

Capitalizing on Decentralization in Canada's Migration Sector

Aubrey Westfall

Professor of Political Science, Wheaton College Massachusetts

Decentralization

Decentralization: The transfer of power and resources away from the central government

core dimensions: fiscal, administrative, political

Globally, immigration policy is generally centralized, while integration policy is more often decentralized.

Canada decentralizes immigrant selection and integration, while ultimate control is centralized

Benefits

- Autonomy
- Efficiency in service delivery and matching
- Proximity
- Preserving culture
- Supporting diversity
- "Laboratory federalism"

Drawbacks

- Fragmentation
- Loss of co-ordination
- Conflict across levels of government
- Transaction costs
- Negative externalities
- Compromised nationalism

Decentralization in Migration

Section 95, Canada's Constitution Act: regulation of immigration is a shared power by the federal government and its constituent units

The Canada-Quebec Accord: Grants near-exclusive power over immigration to Quebec

Provincial ministries: manage provincial responsibilities as they pertain to labor migration

Provincial nominee programs/Atlantic Immigration Program

Pilot programs: experimentation to address particular/local needs

Immigrant settlement and integration: Federally funded, but delivered by autonomous NGOs

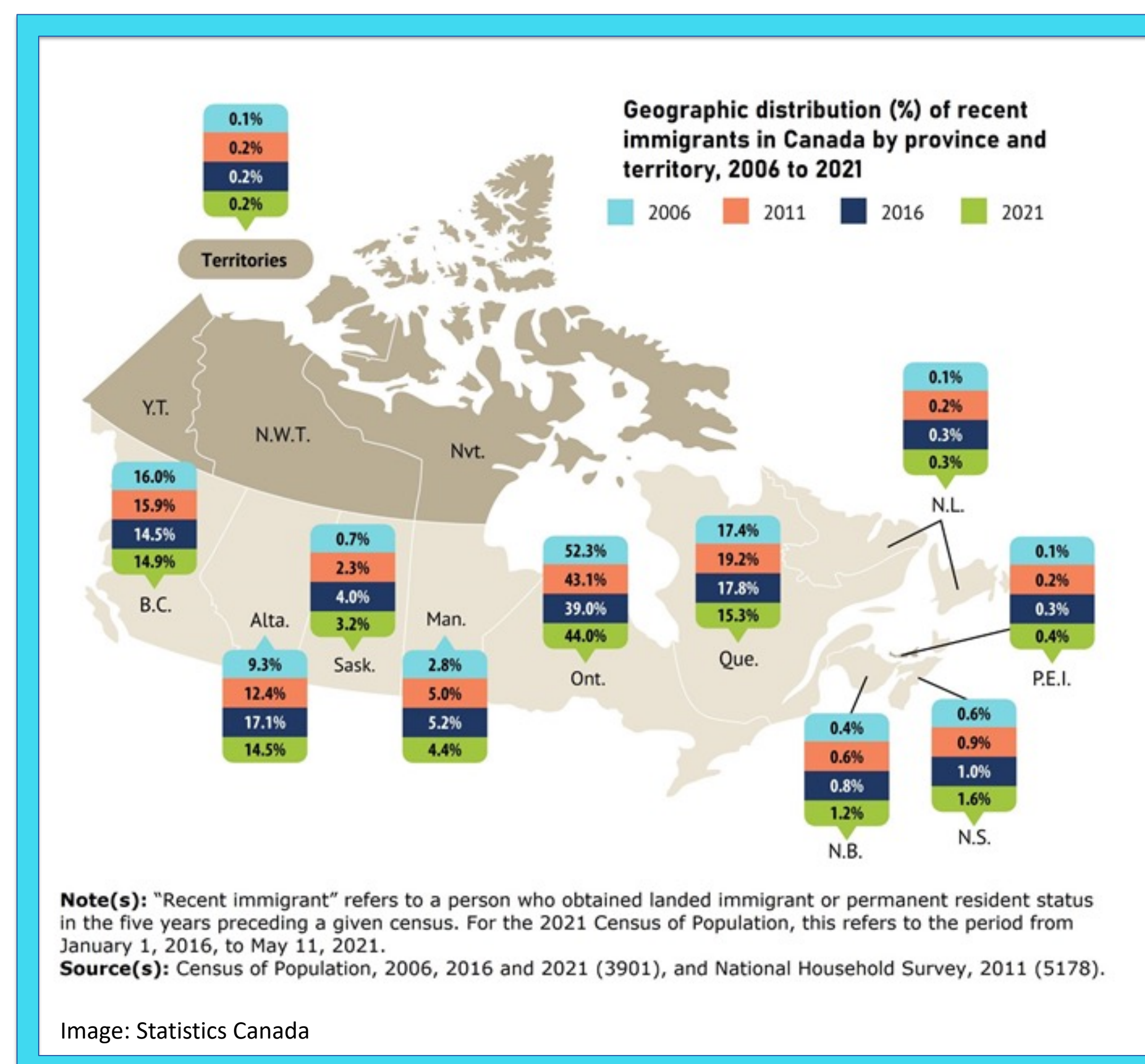
LIP/ZIPs: Same mission country-wide. Variance in size, staffing, and embeddedness. Focused on the particularities of their community and stakeholder needs

Maintaining unity

Given the extent of decentralization, why do we see more unity than fragmentation in the migration sector?

Note: This analysis does not consider Quebec's unique status

- Non-confrontational province-building
- Partisan consensus
- Public support for immigration
- Multicultural nationalism
- Federal funding mandates
- Institutionalized collaboration
 - ✓ Provincial umbrella organizations for immigrant serving agencies
 - ✓ National LIP Secretariat
- Shared best practices
 - ✓ Pathways to Prosperity
 - ✓ The Metropolis Conferences
 - ✓ Small centers conference



"Each community is unique, of course. But I don't think the way [those in the sector] think about immigration differs community-to-community. We want the same things."

-LIP Director in Alberta

Challenges

- Over-reliance on the federal government
 - ✓ Limited funding mandates
 - No temporary migration assistance
 - ✓ Short funding cycles
- Employee retention
- Changing social and political climate

Recommendations

- Funding diversification
- Enhanced provincial engagement/funding
- Long-term (20 yrs) strategic planning tied to municipal development plans
- Professional development and regularization
- Increased support for cross-provincial collaboration in the sector