

**Destination Matters:
Policy Options to Balance the Distribution of
Iranian Immigrants in Canada**

by

Homayoon Fotros

MBA, Sharif University of Technology, Iran, 2013

Industrial Engineering, Sharif University of Technology, Iran, 2011

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Approval

Name: Homayoon Fotros

Degree: Master of Public Policy

Title: Destination Matters: Policy Options to Balance the Distribution of Iranian Immigrants in Canada

Examining Committee: **Chair: Maureen Maloney**
Professor, School of Public Policy, SFU

Joshua Gordon
Senior Supervisor
Assistant Professor

Dominique Gross
Supervisor
Professor

Nancy Olewiler
Internal Examiner
Professor

Date Defended/Approved: April 3, 2018

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Abstract

Dispersing newcomers to destinations outside Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver is a key objective of Canadian immigration policy. The concentration of immigrants in these cities has been a longstanding settlement pattern that contributes to a range of social, environmental, and economic issues. This study first develops knowledge about immigrants' locational choice and the effectiveness of regional immigration programs. Second, it conducts a quantitative and a qualitative data analysis to obtain a broad understanding of Iranian immigrants' locational preferences, as a highly concentrated ethnic group in the major cities. The data analysis shows the destination decision of Iranian immigrants are highly influenced by their social networks and the content of online platforms. The main locational criteria for Iranian immigrants appears to be the *job prospects*, *educational opportunities*, and *climate* at destination. The study then introduces three policy options and an evaluation framework to analyze those options. The policy analysis indicates the option of '*Clustering Immigrants in Second-Tier Cities*' would have the best tradeoffs to achieve the policy's key objectives. The recommended policy would especially be highly effective in attracting Iranian immigrants to targeted cities and establishing a long-term settlement, which can ultimately balance their distribution.

Keywords: immigration policy; destination choice; Iranian immigrants; settlement distribution; regional immigration programs; migration dynamics

To a world without borders.

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List of Acronyms

ENE	Employers-Newcomers Engagement
PN/TNP	Provincial and Territorial Nominee Program
RAA	Regional Allocation Admission

Glossary

Economic Class	Immigrants entered under the Federal Skilled Worker, PTNPs, or other streams for economic pursuits of immigration
Immigrants' Settlement Distribution	Geographic distribution of immigrants
Integration	The engagement of immigrants' in activities, interactions, and social relationships that bond newcomers to the host society.
Location Criteria	Locational features that immigrants consider in choosing their destination
Canadian Major Cities	Includes Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver
Permanent Resident	Admitted immigrants to Canada, including Economic Class, Refugees, and other streams of entry.
Regional Immigration Programs	Immigration programs that the selection and admission process are in large administered by the subnational governments, and immigrants settle in the respective regions.
Retention	Long-term (often more than three years) settlement of immigrants in the arrival location.

Executive Summary

Background and Policy Problem

Shifting immigration toward small cities and less populated areas has become one of the main objectives of Canadian immigration policy. Immigrants have traditionally settled in the three largest cities of the country -Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. This longstanding pattern has led to an uneven distribution of immigrants and depriving other regions of social and economic benefits of immigration. Meanwhile, the concentration of immigrants in the major cities has strained these locations by creating a range of social and economic issues. As a significant indicator, the influx of population to these locations has been in part fueled the inflation of housing prices. There have been also issues such as long wait-time of language training programs and widespread job-skill mismatch among newcomers in the large cities, which inhibit a smooth and timely settlement process and integration of newcomers. The existing distribution of immigrants, therefore, hinders realizing the opportunities that immigration can create for the society as a whole.

In the past two decades, Canadian immigration policy has implemented regionalization programs to disperse immigrants to less populated provinces. These programs have played a significant role in increasing the percentage of immigrant population outside of the three largest cities from about 15% in the 1990s to more than 40% in 2016. However, the impacts of these programs on the distribution of different ethnic groups of immigrants, particularly those from Asia, Africa, and the Middle Eastern countries, have not been the same. The diverse settlement pattern of these ethnic groups highlights the imperative of a better understanding of factors that drive immigrants' destination choice. Such understanding can inform the design of an inclusive immigration policy, which leads to a more balanced distribution of immigrants.

The existing immigration policy projects that the concentration of immigrants in the large cities will increase in the next two decades, which would exacerbate the issues mentioned above. This study, therefore, defines the policy problem as the concentration of immigrants in the Canadian major cities, and seeks an effective policy option to diversify the uneven settlement pattern of newcomers. For this purpose, it examines general and ethnic-specific factors that drive immigrants' choice of location. It specifically investigates the locational preferences of Iranian immigrants in Canada of whom nearly 90% reside in

the three traditional destinations. The study recommends 'Clustering immigrants in Second-tier cities' that would be the most effective approach to settle newcomers in less populated areas, especially regarding Iranian immigrants in Canada.

Methodology

This capstone project is guided by two lines of inquiries. First, "*What are the general and ethnic-specific factors driving Iranian immigrants' choice of location?*" and second, "*What policy design can be more effective toward a more balanced distribution of immigrants?*" To answer these questions, I pursued a mixed-methodology approach that combined the findings from the literature review, case study, and the results of empirical data analysis. Specifically, I conducted an online survey on Iranian immigrants' destination choice and analyzed the survey data using the descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation methods. I also performed a thematic analysis on a thread from Applyabroad.org website—an online discussion forum for prospective Iranian immigrants to Canada.

Research Findings

Most of the regionalization programs have focused on economic factors to attract and retain immigrants in less populated areas. In most cases, however, a purely employment-driven approach has not succeeded in retaining immigrants in the long-term. In fact, immigrants are more likely to settle where they establish social connections. The locational features to attract, retain, and integrate immigrants also correspond to ethnic factors and cultural traits. The results of data analysis provided evidence that Iranian immigrants are highly concerned about specific locational features. These include job prospects, education opportunities, and climate. Iranian's destination choice also appears to be largely influenced by the informal exchanges in social networks and online platforms.

Policy Options and Recommendation

I propose three policy options: 1) *Enhancing Regional Immigration Programs* -that would expand using the existing structure of regional immigration programs to increase the settlement outside the major cities; 2) *Clustering Immigrants in Second-tier Cities*, which involves inducing immigrants to settle in targeted large cities; and 3) *Employment-Newcomers Engagement* -that involves devising a comprehensive information system to

link prospective immigrants to employers across the country. I evaluate these options in light of three societal (Effectiveness, Equity, Social Adaptation) and four governmental (Ease of Implementation, Cost, Stakeholder Acceptance, Political Salability) objectives. The policy analysis showed option (2) would minimize the tradeoffs and better meet the policy objectives. Specifically, the policy analysis indicates this option can achieve better attraction and retention outcomes over time along with a decreasing administrative burden. The study enumerates several strategies for implementing the policy, including the provision of economic and educational incentives for newcomers and measures to facilitate the immigration process of newcomers.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In 2017, Canada admitted nearly 300,000 new immigrants to the country, the highest inflow since World War I. The federal government has announced that it will maintain this influx at the current or increased in upcoming years (IRCC, 2017). One of the main motivations of this immigration policy is to spur economic growth and offset the aging population in small cities and less populated areas. In practice, however, the majority of immigrants settle in the three largest cities -Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. There are multiple consequences arising from this settlement pattern. For the cities, it has resulted in a growing strain on urban infrastructure and the overutilization of health services, income support, and other social programs (MacDonald, 2004). Specifically, the concentration of population in Toronto and Vancouver has contributed to an unprecedented housing unaffordability issue. In fact, Vancouver was the least affordable city of North America in 2017 (Macleans.ca, 2018), where the average housing prices have inflated nearly 40% since 2010 (Real Estate Board of Vancouver, 2017).

The ramifications of existing settlement pattern have also been significant for immigrants. Most of newcomers have been forced to settle in the peripheral areas of the large cities that are more affordable, thus driving the growth of ethnic enclaves and non-properly planned suburbanization, which have culminated in economic issues for this population and affected their social integration process (Hou and Picot, 2003; Vezina and Houle, 2017). In addition, immigration service organizations in the large cities have not been able to maintain their provisions commensurate with growing demand. For instance, in Metro Vancouver, the average wait time for enrolling in language training classes for newcomers has increased from about two months to nearly a year (Vancouver Sun, 2017). More importantly, a large number of immigrants have been employed in low-wage occupations that also do not match their skills, which in part is a result of the highly competitive and service-oriented labour market of the large cities (Shannon, 2015; Krahn and Derwing, 2008; Hyndman et al.; 2005).

To address the discrepancy between the spatial outcomes and objectives of the immigration policy, there have been increasing calls for an 'incentive-based' approach that would fit the newcomers' locational preferences *and* diversifies the distribution of

immigrants, which ultimately benefits the country as a whole (Ferrer et al., 2014; IRCC, 2017; Krahn & Derwing, 2008; CIC, 2001; Huynh, 2004). In the past two decades, the federal and subnational governments have launched several new immigration streams to address the uneven distribution and “regionalize” immigration. These initiatives, however, have had varying outcomes from spatial and ethnical aspects. Specifically, some regions have succeeded in attracting large numbers of immigrants from few specific countries, while some other regions have admitted relatively fewer newcomers but from diverse origins. For some other regions such as Atlantic Canada, the inflow of immigrants has remained low and barely changed. (Baglay, 2012; McCann, 2014; Pandey & Townsend, 2011). These variations contribute to a new map of immigrant settlement that contains demographic, economic, and ethnocultural imbalances.

In this context, a growing body of literature has examined the settlement patterns of immigrants in Canada and other immigration countries. Most of these studies cite economic incentives and social connections as the key factors driving immigrants’ choice of location (Teixeira & Drolet, 2017). It is also widely believed that self-reinforcing dynamics motivate immigrants’ destination choice. These dynamics cause an exponential growth of this population in certain places over time (MacDonald, 2004). Past research, however, is silent in many areas. Particularly, there is a dearth of research on what fuels the disparities between the distribution of immigrants from different origins and how ethnocultural features affect immigrants’ location choice.

1.1. Policy Problem

The policy problem of this study is defined as the uneven distribution of immigrants, specifically, the ethnic groups of immigrants in Canada. Considering the wide scope of this issue, I focus on Iranian immigrants as a particular group of immigrants and derive the policy implications based on the factors driving their settlement pattern. There are three reasons for this choice. First, given the vast range of cultures and ethnicities in Canada, it was beyond the scope of this study to examine all ethnic groups at the same time. Indeed, the distribution pattern and characteristics of immigrants from each source country may define different policy problems each of which should be analyzed with a specific evaluative framework. Secondly, Iran has been one of the major source countries of immigrants in the recent years and has cultural proximities to other contemporary source countries such as Syria and Iraq. Therefore, this study can establish a ground for further

investigations about the increasing immigration from the Middle East to Canada. Third, the case of Iranian immigrants is especially interesting since unlike immigrants from most countries, their high concentration in the three largest cities has barely decreased during the past two decades.

Two lines of inquiry guide this research: “*What are the general and ethnic-specific factors driving Iranian immigrants’ choice of location?*” and “*What policy design can lead to a more balanced distribution of immigrants?*” I pursued a mixed-method approach to answer these research questions. This includes literature review, jurisdictional scan, and the analyses of quantitative and qualitative data. In particular, I conducted an online survey asking Iranian immigrants about their destination choice and analyzed the survey data by descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation methods. I also performed a qualitative analysis on the text-based conversations of a thread from Applyabroad.org in which Iranians discuss their choice of location in Canada.

This research contains nine chapters. Following this introduction, the second chapter provides background information and the literature review. The third chapter explains the research methodology. In the fourth chapter, I present three case studies. The fifth chapter provides the result of data analyses. Chapter 6, 7 and 8 present policy options, policy evaluation framework, and the analysis of policy options respectively. The final chapter outlines policy recommendations and concludes with considerations for implementing the policy.

Chapter 2. Background

2.1. Policy Landscape

Canada is the home of nearly eight million immigrants. The government admits the majority of this population under a merit-based “point-system”. This system prioritizes high-skilled and highly educated applicants who are deemed conducive to the country’s economic growth –this stream is known as the ‘Economic Class’. In addition, Canada offers entry streams that include ‘Family Reunification’, ‘Refugees and Protected Persons’, and ‘Humanitarian’ circumstances. Immigrants allowed to reside permanently in Canada receive “Permanent Residency” upon their arrival. As a constitutional right, permanent residents like Canadian citizens can freely move and reside anywhere across the country (Charter of Rights and Freedoms, S.6).

As illustrated in the figure below, the number of economic class of immigrants has increased over the past several decades. This increase is in part due to the expansion of admission sub-divisions (immigration programs) under the economic class. The oldest and most well-known of these is the “Federal Skilled Worker” (FSW) Program that is designed and administered directly by the federal government.

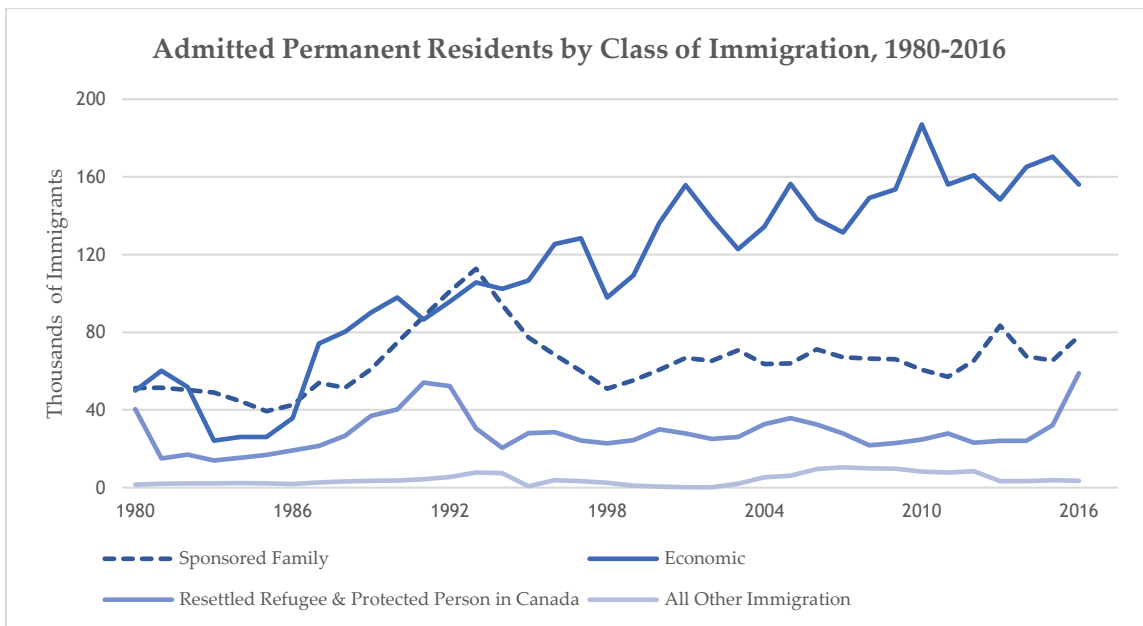


Figure 1 Immigrants to Canada by class of entry
(Data: IRCC, 2017)

Immigration is under shared jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments. In line with the decentralization wave in the 1990s, provincial governments have become more involved in immigration policy. In 1996, the Province of Manitoba and Saskatchewan signed agreements with the federal government to launch Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs). In these regional schemes, each province determines the eligibility criteria as well as other features of the selection process. By 2017, other provinces and two of the territories have already launched similar immigration programs (e.g. PN/TNP¹, Canadian Experience, Express Entry). The share of entries under these regional programs has tripled in the past decade, which highlights the increasing role of subnational governments in Canadian immigration policy.

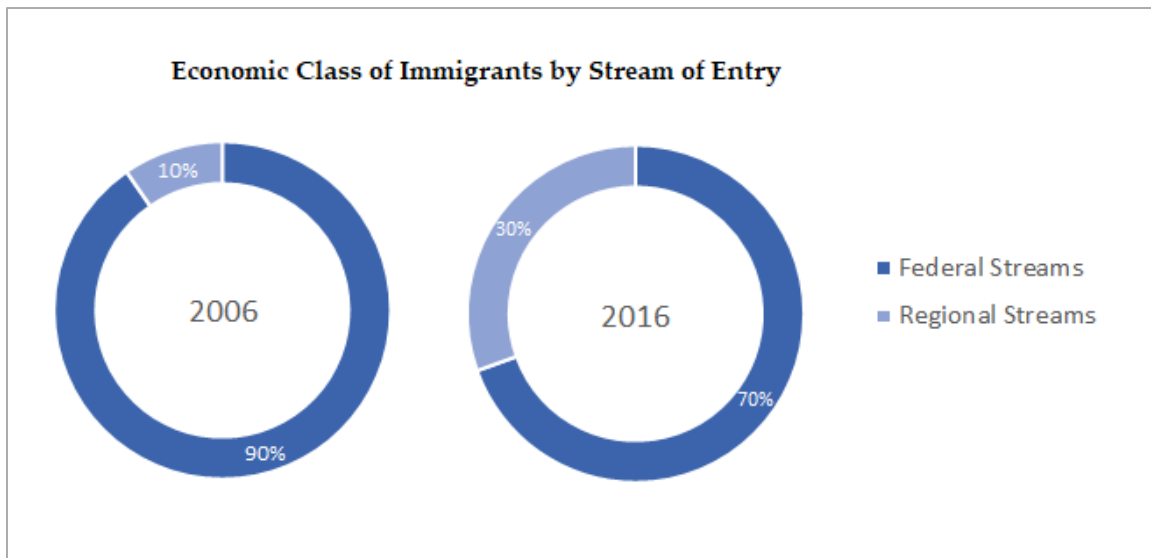


Figure 2 Economic class of immigrant by stream of entry, 2006-2016
(Data: IRCC, 2017)

The main goal of the regional immigration programs has been to shift immigration to non-traditional destinations. In fact, this goal became one of the main pillars of Canadian immigration policy in its revised version that was declared under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) in 2002:

“...to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy, in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions of Canada.” (IRPA Act (2002), Objectives – Immigration (c))

¹ Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs

Specifically, the policy intended to disperse immigrants from the three largest cities – Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Meanwhile, the federal government has recently raised the baseline of the annual intake to 300,000 immigrants, more than half of whom are planned to enter under the Economic Class (IRCC, 2017). The IRCC² has also introduced a new benchmark for its *dispersal ratio* –the percentage of Economic Class permanent resident principal applicants who settle and are retained outside the Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver census metropolitan areas (CMAs) three years after landing. The target denoted to this index is at 40% level for 2017-2018.

In the past two decades, the dispersal ratio has increased from nearly 15% to 40%. This growth is in part due to the expansion of regional immigration programs. However, recent data shows a stalled or reverse trend of this index. The index was 37.5% in the 2015-2016 period, compared to 45.9% in 2014-2015 and 42.1% in 2013-2014 (IRCC, 2017). Statistics Canada estimates that the index will remain above the 40% level for the next two decades (Statistics Canada, 2017). Considering this projection, the existing policy, may not effectively contribute to a more balanced distribution of immigrants. Moreover, it can be argued that the improvement of the above index is not a good measure for the dispersal objective, as it does not indicate the growth of immigrants in the major cities. Indeed, the fast growth of this population has outpaced the increase of the dispersal ratio in recent years. The gap between these two indicators widens when there is an upward trend in the inflow of immigrants to the country (IRCC, 2017).

Meanwhile, there has been a significant variation in immigration policy outcomes among regions. This variation has also led to major differences in the ethnocultural composition of the destination regions. In Manitoba, for instance, the foreign-born population has more than doubled in the past two decades. In fact, nearly 45% of the PN/TN entries between 2005 and 2015 have settled in this province. Noticeably, about half of these newcomers have been from India and the Philippines (IRCC, 2016). During the same period, the tax data shows a large number of immigrants who has entered under the regional programs of the Atlantic Provinces have not stayed in the arrival locations. In this sense, some have argued the regional immigration streams have been used as a “back-door” through which some immigrants find a way to Canada under a less stringent selection process and then move to one of the three major cities (Pandey & Townsend,

² Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada

2011; Abu-Laban & Garber, 2005). In addition, the regional streams of immigration have mostly contributed to the growth of population in the provincial capitals and other large urban centers in any receiving region. This settlement pattern has exacerbated the equitable settlement of immigration benefits within the less populated areas of the country (McCann, 2014; Nolin et al., 2009). On these grounds, therefore, it is hard to envision the existing regionalization policy is leading to a more spatially even and ethnically balanced distribution of immigrants.

In sum, the introduction of regional streams such as the PN/TN programs has resulted in a greater dispersion of immigrants in the country compared to two decades ago. However, this distribution still entails significant spatial and ethnic variations. In the following, I focus on the settlement pattern of Iranian immigrants, which is an excellent example to depict the ethnic variations of immigrants' settlement patterns.

2.2. Iranians in Canada

Iranians are one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. Figure-4 shows Iranians constitute the second highest growing immigrant population between 2005 and 2016 (6% average annual increase). Before 1990, the majority of Iranian immigrants were refugees. The inflow of Iranian immigrants to Canada has increased steadily over the past forty years. However, according to the IRCC data (2016), about one-third of Iranian immigrants have entered between 2011 and 2016. The recent cohorts of Iranian immigrants are mostly high-skilled workers that have entered under the FSW and PN/TN programs, and post-secondary students who have applied to obtain Canadian permanent residency after graduation. The Census (2016) data shows nearly 155,000 Iranian immigrants live in Canada³. The same data also shows about 225,000 individuals in Canada have identified their mother-tongue language as Farsi or Persian, which is the official language spoken in Iran. The vast majority of Iranians in Canada (87%) are in their working age, mostly between 25 and 40 years old (Statistics Canada, 2017).

³ Not including those who have relinquished their Iranian citizenship.

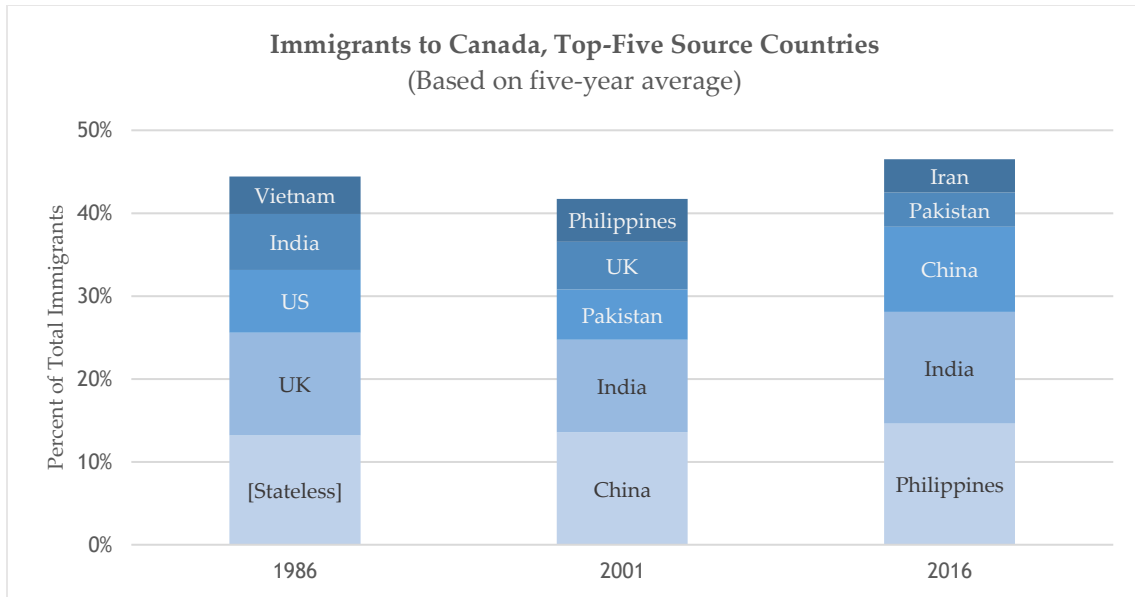


Figure 3 Percentage of immigrants, Top-five source countries, 1986- 2016
(Data: IRCC, 2017)

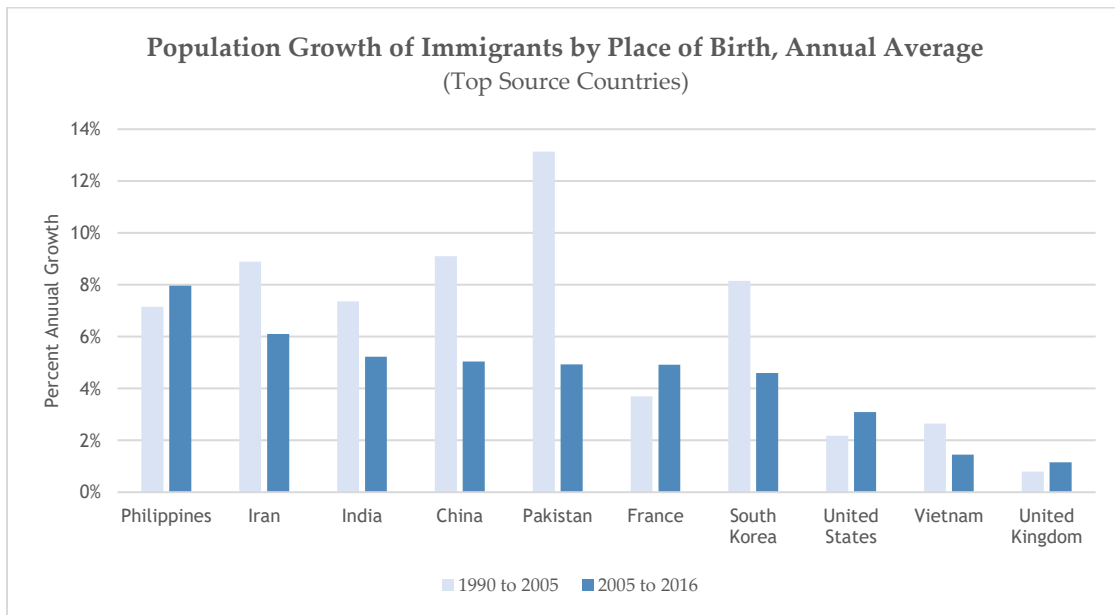


Figure 4 Population Growth of Immigrants by Place of Birth, 1990-2016
(Data: IRCC, 2017)

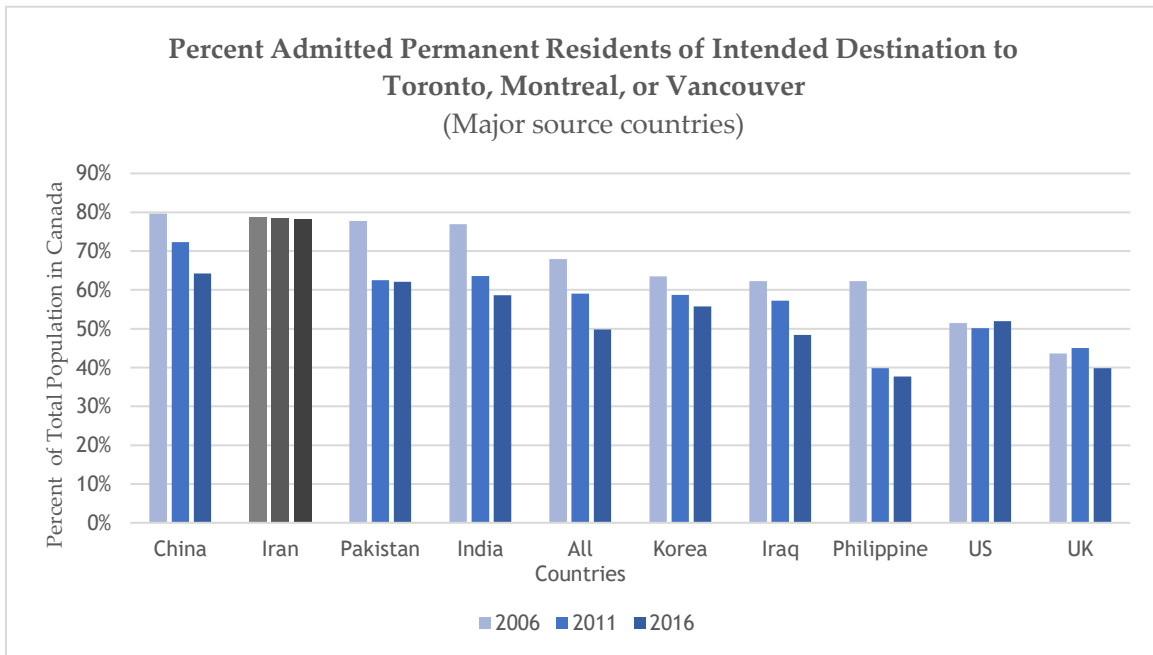


Figure 5 Concentration of immigrants from selected countries in the three major Canadian cities
(Data: IRCC, 2017)

Iranians are perhaps the most geographically concentrated community among ethnic groups in Canada. Nearly 90% of Iranians live in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and the suburbs of these cities. Specifically, more than half of the Iranian population live in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This pattern of distribution was similar among immigrants from most of the major source countries over the past decade. However, as Figure-5 shows, immigrants from countries other than Iran have become more dispersed in recent years. In particular, since 2011 only 40% of Filipino immigrants have landed in the three largest cities. The concentration of Chinese and Indian immigrants in these cities has also dropped to less than 60%. The data suggest that distinct factors may influence the destination decisions of Iranian immigrants.

The location choices of Iranian immigrants may correspond with their socio-economic attributes. In particular, the vast majority of Iranians who immigrate are middle-class urban citizens. These people are accustomed to living in large metropolitan cities like Tehran or Esfahan that host multi-million populations. More importantly, recent university graduates or those who want to continue their education constitute a large number of Iranian immigrants. With regard to economic indicators, it is important to notice that the youth unemployment rate in Iran is nearly 40%. In addition, the average inflation

rate in the past four decades has been nearly 20%. This is while the average income of families has been almost stagnant relative to four decades ago. Aside from these economic issues, the country has suffered from widespread and systematic violation of basic social and human rights and freedom for the past several decades. This condition has motivated or forced many families in Iran to immigrate.

Many of the above characteristics are shared among immigrants to Canada. In particular, the majority of newcomers to Canada are high skilled university graduates who have lived in large cities (Ferrer, Picot, & Riddell, 2014). However, as shown earlier, the distribution of immigrants from Iran has been dissimilar to those of other countries. This motivates more research to examine ethnic-specific factors that shape the destination choice of immigrants and their retention and integration in the host society as well.

2.3. Literature Review

The literature focuses on economic incentives as the main factor explaining the distribution patterns of immigrant settlement. For instance, Massey and España (1987) along with other scholars have attributed the immigration decision to the gaps between the wage, employment rate, and cost of living in origin and destination (Young, 1989; Moore & Rosenberg, 1995). Immigrants are more likely to settle in large cities where they have prospects of higher income and more job opportunities. In the same vein, Florida (2003) describes immigrants as the 'creative class' who contribute to the economic prosperity of global cities, thus perpetuating the urbanized settlement distribution.

In describing immigration as an urban phenomenon, studies have also provided social explanations to justify immigrants' concentration in large cities. In large cities, immigrants can create or join a social network consisting of their family, friends, and members of the same ethnic community. Within these networks, they benefit from easier communication, cultural proximities, and a sense of empathy. More importantly, with the support of these network connections they can mitigate challenges involved in the immigration process, especially in providing accommodation immediately after they arrive. From a social perspective, immigrants prefer to live in multicultural cities particularly to decrease the odds of facing discrimination and negative attitudes toward them as religious and ethnic minorities. Many immigrants also go to large cities simply because those are

the only locations they have heard about (MacDonald, 2004; Hyndman, Schuurman, & Fiedler, 2006).

In this context, immigration scholars attribute the concentrated settlement of immigrants to self-reinforcing and path-dependent dynamics (Krahn & Derwing, 2008; Hou, 2007). Cities that host a “critical mass” of immigrants become strong magnets for their future peers, particularly those from the same country of origin (MacDonald, 2004; Haug, 2008). Many countries experience the impacts of such “chain migration” or “diaspora dynamic”. In Canada, the large community of Chinese in Vancouver, and the growing settlement of Filipinos in Winnipeg are examples of how chain migration has worked. Once these communities were established, it would be very difficult to diversify the settlement pattern of the respective ethnic group of immigrants (Hyndman, Schuurman, & Fiedler, 2006; Sapeha, 2014; Walton-Roberts, 2004).

Meanwhile, research suggests immigrants may find *extra-ordinary incentives* to choose non-traditional destinations. As a typical example, Calgary suddenly became a trending immigration city in the mid-2000s, because of the job opportunities that emerged following the boom of the energy industry (Krahn & Derwing, 2008). This new migration pattern was triggered by an exogenous shock that hit the resource-based economy of Alberta. The attraction of immigrants to the non-major cities can also be an (unintended) outcome of immigration policy. For instance, locations that suddenly received a large number of government-sponsored refugees have become magnets for newcomers of the same ethnicity (CIC, 2001; Krahn, Derwing, & Abu-Laban, 2005; Hou, 2007). Moreover, immigration policy may target specific demographic groups, which then alters distribution outcomes. For instance, research shows “single” immigrants with “high education” are more mobile and more likely to settle in small cities. As another example, there is evidence that immigrants from mainly English speaking countries are the most dispersed ethnic groups in Canada and Australia. Therefore, the design of immigration policy, the target population, and some sporadic external factors can make the non-major locations attractive for newcomers.

Recent studies, however, indicate a considerable number of immigrants who initially settle in small cities or remote areas eventually move to large metropolitan centers. For instance, most of the government-sponsored refugees in Canada have migrated to Toronto or Vancouver after their residency obligations have expired (CIC, 2001; Nolin et

al., 2009). Regarding the Alberta case, along with the decline of the energy industry in recent years, a sizeable population especially immigrants have moved to areas outside of the province. This provides evidence that employment or having a job offer which attracts immigrants to small cities may not be enough incentive to retain them in the long-term. (King & Newbold, 2007).

In the meantime, studies show small cities with higher degrees of welcoming characteristics enhance the immigrants' "social connectedness" and result in a higher retention rate. For example, Walton-Roberts (2004) examines some of the factors that have contributed to the growing population of immigrants in the small city of Squamish, BC. Some of these welcoming features include the existence of a coherent ethnic community, a positive sentiment toward visible minorities, and easy access to immigration support services. On the other hand, a non-welcoming condition deters immigrants' to put down roots (e.g. Kelowna, BC case in Hyndmann (2006)). Welcoming attitudes are especially important to decrease the likelihood of immigrants' isolation and instead, to foster their integration in the host society.

On these grounds, the literature provides three important guidelines for policymaking. First, pure employment-driven measures to disperse immigrants from traditional destinations will be ineffective unless the policy design involves building and reinforcing immigrants' social connections. Secondly, remote, rural, or sparsely populated locations are not good candidates to pursue the policy of dispersing immigrants to areas outside of the urban centers. Instead, growing cities have a higher capacity to retain immigrants in the long-term. Finally, rather than resisting the outcomes of chain migration dynamics, the dispersal policy can use the elements of these self-reinforcing patterns and trigger them in other locations in order to divert immigrants inflow from the major destinations.

Several areas receive less attention in the literature. In particular, there is a gap in knowledge about how best manage chain migration. More importantly, the research has not examined the variation in the settlement patterns of different ethnicities. Some scholars have magnified this gap and pointed to a lack of research about the effects of ethnocultural features on the settlement patterns of immigrants. These effects might be especially pronounced in the recent decades as source immigrant countries have shifted to non-traditional regions such as the Middle East and Asia. In this vein, the destination

choice of recent cohorts of immigrant might be more informed by factors such as racial, cultural, or geographic preferences. Finally, while some studies have tried to reflect immigrants' settlement experience, (Teixeira & Drolet, 2017; Flint, 2006; Walton-Roberts, 2004), there has been no attempt to identify concepts that pervade prospective immigrants' discussions about location choice and use them in the pursuits of effective policymaking.

Chapter 3. Methodology

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, two research questions motivate this study: *“What are the general and ethnic-specific factors driving Iranian immigrants’ choice of location?”* and *“What policy design can lead to a more balanced distribution of immigrants?”* In the second chapter, I began answering these questions by briefly describing Canadian immigration policy context and reviewing the literature. The next two chapters provide empirical evidence for the policy analysis that comes afterwards. Specifically, Chapter 4 evaluates the experience of regional immigration strategies in three jurisdictions. Chapter 5 investigates factors driving Iranian immigrants’ destination choice by conducting qualitative and quantitative data analysis. These two chapters present an objective insight about the policy recommendation that I ultimately put forward.

3.1. Literature review

I conducted the literature review using printed and online sources. These include peer-reviewed articles, books, and policy evaluation reports. Searching for these sources was a continuous process during the research. In doing so, I particularly explored the internet and the SFU library database for keywords that pertain to the research subject, such as ‘immigration dispersal’, ‘regionalization’, and ‘regional immigration programs.’ I also found official reports regarding the immigration policy, which were publicly accessible on governmental websites. The secondary data in this study is retrieved from Statistics Canada, IRCC, and Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS). I used the results of Census 2016 programs in Canada and Australia to elicit the latest available population and immigration data. The immigration data is extracted from the IRCC monthly reports.

3.2. Case Studies

Through a comparative and policy analysis lens, I reviewed the design and outcomes of regional immigration programs in Australia, Manitoba, and British Columbia. This jurisdictional scan was focused on the aspects which relate to the dispersal objectives of immigration policy, including attraction, retention, and integration of newcomers in less populated areas. The rationale for choosing these cases is as follows. I was interested in examining the regional immigration policy in Australia as the most similar country to

Canada from most relevant aspects. I reviewed Manitoba's case since it the province is known as having the most successful regionalization program in Canada. I also reviewed the regionalization policy in British Columbia as another domestic jurisdiction but with a considerably different immigration context and policy goals. These case studies provided empirical and complementary information that I used in policy analysis.

3.3. Survey Analysis

I designed an online questionnaire to obtain a broader perspective of the locational preferences of Iranian immigrants in Canada. The survey questions echoed those cited in an earlier study (Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) by Statistics Canada (2003) that examines the location criteria of newcomers, although without categorizing them by the origin. With this design, therefore, I was able to make an objective comparison between the locational priorities of Iranian and other immigrants in Canada.

The first question of the survey asked respondents to choose and rank items that represent the factors driving their choice of location. Then, they were asked about their current location, time of arrival and duration of residency, and the information sources they had used to choose the destination in Canada. Four demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to attribute the sample population. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

The online survey of Iranian locational choice was running from October 27 to December 15, 2017. I disseminated the survey by sending its hyperlink on several online platforms. These included social networks and applications such as Facebook and *Telegram* –a messenger app that is widely used among Iranians. In addition to reaching as many people as possible, the randomness of the sample population was ensured by using the snowballing effect. For this purpose, respondents were asked to send the survey hyperlink to their family, friends, or other Iranian immigrants in their social networks.

Of 630 total recorded responses, 137 were partial or unfinished. I used the rest of responses for further analysis and deriving the results. Nearly 30% of these responses were from Iranian immigrants living in Toronto, 22% in Vancouver, 18% in Montreal, and the rest were from respondents in several non-major cities including Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and several other cities across the country. This distribution of

responses can in part verify the randomness of the sample population. In addition, the nearly 70% ratio of the finished recorded responses indicates the data is reliable for the purpose and scope of this research. It should be noticed, however, that some demographic groups, such as youngsters or university graduates might have been over-represented in the survey, particularly because of the dissemination method through social media and the internet.

3.4. Discussion Forum Analysis

As a complementary approach to the above survey, I conducted a qualitative analysis on a thread from Applyabroad.org website (the most popular Iranian online forum about immigration). The topic of the thread is “*Which city do you choose to live in Canada, and Why?*” In this online thread, prospective and landed Iranian immigrants in Canada discuss various aspects of destination choice. I retrieved 1190 messages posted on this thread since its start in 2007 to August 2017. These messages contain revealing facts about immigrants’ locational preferences some of which are seemingly specific to Iranians.

Speaking about the rationale for choosing the above method, first, it should be noticed that online discussion forums like Applyabroad.org are increasingly used as the data source for scholarly qualitative research. Such forums are safe shelters for people to raise their concerns while remaining anonymous and being free to choose their level of participation. In addition, unlike most of the research methods, the data in online forums is usually produced without the intervention of the researcher(s). Second, because of tight restrictions on the media in Iran, people tend to use online platforms to freely exchange information. Research therefore can make use of these online platforms as enriched inventories of uncensored information about Iranian characteristics and behaviors.

Using thematic analysis method, I elicited the prevalent concepts or “themes” shaping the Iranian immigrants’ discourse around the locational preferences. It should be noted that this method aims to reflect the participants’ experience and present in-depth analysis of phenomena. In this sense, it discovers non-quantifiable argumentations and cognitive aspects that incentivize individuals and social behaviors. In this sense, the method provides a higher level of comprehensiveness for this study. I will explain further details and the steps of the thematic qualitative method later in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4. Case Studies

4.1. Australia

Australia is one of the major destinations of immigrants with a third of population born overseas (ABS⁴, 2016). As most countries receiving sizable number of immigrants, the distribution of immigrants in Australia is not even. In fact, half of all immigrants live in Sydney and Melbourne, the two largest cities. Australia uses a 'Point Assessment Scheme' to determine the permissibility of immigrant applicants, which is a system designed and administered by the federal government. The primary objective of this merit-based system is to prioritize highly educated and skilled workers who can contribute to the country's economic growth. The Australian immigration policy also includes 'Family' and 'Humanitarian' streams, although these constitute substantially lower entries than the "Skilled stream" (Hugo, 2014; Australia Govt., 2016).

Since the mid-1990s, dispersing immigrants to non-traditional destinations has become an important objective of the Australian immigration policy (Hugo, 2008b). This change has led to the introduction of a set of new visa categories named as "State Specific Regional Migration" (SSRM). These visa schemes are primarily employer-driven and based on regional human capital demands, specifically to address the labour shortages and demographic decline in peripheral states. The less stringent admission criteria of the SSRMs also provide an immigration opportunity for those who may not fully meet the Point Assessment Test requirements, particularly most of the temporary workers within Australia who plan to transition to the permanent residency status. The SSRM visa holders, however, are required to settle in "designated areas" for an initial period of two to three years in order to become eligible to apply for the permanent residency. These designated areas are outside of the high migration regions, so they do not include most of the popular destinations such as Sydney or Melbourne.

The SSRM programs have increased the immigrants' influx over the past two decades (Hugo, 2008a). These programs have resulted in an increase of foreign-born population in non-immigration regions such as South Australia and Northern Territories. Nevertheless, this 'regionalization' policy has barely achieved the prospected dispersal

⁴ Australia Bureau of Statistics

objectives. Data shows the percentage of the country's immigrant population who reside in the two largest cities has not fallen below the 50% level over the past two decades. In fact, many of those immigrants who had entered Australia under the regional schemes have relocated from the designated regions to the largest cities after their residency obligations have expired (Hugo, 2008b; Golebiowska et al., 2016; Taylor & Bell, 2012).

Perhaps more than other regions, the state of South Australia has dealt with such out-migration issue. With 8% share of the country's population, South Australia has intensely sought to take benefit from the SSRMs. In the first decade of implementing these immigration programs, nearly 25% of SSRM visa holders arrived in South Australia (Hugo, 2008a). While at a slower pace, this trend has continued until recently. However, the state's immigrant population has increased only 38% between 1996 and 2016, which is 30% less than the growth of immigrant population in the country during the same period. There is evidence that South Australia has experienced large inter-state 'leakages' (on average 3,000 persons per year) over the years between 1998 and 2008 (ABS, 2008). Therefore, the main challenge for South Australia, as other less populated regions, has been to retain immigrants.

In this context, many studies have examined the outcomes as well as other facets of the Australia regionalization policy in recent years (Golebiowska, 2016; Hugo, 2014; Wuff, 2008, ISSR, 2010). Regarding the attraction effectiveness, two features stand out as the underlying reasons for the policy's achievements. First, the less stringent admission criteria and the opportunity for temporary workers to transition to permanent residents have increased the immigration rate. Second, the residency obligation that mandates newcomers to land in the designated regions has contributed to an increase of immigrants in these regions. It should be noted, however, these positive outcomes have experienced delay and outcomes below the initial expectations. Some scholars have also discussed the social aspects of the policy's results. For example, Wulff (2008) argues "social connectedness" plays a more important role than other factors in retaining newcomers in the country's less populated areas. In this vein, Hugo (2008) shows that immigrants from South Asian countries, South Africa, and Zimbabwe have ethnic characteristics that facilitate their integration within their host communities. In terms of implementation, Australia has a centralized immigration system, which is arguably inflexible and considerably lagging behind the real-time regional demands. To this point, the research suggests involving the local administration and communities can significantly address the

ongoing retention and administration issues of the Australian immigration policy (Hugo, 2014; Hawthorne, 2014; Sapeha, 2014).

4.2. Manitoba

Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP) is known as the most successful regional immigration program in Canada. In 2014, more than 16,000 permanent residents landed in the province under this program, which is twice more than the entries in 2008, and nearly equals the total number of entries between 1996 and 2000 (IRCC, 2016). The immigrants' admission process of the MPNP is mainly the purview of the provincial government. Specifically, the Province is mostly involved in the selection of immigrants, which is based on an assessment system similar to the federal government's 'Point-System'. Hence, MPNP is in fact a merit-based and employment-driven immigration program (Carter et al., 2008; Lewis, 2010).

The MPNP's success in attracting a large number of immigrants can be attributed to four main features that distinguish it from other Canadian regional programs. First, MPNP provides an option for Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) to apply for permanent residency after six months of working in the province (Carter et al.; 2008). In addition, the processing of these applications has usually taken from six to 12 months, a considerably shorter time comparing to the similar immigration streams of the federal government. Secondly, MPNP has introduced the 'Family support' stream that is applicable for those having a strong social tie with someone within the province. This stream is unique to the MPNP and is more frequently used by the families of the TFWs' who transition to permanent residents (Carter et al.; 2010). Third, the 'Employer Direct' stream of the MPNP provides an immigration pathway for low-skilled workers who may not be eligible under the federal or other regional streams (Lewis, 2010). Finally, the MPNP has involved the local governments and organization in the settlement process of new arrivals. These entities particularly entail municipalities, local factories and small businesses, and non-governmental organizations such as charities and churches. In sum, the Manitoba PNP achievements are widely perceived to be a result of a localized and collaborative bottom-up administration approach, and the provisions that make low-skilled and temporary workers eligible for entering the immigration process (Lewis, 2010; Sapeha, 2014; Carter et al., 2010; Gibson et al., 2017).

In spite of having achievements, MPNP has also faced several issues during its implementation. Perhaps the most important of these refer to not dispersing newcomers to cities other than the provincial capital -Winnipeg. In fact, more than 80% of the arrivals have settled in this city and its suburbs (McCann, 2014; Pandey & Townsend, 2011). It is also noted that employers have gained large power on the selection and admission processes of the program. This has raised some concerns about the potential exploitation of the foreign workers by employers (Baglay, 2012). In the meantime, the ethnic composition of the MPNP immigrants is significantly dominated by some specific origins, particularly those from India and the Philippines. In fact, these two countries have comprised nearly half of the new arrivals in recent years (IRCC data, 2016). This pattern has jeopardized the newcomers' social integration especially by creating ethnic enclaves (Carter et al., 2010). Finally, some critiques point to the program's disregard for the newcomers' post-arrival settlement issues, specifically the lack of affordable and adequate housing and insufficient language training services. These deficiencies are especially discussed as major barriers against the immigrants' smooth and timely integration into the host society (Lewis, 2010, Carter et al., 2013; Baglay, 2012).

4.3. British Columbia

British Columbia is the most populated province in western Canada. Vancouver, the country's third largest city is located in this province. The city has evolved to a metropolitan with over one million immigrants. From the regional perspective, 75% of the province's foreign-born population live in Vancouver and it has been projected that by 2036, this percentage will increase to 80% or equally, to more than 1.5 million immigrants. Meanwhile, non-Canadian born populations will remain slim minorities in other areas of the province in the coming decades. For instance, immigrants comprise only 5% of the population in Victoria (the provincial capital and the second largest city) and under 0.5% of the population in the B.C. Interior and Northern regions (Statistics Canada, 2017).

The B.C. provincial government launched "BC Provincial Nominee Program" (BC PNP) in 2004. Given the high rate of immigration to the province, the main motivation of this program was to address the uneven distribution of immigrants and mitigate issues related to the immigrants' inflow to Vancouver. Since the introduction of the BC PNP, however, the spatial pattern of immigrant settlement in the province has been barely

changed. Indeed, recent data shows newcomers are even more concentrated in Vancouver than a decade ago (Statistics Canada Census data, 2017).

The outcomes of the BC PNP have motivated many studies to investigate the barriers against the immigrants' settlement in the small cities and peripheral areas of the province (Nolin et al., 2009; Huynh, 2004; Bisschop, 2013; McCann, 2014). As these studies show, these barriers constitute a wide range, from spatial features –such as long and extremely cold winters to the cultural factors that were mostly overlooked in the immigration policy design. Regarding the latter, it has been pointed out that racial attitudes, discrimination toward visible minorities, lack of ethnic communities, and insufficient immigration support services among other social and cultural factors deter immigrants from living in the B.C.'s less populated areas. Finally, but perhaps more importantly, studies show immigrants in the small cities of B.C. face major difficulties finding a suitable job, let alone the widespread job-skill mismatch and low income among newcomers. In addition, housing unaffordability and inadequacy have been major issues for immigrants in regional B.C. as the vacancy rates are ranked among the lowest in the country (Walton-Rober, 2004; Teixeira & Drolet, 2017; Hyndmann, 2006).

Instead of addressing the above barriers, however, the focus of the BC PNP has been on attracting high-skilled immigrants most of whom may find a job only in Vancouver. The increasing immigrant population in Vancouver has also made it difficult to tackle with chain migration dynamic in which newcomers tend to reunify with their friends or family. In a broad perspective, therefore, while BC PNP has achieved in admitting a large number of immigrants, it has not been effective in distributing the immigration to less populated areas of the province (Nolin et al., 2009; Seidle, 2013; Teixeira & Drolet, 2017).

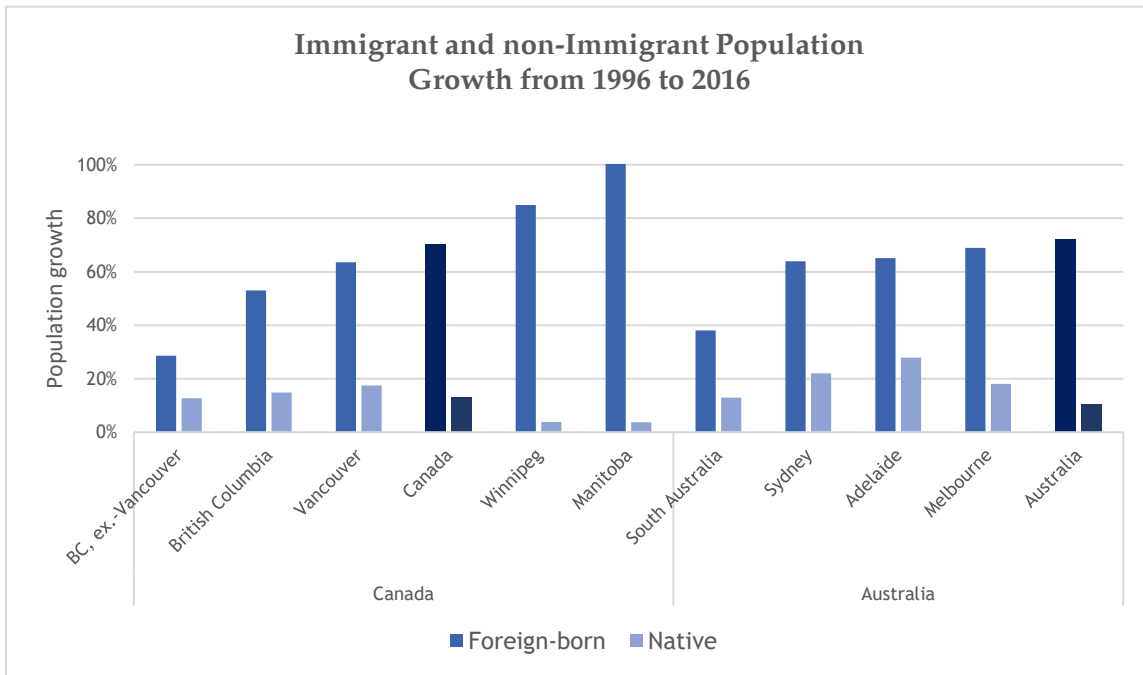


Figure 6 Immigrants and non-immigrants population growth between 1996-2016, Selected cities
 (Data: Statistics Canada and ABS, Census data of 1996 and 2016)

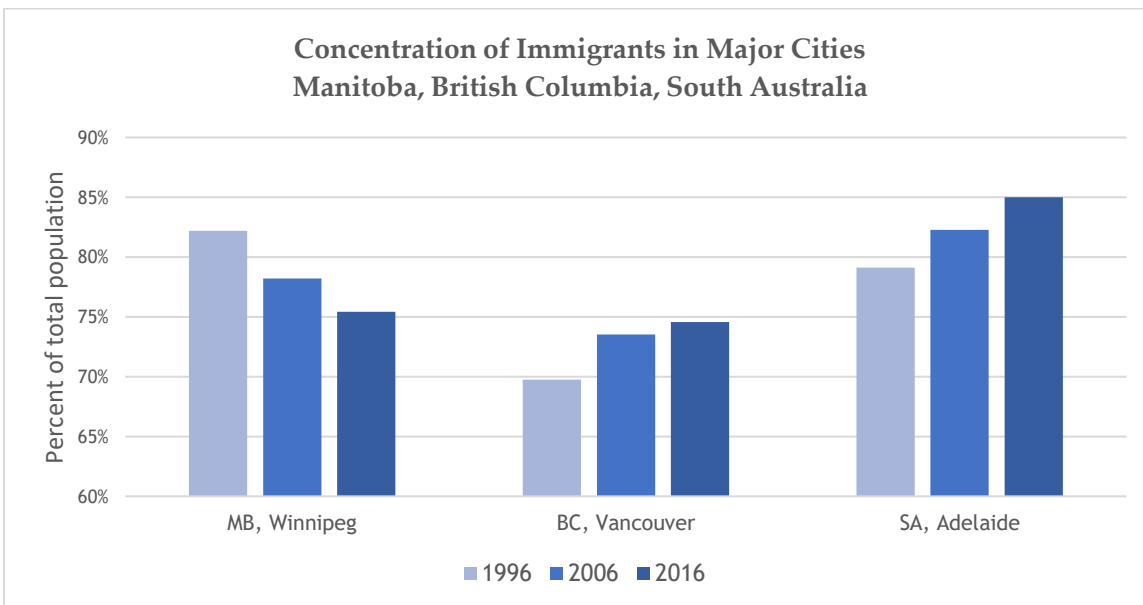


Figure 7 Immigrants concentration in the major cities of BC, Manitoba, and South Australia, 1996-2016
 (Data: Statistics Canada and ABS, 1996-2016 Census data)

4.4. Discussion

The above case studies provide four key points about the design of regional immigration programs. First, the selection and admission criteria of these programs have been primarily based on applicants' skills and geared to regional economic demands. While this approach has resulted in an increase in the number of immigrants, it has also delivered substantial power to employers, which can cause unintended impacts on immigrants' settlement equity, as abusing this power can exploit immigrant labours. Second, the case studies indicate job-offer and pre-arranged employment cannot ensure the immigrants' retention in the arrival locations. In the meantime, the social ties and network connections of immigrants have played a stronger role in attracting and retaining newcomers in small cities in the long-term. Third, the reviewed regionalization policies showed, in addition to job incentives and social relationships, several measures could be utilized to make the policy more effective. These include a two-step residency process, the provision of transitioning from temporary to permanent status, and considering an expedite processing of immigrant's applications. Such complementary 'Second-order' measures, however, shall not substitute for employment or other important locational criteria as the primary drivers of the immigrants' destination choice. Finally, social and ethnic features would be the key factors in reinforcing the migration dynamics. These factors include linguistic features, cultural norms, religious values, preference for a type of climate, as well as socio-economic characteristics such as the average educational attainment and income level of prospective immigrants. The role of these factors will be especially important in the design of a regional immigration policy if the target population is constituted of people from different origins.

In terms of the implementation of a regionalization policy, the case studies provide two important points. First, the disparities between the outcomes of regional immigration programs might have been in part driven by the administration model. In the centralized model (e.g. Australia's SSRMs), the federal government is able to constantly monitor, evaluate, and revise the whole process of immigration, while also managing other policy areas that are complementary to and influential on immigration policy in an efficient and coherent manner. On the other hand, the decentralized model (e.g. Canada's PN/TNs) can be more effective by being more flexible, responsive, and having the capacity of mobilizing local stakeholders to support the policy.

Second, the results of policy can significantly change the social context in which it was primarily designed. In particular, it is likely that the policy attracts a large number of immigrants from the same origin to a specific location. This population then would grow to a ‘critical mass’ when the dynamics of chain migration are taken into account. While this effect helps the policy to achieve the policy’s attraction and retention objectives in initial steps, it can also contribute to ethnic and cultural imbalances. Records show that large cities and provincial capitals are prone to this phenomenon. Therefore, it would be necessary to constantly evaluate the policy’s outcome and possibly revise its design, as the overarching goal of a regionalization policy is to balance the distribution of immigrants.

The following table summarizes the above points regarding the design and implementation of regional immigration policy that are drawn from the presented cases.

Table 1 – Key Findings of Case Studies

Design
Employer-driven policy designs are effective in attracting high number of immigrants.
The long-term retention of immigrants in less popular areas is largely due to the extent to which these newcomers can establish social connections.
Immigration programs that empower employers in the immigration process can contribute to the exploitation of immigrants and consequently affect their living condition.
Second-order measures (e.g. residency obligation, transitioning status, fast-track application process) can improve the attraction and retention outcome of a regional immigration program.
Ethnic and socio-economic features are in part effective on the disparities between the spatial and demographic outcomes of regional immigration programs.
Implementation
The centralized mode of regional immigration policy can take advantage of policy coherence and agile administration. On the other hand, the decentralized mode is more flexible, can take benefits of local touch, and often has higher retention rate.
The spatial and demographic outcomes of the regionalization policy changes the policy context, which can result in a population concentration and ethnic imbalance.

Chapter 5. Data Analysis

5.1. Forum Analysis

The following presents the results of analysis on the qualitative data retrieved from a thread in Applyabroad.org forum –the most popular Iranian website about immigration. The analyzed thread contains nearly 1200 text messages posted by prospective and landed Iranian immigrants in Canada during the past decade. The topic of the thread – “*Which city do you choose in Canada to live in and why?*”, and participants’ messages closely accord with the subject of this study.

I conducted a qualitative analysis of these messages using the “thematic method” to elicit the prevailing concepts and organize them into “themes.” For this purpose, I pursued the iterative multiple-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process is a clear demarcation of thematic analysis, and provides the details of the steps that should be carried out whilst maintaining the flexibility needed for the epistemological aspects of the analysis. The following explains each of these steps in details.

5.1.1. Thematic Analysis Process

The first step was to ‘familiarize’ with the data. I read the messages in several rounds, took notes, and highlighted the excerpts that could represent the pervading ideas. This step culminated in data immersion and substantial acquaintance with the data. The second step was to code the data by identifying the concepts that were pertinent to the research question. The output of this phase constituted the ingredients for discovering the themes. In the third step, themes were identified by clustering the codes or parts of the data that reflected similar meanings. Then, I defined and named the themes. In addition to a clear and meaningful definition of each theme, their relationship to other themes, and how they fit into the whole story of the data had to be conceptualized. It was also important to develop a short but punchy name for each theme, which could promptly convey its core idea. The final step was to choose good quotes from the messages that could support the identified themes.

5.1.2. Results

Following the process explained above, I discovered three themes and labelled them as “#JOBS_JOBS_JOBS”, “Big is Better” and “Cold Matters!” It is important to note that the analyzed messages could have concepts that are shared across these themes. However, this should be interpreted a good indication showing the concepts are not mutually exclusive and representing their coherence to the main subject.

Table 2 - Forum Analysis - Themes Definition

Theme	Definition Summary
#JOBS_JOBS_JOBS	The prospects of finding a job as the most attended criterion of the destination
Big is Better!	Preferences relating to the livability, amenities, and size of the city
Cold Matters!	Concerns about the climate and the weather condition in Canada

#JOBS_JOBS_JOBS

This theme consists of the concepts regarding job prospects of immigrants in locations across the country. Indeed, finding a job is the core subject in most of the debates in the thread. The overarching message sent by many participants is that the destination decision should primarily be based on employment opportunities and work-related considerations. Some thread participants have gone further, saying that these considerations can overshadow any other location criteria. In their words, “*destination is wherever you can find a job, even if it is at the North Pole!*” When a participant has asked about choosing among Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Mississauga (near Toronto), provided having job offers in all, the answer was:

...if you have already employment opportunity immediately after arriving in these cities, no questions remain! (December 27, 2010 – 05:10)

Accordingly, many participants suggest cities such as Toronto and Vancouver are better choices for newcomers for having more and diverse job opportunities. To support this idea, some participants have mentioned entry-level positions are more in these cities, which can address the lack of ‘Canadian experience’ as a significant issue for most of the newcomers.

Toronto is a better choice to begin ...It's more likely that you can find a 'general work' in a large city, especially with little knowledge of the foreign language. (January 29, 2014 – 09:55)

If you want to start from scratch and search for a job, especially if you don't have any link [to corporations], obviously Toronto has more opportunities. (January 31, 2014 – 08:04)

Many thread participants have also raised the subject of acquiring work experience in Canada with regard to the foreign credential and skill-mismatch issues. Specifically, some participants have outlined that in the early years after arrival, it is almost impossible that they find a job fitting their educational or work background. Hence, newcomers should be open to accepting the so-called 'general jobs'. This work experience helps them to gradually integrate into the Canadian labour market and find positions that match their skills. Nevertheless, some participants have stated those immigrants who have enough savings or financial support may be able to continue searching for a desirable position while not being employed. For this group of immigrants, having a job is less or no serious concern:

...so we had to start working in a food factory as low-paid workers, we couldn't be without having a job for longer.., but a friend of mine just searched around for job offers for a year, while he didn't quit spending on entertainments and even paid for attending a French language class. (June 1, 2017 – 19:20)

Cold Matters!

This theme represents the concepts regarding the climate and the weather condition in Canada, particularly the participants' concerns and expectations about the climate. In this regard, the 'Canadian climate' has been extensively discussed in many conversations in the thread. Specifically, many inquiries have been about the climate in non-major cities such as Calgary, Edmonton, or Saskatoon. Some have wondered about the lifestyle in the extreme weather conditions in these locations. The thread participants have also discussed a multitude of weather-related details including the average seasonal temperatures, clothing in the cold weather, and even about the frequency of the snow-removal. In this sense, some participants have mentioned Iranian are better not to go to locations where experience extreme weather conditions because "*we [Iranians] are not raised in such harsh climate*", and "*it is very hard for us to get used to it.*"

Meanwhile, a sizable number of messages are about the tradeoffs between the climate suitability and the job opportunities at destination:

For me, the climate is less important than finding a job; but in general, I can't say that...you should figure out for yourself this tradeoff beforehand... a lower job in a better climate where my family feels more comfortable, or if my immigration success depends on my job... if you ask me, I'd say first: job, second: job, third: job, fourth: climate! (May 1, 2013 – 12:02)

When you have a good job, you can get a good house near your workplace or even a good car; then you'll not feel the cold of -30 degree. But when your income is not enough, a mild chilly wind will freeze you in bus-stop anywhere. (June 7, 2013 – 03:11)

Some participants, however, have pointed to specific issues that may stem from a not suitable climate. For instance, it has been argued that bad weather is particularly troublesome for families with small children, or for those who cannot afford to buy a private vehicle, especially in the initial months after arrival. Some participants have also discussed the expenses that cold climate can impose on a family, including the costs of utilities, vehicle maintenance, clothing, and special equipment. Moreover, some have cited the potential negative impacts of unpleasant weather on the health condition, such as the risk of depression and suicide, and issues caused by the long-term deprivation of sunlight.

...Is it hard for us [my spouse and I] staying warm in Calgary? We also have experienced some degrees of depression in past; Will we be at risk there? How are these in P.E.I? (September 6, 2014 – 02:31)

In response to the concerns mentioned above, several participants have expressed that cities where experience extreme winters (e.g. Calgary, Montreal) or too many rainy days (e.g. Vancouver) are well prepared and equipped to handle the potential issues of bad weather. Some participants have also mentioned that most of the Canadian cities have underground amenities where people can use during the winter. Some even explain about the snow-removing facilities in cities like Calgary to support their claim that life in these regions goes on as always even in the most extreme weather conditions.

- Is there an underground city in Montreal that we don't freeze in winters?!
- It's not an underground city! There are underground malls and trains, so you don't need to come outside for shopping, they are also connected to buildings of offices. Here no one freezes! (August 14, 2014 – 01:35)

Moreover, some participants have argued Alberta, Manitoba, or Atlantic Provinces, have natural features such as plenty of sun in the summer, beautiful and wild scenes, and four-season climate all of which can make these regions even more desirable than cities like Vancouver with a milder climate but a very long period of cloudy and rainy days.

Big is Better!

This theme involves concepts about the features of a livable city and urban lifestyle. In fact, it points to the *size* of a city, which, as inferred from the discussions, has a notable value for Iranians. In the thread conversations, the city livability has been widely associated with some particular features that may not include the city population.

(regarding Toronto:) What I didn't like about it was it being so *cold* such that I couldn't get used to it; I couldn't relate to people; perhaps I felt like this because of being in a very big city; in fact I didn't mind that there was a large community of Iranians; I preferred somewhere that has more entertainment facilities and a good university especially in my field, ... and of course welcoming Canadians. (October 7, 2013 – 01:12)

(regarding Ottawa) It's a high-class and clean city, with about 750,000 population; and has a large immigrant community, mostly Chinese and Lebanese... Yet it's very quiet, good for a family-life, and doesn't have the livelihood of cities like Montreal; shops and everything in downtown are closed at 7 in the evening. (May 29, 2012 – 04:35)

There are also recurring inquiries about the extent to which the basic services and amenities are available in the 'small cities'. In response, many participants have argued that unlike Iran, small and large cities in Canada are similar in terms of providing the settlement necessities. Some have further suggested that less populated cities can be even better choices for those who prefer a more peaceful and social lifestyle:

I lived in Saskatoon for several weeks... very kind and friendly people, everyone takes care of their clean and lovely city; in offices they support clients... there are more native "Canadians," thus feeling you're really in Canada; but it's very small and doesn't have entertainment centers, doesn't have high-rise buildings, almost all houses are small wooden buildings... in sum, if you look for a calm and peaceful life, that's good. (October 28, 2016 – 12:13)

Several participants have approached the above debates from a cost-benefit vantage point. Specifically, it has been argued that living in the more "urbanized" cities (e.g. Toronto and Vancouver) involves advantages such as more job opportunities and housing options, whilst with issues especially higher living costs. With respect to the costs,

participants have particularly focused on the housing prices and compared the large and small cities. In this regard, participants have had mixed opinions: some have mentioned the costs of housing as a significant disincentive for going to the major cities. Some others, however, have argued the extent to which such housing issues exist in the large cities is exaggerated.

5.1.3. Discussion

The above analysis provides a better understanding of the reasons behind the existing settlement pattern of Iranian immigrants. It also shows the prevalent discourse among Iranian immigrants involves some biases about the features that differentiate between the major and non-major cities. These features specifically include the job opportunities, the city livability, and the climate. Finding a job, for instance, is perceived to be easier and in a shorter time in the major cities. Other cities are frequently juxtaposed with negative connotations such as '*freezing*,' '*gloomy*,' or '*tolerable*'. In addition, certain features such as housing, entertainment facilities, and public transportation are believed to be more desirable in renowned locations such as Toronto and Vancouver. Whereas, other cities are more often mentioned as being 'small', inferring a rural location. This analysis shows the prevailed perception of many Iranian immigrants about the destinations in Canada is highly anecdotal and associated with negative biases.

Finally, it should be noticed that the thread participants who were inside Canada tentatively represent the existing distribution of Iranian immigrants, in which the vast majority of the population are concentrated in the major cities. Hence, it could be foreseeable that, because of a confirmation bias, the dominant sentiment in the conversations would lean toward choosing the major cities. Further, it shows the uneven distribution of Iranian immigrants promotes the biased discourse in which the anecdotal beliefs about the locational features of the Canadian cities are constantly strengthened and reproduced. Such self-reinforcing characteristic of the above discursive context, therefore, is another indication of the difficulties involved in changing the settlement distribution of this ethnic group of immigrants.

5.2. Survey Analysis

In the following, I outline the results of the survey of Iranian immigrants' destination choice. First, I provide a summary of the respondents' demographic information. Then, I explain key findings from the descriptive analysis of the survey data. In line with the survey's flow, the results are structured in three parts: 1) Location Criteria, 2) Relocation and Retention, and 3) Location Information. I conclude this chapter with notes about the policy implications derived from this data analysis.

5.2.1. Demographics

The survey respondents constitute a sample population of 493 Iranian immigrants across the country. More than 68% of respondents were in the major cities. Nearly all (97%) of respondents were between the age 20 and 54. The percentages of females and males were almost equal. In terms of educational attainment, three out of four of respondents had Bachelor or Masters degrees, and 21% were Ph.D. The majority of respondents (53%) were Canadian permanent residents. About 30% of respondents in Vancouver and 35% in the non-major cities mentioned having a temporary status (student Visa, working permits, tourist Visa). Nearly three out four of respondents had been in Canada for less than five years. Of respondents who had been in Canada for more than five years, the largest portion (37%) was in Toronto.

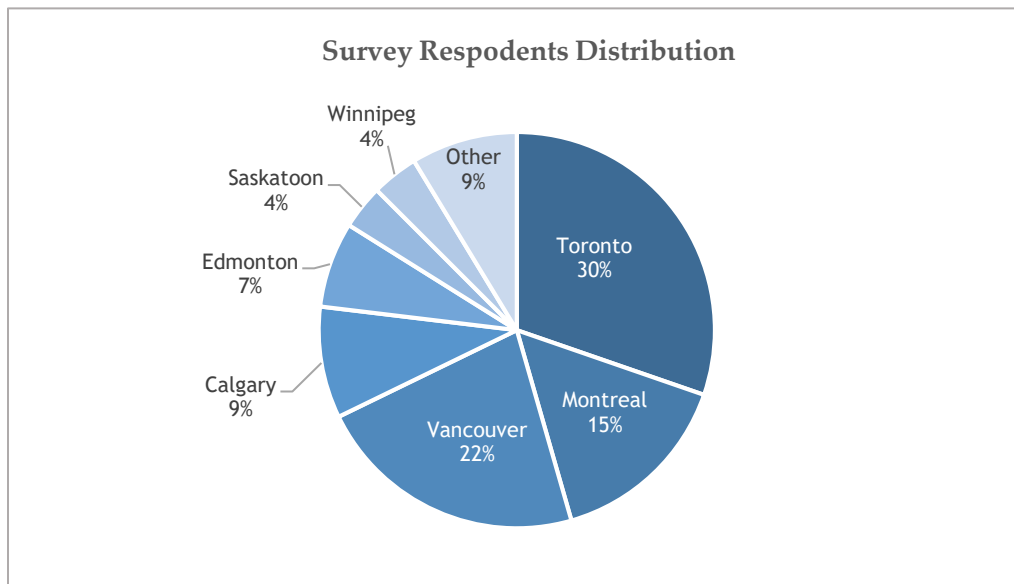


Figure 8 Survey Respondents' Locations

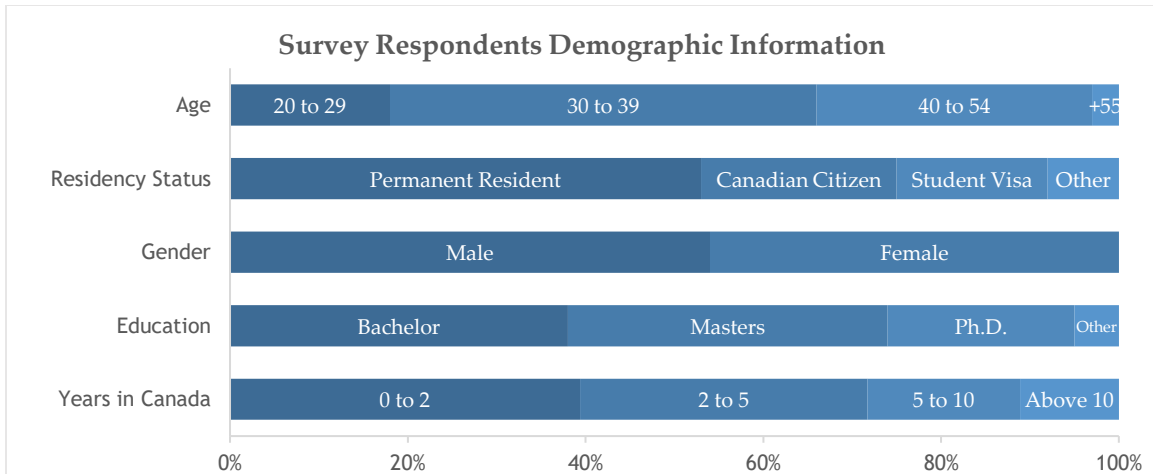


Figure 9 Survey Respondents Demographic Information

5.2.2. Survey Data Analysis

Location Criteria

'Job prospects' was by far (82%) the most cited criterion of destination choice by respondents, followed by 'Level of urbanization' (50%), 'Climate' (42%), and 'Being close to family or friends' (37%). For 45% of respondents, 'Job prospects' was the most important criterion. Meanwhile, 39% of respondents in Vancouver chose 'Climate' as their top criterion. Whereas, for respondents in the non-major cities, 'Job prospects' was the most important criterion with 55%. A large majority of respondents in non-major cities (72%) did not mention 'climate' among their location criteria, 21% higher than those in the major cities. For all respondents, the least chosen cited were 'Racial and Cultural Features', 'Size of Iranian Community', and 'Access to Immigration Support Services' with 16%, 17%, and 23% of respondents respectively. Two other criteria ('Housing Condition' and 'Education Opportunities') were mostly ranked as the fifth or sixth important criterion if were mentioned by respondents.

The above data maintains that the location criteria which are important to Iranian immigrants correspond to those signified in the literature as the factors diving immigrants' destination decision. These include the prospects of having a job, joining family or friends, urbanization level, and climate. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the survey results. It also outlines the data conducted by an earlier study (LSIC, 2003) that surveyed the locational choice of immigrants to Canada. This table shows there are some locational features

about which Iranian immigrants are relatively more concerned. Namely, ‘Job Prospects’ appears to be twice more important for Iranians. Noticeably, ‘Being close to family or friends’ is less important for this population than the city’s climate.

Table 3 - Survey Results, Location Criteria

Most Important Criterion	Percentage of Respondents	
	Iranian Immigrants (Survey results)	All Immigrants (LSIC)
Toronto		
Family or Friends	12	50
Job Prospects	54	23
Housing	5	5
Same-ethnic community	3	5
Vancouver		
Family or Friends	8	41
Job Prospects	26	6
Climate	39	20
Education Prospects	9	7
Montreal		
Family or Friends	13	31
Job Prospects	32	16
Education Prospects	18	10
Non-major cities		
Family or Friends	7	36
Job Prospects	55	32
Education Prospects	13	12

It is important to notice that the results infer Iranian immigrants are almost indifferent to the size of Iranian community. The perceived importance of ‘Being close to family or friends’ also seems to be much lower than expected. These observations are in sharp contrast with the widespread notion that social network plays a key role in attracting immigrants. However, it can be argued that the survey respondents might have taken these locational features for granted in the large cities. Moreover, their answer can be skewed by the ‘social desirability’ bias, that is, participants tend to reflect a different or negating point of view to distinguish their response from others. In a similar vein, the vast

majority of respondents did not cite the ‘welcoming’ attribute of destination as an important criterion. Despite having these potential biases of the data, the results can still indicate Iranian immigrants locational preferences follows a particular pattern which in many aspects do not conform to the conventional wisdom.

Relocation and Retention

About a third of the respondents cited they have moved from their arrival city. Of these respondents, 73% had initially lived in Montreal or in the non-major cities, while only 3% had been in Vancouver. The data shows nine out of ten of the relocations have been during the first five years of respondents being in Canada, and 55% in the first two years. The majority of these respondents (65%) have moved to the three major cities. In fact, most of them (37%) have ended up living in Toronto. Of respondents who had moved to the major cities, 75% did not cite the ‘Housing’ criterion, whereas, nearly half of those who had moved to the non-major cities did so. In both groups ‘Job prospects’ appeared to be the most important location criterion, for 81% and 90% of those in the major and non-major cities respectively.

The above data infers that the relocation choice between the major and non-major city correlates with the location criteria some of which mentioned above. Further analysis of the data indicates respondents who have cited the ‘Climate’ criterion are more likely to relocate to the major cities. Regarding other criteria, however, this relationship is not statistically significant. This distinction is mainly resulted by the 92% of respondents who have moved to Vancouver and cited ‘Climate’ as one of their location criteria, while this criterion was a concern for only 20% of those moved to the non-major cities.

Table 4 - Survey Results - Relocation and Location Criteria Relationship

Location Criterion	Current Location	
	Major Cities	Non-major Cities
Job Prospects	81% (a)	90% (a)
Urbanization Level	62% (a)	59% (a)
Climate	61% (a)	20% (b)
Family or Friends	28% (a)	41% (a)

*The proportion of columns with the same subscript letter do not differ from each other at the 0.05 level.

Data Processed by IBM™ SPSS™ Statistics ver. 24

Location Awareness

More than 64% of respondents cited 'Family or friends' as one of the information sources for deciding the destination, and for some 23%, it was the only source. Many respondents also mentioned they had used the internet for this purpose. Particularly, nearly half of survey respondents cited 'Online discussion forums' or 'Search engines' among their information sources. Meanwhile, traditional sources such as 'Immigration lawyers' and 'Work-related contacts' were mentioned only by 13% of respondents.

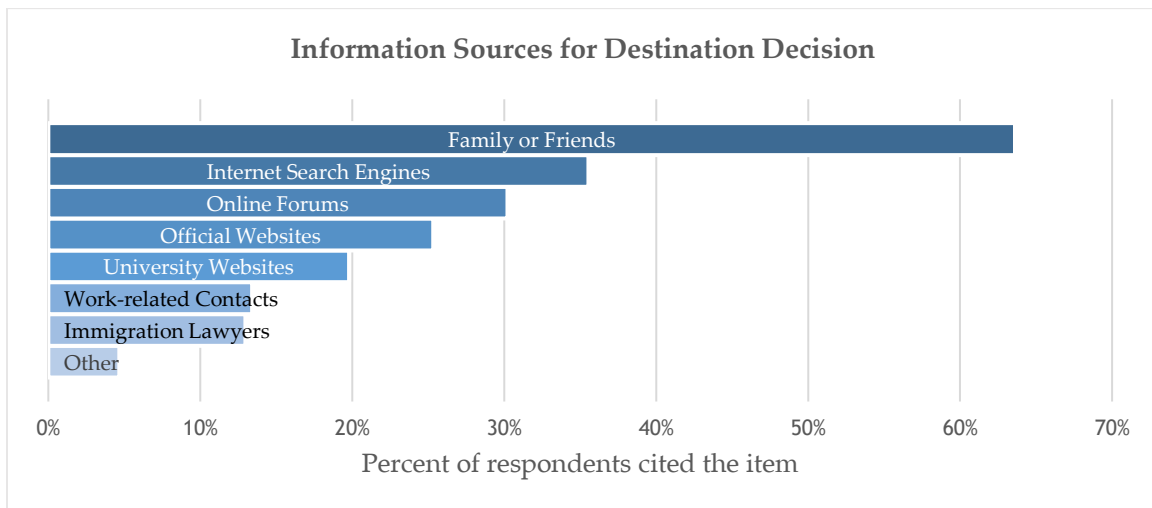


Figure 10 Survey Results, Source of Information about Locations

'Family or Friends' was cited 10% more among respondents in the major cities than those in the non-major cities. Statistical analysis confirmed that Iranian immigrants who receive information from their family or friends are more likely to be in the major cities. Regarding the 'University websites,' respondent in the major cities and non-major cities had used this source by 14% and 32% respectively. Data analysis also showed Iranian immigrants using information on university websites are more likely to reside in the non-major cities. This particular dependency is maintained even when the analysis excludes the responses of those with student visas or the other temporary residency status. The analysis did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between the other information sources and the respondents' current location.

Table 5 - Proportion of the respondents that cited the information source

Location Criterion	Current Location	
	Major Cities	Non-major Cities
Family or Friends	67% (a)	57% (b)
Online Forums	33% (a)	29% (a)
University Websites	14% (a)	32% (b)
Government Websites	24% (a)	27% (a)
Internet Search Engines	36% (a)	35% (a)
Work-related Contacts	13% (a)	14% (a)

*The proportion of columns with the same subscript letter do not differ from each other at the 0.05 level.

Data Processed by IBM™ SPSS™ Statistics ver. 24

5.2.3. Discussion

The large majority of survey respondents were individuals between the age 20 and 40 and nearly all the respondents had university degrees. This sample population can likely represent Iranian immigrants in Canada particularly for two reasons. First, the vast majority of Iranian youth, especially those in Iran's large cities, accomplish post-secondary schools (For example, from 9.6 million population between the age 17 and 34 in Tehran, 7 million (72%) have post-secondary education (Iran's census data, 2016)). Second, considering the selection process of Canadian immigration system and the higher scores that point-system assigns to younger ages and advanced education levels, most Iranian immigrant applicants who could receive admission have university degrees.

The survey results provide several noteworthy aspects of how Iranian immigrants choose their destination. The following has summarized these results in five points. First, Iranians are relatively more concerned about some specific characteristics of a location than immigrants in general. These characteristics entail the prospects of having a job, the location's level of urbanization, and climate. The distinction of Iranians and others may have stemmed from the fact that, most Iranian immigrants are born and raised in metropolitans with millions of population such as Tehran, which also have a mild and four-season climate. More importantly, the vast majority of Iranian immigrants are young people with advanced degrees who mostly have immigrated because of a widespread unemployment, employment insecurity, and insufficient income in Iran. In this sense, it is

conceivable that Iranians count on immigration as a solution for their job-related issues. Second, the analysis showed that climate would be the only factor that could have significant effect on Iranian immigrants' relocation choice. This shows climate is one of the most important long-term locational preferences of this population. Third, the destination choice of Iranian immigrants appears to be largely driven by the information they obtain from informal sources. Particularly, it was found that social networks along with the content of university websites could significantly affect the Iranian immigrants' destination decision. Fourth, the results showed the migration decision of most Iranian immigrants is informed by the information on the internet. The widespread use of online platforms by Iranians could reflect their lack of access to official Canadian immigration representatives in Iran. As a side effect of this deficiency, Iranians then would not prefer going to relatively unknown destinations, which may result in uncertainties and risks. Finally, the results showed the majority of Iranian immigrants who arrive in non-major cities stay there for more than five years, which would increase the likelihood of their long-term settlement. This highlights the importance of dispersing this population from the major destinations at their arrival phase.

5.2.4. Policy Implications

The survey results can be used to determine the extent to which different policy designs and measures would be effective in diversifying the location choice of Iranian immigrants. In particular, the results indicate a region immigration policy can meet the Iranian immigrants' locational criteria by providing pre-arrival job and education arrangements. Using these measures alone, however, as noted in the literature and shown in the survey results, would not necessarily lead to newcomers' retention in arrival locations. The policy therefore would need a design that aims to settle Iranians where they are more likely to stay, like in large cities with a desirable climate. Meanwhile, the prerequisite of using the above measures to attract and retain Iranian immigrants is to make them aware of the policy's details and benefits. In doing so, as the survey results indicate, the most effective communication way would be through the immigrants' social networks including their family and friends. Expanding the social networks of Iranians in locations outside the three largest cities therefore could be the centerpiece of a policy's approach to achieving the dispersal objectives.

Chapter 6. Policy Options

A strong knowledge base has been developed to support the following three policy options. In the first two chapters, I explained the policy problem and provided background information from the literature. I then discussed three cases studies and presented the results of my data analysis. The combination of these methods led to the development of my policy options.

This chapter introduces the design features of the three policy options and explains their design features. These options are inspired by immigration schemes that have been already implemented in Canada or elsewhere in the world. The proposed options have a shared goal and common set of objectives. The ultimate policy goal is to disperse immigrants to destinations outside the major cities: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. To achieve this goal, the policy should accomplish three key objectives: 1) *Attracting* immigrants to non-traditional destinations, 2) *Retaining* newcomers in those locations, and 3) *Integrating* them into the host society. Importantly, the policy outcomes regarding these objectives are not mutually exclusive and can work together over time. The following describes the design of each policy option in details.

6.1. Enhancing Regionalized Immigration

This policy involves increasing the immigration intake of regional programs (e.g. PT/NPs). In particular, this option would mandate the provincial and territorial governments to expand their immigration initiatives and elevate the existing annual arrival benchmark in non-traditional destinations. In this sense, this option would not introduce new regional or federal immigration initiative. However, it would result in a lower portion of immigrants entering the country through a federal program such as the FSW⁵. Therefore, the policy would enhance the role of subnational jurisdictions in implementing the immigration policy by requiring governments to be more engaged in the settlement process of new immigrants. This change shall ultimately lead toward a more even distribution of immigrants in the country as a whole.

⁵ Federal Skilled-Worker

Regarding the implementation of this option, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments would need to collaboratively determine the baseline of the annual immigrants' entry for each region. The federal government would oversee and guide this planning process. For example, the policy could target 60% of 300,000 prospected arrivals to be entered under regional streams for a single year. At the same time, the government would target the settlement of 40% of immigrants outside the major cities. This would mean about 72,000 (300,000 multiplied by 0.6 multiplied by 0.4) new immigrants shall intend to reside in less populated regions. Hence, the sum of intake baselines for these destinations would be equal to or exceed this number. In the meantime, the admission baselines for the three largest provinces would consider the 40% dispersal target. This means the total of projected intake for these regions shall not exceed 108,000 (60% of 300,000 minus 72,000) immigrants per annum.

Under this policy, the provincial and territorial governments would be in charge of the selection and settlement processes. These responsibilities include specifying the eligibility criteria (e.g. applicant's skills, age, language proficiency, etc.) and the retention enforcement method (e.g. two-step permanent residency, declaration of intent to live in the region, etc.). In this sense, this policy would demand no change in the role and domain of governments in designing and administrating the regional immigration programs.

6.2. Clustering Immigrants in Second-tier Cities

Option (2) involves inducing immigrants to reside in cities that have desirable locational preferences for a target population. The idea that motivates this option is to attune immigration policy to the social forces and individual characteristics that drive migration dynamics. In this sense, this option would be more effective for people who have pre-existing social connections, namely immigrants from a same origin or ethnicity. For this case, the settlement of a sizeable number of an ethnic group of immigrants in particular locations triggers chain migration effect that increasingly attracts the next cohorts of immigrants from the same origin. Hence, the design of this option is primarily informed by the locational preferences of immigrants, and is mainly driven by migration dynamics and networking effects as its key strategy to retaining newcomers outside the largest cities.

The primary step of designing this policy is to examine the locational criteria and socio-economic characteristics of the policy's target population. The second step involves identifying second-tier cities with a viable labour market that offers working opportunities relevant to newcomers' education and skills. The targeted cities should also have desirable features for immigrants that match to their locational preferences identified in the first step. These features include the level of urbanization, climate, housing condition, and the availability of the immigration support services among others.

Regarding the implementation, the success of this policy largely depends on using effective attraction measures. Specifically, the implementation involves informing the target population of the policy about the details of immigration program and host location. Using online awareness campaigns, short-trip tours, and sponsoring social events can significantly help to make the targeted cities known and branded among new immigrants. The implementation measures can also include the provision of an easier and streamlined immigration process, connecting newcomers to residents especially immigrants by organizing local community meetings, and providing initial accommodation for arriving immigrants. Further implementation measures can entail the provision of economic and educational incentives to assist and secure the long-term settlement of newly arrived immigrants.

These measures can be financial aids for immigrant students, low-rate and long-term payback mortgage, rental assistance, and temporary housing for newcomers. It can also include streamlining the processes of foreign credential recognition and facilitating the recruitment of high-skilled immigrants in licensed occupations. Considering this broad scope, however, the focus of this policy would be on incentives to catalyze the labour market integration of newcomers. This approach would also be more administratively feasible, because the provision of generous benefits and financial aid to newcomer might raise public backlash and derive political opposition. In this vein, incentives that catalyze the entrance of newcomers to local labour market and match their skills with jobs would be more viable and aligned with the overarching motivation of immigration policy. Nevertheless, it would be in the discretion of provinces, municipalities, and other local level organizations to collaboratively decide which attraction measures suites the jurisdiction and can be the most effective.

In the meantime, the federal government would need to coordinate with local governments to implement the policy, particularly for the two primary steps of examining the locational criteria of newcomers and targeting the suitable second-tier cities. Considering the size and climate as two important locational criteria for most immigrants, such second-tier cities would namely be Calgary or those located in Vancouver Island and southern region of Ontario. Funding and the further phases of implementation, specifically the provision of incentives to attract and retain immigrants would be in the purview of provinces and through municipalities and other local organizations as the point of delivery.

As noted above, the effectiveness of this policy may be higher on ethnic groups of immigrants with social bonds and shared cultural features. Indeed, this notion is supported by the precedents of clustering settlement policy in Canada and several other countries. A recent example in Canada is the concentration of Filipino immigrants in Winnipeg, while the settlement of Vietnamese refugees in British Columbia and Lebanese immigrants in Nova Scotia goes back to earlier dates. The settlements of Bosnian refugees in the U.K and Indochinese immigrants in the U.S among other examples have also lessons that can inform a more deliberate and comprehensive policy design.

6.3. Employers-Newcomers Engagement

This option seeks to establish a strong connection between employers outside the three largest cities and prospective immigrants to Canada. A key feature of this design is the provision of large incentives for both parties (employers and immigrants) to engage in the policy. These provisions can specifically offer advantages such as tax credits for employers who hire new immigrants, and an expedite processing of permanent residency applications. Another pillar of this program is to develop a comprehensive, searchable, and easily accessible system that comprise a database of employers' information, job postings, and the profiles of immigrant applicants. In conjuncture with this database, this system will provide useful pre- and post-arrival information including housing opportunities, job-related facilities, and language training services to catalyze the employment process of the newcomers. These latter measures, however, would play a complementary role in attracting newcomers as this option is largely focused on arranging the employment of prospective immigrants in destinations outside the three largest cities.

The implementation phase of this policy begins with developing an online platform in which prospective immigrants could enter their information regarding education and work background, proficiency in official languages, and other records that employers might require. Employers also would be able to enter the details of their job postings to the database of this platform. The critical feature of this platform would be its ability to perform a data-mining task to match employers with qualified immigrants. In this sense, the more data the platform receives, the more likely it can draw desirable results. The platform would also improve if it could receive feedback from the employment status of newcomers across the country in an ongoing manner. Therefore, this system would require professional computer and network programming and a high capacity to constantly upgrade.

In the meantime, the system proposed by this policy would need to be persistently supervised for the outcomes and potential issues. These could include the potential of employers' discriminatory behaviour toward newcomers, immigrants' incorrect or flawed data entry, profiles' privacy, and the confidentiality of the systems' data. Keeping such intelligent platform secure and reliable therefore requires an elaborated oversight and protection process.

Considering this policy design, and particularly its nation-wide scope, it would be in the purview of the federal government to finance and implement administrative measures for this option. However, these responsibilities can be gradually devolved to local jurisdictions especially after an initial period of pilot implementation to track and resolve potential issues. This process can be facilitated by using the experience of similar employment-driven immigration programs in Canada and other countries such as the RSMS schemes and 'Employer Nomination Initiatives' in Australia.

The three policy options outlined above incorporate the aforementioned key objectives (attraction, retention, integration). The differences between these options, however, can mainly be attributed to the extent to which they weigh each of the three key objectives in their designs. The proposed options can be imagined on a spectrum, one end leaning toward utilizing social connections, and the other to prioritizing the economic incentives of immigration. The following table summarizes the options' design and features.

Table 6 - Policy Options - Summary of Policy Options' Features

Policy Features		Enhancing Regionalized Immigration	Clustering in Second-tier Cities	Employers-Newcomers Engagement
Objective Strategy	Attraction	Eligibility Criteria	Targeted Location	Pre-arranged Job
	Retention	Residency Obligation	Location Suitability	Employment
	Integration	Settlement Duration	Social Connections	Career development
Administration Level		Federal-Provincial	Local	Federal-Local
Precedents		Existing programs (PTNP, CEC, etc.)	Clustered Settlement in Canada, Europe, and the U.S.	Job-offer programs in Canada and Australia.

Chapter 7. Policy Evaluation Framework

This chapter presents a framework to evaluate the policy options introduced in Chapter 6. The framework is comprised of three societal objectives (**Effectiveness**, **Equity**, and **Social Adaptation**) and four governmental objectives (**Ease of Implementation**, **Cost**, **Stakeholder Acceptance**, and **Political Salability**). The pursuit of these objectives is aligned with the overarching policy goal to settle immigrants in locations outside Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

Considering the above objectives, I use several criteria to evaluate the policy options. To measure these criteria, I project the options' performance based on the findings from the literature review, jurisdictional study, and data analysis in the previous chapters. I assign a relative score of High (3), Medium (2), or Low (1) to each criterion. The sum of scores assigned to the evaluative criteria will determine the overall projected performance of each option.

7.1. Societal Objectives

Effectiveness. The key objective here is defined as the policy's effectiveness in establishing the long-term settlement of newcomers in regions outside the major cities. This objective is aligned with the ultimate policy goal, which is to balance the distribution of immigrants in Canada. Considering this broad objective, three criteria are specified to evaluate the 'policy effectiveness': Attraction, Retention, and Integration Effectiveness. The following table outlines these criteria accompanied by their definitions and corresponding measures, which are framed in question form. If the evaluative questions of a criterion have positive or negative answers, the criterion will receive a High (3) or Low (1) score respectively. In other cases, when the questions have uncertain or divergent answers, a Medium (2) score is assigned to that criterion. To reflect the importance of 'Effectiveness' as the primary objective of this evaluation framework in analysis, the scores assigned to the three associated criteria will be double weighted in the overall calculation.

Table 7. Policy Evaluation - Effectiveness Criteria and Measures

Criterion	Definition	Measure
Attraction Effectiveness	The projected increase in the number of admitted immigrants who intend to live outside the three major cities.	1) Does the policy meet the locational criteria of immigrants, esp. employment? 2) Does the policy trigger migration dynamics?
Retention Effectiveness	The degree to which the policy incentivize immigrants to stay in arrival locations.	1) Does the policy meet the long-term locational preferences of immigrants? 2) Does the policy utilize social connections to result in a higher retention rate?
Integration Effectiveness	The projected social bonds between newcomers and host communities in the long-term.	1) Are the target population likely to effectively interact with the host society? 2) Does the policy decrease the likelihood of creating ethnic enclaves?

Equity. The second objective speaks to whether the policy contributes to a more equitable settlement of new immigrants. It is especially important that the policy result in a settlement condition for newcomers in which they are not exploited based on their race, gender, religion, and wealth among other socio-economic characteristics.

The criterion of 'Equitable Settlement' refers to the policy's capacity to achieve the above equity objective. This criterion is measured by examining two aspects: 1) The degree to which the policy prevents employers from exploiting newcomers; 2) The degree to which newcomers have the choice to refrain from living in a setting that would make them vulnerable to exploitation due to residency obligations of their admission process.

Social Adaptation. This objective refers to minimizing the potential impacts of immigrants' inflow on social cohesion and cultural characteristics of the host communities. Specifically, it is important to consider the growing negative sentiment toward visible minorities and Muslims in the past few years. On these grounds, this policy objective is to maximize the potential for smooth adaptation of newcomers into the society.

The 'Social Adaptation' criterion is defined to evaluate the policy's capacity to absorb the social and cultural shocks that could be created by the policy. The measurement of this criterion is based on the degree to which the policy can prevent public backlash and the growth of negative attitudes that may rise because of a sudden influx of newcomers or the creation of ethnic enclaves especially in locations with unwelcoming social contexts.

7.2. Governmental Objectives

Ease of Implementation. This objective draws on the administration and implementation complexities of the policy. These administrative challenges may involve establishing a new body, legislative challenges, training and recruitment, and other possible bureaucratic barriers in the policy process.

The 'Ease of Implementation' criterion indicates the degree to which the policy can be implemented easily. This criterion is measured with respect to the expected administrative complexities both in the short and long-term.

Cost. It is more desirable to minimize the budgetary costs associated with the implementation of policy. In this sense, the criterion for this objective evaluates the degree to which the policy is costly, particularly at the initiation stage. To maintain consistency with other defined criteria, the scoring of this criterion will infer a reverse meaning; that is, a *higher* score of 'Cost' shows the policy is *less* costly.

Stakeholder Acceptance. This objective points to the imperative of gaining stakeholder acceptance. More specifically, it is important that new immigrants and employers, the two key stakeholders, both support the policy.

The criterion for this objective indicates the extent to which the policy is capable of achieving the objective. To measure this criterion, the design of the policy is evaluated based on two aspects: 1) The capacity of policy to address issues at the local level, including workforce shortages and population decline; 2) The projected attitudes of newcomers toward the policy's selection, admission, and settlement processes.

Political Salability. This objective refers to the policy's political feasibility. A policy design should have features that can gain the support of policymakers and politicians, who are responsible for moving the proposed option through the policy process.

The criterion for this objective reflects the extent to which the policy is defensible by the political actors. To measure this criterion, two aspects are examined: 1) The degree to which the policy is aligned with the overarching goal and the economic objectives of Canadian immigration policy; 2) The degree to which the policy can avoid controversies, particularly regarding ethnic-specific aspects and inter-governmental relationships.

Table 8 - Policy Evaluation - Summary of Criteria and Measures

Criteria	Measurement (High-Medium-Low)
Societal	Attraction: Meeting locational criteria (e.g. job prospects); Triggering and utilizing chain migration
	Retention: Meeting locational preferences (e.g. climate); Developing social connections
	Integration: Enabling social interactions Preventing the creation of ethnic enclaves
	Equitable Settlement Decreasing the likelihood of exploitation by employers based on newcomers' race, gender, or residency obligations
	Social Adaptability Preventing from a sudden influx of immigrants that would create social resentment and public backlash
Governmental	Ease of Administration Implementation simplicity; Use of existing procedures and structures
	Cost Costs for new infrastructure, procedures, etc.; considering initial vs. long-term costs
	Stakeholder Acceptance Acceptance among key stakeholders including local residents, employers, and new immigrants
	Political Salability Alignment with existing immigration policy, Addressing concerns about migration and inter-governmental issues

Chapter 8. Policy Analysis

This chapter analyzes the policy options proposed in Chapter 6. Each option is analyzed using the criteria and measures of the evaluation framework presented in Chapter 7. I then illustrate the tradeoffs and the overall expected performance of each option. Based on this analysis, the next chapter provides the policy recommendation, implementation strategies, and final considerations.

8.1. Enhancing Regionalized Immigration

Attraction Effectiveness. This option receives a medium score of 2 for this criterion, mainly because of the uncertain outcomes in less populated regions. In particular, the option could result in an immediate increase in the number of admissions under regional programs. However, finding a job in most small cities would be difficult for prospective immigrants, not to mention other undesirable features such as climate or urbanization level. Considering these issues, prospective immigrants are less likely to apply for the regional programs of less populated provinces and territories. As the outcomes of existing regional programs show, immigrants who have similar ethnocultural traits are more likely to be dispersed across the country under this policy. Therefore, the policy would not necessarily trigger the dynamics of chain migration. Finally, the policy would effectively lower the cap on the immigration intake of the large provinces, which may affect the attractiveness of immigration to Canada, especially at the initial period of implementation.

Retention Effectiveness. Of new immigrants who arrive in non-major destinations under the regional immigration programs like PN/TNs, those who join their social network especially their family or friends are more likely to stay in these locations. Others, however, who cannot establish such social bonds are prone to move to the major cities. Therefore, this option could result in different retention rates. Newcomers may also find the locational features of their destination not desirable for a long-term settlement. The retention outcome of this option therefore depends on circumstances such as the extent to which the ethnocultural characteristics of newcomers match to their destinations' criteria. The presented case studies also provide evidence that the retention outcomes of existing programs have a high spatial and ethnical variation. Considering such uncertainty of retention results, this option receives a medium score of 2 for retention effectiveness.

Integration Effectiveness. Under this option, the integration of immigrants into the host society has uncertain aspects. Specifically, newcomers who arrive in a welcoming location are expected to establish better interactions with their community in the long-term. However, the policy's spatial outcome would be relatively dispersed and non-targeted across the country. This feature decreases the capacity of the policy to focus on the development of social connections between newcomers and people in the host cities. In this sense, the policy may result in immigrants' isolation and the creation of enclaves especially in locations with a pre-existing ethnic community. For these reasons, this option receives a medium score of 2 for integration effectiveness.

Equitable Settlement. The admission mechanism of the regional program like PN/TNs is based on immigrants' skill and employability. While this mechanism may improve their employment outcomes, they can be exploited by employers. Specifically, they may reluctantly adhere to their employment contract only to secure their immigration status. More importantly, immigrants may unknowingly arrive in regions with a relatively poor economic condition or a culturally unwelcoming context where they may be treated in a discriminatory manner. Considering these conditions, the option receives a low score of 1 for equity criterion.

Social Adaptation. The social attitudes toward immigrants who enter under this option depend on several factors including the ethnocultural features and openness of the host communities. In particular, it is likely that the inflow of a large number of new immigrants will create social anxiety, particularly in communities with low cultural and racial diversity. On the other hand, some receiving communities may have a high social and cultural capacity to be welcoming toward new immigrants. Considering these uncertain and mixed results, this option receives a medium score of 2 for social adaptation.

Ease of Implementation. The administration of this policy option involves different layers of complexity. On one hand, it would use the existing selection and admission processes of the regional immigration programs. On the other hand, however, the implementation involves the designation and enforcement of the elevated admission baselines in less populated regions. This requires the federal government and subnational jurisdictions to collaborate with each other. The largest share of this process, however, would be taken only at the program's initiation. Therefore, this option receives a medium score of 2 on ease of administration.

Cost. This option is a relatively low-cost policy. The implementation of this option is based on the existing immigration processes and the current system that is used by the federal and the provincial governments. This option, therefore, is expected to have a limited budgetary effect, so it receives a high score of 3 for the cost criterion.

Stakeholder Acceptance. Local residents and employers are expected to welcome new immigrants especially in small cities that are facing workforce shortages. This inflow, however, may put pressure on the local immigration service providers in receiving cities. Newcomers, as the main actor of this policy, may also face difficulties in finding affordable and adequate housing in small cities. As this option would result in a decrease of admissions under the FSW program, it could cause resentment among some prospective immigrants who would prefer to choose their destination more freely. Considering all these impacts, the policy receives a medium score of 2 for stakeholder acceptance.

Political Salability. This option is very likely to gain the necessary political support to pass through the policy process. In fact, the option can be framed as an improvement of the status quo, which conforms to the existing policy approach and objectives. More importantly, this option pursues a culturally inclusive and employment-driven approach, which fits into the present paradigm of Canadian immigration policy. Therefore, this option receives a high score of 3 for political salability.

8.2. Clustering Immigrants in Second-tier Cities

Attraction Effectiveness. It is expected that this option would result in a significant number of new immigrants being attracted to the targeted locations. First, the policy is designed to meet the locational criteria of immigrants. Second, the policy would purposefully trigger chain migration effect by creating a critical mass of newcomers at targeted destinations. There is also empirical evidence that cities that host immigrant clusters, especially of the same ethnocultural background, become increasingly attractive for prospective immigrants. Further, this policy would draw attention to specific non-traditional destinations, which improves the discourse about the location choice among landed and prospective immigrants toward the goal of dispersing immigrants from the major cities. For these reasons, this option receives a high score of 3 for attraction effectiveness.

Retention Effectiveness. The design of this policy involves targeting large cities as that are welcoming and have desirable locational characteristics as newcomers' destinations. This design could significantly increase the likelihood of newcomers' long-term settlement. More importantly, this policy aims to contribute to creating immigrant communities and expanding the social networks of immigrants in the targeted destinations. By meeting the locational preferences of immigrants and utilizing chain migration effect, therefore, this option has a high capacity to retain newcomers, and receives a high (3) score for retention effectiveness.

Integration Effectiveness. The integration results of this option may have conflicting aspects. On the one hand, being focused on specific locations enables policymakers to educate local residents and prepare the city to accommodate newcomers. However, a large concentration of new immigrants can fuel in-group isolation and hinder the target population from being properly integrated into the host society. The details of the implementation process along with contextual features would determine the extent to which this policy is able to succeed at long-term integration. For these reasons, this option receives a medium score of 2 for integration effectiveness.

Equitable Settlement. This option is projected to provide a more equitable settlement of newcomers. First, newcomers voluntarily choose to go to the targeted locations, which is driven by social and economic incentives. In this sense, their destination choice is not exogenously imposed by employment or residency obligations, which would substantially decrease the likelihood of being exploited. Further, immigrants under this policy would be expected to be treated more fairly as they are likely to form supportive communities within which they can find more employment opportunities, especially with more convenience and accommodation regarding their language, religion, or race. Hence, this option receives a high score of 3 for this criterion.

Social Adaptation. The design of this option provides the capacity to take measures to educate and prepare host cities populations to receive new immigrants. However, it could still be difficult for recipient communities to absorb the large influx of newcomers, especially in a relatively short time. This could raise public backlash and resentment. Nevertheless, the extent of this effect depends on the social and cultural characteristics of newcomers and the host cities. Because of the potential drawbacks and uncertainties, the policy receives a medium score of 2 for social adaptation.

Ease of Implementation. The administration processes of this option include a range of steps from research on identifying immigrants' locational criteria and desirable cities, to collaborative efforts among different levels of the government. Specifically, the initial phase of the implementation has the greatest importance and complexities, which involves the selection and preparation of suitable second-tier cities. More importantly, the policy's success depends on the extent to which it can attract the pioneer waves of new immigrants. While these steps increase the administrative load of the policy, as the self-reinforcing migration dynamics come into effect, the targeted cities would become magnets for prospective immigrants. This effect therefore decreases the administrative strains of the policy over time. Considering both short-term and long-term administrative aspects, therefore, this option receives a medium score of 2 for ease of implementation.

Cost. As noted above, the implementation of this option would require several new administrative measures and bodies, which specifically makes the initial steps quite costly. However, because of the self-reinforcing effects of chain migration, the implementation costs are projected to significantly decrease over time. Considering this cost dynamic and the importance of initial costs for decision makers in the policy process, this option receives a medium score of 2 for cost.

Stakeholder Acceptance. This policy is likely to achieve a high level of stakeholder acceptance. Specifically, the policy contributes to the local economy and addresses the population decline in the targeted destinations to a great extent. Immigrants are also likely to welcome this option as they benefit from having a more diverse choice of location. Meanwhile, it can be argued that the policy may raise resentment among the employers in the major cities if they face a shortage of skilled labour. Considering the current rate of immigrants' inflow to the major cities, however, the odds have such impacts would be low. Therefore, this option receives a high score of 3 for stakeholder acceptance.

Political Salability. The political aspects of the policy process should be examined from two perspectives. First, the design of this policy involves targeting specific locations, which could raise inter-governmental confrontations and controversies over the equal distribution of immigration benefits. Specifically, it could be argued that the policy is in favor of a few locations in a discriminatory manner. On the other hand, the policy is expected to receive support from the political actors whose constituencies would be the recipient communities and the beneficiaries of the policy. It might also be argued that the

positive effects of the policy would trickle down to regions that are not targeted directly, as a more dispersed distribution of immigrants will benefit the country as a whole. Considering these views, a medium score (2) is assigned to this criterion.

8.3. Employers-Newcomers Engagement

Attraction Effectiveness. This policy option pursues a highly effective attraction approach, as the prospect of having a job is by far the most important location criterion for immigrants. However, the success of this approach would depend on the extent to which the job offerings in less populated regions matched the skills and background of newcomers. Currently, most of the in-demand occupations in less populated regions are in general and low-specialization sectors, whereas the vast majority of new immigrants are highly-skilled with advanced degrees. The spatial outcome of this option is also expected to be highly scattered across the country, which does not contribute to creating a critical mass of immigrants in small cities. In this sense, the policy is unlikely to trigger chain migration effect. As a side but important point, the attraction effectiveness of this policy is highly contingent on the state of the economy at the local and national levels in Canada, as well as in source countries. Considering all these, this option receives a moderate score of 2 for attraction effectiveness.

Retention Effectiveness. This option lacks the capacity to retain new immigrants in the non-major destinations and receives a low score of 1. According to the presented research findings and case studies, having a job can barely be a firm decision factor for immigrants to stay in small cities and remote areas. Indeed, new immigrants are more likely to relocate from locations with undesirable features such as unsuitable climate or racial attitudes even if they have a job. In addition, the dispersed distribution outcome of this option makes it less likely that newcomers would find others with whom they have ethnocultural similarities and could develop social bonds. Further, this projected outcome also limits the provision of retention incentives namely immigration facilitation and affordable housing.

Integration Effectiveness. The integration level of newcomers who remain in their destinations is expected to be high. First, it is more likely that newcomers who arrived in small cities under this policy become more engaged with the host society, as in most destinations immigrants represent slim minorities. The policy would also not aim to settle a large mass of immigrants in destinations, thus the chance of developing ethnic enclaves

and in-group isolation would be low. For these reasons, this option receives a high score of 3 for integration effectiveness.

Equitable Settlement. This option has a moderate capacity to improve the settlement equity of new immigrants. In terms of positive effects, newcomers under this option would have a relatively broad set of destination choices. Therefore, they would be less vulnerable to exploitation because of their employment or residency obligation. Moreover, this option is expected to improve the newcomers' employment outcomes and address the existing job-skills mismatch. On the other hand, however, the influence of employers on the selection and admission process under this option may increase the odds of exploiting measures to some extent. Specifically, some immigrants could become entrenched in unfair job contracts to secure their immigration status after arrival. Considering these aspects, this option receives a medium score of 2 for equity criterion.

Social Adaptation. It is unlikely that this policy option would result in a notable influx of immigrants, especially those with the same ethnic or cultural traits to any destinations. In this sense, it is unlikely that the policy would contribute to public resentment or raise social and cultural concerns among the host communities. Therefore, this option receives a high score of 3 for social adaptability.

Ease of Implementation. The implementation of this option would involve complexities some of which would continue on a permanent basis. First, as mentioned in the design of this option, the implementation of the policy requires building an inclusive database of prospective immigrants and employers across the country and defining a procedure to link them together. This policy also requires ongoing supervision by federal and local jurisdictions to enforce the residency and employment terms and conditions. On these grounds, this option receives a low score of 1 for ease of implementation.

Cost. The implementation steps of this option are quite costly. In particular, a large portion of funding would need to be allocated during the program's design to create the new information infrastructure. Meanwhile, ongoing supervision of the program would require sizable financial resources. Considering these expenses, this option receives a low score of 1 for the cost criterion.

Stakeholder Acceptance. This option is likely to receive public support in the short-term. This support stems particularly from being perceived as a policy that contributes to local

economies across a broad geographic scope. It is also expected that most employers across the country and new immigrants would welcome this option, as it addresses the employment concerns of both sides. This sentiment, however, may erode over time because, as past records show, the desired economic and distribution outcomes would not be achieved. Considering the short and long-term impacts of this option together, therefore, it receives a medium score of 2 for stakeholder acceptance.

Political Salability. There are two features that would make this policy highly acceptable in the political arena. First, it can be framed as an employment-driven option, which is aligned with the stated Canadian immigration goals. Second, it pursues a location-neutral approach, which does not invoke regional sensitivities and inter-governmental conflicts. For these reasons, this option receives a high score of 3 for political salability.

Table-9 provides the scores assigned to the options by the above assessment. It should be noticed that since 'Effectiveness' is the primary objective of the policy, the average of scores for the effectiveness criteria have been doubled (x2) to reflect their importance in the evaluation.

Table 9 - Policy Analysis - Options' Performance Scores

Criterion		Enhancing (1)	Clustering (2)	ENE (3)
Effectiveness (x2)	Attraction	2 (Medium)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)
	Retention	2 (Medium)	3 (High)	1 (Low)
	Integration	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	3 (High)
Equitable Settlement		1 (Low)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)
Social Adaptation		2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	3 (High)
Ease of Implementation		2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)	2 (Medium)
Cost		3 (High)	2 (Medium)	1 (Low)
Political Salability		3 (High)	2 (Medium)	3 (High)
Stakeholder Acceptance		2 (Medium)	3 (High)	2 (Medium)
Total Option Score		17	19.34	17

Chapter 9. Policy Recommendation

In the pursuit of addressing the uneven distribution of immigrants in Canada, and based on the presented policy analysis, this study recommends option (2) -*Clustering Immigrants in Second-tier Cities*. This policy is in line with Canadian immigration policy to disperse immigrants to destinations outside Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. In addition, it would improve the employment outcomes of immigrants while resulting in a more equitable settlement. This policy would also contribute to the economic growth of targeted destinations by addressing their demands for labour, increasing consumer spending, and creating a large capacity for investment. More importantly, while these potential benefits of the policy are expected to be realized in an increasing manner, its administrative burdens would likely decrease over time. Meanwhile, the policy analysis showed the two other options have the second best set of tradeoffs. In particular, while those options would be more feasible from the administrative perspective, they would be less effective in attracting and retaining new immigrants.

This study showed a location-driven policy as the one recommended here has a large capacity to retain newcomers in non-traditional destinations. This is while the focus of two other options is mainly on arranging the newcomers' employment status, which despite being a widely practiced approach, has a relatively poor long-run record of settlement outcomes. Indeed, as the data analysis of this study maintained, destination matters for new immigrants, especially with regard to any specific ethnic groups. In this sense, the recommended policy has a feature to distinguish between different groups that constitute the policy's target population, which enables it to have a customized design that meet the preferences and characteristics of each group. With respect to the locational preferences of Iranian immigrants that were examined earlier in this study, this feature of the policy would translate to targeting large cities with mild climate that have viable employment and educational opportunities. For instance, cities in Vancouver Island such as Victoria and Nanaimo in B.C seemingly have desirable characteristics for the long-term settlement of Iranian immigrants. This location-specific and highly targeted approach would significantly increase the policy's effectiveness in achieving the overarching dispersal objectives.

By utilizing the dynamic effects of chain migration, the recommended option could also result in an exponential growth of the immigrants' population in the targeted cities. Iranians are especially prone to this phenomenon as their destination decisions are mainly guided by their family and friends. The self-reinforcing feature of the policy also has several administrative advantages. First, it would gradually decrease the necessity of implementing proactive attraction measures. In fact, such measures would become almost unnecessary when the social network of immigrants became the main attraction factor. Second, as noted in the literature, network connections decrease the cost and perceived risks associated with the immigration process. This would improve the policy's acceptance among immigrants who are one of the key stakeholders. In a similar vein, it would make government more confident regarding the policy's performance, which then will increase the political commitment to the policy process. Third, a clustered settlement could also cultivate incentives for entrepreneurship among newcomers who would start ethnic-specific businesses such as retail stores (e.g. grocery stores, restaurants, bookstores), customized services (e.g. banking), and would incentivize local organizations to expand immigration services (e.g. language training, workplace preparation) in the their community. This would contribute to developing a socially and economically prosperous city that could also attract the future cohorts of immigrants.

9.1. Implementation Strategies

As the research findings show, the settlement distribution of newcomers is an outcome of complex social and economic parameters, which makes changing its pattern difficult. To alter this equilibrium, however, the policy would need to involve effective and targeted measures to encourage immigrants to choose new destinations. In the following, I outline several economic, educational, and 'immigration facilitation' initiatives. These initiatives would especially be crucial for the policy's long-term effectiveness.

9.1.1. Economic Incentives

Labor Market Attachment. Considering the significance of employment outcomes of newcomers, it would be highly effective to engage employers in the implementation process. This can include profiling immigrants' competencies and using the records of employers' data to facilitate the hiring process. In this vein, occupation-specific language

training would be a key step in matching newcomers' skills with their jobs. Special taxing structure could also be offered to the local employers who recruit new immigrants or to those newcomers starting a business in locations outside the largest cities.

Housing Provisions. There is strong evidence that affordable and quality housing is a key incentive to attract and retain immigrants. In addition to rental assistance to new immigrants, the policy could involve measures to help newcomers finding initial accommodation and renting their first home. This support particularly would address the issue regarding lack of reference and credit score that many immigrants face upon their arrival. Newcomers could also be offered with various kinds of financial assistance related to home ownership such as decreased mortgage rate and extended loan payback period.

In-kind Benefits. Affordable social services can be a large incentive for attracting new immigrants. These specifically include health care, transportation, and childcare which are the most demanded services by immigrant families. Recently arrived families thereby could be offered with these benefits in the form of cash or vouchers for a temporary period.

9.1.2. Education Incentives

Post-secondary Education. Schools and universities can play a major role in attracting prospective immigrants and their families to the targeted locations. These cities can also provide initiatives to retain international students. In this vein, the policy could consider financial aids and discounted tuition fees for international students who intend to stay. Educational organizations could become proactive to attract newcomers by providing in-person sessions or online webinars that have language accommodations for this people.

Foreign Credentials. A clear, speedy, and affordable process to resolve the credential issues of new immigrants would substantially increase the policy's effectiveness. Specifically, this would address the widespread job-skill mismatch among immigrants and would improve their income equity. Streamlining the credential recognition would also benefit less populated regions where the demand for the licensed specialties is high.

Life-long Education. The provision of educational opportunities for the post-university age groups especially for the elderlies can significantly improve the social integration of the policy target population. Discounted and accessible programs such as language training,

and instructing basic work-related skills such as resume writing and searching for a job would be a great advantage of the policy's implementation agenda.

9.1.3. Immigration Process

Application Fast-track. Delegating the selection and admission tasks of immigration to local entities and streamlining this process could largely facilitate the pre-arrival tasks of newcomers. Considering the feedbacks of landed immigrants, the policy could identify and address frequent application issues such as long waiting period and complex paperwork.

Admission criteria. The current point-system is based on admitting high-skilled individuals. This is while there is a high vacancy of low-skill positions in most small cities. The policy therefore could involve streams for admitting immigrants with qualifications matching the labour market demand. There could also be provisions for newcomers to enhance their skills by receiving post-arrival training and enrolling in internship programs. This would also add to their 'Canadian experience' to which most employers are highly attentive.

Family Stream. The policy could include a 'Family Stream' that gives admission to those applicants who have a strong affiliation with residents in the targeted cities. As the presented jurisdictional scan showed, this stream could be a highly effective measure to attract prospective immigrants. For Iranian immigrants, such 'Family Stream' would especially be the most effective measure in the pursuit of the policy's dispersal objectives.

Finally, it should be noticed that the effectiveness of the recommended option would be largely contingent on the locational features and social context of the targeted cities. Specifically, since most of non-traditional destinations have never experienced receiving a sizable number of newcomers in a relatively short time, the implementation have to be proceeded by a phase-in process that involves public awareness campaigns and education for local residents, organizing immigration service providers, collaborating with local communities among other measures to promote a welcoming sentiment.

9.2. Conclusion

The primary pursuit of this study was to derive effective policy options to address the uneven distribution of immigrants in Canada. Based on this research, I recommended the option of *Clustering Immigrants in Second-tier Cities*. This recommendation is in line with the overarching goal of Canadian immigration policy, that is, to shift immigration to regions outside the traditional destinations. It is also supported by past research, which pinpoints social connectedness, employment condition, and welcoming community as the pillars of an effective and long-term settlement strategy for immigrants.

In this study, I focused on Iranian immigrants as a growing community in Canada whose concentration in the three largest cities is notably higher than other ethnic groups. I examined their locational preferences and pervading concepts in their discourse about destination choice. The results of this study showed this population have specific locational preferences and social characteristics that maintain the recommended option as the most effective policy to address their uneven distribution.

Three steps were taken to develop the knowledge basis of this research. First, I outlined the literature review and provided information regarding the existing landscape of Canadian immigration policy. Second, I briefly discussed the experience of Australia, Manitoba, and British Columbia regarding the regional immigration programs. Finally, I presented the results of data analysis, including the quantitative analysis of the online survey of Iranian immigrant's destination choice, and the thematic qualitative analysis on the selected thread from Applyabroad.org. These three parts of the research were complementary to each other in the sense of enhancing the understanding of the policy problem and informing the policy solutions.

Perhaps the most noteworthy point of the research findings was that immigrants' social connections play a stronger role than employment incentives in establishing the long-term settlement. In the short-run, however, the data analysis maintained that job opportunity and pre-existing social network are the most influential factors driving the destination decision of immigrants. This research also indicated that ethnocultural features might have considerable effects on the settlement distribution outcomes of a regional immigration policy. Iranian immigrants, as a particular case, appeared to be distinctively more concerned about the climate, urbanization level, and educational opportunities at

their destination. The high attendance of Iranians to these three location criteria, therefore, might have been a significant cause of their existing settlement pattern in the major cities.

This research can be a departure point for future studies in several directions. One of these refers to the demand for further research on ethnocultural features of the recent cohorts of immigrants. As this study showed, there are distinctive aspects about the factors that drive Iranian immigrants' location choice, which could similarly be examined regarding other increasing immigrant communities. This approach contributes to a comprehensive understanding of locational preferences of immigrants in Canada that can inform a more inclusive regionalization policy design. Further research would also focus on quantifying the attraction and retention measures that this study discussed. This includes developing knowledge about the notion of 'critical mass' that plays a key role in the migration dynamics.

More research should also be conducted on the social and economic impacts of immigration to non-major destinations. Regarding the latter, studies would focus on investigating the ways in which the labour market and economy of small cities can be modernized. Such transition from a traditional farming or factory-floor workforce model to what fits highly educated and mostly specialized in service sector immigrants would be crucial for achieving sustainable economic growth in these location. There are also important areas to investigate about the social aspects of regionalized immigration. Particularly, the inflow of immigrants to non-traditional destinations is more likely to invoke public backlash and contribute to a negative sentiment. These attitudes could especially fueled by a more visible dissonance of the values and lifestyles of racial and religious minorities with people in the host cities.

Finally, it is important to notice how the social and economic effects of immigration policy in the past few years have affected the political environment. The recent rise of anti-immigrant attitudes and the polarization of political parties around immigration issues in countries around the world, specifically in the U.S. and to a lesser extent in some regions in Canada, have been in part resulted by the large influx of newcomers to locations with limited absorptive capacity. This political context and the wide range of factors that affect the results of a regional immigration program highlight the imperative of far more comprehensive studies that involve a multi-disciplinary approach.

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Appendix A.

Survey Questionnaire

Welcome Screen (appeared by opening the survey's link)

This survey is being conducted as a part of a capstone project at Simon Fraser University. The subject of this project is "Geographical distribution of Iranian immigrants in Canada." The procedures of this study will be carried out from August 2017 to March 2018.

Please proceed if you are 19 years of age or older. Every Iranian immigrants in Canada (Except minors -under age 19) can participate in this survey. Your participation is voluntary. You can quit the survey at any time during the survey without consequences.

Answering to this survey takes about 3 to 5 minutes. I appreciate your valuable time and your contribution to this project. There are no foreseeable risks to you in answering this survey. We hope the results of this study will benefit the Iranian community in Canada, and the society as a whole.

The information you provide here is valuable for me. Your answers, as well as your personal information and your identity will remain completely secured and confidential. No contact information regarding the potential survey respondents (e.g. name, address, telephone number, email address, etc.) will be collected nor will be stored. The respondents' answers cannot be identified to be deleted or modified upon their requests.

The data will be stored on Qualtrics™ secured servers and an encrypted (password-protected) folder of the researcher's personal computer. This computer is kept safe in a locked unit at SFU Residence, Vancouver. The data is stripped of any information that could identify participants (e.g., names, email addresses), to ensure confidentiality. The data will be stored for two years and then destroyed. There is no plan to store the data files on any other online or offline platforms.

The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis. Results will be provided with the final submission of the project, and accessible via the SFU library platform for thesis repository. Participants can download the project's final report from the SFU Research Depository (Summit) in which the results of the online survey is discussed. There is no planned use of your provided data in the future.

Contact Information

If you had any questions regarding this survey or the project, please do not hesitate to contact me at [...]@sfu.ca or Dr. Josh Gordon ([...]@sfu.ca)

If you had any concerns or complaints please contact Dr. Jeff Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at SFU: 778-[...],[...]@sfu.ca.

Declaration of consent

By proceeding to the next page, you declare you understand the study procedure and accept the terms and conditions described above.

Q1 – What are your highest priorities for choosing the city in which you live? Please **select at least three items** (drag and drop), and rank them.

Items

- Job prospect and preferences
- Being close to friends and/or family
- Climate
- Existence of Iranian community
- Urban lifestyle and amenities
- Educational plans or opportunities
- Housing condition (price, rentals, etc.)
- Racial, cultural, and religious attitudes
- Immigration service centres (provisions of language training, job searching, etc.)

Q2 – For how long have you been in Canada?

- Less than 1 year
- More than 1 year to 2 years
- More than 2 years to 5 years
- More than 5 years to 10 years
- More than 10 years

Q3 – In which city do you live?

- Toronto
- Montreal
- Vancouver
- Calgary
- Edmonton
- Winnipeg
- Others: _____

Q4 – Have you been in your current city since the arrival?

- Yes
- No

Q5 - (If Q4 is Yes) After how many years since your arrival in Canada did you moved to your current place?

- After 1 to 2 years
- After 2 to 5 years
- After 5 to 10 years
- After 10 years

Q6 - (If Q4 is Yes) In which city did you first arrived?

- Toronto
- Montreal
- Vancouver
- Calgary
- Edmonton
- Winnipeg
- Others: _____

Q7 – Before coming to Canada, which cities have you considered as your destination?

- Toronto
- Montreal
- Vancouver
- Calgary
- Edmonton
- Ottawa
- Hamilton
- Winnipeg
- Halifax
- Saskatoon
- Regina
- Others: _____

Q8 – Which sources have you used for choosing and getting information about the city of your residence?

- Family and Friends
- People in relation to job or employment
- Official websites (e.g. related to the Federal, provincial, municipal governments)
- Unofficial websites and online forums
- Immigration lawyers and agencies
- Television and Radio
- Online search engines
- Universities' websites
- Others: _____

Q9 – Residency status:

- Permanent Resident
- Citizen of Canada
- Student Visa
- Tourist Visa
- Temporary Work Visa

Q10 – Gender

-Male - Female - Other

Q11 – Education

- High School Diploma
- Higher Diploma or Certificate
- Bachelor degree
- Master Degree
- Ph.D. or Doctoral
- Others

Q12 – Age

- Under 20
- 20 to 29
- 30 to 39
- 40 to 54
- Above 55