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Migrants are driving a population surge — and Alberta is the fastest-growing province: StatsCan

Agency says that 98 per cent of Canada's population growth over last year came from international migration



Peter Zimonjic | | CBC News – September 27, 2023



A young new Canadian holds a flag as she takes part in a citizenship ceremony on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. (Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press)

The surge in international migration is driving Canada's population growth rate to heights not seen in almost 70 years, and Alberta is now growing faster than any province has since records began, Statistics Canada reports.

The latest population estimates from Statistics Canada show Canada's population grew by 1.15 million from July 2022 to July 2023 — the biggest jump in the G7 — and Canada's population growth rate is now 2.9 per cent.

That growth rate is the highest recorded in Canada since a 12-month period in 1957, when it hit 3.3 per cent annually during the height of the baby boom and the Hungarian refugee crisis.

Close to 98 per cent of that population growth can be attributed to net migration. The number of non-permanent residents has jumped 46 per cent, mostly due to an increase in work and study permits.

The tables show that since July 2022, the number of non-permanent residents increased by almost 700,000 to 2.2 million, and the number of immigrants increased by 468,817.

Statistics Canada published a new data table estimating the number of non-permanent residents by type and province after a CIBC Capital Markets report in August said the official number of non-permanent residents could be underestimated by close to one million.

The agency stood by its numbers at the time. It said Wednesday that its new table's impact on Canada's total population is "minimal."

The table includes "new adjustments to the delays incurred after permits expire," improving the counting of "non-permanent residents living in Canada with an expired permit" who are in the process of renewal, Statistics Canada said.

Alberta leads provincial growth

While Alberta's 4 per cent population growth was in part fuelled by international migration, it also was driven by record-high migration between provinces.

In the last year, Alberta saw 56,245 more people move to the province than leave it — the highest ever annual gain since Statistics Canada started collecting comparative data in 1971/72.

Alberta wasn't the only province to set records. Seven other provinces also saw their population rates spike to record heights:

- Prince Edward Island at 3.9 per cent
- Nova Scotia at 3.2 per cent
- New Brunswick at 3.1 per cent
- Ontario at 3.0 per cent
- Manitoba at 2.9 per cent

- Saskatchewan at 2.6 per cent
- Quebec at 2.3 per cent

Canada's population on track to double by 2048

While Quebec's growth rate set a record in the province, it experienced the second lowest population growth rate of all provinces after Newfoundland and Labrador, which only grew by 1.3 per cent.

Rounding out the provincial growth rates are British Columbia at 3.0 per cent, Manitoba at 2.9 per cent and Saskatchewan at 2.6 per cent.

Statistics Canada said the number of temporary immigrants was highest in three provinces, with Ontario reporting close to 1 million non-permanent residents, Quebec about 500,000 and B.C. 400,000.

Statistics Canada said that the country's fertility rate is now at a record low of 1.33 children per woman, compared with 1.44 in 2021.

Only two per cent of Canada's population growth over the last year came from the difference between births and deaths.

Despite that declining birth rate, Canada's population could double in 25 years if international migration levels remain constant in the coming decades.