

Interprovincial Migration in Canada

QUEBECKERS VOTE WITH THEIR FEET

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Executive Summary

The movement of people from one place to another, migration, can be a powerful indicator of a jurisdiction's success or failure. One of the reasons migration is such a powerful indicator is the high cost involved for people who move from one jurisdiction to another. Uprooting one's family, disposing of family assets, the costs of job searches, and leaving the confines of what is known in search of something better is an incredibly costly action. This study focuses on the important insights Quebecers can and should glean from provincial migration data.

Net migration (total in-migration – total out-migration)

On average, between 1971/72 and 2014/15, 13,238 more Quebecers left the province annually than people from other provinces moved to Quebec. Quebec is the only province to have experienced net out-migration every year between 1971/72 and 2014/15. Negative migration ranged from a low of –822 in 2003/04 to a high of –46,429 in 1977/78, one year after the election of the Parti Québécois.

On a cumulative basis, Quebec experienced the highest out-migration, losing a total of 582,470 residents. Interestingly, though, since 2003/04, Ontario's cumulative out-migration of 142,514 outstripped Quebec's (–101,497). Most Canadians who migrated between provinces over this period ended up in Alberta or British Columbia.

Controlling for population, the province of Newfoundland & Labrador recorded the largest net loss of residents at 23.1% of its 2015 population. The prairie provinces of Saskatchewan (–17.3%) and Manitoba (–17.0%) ranked second and third, respectively. Quebec ranked fourth, losing 7.0% of its population (2015) to net migration over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15.

Total out-migration

Quebec and, to a lesser extent, Ontario consistently experienced the lowest level of total out-migration of any of the provinces over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15. In 2014/15, Quebec experienced out-migration of 3.9 people per 1,000 population while Ontario experienced out-migration of 5.1 people per 1,000 population. The remaining eight provinces recorded out-migration per 1,000 population of between 9.2 (British Columbia) and 23.5 people (Prince Edward Island). Put differently, the out-migration recorded in Quebec in 2014/15 was only 42.4% of the out-migration level recorded by the third-ranked province of British Columbia.

Similar results are observed when the average out-migration is measured. Over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15, Quebec, on average, experienced out-migration of 5.4 people per 1,000 population. This was the lowest of any province. Put simply, Quebec had the most stable domestic population in terms of out-migration among the provinces over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15.

Total in-migration

Quebec also recorded the lowest level of in-migration, adjusted for population, of any province between 1971/72 and 2014/15. In 2014/15, Quebec experienced in-migration of 2.1 people per 1,000 population. Ontario ranked second-lowest, with in-migration of 4.5 people per 1,000 population, more than double Quebec's level. Alberta, at almost ten times the level recorded by Quebec recorded the highest level of in-migration with 20.5 people per 1,000 population in 2014/15.

Quebec had the lowest average level of in-migration at 3.5 people per 1,000 population over this time period. Ontario recorded the second-lowest average rate of in-migration over this period: 7.5 people, which is more than double the average rate of Quebec. Alberta recorded the highest average annual rate of 26.8 people per 1,000 population.

The difference between the average annual in-migration of 3.5 people per 1,000 population (lowest in Canada) and the average annual out-migration of 5.4 people per 1,000 population (again the lowest in Canada) is what produces the average annual loss of 1.9 people per 1,000 population in Quebec through interprovincial migration.

Simply put, Quebec loses relatively few residents each year but it attracts only minimal migration from other Canadian provinces, which explains its comparatively high level of net out-migration. Indeed, over the 44-year period, the Atlantic provinces had almost twice as much in-migration (1,868,104) as Quebec (1,069,306) on a population base that is less than a third of Quebec's.

Finally, Quebec's net out-migration is tilted towards the young and particularly those starting or in the early stages of their careers. This out-migration of the young has in part contributed to the older age structure of Quebec's population.

Introduction

Migration—the movement of people from one place to another—can be a powerful indicator of a jurisdiction’s success or failure. [1] Jurisdictions that attract people from other places can provide positive lessons for success. Alternatively, jurisdictions that consistently lose people to other places can provide lessons on policies to avoid. One of the reasons migration is such a powerful indicator of performance is the high cost involved for people who move from one jurisdiction to another. Uprooting one’s family, disposing of assets such as the family house, the costs of job searches, and leaving the confines of what is known in search of something better is an incredibly costly action.

Canada as a nation as well as a number of provinces have experienced episodes with heightened interest in migration. Concerns over the “brain-drain” in the mid- to late-1990s focused attention on Canada’s competitiveness with the United States for high-skilled talent. Repeated episodes of out-migration from the Prairies led to heightened concerns about the lack of opportunities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Indeed, the continued out-migration of Saskatchewan’s young people was a key motivator in the 1990s for the NDP government to enact economic policies that promoted growth, opportunity, and competitiveness. Perhaps no other episode in Canadian history, though, focused the attention of policy makers, the media, and citizens more broadly than the out-migration from Quebec following the election of the Parti Québécois (PQ) in 1976.

The study is organized as follows. First data on net interprovincial migration are presented, showing the movement of people (net) into or out of the provinces over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15. The next section adjusts the raw migration numbers presented in the first section for the size of the underlying population and the following examines the two underlying data series that are used to calculate net interprovincial migration, namely the total, or gross, in-migration and out-migration for each of the provinces. This is particularly important for Quebec because it adds an interesting nuance to the record of the province’s net interprovincial migration. The following section

[1] Interest in jurisdictional migration as a signal was spurred by the landmark work of Charles Tiebout in the mid-1950s. The publication of his first article on the economics of how people decide where to live locally and how local governments decide the proper level of spending and taxes motivated an entire line of research in economics. See Charles M. Tiebout (1956), A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures, *Journal of Political Economy* 64, 5 (October): 416–424, <https://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/teaching/PLSC541_Fall08/tiebout_1956.pdf>.

then examines the age profiles for Quebec's net interprovincial migration in order to understand the nature of the province's negative net migration (net out-migration) over time. It also briefly looks at international immigration into Quebec to ascertain if it might be part of the explanation for subsequent migration. The paper concludes with a few summary observations.

Net Interprovincial Migration— What Are We Measuring?

There are a number of ways to measure and assess migration. The key to the measurement used in this paper is that it examines the movement of existing residents of Canada. In other words, it excludes the movement of people into Canada from other countries and the movement of people leaving Canada to live elsewhere (international migration). Specifically, the migration data used in this paper is from Statistics Canada [2] and tracks changes in the “usual place of residence” for residents over time. [3] It excludes people who commute for extended periods of time between provinces but who do not change their formal province of residence. This measure targets residents who expend the time and energy, physically and practically, to change their province of residence, a higher bar for measuring migration than alternative measures that, for instance, might include extended periods of commuting.

This publication examines both net interprovincial migration data as well as the two series that are used to calculate net interprovincial migration: total in-migration and total out-migration. Net interprovincial migration is simply the difference between residents moving out of a province (out-migration) and the number of residents from other provinces moving into that province (in-migration).

[2] Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*, Statistics Canada, <<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=0510012&&pattern=&stByVal=1&p1=1&p2=-1&tabMode=dataTable&csid>>, as of January 12, 2016.

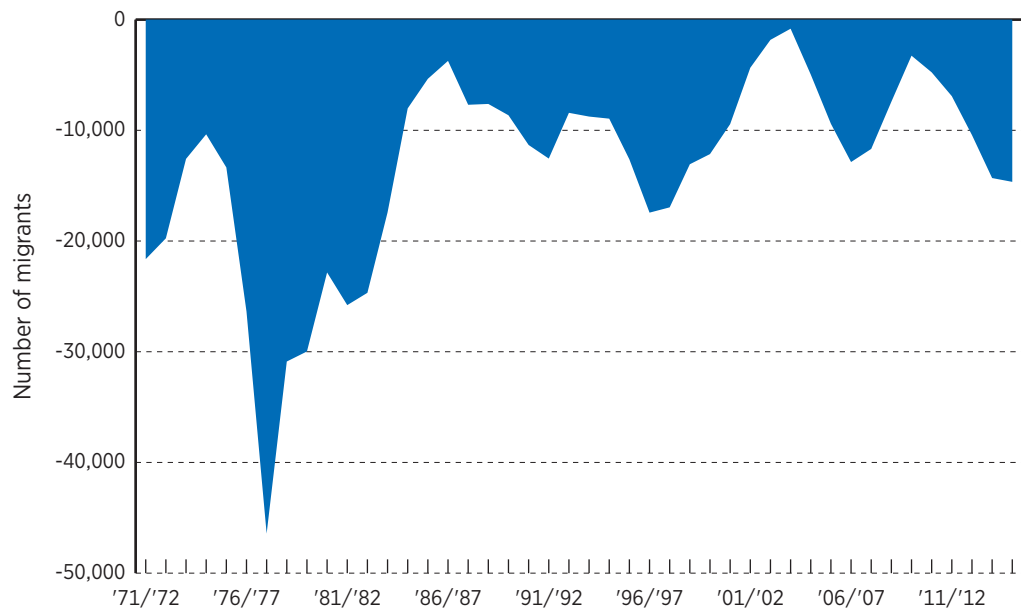
[3] It is worth noting how the migration data relied upon in this analysis interacts with other population data provided by Statistics Canada. The *Census of Population* is the basis for the population estimates for the provinces, territories, and municipalities. Postcensal estimates are produced with the most recent census (adjusted for net under-coverage or CNU) and estimates of the components of demographic growth. The demographic components include births, deaths, immigration, emigration, net non-permanent residents, net temporary emigration, returning emigrants, and interprovincial migration. Intercensal estimates (for dates between two censuses) are produced following each census in order to reconcile previous postcensal estimates with the new census counts adjusted for census net undercoverage (CNU). Intercensal estimates are produced by estimating the error of closure and then linearly distributing it according to the number of days between intercensal years. The error of closure consists of measurement errors in any of the demographic components over the intercensal period and also errors from the measurement of censal coverage error itself for the current and previous censuses. For more information, please see Statistics Canada, Demographic Analysis Section (2012), *Population and Family Estimation Methods at Statistics Canada* (Cat. no. 91-528-X), Minister of Industry, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-528-x/91-528-x2011001-eng.pdf>>.

Statistics Canada’s formal definition of net interprovincial migration is as follows: “A person who takes up residence in another province or territory is an out-migrant with reference to the province or territory of origin, and an in-migrant with reference to the province or territory of destination. Net interprovincial migration is the difference between the number of in-migrants and the number of out-migrants”. [4] In the interest of clarity and brevity: all movements of people discussed in the paper, aside from the section specifically devoted to “in-migration” and “out-migration”, refer to net interprovincial migration.

Migration—the Raw Numbers

Figure 1 illustrates the net migration of Quebecers between 1971/72 and 2014/15, the latest year for which data are available. More people moved out of Quebec than moved in from other provinces in every single year between 1971/72 and 2014/15 (see figure 3), ranging from a low of –822 in 2003/04 to a high of –46,429 in 1977/78. On average, each year between 1971/72 and 2014/15, a total of 13,238 Quebecers chose to leave the province, net of those from other provinces moving to Quebec.

Figure 1: Quebec’s net interprovincial migration, 1971/72–2014/15



Source: Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

[4] Statistics Canada (2016), Table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants*.

There is considerable volatility in the migration of Quebecers that is worth considering. First, the largest outflow was in 1977/78 just after the 1976 election of the Parti Québécois. [5] In the year of the election (1976/77), 26,366 more Quebecers left the province than moved in from other provinces. The next year, 46,429 more people left Quebec than arrived from other provinces.

Another spike of negative migration (net) occurred in 1996/97, one year after the second referendum on Quebec separation. Specifically, 17,436 more people left than arrived in 1996/97, up 94.9% from just two years earlier (1994/95). This spike, however, was only 37.6% of the level of out-migration Quebec experienced in 1977/78. Migration from Quebec spiked again, although to a much lesser degree in 2006/07, just before the global recession. Specifically, migration reached -12,865 in 2006/07 and declined from that level over the following three years. Finally, negative net migration started to trend upwards again in 2010/11 and has continued through to 2014/15, the latest data available. In 2014/15, migration from Quebec reached -14,656 from a relatively small outflow of -3,258 in 2009/10.

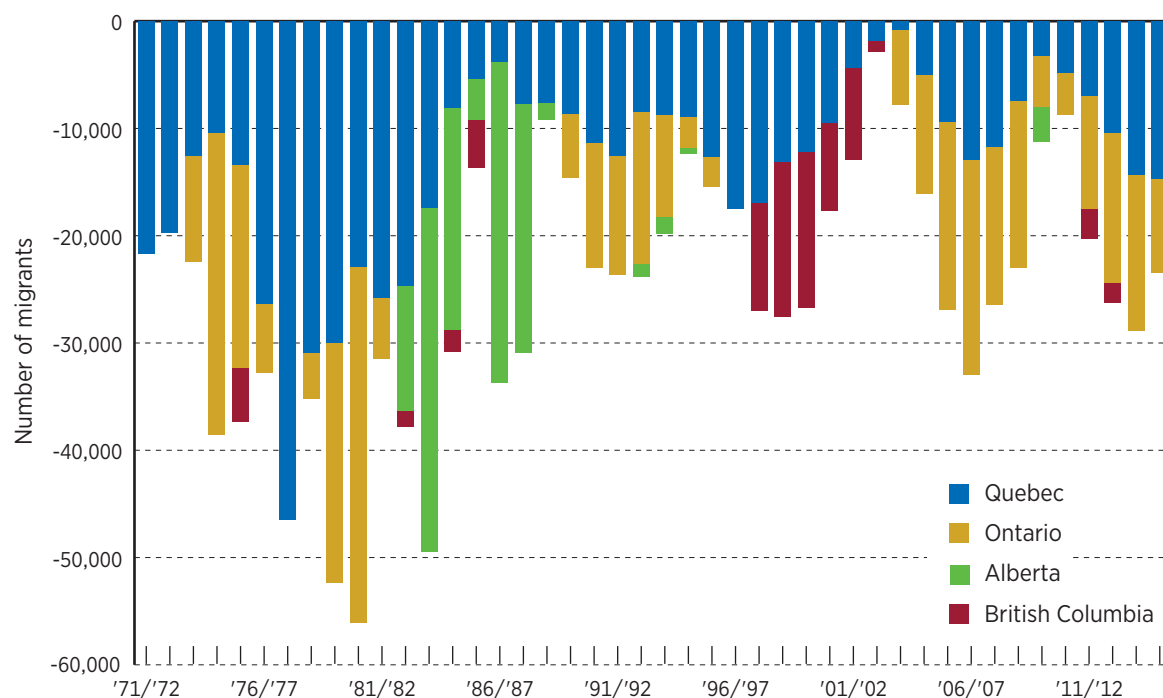
Figure 2 illustrates the level of migration for the “Big Four” provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia) [6] in the years when each experienced outflows of residents net of residents moving into the province. In other words, figure 2 only shows data for the provinces in the years in which more people moved out than moved in.

Several key facts about the migration patterns of the Big Four provinces are evident from figure 2. First, Quebec is the only province to have experienced a loss of residents every year between 1971/72 and 2014/15. Quebec lost 582,470 residents to other provinces over this time period. Second, Alberta’s years of negative net migration during the 44-year period are almost exclusively confined to the years from 1982/83 to 1988/89 when the effects of the world energy crash coupled with the National Energy Policy were having large, deleterious effects on the provincial economy. Third, British Columbia’s years of negative net migration are largely limited to a brief period in the late 1990s.

[5] For an informative and interesting analysis of the consequences of separatist governments in Quebec, please see Kim Somers and François Vaillancourt (2014), *Some Economics Dimensions of the Sovereignty Debate in Quebec: Debt, GDP, and Migration*, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 30, 2: 237–256.

[6] Particular attention is paid to what have been called the “Big Four” provinces because there are migratory patterns—specifically the move from rural areas to more urbanized areas—that influence the Big Four provinces differently than the remaining provinces. A key difference is the presence of at least one major metropolitan area in each of the Big Four provinces: Montreal in Quebec; Toronto and Ottawa in Ontario; Calgary and Edmonton in Alberta; and Vancouver in British Columbia. For this reason, residents of the province do not have to leave in order to secure and enjoy the benefits of living in a major metropolitan area. This is not the case for residents in the other six provinces, who have to leave their current province to secure such benefits. Comparing the migration results for the Big Four largely eliminates this challenge within Canada.

Figure 2: Net interprovincial out-migration from Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, 1971/72–2014/15



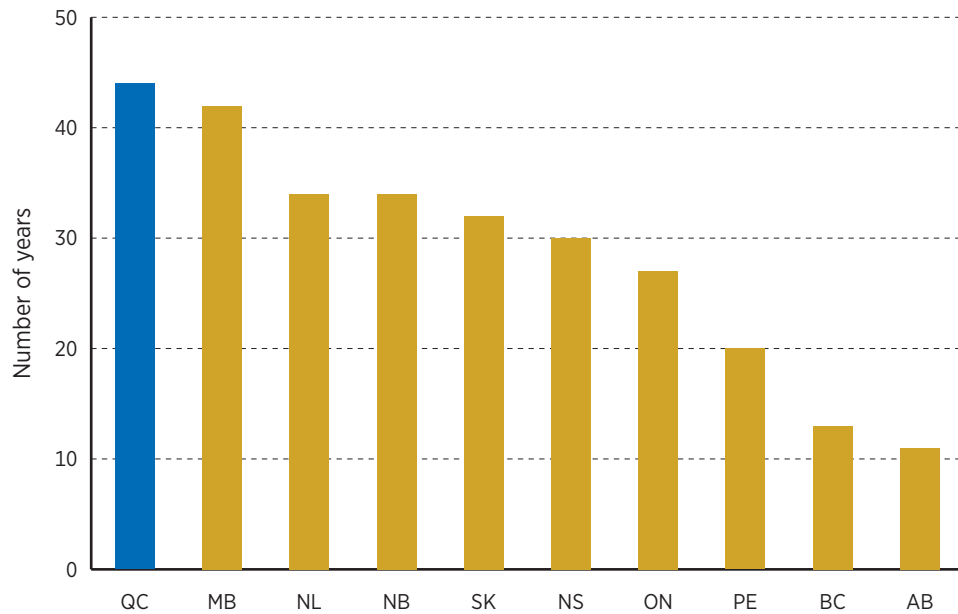
Source: Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Fourth, more people have left Ontario than most Canadians and particularly Ontarians are probably aware. Ontario has consistently experienced negative migration every year since 2003/04. Indeed, no other province including Quebec recorded as large a negative migration over the period from 2003/04 to 2014/15 as Ontario, which lost 142,514 residents to other provinces; over this period, Quebec experienced a loss of 101,497. Most Canadians who migrated between provinces over this period ended up in Alberta or British Columbia.

Figure 3 illustrates the number of years each of the provinces recorded negative migration over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15 period (44 years). Quebec is the only province to lose residents every year over this time period. Manitoba ranks second, with negative migration in 42 of the 44 years of this time period. Alberta—11 years of losses—ranks lowest and British Columbia—12 years of losses—second lowest.

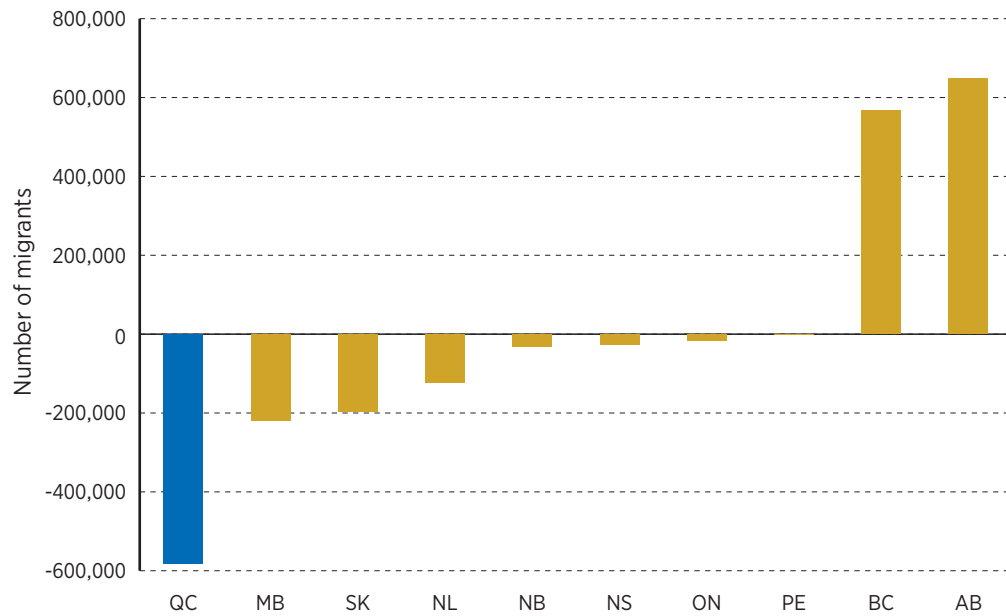
Finally, to give absolute migration numbers, figure 4 depicts the cumulative net migration of each of the provinces over from 1971/72 to 2014/15. Quebec clearly experienced the largest negative migration of residents over this period, losing a total of 582,470 residents. The next largest loss was recorded by Manitoba with a negative migration over the period of 220,415 residents, less than half the number of Quebec. Alberta and British Columbia were the only two provinces to record positive migration over this period: 648,810 and 567,694, respectively. Prince Edward Island (−171) experienced balanced migration over the time period wherein losses in some years were largely offset by gains in others.

Figure 3: Number of years with negative migration, by province, 1971/72–2014/15 (44 years)



Source: Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Figure 4: Net cumulative interprovincial migration, 1971/72–2014/15



Source: Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Migration—Controlling for Population

The preceding section ignores the size of the population of each of the provinces; this section incorporates the size of the provincial populations to calculate net interprovincial migration per 1,000 residents. [Figure 5](#) replicates the data presented in figure 1, but controls for the size of the underlying population of Quebec.

The pattern of losses mirrors that of figure 1: on a population basis, net outflows from Quebec spiked in 1977/78 reaching 7.2 people per 1,000 population. [\[7\]](#) The second spike in losses, which occurred in 1996/97, saw net outflows reach 2.4 people per 1,000 population, well below the 1977/78 peak. Similarly, the losses observed in 2006/07 (1.7 people per 1,000 population) and again in 2014/15 (1.8 people per 1,000 population) did not reach the level experienced in 1996/97 (2.4/1,000), let alone the level of 1977/78. [\[8\]](#)

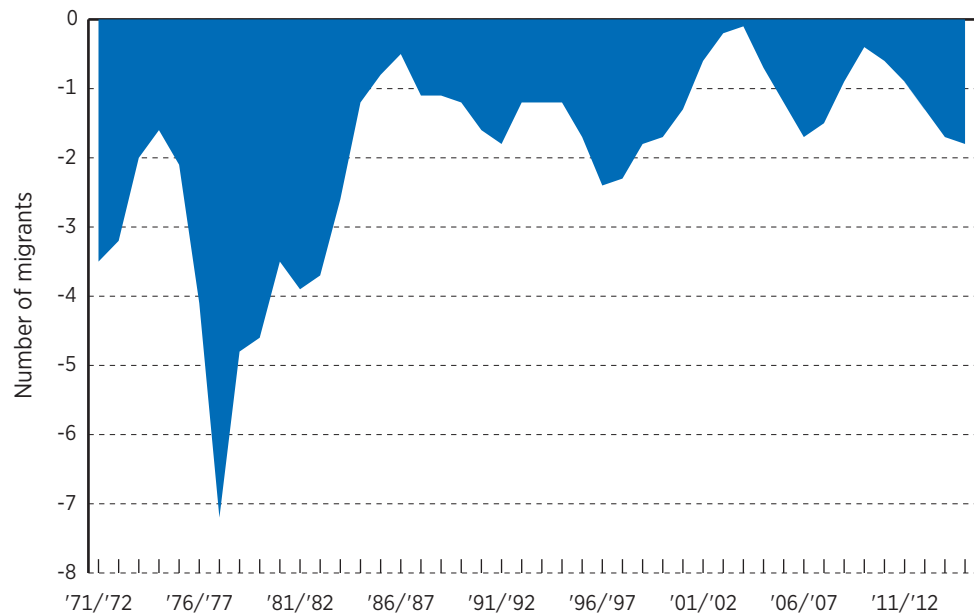
[Figure 6](#) shows the cumulative migration of the provinces from 1971/72 to 2014/15, relative to the provinces' 2015 population. [\[9\]](#) The province of Newfoundland & Labrador recorded the largest cumulative loss of residents from net migration at 23.1% of its 2015 population. Newfoundland & Labrador was followed by the prairie provinces of Saskatchewan (−17.3%) and Manitoba (−17.0%). While Quebec recorded the largest *absolute* loss of residents (figure 4), it ranks fourth for cumulative negative migration as a share of its 2015 population. Specifically, Quebec lost 7.0% of its 2015 population to net migration over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15. Only Alberta (15.5%) and British Columbia (12.1%) gained people through migration over this period.

[\[7\]](#) Readers should note that 7.2 people per 1,000 population is not the equivalent of 7.2% of the population. Indeed, on a percentage basis, net migration in Quebec was 0.72%.

[\[8\]](#) The Appendix illustrates the net migration, positive or negative, for all the provinces over the same time period, controlling for the size of the population.

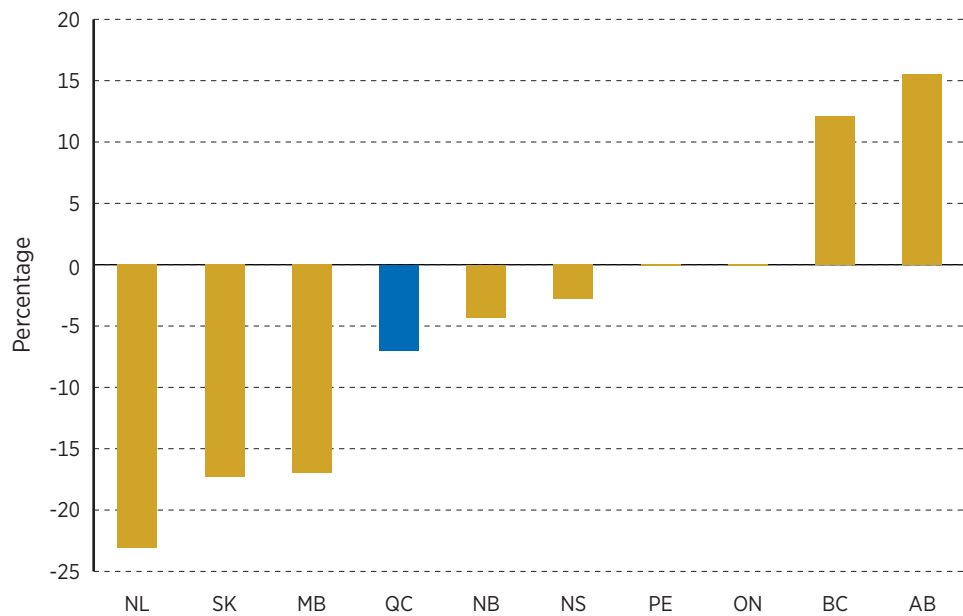
[\[9\]](#) Please note that the cumulative net migration data is presented in figure 6 as a percentage of the province's 2015 population rather than per 1,000 population as in figure 4.

Figure 5: Quebec's net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



Sources: Statistics Canada, table 051-0001: *Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*; table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Figure 6: Net cumulative interprovincial migration, 1971/72–2014/15, as a share of population, 2015



Sources: Statistics Canada, table 051-0001: *Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*; table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Migration—What Do the Component Numbers Tell Us?

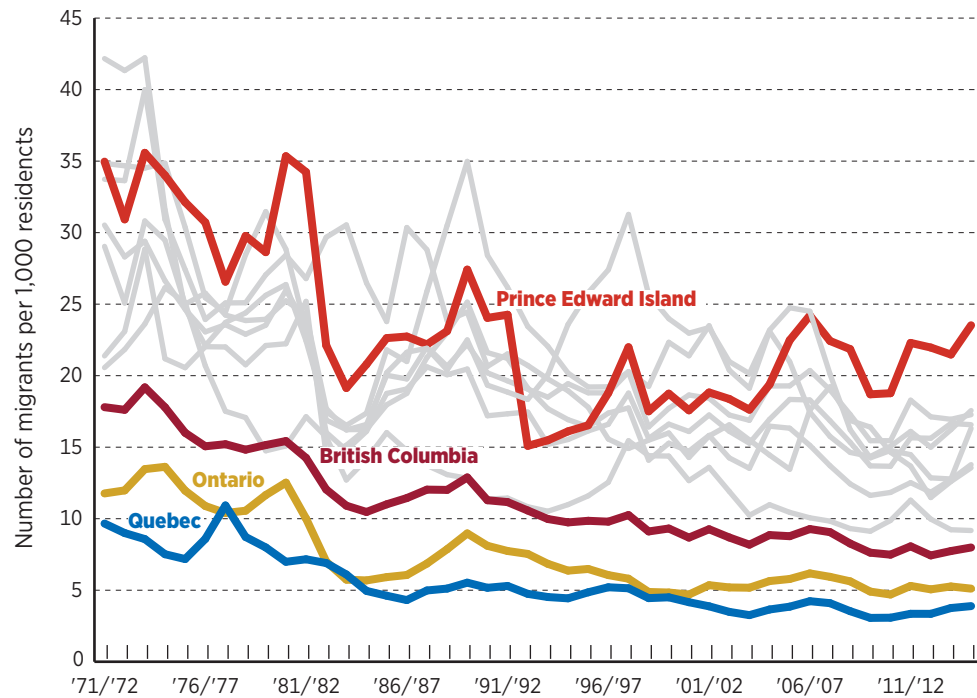
Many readers will no doubt have read or heard about the issue of migration from Quebec as presented above. The components underlying the migration data offer additional insight into Quebec's migration patterns and present what may appear to be contradictory evidence. This section presents the data for all of the provinces on total out-migration and in-migration. Recall that net interprovincial migration is the difference between these two component series: out-migration and in-migration.

Figure 7 plots the annual out-migration of residents, controlling for population, by province over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15. Quebec and, to a lesser extent, Ontario consistently experienced the lowest level of out-migration of any of the provinces over this time period. In the most recent year, 2014/15, for instance, Quebec experienced out-migration of 3.9 people per 1,000 population while Ontario experienced out-migration of 5.1 people per 1,000 population. The remaining eight provinces recorded out-migration of between 9.2 people per 1,000 population (British Columbia) to 23.5 people per 1,000 population (Prince Edward Island). In other words, the out-migration recorded in Quebec in 2014/15 was only 42.4% of the out-migration recorded by the third-ranked province, British Columbia.

It is interesting to note the lack of a pronounced spike in total out-migration in and around the time the Parti Québécois was elected in the 1970s. Recall that the net migration numbers, both absolute (figure 1) and controlled for population (figure 5) show a pronounced spike in net migration in 1977/78, one year after the election of the separatist PQ. However, the increase in total out-migration as depicted in figure 7 is much less prominent. Specifically, total out-migration from Quebec declines from 9.7 people per 1,000 population in 1971/72 to 7.2 people per 1,000 population in 1975/76, the year before the provincial election. Total out-migration increases to 8.6 per 1,000 people in 1976/77, the year of the election and further increases to 10.9 people per 1,000 population in 1977/78. It then begins a steady decline to roughly 5 people per 1,000 population by the early 1990s and 3.1 in 2010/11, when it began to grow again.

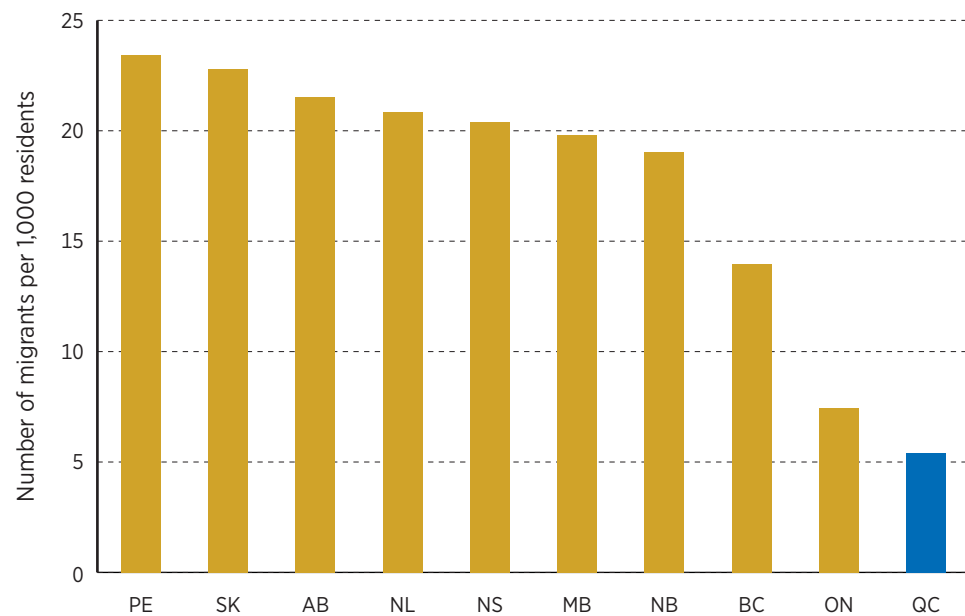
Another way of looking at total out-migration is by examining the annual averages, which are depicted in **figure 8**. Over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15, Quebec, on average, experienced out-migration of 5.4 people per 1,000 population. This was the lowest of any province over this period. Ontario ranked second with 7.4 people per 1,000 migrating out of the province, on average. Prince Edward Island recorded the highest average level of out-migration during this period: 23.4 people per 1,000 population.

Figure 7: Total out-migration per 1,000 residents, by province, 1971/72–2014/15



Sources: Statistics Canada, table 051-0001: *Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*; table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Figure 8: Average out-migration, by province, per 1,000 residents, 1971/72–2014/15



Sources: Statistics Canada, table 051-0001: *Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*; table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Judging by out-migration, Quebec had the most stable domestic population among the provinces from 1971/72 to 2014/15. This is consistent with previous empirical work showing that Francophone Quebecers are much less likely to migrate than non-Francophone Quebecers. [10] This recognition is important since 78.1% of Quebecers report French as their primary language. [11] Further, previous empirical work has also demonstrated that younger Anglophones and those with greater education are the most likely to migrate. [12]

Figure 9 presents the total annual in-migration data per 1,000 population, by province, for the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15. As is clearly shown, Quebec experienced the lowest level of in-migration, adjusted for population of any province in each year between 1971-72 and 2014-15. For example, in the most recent year of data, 2014/15, Quebec experienced in-migration of 2.1 people per 1,000 population. Ontario ranked second lowest, with in-migration of 4.5 people per 1,000 population, more than double the level of Quebec. Alberta, at the other end of the spectrum, recorded the highest level of in-migration with 20.5 people per 1,000 population in 2014/15. Alberta's in-migration level is almost 10 times the level recorded by Quebec.

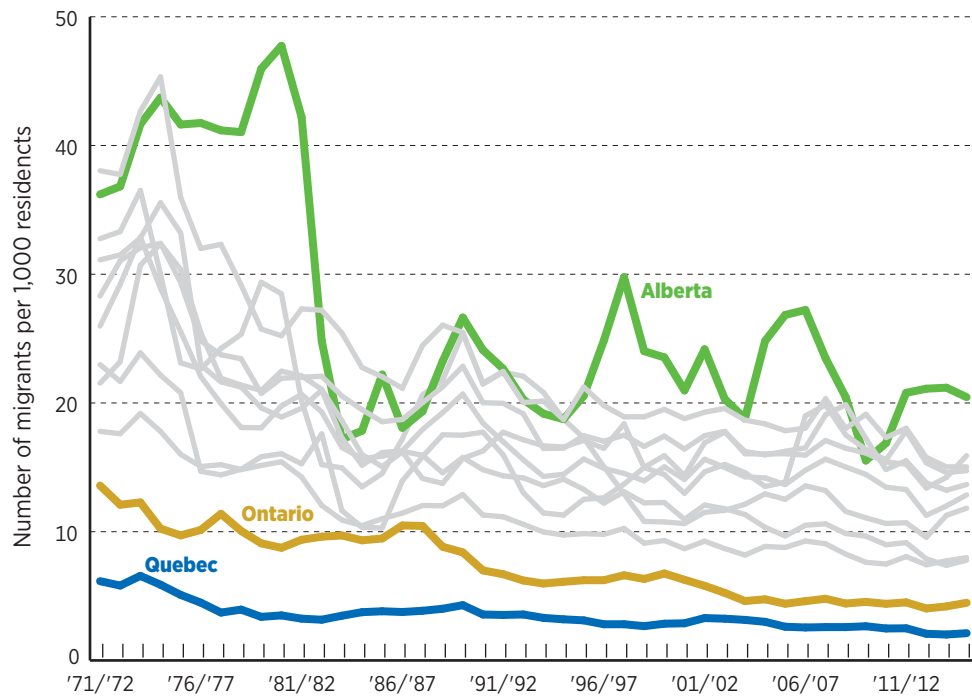
Figure 10 presents the average annual level of in-migration controlling for population, specifically per 1,000 population, for the provinces over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15. Quebec had the lowest average level of in-migration at 3.5 people per 1,000 population over this time period. Ontario recorded the second-lowest average level of in-migration over this period: 7.5 people per 1,000 population, which is more than double the average rate of Quebec. Alberta recorded the highest average annual level of in-migration, adjusted for population, over this period: 26.8 people per 1,000 population

[10] See André Bernard, Ross Finnie, and Benoît St. Jean (2008), *Interprovincial Mobility and Earnings, Perspectives On Labour and Income* 9, 10 (October): 15–25, Statistics Canada cat. no. 75-001-X, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/75-001-x2008110-eng.pdf>>; Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Brigitte Chavez, and Daniel Pereira (2010), *Portrait of Official-Language Minorities in Canada – Anglophones in Quebec*, Statistics Canada, Cat. no. 89-642-X – no. 002, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-642-x/89-642-x2010002-eng.pdf>>; Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage (2011), *A Portrait of the English-Speaking Communities in Quebec*, <[https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/com-com.nsf/vwapj/CANHER_June2011_eng.pdf/\\$file/CANHER_June2011_eng.pdf](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/com-com.nsf/vwapj/CANHER_June2011_eng.pdf/$file/CANHER_June2011_eng.pdf)>; and, William Floch and Johanne Pocock (2008), *The Socioeconomic Status of English-Speaking Quebec: Those Who Left and Those Who Stayed*, in R.Y. Bourhis, Ed., *The Vitality of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec: From Community Decline to Revival* (CEETUM, Université de Montréal): 35–61, <<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/633158/9530586/1290462691613/Bourhis+publication.pdf?token=aQplviBjln2aeDtEBTdrSnmco0%3D>>.

[11] Statistics Canada (2012), *Focus on Geography Series, 2011 Census: Province of Quebec*, <<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-pr-eng.cfm?Lang=eng&GC=24>>.

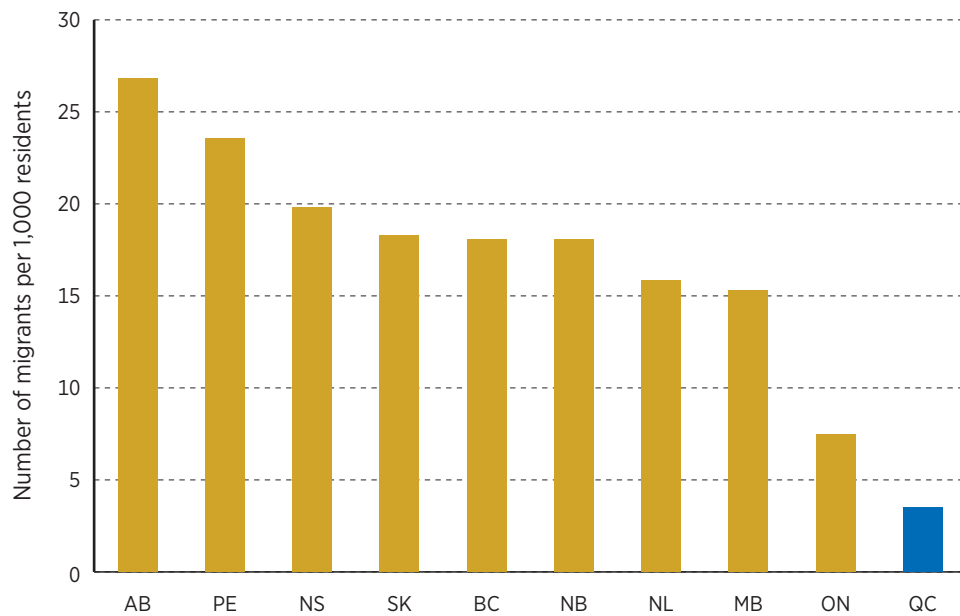
[12] See Corbeil, Chavez, and Pereira (2010), *Portrait of Official-Language Minorities in Canada*; and Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage (2011), *A Portrait of the English-Speaking Communities in Quebec*.

Figure 9: Total in-migration per 1,000 residents, by province, 1971/72–2014/15



Sources: Statistics Canada, table 051-0001: *Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*; table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

Figure 10: Average in-migration, by province, per 1,000 residents, 1971/72–2014/15



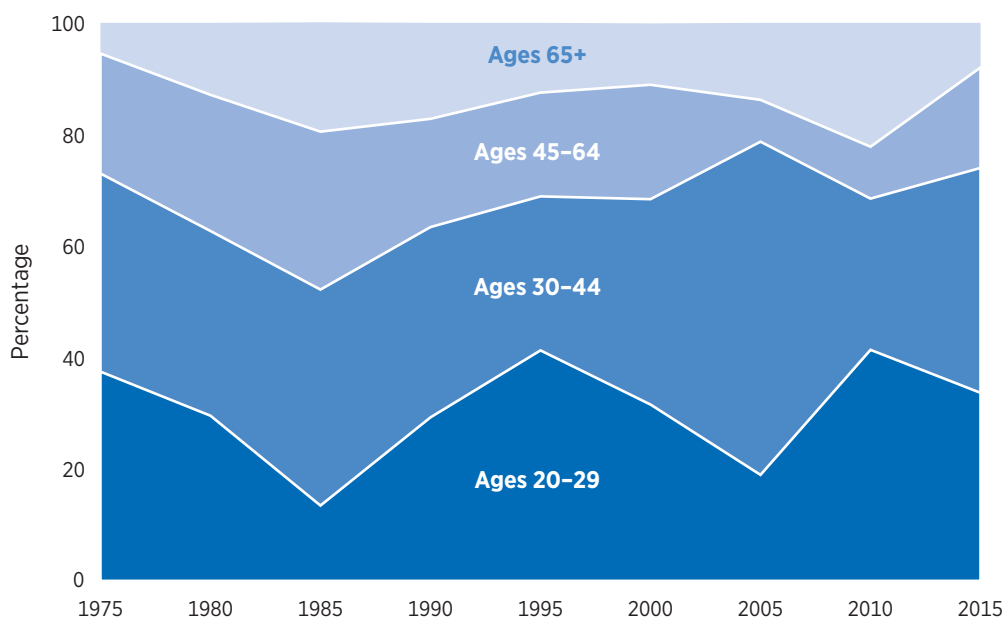
Sources: Statistics Canada, table 051-0001: *Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*; table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

The difference between the average annual in-migration of 3.5 people per 1,000 population (lowest in Canada) and the average annual out-migration noted above of 5.4 people per 1,000 population (again the lowest in Canada) is what produces the average annual loss of 1.9 people per 1,000 population in Quebec through interprovincial migration. This rate, when coupled with the fact Quebec had roughly 28% of Canada's population in 1972 translates into an outflow of 582,470 over the last 44 years. Compared to its total population, Quebec loses relatively few residents each year but it attracts only minimal migration from other Canadian provinces. Indeed, over the 44-year period, the Atlantic provinces had almost twice as many in-migrants (1,868,104) as Quebec (1,069,306) on a population base that is less than a third of Quebec's.

Understanding the Age Structure of Quebec's Migration

This section of the paper examines the age structure of Quebec's negative migration over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15. **Figure 11** presents the share of Quebec's migration by age category at five-year intervals between 1974/75 and 2014/15. Four age cohorts were used in the analysis. The first group, aged 20 to 29, includes individuals still in school completing their education as well as many who would just be starting their careers. The next age cohort, 30–44, encompasses those workers still in the early stages of their careers. The third cohort, those aged 45 to 64, includes workers in the prime of their careers. The final age cohort consists of all those over the age of 65. [13]

Figure 11: Age distribution of Quebec's net interprovincial migration at five-year intervals, 1975–2015



Note: We chose to focus on five-year intervals rather than show every year to make the figure easier to understand. Overall results are similar when we use all years. For example, the minimum ratio for the combined groups (ages 20–44) is 32.1% (compare 52.1% for the years shown in this figure); the maximum is 81.3% (compare 78.7%); and, most importantly, the average is almost the same (66.6% compared to 67.8%).

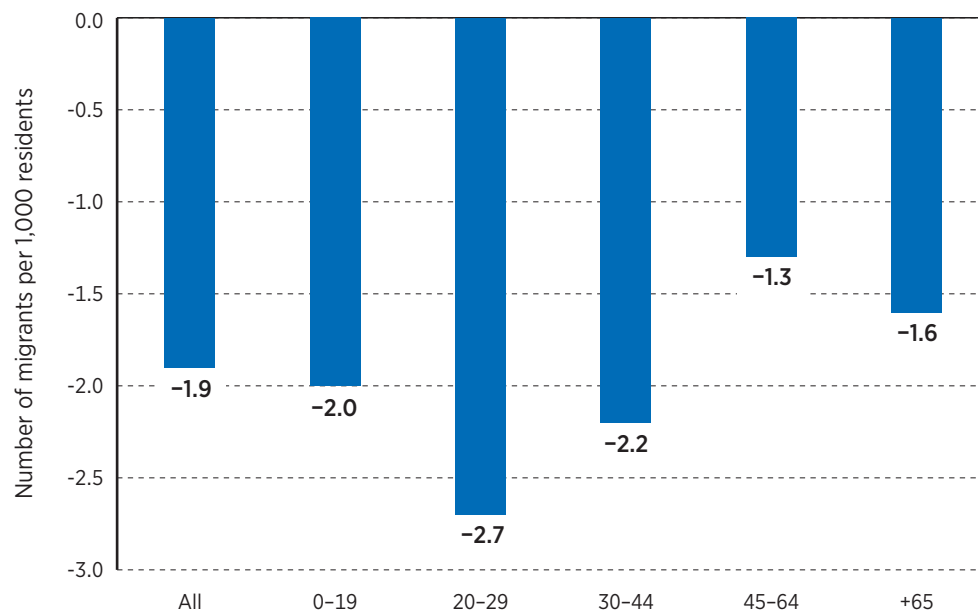
Source: Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

[13] Please note that the age group 0–19 has been excluded on the assumption that this age group's migration decisions are largely made by individuals (likely parents) in other age categories. This age group represents almost 30% of Quebec's migration between 1971/72 and 2014/15 and their departure reinforces the results described below.

The first two age cohorts, encompassing people between the ages of 20 and 44 consistently represent the lion's share of Quebec's out-migration (net). The smallest combined share for these two groups occurred in 1985 where they constituted 52.1% of out-migration. The largest share attributable to these two age groups occurred in 2005 when they represented 78.7% of Quebec's migration. The average share of total negative migration for these two groups for the periods covered in figure 11 was 67.8% or slightly more than two of every three Quebecers choosing to leave the province.

Figure 12 presents this data in a different manner by examining average migration-to-population ratios in Quebec by age group. As noted earlier, Quebec experienced an average negative migration of 1.9 people per 1,000 population between 1971/72 and 2014/15. As shown, the level of migration adjusted for population for the groups of those aged 20 to 29 (−2.7) and 30 to 44 (−2.2) age groups was greater than the average level (−1.9). Other provinces which have negative migration (net) also exhibit above-average rates of migration for the population aged 20 to 29. However, the ratio for people in the 30–44 age category is generally below average or even positive, which is distinctly different from Quebec's experience.

Figure 12: Average migration as a share of population in Quebec, by age group, 1971/72–2014/15

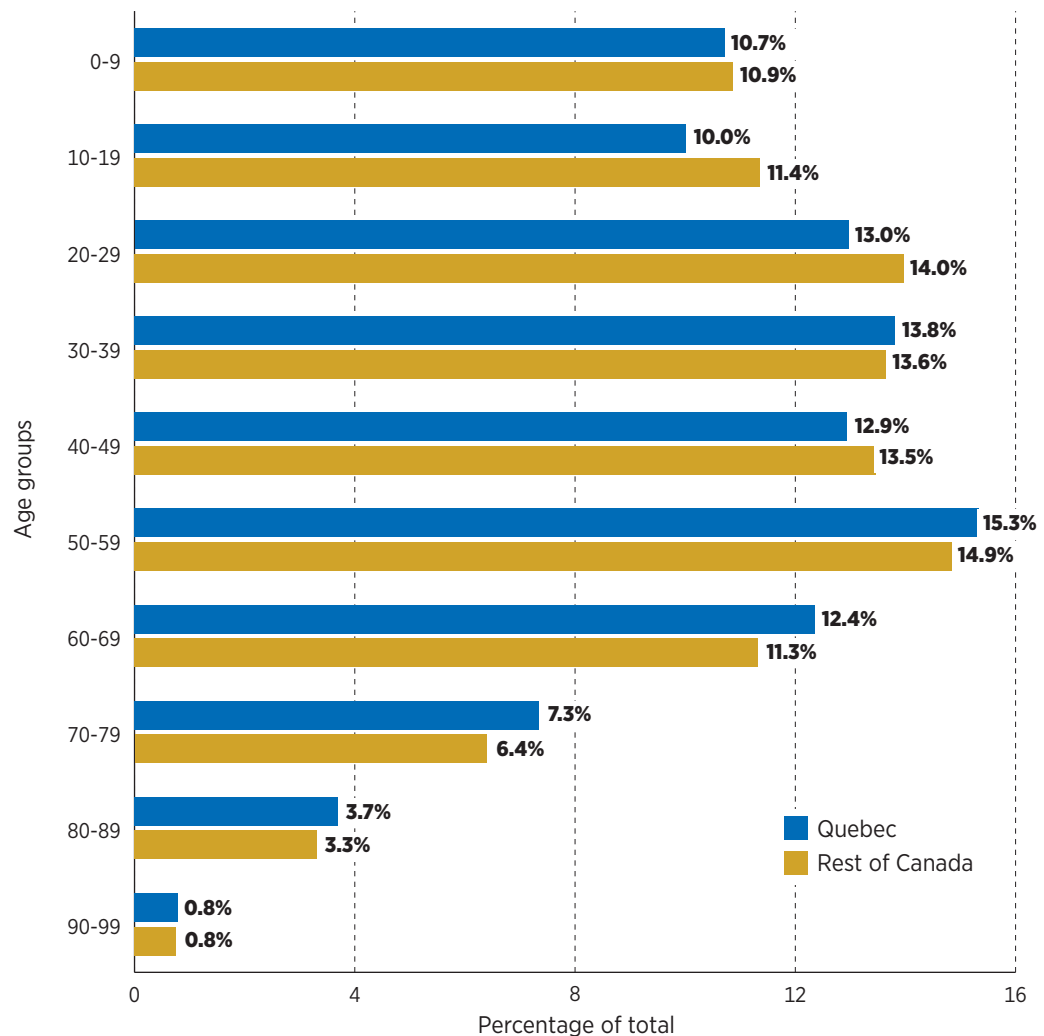


Source: Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

On the other hand, the average annual migration ratios recorded by the age groups 45–64 (−1.3) and over 65 (−1.6) were lower than the average. Simply put, younger Quebecers, and particularly those starting their working

careers, were the most likely to leave the province and, similarly, young people from other provinces starting their careers were least likely to move to Quebec if they migrated. This is one of the reasons that Quebec has an older population compared to the rest of the country. **Figure 13** depicts the age distribution of the population in Quebec compared to the rest of Canada for 2015. In every age category but one (30–39) for those under the age of 50, Quebec has a lower proportion than the rest of Canada. On the other hand, Quebec has a higher share of its population in every category above the age of 50 compared to the rest of the country. Clearly, Quebec’s migration patterns—namely that the younger tend to be those that migrate out of the province—have affected the province’s age distribution.

Figure 13: Age distribution of the population, Quebec compared to the rest of Canada, 2015



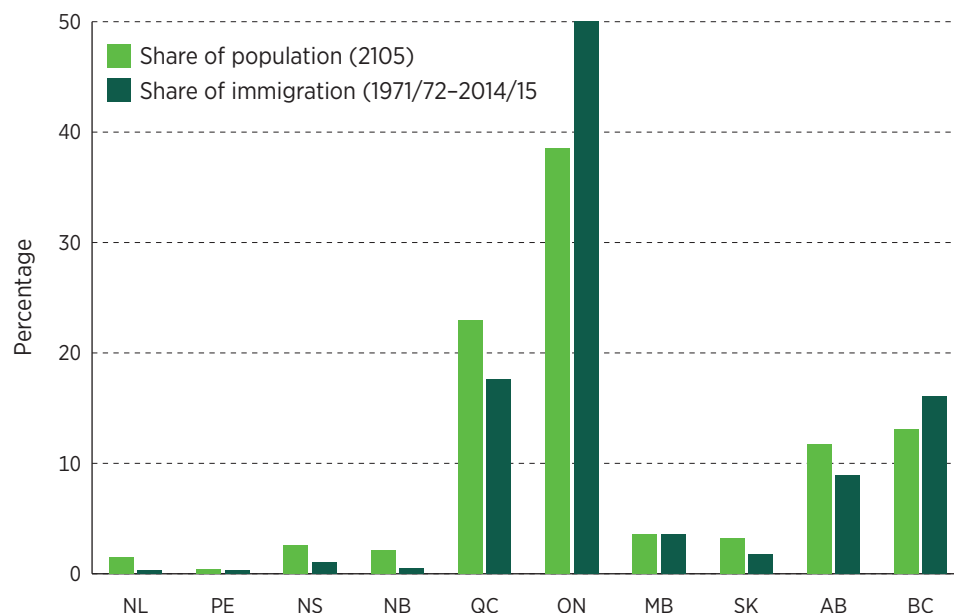
Source: Statistics Canada, table 051-0012: *Interprovincial migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*.

International Immigration

While beyond the scope of this paper, which examines domestic migration of residents within Canada, it is nonetheless useful to examine briefly the pattern of international immigration. The Cullen-Couture Agreement of 1978 [14] provided Quebec a unique if partial control over international immigration to the province. There is, therefore, often an intuitive argument that Quebec's migration may be influenced by this control over international immigration.

The actual immigration data, however, imply that Quebec is actually attracting less international immigration, as a share of total immigration, than its proportional population would predict. Figure 14 shows Quebec's share of Canada's population in 2015 (23.0%) compared to its share of international immigration over the period from 1971/72 to 2014/15 (17.6%). Simply put, Quebec like every other province except Ontario and British Columbia attracted relatively few international immigrants.

Figure 14: Share of international immigration, 1971/72–2014/15 compared to share of population, 2015



Sources: Statistics Canada, table 051-0001: *Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual*; table 051-0011: *International migrants, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces, and territories, annual*.

[14] For additional information, see: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2006), Chapter 6 (continued): Trail-Blazing Initiatives, *Forging Our Legacy: Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, 1900–1977*, <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/legacy/chap-6b.asp>> (archived); and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (1991), *Canada–Québec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens*, <<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/laws-policy/agreements/quebec/can-que.asp>>.

Conclusion

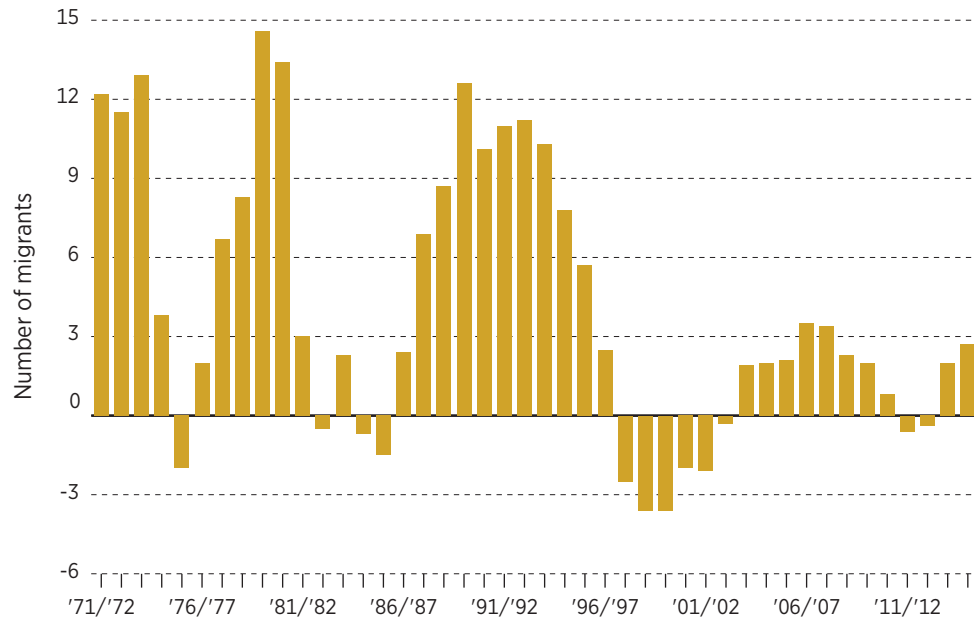
Quebec experienced the largest nominal outflow of residents (net of those moving to Quebec) of any province in the country between 1971/72 and 2014/15. As a share of the population, Quebec experienced the fourth largest negative migration of any province and the largest of any of the Big Four provinces, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia).

Interestingly, Quebec actually had the lowest level of total out-migration, adjusted for the size of its population, over the period examined. Indeed, only Ontario recorded a level of out-migration comparable to Quebec's over this time period. All of the other provinces experienced much higher levels of out-migration relative to their populations. However, Quebec's inability to attract migration to the province means that it has had a negative interprovincial migration rate in every year since 1971/72. No other province recorded as low a level of in-migration as Quebec during this period. For instance, Ontario, which had the second lowest level of in-migration (adjusted for population), experienced more than double the rate of total in-migration, on average, as Quebec over this time period.

Finally, Quebec's net out-migration is tilted towards the young and particularly those starting, or in the early stages of, their careers. This out-migration of the young has in part contributed to the older age structure of Quebec's population.

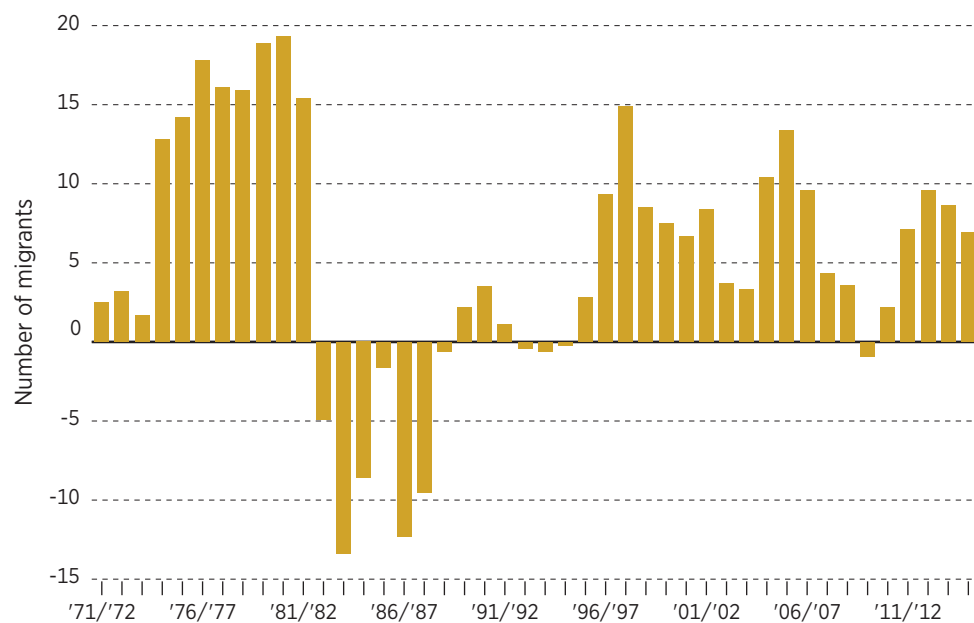
Appendix: Net Interprovincial Migration per 1,000 Population

British Columbia—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



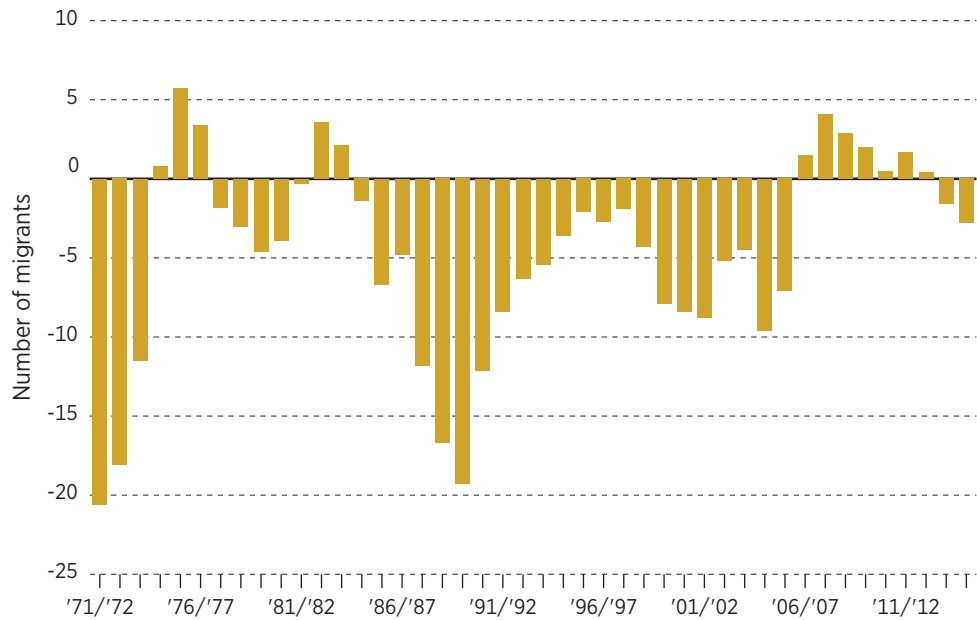
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Alberta—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



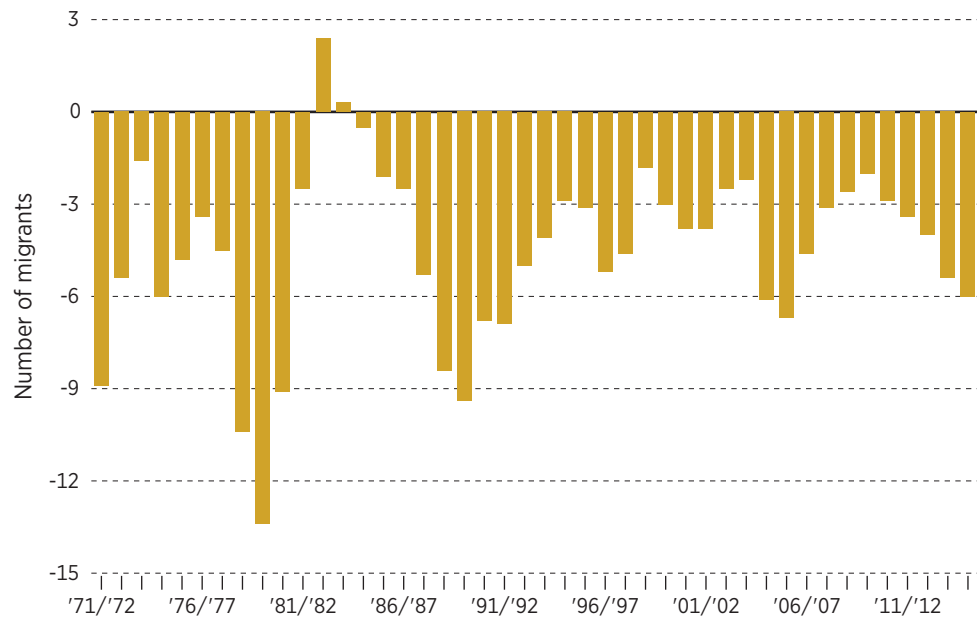
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Saskatchewan—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



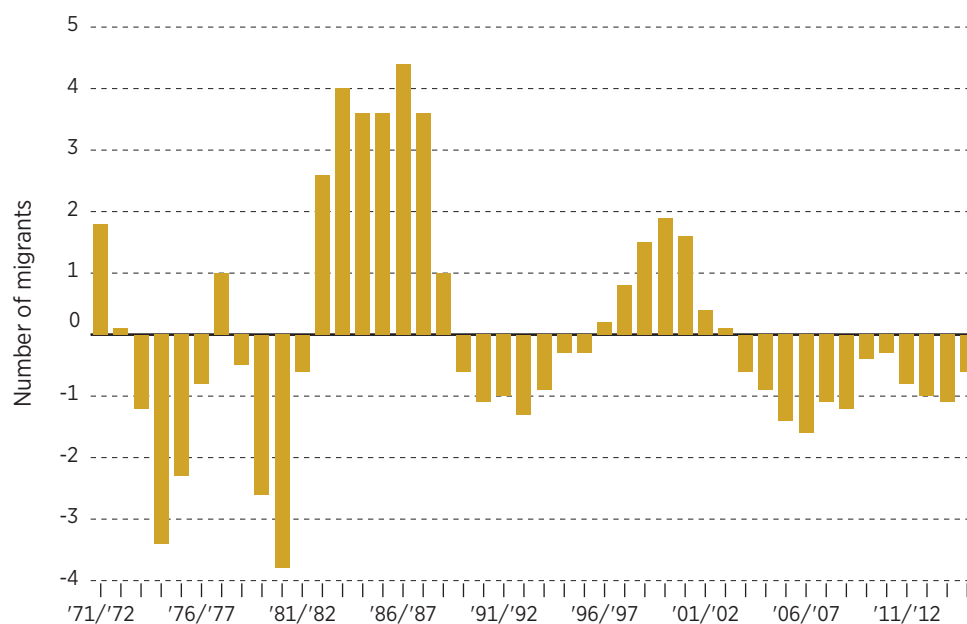
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Manitoba—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



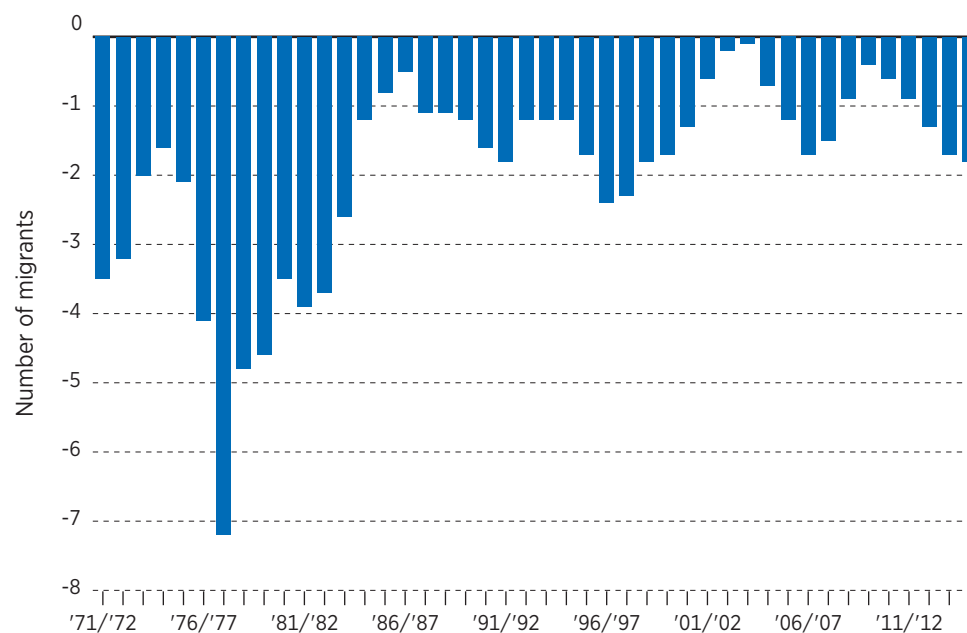
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Ontario—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



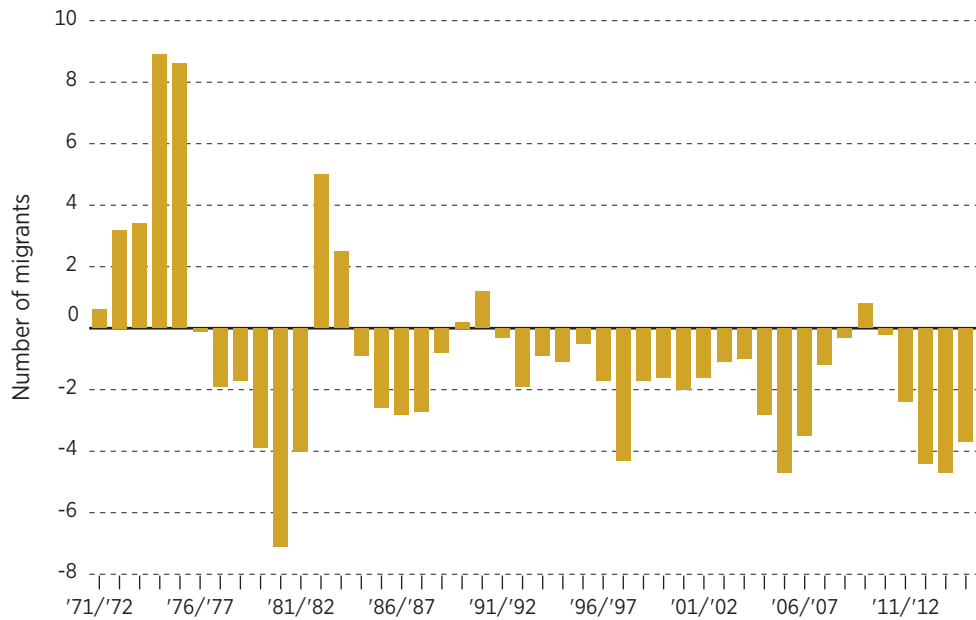
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Quebec—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



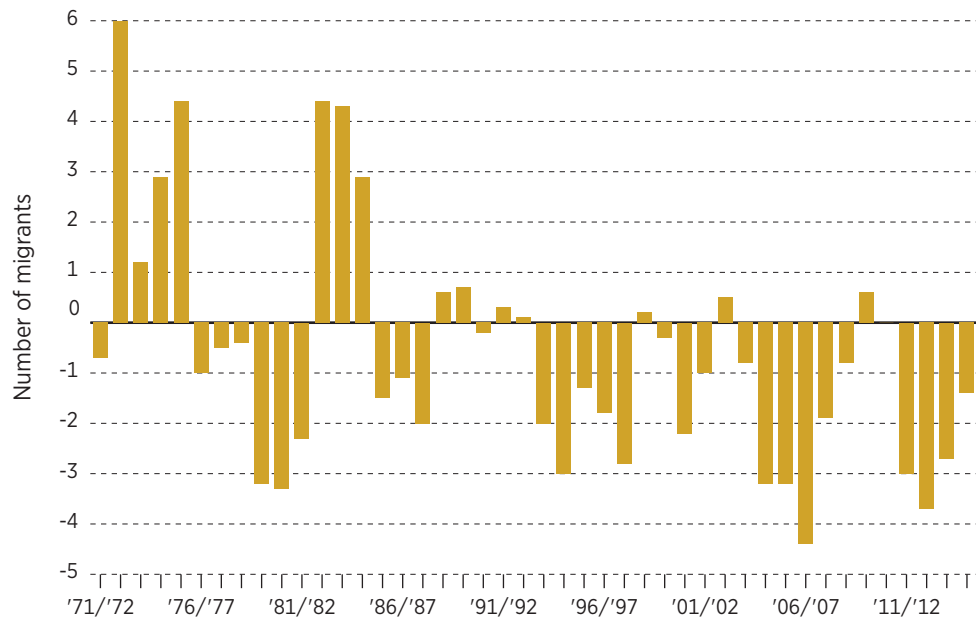
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

New Brunswick—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



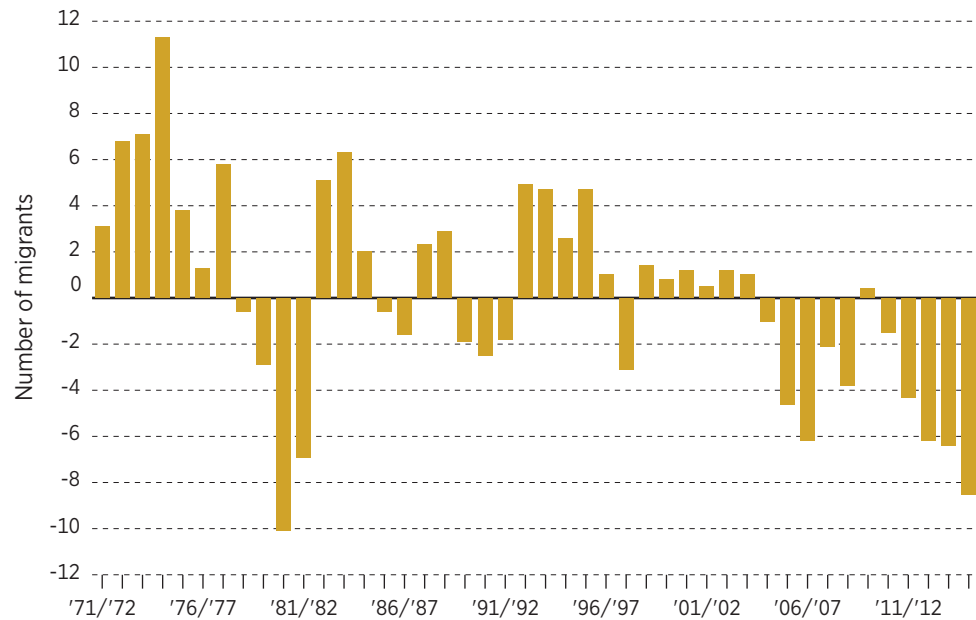
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Nova Scotia—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



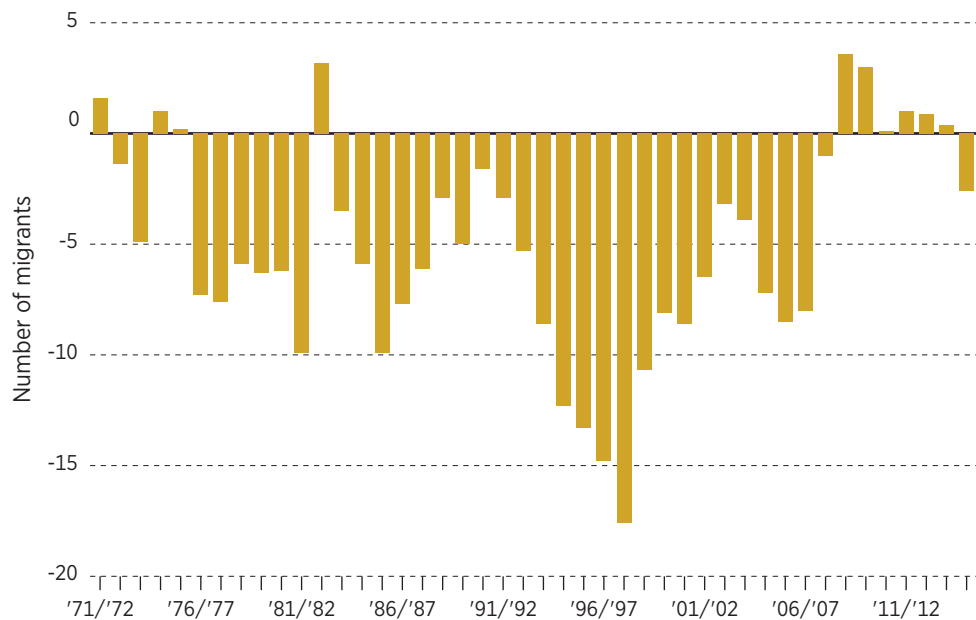
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Prince Edward Island—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

Newfoundland & Labrador—net interprovincial migration per 1,000 population, 1971/72–2014/15



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 (table 051-0012).

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