Immigrants in Ontario: Linking Spatial Settlement Patterns and Labour Force Characteristics

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Introduction

In Canada immigrant settlement patterns depict a spatial polarisation between rural and urban regions. In 2001, immigrants constituted 18.4% of Canada's population (Citizenship and Immigration 2003). The vast majority of these immigrants settled in urban regions and industrialized provinces (Beshiri and Alfred 2002). In 2002, Ontario received 58.3% of all immigrants to Canada, most of whom settle in Toronto (Citizen and Immigration 2003). Historically, changes in immigration policy have fluctuated in response to employment opportunities, economic goals and labour shortages; such changes have influenced the location and composition of settlement patterns in various regions across Canada (Hiebert 1994, Green and Green 1996, Knowles 1997, Kelly and Trebilock 1998). In the face of these changes, there is an increased interest in understanding how settlement policies direct the inflow of immigrants toward highly populated regions and recently towards smaller cities and towns.

There has been a growing interest and discussion among various levels of government with regard to a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrant settlement. This interest has developed for several reasons. The increasing concentration of immigrants in Canada's three largest cities (Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal) has challenged the capacity and rate at which these cities can accommodate for immigrant flows. Immigrant dispersal could potential reduce growth pressures in the Greater Toronto Area and other popular metropolitan regions. In addition, there has been a growing interest among provincial governments in the Provincial and Territorial Nominee Program to attract immigrants who would settle in less urbanized regions (Walton Roberts 2004). In May of 2004, federal and provincial immigration ministers signed a Letter of Intent giving Ontario municipalities the ability to contribute to immigration matters, through a Canada-Ontario immigration agreement. There has also been an increased interest in the size and quality of the immigrant labour force in relation to economic development, particularly in light of regional disparities and labour shortages in rural regions across Canada (Citizenship and Immigration 2001).

For some rural communities immigration could be an essential component of a competitive and skilled labour force. In addition attracting immigrants to rural communities could contribute to the social fabric of multiculturalism in rural Canada, increase local community capacity and leadership, create local economic opportunities, fulfill labour shortages and potentially increase political influence of rural Canada (Citizenship

and Immigration 2001, Walton Roberts 2004). However, immigration accounts for a shrinking proportion of Canada's rural population. In 2001 immigrants represented less than seven percent of the total farm population. In addition, the 2001 Canadian Census revealed that the proportion of Canada's immigrant farm population has continuously decreased over the last three decades (Statistics Canada, 2003). Despite this trend, existing research on immigrant settlement in Canada has focused on Census Metropolitan Areas and in particular, on the gateway cities of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal Lo and Wang 1997, Ray 1999, Hiebert 2000, Bauder and Sharpe 2002, Rural and Small Town Analysis Bulletin 2002). Settlement patterns of immigrants in rural regions have been neglected.

Objective

This document presents finding from a research project that systematically assesses the distribution of immigrant settlement patterns across Ontario. The purpose was (1) to *identify the variations in immigrant settlement patterns* and (2) *link these patterns to labour force characteristics of the regions of settlement.* The research project was structured around three specific objectives.

- *To identify and develop a profile of the spatial distribution of immigrants in Ontario.*
- *To develop a profile of the labour market characteristics of regions immigrants settle in.*
- *To identify immigrant motivations and obstacles in the context of labour market characteristics for settling in specific regions outside of the Greater Toronto Area.*

Details of the Study

Ontario was selected as the prime study area due to the number of immigrants, which the province receives, and the overwhelming role of Toronto as a gateway city. Particular focus areas outside of the Greater Toronto Area were the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph.

Figure 1: Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph and Toronto
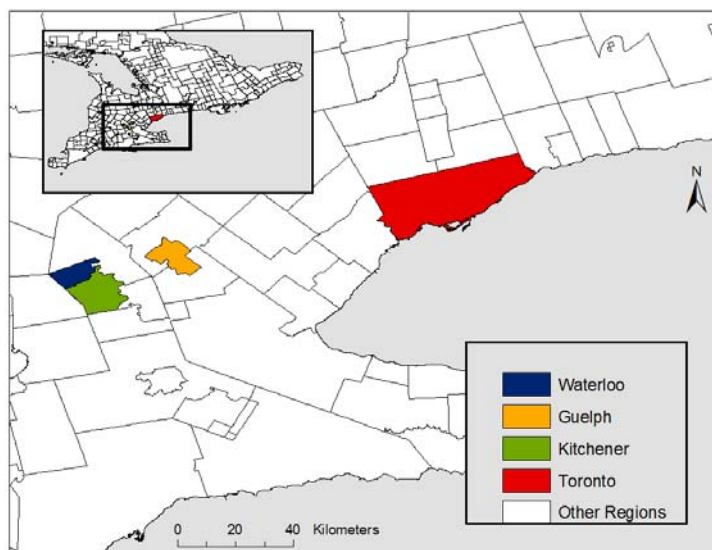
Several methods of analysis were used to investigate the geographical distribution of immigrant settlement patterns in relation to labour force characteristics and other factors that shape settlement decisions. First, an analysis of census data identified urban, intermediate and rural regions across Ontario (see Appendix for further details). Figure 2 displays this classification scheme.

Figure 2: Urban, Intermediate and Rural Classification Scheme for Ontario, 2001
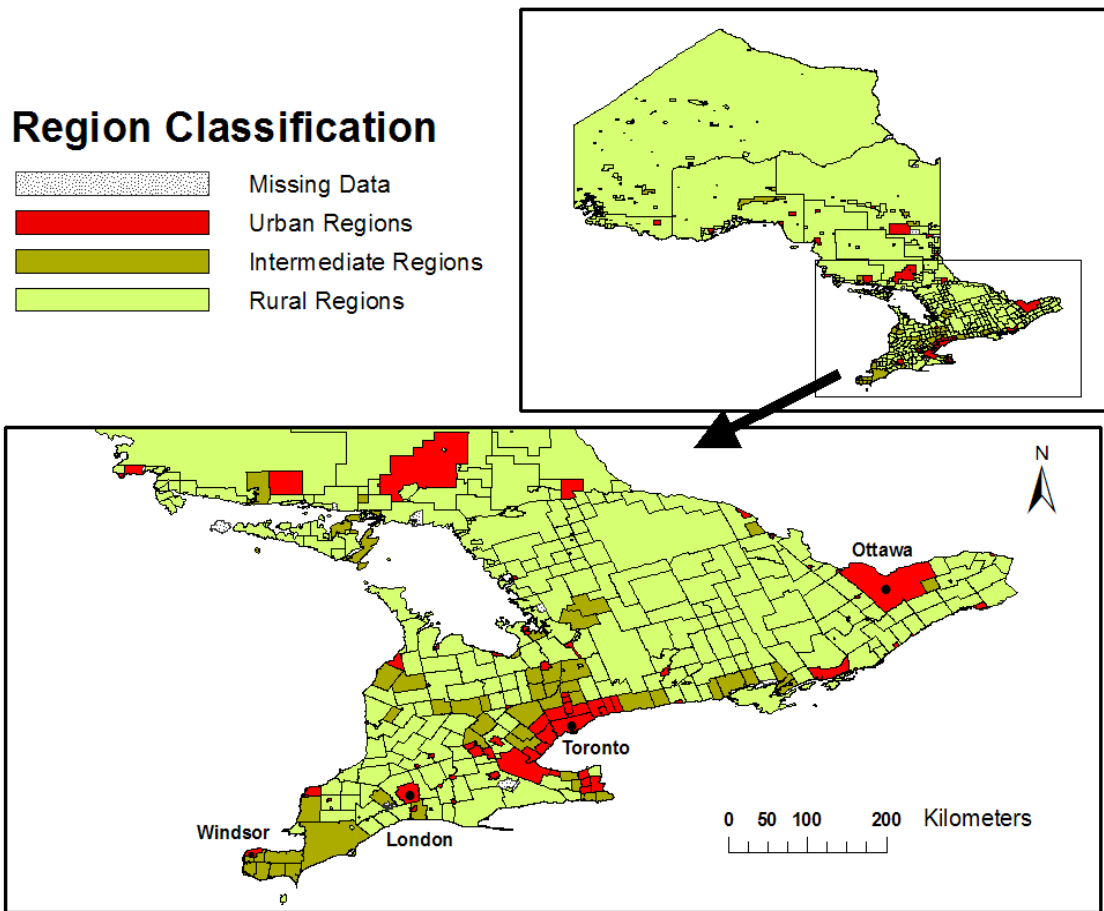
Source: Calculated from the 2001 Canadian Census of Population

Location quotients were calculated to compare the spatial concentration of recent[1] immigrants in a given census subdivision relative to the total population of Ontario. Separate location quotients were calculated for urban, intermediate and rural regions independently (see Appendix). Location quotients greater than one indicate that the immigrant population is more concentrated within a given area relative to this subdivision's overall share of the population. Location quotients equal to one show that the share of immigrant population in a subdivision matches the share of total immigrant population. Values less than one indicate that the census subdivision has a lower proportion of immigrant population. The location quotients were first mapped for spatial analysis. Second, a multivariate regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between immigrant settlement and an area's labour force characteristics. Third, 19 interviews were conducted at two settlement and service agencies which assist immigrants with their job search and settlement process outside the Toronto area.

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[1] Recent immigrants refer persons who came to Canada between 1996 and 2001 and were granted the right by immigration authorities to live permanently in Canada.

Findings

Among the 3,029,350 immigrants who lived in Ontario in 2001, roughly 91% resided in urban regions, and less than 5 percent in rural regions. Of immigrants who came to Canada between 1996 and 2001 and who settled in Ontario, over 96% live in urban regions, and less than four percent in intermediate and rural regions (Table 1). Apparently, urban regions in Ontario are far more popular destinations among recent immigrants than rural or intermediate areas.

Table 1: Immigrant Distribution by Region, 2001

	Total Population (2001)	Total Immigrants	Total Immigrants (%)	Percent Immigrants of Total Immigrant Population	Total Recent Immigrants (1996-2001)	Total Recent Immigrants (%)	Percent Recent Immigrants of Total Population
Canada	30,007,094	5,448,480	18.2	--------------	963,325	3.21	--------------
Ontario	11,387,629	3,029,350	26.6	--------------	538,540	4.73	--------------
Urban	8,749,123	2,763,045	31.6	91.2	521,760	96.9	6.0
Intermediate	1,151,334	138,305	12.0	4.6	9,385	1.7	0.8
Rural	1,487,172	128,000	8.6	4.2	7,395	1.4	0.5

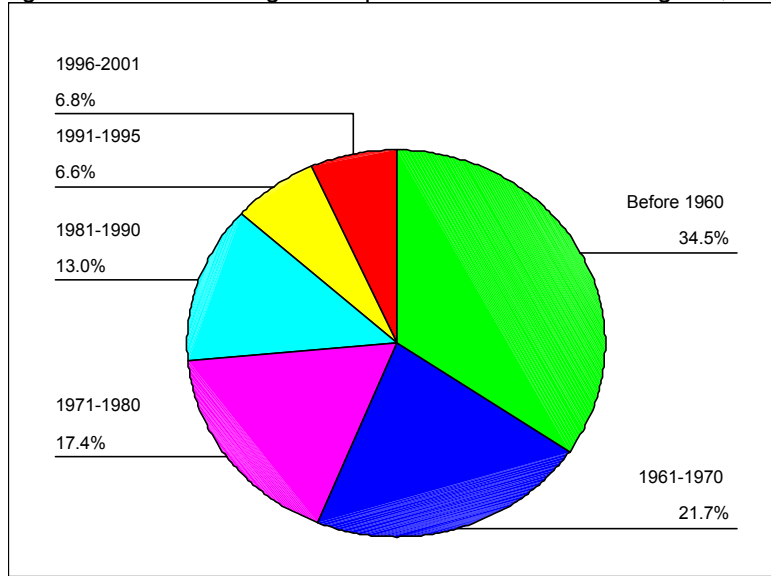Source: Calculated from 2001 Canadian Census of Population

Figures 3-5 show that urban regions contain a greater mix of immigrants in terms of period of immigration. The distribution of immigrant cohort across intermediate and rural regions is heavily dominated by immigrants who came to Canada before 1970.

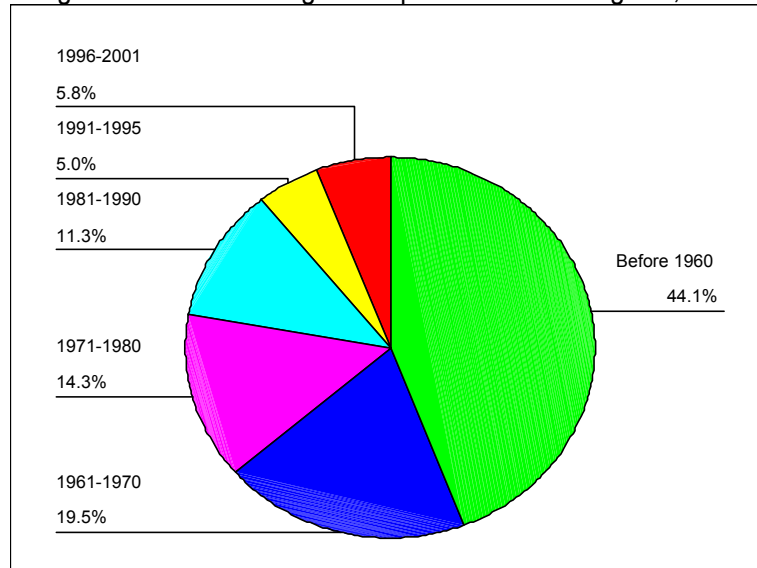Figure 3: Percent Immigrant Population: Urban Regions, 2001
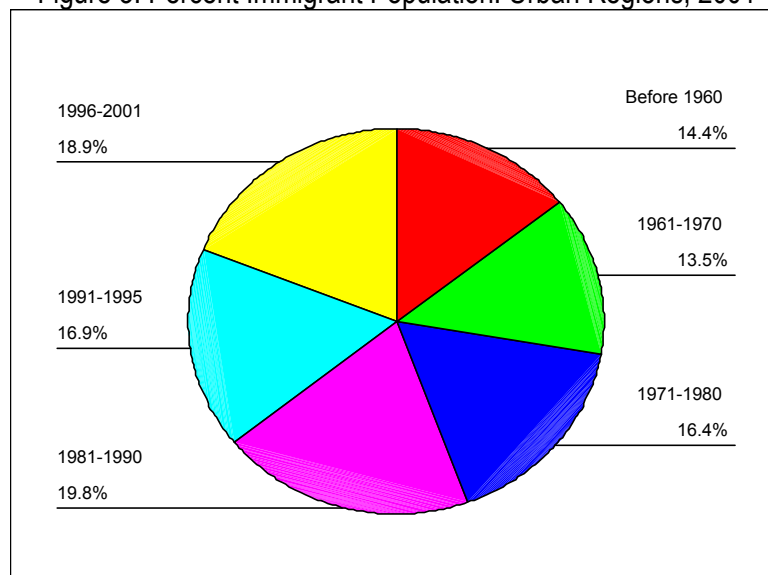
Source: Calculated from 2001 Canadian Census of Population

Figure 4: Percent Immigrant Population: Intermediate Regions, 2001

1996-2001
6.8%

1991-1995
6.6%

1981-1990
13.0%

1971-1980
17.4%

Before 1960
34.5%

1961-1970
21.7%

Source: Calculated from 2001 Canadian Census of Population

Figure 5: Percent Immigrant Population: Rural Regions, 2001

1996-2001
5.8%

1991-1995
5.0%

1981-1990
11.3%

1971-1980
14.3%

Before 1960
44.1%

1961-1970
19.5%

Source: Calculated from 2001 Canadian Census of Population

Among recent immigrants, a relatively large proportion in intermediate and rural regions was born in Europe, Central and South America and the United States. In comparison, in urban regions many immigrants came from Asian countries. For example, over 30 percent of recent immigrants who settled in intermediate regions were born in Europe. In rural regions half the recent immigrants were born in Europe. In contrast over 60 percent of recent immigrants in urban regions were born in Asia and less than 20 percent were born in Europe.

Geographical Patterns of Settlement

The analysis involving location quotients revealed that recent immigrants concentrate in areas surrounding Toronto, as well as the medium-size cities Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph, Hamilton, and London (Figure 6). Interestingly, some of the highest location quotients among recent immigrants can be found within townships, including Plummer Additional, Dawn-Euphemia, and Bayham and the village of Westport. Plummer Additional had the highest spatial concentration of immigrants in rural regions. The 70 recent immigrants who settled in this census subdivision, accounted for over 10 percent of their total population in 2001.
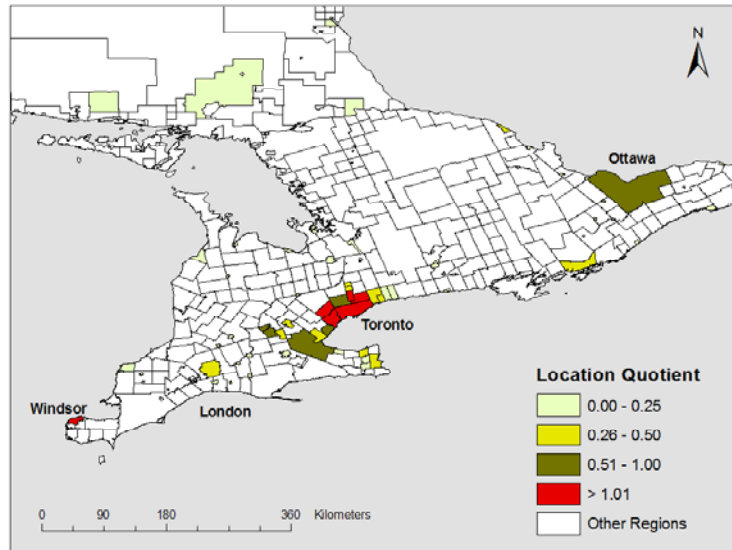
Figure 6: Location Quotients for Recent Immigrant, 2001
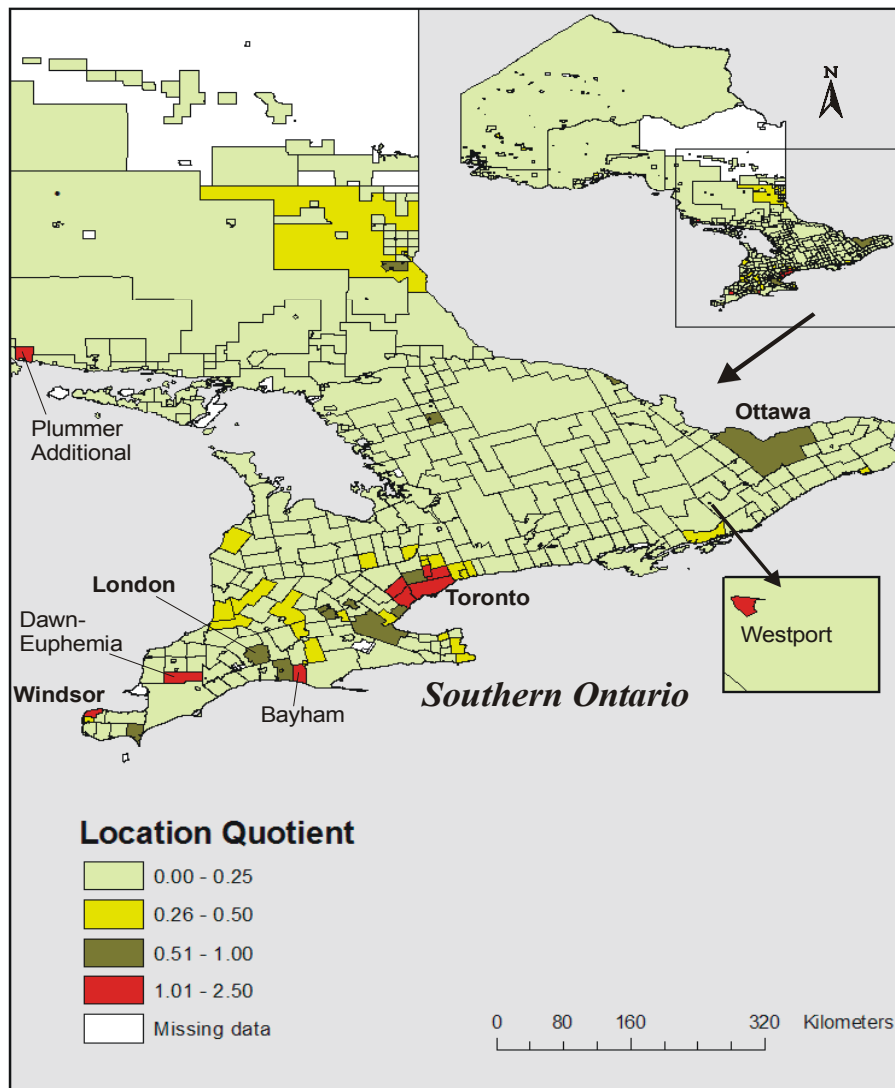
Source: Calculated from the 2001 Canadian Census of Population

Within the Greater Toronto Area recent immigrant populations concentrated in the cities of Toronto, Markham, Richmond Hill, Brampton and Mississauga. In fact, over 75 % of the all immigrants who came to Ontario between 1996 and 2001 settled in these cities. Location quotients were calculated for urban regions only, omitting intermediate and rural regions from the sample. This exercise illustrates the spatial polarisation of immigrants within urban areas (Figure 7). When location quotients were calculated for intermediate and rural regions more dispersed geographical patterns emerged (Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 7: Location Quotients of Recent Immigrants in Urban Regions.

Source: Calculated from 2001 Canadian Census of Population

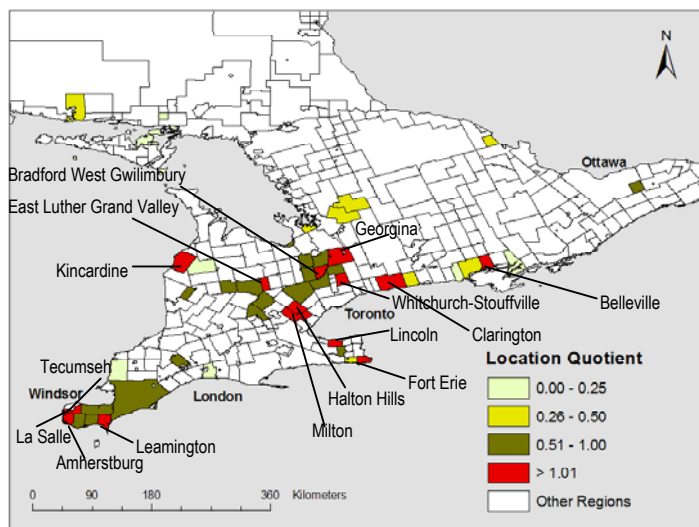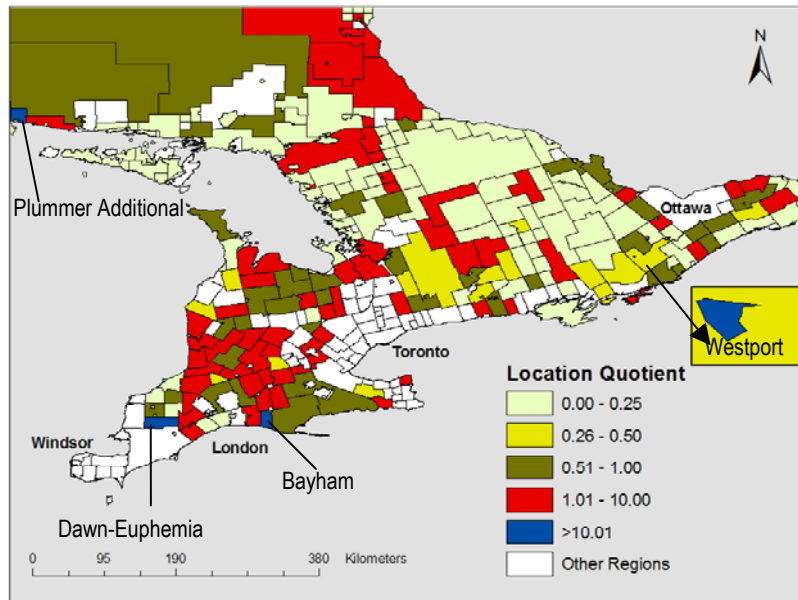Figure 8: Location Quotients of Recent Immigrants in Intermediate Regions

Figure 9: Location Quotients of Recent Immigrants in Rural Regions.

Source: Calculated from 2001 Canadian Census of Population

Local Labour Market Characteristics

Several multivariate regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between the spatial concentration of recent immigrants and selected labour market characteristics. Two economic characteristics available in the Canadian census are employment rate and average incomes. The analysis revealed that recent immigrants who settled in rural and intermediate regions gravitate towards particular areas in which income levels are higher and employment rates lower. While these tendencies are statistically significant, they only contribute a small share to explaining the spatial patterns of immigrant settlement in rural and intermediate areas.

Average dwelling size in an area was also considered in the analysis as a potential attraction for immigrant settlement. Results showed a strong *positive* association between the spatial concentration of recent immigrants in urban regions and average dwelling value. That urban immigrants settle in more expensive residential areas could indicate that they settle in newer subdivisions, where housing tends to be more expensive, or that they are relatively affluent. The same association between the spatial concentration of immigrants and average housing value did not exist for intermediate and rural regions. While in intermediate regions no statistically significant association was found, in rural regions a weak positive association exists.

The analysis was limited by the information on labour market circumstances available in the census. This limitation prohibited a more complete statistical analysis of the link between local labour market characteristics and immigrant settlement. To gain a different perspective of factors and perceptions that influence immigrant settlement decisions, interviews were conducted with recent immigrants and counsellors at immigrant settlement and employment agencies.

Interviews

The interviews showed that the initial settlement locations of recent immigrants were largely shaped by pre-migration perceptions of places and associated lifestyles. These images of places were constructed before the immigrants' arrival in Canada. For instance, many respondents stated that they had sought residence in a new home in a suburban community in what they perceived to be a typically Canadian lifestyle. An interviewee explained her decision to locate in Kitchener. She stated:

> I came here so that I could have a better job and so that my children could have a better life, a life like we see Americans have on TV, with nice cars…I wanted to live in a neighbourhood with large homes and if I can't achieve this, maybe my children will.

Similarly another interviewee explained his desire to settle in a suburban community. He explained:

> Before I came to Canada I already knew that I wanted to live in a large home, with many similar large homes in the same area, like everyone in Canada. All the immigrants I know moved into new homes in these types of areas…

This finding complemented the results from the statistical analysis, which demonstrated that there was a strong association between the spatial concentration of immigrants and housing prices. Apparently, immigrant settlement patterns in Ontario are closely associated with the perception of housing and life style in Canada.

In addition, telecommunications and marketing strategies had an influential role in facilitating the transfer of information to immigrants before they arrived Canada. Several immigrants said that they had used the internet as a tool for researching and obtaining information about the local availability of immigrant services, labour markets conditions, and employment opportunities. For example, a recent immigrant explained:

> I wanted to come to Canada, but I knew nothing about where to go and where there were opportunities for engineers. I heard from friends back home that Kitchener-Waterloo was a hot spot. So, I did research on the internet.

Recent immigrants also discussed issues of settlement and economic opportunities in chat rooms with other individuals who had already immigrated to Canada. This form of networking provided them with information about services and ultimately influenced their initial settlement location.

These results could potentially lead to innovative strategies and incentives to attract immigrants to rural and less urbanized areas in Ontario. Similar marketing strategies, such as the Three Thousand Family Schemes and other advertisement campaigns, were in place prior to the 1960s, when the majority of immigrants settled in Canada's rural regions and smaller cities. In addition, several settlement counsellors noted that some immigrants settle in rural regions, not to seek employment or settlement services, but rather because of lifestyle preferences. These immigrants may live on the urban fringe in commuting distance to larger urban centres.

Conclusions

Immigrant settlement is spatially polarised across Ontario. Rural regions tend not to be popular destinations for recent immigrants. Many small towns and rural communities may not have the resources and capacity to provide immigrant services and accommodate newcomers. In addition, many newly arriving immigrants perceive rural communities as lacking the opportunities that correspond to their skills or educational background.

In order to attract immigrants to smaller places in Ontario several strategies should be considered:

- provide adequate settlement and employment services to immigrants
- co-ordinate the skills of immigrants with the opportunities in the local labour market
- market rural communities and small towns as attractive places of settlement to an international clientele of potential immigrants

Further studies should continue to investigate the motives and factors that facilitate and sustain immigrant settlement in rural areas and smaller cities. In addition, innovative ideas are needed on how various levels of government can contribute the efforts of guiding the spatial patterns of immigrant settlement.

Appendix

Census subdivisions were classified according to the percentage of rural and urban population, as defined by the 2001 Canadian Census of Population. Following the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development census subdivisions with a rural population of 50 % or greater were classified as predominantly rural regions. Census subdivisions with a rural population of less than 15% were classified as predominately urban regions; and those with a rural population of 15.1% to 50% were classified as intermediate regions.

Location quotients (LQ) are calculated as follows:

$$LQ = (X_i/X)/(t_i/T)$$

Where:
X_i= the immigrant population in the Census Subdivision
X= the total immigrant population in Ontario (urban, intermediate or rural region)
t_i= the total population in the Census Subdivision
T= the total population of Ontario (urban, intermediate or rural region)

A total of 19 interviews were conducted; 13 with immigrants and 6 with settlement and employment councillors at service agencies in the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph. All interviewees had a university degree or higher and several years of work experience abroad. The immigrant sample is reflective of the increasingly and strategically important immigrant group small cities, towns and communities seek to benefit from. Table 2 provides further information about immigrant sample characteristics.

Table 2: Sample Characteristics of Immigrant Interviewees, 2004

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS						
Place or Origin	Year of Immigration	Gender	Family Status	Age Group	Level of Education	Occupational Field
Middle East	2003	Male	Partner and children	35-45	Bachelors	Engineering
Eastern Europe	2003	Male	Single	25-35	Bachelors	Engineering
South-East Asia	2002	Male	Partner with children	35-45	Bachelors, Masters PhD	Natural Sciences
East Asia	2003	Male	Single	25-35	Bachelors	Accounting
Eastern Europe	2003	Male	Partner	25-35	Bachelors	Engineering
Eastern Europe	2002	Male	Single	25-35	Bachelors	Engineering
East Asia	2002	Female	Single	25-35	Bachelors	Commerce
East Asia	2002	Female	Partner	25-35	Bachelors	Engineering
East Asia	1998	Female	Single	25-35	Bachelors	Education
Eastern Europe	2003	Female	Partner	25-35	Bachelors	Computer Science
East Asia	2003	Female	Partner with a child	35-45	Bachelors	Accounting
Middle East	2003	Female	Partner with children	35-45	Bachelors	Pharmaceuticals
South America	2003	Female	Partner with children	25-35	Bachelors	Engineering

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