



# **GLOBAL TALENT, LOCAL SOLUTIONS**

A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON  
IMMIGRATION TRENDS IN ALGOMA

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## Disclaimer

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This report was created for the Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation (AWIC).

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## **ABOUT AWIC**

Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation (AWIC) is a not-for-profit, community-centred organization. It is part of the 26 Workforce Planning Boards operating in the Province of Ontario, supported through funding from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development (MLITSD).

AWIC is a trusted community partner in Algoma, providing data and insight supporting a diverse and talented workforce that contributes to a prosperous community. Our work prepares Algoma's communities for the current and future workforce challenges and opportunities.

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## Executive Summary

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This report presents a comprehensive overview of immigration to Algoma District ("the District"), encompassing permanent and temporary movements. The data and information herein outline the historical narrative of immigration and highlight key population trends. These trends underscore the significance of prioritizing immigrant attraction and retention as a fundamental strategy for sustaining the community in the Algoma District.

This report also details some key recommendations for community leaders and policymakers to support them in meeting the objective of attracting and retaining immigrants in their communities.

At the time of the writing of this report, there are increasing anxieties about how immigration is being managed and understood strategically by the Federal Government of Canada. Specifically, there is increasing concern about the rapidly expanding international student population and the growing issues of affordable and accessible housing availability, student pre- and post-graduation employment, healthcare, public transportation, and childcare services because of this expanding international student population. Many of these issues are also being increasingly faced by the Canadian-born population. As is true of many equity situations, efforts to address these issues increasingly faced by international students and their communities will also help the non-immigrant population.

Another key immigration-related issue that urgently requires a practical and pragmatic solution concerns professional and skilled worker immigrants with foreign accreditations and the difficulties of working in their respective fields in Canada, short of starting all over again in Canadian education. This has led to the frustrating yet all too common scenario of, for example, foreign-trained doctors working in lower-skilled and paying jobs in communities where there is a desperate shortage of doctors. In such a scenario, there is a great cost to the individual in question, the community and the nation regarding labour market gaps, lost tax revenue and a decreased Gross Domestic Product.

Generally, in Canada, there is a large and growing gap between the overall wages of immigrants and those born in Canada. The 2019 RBC Report "*Untapped Potential*" stated that "*bringing immigrants up to the wage levels and employment of those born in Canada would produce substantial economic benefits—maybe as much as 2.5% in annual GDP, about \$50 billion.*"<sup>1</sup> The report also stated that "*Immigrants earn about 10% less than those born in Canada; 30 years ago, the gap was less than 4%*"<sup>2</sup> It should be a key concern for community leaders and policymakers to understand the reasons for the growing immigrant/non-immigrant wage differential and to implement initiatives which have wage parity between immigrants and non-immigrants as a key objective.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.rbccm.com/en/insights/story.page?dcr=templatedata%2Farticle%2Finsights%2Fdata%2F2019%2F10%2Funtapped\\_potential\\_canada\\_needs\\_to\\_close\\_its\\_immigrant\\_wage\\_gap\\_pg1](https://www.rbccm.com/en/insights/story.page?dcr=templatedata%2Farticle%2Finsights%2Fdata%2F2019%2F10%2Funtapped_potential_canada_needs_to_close_its_immigrant_wage_gap_pg1)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

## Key Findings

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In the 2021 population census, the District's population decreased by 0.3% since 2016. This also represented a 13.7% decrease since 1986, highlighting the importance of immigrant attraction and retention strategies for building more welcoming and inclusive communities.

The 2021 population census showed that the indigenous population of the District grew by 3.1% since 2016 and is much younger on average than the general population. Utilizing the principle of "nothing for us without us" and understanding the requirements, perspectives, histories, and characteristics of indigenous people in the District is vital to building inclusive and equitable communities that work for indigenous people.

International student numbers have risen considerably recently, mainly in Sault Ste. Marie. The percentage increase of approved applications between 2017 and 2023 in Algoma District was 3201%. This has led to challenges relating to affordable and accessible housing, health care services, adequate public transportation, employment and post-graduation support and local retention strategies, as well as growing public backlash to international students and immigration more generally, as well as political fallout.

To date, the Sault Ste. Marie Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program (RNIP) appears to be very effective in connecting businesses with the skilled workers they need to thrive. Eleven communities participated in the program, including the Sault, Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins and Thunder Bay. The total number of applications to the program from its introduction in 2019 to 2023 is 670. The number of recommendations issued in 2023 represented a 543% increase on 2019/20's number. The number of applicants who have received Permanent Residence, including their dependents, is 385. Concerns arose during 2023/24 consultations about exclusions out of outlying communities, especially when the program renewal in 2022 didn't expand community boundaries while other communities did. The recent March 2024 announcement introduced a permanent program in the spring of 2024 with two initiatives to assist businesses and offer residency pathways in communities. Renewed concerns from municipalities and employers regarding the recent announcement highlight the imperative to customize the program for the entire Algoma District. This emphasizes the necessity of going beyond Sault Ste. Marie, in implementation, recognizes the distinctive challenges that all rural and northern communities face.

While the Sault Ste. Marie Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)<sup>3</sup>, the Thunder Bay LIP<sup>4</sup> and the Réseau du Nord<sup>5</sup> all have mandates to enhance the systemic capacity of the District to support the attraction and retention of immigrants; it appears that further capacity-building efforts are required.

At a municipal level, there is little evidence to suggest that District municipalities, townships, and unorganized areas address immigrant attraction and retention with sufficient intentionality, including building more welcoming communities.

Given the importance of immigration in addressing demographic, labour market, and tax base issues, it is crucial that community leaders and policymakers in the District enhance their expertise in the realms of immigrant attraction and retention.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://welcometossm.com/immigrate/local-immigration-partnership/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thunderbay.org/local-immigration-partnership>

<sup>5</sup> <https://reseauunord.ca/>

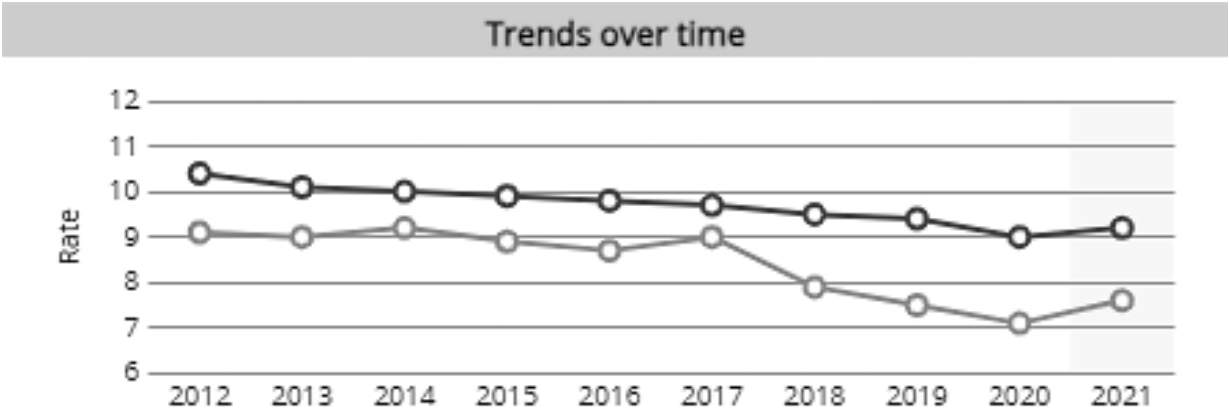
## Introduction

Algoma District is a district and a census division<sup>6</sup> located in Northeastern Ontario. Algoma District constitutes a land area of 48,281.36 square kilometres and, as of 2021, has a population density of 2.4 people per square kilometre<sup>7</sup>.

Like many rural and/or remote areas in Canada, Algoma District is confronted with the twin demographic challenges of an aging and declining population. According to the 2021 Canadian census, Algoma District had the fourth lowest population change in all census divisions in Ontario<sup>8</sup> between 2016 and 2021. These demographic trends have profound and serious implications regarding meeting current and future labour market needs, funding government services through taxation, and ensuring the sustainability and viability of many communities in the District.

Figure 1 shows the “Crude Birth Rate” (CBR - live births per 1000 people) for the District (green line) and Ontario (red line) from 2012 to 2021 and shows a largely consistent pattern of falling birth rates in that time. It can be observed that the CBR in the District is lower than in Ontario. In 2012, the CBR was 9.1 live births per 1000 people; by 2021, this had fallen to 7.6 live births per 1000 people. For comparison, in 2023, the CBR for Canada was 10.07<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1: Crude Birth Rate Comparison Between Ontario (black line) and Algoma District (grey line)**



Source: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Reproductive-and-Child-Health/Reproductive-Health>

To address the demographic threats of an aging and declining population, the Federal Government has focused on immigration as the main policy to maintain and grow the population as well as to reduce the population’s average age.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-195-x/2021001/geo/cd-dr/cd-dr-eng.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/Page.cfm?dguid=2021A00033557&topic=1&lang=E>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?topic=1&lang=E&dguid=2021A00033557gh>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/CAN/canada/birth-rate>

Figure 2 shows the Federal Government’s annual immigration targets from 2024 to 2026 broken down by the principal immigration streams of “economic,” “family,” and “refugee/protected person/humanitarian and compassionate.”

**Figure 2: 2024–2026 Immigration Levels Plan**

|   | 2024           |         | 2025           |         | 2026           |         |
|---|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| <b>Total Projected admissions<br/>Targets and Ranges</b>                              | <b>485,000</b> |         | <b>500,000</b> |         | <b>500,000</b> |         |
|   | Low            | High    | Low            | High    | Low            | High    |
|   | 430,000        | 532,500 | 442,500        | 550,000 | 442,500        | 550,000 |
| <b>Economic immigration</b>   | <b>281,135</b> |         | <b>301,250</b> |         | <b>301,250</b> |         |
|   | 250,000        | 305,000 | 265,000        | 326,000 | 265,000        | 326,000 |
| <b>Family reunification</b>   | <b>114,000</b> |         | <b>118,000</b> |         | <b>118,000</b> |         |
|   | 105,000        | 130,000 | 107,000        | 135,000 | 107,000        | 135,000 |
| <b>Refugees, protected<br/>persons, humanitarian and<br/>compassionate, and other</b> | <b>89,865</b>  |         | <b>80,750</b>  |         | <b>80,750</b>  |         |
|   | 75,000         | 110,500 | 70,500         | 92,000  | 70,500         | 92,000  |

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2024-2026.html>

The figure also shows the Federal government’s ambitious target of bringing in close to 1.5 million immigrants over the next three years, 2024 - 2026, and shows the importance of immigration as a key government policy tool to address the aging and declining population and to meet labour market demands. Therefore, community leaders and policymakers in the Algoma District must further develop their capacity and knowledge in immigrant attraction and retention.



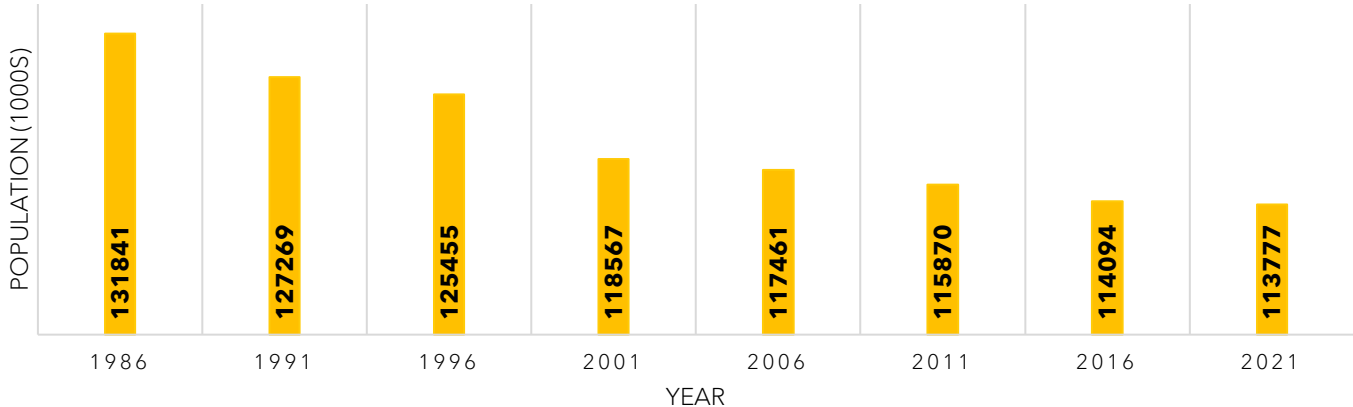
**Figure 3: Canadian Permanent Residents Admitted in 2022 by Top 10 Source Countries**

| Rank                              | Country       | Total Number   | Percentage (%) | Males          | Females        |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>1</b>                          | India         | 118,224        | 27             | 61,474         | 56,750         |
| <b>2</b>                          | China         | 31,841         | 7              | 14,784         | 17,057         |
| <b>3</b>                          | Afghanistan   | 23,748         | 5              | 11,749         | 11,995         |
| <b>4</b>                          | Nigeria       | 22,118         | 5              | 10,787         | 11,331         |
| <b>5</b>                          | Philippines   | 22,095         | 5              | 9,896          | 12,199         |
| <b>6</b>                          | France        | 14,151         | 3              | 7,452          | 6,698          |
| <b>7</b>                          | Pakistan      | 11,598         | 3              | 5,755          | 5,843          |
| <b>8</b>                          | Iran          | 11,108         | 3              | 5,404          | 5,704          |
| <b>9</b>                          | United States | 10,415         | 2              | 5,262          | 5,153          |
| <b>10</b>                         | Syria         | 8,507          | 2              | 4,473          | 4,033          |
| <b>Total Top 10</b>               |               | <b>273,805</b> | <b>63</b>      | <b>137,036</b> | <b>136,763</b> |
| <b>All Other Source Countries</b> |               | <b>163,734</b> | <b>37</b>      | <b>81,068</b>  | <b>82,655</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                      |               | <b>437,539</b> | <b>100</b>     | <b>218,104</b> | <b>219,418</b> |

Source: IRCC, Chief Data Office (CDO), Permanent Residents Data as of March 31, 2023

Figure 3 shows the top ten source countries for Canadian permanent immigration. By a considerable margin, India is the top source country, accounting for over one in four Canadian immigrants in 2022. China is a distant second, providing 7% of Canada’s immigrants in 2022. The countries that are the third-highest-source countries, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Nigeria, each provided 5% of Canada’s permanent immigrants in 2022. Community leaders and policymakers should consider this information in the Algoma District in developing their community immigrant attraction and retention efforts.

Figure 4: Population Changes, Algoma District – Population Change From 1986 to 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Community Profiles 1986 - 2021

**Overall Population**

As per the 2021 census, the Algoma District population numbered 113,777 individuals. This figure represented a 0.3% decrease from the 2016 census figure of 114,094 individuals and a 13.7% decrease from the 1986 census figure of 131,841 individuals. The decline of the population in the Algoma District since 1986 can be explained primarily by a loss of employment opportunities that led people, often in their childbearing years, to leave the area and an insufficient birth rate. These population trends underscore the urgency for community leaders and policymakers in the District to implement immigrant attraction and retention strategies to offset these trends, not least through creating employment opportunities and other economic development strategies.

**Indigenous Population**

An outlier in these District population trends is the growing indigenous population, which rose from 9.2% to 14.2% between 2001 and 2021 and is much younger on average than the overall population. In 2021, there were 15,940 Indigenous people in Algoma District, making up 14.2% of the population<sup>10</sup>. The average age of the Indigenous population in Algoma District was 37.1 years, compared with 47.4 years for the non-Indigenous population in 2021<sup>11</sup>. The Indigenous population’s share of the District’s total population is expected to increase to 15.8% by 2030. The share of working-age Indigenous peoples (those aged 20 to 64) is expected to increase to 16.8 % by 2030<sup>12</sup>.

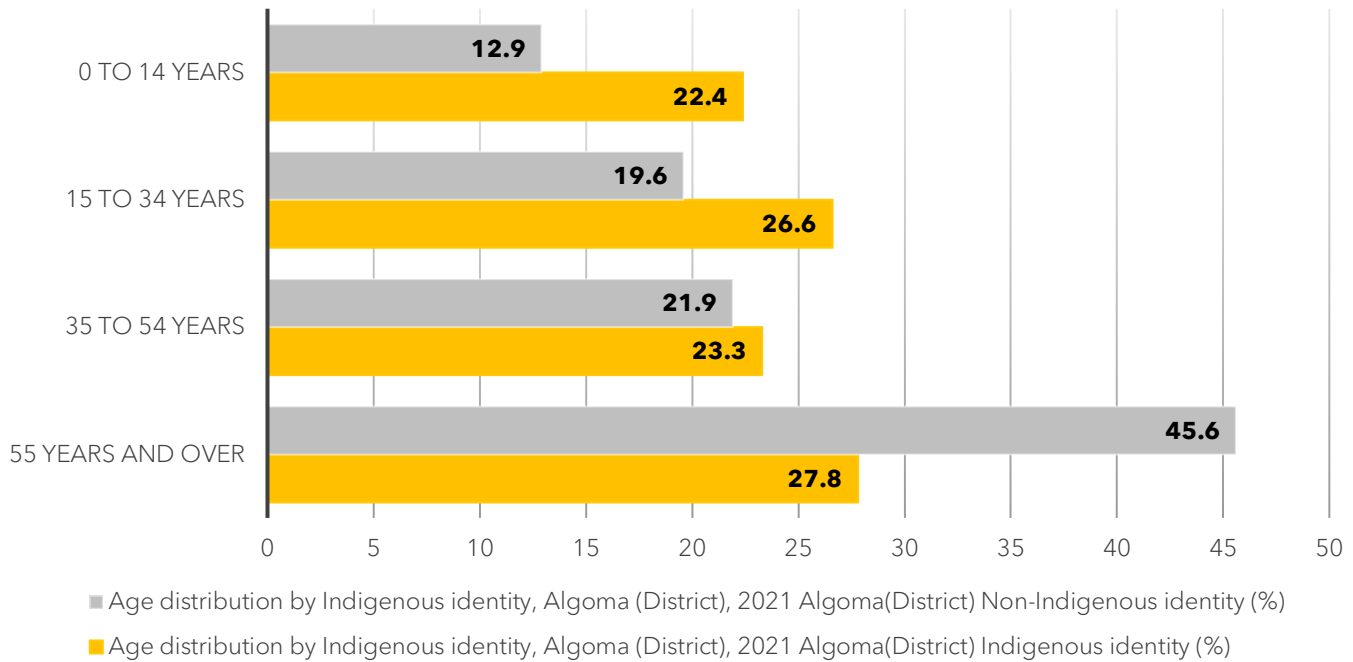
Figure 5 indicates the percentages by age distribution of indigenous and nonindigenous populations and clearly shows that the nonindigenous population is significantly older on average than the indigenous population. This is a significant factor for community leaders and policymakers in Algoma District to address in terms of who they should consider when developing inclusive, equitable and welcoming community initiatives.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?topic=8&lang=E&dguid=2021A00033557>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Northern Policy Institute “Northern Projections Human Capital Series, Algoma District 2019” pg20.

**Figure 5: Age Distribution (%) by Indigenous Identity, Algoma District, 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada 2021

**Immigration Trends pre 1980 to 2021**

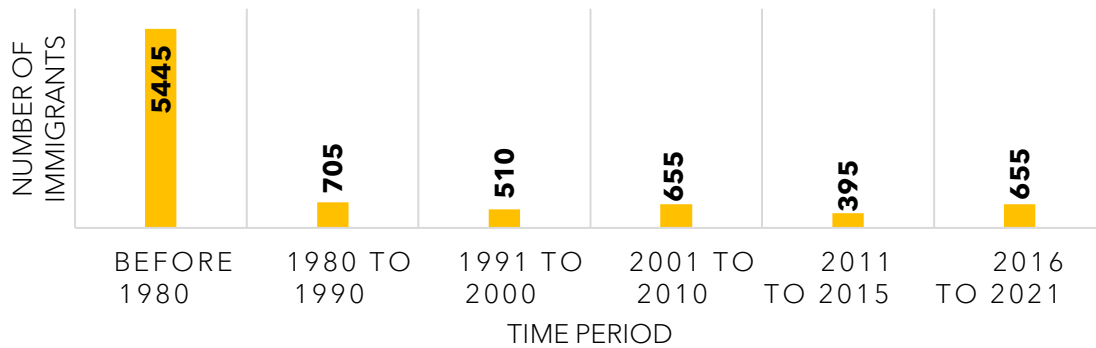
As of the 2021 Canadian census, the immigrant/non-immigrant breakdown of the population of Algoma District was as follows:

**Figure 6: Immigrant Status 1980 to 2021**

|                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| Non-Immigrants | 102,585 |
| Immigrants     | 8360    |

Figure 6 shows the minimal recent influence of immigration in the District, with immigrants only accounting for 8.1% of the total population. As Figure 6 shows 8.1%, 65% of immigration occurred prior to 1980.

**Figure 7: Algoma District – Immigration Over Time**

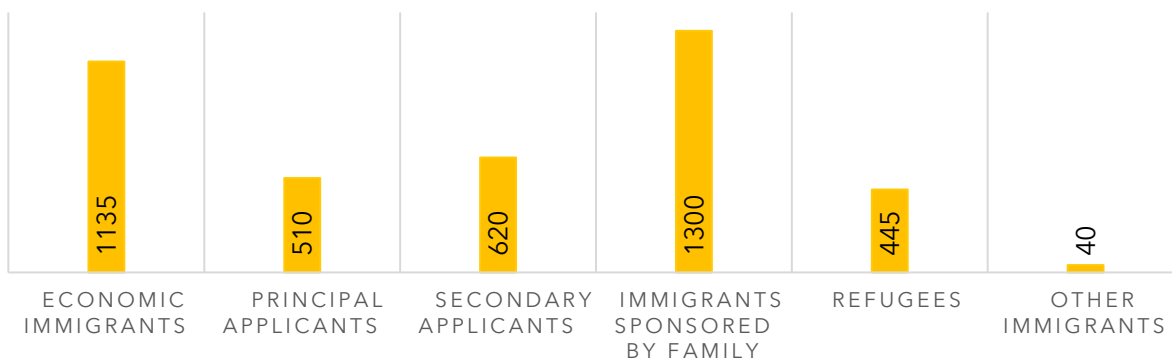


Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

Figure 7 identifies that most immigrants to Algoma District arrived many decades ago, prior to 1980. These earlier immigrants were typically from European states such as Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Since 1980, Algoma District has received much lower immigration, with only 2,920 residents of the District having immigrated to Canada since 1980. As was noted previously, more recent immigration has not come from European countries or anywhere in the Anglosphere but rather from countries such as India, China, the Philippines, and Nigeria. Community leaders and policymakers are recommended to carefully consider the main source countries of immigration when developing immigrant attraction and retention strategies to create more welcoming and inclusive communities.

Figure 8 provides a breakdown of Admission by Category and Applicant Type\* by means of immigration pathway and whether the applicant was the “principal applicant” (the individual directly applying for immigration) or the “secondary applicant” (an individual who is accompanying the principal applicant in the application process, such as their spouse or dependent child). Interestingly, while economic immigration is typically the principal immigration pathway for immigrants, with “family class” immigration the secondary pathway, this trend is reversed in the District for immigration between 1980 and 2021. Please note, however, that these figures represent 25% of the sample data of the total population and, therefore, should be interpreted cautiously.

**Figure 8: Immigration by Immigration Pathway  
(Economic, Family, Refugee/Protected Persons)**



\*Admission category and applicant type for the immigrant population in private households who were admitted between 1980 and 2021 - 25% of sample data

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

## Migration data

The migration data in this report is derived from a dataset compiled by Statistics Canada that compares addresses from individual income tax returns for two consecutive years. The data in this report covers the tax years from 2016-2017 to 2020-2021. The figures for these five years have been added together for a migration summary for the years 2016 to 2021.

Figure 9 shows the net migration figures by age group between 2016/17 and 2020/21. The net figure is the difference between the number of individuals migrating into an area minus the number of individuals migrating out of an area. A positive net figure means more individuals migrated in than migrated out.

**Figure 9: Net Migration by Age Groups, Algoma, 2016–2021**

| Algoma | AGE (YEARS) |       |       |       |     | TOTAL        |
|--------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|--------------|
|        | 0-17        | 18-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 65+ |              |
|        | 819         | -67   | 657   | 1,359 | 309 | <b>3,077</b> |

Source: Statistics Canada, Tax filer (T1FF) - Migration Estimates, 2016/17 to 2020/21

In the District, there was a net in-migration of 3,077 individuals between 2016 and 2021, with the largest net in-migrants aged 45-64. The District experienced a small net loss of residents among those aged 18-24 years old, and there was a low number of net in-migrants aged 65 years and older.

Analyzing the data by where migrants came from and went to provides further insight into migration patterns. Figure 10 shows that data, categorized as follows:

- Intra-provincial: movement to and from Ontario
- Interprovincial: movement to and from Canada, excluding Ontario
- International: movement to and from outside Canada

**Figure 10: Net Migration by Source and Destination, Algoma, 2016–2021**

| Algoma | Intra-provincial |         | Interprovincial |         | International |         | TOTAL |         |
|--------|------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------------|---------|-------|---------|
|        | Males            | Females | Males           | Females | Males         | Females | Males | Females |
|        | 1,006            | 847     | -3              | -24     | 736           | 515     | 1,739 | 1,338   |

Source: Statistics Canada, Tax filer (T1FF) - Migration Estimates, 2016/17 to 2020/21

The largest proportion of net in-migrants come from Ontario, followed by international sources. There is a very minor net out-migration when it comes to mobility between Algoma and the other parts of Canada. Males make up 54% of the net incomers from Ontario, and 59% come from international sources.

**Sault Ste. Marie | Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Program (RNIP) Statistics**

In 2019, Sault Ste. Marie, the largest of the two cities in the District, was selected by the Federal Government as one of eleven communities across Canada to participate in the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) program<sup>13</sup>.

The purpose of the RNIP program is a community-driven program. This pilot is community-driven, meaning the communities will assess prospective candidates who:

- best fit the economic needs of these community
- have a genuine employment opportunity that meets their community requirements
- have the intention of staying in the community.<sup>14</sup>

The program is designed to spread the benefits of economic immigration to smaller communities by creating a path to permanent residence for skilled foreign workers who want to work and live in one of the participating communities. The theory is that participating communities can tailor their qualifying criteria better to meet the labour market needs of their community while also maximizing the chances that successful applicants will reside in their communities in the longer term. In March 2024, Immigration Minister Marc Miller announced that the Rural and Northern Immigration Program will become permanent, and two other similar programs will be introduced later this year.

As of November 2023,<sup>15</sup> the following statistics applied to Sault Ste. Marie RNIP.

**Figure 11: 2019–2023, RNIP Recommendations Issued, Sault Ste Marie**

| <b>Year</b>                             | <b>2019-20</b> | <b>2021</b> | <b>2022</b> | <b>2023</b> |
|---|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Number of Recommendations Issued</b> | 61             | 65          | 213         | 331         |

The total number of applications from 2019 to 2023 is 670. The number of recommendations issued in 2023 represents a 543% increase on 2019/20’s number. In 2022, 213 recommendation letters were provided under the program, well above the city’s allotment of 125. It resulted in 137 local positions being filled. Unfilled allotments from other communities were transferred to Sault Ste. Marie.<sup>16</sup>

The number of applicants who have received Permanent Residence, including their dependents, is 385.

**Figure 12: Top 5 Source Countries for Successful RNIP Applicants**

| <b>Country</b>     | <b>Number of Applicants</b> |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>India</b>       | 370                         |
| <b>Philippines</b> | 121                         |
| <b>Brazil</b>      | 34                          |
| <b>Pakistan</b>    | 16                          |
| <b>Columbia</b>    | 13                          |

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/rural-northern-immigration-pilot.html>  
<sup>14</sup> Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot: about the pilot - Canada.ca  
<sup>15</sup> Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie, November 23, 2023  
<sup>16</sup> RNIP program to become permanent: Miller | Sault Star

**Figure 13: International Students – Study Permit Applications (Algoma District)**

| Year                     | Total Applications - Algoma U & Sault College | % Change by Year | Approved Applications | % Change by Year |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 2017                     | 530   | -                | 315                   | -                |
| 2018                     | 1,192   | 125              | 726                   | 130              |
| 2019                     | 4,097   | 244              | 2,046                 | 182              |
| 2020                     | 1,962   | -52              | 781                   | -62              |
| 2021                     | 8,550   | 336              | 4,402                 | 464              |
| 2022                     | 16,897  | 98               | 8,357                 | 89               |
| 2023 (to September 2023) | 15,589  | -8               | 10,397                | 24               |

Source: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/9b34e712-513f-44e9-babf-9df4f7256550> and <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-afa3-b4cff8facaee>

Figure 13 shows the total study permit applications received by Algoma University and Sault College and the approved applications for these institutions. Except for 2020, which is an outlier due to COVID-19 restrictions, there has been a huge year-on-year increase in the number of international students in the district. The number of applications received to September 2023 was a 2841% increase in the number received in 2017. The percentage increase for approved applications over the same period was 3201%.

This dramatic increase in the number of international students raises several challenges related to the settlement capacity of Algoma District communities to meet the demands of these students, principally, but not exclusively, in housing, public transport, health care and employment.

Policymakers and community leaders in the Algoma District must also be concerned with post-graduation retention of international student strategies to meet labour market needs population growth and age reduction goals.

**Figure 14: 2022 Top 5 countries, Total Applications (Total and Approved)**

| Country     | Total applications - Algoma U & Sault College | Approved |
|-------------|---|----------|
| India       | 14,865  | 7,124    |
| Philippines | 693   | 458      |
| Nepal       | 463   | 317      |
| Nigeria     | 274   | 130      |
| Pakistan    | 119   | 52       |

Figure 14 shows the top five source countries for international students who applied to either Algoma University or Sault College in 2022. India is the clear leader in this regard, with over 91% of the approved applications being Indian. By some distance, the Philippines is in second place with 5.9% of approved applications. These figures help to inform how priorities should be established in terms of increasing intercultural competency and inclusion efforts more broadly.

## Sault College Statistics

The figures below detail the domestic and international student enrolment figures for 2022 and 2023.

**Figure 15: Full Time Post Secondary Enrolment – Main Campus**

|                         | Domestic | International | Total |
|-------------------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| <b>November 1, 2023</b> | 1,332    | 991           | 2,323 |
| <b>November 1, 2022</b> | 1,221    | 845           | 2,066 |

Figure 16 details the academic areas under which international students study courses fall under for 2022 and 2023.

**Figure 16: International Student Course of Study, 2022-2023**

| Program Area           | 23F        | 22F        | Grand Total  |
|------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Business               | 413        | 304        | 717          |
| Health                 | 221        | 254        | 475          |
| Trades/Engineering     | 102        | 68         | 170          |
| Information Technology | 93         | 55         | 148          |
| Community Services     | 80         | 66         | 146          |
| Culinary               | 29         | 55         | 84           |
| SONE                   | 38         | 27         | 65           |
| Media and Design       | 17         | 14         | 31           |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>993</b> | <b>843</b> | <b>1,836</b> |

\*SONE is the School of Natural Environment.

## Algoma University Statistics

Figure 17 below displays the percentage of international students over the academic years 2020 - 23 by their course choice.

**Figure 17: International Student Course of Study, 2020-2023**

| Course                                | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Computer Science <sup>17</sup>        | 53         |
| Business Administration <sup>18</sup> | 20         |
| Biology <sup>19</sup>                 | 10         |
| Psychology <sup>20</sup>              | 7          |
| Finance & Economics <sup>21</sup>     | 4          |

<sup>17</sup> <https://algomau.ca/academics/programs/computer-science/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://algomau.ca/academics/programs/business-administration/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://algomau.ca/academics/programs/biology/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://algomau.ca/academics/programs/psychology/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://algomau.ca/academics/programs/finance-economics/>



Facing the impact of provincial budget cuts and a sustained freeze on domestic student fees since 2019, the imperative to discover new sources of revenue for post-secondary institutions has become increasingly critical. Back in 2021, 68 percent of the revenue for Ontario's public colleges came from foreign students, a total of \$ 1.7 billion. Today, that number is far higher.<sup>22</sup> The contribution of students extends beyond financial aspects, aiding in mitigating labour shortages and elevating overall productivity in our communities. International students are also considered ideal candidates for permanent residency to replace an aging workforce. The ongoing freeze on domestic student fees is unsustainable and fails to address the requirements of post-secondary education providers. Additionally, relying on foreign students as the primary funding source for rural and low-enrollment institutions is not a viable solution.

International students play two primary roles within the local context of Algoma. First, after completing their education, they seamlessly join the local workforce, contributing to the community's economic vitality. Simultaneously, during their academic pursuits, international students actively address the challenge of labour force gaps, providing valuable support to industries and sectors experiencing shortages of skilled workers. "Lack of work experience acquired during studies has been cited as a primary barrier to international students finding a job after they graduate," said a report by RBC Economics & Thought Leadership in 2022<sup>23</sup>. Predictably, those holding temporary work permits are primarily employed in sectors characterized by low-skilled occupations facing severe labour shortages, notably in accommodation and food services. However, the extended availability of labour in these sectors does not necessarily translate into clear long-term benefits, as shortages persist in crucial fields, particularly healthcare and skilled trades, despite the influx of workers.

International students exhibit a strong presence in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and Business Administration fields between the two post-secondary institutions. Despite this, there is a call for increased participation of international students in healthcare, specific trades and services, and education to align with regional labour market demands. International students are also ineligible for most government-funded and other Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs which miss out on valuable opportunities to gain practical, hands-on experience in their field of study, which could impact their competitiveness in the job market upon graduation. Government-funded programs often come with additional educational support, resources, and services, and those without Permanent Residence (PR) status are excluded from these benefits, impacting their academic experience and success.

In January, the federal government implemented a cap on the total study permits to be issued over two years—limiting it to 364,000—roughly half the number of permits issued in 2023. The cap was initially meant to stop institutions from taking advantage of international students but also to help alleviate infrastructure and social services pressures.

In November 2022 a temporary policy was implemented that lifted the cap of 20 hours per week of work for international students. This demonstrates flexibility in recognizing the ongoing challenges. This work-hours waiver has benefitted international students in many ways. They now have greater flexibility in choosing their working hours, can graduate with more work experience, and can earn more income to support their studies.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/ontario-college-international-students-1.7129564>

<sup>23</sup> <https://thoughtleadership.rbc.com/course-correction-how-international-students-can-help-solve-canadas-labour-crisis/>

**Sault Ste. Marie New to the Sault (Settlement Agency Program) Statistics 2020 - 2024 (to date)**

Figure 18 shows the numbers of recently arrived immigrants (“newcomers”) for the fiscal years 2020/21 to 2023/24 who were served by “New to the Sault,” which is the settlement agency function of the Sault Community Career Centre.

**Figure 18: Newcomer Programs- Sault Community Career Centre**

| Fiscal year | Program Stream |     |     |       |      |
|-------------|----------------|-----|-----|-------|------|
|             | IRCC           | NSP | RAP | Total | BVOR |
| 2023-2024   | 375            | 450 | 250 | 1075  | 0    |
| 2022-2023   | 391 *          | 439 | 234 | 854   | 0    |
| 2021-2022   | 267 *          | 240 | 78  | 585   | 0    |
| 2020-2021   | 266 *          | 154 | 34  | 454   | 0    |

**Column header explanations:**

- IRCC: Permanent residents and convention refugees.
  - NSP: Visitors, Temporary residents (work permit, study permit), Refugee claimants (no status), Canadian citizens.
  - BVOR: Private sponsor refugee program
  - RAP: Refugee Assistance program
- \* Included are some RAP clients who have moved to permanent housing.

**Newcomer Attraction and Retention Recommendations**

Considerable research has been done regarding the characteristics of communities that are successful in attracting and retaining newcomers. Such communities are referred to as “welcoming communities.”

One of the most prominent pieces of Canadian research around welcoming communities comes from the “Measuring welcoming communities: A toolkit for communities and those who support them. Pathways to Prosperity Partnership”<sup>24</sup>

The toolkit defines a “welcoming community” as follows:

- “A welcoming community is a collective effort to design and sustain a place where immigrants feel that they belong and that supports immigrants’ economic, socio-cultural, and civic-political integration.
- A welcoming community has structures, processes, and practices in place to meet the needs and promote the inclusion of immigrants in all aspects of life, and actively works to ensure these are effective.”

The toolkit identifies nineteen characteristics of a welcoming community, broken down into three clusters as follows:

<sup>24</sup> Esses, V.M., Hamilton, L.K., Aslam, A., & Barros, P.R.P. (2023). Measuring welcoming communities: A toolkit for communities and those who support them. *Pathways to Prosperity Partnership*. <http://p2pcanada.ca/library/measuring-welcoming-communities-a-toolkit-forcommunities- and-those-who-support-them/>

## **Cluster A**

1. Access to Affordable, Adequate, and Suitable Housing
2. Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities
3. Access to Suitable Health Care, including Mental Health Care
4. Positive Attitudes Toward Immigrants of All Racial, Cultural and Religious Backgrounds
5. Access to Immigrant-Serving Agencies that Meet Immigrants' Needs

## **Cluster B**

6. Access to Transportation
7. Educational Opportunities
8. Ongoing Commitment to Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression
9. Access to Services and Support for French-speaking immigrants by French Speakers
10. Immigrant-Responsive Municipal Features and Services

## **Cluster C**

11. Coordination and Collaboration Among Community Organizations and Different Levels of Government Working Toward Welcoming Communities
12. Equitable Neighbourhoods
13. Opportunities to Form and Join Social and Community Networks
14. Immigrant-Responsive Police Services and Justice System
15. Access to Inclusive Public Spaces, Facilities, and Programs
16. Positive Indigenous-Immigrant Relations and Understanding
17. Access to Diverse Religious and Ethnocultural Organizations
18. Civic and Political Participation Opportunities
19. Equitable Media Coverage, Representation, and Content

It is strongly recommended that community leaders and policymakers thoroughly familiarise themselves with the toolkit and implement it as outlined. It is also strongly recommended that community leaders and policymakers adopt a community consultation process and make the appropriate implementations with consideration to the local needs, priorities, and characteristics of their community.

It is also strongly recommended that community leaders and policymakers broadly implement intercultural competency training sessions in their communities at the institutional level to better harness the benefits of diversity while minimizing the conflicts that can occur due to misunderstandings that may arise as a result of the complexities that increasing diversity brings.

## Conclusion

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Given the trend of the District's population decline and age, community leaders and policymakers should continue to focus on immigrant attraction and retention efforts and should also continue to support the RNIP program in Sault Ste. Marie while also, ideally, expanding the geography of the program to cover the entire District. Part of the support for RNIP must include employer awareness and education sessions regarding the hiring and retaining of foreign workers through RNIP and other federal and provincial immigration streams, as well as integrating any family that may be accompanying.

Municipalities, government service providers and major employers have a crucial role in developing welcoming communities. This work must be coordinated, integrated and, most importantly, done intentionally. The work of the Sault Ste. Marie Local Immigration Partnership must be supported and enhanced as well as its Francophone equivalent, the Réseau du Nord, to promote Francophone immigration to the District and to ensure that welcoming community work has a Francophone component. A recent and potentially interesting initiative, one that builds on the existing concepts of the LIPs, is one recently released by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and that is the "Zonal Immigration Partnerships,<sup>25</sup>" which offers the potential for other municipalities in the District to collaborate around building more welcoming communities.

Due to the funding issues that affect secondary education institutions and a strong interest in Canada as an immigration destination, international students will likely play a significant role in institutions' student recruitment processes, despite the current issues surrounding international students. A large proportion of international students are typically interested in permanent immigration post-graduation. Therefore, host communities must develop local post-graduation pathways and strategies for individuals interested in permanently residing in Canada post-graduation.

Such pathways include building more welcoming communities that can offer both the quality of life and the fundamental amenities most people require to live viable and fulfilling lives. In addition, more coordination and relationship development between further education institutions, key employers, economic development departments, employment organizations, unions, trade, professional and business bodies, municipalities, townships and unorganized areas is required.

The findings of this report underscore the critical importance of immigrant attraction and retention strategies for the sustainable development of the Algoma District. As the population continues to decline and demographic shifts occur, fostering welcoming and inclusive communities becomes paramount to ensure growth, prosperity, and social cohesion.

At the time of writing, no data was available regarding temporary foreign workers in the District nor those that came to the District via a provincial immigration pathway, such as the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP). Efforts should be made to obtain this data for future reporting to understand the immigration picture more fully in the Algoma District.

As always, for the most up-to-date information, please visit the news page on the IRCC website<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/partners-service-providers/funding/local-immigration-partnership.html>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news.html>

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