

- fostering a strong and viable economy in all regions of Canada.

These objectives are supported by the three main components of immigration: family class, refugees, and independent (economic) immigration.

Selection Criteria

The immigration program is subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This means that immigrants must be selected without discrimination regarding race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion or sex. All selection criteria are universal: an applicant in one part of the world is assessed against the same criteria applying to his or her particular immigrant class as an applicant in any other part of the world. All immigrants, regardless of the type of application, must be in good health and of good character. In addition, applicants must meet the criteria relevant to their specific category.

Family Class

Family class applicants are "self-selected" — that is, they may qualify to come to Canada on the basis of their close relationship with a family member already in Canada, who agrees to sponsor the applicant for up to 10 years. The sponsorship undertaking is an enforceable agreement to provide the necessities of life. Sponsors, other than sponsors of spouses and their dependent children, must meet minimum income requirements. No one can sponsor if he or she is in default of another sponsorship undertaking.

Refugees and Designated Class Members

Successful in-Canada refugee claimants are eligible to be granted permanent resident status. In addition, refugees and members of designated classes — people in refugee-like situations — are admitted from abroad. Their ability to become successfully established in Canada is assessed by an informal review of the factors in the immigrant selection system.

Refugee Women

In recognition of the special problems faced by refugee women, Canada has developed and promoted international measures designed to respond to their needs. For example, Canada was the first country to institute a special refugee program, known as "Women at Risk". This program assists refugee women in particular need of protection.

Skilled Workers

The independent immigrant selection system, or "point" system as it is often called, assesses factors such as age, education, knowledge of one or both of Canada's official languages, specific vocational preparation, job training, occupation, arranged employment or designated occupation.

Business Immigrants

Business immigrants comprise investors, entrepreneurs and self-employed persons. Investors and entrepreneurs are admitted on the basis of an approved investment, or the applicant's ability and commitment to manage a business that will create or maintain jobs for Canadians. Self-employed persons, a small part of the program, are required to contribute significant economic or other benefits to Canada; there is no job-creation requirement.

Immigrant Sources and Destinations

In 1965, about 85 percent of immigrants to Canada came from Europe and the United States. Today, people from those areas represent about 20 percent of immigration, while about 50 percent come from Asia. The change reflects the non-discriminatory nature of immigration policy, which is consistent with the Charter as well as changing pressures to migrate. The share of Canada's immigrants from various world areas reflects, more or less, those areas' shares of the world population, although Asia is slightly under-represented and South and Central America are slightly over-represented.