

# Annual Population Report

Alberta 2020-21

## Slowest population growth in almost 40 years

Alberta registered its lowest population growth since the late 1980s for the 12 month period preceding July 1, 2021<sup>1</sup>. In combination with lower immigrant landings and net outflows of non permanent residents, substantial net outflows of migrants to other parts of the country weighed heavily on growth.

## Annual population

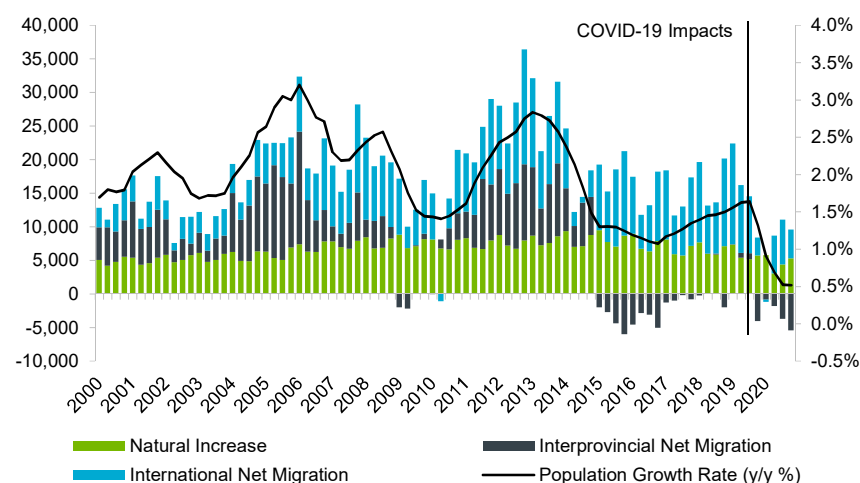
Alberta's population grew by 0.52% between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021, adding 22,850 new residents<sup>2</sup>. This was the lowest growth by both percentage and number since 1987-88. This slowdown in growth is significant. For comparison, between 2012 and 2014 the population of Alberta grew rapidly, adding about 26,000 new residents per quarter, which was larger than the current annual increase.

The slowdown in Alberta's population increase was a result of fewer gains across all three components of growth (Figure 1). COVID-19 travel restrictions and difficulties getting permits limited international movement and slowed international migration. More people left the province than entered it from other regions of Canada, leading to net interprovincial losses. Finally, natural increase was slightly lower than that of the last year, with fewer births and more deaths, partially attributable to COVID. Over the entire period, natural increase contributed 0.42% to Alberta's growth, while net international migration added

1 All data are from Statistics Canada. Estimates from 2011 to 2021 are based on the 2016 Census adjusted for net census undercount and incompletely enumerated Indian Reserves. All estimates are subject to revision.

2 Population estimates from 2017 to 2020 have been revised.

**FIGURE 1: ALBERTA COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE**  
2000-2021



Source: Statistics Canada

**TABLE 1: POPULATION OF PROVINCES/TERRITORIES AS OF JULY 1, 2021 AND GROWTH RATES SINCE JULY 1, 2019**

	Population	y/y Growth Rate 2020-2021	y/y Growth Rate 2019-2020
Canada	38,246,108	0.55%	1.16%
NL	520,553	-0.16%	-0.39%
PE	164,318	1.85%	2.48%
NS	992,055	1.04%	1.20%
NB	789,225	0.77%	0.78%
QC	8,604,495	0.31%	0.88%
ON	14,826,276	0.55%	1.38%
MB	1,383,765	0.23%	0.78%
SK	1,179,844	0.05%	0.58%
AB	4,442,879	0.52%	1.32%
BC	5,214,805	1.09%	1.25%
YT	42,986	1.93%	1.96%
NT	45,504	0.29%	0.67%
NU	39,403	0.63%	1.46%

0.37%. Net outflows of interprovincial migration slowed growth by -0.27%.

Most regions in Canada experienced significantly slower growth in 2020-21 when compared to 2019-20 (Table 1) due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>3</sup>. A slowdown in international migration, due to travel restrictions, as well as an increase in deaths, weighed on growth.

On a quarterly basis, most regions of the country saw their population growth accelerate with the easing of restrictions. However, Alberta's growth did not recover in the same way as the other provinces, due to net outflows of interprovincial migrants, the province receiving a lower proportion of immigrants to Canada, and net outflows of non-permanent residents (NPRs). Alberta's growth in the second quarter was 0.09%, compared to the national rate of 0.24%. Of the four biggest provinces, this was the slowest growth.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the impact of COVID-19 on the population estimates, please see <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91f0015m/91f0015m2020002-eng.htm>

## Migration

### International migration

Alberta gained 16,199 new international migrants between July 2020 and June 2021. This was less than half of the 36,264 in 2019-2020.

### Immigration

Immigration to Alberta continued to slow in 2020-21, when compared to the previous year. Restrictions due to COVID-19 began late in March 2020, so the 2019-20 census year saw about 5,000 fewer immigrants than that of the year prior, as only one quarter of growth was impacted. With a full year of COVID-19 related travel issues, 2020-21 saw Alberta gain 23,987 immigrants, the lowest number in 13 years.

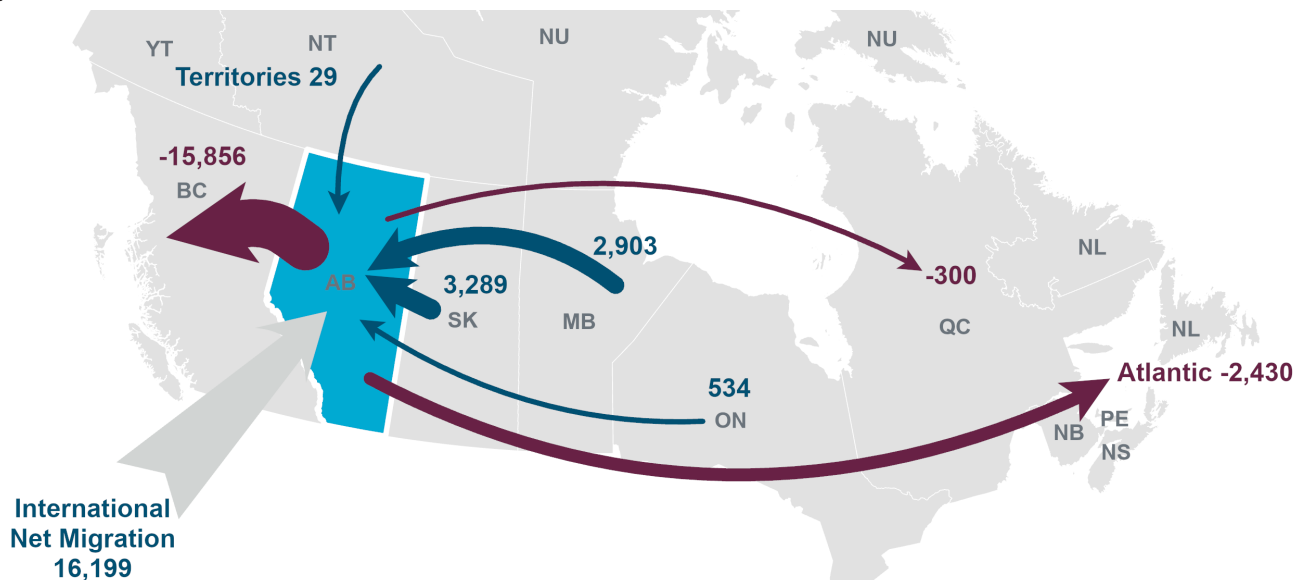
On a quarterly basis, immigration was lower for the third and fourth quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 than the year before. However, immigration was over one and a half times higher in the second quarter, suggesting that immigration may be slowly recovering from original pandemic lows.

Despite Alberta seeing an uptick in immigration in the second quarter, these gains are below what was experienced in other large provinces. Over the past three years, Alberta's total share of immigrants to Canada has been declining. Between July and June of this year, the province's share was 10.6%, down from 12.5% in 2019-2020 and 13.0% in the 2018-2019 period. This decrease in share between 2020 and 2021 was the highest in the country. Despite the decline, this was the fourth highest share in the country, following Ontario at 47.7%, BC at 15.2%, and Quebec at 14.9%.

Every year, the federal government releases three-year immigration targets for Canada, which generally increase year-over-year. The target for the calendar year of 2020 was higher than that of the previous year; however, with barriers to international movement in 2020, immigration was lower. In the 2020 calendar year, Canada added 184,586 new immigrants, just over half the level seen in 2019. In response to declining immigration, the federal government released new immigration targets for 2021-2023, with the target

## MAP 1: NET POPULATION MOVEMENT FOR ALBERTA

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021



of settling 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021. Furthermore, in late October 2020, the government prioritized giving permanent residency to temporary workers and international graduates already in the country, to help with pandemic efforts and the recovery<sup>4</sup>.

## Emigration

Following the net gain of emigrants in 2019-20 due to COVID-19, emigration appeared to have recovered from that early pandemic impact this year, with a net loss of 3,608 residents moving overseas. This number is closer to that seen in the years 2016-17 to 2018-19 (Table 3).

## NPRs

The net flow of NPRs was negative in 2020-21, with an overall loss of -4,180. This net outflow was driven by the third quarter of 2020 (-5,065), with the other three quarters of the year seeing smaller amounts of movement. While other regions of the country saw second quarter net gains of NPRs, Alberta saw net losses.

In Alberta, NPRs are largely comprised of temporary foreign workers (TFWs), while foreign students make up a smaller, but growing group. The third quarter (the period from July 1 to September 30) is when international students tend to arrive in Canada, however with many post-secondary programs delivered online in Q3 2020; it is likely that significantly less international students physically moved to Canada to attend classes. This could be part of the reason why third quarter net outflows were so high.

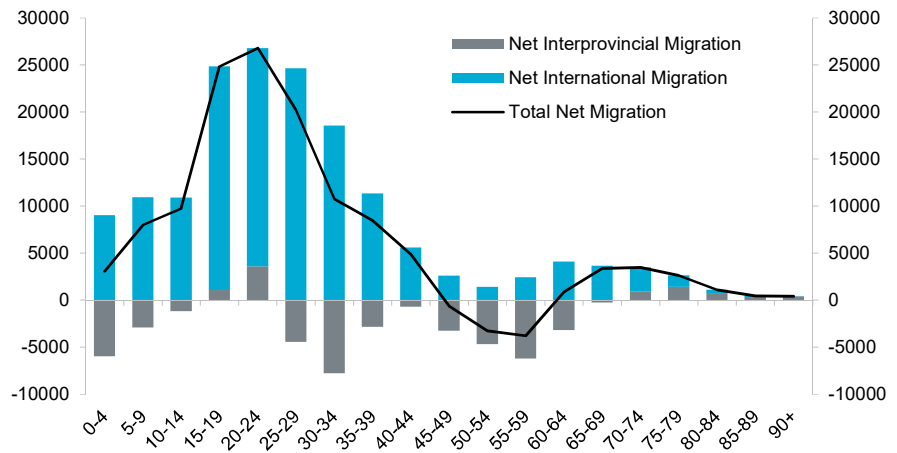
## Interprovincial migration

According to preliminary estimates, Alberta lost 11,831 net interprovincial migrants in 2020-21, which weighed heavily on population growth. This

<sup>4</sup> Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2020/10/government-of-canada-announces-plan-to-support-economic-recovery-through-immigration.html>

**FIGURE 2: NET MIGRATION BY AGE GROUP**

July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada

was the second largest loss in the country, behind Ontario (-17,085). Manitoba and Saskatchewan also saw significant losses, at -9,685 and -9,410, respectively. British Columbia had the largest net gain (34,277), followed by Nova Scotia (9,949) (Table 2).

Over the period from July to June, Alberta gained the largest net inflows from Saskatchewan and Manitoba (3,289 and 2,903, respectively), and lost the largest net outflows to British Columbia, followed by Nova Scotia, with losses of 15,856 and 1,599, respectively (Map 1).

Alberta's interprovincial migration patterns are heavily influenced by the economic conditions in the province, and as the economy cooled, the province experienced net outflows. Following some small net inflows between July 2019 to March 2020, Alberta has experienced five consecutive quarters of net outflows.

Preliminary estimates of net interprovincial migration should be interpreted cautiously, since they are revised annually as new data becomes available. The difference between preliminary and revised estimates can be significant, and can change

the story these estimates tell. When the preliminary 2019-20 estimate was released last year, net interprovincial migration was estimated at 2,183, and was revised down to -2,377 this year (Table 3). The quarterly pattern of net inflows for the first three quarters of the year and a net outflow in the last quarter remain accurate, which suggests that the pattern of interprovincial migration was correct.

## Natural increase

Alberta added 18,482 new residents through natural increase in 2020-21. This was the net of 48,799 babies born and 30,317 deaths. There were fewer births this year compared to the recent past, which may have been driven in part by COVID-19. Concerns about the pandemic, economic stability and adverse health outcomes are just a few of the reasons that women may have decided against having a baby over the last year. There was also an increase in deaths this year, due to COVID-19.

Natural increase is a large portion of Alberta's annual population growth. Over 0.4% of the province's growth was due to natural increase, the highest amongst the provinces. This was significant growth, especially when compared to other areas of the country. British Columbia saw minimal growth

due to natural increase, while the Atlantic Provinces had negative growth due to natural increase.

### Slower migration accelerating aging

After holding relatively steady between 2012 to 2014, the aging of Alberta's population has accelerated, driven by large numbers of young adults leaving the province to seek opportunities elsewhere. During this time, a large proportion of the people who left were young adults aged 25 to 39 years and young children aged 0 to 9 years (Figure 2). Despite this aging, Alberta remains a very youthful province.

With a median age of 37.9 years, Alberta was slightly older than Manitoba as of July 1, 2021 (37.8 years). This is the first time since 1971 that the population of Alberta did not have the youngest median age. Other indicators, however, suggest that Alberta remained a very youthful province. Alberta had the youngest average age of the provinces

at 38.9 years, and had the lowest proportion of population aged 65 and older of all the provinces.

The oldest province remained Newfoundland, with a median age of 47.8 years, while Canada overall had a median age of 41.1 years.

While interprovincial migration saw net losses, international migration remained positive, which supported positive total migration between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2021. During this period, Alberta lost over 35,000 people through net interprovincial migration, but had a net overall gain of over 121,000 people from total migration.

Because of net outflows of interprovincial migrants and lower immigration inflows in 2020-21, Alberta tied Newfoundland as the region with the largest increase in median age between 2020 and 2021, when both regions' median age increased by 0.4 years. With lower international movement, Canada aged by 0.2 years.

Alberta's average age increased by 0.3 years between 2020 and 2021, which was the same as Canada, Newfoundland and Quebec.

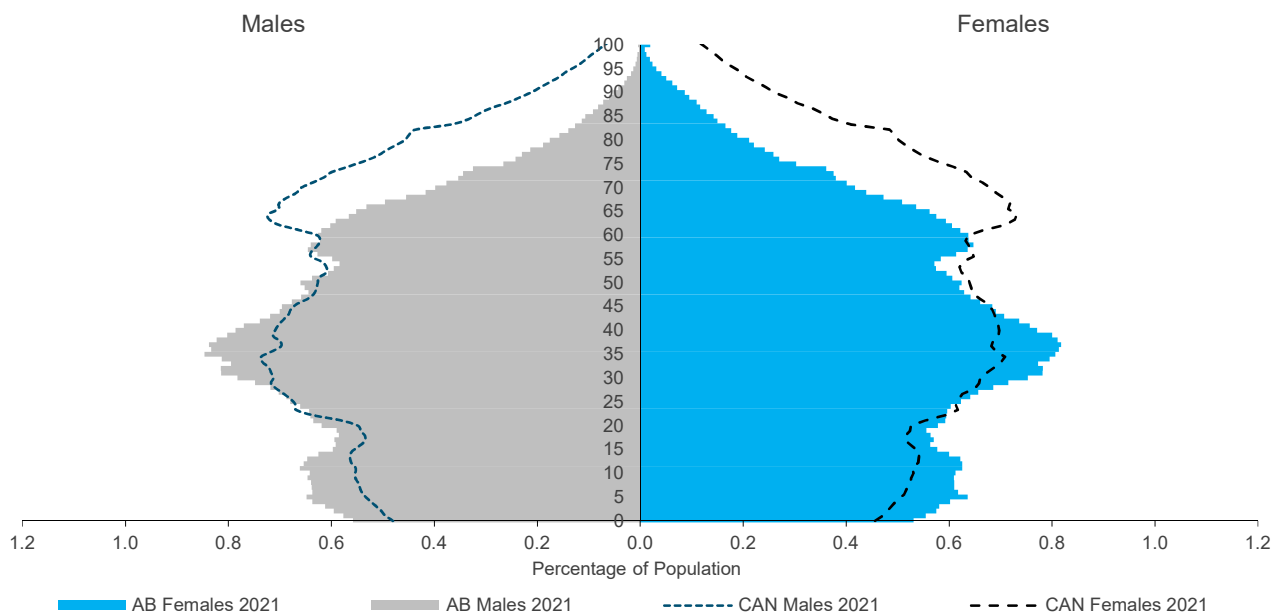
Relative to the national population, Alberta's population is composed of greater proportions of children and working age persons, and a smaller proportion of seniors (Figure 3). As of July 1st 2021, two in ten Albertans were younger than 15 years of age, almost seven in ten were working ages (i.e., 15 to 64 years), and one in seven were aged 65 or older.

In Alberta, 18% of the population was in the age range of 0 to 14 years. For Canada, the share of children was 16%. Children outnumber seniors in Alberta, contrary to Canada where the opposite is true.

Out of all the provinces, Alberta had the highest proportion of the working ages 15 to 64 years (67%), as well as those aged 25 to 54 years (or the core working ages) at 43%. At the national level, these shares are slightly lower at 66% and 40%, respectively.

**FIGURE 3: ALBERTA AND CANADA'S AGE PYRAMIDS**

Population age structure, as of July 1, 2021



Sources: Statistics Canada

Alberta had the lowest proportion of the population aged 65+ out of all the provinces, comprising 14% of the population as of July 1, 2021. By contrast, 19% of Canada's population was in the senior age cohort.

Because of the large working age population, Alberta had the lowest dependency ratio out of all the provinces. For every 100 people in the working ages, there were 49 seniors (aged 65 and older) and youth (aged 0 to 14) depending on them.

As of July 1, 2021, Alberta had the third highest youth dependency ratio (27 youth per 100 working age population) of the provinces, behind Manitoba and Saskatchewan (ratios of 29 and 30, respectively).

At the other end of the spectrum, Alberta had the lowest old age dependency ratio of all the provinces, at 21 seniors per 100 working age population. Newfoundland had the highest ratio (36)

Contact, [Lisa Zaporzan](#) at 780.427.8891 or [Jennifer Hansen](#) at 780.427.8811

**TABLE 2: ORIGIN AND DESTINATION OF INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRANTS**

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

		Destination												
		NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	YT	NT	NU
Origin	NL	0	64	853	348	263	1549	81	86	1439	590	4	59	48
	PE	89	0	484	533	120	1240	80	6	273	283	61	0	27
	NS	572	478	0	1615	656	3616	239	282	1540	1338	72	90	37
	NB	278	284	1979	0	1917	2724	125	108	1366	754	9	29	21
	QC	273	194	856	1538	0	16370	528	328	2433	4485	61	44	123
	ON	2549	2348	9970	6112	16469	0	3262	3040	16849	20728	347	471	437
	MB	36	51	479	335	858	5559	0	1541	5051	5208	32	59	56
	SK	161	63	394	185	456	5659	1310	0	8235	5395	65	26	36
	AB	1550	469	3139	1890	2733	16315	2148	4946	0	31232	276	480	162
	BC	477	204	1982	762	2110	11497	1585	2063	15376	0	283	198	42
	YT	0	3	36	11	15	248	50	66	164	493	0	44	3
	NT	78	10	155	107	97	258	35	78	631	286	158	0	11
	NU	106	18	157	45	89	462	137	31	152	64	35	144	0
	IN		6,169	4,186	20,484	13,481	25,783	65,497	9,580	12,575	53,509	70,856	1,403	1,644
OUT		5,384	3,196	10,535	9,594	27,233	82,582	19,265	21,985	65,340	36,579	1,133	1,904	1,440
NET		<b>785</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>9,949</b>	<b>3,887</b>	<b>-1,450</b>	<b>-17,085</b>	<b>-9,685</b>	<b>-9,410</b>	<b>-11,831</b>	<b>34,277</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>-260</b>	<b>-437</b>
2020-21		NL	PE	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	YT	NT	NU
Outflow to AB		1,439	273	1,540	1,366	2,433	16,849	5,051	8,235	0	15,376	164	631	152
Inflow from AB		1,550	469	3,139	1,890	2,733	16,315	2,148	4,946	0	31,232	276	480	162
Net Flow to AB		<b>-111</b>	<b>-196</b>	<b>-1,599</b>	<b>-524</b>	<b>-300</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>2,903</b>	<b>3,289</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-15,856</b>	<b>-112</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>-10</b>

**TABLE 3: ALBERTA COMPONENTS OF GROWTH BY QUARTER**

Quarters in Census Year	Interprovincial Migration <sup>1</sup>			International Migration						Total	Vital Events		Total <sup>4</sup>
	In	Out	Net	Immigrants	Net Non-Permanent Residents <sup>2</sup>	Emigrants	Net Temporary Emigrants	Returning Emigrants	Net <sup>3</sup>	Total Net Migration	Births	Deaths	Sum of Components
2018-2019													
Jul-Sep	14,495	14,715	-220	10,398	2,227	2,204	670	2,170	11,921	11,701	13,791	6,102	19,390
Oct-Dec	10,909	10,851	58	9,371	-1,021	1,393	548	757	7,166	7,224	12,626	6,682	13,168
Jan-Mar	13,744	13,601	143	8,545	481	1,479	553	639	7,633	7,776	12,473	6,628	13,621
Apr-Jun	19,356	21,369	-2,013	12,418	1,341	1,494	531	1,307	13,041	11,028	13,433	6,339	18,122
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,796</b>	<b>54,828</b>	<b>-2,032</b>	<b>40,732</b>	<b>3,028</b>	<b>6,570</b>	<b>2,302</b>	<b>4,873</b>	<b>39,761</b>	<b>37,729</b>	<b>52,323</b>	<b>25,751</b>	<b>64,301</b>
2019-2020													
Jul-Sep	16,768	16,702	66	12,682	3,048	2,235	680	2,201	15,016	15,082	13,621	6,297	22,406
Oct-Dec	11,456	10,751	705	10,047	1,275	1,412	556	768	10,122	10,827	12,248	6,877	16,198
Jan-Mar	17,103	16,200	903	8,480	-611	1,355	206	2,145	8,453	9,356	12,327	7,163	14,520
Apr-Jun	16,872	20,923	-4,051	4,262	-3,403	19	-146	1,687	2,673	-1,378	12,566	6,859	4,329
<b>Total</b>	<b>56,538</b>	<b>58,915</b>	<b>-2,377</b>	<b>35,471</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>5,021</b>	<b>1,296</b>	<b>6,801</b>	<b>36,264</b>	<b>33,887</b>	<b>50,762</b>	<b>27,196</b>	<b>57,453</b>
2020-2021													
Jul-Sep	12,592	13,454	-862	4,896	-5,065	531	70	418	-352	-1,214	12,645	6,903	4,528
Oct-Dec	8,659	10,449	-1,790	5,318	877	693	89	220	5,633	3,843	11,527	8,473	6,897
Jan-Mar	15,241	18,973	-3,732	6,769	1,068	1,251	104	169	6,651	2,919	12,214	7,815	7,318
Apr-Jun	23,639	29,086	-5,447	7,004	-1,060	1,715	185	223	4,267	-1,180	12,413	7,126	4,107
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,509</b>	<b>65,340</b>	<b>-11,831</b>	<b>23,987</b>	<b>-4,180</b>	<b>4,190</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>16,199</b>	<b>4,368</b>	<b>48,799</b>	<b>30,317</b>	<b>22,850</b>

<sup>1</sup> The sum of quarterly in- and out- interprovincial migrants may not to be equal to annual interprovincial in- and out- migrants from 2011 onwards. It is however possible to add quarterly net interprovincial migration estimates to calculate annual estimates.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates of Non-Permanent Residents (NPRs) represent the number of "...persons who are lawfully in Canada on a temporary basis under the authority of a temporary resident permit, along with members of their family living with them. Non-Permanent Residents include foreign workers, foreign students, the humanitarian population and other temporary residents. The humanitarian population includes refugee claimants and temporary residents who are allowed to remain in Canada on humanitarian grounds and are not categorized as either foreign workers or foreign students." (Statistics Canada)

<sup>3</sup> Includes NPRs

<sup>4</sup> The sum of the components may not equal the quarterly population change due to differences in the methods used to derive intercensal and postcensal population estimates. All figures subject to revision.