

# 2023 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Planning of Immigration to Québec  
for the 2024-2027 Period

## Consultation Booklet

Ministère de l'Immigration,  
de la Francisation et de l'Intégration

This document was written by the Direction de la planification de l'immigration of the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration in collaboration with many of the Ministry's administrative units.

This document and all of the documentation prepared for the public consultation can be viewed on the National Assembly website: [www.assnat.qc.ca](http://www.assnat.qc.ca).

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# Message from the Premier of Québec



As the Premier of Québec, my primary responsibility is to protect and promote the French language. For many years now, we have witnessed a serious decline in our common language, especially in the Montréal region. It is our duty to reverse this trend. Our immigration policy plays an important role in this regard, and this is why we are proposing to make sound knowledge of French a mandatory prerequisite for granting a Québec Selection Certificate to economic immigrants. Our goal is for the proportion of people who know French among the principal applicants of this immigration class to quickly rise to 96%. This is unprecedented and extremely ambitious, but necessary to protect the future of French in Québec.

In the current economic context, immigration is also a lever, although not the only lever, for filling vacant positions, especially in strategic sectors. We have to focus on immigration that is more aligned with our needs in order to fill vacant positions in all the regions of Québec. To achieve this, we must step up efforts related to the regionalization of immigration, especially as this strategy will also help effectively integrate newcomers into Québec culture.

It is essential for the number of permanent immigrants that we accept in the coming years, as well as the increased presence of temporary workers, foreign students and refugee claimants, to take our accommodation capacities into account. Our goal is therefore to increase the number of immigrants chosen by Québec based on our conditions and in keeping with our needs.

Foreign students who are graduates of our French-language programs appear to be the ideal candidates. As these people have a Québec diploma, are young and have already lived here, in French, for several years, they constitute an exceptional pool for recruiting new Quebecers.

For our nation to be able to advance into the future and for our new compatriots to be able to fully integrate into Québec culture, proficiency in French is critical, as is providing a good match for our economic needs and putting down roots in all regions of Québec. This is what our government plans to implement in the coming years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "François Legault". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**François Legault**

Premier of Québec

# Message from the Minister of Immigration, Francization and Integration



To describe the orientations we are proposing for immigration, I like to use the letter “Y” as an analogy. One of the branches represents the economy and the workforce we need, while the other represents the French language and francization. These two branches must converge. And where they meet, they form the solid trunk on which our immigration policy must stand. A trunk that combines our workforce needs and our French-language needs. A trunk that must take root in all the regions of Québec.

Immigration is a complex responsibility, but it signifies wealth for Québec. Our nation can be proud of our long tradition of welcoming people from the four corners of the earth, who have indelibly marked Québec culture and contributed to our collective advancement. I have the greatest respect for these people who have decided to leave their countries of origin to invest themselves in immigration. They choose Québec as the place where they can build a better life, for themselves and for their children. This process requires courage, determination and a fair measure of resilience.

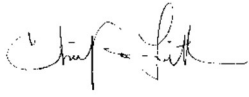
Since becoming Minister of Immigration, Francization and Integration, I have organized regional meetings across Québec to talk with political, economic and social stakeholders and learn about their expectations and the challenges they face and to draw up a portrait of the situation. This consultation, which deals with planning permanent immigration in Québec for the period from 2024 to 2027, is part of the same process and aims to establish a solid basis for our immigration policy.

We plan for 96% of the principal applicants selected for economic immigration to be people who know French, an unprecedented goal. Immigration has the potential to be a solution for the decline of French, and our government will do everything in its power in the coming years to make this happen.

The implementation of Francisation Québec, a single-window government service point for French-language learning services, will make them more easily accessible. This is a major step for ensuring that everyone who joins us is able to communicate easily in French.

For immigration to more equitably benefit all regions of Québec, we must enhance our regionalization efforts. Workforce needs that newcomers can relieve in certain strategic fields are being felt all across Québec. The regions of Québec offer immigrants a quality of life that allows them to integrate, live and work in French while contributing to the momentum of the regional economies. To take full advantage of this, we have to ramp up efforts to strengthen our accommodation capacities, particular in terms of housing.

The orientations proposed in this consultation document will evolve based on the consultation, and that is why I am calling on civil society as a whole, as well as the groups concerned, to offer their opinions. Your participation will allow us to design and implement an immigration policy that reflects the aspirations and needs of Quebecers.



**Christine Fréchette**

Minister of Immigration, Francization and Integration

### 3. Introduction

In Québec, immigration serves three main goals. First, it provides important economic input that expands the labour pool and meets needs in strategic sectors. It is also a humanitarian duty for Québec to welcome people in need, including refugees fleeing war and persecution. Finally, immigration is a source of cultural richness that has historically helped shape Québec culture and that will continue to enrich it in the future.

Since 1991, with the signature of the Canada-Québec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens, the Québec government has conducted multi-year immigration planning exercises. It establishes multi-year orientations for the number of permanent immigrants who can be admitted, as well as the makeup of the group Québec wants to receive in the years to come. Since 2004, these exercises have been enshrined in the *Québec Immigration Act*, which stipulates that a general consultation by parliamentary committee be held on the proposed multi-year orientations before they are approved.

As the only Francophone state in North America, Québec faces unique linguistic and cultural challenges and has the duty to proudly defend this particularity. For many years, a marked decline of French has been observed in Québec, particularly in the region of metropolitan Montréal. With the entire government mobilized to protect and enhance the status of French in Québec, its immigration policy must also embrace this goal and help reverse the decline of the French language.

One of the priorities for the future of immigration in Québec is regionalization. Although the vast majority of newcomers settle in metropolitan Montréal, economic and demographic needs are being felt in all the regions, which are all able to offer successful cultural and linguistic integration. Efforts to regionalize immigration have increased in recent years, and they will continue, in order to fully achieve this objective in the future.

Furthermore, Québec receives a great many temporary workers and international students. Although temporary immigration is not the focus of this consultation, we cannot ignore it in the multi-year plan for permanent immigration, as Québec's integration capacity is not unlimited.

This consultation booklet begins by presenting Québec's responsibilities in terms of immigration (Section 4), the situation of French in Québec (Section 5) and the situation of the labour market with regard to immigration (Section 6). Section 7 provides a portrait of immigration in Québec, and Section 8 presents government immigration actions in recent years and those to come. Section 9 outlines current immigration issues in Québec. The orientations proposed for the multi-year immigration plan for 2024 to 2027 are set out in Section 10, and the results of the last multi-year plan are provided in the appendix.

## 4. Québec's responsibilities in terms of immigration

Under the Canadian Constitution, responsibility for immigration is shared between the federal government and the provinces. The Canada-Québec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens (Canada-Québec Accord), which came into effect in 1991, structures the division of responsibilities between Québec and Canada.

The Canada-Québec Accord gives Québec full control of its responsibilities in terms of planning permanent immigration levels, selection and the welcome, francization and settlement of immigrants. In these fields, it defines policies and programs, enacts laws, establishes regulations and sets its own standards.

This Accord reflects the Québec government's intention to establish immigration and integration that uphold the distinctive character of the Québec nation. It recognizes the Québec government's authority in terms of reception services for immigrants and in terms of the linguistic, cultural and economic integration of permanent residents in Québec. The federal government withdrew from the provision of these services and gives Québec financial compensation to enable it to implement its own programs.

In Québec, there are two components of immigration: permanent immigration and temporary immigration. Planning admission volumes only concerns permanent immigration, but the analysis of Québec's accommodation capacities must also take temporary immigration and requests for asylum into account.

### Permanent immigration

Permanent immigration is comprised of three main classes: economic immigration, family class and humanitarian immigration.

Permanent immigration should contribute to the achievement of various objectives, such as the prosperity of Québec, the longevity and vitality of French, the vibrancy of the regions and Québec's international reputation. Immigration also contributes to the diversity of Québec culture. The characteristics, competencies, aspirations and varied paths of people who want to settle in Québec are a true source of wealth for the Québec nation.

## Economic immigration

The selection of candidates for economic immigration is the exclusive responsibility of Québec, which establishes its orientations based on its societal choices and its reading of the socio-economic environment. Economic immigration seeks primarily to meet Québec's needs in order to enhance its prosperity. People admitted in this class – skilled workers and business people – are selected based on certain socio-professional characteristics geared toward rapid integration into Québec society, the workforce and the business community.

## Family class

The family class allows Canadian citizens or permanent residents to sponsor a close relative so that this person and their accompanying family members can settle in Québec. Canada is responsible for determining eligibility and establishing the related selection criteria.

Québec is responsible for examining the undertaking applications submitted by people who live in its territory, establishing the financial standards for evaluating their financial capacity, tracking undertakings and determining their duration.

## Humanitarian immigration

Humanitarian immigration allows people in a special hardship situation to settle in Québec. It expresses Québec's international solidarity by meeting international obligations stemming, in part, from the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This class includes:

- ▶ Refugees selected abroad, government-assisted refugees and refugees with community sponsorship
- ▶ People whose refugee status is recognized after an asylum application made in the territory
- ▶ People selected for humanitarian considerations or under special programs

For people who apply for the recognition of refugee status from abroad, Canada determines those that meet the definition of refugee under the Convention. For these people, Québec sets its own selection criteria.

For people who are already in Canada when they apply for asylum, the application is assessed by the federal authorities. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) determines whether the applicant can be recognized as a refugee under the Convention or protected by the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (S.C. 2001, c. 27).

## Temporary immigration

Temporary immigration is comprised primarily of temporary foreign workers and international students. The number of temporary foreign workers who come to Québec depends on the changing needs of Québec employers.

People who come to meet the workforce needs of Québec businesses can, if they meet the requirements, including those related to knowledge of French, apply for permanent selection to settle in Québec, particularly through the Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ – Québec experience program). This option is also offered to people who earn degrees in Québec that meet the program's criteria.

### **Box 1: Temporary immigration programs**

Two temporary immigration programs allow foreign workers to enter Québec: the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the International Mobility Program (IMP). Foreign students come to Québec through the Foreign Student Program (FSP). The TFWP and the FSP are federal programs administered jointly with Québec, while the IMP is under the exclusive authority of the federal government.

In recent years, flexibility measures have been brought in to facilitate the arrival of temporary foreign workers in order to meet the workforce needs of Québec businesses.

The new International Mobility Program Plus (IMP+) came into effect in 2022. By granting an open work permit with a maximum term of three years, it speeds up the applicants' arrival. To qualify, applicants must hold a Québec Selection Certificate, issued under the Regular Skilled Worker Program (RSWP) or the permanent immigration pilot program for workers in the artificial intelligence, information technologies and visual effects sectors, and they must live outside Québec while they wait for permanent residence.

To fulfil workforce needs quickly and effectively, the TFWP has also been relaxed, in particular to increase the number of temporary foreign workers per workplace in certain sectors and to add certain less-specialized occupations in high demand to the list of occupations eligible for simplified processing. The federal government has also agreed to create a bridging open work permit (BOWP), under the IMP, for skilled workers with a Québec Selection Certificate staying in the territory as temporary foreign workers. These people must already be waiting for their permanent residence application to be processed by the federal government. In other words, they must have received a regular acknowledgment of receipt for their application attesting that it is being processed. The BOWP is for a maximum term of two years and can be renewed for 12 months.

## Permanent admission of immigrants

The federal government is responsible for admitting immigrants to Canada. It grants the status of permanent resident, particularly to people who have been selected by Québec. Under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (S.C. 2001, c. 27), a person cannot be admitted to Canada if they do not meet the province's selection criteria, especially for reasons related to health, State security and crime.

## Relationship with the federal government

As stipulated in the Canada-Québec Accord, the federal government cannot ignore Québec's immigration objectives.

The Québec government has clearly expressed its intention for immigration to become one of the solutions implemented to counter the decline of French, particularly in Montréal. It is counting on the federal government to demonstrate increased sensitivity in this regard, in part by increasing the admission rates of Francophone African students. Improvements were observed at the end of 2022, but as this is a strategic recruitment pool, special attention must be paid to it by federal services, to increase the percentage of applications accepted.

In the same vein, Québec also expects federal immigration guidelines to be more cautious about their impact on the only Francophone nation in North America. In this sense, the announcement of the federal intention to welcome 500,000 permanent immigrants a year seems to have been made without considering the impact this policy would have on the situation of Québec within Canada and the potential imbalances within the federation. It is perplexing that, in 2022, Canada welcomed a million immigrants, more than ever before in history. A demographic change of this size raises important issues and requires reflection and discussion, as well as advance planning on the part of the governments involved, including Québec.

As this document will show, temporary immigration has expanded in the last few years. More temporary foreign workers and foreign students have entered Québec, not considering the significant increase in the number of refugee claimants. Although this type of immigration is not the subject of this consultation, the increase in temporary immigration has consequences that will influence the choices that Québec has to make in terms of permanent immigration. Québec is within its rights to expect the federal government to be sensitive to the consequences of its choices as regards Québec's socio-linguistic and economic balance. Even though Québec has received accommodations in certain programs, we can expect the government of Canada to do more and do it better.

It is with this in mind that Québec is seeking complete control over the management of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, to adjust the parameters and ensure a better match with the permanent economic immigration programs. While pursuing this goal, Québec is continuing its efforts to simplify and improve the management of this program in the short term.

## 5. The situation of French in Québec

### Progression

As French is the only official language in Québec, its vitality must be supported due to its situation in the majority Anglophone continent of North America. The vast majority of indicators in the most recent censuses point in the direction of an accelerated decline of French in recent years.

The Office québécois de la langue française has drawn several findings from the censuses of 2016 and 2021<sup>1</sup>, particularly about French as mother tongue (from 77.1% to 74.8%) and about the changes in linguistic groups based on the language spoken at home:

- ▶ The proportion of people who usually speak French at home has declined from 79.0% to 77.5% in Québec and from 49.8% to 48.3% on the island of Montréal.
- ▶ The proportion of people who usually speak English at home has increased, from 9.7% to 10.4%.
- ▶ The proportion of people who usually speak a language other than French or English at home also increased, from 7.3% to 7.9%.

Of the Allophone population of Québec, 18.2% say they regularly speak French at home, compared with 11.1% for English.

Within the immigrant population, the proportion of people who say they usually speak French at home increased between 2016 and 2021, rising from 33.2% to 36.4%. But the inverse trend was observed in resident and non-permanent resident populations (from 44.2% to 39.7%).<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the declared knowledge of French and English in the census, the proportion of Quebecers who say they can carry on a conversation in French declined slightly between 2016 and 2021 (from 94.3% to 93.7%). Of these, three-quarters of people whose mother tongue is a language other than French and English (75.3%) said in 2021 that they could carry on a conversation in French. Furthermore, people who knew only English were proportionally more numerous in 2021, an increase of 0.7 percentage points. Finally, the proportion of people who said they were bilingual in French and English increased, from 44.5% in 2016 to 46.4% in 2021.

Among the factors explaining the “increase in the relative proportion of English speakers in Québec,” Statistics Canada mentions the fact that the English-speaking population is younger on average, along with specific recent migratory trends, such as the considerable increase in the

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<sup>1</sup> Feuillet d'information : Caractéristiques linguistiques de la population du Québec en 2021, Office québécois de la langue française, 2022: [https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/sociolinguistique/2022/Feuillet\\_Car-ling-pop-Quebec-2021.pdf](https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/sociolinguistique/2022/Feuillet_Car-ling-pop-Quebec-2021.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> For 2022, see: Statistics Canada, Data tables, 2021 Census of Population, Table 98-10-0301-01. For 2016, see: Statistics Canada, Data tables, 2016 Census, Table 98-400-X2016194.

number of non-permanent residents since 2016 and the improvement in Québec's net interprovincial migration.<sup>3</sup>

The only census indicator that measures the public use of language is the language most often used at work in Québec. In the overall population, the proportion of people who report using French most often continued to decline in 2021, to 79.7%, while the proportion of those who use English most often increased by 13.9%.<sup>4</sup> Among permanent immigrant workers, the number who usually used only French at work increased (from 55.7% in 2016 to 61.4% in 2021).<sup>5</sup> In all the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in Québec, the upward trend of French as the most common language used by immigrant workers was also confirmed, including the CMA of Montréal (from 52.6% to 58.6%).<sup>6</sup>

Finally, among recent immigrants, a greater proportion of workers who arrived between 2011 and 2021 (61.5%) and between 2001 and 2010 (64.4%) were more likely to use only French at work in 2021 than those who arrived before 1980 (51.7%) or between 1980 and 1990 (59.2%).

Other indicators taken from Office québécois de la langue française surveys tell us about the public use of language by Québec immigrants in recent years. Concerning the language most often used in public space, one of the OQLF's studies showed that people born outside of Canada used French less often in public space in Québec in 2016 (58.9%) compared with people born in Québec (83.8%).<sup>7</sup> People born outside of Canada who usually speak French at home were more likely to use that language in public space (82.1%) than people born outside the country who usually speak English at home (11.8%). Of people born outside Canada, those who have lived in Québec for ten years or less are more likely to use French in public space (71.8%) than those who have lived there for between 21 and 40 years (55.9%) or for 41 years or more (44.7%).

The fact that recent immigrants are more likely to use French in the public space is encouraging, but it has been noted that the immigrants selected by Québec use French more, while non-permanent immigrants contribute to the increased weight of English. Overall, we are witnessing an accelerated decline of the use of French in Québec.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220817/dq220817a-eng.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Feuillet d'information : Caractéristiques linguistiques de la population du Québec en 2021, Office québécois de la langue française, 2022. [https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/sociolinguistique/2022/Feuillet\\_Car-ling-pop-Quebec-2021.pdf](https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/sociolinguistique/2022/Feuillet_Car-ling-pop-Quebec-2021.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> [https://statistique.quebec.ca/fr/document/langue-de-travail/tableau/repartition-travailleuses-travailleurs-immigrants-selon-langue-utilisee-plus-souvent-travail#tri\\_tertr=A](https://statistique.quebec.ca/fr/document/langue-de-travail/tableau/repartition-travailleuses-travailleurs-immigrants-selon-langue-utilisee-plus-souvent-travail#tri_tertr=A).

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that in 2021, a change in the order of questions asked in the census about the language of work (the question about the languages used regularly at work was placed before the question about the language used most often at work) may have had an effect on historical comparisons. According to Statistics Canada, "this change had the effect of decreasing the proportion of multiple responses and increasing the proportion of single responses." The results should therefore be interpreted with caution. See: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/98-500/003/98-500-x2021003-eng.cfm>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/sociolinguistique/2019/rapport-langue-publique-espace-public.pdf>.

## The role of immigration

Québec's particular linguistic situation complicates the challenges facing Québec's immigration system and the government's integration and francization services. Well-planned immigration is one of the solutions for countering the decline of certain indicators related to the use of French in Québec. Furthermore, for immigrants who do not speak French when they arrive, learning French is key to finding a job. For this, they can turn to the various courses offered by the Québec government.

The future of French in Québec depends on measures related to a set of fields, including immigration. Efforts must be made in all spheres of society to promote the knowledge and use of French among the entire population, especially in Montréal. This is why, on June 1, 2022, the *Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec* was assented to, amending the *Charter of the French Language* to achieve the following objectives:

- ▶ Make French the only official language of Québec, the common language and the integration language of immigrants
- ▶ Reinforce the status of French in Québec in all spheres of society
- ▶ Ensure that the government is exemplary in its use of French
- ▶ Make the preservation of French an unwavering priority of the Québec government
- ▶ Establish strong, neutral institutions to oversee the progression of French in Québec
- ▶ Establish Francisation Québec within the Ministry

In addition, extensive work involved many departments and organizations in the deployment of French language learning services. In January 2023, the Groupe d'action pour l'avenir de la langue française was created in January 2023 and placed under the direction of the minister responsible for the French language. The Ministère is one of six departments involved in this work, coordinated by the Ministère de la Langue française, that will establish indicators and actions to protect the future of the French language.

## 6. The Québec labour market and the role of immigration

### Current state of Québec's labour market and economy

In Québec, the situation in the labour market is favourable for people seeking work. In 2022, the number of people working was up 3.0%, to over 4.4 million. This level of employment is a historical record since 1976, exceeding the 2019 level by 72,400 (before the pandemic).<sup>8</sup>

The unemployment rate dropped by 1.8 percentage points in 2022, to 4.3%, its lowest level since 1976, and the employment rate of people 15 to 64 increased by 1.9 percentage points to 77.5% (75.6% in Canada).

In 2022, permanent and temporary immigrants exceeded their pre-pandemic employment rates by 116% and 133%, respectively, of the 2019 levels. The non-immigrant population reached 98% of its 2019 employment rate. In the fourth quarter of 2022, the ratio of unemployed workers to vacant positions in Québec was 0.9, compared with 1.2 for Canada as a whole.

In other words, in step with the gradual resumption of economic activity in Québec in 2021, the pandemic's negative consequences on the economy have faded. In 2022, nearly 130,000 jobs were created, 91,000 of which were full-time positions. The number of unemployed people (199,100) decreased by 28.7% compared with 2021. This was an all-time low,<sup>9</sup> because for the first time, there were fewer than 200,000 people unemployed. The effects of the labour shortage are still being felt in Québec, as demonstrated by 216,695 vacant positions in fourth quarter 2022, despite the decrease of just under 12% compared with the same quarter in 2021. Québec has one of the lowest ratios of unemployed workers to vacate positions in Canada. This proves the vitality of the labour market and the extent of the labour shortage in Québec.

This situation works in favour of people who have jobs or are looking for jobs, especially for immigrants entering the workforce. The job market is highly favourable for people seeking jobs, since labour is scarce and competitiveness among employers can result in improved working conditions. This situation may slow or even prevent business growth, however, and, by extension, the Québec economy.

If the Québec labour market continues to face pressure and demographic issues persist, such as the continuing decline in the working-age population, means will have to be found to meet workforce needs. This is where various levers such as automation and productivity increases come into play, along with extending working years, the integration of various groups with weakened ties to the labour market and workforce retraining. Employers must also ensure that they are offering working conditions that attract and retain workers. Immigration, both temporary and permanent, figures among the available levers that employers and government can use to meet workforce needs in priority sectors.

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<sup>8</sup> Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, Bulletin mensuel du marché du travail au Québec, December 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, Bulletin mensuel du marché du travail au Québec, December 2022.

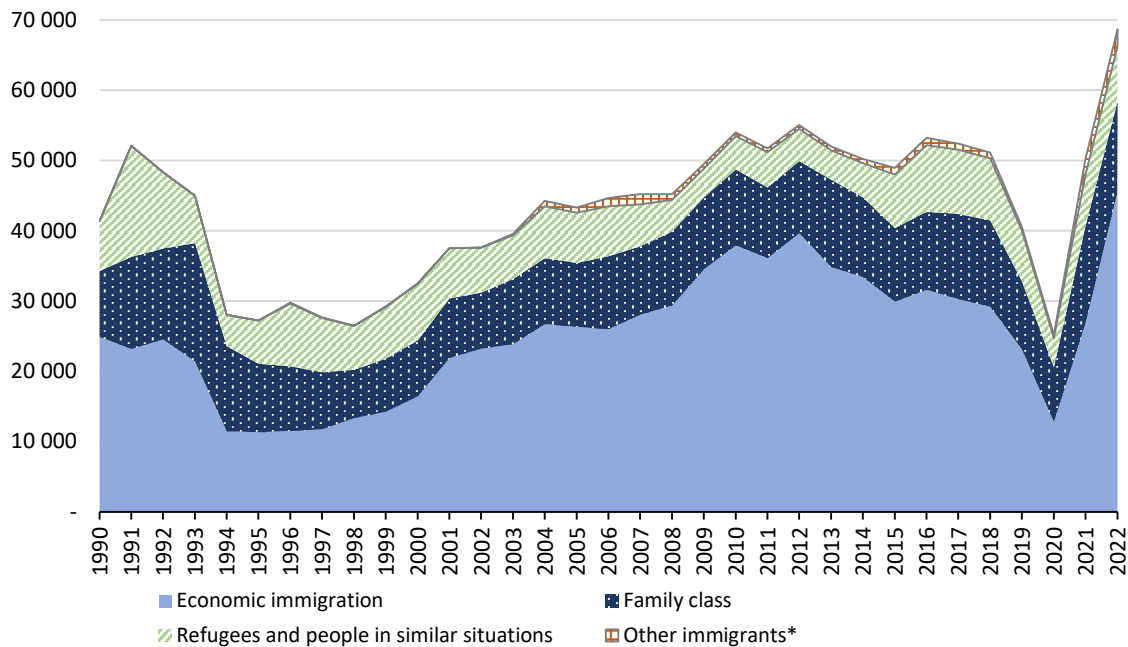
## 7. Portrait of immigration in Québec

### History of permanent immigration levels

Immigration levels have fluctuated since the adoption of the Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration, in 1990, and the signature of the Canada-Québec Accord, in 1991, as illustrated in Figure 1. In 1991, the number of immigrants admitted was over 50,000, a result stemming in part from the Refugee Backlog Clearance (RBC) program. In the ensuing years, the number of people admitted declined, settling at below 30,000 from 1994 to 1999, a return to the levels in the 1980s, before climbing again in the early 2000s. From 2010 to 2018, immigration levels remained relatively stable, at around 52,000. The number of people admitted then decreased by 21% from 2018 to 2019, to 40,565. This drop reflected the government's commitment to temporarily decrease the number of immigrants admitted in 2019 to accommodate them better and support them in their efforts to learn French and integrate. In 2020, the public health crisis and resulting travel restrictions deeply affected the immigration level, which declined to 25,227, the lowest level since 1986. In 2021, the public health crisis also had consequences for the number of admissions, which stood at 50,275. In 2022, the number of people admitted rose to 54,357 regular admissions and 14,347 catch-up admissions, for a total of 68,704. It should be noted that a significant proportion of the people admitted were already in the territory with temporary status (workers, students).

Since 1990, the change in the number of immigrants admitted on a permanent basis in the economic immigration class has followed a trend similar to overall immigration levels. These changes reflect the fact that economic immigration is the main component of permanent immigration.

**Figure 1: Changes in the number of immigrants admitted to Québec, by class, 1990-2022**



Source: Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, Direction de la recherche, de la statistique et de la veille.  
Preliminary data for 2022.

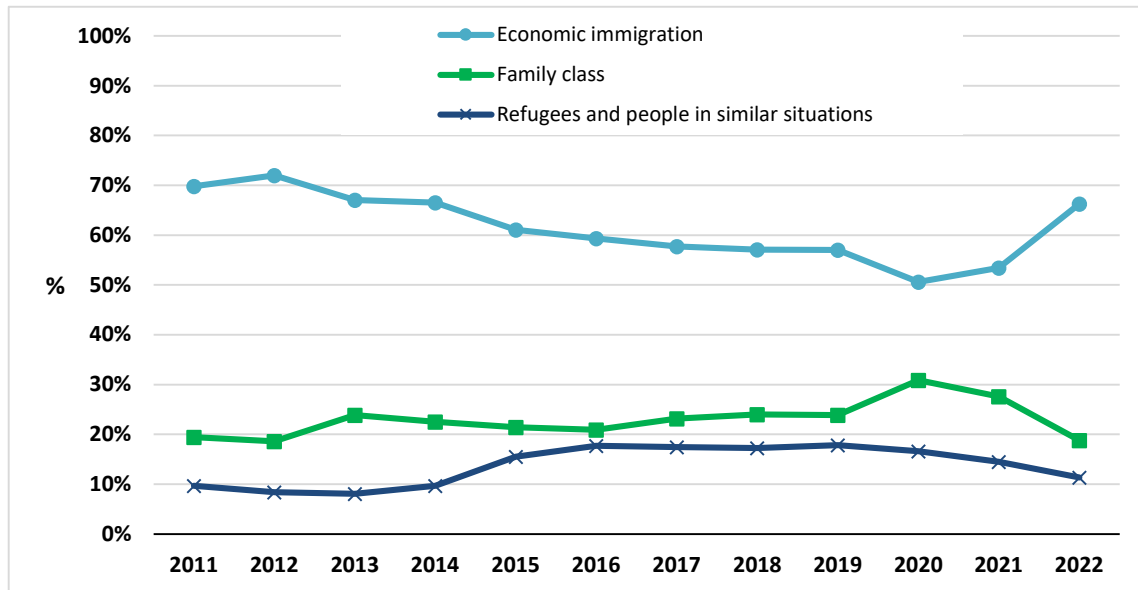
\* Includes various specific classes of immigrants admitted for humanitarian or public-interest purposes.

## Changes in the composition of permanent immigration in Québec in the last ten years

The portrait of immigrants and their distribution by permanent immigration class have changed in the last ten years in Québec.

While the proportion of economic immigration was about 70% in 2011, this share declined to 57% in 2019 and 51% in 2020. The guidelines established by the government after the multi-year plan for 2020 to 2022 restored an upward trend in favour of economic immigration, with the proportion rising to 53% in 2021 and 66% in 2022. Economic immigration is the immigration class with the highest number and proportion of admissions.

**Figure 2: Change (as a %) in the proportion of immigrants admitted, by immigration class, in comparison to overall immigration, 2011 to 2022**



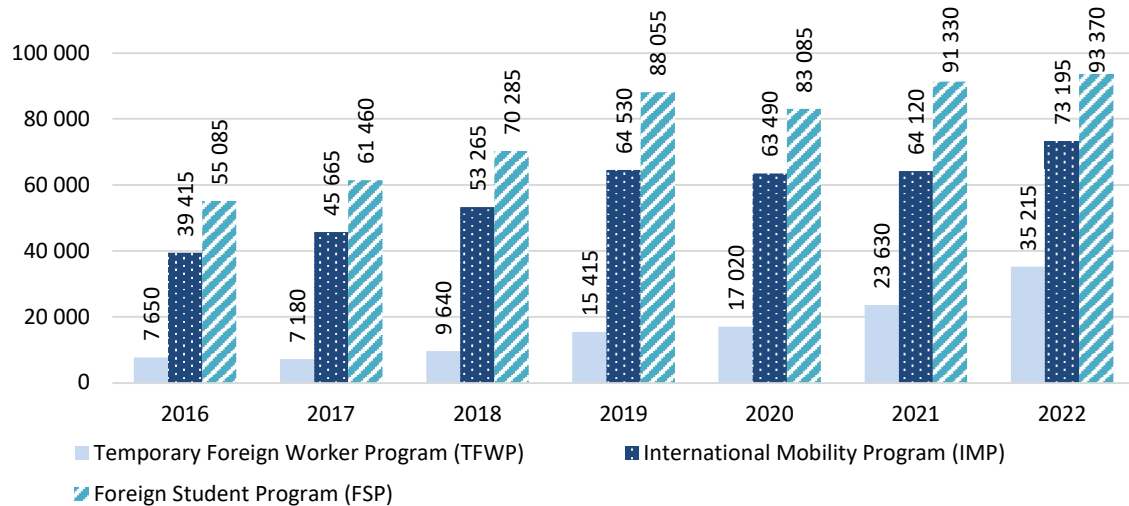
Preliminary data for 2022.

Source: Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, Direction de la recherche, de la statistique et de la veille. Databank on permanent residents.

## Significant increase in temporary immigration

One marked change in recent years concerns temporary immigration. From 2015 to 2022, Québec educational institutions welcomed a growing number of foreign students, while Québec employers called increasingly on temporary foreign workers to meet their workforce needs. After annual increases from 2015 on, the number of study permit holders declined slightly in 2020, before increasing again in 2021 and 2022. The number of valid work permit holders on December 31 under the International Mobility Program (IMP) was higher in 2022 than from 2019 to 2021, due to measures put in place by the federal government during the pandemic. In the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), the increase continued in 2022, reaching 35,215 valid permit holders on December 31. People working through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) weigh less heavily in the count of valid permit holders on December 31, because nearly all these workers leave Québec every year, at least between December 15 and January 1. That means that, in 2021, for the SAWP, there were 250 valid permit holders on December 31, compared with 6,300 holders of at least one permit issued the same year. The trends are nearly the same for 2020 (395 compared with 5,315) and 2019 (685 compared with 6,025).

**Figure 3: Number of valid TFWP, IMP and FSP permit holders in Québec on December 31, 2016 to 2022**



The data represent preliminary estimates and may be modified.

Source: This report was created by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, Direction de la recherche, de la statistique et de la veille, using IRCC open data. The figures were rounded to the nearest 5.

Although the responsibility for temporary immigration is shared with the federal government, Québec has made significant progress in several programs. In particular, an agreement was concluded on August 4, 2021 to ease some aspects of the TFWP, such as:

- ▶ The possibility of including less-skilled occupations in the simplified processing list.
- ▶ Occupations identified by Québec as not requiring specific qualifications are exempted from posting requirements and proof of recruitment effort requirements.
- ▶ On the signature of the agreement, the limit for temporary foreign workers per workplace was increased from 10% to 20%<sup>10</sup> for some sectors.
- ▶ The federal government terminated the refusal to process applications from certain sectors.

The agreement will come to an end on December 31, 2023. The Québec government hopes that, by that date, a new agreement will be signed that further simplifies this program.

Furthermore, the creation of the International Mobility Program Plus (IMP+) was made possible thanks to cooperation between the Québec and Canadian governments. It speeds up the arrival of skilled workers selected by Québec while they await their permanent residence.

Finally, the bridging open work permit (BOWP), the outcome of requests made by Québec to the federal government, came into effect in August 2021. It allows workers who reside in Québec and who have received a CSQ to obtain an open work permit while they await their permanent residence.

<sup>10</sup> On April 4, 2022, it was increased to 30% for all of Canada for hotel and restaurant services and to 20% for the other sectors.

## Refugee claimants

An increase in the number of refugee claimants has been observed in recent years. After a long period of relative stability, the number of refugee claimants increased by 461.3% from 2016 to 2017. Subsequently, until the borders were closed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the number of refugee claimants increased continuously in Québec. The increase began again with the reopening of the borders in December 2021, with a peak of 58,995 people in 2022, an increase of 88.7% compared with 2019.

Between 2011 and 2016, Québec received, on average, 21.4% of the people who filed a refugee claim in Canada. This proportion almost doubled to 49.7% in the period from 2017 to 2022, with a peak of 64.1% in 2022.

This major influx of refugee claimants impacts public services and access to housing. It also weakens Québec's capacity to appropriately welcome refugee claimants. This is why Québec asked the federal government to find solutions to manage the influx of arrivals at Roxham Road. As Québec had already welcomed 58,995 refugee claimants in 2022, it asked the federal government to transfer all refugee claimants arriving through Roxham Road to other Canadian provinces and to find a solution to end irregular entries by this route. This was confirmed by the amendment of the Safe Third Country Agreement on March 24, 2023.

**Figure 4: Changes in the number of people who filed a refugee claim in Québec, by year in which the application was received, 2011 to 2022**



Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), January 31, 2023.

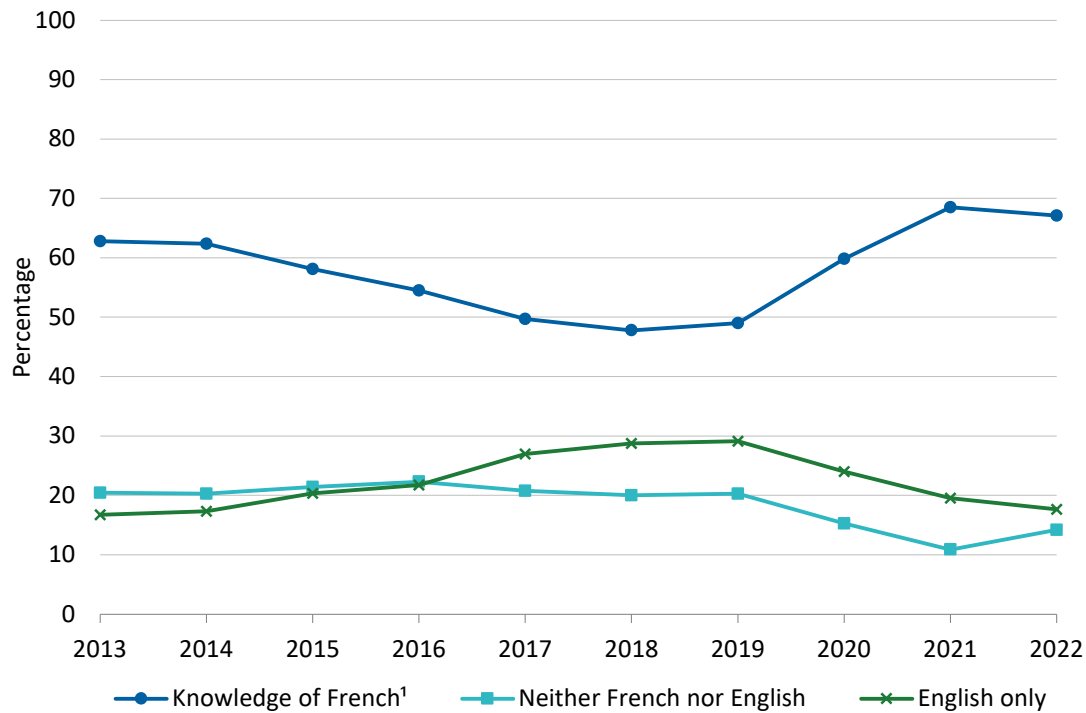
Compilation by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, Direction de la recherche, de la statistique et de la veille.

## Immigrants' knowledge of French

French is the official language of Québec. Knowledge of French is an essential condition for successful integration and full participation in community life, as well as a social cohesion factor.

During the period from 2013 to 2019, the proportion of immigrants admitted who declared that they knew French during the admission process gradually declined to 50% in 2019. Beginning in 2020, an improvement was observed, with 69% of immigrants admitted in 2021 declaring that they knew French and 68% in 2022. This increase is due to the government's determination, assisted by a far higher proportion of immigrants already living in Québec and who had a knowledge of French. The situation related to the pandemic was less favourable to the admission of people still abroad and therefore less likely to have a knowledge of French. The route of admitting people who already live in Québec is promising for increasing the number of immigrants with a sound knowledge of French.

**Figure 5: Change (as a %) in the knowledge of French and English declared in the admission process\* by immigrants admitted to Québec, 2013 to 2022**



\* Linguistic knowledge declared in the permanent residence application form.

<sup>1</sup> The category “Knowledge of French” includes knowledge of French only and knowledge of French and English.

Note: The calculation of the total and the percentages excludes information not available.

Preliminary data for 2022.

Source: Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration, Direction de la recherche, de la statistique et de la veille.

Databank on permanent residents.

Furthermore, immigrants who know French have a higher retention rate, that is, they still live in Québec many years after admission. According to the data on knowledge of the official languages of Canada in the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB),<sup>11</sup> people who declared only knowing French before their admission in 2015 had the highest retention rate<sup>12</sup> in 2020, at 94.7%. People who declared knowing both French and English had a retention rate of 82.9% in 2020. This rate is lower than for people who only knew French, but there is a less significant difference (-11.8 percentage points) than for people who knew only English (-26.2 percentage points). The retention rate for people who declared only knowing English before their admission in 2015 was 68.5% in 2020.

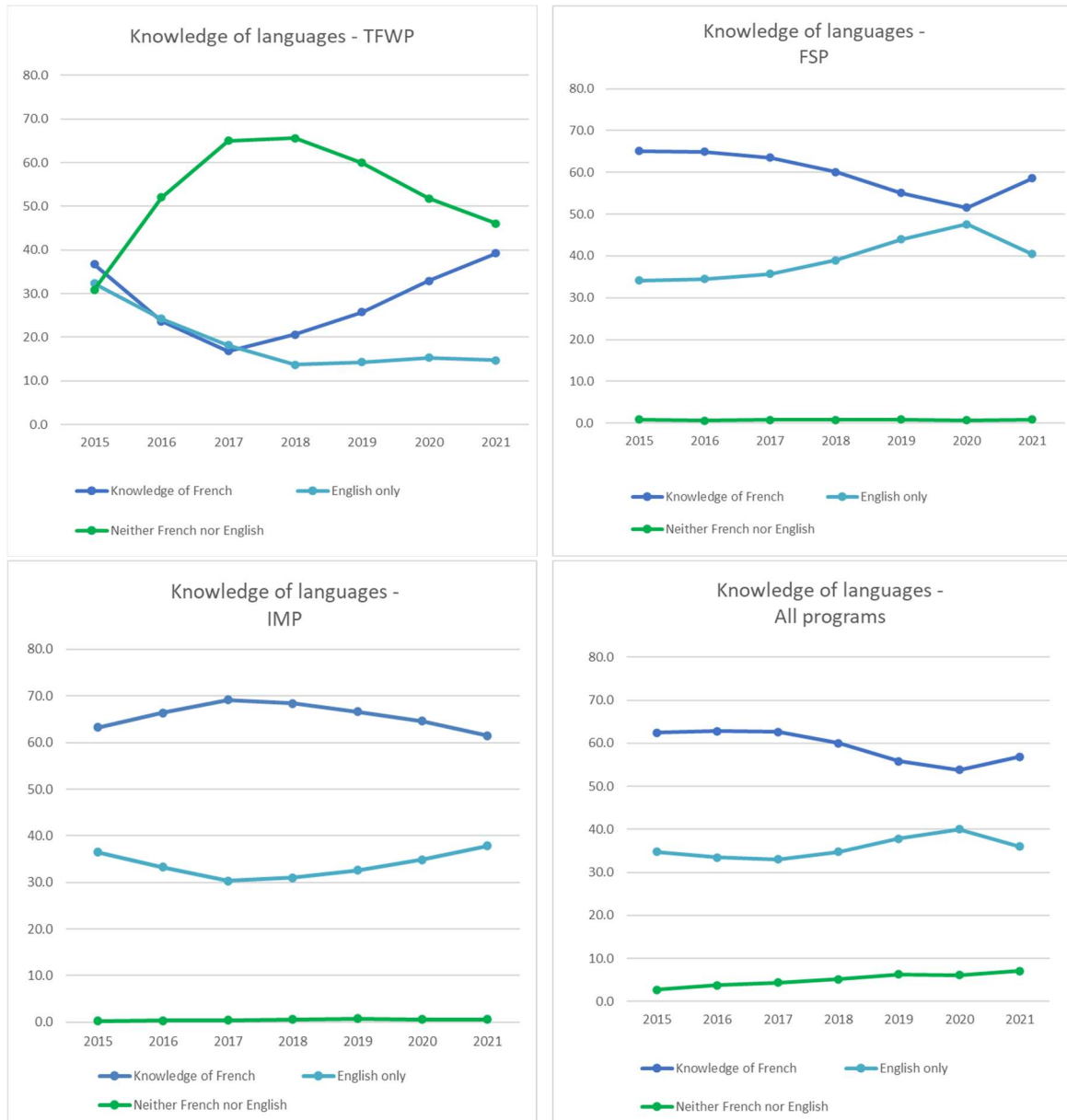
<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) 2020.

<sup>12</sup> The numerator of the retention rate is the number of people admitted to Québec in 2015 and who filed their taxes with an address in Québec for the 2020 tax year, and the denominator is the number of people admitted to Québec in 2015 who filed their taxes in Canada.

In terms of temporary immigration (holders of valid TFWP, IMP and FSP permits), the level of declared knowledge of French during the admission process as a resident or temporary resident was fairly stable between 2015 and 2021, despite a slight reduction beginning in 2019 and an increase in 2021. It is primarily holders of valid permits who said they had no knowledge of French or English that has gradually increased since 2005 (from 2.7% to 7.1% of valid permit holders on December 31).

The *Knowledge of languages – All programs* graph (see Figure 6) shows a slight improvement in knowledge of French beginning in 2020 but at a level far lower than that of the proportion of Francophones in Québec. From 2015 to 2019, the proportion of foreign students who do not know French increased very rapidly, to the benefit of English. This trend reversed beginning in 2020. Meanwhile, the International Mobility Program (IMP), which is entirely managed by the federal government, reveals a worrisome trend, with a decrease in French and an increase in English.

**Figure 6: Change (as a %) in the knowledge of French and English declared in the admission process\* for holders of valid permits on December 31, by program, Québec, 2015 to 2021**



\* The category "Knowledge of French" includes people who declared they knew "French" and "French and English."

Note: The calculation of the total and the percentages excludes information not available.

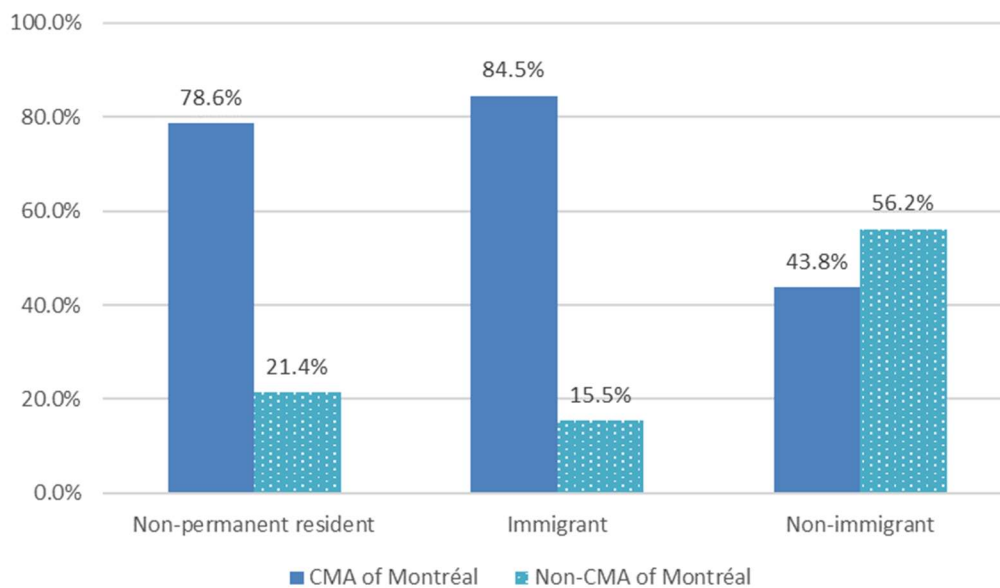
Source: Direction de la recherche, de la statistique et de la veille, based on IRCC data for the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2021. The figures were rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.

## Regionalization of immigration

According to the 2021 census, over 84.5% of immigrants and 78.6% of non-permanent residents live in the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Montréal, compared with 43.8% of non-immigrants.<sup>13</sup> By comparison, in 2016, the immigrant population (85.8%) and the non-permanent immigrant population (82.3%) were proportionally more numerous in the CMA of Montréal. From 2016 to 2021, the proportion of immigrants living outside the CMA of Montréal increased by more than a full percentage point (+32,660 people). The proportion of non-permanent immigrants living outside the CMA of Montréal increased by 3.7 percentage points (+28,885 people).

Progress can also be seen in terms of the region of destination of the people admitted to Québec. In 2016, 18.6% of immigrants intended to live outside the regions of Montréal, Laval and Longueuil, while the proportion was 26.7% in 2022 (+8.1 percentage points). Of the people admitted in 2014 and still in Québec in January 2016 (presence rate), 20.0% lived outside these three regions. For people admitted seven years later, in 2021, and still in Québec in January 2023, the proportion rose to 31.5% (+11.5 percentage points).

**Figure 7: Distribution (as a %) of the Québec population by immigration status\* and place of residence, Québec, 2021**



\* Statistics Canada defines non-permanent residents as follows: “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, landed immigrants or permanent residents.”

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population, Tables 98-10-0301-01 and 98-10-0307-01, available online. Compiled by the Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration du Québec, February 13, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada, Data tables, 2021 Census of Population, Table 98-10-0301-01.

Among holders of at least one work permit for Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) work purposes, the proportion of people who intended to live in the administrative region of Montréal declined by half in recent years, from an average of 20.8% between 2015 and 2019 to about 10% in 2020 and 2021. All the other administrative regions of Québec have seen their proportion of holders of at least one work permit increase since 2020.

Among the holders of at least one study permit from the Foreign Student Program (FSP), the proportion of people who intended to live in the administrative region of Montréal declined slightly in 2021 (70.0%) compared with the average for the years from 2015 to 2019 (71.6%). The administrative regions that had the highest increases in their proportion of holders of at least one FSP study permit include Mauricie (from 3.0% to 4.2%), Montérégie (from 2.7% to 3.1%) and Centre-du-Québec (from 0.3% to 0.8%).

## **8. Government immigration actions in recent years and those to come**

In a context of reform, the Québec government announced in 2018 its intention to temporarily decrease the number of immigrants admitted in 2019 to improve their integration into Québec society by offering enhanced integration and francization services. The reduction of immigration levels in 2019 was a transitional step designed to launch effective, customized actions in the selection, francization and integration systems for immigrants.

### **Reform of the PEQ**

When it was launched on July 22, 2020, the reform of the Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ – Québec experience program) sought to encourage the long-term integration of immigrants in the workforce, improve the response to workforce needs, select candidates with a knowledge of French and ensure better program integrity. The changes consisted primarily of adding a requirement for work experience after the study program for Québec graduates and extending the work experience for temporary foreign workers by one year. The PEQ reform also terminated the eligibility of temporary foreign workers who held low-skill jobs that do not generally require a high-school diploma or any diploma, that is, Level C or D jobs in the 2016 National Occupational Classification. A condition related to the spouse's knowledge of French was added, and a change was made to the acceptable means for supporting the knowledge of French.

## Expression-of-interest system and invitations by classification

Since September 18, 2018, people interested in immigrating to Québec through the Regular Skilled Worker Program (RSWP) must complete and submit an expression-of-interest form in the Arrima portal. Since July 4, 2019, the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration has issued multiple invitations to submit a permanent selection application under the RSWP.

On July 14, 2021, the Ministère established an invitation-by-classification system that identifies foreign nationals with a high potential for integration or who practise specific occupations or trades and whose profile matches Québec's socio-economic needs. These foreign nationals are invited based on a score that establishes their socio-occupational integration potential. The invitation criteria and their scores were determined so that the profiles of the foreign nationals who receive invitations more accurately reflect the needs of Québec and the needs of the labour market.

The first classification-based invitations were issued on August 12, 2021. There have been 11,700 people invited as at December 31, 2022. Among the people who received classification invitations, 77% practise an occupation targeted by Opération main-d'œuvre, 89% declared a score of 7 or higher on the French test, and 78% are between the ages of 18 and 35.

## Three permanent immigration pilot programs

Due to the shortage of workers in Québec in some sectors, the Ministère launched three new pilot programs in 2021, despite the pandemic:

- ▶ The Permanent immigration pilot program for workers in food processing
- ▶ The Permanent immigration pilot program for orderlies
- ▶ The Permanent immigration pilot program for workers in the artificial intelligence (AI), information technologies (IT) and visual effects (VE) sectors

## Special program for asylum seekers during COVID-19

In recognition of the extraordinary contribution of refugee claimants working in the health sector and who provided direct care to the public during the first wave of the pandemic, the government established this special program for refugee claimants during COVID-19. It allowed eligible people to settle permanently in Québec.

The program led to the selection of 3,240 people: 1,393 in 2021 and 1,847 in 2022. All the selected people are expected to be admitted by the end of 2023.

## Consistent support for people and communities

The reform and modernization of the immigration system, launched by the Québec government in 2018, helped improve the Ministry's service offering to people, businesses and communities.

- ▶ A regional network was set up by the Ministry. It now has nine regional directorates and 73 antennas, distributed across all the regions of Québec. This network relies on the following four dimensions to offer local services:
  - Customized support for immigrants
  - Local support for businesses
  - Dialogue with local and regional stakeholders
  - Support and follow-up from the network of service partners
- ▶ Accompagnement Québec is a Ministère service that has existed since 2019 and that seeks to facilitate and accelerate immigrants' settlement, francization, skill recognition and integration processes, as well as their participation in Québec society and especially the labour market. This free, voluntary service offers a needs evaluation carried out by integration assistance officers working in all the administrative regions of Québec. It also offers an adapted referral service to organizations, regional skills recognition counsellors, partner ministries, etc. In this way, Accompagnement Québec coordinates the efforts of various stakeholders to optimize the response to the needs expressed by immigrants.
- ▶ The Programme d'accompagnement et de soutien à l'intégration (PASI – integration assistance and support program) subsidizes community organizations that offer welcome and integration services to immigrants. It has five different streams, with the goal of speeding up the integration process for immigrants by supporting them in their settlement and integration efforts so they can fully participate in community life and become active members of Québec society. The Programme d'appui aux collectivités (community support program), launched in October 2020, engages the public to help build communities that are more welcoming and inclusive for immigrants and diverse ethnocultural minorities, so they can fully participate, in French, in Québec's prosperity. The activities and projects that are funded aim to bring together the conditions that will attract these people and ensure they can settle and integrate in the region for the long term. The program is aimed at promoting harmonious intercultural relationships among Quebecers of all origins, ensuring full participation in community life, in French, for immigrants and people in various ethnocultural minorities and helping counter racism, intimidation and discrimination to foster respectful, egalitarian and inclusive togetherness.
- ▶ The Ministère has developed a departmental regionalization of immigration action plan to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the regions. One of its goals is to encourage the primary migration of immigrants to the regions, by encouraging them to settle there immediately on their arrival in Québec.

- ▶ Since July 1, 2022, to facilitate and speed up their integration in French in Québec society as soon as they arrive, many more immigration applicants, especially those in a priority employment field and people abroad who have a CAQ for Francisation en ligne, have had access to French courses offered for free by the Québec government, increased financial assistance and simplified processes:
  - Government francization services are available from abroad for immigrants in a priority employment field
  - The online service offering is enhanced, even from abroad, with Francisation en ligne (FEL) with tutoring for immigration applicants who have a Certificat d'acceptation du Québec (CAQ – Québec Acceptance Certificate)
  - French courses taken abroad from a francization partner are eligible for reimbursement for temporary immigrants with a CAQ
  - Participation and transportation allowances for people taking French courses have been increased
  
- ▶ At the beginning of 2022, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia forced many people from Ukraine to settle in other countries. The creation of a Canada-Ukraine emergency travel authorization by the federal government facilitated the arrival of these people in the country as temporary foreign workers. Accommodation measures were put in place for those who wanted to settle in Québec, including:
  - Welcome at the airport (information about government services offered, temporary emergency accommodations)
  - Last resort financial assistance
  - Preschool education, and elementary and secondary school education
  - Complete coverage under the Québec Health Insurance Plan, which gives access to the services offered by the health and social services network
  - Childcare tax credit
  - Employment measures and services
  - French courses
  - Integration services from Accompagnement Québec.

## Service offering for businesses

In September 2018, the Ministère established a service offering for businesses that draws on customized local support by regional immigration counsellors in all the regions and, where needed, international recruitment counsellors. The Ministère service offering for businesses, which recognizes the contribution of foreign workers, was developed to complement the offer of government assistance from the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MESS), the Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie (MEIE) and Investissement Québec. Between 2019 and 2022, 5,094 businesses in all the regions took advantage of support offered by the Ministry.

It also offers hiring tools, such as the Employer Portal and Journées Québec recruitment missions abroad.

The Employer Portal connects Québec companies with foreign workers who have expressed an interest in immigrating to Québec. It accelerates the search, identification and contact with foreign workers, either already in Québec or abroad, whose profile matches the companies' target occupations.

To support the recruitment of temporary foreign workers (TFW), the Ministère is putting targeted actions in place to support recruitment in occupations identified by Opération main-d'œuvre in the information technology (IT), health, education, childcare services, engineering and construction sectors.

To fill priority workforce needs, international recruitment activities will be directed primarily toward target sectors and occupations.

## Concrete actions to recognize the skills of immigrants

When it tabled the 2021-2022 budget, the Québec government announced structuring measures for the recognition of skills of immigrants. To implement them, it adopted an interdepartmental action plan with the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ), the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur (MES), the Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie (MRIF), the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS), the Ministère du Travail (MTRAV), the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MESS), coordinated by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration and in close collaboration with the Office des professions du Québec, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec and the Commission de la construction du Québec. The following measures in the plan offer a continuum of services to speed up and improve skills recognition for internationally trained immigrants:

- ▶ Prospecting of new recruitment pools with the identification of educational systems and practice settings comparable to Québec's
- ▶ Financial support and increased assistance for regulatory bodies and professional orders to improve practices, including an update of the Programme d'aide à la reconnaissance des compétences (PARC – skills recognition assistance program)
- ▶ Customized skills recognition support for immigrants
- ▶ Financing for the development and provision of refresher training and internships
- ▶ Financial support for immigrants undertaking a skills recognition process
- ▶ Support for Québec employers in the evaluation of studies taken abroad

A skills recognition project to recruit 1,000 nurses from abroad was announced in early 2022. Thanks to this \$65-million investment, nurses from targeted Francophone countries will settle in various regions of Québec. They started to arrive in 2022, and other cohorts are expected shortly. This project seeks to accelerate the recognition of skills for Francophone candidates who have work experience comparable to that earned in health and social services institutions in Québec and whose nursing training is similar to what is offered in Québec, through refresher training prescribed by the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec (OIIQ).

The Ministère also offers an evaluation service for studies done outside Québec (12,282 opinions issued between April 1, 2021, and February 28, 2022). This service, generally requested by immigrants, allows third parties – employers, regulatory bodies, teaching institutions, etc. – to more accurately assess the level and field of education for diplomas earned abroad.

## **Upcoming reform of all economic immigration programs**

### **Promote the retention of students who earn a diploma in French-language programs by changing the Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ)**

The government wants to encourage greater retention of graduates of French-language programs. These candidates are mostly young people who are already integrated in French, often have jobs and have been living in Québec for many years. The Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ – Québec experience program) facilitates the change from temporary status to permanent resident status for foreign students who have graduated in Québec and for temporary skilled workers. The government wants to offer them a fast track through changes to the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ, to make it easier and faster for them to receive permanent residence. The candidates will no longer need the required work experience or have to be working when they apply.

### **Reform of the Regular Skilled Worker Program (RSWP)**

To modernize its immigration system, the Ministère began an overhaul of the Regular Skilled Worker Program (RSWP), which is part of the immigration application management system based on expressions of interest. The objective of the proposed reform of the RSWP is to select skilled workers who know French and who are able to practise their occupation in Québec within a reasonable time. The reform will also ensure that the program contributes to the sustainability and vitality of French in Québec.

## Reform of the Investor Program

The Investor Program selects people who will support the economic development of Québec by contributing capital and experience.

The program's main issue is related to the low settlement rate of the selected people and their minimal knowledge of French.

Consequently, the Ministère will reform the program to improve the settlement rate in Québec and the knowledge of French of the people selected through it.

## Update of the Entrepreneur Program

The goal of the Entrepreneur Program is to select foreign nationals who will contribute to the economic development of Québec by creating, operating or acquiring businesses. In an environment where French is the common language, sufficient knowledge of French is required to encourage the integration of these people into the business environment and thereby increase the chances that their business projects will succeed.

This program will be updated to select people with the means and skills required to bring their business projects to fruition.

## Self-Employed Worker Program

The goal of the Self-Employed Worker Program is to select foreign nationals who will contribute to the economic development of Québec by practising their occupation as self-employed workers. To allow immigrants to fully contribute to Québec society and integrate into their new environment, knowledge of French is crucial.

The Ministère will change this program to ensure that it is consistent with the other business immigration programs and that it contributes to the vitality of French.

## Adjustments to the Family Class Program

With regard to family class immigration, the Ministère will provide better support for sponsors in terms of the francization and integration of the people they sponsor.

## Creation of Francisation Québec, a historic change

The longevity of French is an unwavering priority for the Québec government and it requires constant vigilance, given Québec's unique situation as the only state in North America where French is the sole official language. For this, the government relies on three lines of action:

- ▶ Selecting immigrants with a sound knowledge of French
- ▶ Offering accessible, effective, diverse francization services
- ▶ Defending, promoting and strengthening the French language

The *Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec* was assented to on June 1, 2022, to amend the *Charter of the French Language*. One of its major provisions is the institution, within the Ministry, of Francisation Québec, a single governmental access point for French-language learning services. With Francisation Québec, the government intends to make francization easier for individuals and businesses by directing them to the best service for their needs – classroom, workplace or online French courses or courses specialized by field of employment. Full- and part-time French courses are completely free to people living in Québec and people abroad who have a Québec Selection Certificate (CSQ) or a Québec Acceptance Certificate (CAQ).

Francisation Québec is responsible for driving and managing the government's actions with regard to French-language learning services for:

- ▶ People living in Québec who are not subject to the obligation to attend school (immigrants, Anglophones and Indigenous peoples)
- ▶ People considering settling in Québec
- ▶ People working in businesses, whether they are immigrants or Canadian citizens by birth

More specifically, Francisation Québec is responsible for:

- ▶ Coordinating and offering French-language learning services in the classroom, in the workplace and online, full-time and part-time
- ▶ Determining the registration conditions for these services, the placement of the people who receive them and the evaluation of the French-language learning, as well as accountability for the services rendered
- ▶ Developing French-language learning services in businesses in collaboration with the Office québécois de la langue française and implementing them
- ▶ Developing pedagogical programs, materials and tools
- ▶ Encouraging childcare service providers to offer activities to help children learn French
- ▶ Developing and implementing programs to provide opportunities to participate in Québec society in French

## 9. Current immigration issues in Québec

### The demography of Québec – Accelerated ageing

Québec's demographic situation is characterized by the pronounced ageing of the population. In 2022, the number of people 65 and over exceeded the number of those under 20 for the first time. On July 1, 2022, 20.6% of Québec's population was under 20, compared with 20.8% who were 65 or over. According to projections, 25% of Québec's population will be over 65 by 2031, and that proportion will climb to 27% by 2066.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, by 2041, all the administrative regions of Québec will have a higher proportion of seniors than they had in 2021, with increases ranging from 22% to 72%.<sup>15</sup> This acceleration of demographic ageing is largely caused by declining fertility and increasing life expectancy.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not change the long-term demographic issues in Québec, although a small population growth was observed in 2020 (+19,134), followed by a larger growth in 2021 (+58,640).<sup>16</sup> The population growth has greatly intensified since the beginning of 2022, and the demographic growth in the first six months of the year has caught up with levels observed before the pandemic. It is explained primarily by higher international migration after the pandemic.

#### Box 2: Immigration in the current demographic context

Demographic ageing leads to a reduction of the pool of potential workers, that is, the number of people between 20 and 64. According to the projections of the Institut de la statistique du Québec reference scenario, disclosed in 2022, although the potential labour pool of people aged 20 to 64 may increase slightly in Québec (+1.4%) between 2021 and 2041, that pool will shrink in several administrative regions – for example, Abitibi-Témiscamingue (-10%), Bas-Saint-Laurent (-11%), Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (-12%), Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (-14%) and Côte-Nord (-22%).

As immigrants are generally young, the potential worker pool would be even more limited without immigration.

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<sup>14</sup> Institut de la Statistique du Québec, Bilan démographique du Québec, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Institut de la Statistique du Québec, Bulletin sociodémographique, Volume 26, No. 4, July 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Institut de la Statistique du Québec, Bilan démographique du Québec, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 2022.

## Demographic weight of Québec within Canada

Québec's demographic weight within Canada has been declining continually for many years, from 27.9% in 1971 to 22.3% on July 1, 2022. This decrease stems mainly from lower demographic growth in Québec than in most of the other provinces.

The Canada-Québec Accord sets out the division of immigration responsibilities between the governments of Québec and Canada. It stipulates that Québec can admit a number of immigrants that corresponds to its demographic weight compared with the admission targets for Canada as a whole and that it can exceed this number by 5%.

In the past few years, the IRCC has adopted record permanent immigration thresholds, planning for up to 500,000 admissions in 2025. To maintain its demographic weight within Canada, therefore, Québec would have to admit more than 100,000 people annually. In 2022, Canada admitted a million people (temporary and permanent immigrants). But Québec is facing unique issues, such as the decline of French. Québec's accommodation, integration and francization capacities are taken into account in the development of immigration thresholds. The immigration thresholds established by Canada make it harder to maintain Québec's demographic weight within Canada.

The federal government has not, however, specified how it intends to integrate this high number of immigrants. Many observers from all across Canada have identified major potential difficulties, particularly in terms of housing.

## Workforce available in Québec to meet economic imperatives

The last ten-year projection exercise carried out by the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MESS) projects that, for the entire 2022-2031 period, about 1.6 million jobs will have to be filled. The bulk of this demand, or just under 71%, will be related to the replacement<sup>17</sup> of people who leave the labour market, while just over 29% of these jobs will stem from net job creation resulting from economic activity.<sup>18</sup> Workforce needs will therefore be significant in the years ahead. The very low unemployment rate and the relative stagnation of the working-age population are factors that will contribute to the long-term shortage of workers, especially in the most deeply affected strategic sectors, such as healthcare, education, childcare services, construction, engineering, and information technology.

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<sup>17</sup> These worker replacement needs arise from various causes: retirement, death, illness, occupational mobility, etc.

<sup>18</sup> Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, État d'équilibre du marché du travail, 2022.

The planned reform of the RSWP offers an opportunity to more closely target the specific needs of the labour market, particularly through the expression-of-interest system that is part of the Arrima platform. Since 2018, skilled workers who want to immigrate to Québec can submit an expression of interest, answering many questions about their socio-economic profile. In the face of a worker shortage, the Ministère can invite an increasing number of people with profiles that can meet needs identified on the labour market in the various regions of Québec.

Bringing in an increasing number of foreign students with French-language diplomas will also make an invaluable contribution to the labour pool.

In addition to the many avenues for meeting Québec's workforce needs, including actions to add workers from groups with weak ties to the labour market, prolong working life, automate processes and improve productivity and retraining, immigration will have an important role to play.

## **Admission wait times**

The federal government's admission wait times for skilled workers have undermined Québec's appeal in the context of stiff international and Canadian competition for attracting immigrants. This has been an obstacle while Québec faces a worker shortage in various sectors across all its regions.

But efforts such as application management and the overhaul of certain programs have considerably reduced the projected wait time before the admission of the skilled workers selected by Québec. It in fact decreased from about two years at the end of 2021 to about one year at the end of 2022. This reduction in wait time can be explained by the decline in the number of skilled workers with a permanent residence application pending processing or ready to be admitted. There were about 25,900 people in this situation at the end of 2022, while there had been some 50,500 at the end of 2021, a decrease of about 49%. This reduction in the admission wait time puts Québec back in place as the top international choice for Francophone immigration.

The Ministère is also upholding its commitment to make a decision within six months for complete permanent selection applications submitted under the RSWP and the PEQ.

The application management efforts in the businesspeople immigration and community sponsorship of refugees abroad programs have reduced their admission wait times, but they are still long, especially in the Investor Program. Other immigration classes still have long wait times.

## **Immigration to support development in the regions**

Many efforts have already been made to promote the regionalization of immigration in Québec. Despite progress in recent years, the long-term settlement of immigrants in the regions of Québec is still a challenge.

Most skilled workers admitted between 2011 and 2020 (78.0%) were living in the metropolitan community of Montréal (MCM) in 2022, and yet workforce needs are felt in all regions of Québec. There is and will continue to be heavy pressure on the labour market, especially in certain regions and particular economic sectors.

To reinforce settlement and retention throughout Québec, the government will rely increasingly on foreign students who are graduates of French-language programs, often provided in the regions. Since students generally live for several years in the place where they study, they put down roots there and gradually integrate into their host community, including into the labour market.

The Ministère will also continue to put pressure on the IRCC to increase the acceptance rate of foreign students from French-speaking Africa, after noticing that their visa requests were being disproportionately rejected.

The Ministère intends to pool its efforts with those of other partners to implement the Plan d'action ministériel sur la régionalisation de l'immigration (PAMRI). This action plan will contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the regions. Its three objectives are to:

- ▶ Prioritize regionalization from abroad by encouraging immigrants whose competencies meet the needs of the regions to settle there when they arrive in Québec;
- ▶ Contribute to the attractiveness of the regions and the development of more welcoming and inclusive communities to encourage the sustainable regionalization of immigrants;
- ▶ Review and optimize the regionalization programs, services and measures to expand their use in all regions and simplify the client experience.

Starting in fall 2023, a new measure will encourage foreign students to take a French-language program targeted by Opération main-d'œuvre in an institution of higher learning located outside the metropolitan community of Montréal. This and other measures will support the economic development and vitality of the regions in employment sectors facing a severe worker shortage. In partnership with the various regional economic stakeholders, effective harmonization of workforce needs and immigrants' profiles can improve the economic development of the various regions of Québec and thereby contribute to their vitality.

In this regard, the Ministry's representations abroad to support the regionalization of economic immigration play an active role upstream by promoting Québec and its 17 administrative regions as top-choice destinations, particularly through webinars and information sessions that present the socio-economic benefits of settling there and highlighting the particular attractions of each one to boost their visibility.

## Refugee claimants

The lifting of restrictions on entry to Canada stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, which were in effect from March 2020 to November 2021, led, in 2022, to a significant increase in refugee claimants, the great majority of which (64.1% of refugee claimants in Canada) were filed in Québec: 58,995<sup>19</sup> people made refugee claims in Québec in 2022. This is an increase of nearly 89% compared with the 31,260 people who submitted a refugee claim in Québec in 2019.

Nearly all the refugee claims made after irregular entry into Canada were made in Québec, through Roxham Road, because the Safe Third Country Agreement signed by Canada and the United States did not apply to irregular entry. On March 25, 2023, however, the renegotiated agreement between Canada and the United States now applies to all land entry points.

To provide a dignified welcome to refugee claimants and support them after an often-traumatizing journey, Québec put in place a series of measures, including temporary shelter, last resort financial assistance, help finding housing, access to social and healthcare services, and so forth. Québec also educates the children, a legal and moral obligation.

Quebecers have a long tradition of welcoming refugees, and they are proud to fulfil this humanitarian duty. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the fact that the growing number of refugee claimants puts heavy pressure on public services and on the frontline community organizations that offer essential services. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide proper housing for these people.

## Accommodation and integration capacities

The evaluation of accommodation capacities naturally has to include permanent immigration as well as temporary foreign workers, foreign students and refugee claimants. In addition to the permanent admission targets, there are over 108,000 holders of temporary work permits and 93,000 foreign students (December 31, 2022). To this we must add the nearly 60,000 claims for refugee status filed in 2022. These people, including families with children, must be accommodated humanely and with dignity. They need a roof over their heads and, to varying degrees, access to public services.

Like every other group in the population, immigrants use public services (education, healthcare, subsidized childcare, transportation, integration and francization services, employment assistance measures, social assistance or social solidarity programs) and must also find housing.

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<sup>19</sup> Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), January 31, 2023.

The capacity of public services to serve newcomers and offer them access to housing and public transit must be taken into consideration in immigration planning in order to provide quality services to the public. Furthermore, the integration of newly arrived immigrants requires the host society to establish an adequate settlement and integration structure. Admission thresholds must therefore be planned in accordance with the goal of integrating immigrants into society.<sup>20</sup>

Québec's accommodation and integration capacities are determined through a delicate balancing act and the quantitative and qualitative analysis of multiple factors. The public consultation process, initiated in Québec for the multi-year planning exercise, provides an opportunity to extend the reflection on permanent immigration levels to a variety of stakeholders and partners, in order to make an informed decision.

Access to housing has also become a serious concern in recent years. The vacancy rate of rental housing was low in 2022, at 1.7% across Québec.

Québec must also help all these people integrate in French. Unprecedented budget investments have been made in recent years to accommodate immigrants and support them in the process of learning French and integrating.

Dialogue and collaboration mechanisms have been established between the Ministry, its partners and the organizations involved, but the complexity and diversity of the challenges make accommodation and integration capacities a multifaceted issue that require both flexibility and innovation.

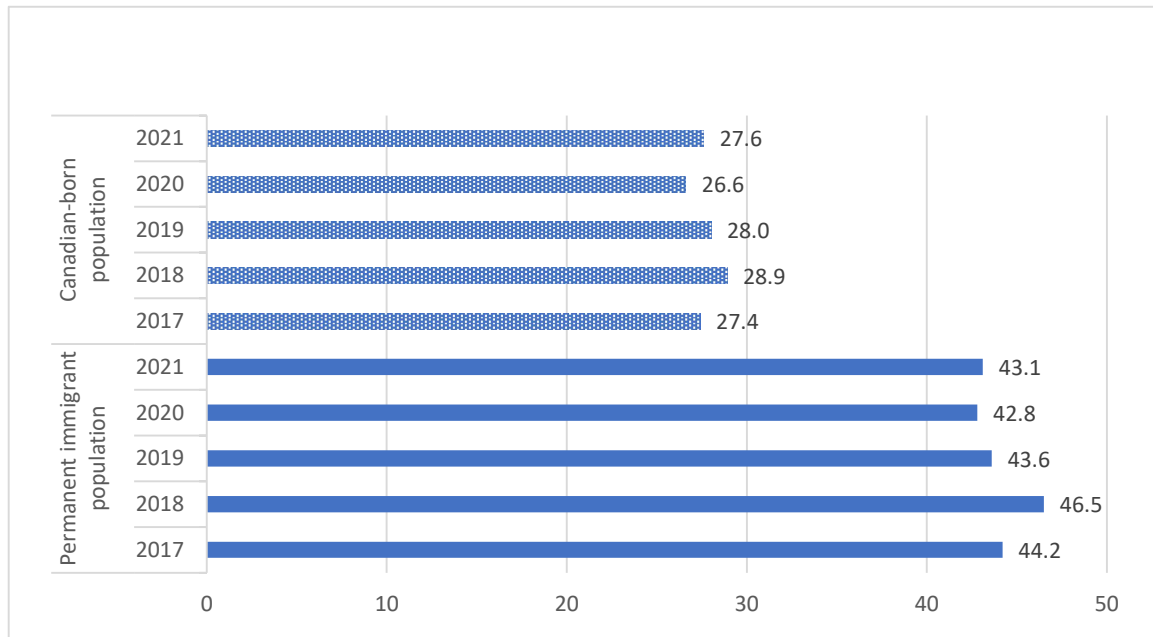
## **Access for immigrants to jobs that match their skills**

Over-qualification is when the employee has a higher level of education than the skills required for the job. The high over-qualification rate of immigrants in the Québec labour market underscores the importance of paying special attention to the recognition of diplomas and skills. When we compare the diplomas of immigrants to those of the Canadian-born population and the unemployment rate of people admitted in the last five years, their over-qualification and the obstacles they face finding a job suited to their skills are signs of the trouble they encounter in the Québec job market. The over-qualification rate of immigrants is higher than that of the Canadian-born population, despite the gradual shrinking of the gap since 2018 (see Figure 8).

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<sup>20</sup> Intégrer les immigrants pour stimuler l'innovation au Québec, Canada (2020). Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

**Figure 8: Change in the over-qualification rate (%) of the permanent immigrant population and the Canadian-born population, Québec, 2017 to 2021**



Note: Non-permanent residents are excluded from these results.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey. Compiled by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration.

According to a survey carried out in 2018 by the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec (CIQ) with the ten professional orders that receive the most applications for equivalence, over 60% of people who apply to an order for equivalence have to take refresher training and do an internship. Refresher training and internships are difficult to access, however, and 34% of the applicants abandon the process leading to full recognition of an international diploma. The main obstacles to accessing the professions are the non-existence of refresher training in certain professions, the fact that teaching institutions offer little or no refresher training, focusing instead on qualifying training, and, finally, the immigrants' lack of financial resources for pursuing this training.

Major investments were, in fact, planned in the 2021-2022 budget to improve skills recognition for immigrants. Selecting graduates from our French-language programs confers a definite advantage as it automatically eliminates both the recognition of international diplomas and the francization process.

## 10. Orientations of the Planning of Immigration to Québec for the 2024-2027 Period

As part of the public consultation, the Ministère is submitting 12 orientations that will guide it during the 2024 to 2027 period. The last orientation addresses permanent immigration thresholds and takes the form of two distinct scenarios. The first scenario proposes a gradual increase in admission thresholds to attain 60,000 in 2027, an increase concentrated in the skilled worker subclass. Moreover, there will be continuous admission to the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ, with no maximum limit. The second scenario proposes maintaining the admission threshold at 50,000 for the four years covered by the multi-year plan. Admissions under the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ would be included within these targets.

Since these two distinct scenarios have an impact on certain other orientations, they also take the form of two proposals duly identified in the immigration threshold scenarios in question.

The proposed multi-year orientations are subject to public consultation, to allow all socio-economic stakeholders and the general public to provide an opinion on their relevance and on their underlying issues.

### Proposed orientations

#### **ORIENTATION 1 : Increase in the proportion of francophone immigration**

##### **A. Lean toward a selection comprised entirely of adult immigrants who know French in the economic immigration programs**

##### **B. Increase the proportion of adults who declare that they know French on admission**

French is the official language of Québec and immigration must contribute to its longevity and vitality. Communicating in French is essential to participate in Québec society, whether it is to integrate into the labour market, contribute to the business community or participate in community life. The selection conditions for economic immigration programs and the invitation criteria for the expression-of-interest system are, in fact, the best ways to encourage the selection of adult immigrants who know French. Furthermore, the Ministère is pursuing its efforts to reinforce certain selection conditions for these programs related to knowledge of French in order to promote selection comprised entirely of adult economic immigrants who know French.

By selecting adults who already know French in the economic immigration programs, Québec ensures that the people admitted in this class meet Québec’s workforce needs and promote the vitality of French in all the regions. These people also have a higher retention rate than people who do not know French. This ensures sustainable immigration to Québec.

A Francophone immigration target will also be maintained for all admissions, to ensure that knowledge of French is promoted while respecting Québec's francization capacity. For the first proposed immigration threshold scenario, on the basis of the projected regular admission targets that do not include admissions under the "Québec graduate" stream of the PEQ, the Ministère estimates that the proportion of adults who declare that they know French on admission will be 79% in 2027, at the end of the period. This proportion could be higher, based on the number of people who will be admitted under the "Québec graduate" stream of the PEQ.

For the second proposed immigration threshold scenario, this same proportion will be 77%. Considering only the principal applicants for economic immigration, the target proportion increases to 96%, for both scenarios.

## **ORIENTATION 2: Implementation of Francisation Québec and increase in the knowledge of French among immigrants**

- A. Support French-language learning among immigrants residing in Québec**
- B. Increase the offer of French-language learning services for immigrants before their arrival in Québec**
- C. Increase the knowledge of French among temporary foreign workers**
- D. Increase francization in the workplace in collaboration with the business environment**

The pandemic forced the Québec government to accelerate adapting its offer of francization services. The switch to virtual mode provided an opportunity to expand the accessibility of the existing service offer. Distance and hybrid courses made it possible to reach people in regions far from the main centres, where the offer of in-person French courses is generally more limited. Going forward, courses will be offered in several formats: online, distance learning with in-person or in-class support, part-time or full-time. In addition, the French courses may be general or specialized by field of employment.

People with a Québec Acceptance Certificate (CAQ) or a Québec Selection Certificate (CSQ) can also take French courses from abroad, thanks to the vast network of Alliances françaises and other language schools that are Ministère partners. Tuition fees can be reimbursed on arrival in Québec, under certain conditions. These people can also take advantage of free French courses offered by the Francisation en ligne platform (intermediate and advanced stages, specialized modules by field of employment). It is envisioned that the offer of francization services for people abroad will be expanded in the coming years.

The expertise acquired in recent years will be leveraged for the launch of Francisation Québec, which is part of an incentive approach focused on the partnership of French learning services.

Francisation Québec will be responsible for driving and managing government action related to French-language learning services for anyone living in Québec (and not subject to the obligation to attend school), whether they are people born in Québec, elsewhere in Canada or abroad, people considering settling in Québec or people working in businesses.

For French courses in the workplace, Francisation Québec will propose a variety of flexible services to meet the various needs of Québec businesses and workers.

### **ORIENTATION 3: Québec selection**

**Scenario 1: Increase the proportion of people selected by Québec**

**Scenario 2: Maintain the proportion of people selected by Québec to 72% for the entire period**

Although Québec determines its own admission thresholds in all immigration classes, it does not establish the selection criteria for all the immigrants it receives. It has the power to establish them in the *Economic immigration* and *Other immigrants* classes, and in the *Refugees selected abroad* subclass. Québec cannot, however, set its own selection criteria in the other immigration classes and subclasses, that is, for refugees recognized within Québec and people admitted in the family class. Therefore, on the basis of projected regular admissions targets in the first proposed threshold scenario, by excluding the impact of admissions under the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ, 77% of the people admitted in 2027 will have been selected by Québec, while for the second proposed threshold scenario, this target is 72% for the period.

### **ORIENTATION 4: Proportion of economic immigration**

**Scenario 1: Increase the proportion of economic immigration in total immigration**

**Scenario 2: Maintain the proportion of economic immigration in total immigration for the entire period**

The Québec government determines the selection criteria for applicants in the economic immigration class programs. It can therefore select people based particularly on their socio-economic profile and their knowledge of French, in order to more effectively meet its economic, linguistic and demographic needs.

The proportion of economic immigration slid below the 60% mark in 2016. In 2019, it was about 57% of total immigration, similar to the proportion in 2018. In 2020, it was just over half (51%) of total immigration in Québec, and then increased to 53% in 2021, and 66% in 2022. In the context of the labour shortage, the contributions of immigrants admitted in this class will be important for meeting the needs of the labour market. On the basis of the projected regular targets, the proportion of economic immigration will reach 70% by 2027 with the first proposed threshold scenario. This increase is in line with the one started in the previous multi-year plan. In the case of the second proposed threshold scenario, the proportion of economic immigration is at a level similar to the one observed over the last few years.

## **ORIENTATION 5: Youth immigration**

### **Encourage the permanent immigration of young people in order to help reduce the effects of ageing on the Québec population in the medium term**

The ageing of Québec's population is a demographic phenomenon that has worsened in recent years. The proportion of the population aged 15 to 64 will continue to decline, according to the demographic projections of the Institut de la statistique du Québec. This trend will exert considerable pressure on the labour market. The arrival of immigrants, and especially young families, fosters the demographic growth of Québec, in terms of the birth rate, by rejuvenating the working-age population and even by reducing the demographic dependency ratio.<sup>21</sup>

From 2016 to 2020, more than a quarter of admitted immigrants were children or dependants. The arrival in Québec of a high number of children fosters successful integration and the increased participation of immigrants in Québec society, based on the adaptation capacity and potential for language learning of younger people.

Year in and year out, people under 35 represent over 60% of the immigrants admitted to Québec. The people admitted in skilled worker programs greatly contribute to this phenomenon, because about two-thirds of them are under 35. The proportion of young people is also high among refugees and people in similar situations and among spouses in family class immigration.

## **ORIENTATION 6: Inventories and wait times for obtaining permanent residence**

### **With the collaboration of the federal government, process the selection and permanent residence applications of skilled workers within 12 months**

In its service statement, the Ministère undertakes to render a decision in a maximum of six months for 90% of permanent selection applications made through the PEQ and the Regular Skilled Worker Program.

Once the Québec Selection Certificate is received, the applicants must file an application for permanent residence with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The projected admission wait time for skilled workers selected by Québec is about one year. The number of people who submitted an application for permanent residence with Québec as their destination and whose applications are currently pending processing at the IRCC decreased significantly between the beginning of 2020 and the end of 2022. The admission targets in the Québec immigration plan for 2023 are also sufficient for applications pending processing at the IRCC to be processed now. Beginning in 2023, any wait time between selection and admission depends on the IRCC's operating capacity. The IRCC should speed up the processing of permanent residence applications for skilled workers headed for Québec in order to ensure our admission targets are

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<sup>21</sup> According to Statistics Canada, the demographic dependency ratio is calculated using the number of young people (from 0 to 19 years old) and the number of seniors (65 and up) for every 100 workers (20 to 64 years old).

achieved. Faster access to permanent residence will help meet the needs of the Québec labour market in the coming years. The goal is to ensure that the selection and permanent residence applications of skilled workers are processed within 12 months.

## **ORIENTATION 7: Labour market needs**

### **Foster integration into the labour market of people in all immigration classes, in order to meet Québec's diverse labour needs, including priority sectors in all regions**

The labour market in Québec is made up of different regional realities. Needs may differ significantly from one region to another, in terms of economic sectors, occupations sought and types of expertise required.

In recent years, the Ministère has set up a vast regional network covering all the regions of Québec. Through the improvement of its regional network, and in coordination with Services Québec, the Ministère wants to offer customized support to immigrants in the regions, to the communities that welcome them, to the partners that offer them services and to the businesses that employ them.

Several tools launched in recent years will facilitate networking between people interested in immigrating to Québec and the communities that want to receive them.

- ▶ The Employer Portal that is part of the Arrima platform allows Québec employers to search for and contact foreign nationals whose socio-occupational characteristics match their needs.
- ▶ The Journées Québec international recruitment missions provide people interested in immigrating to Québec with job offers from employers in all regions of Québec and in priority sectors for Québec.
- ▶ The implementation of Accompagnement Québec's predeparture service supports the integration of immigrants even before they arrive in Québec; this support continues after their arrival.
- ▶ A new integrated prospecting and attraction approach for skilled workers abroad, supported by partners in Québec and abroad, also allows Québec businesses to meet some of their workforce needs.
- ▶ Through the economic immigration and expression-of-interest programs, a variety of criteria encourage immigrants to settle outside of the metropolitan community of Montréal immediately on their arrival in Québec.

These tools exist for all the regions of Québec, including the Montréal region, but they showcase the benefits and unique character of each region of Québec.

In the period from 2024 to 2027, it is planned that efforts will continue and certain existing measures will be enhanced to increase the proportion of immigrants who settle in regions especially affected by the worker shortage.

## **ORIENTATION 8: Recognition of skills**

**Improve the actions leading to the recognition of immigrants' skills so that they can integrate quickly into the Québec labour market and hold jobs that match their skills**

The objective of the structuring measures in the Plan d'action interministériel concerté en reconnaissance des compétences is to improve and accelerate the recognition of skills of people trained abroad so they quickly join the Québec labour market in a job that matches their skills. In collaboration with government partners, regulatory bodies and teaching institutions, the Ministère intends to pursue the deployment of these measures and the development of skills recognition to make it easier for immigrants to practise their trades and occupations in Québec.

## **ORIENTATION 9: Regionalization of immigration**

**Ensure the sustainable settlement and successful integration, in French, of immigrants all across Québec, to more effectively meet regional labour market needs, in collaboration with regional stakeholders**

Immigration is one of the levers that can respond to regional workforce issues. To facilitate the long-term settlement of immigrants in all regions of Québec, the Ministère is counting on increased dialogue with economic, municipal and regional community stakeholders. The involvement of these regional players is essential to anchor the actions in the practical reality experienced in the different regions. Thanks to this increased cooperation and to programs adapted to regional realities, such as the Programme d'appui aux collectivités (PAC – Community Support Program), communities will be better equipped to welcome immigrants. The Plan d'action ministériel sur la régionalisation de l'immigration will also be supported by innovative and practical measures to increase the proportion of immigrants who settle in the regions.

## **ORIENTATION 10: Government coordination of immigrant integration services**

**A. Promote the reception, integration and retention of immigrants in all regions, relying on reception and support services for immigrants**

**B. Provide governmental leadership to document our accommodation capacity**

Since early 2019, the government has completely reformed its francization and integration services, injecting significant sums in each of the last four Québec budgets. The pandemic also required rapid adaptation of the services offered by the Ministère since March 2020 and after the crisis was over.

Thanks to these achievements, the Ministère has rectified several gaps identified in the Québec Auditor-General's report, submitted in fall 2017, about the francization and integration of immigrants.

The service offer of the government and its partners has been clearly improved, making it possible to offer immigrants the tools required to successfully integrate into Québec society with respect for democratic values and the Québec values expressed in the *Charte des droits et libertés de la personne*. In collaboration with its partners, the Ministère will enhance the skills recognition support service to help immigrants make an informed choice about employment opportunities or the steps to take, depending on the skills they have already acquired abroad. This journey can be offered from the immigrant's country of origin or in Québec, to help them prepare for integration into a job that matches their skills.

To finalize the reform of the francization and integration services, the Québec government wants to deepen the overall approach developed in recent years to encourage the accommodation, integration and retention of immigrants in all regions. Accompagnement Québec, a free, customized service offered to immigrants, will be the cornerstone of this approach to offering customized, high-quality support services. The Ministère's integration assistance officers are present in all regions of Québec and assess the immediate and future needs of immigrants, whether they are in Québec or still in their country of origin.

Although some services are available from abroad, the Ministère plans to expand its offer so people can start their francization and integration processes as soon as possible, improving the chances of successful integration when they arrive in Québec.

In addition to this service offering, the Ministère intends to rally the stakeholders around the specific needs of immigrants and join in on the development of solutions. Being a frontline player and serving as a leader in all areas that can affect the integration of immigrants is one of the Ministère's goals. And that includes documenting Québec's accommodation capacities.

## **ORIENTATION 11: Humanitarian commitment**

### **Pursue Québec's humanitarian commitment by welcoming refugees and other people who need protection, as well as asylum seekers**

In 2022, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimated that over 103 million people around the world were forced to flee their homes, largely due to armed conflict, widespread violence or human rights violations.<sup>22</sup> Québec enjoys a well-established ecosystem for welcoming and integrating refugees in the main host cities in its different regions. Every year, hundreds of refugees are also welcomed and supported financially by groups of individuals or organizations that sponsor them for a year. Furthermore, in a situation in which forced displacements may increase,<sup>23</sup> Québec could put in place special programs in response to specific humanitarian crises.

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations Refugee Agency. *2022 Mid-Year Trends report*.

<sup>23</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Forced migration or displacement*, Migration Data Portal, 2022.

Also, since 2017, Québec has had an increase in the number of people claiming asylum in its territory. Many of these people have been recognized as refugees by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB). These people were welcomed permanently by Québec.

## **ORIENTATION 12: Immigration levels**

### **Scenario 1:**

**A. Gradually increase total targets to attain 60,000 admissions in 2027**

**B. Continually admit people who submit a permanent residence application after receiving a CSQ from the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ**

### **Scenario 2: Maintain immigration targets at 50,000 annual admissions for the period**

In 2019, the progressive increase in the number of immigrants admitted, planned for the period 2020-2022, was particularly aimed at meeting Québec’s economic and demographic needs. The labour shortage in many economic sectors and demographic issues are still major trends.

The first threshold scenario proposes gradually increasing the number of immigrants admitted in order to attain 60,000 admissions by the end of the period. The proposed increase is about 10,000 more than the planned number of immigrants that will be admitted in 2023 and is concentrated in the skilled worker subclass. This gradual increase in admissions will enable an increased contribution to the labour needs in certain priority activity sectors. Despite the labour shortage noted in several sectors, an annual increase in immigration levels must not conflict with Québec’s accommodation and integration capacities. It is important to find a balance between these two elements. The current context, which is putting pressure on accommodation capacity, requires prudence and encourages a greater focus on selecting people who are already present in Québec and, in particular, students who have graduated.

People selected under the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ are already participating in Québec society, in particular thanks to their knowledge of French and their active lives within their educational institution and their community. Holding a diploma from a francophone program is a major asset for people who wish to work in Québec and makes it possible, both for immigrants and employers, to avoid recourse to francization and skills and diploma recognition procedures. Consequently, the first scenario proposes continuously admitting people who have been selected under the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ. Continuous admission means that the applications for permanent residence are processed by the federal government as they are submitted, without regard to regular targets. Most of these foreign nationals are already residing in Québec and already receiving several public services. Therefore, their transition to permanent residence status should no lead to any additional pressure on the public services they are already being offered. This new approach makes it possible to establish thresholds consistent with accommodation and integration capacities, while effectively meeting Québec’s socio-economic needs.

The second scenario proposes maintaining immigration thresholds at 50,000 annual admissions for the period and maintaining admissions under the “Graduate diploma” stream of the PEQ at the regular targets. This scenario is consistent with the thresholds over the last few years, and does not increase pressure on government services and Québec’s accommodation capacity. It is planned that the proportion of people already in Québec who will obtain their permanent residence will increase during the period. This scenario would limit Québec’s capacity to respond to specific labour needs, such as those of Opération main-d’oeuvre, for example.

## Projected admissions

The multi-year orientations proposed for the 2024-2027 period aim to more effectively define the composition and characteristics of Québec immigration. Tables 1 and 2 show the projected change in immigration that should result from the implementation of the proposed orientations in scenarios 1 and 2 of orientation 12, during the 2024-2027 period.

Once adopted, the multi-year planning orientations will allow us to establish annual immigration plans for 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027. These plans will specify the number of immigrants that Québec plans to welcome and the number of immigration selection decisions that may be made for people who want to settle in Québec permanently.

**Table 1 – Projected admissions for the 2024-2027 period based on Scenario 1:**

**A. Gradually increase total targets to attain 60,000 admissions in 2027, and**

**B. Continuously admit people who submit an application for permanent residence after obtaining a CSQ under the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ**

Based on this scenario, the levels do not include admissions of people selected under the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ, since one of the multi-year planning orientations is to continually admit these people. This means that the proportions in the table do not take into account admissions from the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ. Taking into account the people selected under the “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ will have positive impacts on the knowledge of French proportion, the Québec selection proportion and the economic immigration proportion.

	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Economic immigration</b>	<b>31,950</b>	<b>35,950</b>	<b>38,950</b>	<b>41,950</b>
Skilled workers <sup>1</sup>	30,650	35,500	38,500	41,500
Business immigration	1,300	450	450	450
<b>Family class</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>10,400</b>
<b>Refugees and people in similar situations</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>7,200</b>
Refugees selected abroad <sup>2</sup>	3,650	3,650	3,650	3,650
Refugees recognized within Québec <sup>3</sup>	3,550	3,550	3,550	3,550
<b>Other immigrants<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>450</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>Total immigration</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>57,000</b>	<b>60,000</b>
Québec selection proportion <sup>5</sup>	72%	74%	76%	77%
Economic immigration proportion	64%	67%	68%	70%
Proportion of immigrants who know French	67%	70%	71%	72%
Proportion of adult immigrants who know French	71%	77%	78%	79%
Proportion of knowledge of French in economic immigration (principal applicants)	89%	96%	96%	96%
Proportion of people recognized within Québec	47%	42%	42%	41%

1. Includes people selected in the PEQ “temporary foreign workers” stream, the Regular Skilled Worker Program and the permanent immigration pilot programs.
2. Includes government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees.
3. Includes their dependants abroad.
4. Includes various specific classes of immigrants admitted for humanitarian or public-interest reasons.
5. Economic immigration, refugees selected abroad and other immigrants.

**Table 2 – Projected admissions for the 2024-2027 period based on Scenario 2 :**  
Maintain immigration targets at 50,000 annual admissions for the period

	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Economic immigration</b>	<b>31,950</b>	<b>31,950</b>	<b>31,950</b>	<b>31,950</b>
Skilled workers <sup>1</sup>	30,650	31,500	31,500	31,500
Business immigration	1,300	450	450	450
<b>Family class</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>10,400</b>
<b>Refugees and people in similar situations</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>7,200</b>
Refugees selected abroad <sup>2</sup>	3,650	3,650	3,650	3,650
Refugees recognized within Quebec <sup>3</sup>	3,550	3,550	3,550	3,550
<b>Other immigrants<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>450</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>Total immigration</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>
Québec selection proportion <sup>5</sup>	72%	72%	72%	72%
Economic immigration proportion	64%	64%	64%	64%
Proportion of immigrants who know French	67%	69%	70%	70%
Proportion of adult immigrants who know French	70%	73%	76%	77%
Proportion of knowledge of French in economic immigration (principal applicants)	89%	93%	96%	96%
Proportion of people recognized within Québec	54%	57%	58%	60%

1. Includes people selected in both streams of the Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ), in the Regular Skilled Worker Program and in the permanent immigration pilot programs.
2. Includes government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees.
3. Includes their dependants abroad.
4. Includes various specific classes of immigrants admitted for humanitarian or public-interest reasons.
5. Economic immigration, refugees selected abroad and other immigrants.

# 11. Conclusion

The public consultation on the Planning of Immigration to Québec for the 2024-2027 period will take place at the end of summer 2023. The following orientations will then be examined by a parliamentary committee.

## 1. Increase the proportion of Francophone immigration

- I. Lean toward a selection comprised entirely of adult immigrants who know French in economic immigration programs
- II. Increase the proportion of adults who declare that they know French on admission

## 2. Launch Francisation Québec and increase the knowledge of French among immigrants

- I. Support French-language learning among immigrants residing in Québec
- II. Increase the offer of French-language learning services for immigrants before their arrival in Québec
- III. Increase knowledge of French among temporary foreign workers
- IV. Increase francization in the workplace in collaboration with employers

## 3. Québec selection

Scenario 1: Increase the proportion of people selected by Québec

Scenario 2: Maintain the proportion of people selected by Québec at 72% for the entire period

## 4. Proportion of economic immigration

Scenario 1: Increase the proportion of economic immigration in total immigration

Scenario 2: Maintain the proportion of economic immigration in total immigration for the entire period

## 5. Youth immigration

Encourage the permanent immigration of young people in order to help reduce the effects of ageing on the Québec population in the medium term

## 6. Inventories and wait times for obtaining permanent residence

With the collaboration of the federal government, process the selection and permanent residence applications of skilled workers within 12 months

## **7. Labour market needs**

Foster integration into the labour market of people in all immigration classes, in order to meet Québec's diverse labour needs, including priority sectors in all regions

## **8. Recognition of skills**

Improve the actions leading to the recognition of immigrants' skills so they can integrate quickly into the Québec labour market and hold jobs that match their skills

## **9. Regionalization of immigration**

Ensure the sustainable settlement and successful integration, in French, of immigrants all across Québec, to more effectively meet regional labour market needs, in collaboration with regional stakeholders

## **10. Government coordination of immigrant integration services**

- I. Promote the reception, integration and retention of immigrants in all regions, relying on reception and support services for immigrants
- II. Provide governmental leadership to document our accommodation capacity

## **11. Humanitarian commitment**

Pursue Québec's humanitarian commitment by welcoming refugees and other people who need protection, as well as asylum seekers

## **12. Immigration levels**

Scenario 1:

- I. Gradually increase total targets to 60,000 admissions in 2027
- II. Continually admit people who submit a permanent residence application after receiving a CSQ from the "Québec graduate" stream of the PEQ

Scenario 2: Maintain immigration targets at 50,000 annual admissions for the period

## 12. Appendix

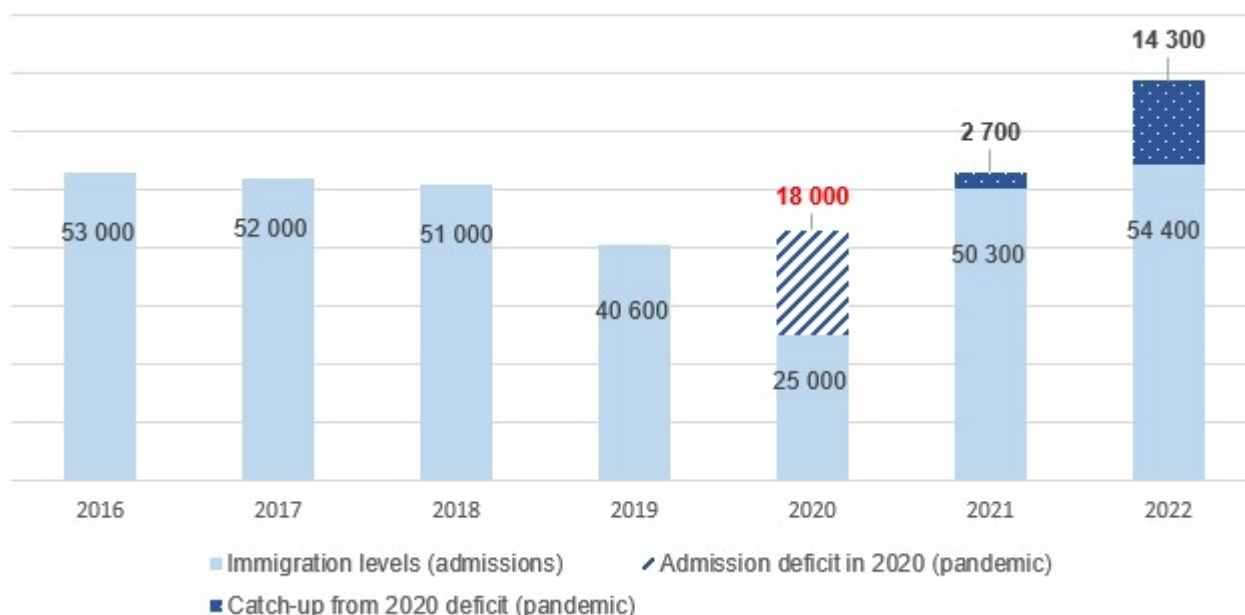
### Principal results from the multi-year immigration plan for 2020-2022

Ten orientations were approved after the public consultation on the *Planning of Immigration to Québec for the 2020-2022 Period*. The orientations approved for that period are presented below, with the compiled results for 2020 to 2022.

#### 1. Gradually increase the number of immigrants admitted during the period to between 49,500 and 52,500 in 2022

The health crisis and border closure decreased the number of immigrants admitted in relation to the target levels for 2020. Only 25,227 immigrants were admitted in 2020, about 18,000 fewer than the minimum target planned. The change in the numbers of immigrants admitted from 2016 to 2022 highlights the decrease in immigration levels in 2019 and 2020.

**Figure 9: Change in the number of immigrants admitted from 2016 to 2022**



Source: Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, Direction de la planification de l'immigration

In 2019, the decrease in admissions of approximately 10,000 reflects the Québec government's commitment to temporarily reduce the number of immigrants admitted to improve their integration into Québec society by offering them enhanced integration and francization services.

The Québec immigration plan for 2021 targeted the admission of between 44,500 and 47,500 immigrants, in keeping with the levels planned in the planning exercise for 2020 to 2022. The admission of an additional 7,000 people was also planned for 2021, representing a portion of the admissions not carried out in 2020. In total, 50,275 immigrants were admitted in 2021. While the target number of regular admissions was achieved, catch-up admissions were only partially achieved, at 2,700.

Therefore, in the 2022 immigration plan, it was decided to continue with the regular admissions from the 2020-2022 multi-year immigration plan – that is, from 49,500 to 52,500 admissions – and add all admissions not carried out in 2020. Considering the partial catch-up from 2021, the remaining balance was 15,300 missing admissions. The number of people admitted in 2022 was 54,357 regular admissions and 14,347 catch-up admissions due to the pandemic.

## 2. Attain a proportion of approximately 65% of people admitted in the economic immigration class by the end of the period

The proportion of economic immigration was 51% in 2020, 53% in 2021 and 66% in 2022.

The target of 65% was therefore achieved. In 2020, however, travel restrictions to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus had major consequences for the number of people admitted in the economic immigration class. In 2021, to maximize the achievement of the overall admission target, targets including catch-up admissions were exceeded in certain classes, particularly the family class, refugees recognized within Québec and other immigrants. The family class was not subject to travel restrictions, and the refugees recognized within Québec and other immigrants were already in Québec. The targets were not achieved in other classes, however, such as skilled workers, business people and refugees selected abroad. This means that the economic immigration target was not achieved. In 2022, because of rebalancing due to the pandemic, and despite exceeding the targets for the family class and refugees recognized within Québec, this target was achieved.

## 3. Prioritize the permanent selection of foreign workers and Québec graduates who meet the needs of the labour market and who are living temporarily in the territory

Because of the terms of the Québec experience program (PEQ), applicants selected through this program already had work experience in Québec. For the entire period from 2020 to 2022, 67% of skilled workers were selected through this program. The “Québec graduate” stream of the PEQ represented about 26% of the people selected in the skilled worker programs and the PEQ Workers program represented 41%. The other skilled workers selected were invited to submit a selection application through the RSWP or applied to one of the three permanent immigration pilot programs. The proportion of people invited through the RSWP who were staying temporarily in Québec when they received their invitation was 24% in this period.

#### 4. Harmonize selection with short-term labour market needs by selecting principal applicants who are skilled workers with training that is in demand or a validated job offer

Beginning in August 2021, the Ministère started inviting people by classification through the RSWP. The classification is determined by a score that gives an advantage to people whose occupation is affected by a labour shortage or who have a permanent job offer from an employer that has been validated by the Ministère.

In fall 2021, the government launched Opération main-d'œuvre (OpMO), which targeted the worker shortage in certain priority sectors for specific occupations. The Ministère is contributing to the government effort by selecting, on the basis of targeted invitations in the Regular Skilled Worker Program (RSWP), people with occupations that have been prioritized by OpMO. In 2021, therefore, every person invited to apply for permanent selection had an occupation that was targeted in OpMO (2,835 invitations). In 2022, of everyone invited, nearly 70% (6,318 invitations) had an OpMO-targeted occupation. Furthermore, the vast majority of people who were invited had an occupation considered to be facing a labour shortage or slight labour shortage, according to the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale. This was the case of 87% of the people invited in 2021 and of 94% of those invited in 2022.

With regard to validated job offers, in 2022, 1,076 people with a validated job offer were invited to apply for permanent selection, 568 of whom were headed for the regions. There were 862 such people invited in 2021, 464 of them headed for the regions, and 588 in 2020, with 196 headed for the regions.

#### 5. Speed up the arrival of people in the economic immigration class to respond to Québec's needs more quickly

The Ministère has made a commitment to process all PEQ and RSWP applications within six months. For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, 95% of applications finalized in the PEQ were processed within six months or less, in keeping with the commitment. The proportion was 99% for applications finalized in the RSWP.

The federal government's processing time must be added to Québec's time. In 2020 and 2021, the pandemic pushed up the number of people in the economic immigration class with a permanent residence application pending processing, since fewer people were able to be admitted in 2020 and 2021 than projected in Québec's immigration plans.

In 2022, catching up on 12,500 admissions for skilled workers, in combination with the reduction in permanent selection applications made through the PEQ after the new selection conditions came into effect, considerably reduced the number of people selected in skilled worker programs who had pending permanent residence applications with the federal government and, consequently, shortened the admission wait time for these people. The projected admission wait time for people selected by Québec went from about two years at the end of 2021 to about one

year at the end of 2022. At the end of 2022, the number of skilled workers awaiting processing or ready to be admitted to Québec was about 25,900, 49% fewer than at the beginning of 2021. For business immigration, application management exercises and selection targets lower than admission targets in particular reduced the number of people with a permanent residence application pending with the federal government. This number dropped from 19,500 at the beginning of 2020 to 15,400 at the end of 2022, a decrease of 21%. The projected admission wait time for business immigrants with a permanent residence application pending with the federal government therefore dropped from about five years at the beginning of 2020 to three and a half years at the end of 2022.

## 6. Support employers in all regions of Québec in the recruitment of temporary foreign workers, to increase their number, reduce wait time before their arrival and facilitate procedures to respond to short-term labour needs

On December 31, 2022, 108,400 temporary foreign workers were present in Québec, an increase of 35% compared with 2019.

Tools have been provided to businesses to help them with their labour needs.

The Journées Québec held by the Québec government and its partners Montréal International, Québec International and the Société de développement économique de Drummondville are virtual and in-person recruitment missions that allow Québec businesses to hire temporary workers who want to settle in Québec.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, 17 Journées Québec missions were held. Recruitment efforts were stepped up in Francophone and francotropic<sup>24</sup> territories, in order to attract candidates who would more easily integrate into Québec in French. The Opération main-d'œuvre sectors (healthcare, education, engineering, construction, educational childcare and information technology) were prioritized, while still leaving room for other sectors with significant workforce needs, such as hospitality, restaurants, transportation and manufacturing.

In 2022, according to the preliminary data available at March 31, 2023, a total of 4,027 people were hired through a recruitment activity, exceeding the target of 3,000. In 2021, 2,292 people were hired through a recruitment activity, exceeding the target of 1,500. The previous year, in 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, 791 people were hired through a recruitment activity, exceeding the target of 400.

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<sup>24</sup> Country where the official language is not French, but where the population speaks French or a language with a linguistic affinity with French (e.g., Romance or Latin languages). It may also be a country that was influenced by the French language during its history.

The Ministère's international deployment in 2019 allowed it to take a strong position on the world stage to attract potential candidates who meet the needs of Québec's businesses. This deployment was further optimized in 2022 to align international recruitment activities with the government orientations to attract Francophones, regionalize immigration and encourage the arrival of specialists in sectors prioritized by the Québec government (Opération main-d'œuvre).

The service offering for businesses was also reinforced by the web launch of the Employer Portal interface for businesses, in November 2020. This new interface gives employers direct access to people who have submitted an expression of interest in immigrating to Québec. After their networking efforts, the businesses can receive custom support to help them choose the right immigration program and to carry out the various steps. Between 2019 and 2022, 5,094 businesses in all the regions took advantage of support offered by the Ministère.

## 7. Prioritize the selection of immigrants familiar with democratic values and the Québec values expressed in Québec's *Charte des droits et libertés de la personne*

Since January 1, 2020, foreign nationals who want to settle in Québec permanently must receive an attestation of learning about democratic values and Québec values. This condition applies to all permanent selection applications made through an economic immigration program. For 2020, 2021 and 2022, the success rate for receiving the attestation was nearly 100%.

## 8. Target the admission of adult immigrants who know French by expanding access to government francization services

The proportion of adult immigrants admitted who knew French at the time of admission was 65% in 2020, 72% in 2021 and 71% in 2022, compared with 54% in 2019. This increase in the knowledge of French reflects the profile of the people selected in earlier years, particularly through the PEQ, where knowledge of French is a selection criterion for the program. The increase can also be explained by the admission of a greater proportion of people already in Québec, as they are more likely to know French.

In summer 2019, people with temporary status became eligible for francization services and incentive financial assistance, which encouraged them to learn French and facilitated their access to the PEQ.

The distinct number of people involved in francization increased by 17.4% between 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The biggest increase was in part-time training (33.5%), and the number of participants in full-time training increased by 1.5%.

Although the data for 2022-2023 were incomplete at the time of writing, an increase has already been observed. Comparing the data from April 2021 to March 2022 to those from April 2022 to December 2022 reveals a 2.4% increase in the number of people who took a French course (full-time, part-time and francization online). The biggest increase in that period was in part-time training, at 5.1%.

In 2022:

- ▶ 37,000 people took advantage of francization services, an increase of 16% over the previous year. Just over one-third (35%) of these people had temporary status during the reference period.
- ▶ Nearly 70,000 people received integration services from partner organizations. A total of 8,800 people benefited from the needs evaluation service offered by Accompagnement Québec, nearly double the number in 2021.

## 9. Encourage permanent immigration of young people, in order to respond to Québec's demographic issues

The Québec government prioritizes the selection of young immigrants who are likely to successfully integrate into Québec society. Youth immigration helps limit the effects of the ageing of the population and increases the proportion of working-age people in the total population of Québec. The proportion of people under 35 who were admitted was 63% in 2020, 65% in 2021 and 62% in 2022, compared with 62% in 2019.

## 10. Pursue Québec's humanitarian commitment by welcoming refugees and other people who need international protection

The Québec government has contributed for many decades to international solidarity efforts by welcoming refugees and other people in distress. About 18% of the people admitted in 2020 were in the category of refugees and people in similar situations or the other immigrant class, which includes people selected for humanitarian or public-interest reasons. Despite the circumstances related to the pandemic, the proportion was 18% in 2020 and 19% in 2021, comparable to the proportion in 2019 (19%). The proportion was 15% in 2022, due, in part, to the catch-up in the other classes.

The special program for refugee claimants during the COVID-19 pandemic also admitted 3,240 people in 2021 and 2022.

## 2023 immigration plan

The 2023 immigration plan, tabled in the National Assembly in December 2022, is based on the orientations adopted in the multi-year immigration plan for 2020-2022 and sets a total regular target of between 49,500 and 52,500 admissions. The projected proportion of immigrants admitted through Québec selection should be about 74% of planned admissions, and economic immigration should represent about 65% of planned admissions.

To speed up the effects of the reform of the business immigration programs, the Ministère asked Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, in January 2023, to complete the processing of all current or pending permanent residence applications in the business immigration subclass before the end of 2023. Given the IRCC's operating capacity, the processing will take place in 2023 and 2024.

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