NPRs who have postsecondary qualifications and experience prior to arriving in Canada, an important aspect of labour market integration is whether foreign experience is taken into consideration by employers and leads to the full utilization of human capital.

In the third quarter of 2024, nearly 7 in 10 (69.4%) recent working-age immigrants who had obtained a job related to their highest foreign qualification indicated that most of their foreign experience had been taken into consideration by their first employer to determine their pay, benefits and other job characteristics. This proportion was 19.3 percentage points higher than the rate observed among immigrants who had arrived from 5 to less than 10 years earlier (50.1%). Among recent working-age NPRs, 64.8% reported that most of their foreign experience had been taken into consideration by their first employer.

Chart 3
Percentage of working-age immigrants and NPRs with postsecondary qualifications whose first employer took most of their foreign experience into consideration



Notes: Restricted to immigrants and NPRs with a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree from outside Canada who had professional experience when they arrived, and found a job related to their studies in Canada. See text for a detailed description of the four groups of immigrants and NPRs used for this analysis.
Sources: Labour Force Survey (3701), and Labour Market and Socio-economic Indicators (5377), third quarter of 2024, custom tabulation.

More than half of recent working-age immigrants and over one third of NPRs applied for an equivalency assessment for the qualifications they had earned abroad

Immigrants who arrive in Canada face diverse requirements with regards to the recognition of their foreign degrees or diplomas. Educational Credential Assessments (ECA) are required for the principal applicant in most economic immigration programs, but other immigration pathways such as Family Sponsorship do not require an ECA. Immigrants and NPRs who do not have an ECA may be required by employers to obtain an equivalency assessment from a private sector organization. Further, immigrants who wish to practice a regulated occupation must apply to regulatory colleges or professional associations who manage their own credential assessment processes.

In the third quarter of 2024, 55.3% of recent working-age immigrants who had obtained a postsecondary degree, certificate or diploma outside Canada reported having applied for an equivalency assessment, either through a government agency or a private sector provider.

The proportion of working-age immigrants with postsecondary credentials who had applied for an equivalency assessment was lower among immigrants who arrived from 10 to less than 15 years before (42.2%). Further, 35.9% of working-age NPRs with foreign postsecondary qualifications had applied for an equivalency assessment. NPRs may generally have a lower need for equivalency assessments since many already have an employer when they arrive. NPRs may also be more likely to work in jobs unrelated to their degrees.

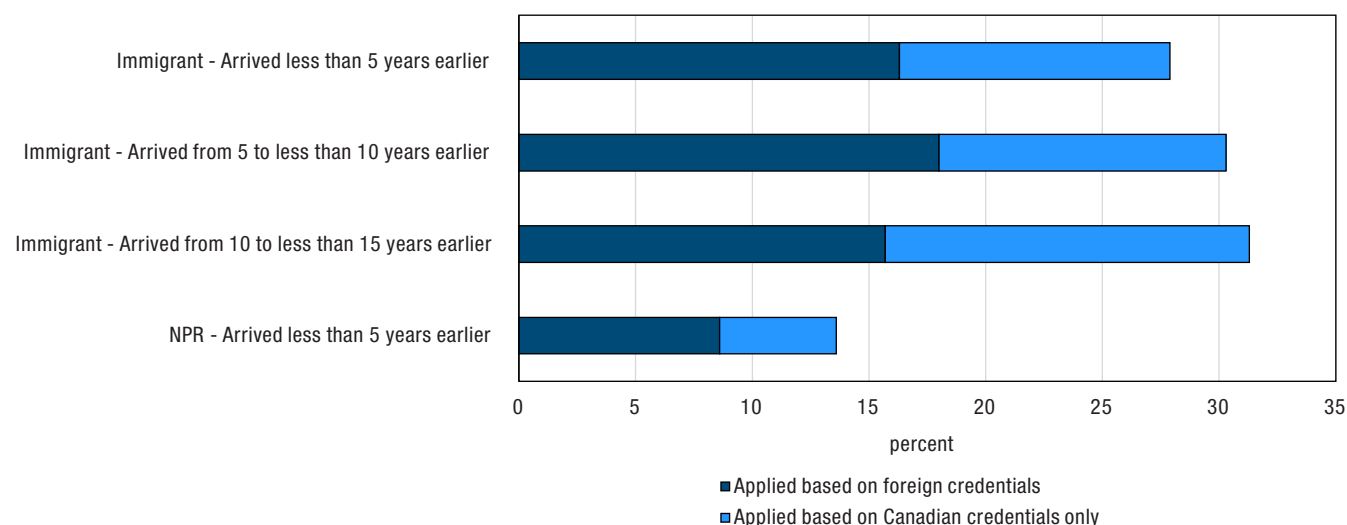
In the third quarter of 2024, the vast majority (97.6%) of those who had applied were granted a Canadian equivalency (of any level).¹²

Less than half of working-age immigrants who applied to practice a regulated occupation received full recognition of their foreign qualifications and experience

Distinct from equivalency assessments is the process to obtain a license to practice a regulated occupation in Canada, which involves additional accreditation managed by a professional or regulatory body. In the third quarter of 2024, 28.0% of recent working-age immigrants with postsecondary credentials from outside Canada¹³ reported having tried to obtain a license to work in a regulated occupation in Canada. Of those who did, over half (58.4%) applied based on foreign qualifications, while the remainder applied based on credentials obtained after arriving in Canada. Fewer recent NPRs reported having applied to obtain a licence to work in a regulated occupation (13.5%).

Chart 4

Working-age immigrants and NPRs who applied to practice a regulated occupation, third quarter of 2024



Notes: Restricted to immigrants and NPRs with a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree from outside Canada and excludes people who never worked in Canada. See text for a detailed description of the four groups of immigrants and NPRs used for this analysis.

Sources: Labour Force Survey (3701), and Labour Market and Socio-economic Indicators (5377), third quarter of 2024, custom tabulation.

While the results are not available for recent immigrants alone due to the small sample size, the data indicate that working age-immigrants who arrived in the previous 15 years experienced challenges with the full recognition of foreign credentials as part of their application process.

Among all working-age immigrants who applied to practice a regulated occupation based on foreign credentials, less than half (42.7%) had obtained full recognition of their foreign experience and qualifications by the third quarter of 2024, and over a third had received partial recognition (34.0%), meaning that they had to take additional courses or training in order to obtain the required accreditation.

12. This may include situations where the equivalency is for a lower level of educational attainment than the one stated on the foreign certificate, diploma or degree. Due to the small sample size, NPRs and the three cohorts of immigrants were combined to understand how many were able to obtain an equivalency.

13. Excludes people who never worked after arriving in Canada.

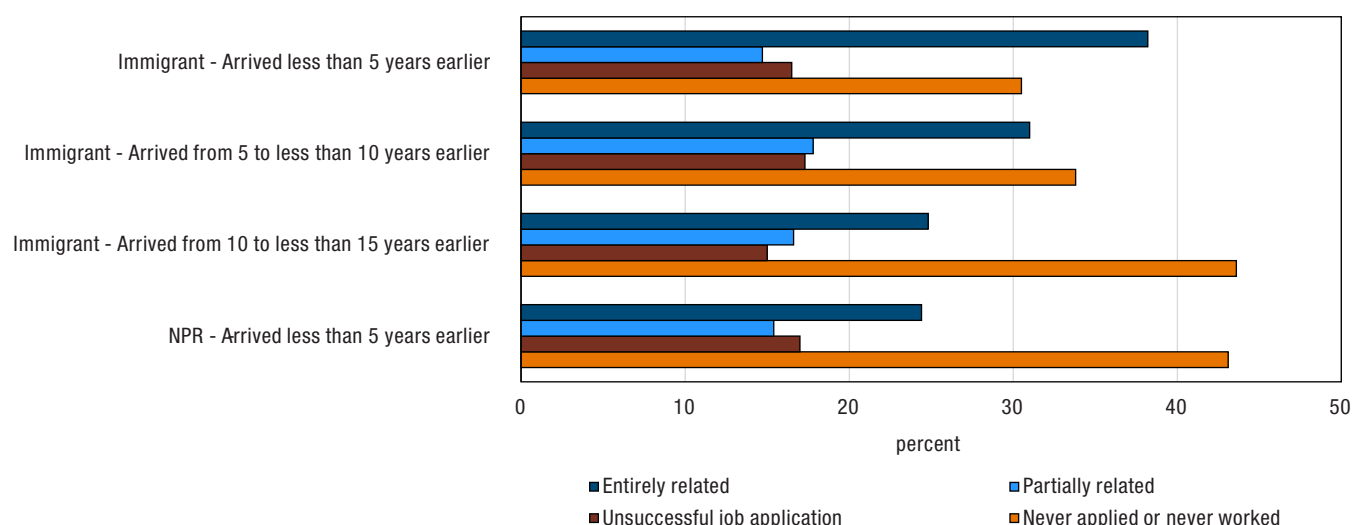
Recent working-age immigrants more likely than previous cohorts to have held paid jobs entirely related to their foreign qualifications

Barriers related to the acquisition of a license to practice a regulated occupation are part of a broader set of difficulties that make it challenging for immigrants and NPRs to obtain a job related to the postsecondary qualifications they have acquired abroad. In the third quarter of 2024, 53.0% of recent working-age immigrants and 39.8% of NPRs with postsecondary credentials from outside Canada had held a paid job after arriving in Canada that was entirely or partially related to their highest foreign qualification.

Despite the fact that nearly half had not held a paid job related to their highest foreign qualification, recent working-age immigrants were more likely than previous cohorts to have held a job in their field. As of the third quarter of 2024, just over 4 in 10 working-age immigrants (41.5%) who had arrived from 10 to less than 15 years earlier had ever held a paid job related to their highest foreign certificate, diploma or degree. More challenging economic conditions upon arrival, especially from 2009 to 2014, may have meant that more immigrants who arrived during this period pursued additional postsecondary education in Canada in a different field, became self-employed, or pursued a career that was unrelated to their foreign qualifications.

Chart 5

Percentage of working-age immigrants and NPRs who ever held a paid job related to their highest foreign qualification, third quarter of 2024

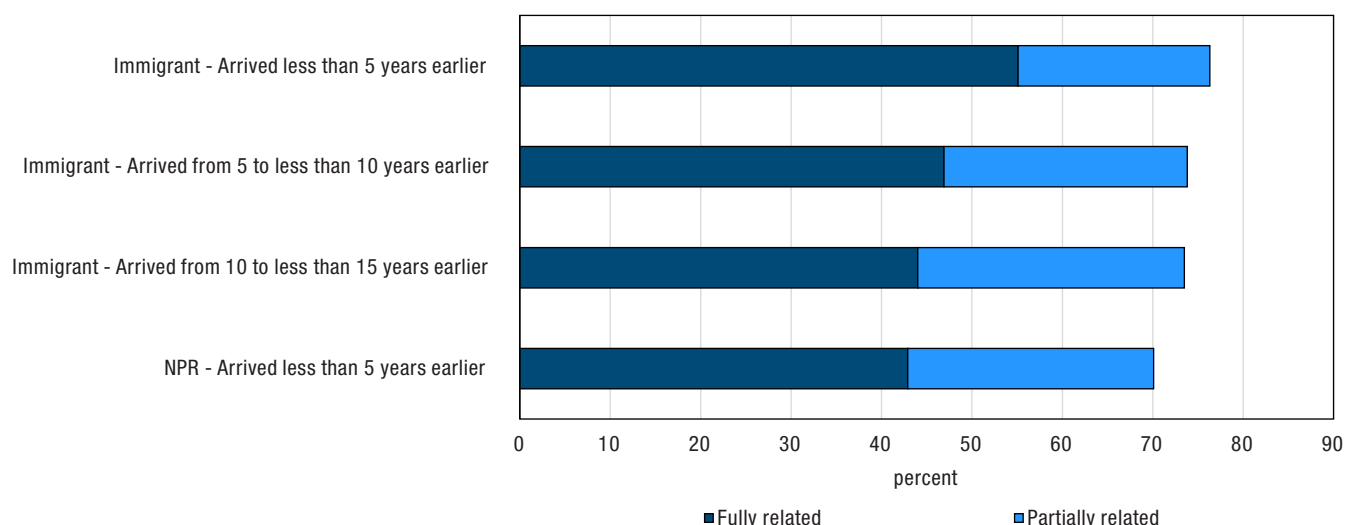


Notes: Restricted to immigrants and NPRs with a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree. See text for a detailed description of the four groups of immigrants and NPRs used for this analysis.

Sources: Labour Force Survey (3701), and Labour Market and Socio-economic Indicators (5377), third quarter of 2024, custom tabulation.

Part of the difference between cohorts relates to the share of people who did not apply to jobs related to their qualifications. Fewer recent working-age immigrants (19.9%) reported never applying to jobs related to their highest postsecondary credential from outside Canada compared to working-age immigrants who arrived from 10 to less than 15 years earlier (36.5%).¹⁴ In fact, when considering only those who applied to jobs related to their studies, there was little difference between recent immigrants (76.3%) and immigrants who arrived from 10 to less than 15 years earlier (73.5%) in terms of the share who held a job entirely or partially related to their foreign qualifications. At the same time, recent working-age immigrants remained more likely to have held a job entirely related to their foreign qualifications (55.1%, compared with 44.0% for those who arrived from 10 to less than 15 years previously).

14. Excludes people who never worked after arriving in Canada.

Chart 6**Ever held a paid job related to highest foreign qualification among persons who applied to jobs related to their studies, third quarter of 2024**

Notes: Restricted to immigrants and NPRs with a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree. See text for a detailed description of the four groups of immigrants and NPRs used for this analysis.

Sources: Labour Force Survey (3701), and Labour Market and Socio-economic Indicators (5377), third quarter of 2024, custom tabulation.

Conclusion

Using data from the LFS supplement for the third quarter of 2024, this article highlighted several aspects of the experiences of recent working-age immigrants and NPRs who arrived in Canada in the five years prior to the third quarter of 2024.

The results suggest that recent working-age immigrants who arrived in Canada in the previous 5 years fared better than previous cohorts in terms of their initial integration into the labour market. Compared with previous cohorts, they found their first job more quickly, were more successful in securing paid jobs related to their foreign qualifications and were more likely to have had their foreign experience recognized by their first employer. At the same time, while some of the difficulties experienced by recent immigrants were alleviated, they were not eliminated. Long-standing patterns, such as a lower employment rate among recent immigrants compared with more established immigrants and persons born in Canada, persisted throughout the 2019 to 2024 period.

Among working-age NPRs, while many had already secured a job before moving to Canada or were able to find one within 3 months of arriving, a smaller proportion of those with foreign qualifications had ever worked in a paid job related to their highest certificate, diploma, or degree. Further, NPRs working as paid employees had a lower average hourly wage than both recent immigrants and persons born in Canada.

It remains to be seen whether improvements in the initial integration of recent immigrants reflect the beginning of a durable change in the pathways to labour market integration, a long-term shift in the characteristics of immigrants—such as an increase in the share of immigrants who acquire Canadian experience as NPRs before becoming permanent residents—or are largely the result of more favourable labour market conditions during the post-COVID recovery. Future analysis could examine the experiences of newcomers in the context of increased labour market uncertainty and a slowdown in the number of new immigrants and NPRs in Canada.