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# EMPLOYER ATTITUDES TOWARDS HIRING NEWCOMERS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

## REPORT SUMMARY

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# Context



- Atlantic Canada is facing a **population crisis** due to declining fertility rates, an aging population, and continued outmigration.



Increased immigration is one solution to this crisis.

- Atlantic Canada has the **lowest immigration and retention rates** in Canada, but the highest average population age in Canada.
- Because immigrants tend to reside in larger cities such as Montreal, Vancouver, or Toronto, and because of the remote nature of Atlantic Canada, there are fewer immigrants in the Atlantic provinces than elsewhere in Canada.



- Many international students end up leaving the region due to a **lack of job opportunities** that match their professional qualifications and career aspirations.
- The most important factor in determining immigrant retention is employment.





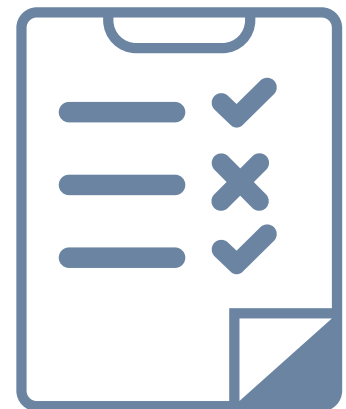
# Study



- This study investigated **attitudes, perceptions, and experiences** of employers in Atlantic Canada to better understand the opportunities and challenges associated with the integration of newcomers in the regional labour market.



- **801 employers were surveyed** across the Atlantic Provinces to gauge their views on labour market conditions in Atlantic Canada, and their attitudes towards hiring newcomers and international students.



# Key Findings



- The top reasons for hiring difficulties overall were **lack of applicants**, lack of applicants with the necessary experience, and lack of applicants with necessary skills.
- **53% of employers** who received applications from immigrants and international students **hired immigrants and international students**; this percentage is much higher than the one reported 15 years ago.
- An overwhelming majority of the employers surveyed (**88%**) had **positive experiences with immigrant workers**. The more experience an employer had with immigrants, the more positive their attitude towards hiring immigrants was.
- The main reason employers had positive attitudes towards immigrants was because they thought that the immigrants they had previously hired were **hard-working, skilled, and reliable**.
- Employers' main concerns were found to be limited to official language proficiency, cultural differences, immigrants' and international students' unfamiliarity with workplace norms and practices, difficulty in evaluating immigrants' foreign credentials and work experience, and concerns about retention.

# Implications



- To facilitate the social and economic integration and retention of immigrants and international students to Atlantic Canada, and support the long-term economic prosperity of the region, a number of policy and practice recommendations have been made based on the main findings of the study:

1. A transparent and effective immigration system;
2. Supportive employers;
3. Welcoming communities;
4. Affordable housing, accessible health care and public transportation systems;
5. Strong service delivery programs from immigrant service organizations

- Immigration **policies** that meet the needs of local employers should be developed and improved
- The government should provide transparent and easy-to-understand **information** about the immigration process.

# Implications

- **Intercultural training** for both immigrants and employers should be considered to facilitate workplace communication and enhance immigrants' organizational performance and productivity.
- **Changing workplace practices** may better accommodate the needs of immigrants, and subsequently improve immigrant retention.
- As the survey finds that small- to medium-sized businesses and those located in rural areas are less likely to hire immigrants, they should be prioritized to encourage immigrant-hiring through various supports, including more **immigration information, funding, and personnel**.
- The employers surveyed suggested that **government, settlement agencies, NGOs, and educational institutions** should do more to support immigrants' work and family life, including spousal employment, children's education, accessible and affordable housing and healthcare, and improvement of social and community connection activities.

