

# **ALBERTA INTERPROVINCIAL AND SECONDARY MIGRATION:**

## **RATES, CONTEXT AND PROFILE**

**ALBERTA  
INTERPROVINCIAL AND  
SECONDARY  
MIGRATION:  
RATES, CONTEXT AND  
PROFILE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report analyzes the migration patterns of secondary and interprovincial migrants moving to and from Alberta. In this report secondary migration is defined as the movement of individuals who landed in Canada as immigrants and subsequently relocated from their original province of landing to another province. In addition, interprovincial migration is defined as the migration of individuals from one province of residence to another province of residence.

Data for this report is gathered using the Statistics Canada database. In particular, the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) was used to gather secondary migration data. The IMDB “combines an administrative Landing File with the T1 Family File through exact matching record linkage techniques” (The Daily, 2015). In addition to the data captured, relevant literature on this topic is presented in each section to provide a rationale for the migration flows.

The report is presented in four sections. The first section looks at the rates of net interprovincial and secondary migration for Alberta. What we find here is that Alberta has significant and high rates of positive net migration. The second section observes the context of interprovincial and secondary migration to Alberta, demonstrating that the province gains high rates of migration during economic upturns and loses migrants during times of economic downturn. In the third and fourth section we observe the profiles of secondary and interprovincial migrants to Alberta. We find that Alberta has the highest net gains in migration from Ontario, British Columbia, the Prairies, and Quebec. In addition, we find that migrants to Alberta are mostly young individuals and that there is a slightly higher percentage of males to females. Finally, we observe the Immigrant Admission Category profiles of secondary migrants and find that the majority of migrants to Alberta fall under the economic class category.

# SECTION I:

## RATES OF ALBERTA INTERPROVINCIAL AND SECONDARY MIGRATION

### SECTION I ANALYSIS

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#### SECONDARY VERSUS INTERPROVINCIAL RATES OF MIGRATION

Alberta has high proportion of both provincial and secondary migrants moving into the province. As can be observed in Graph 1a and 1b, net secondary migration and net interprovincial migration follow the same trends. For net interprovincial migration, Alberta has a positive net migration for all years shown, but has a negative net migration in the 2009/2010 period, which was a time when the province experienced an economic downturn because of the drop in oil prices. Similarly, while net secondary migration rates did not go into the negatives, they did drop significantly for the 2009 year, picking up slowly from there.

In addition, when observing quarterly estimates found on Graph 1a, Alberta's net interprovincial migration rates have again gone down since the economic downturn of 2015. While data for secondary migration rates is not available after 2013, it is safe to assume these rates would follow those of the past, and that net secondary migration would also have dropped significantly since the most recent economic downturn—although it may not necessarily be a negative value, as was observed in 2009.

These observations are similar to those found in existing research. For instance, Okonny-Myers (2010) present findings on secondary migrant mobility and retention of immigrants from 1991 to 2006 who filed taxes in the 2006 tax year. The author finds that Alberta had the highest proportion of secondary migrants moving into the province, “with 37% more immigrants moving in than were destined there” (p. 2). The author notes that this finding is similar to the movement of interprovincial migration of the general population for 2006 (p. 3). In addition, Willbond (2015) finds that, minus the 2009/2010 economic downturn, Alberta had the highest number of interprovincial migrants move into the province from 2001/2002-2011/2012. In fact, Alberta welcomed 28.8% of all migrants in 2011/2012, with Edmonton and Calgary having the highest net migration in absolute terms.

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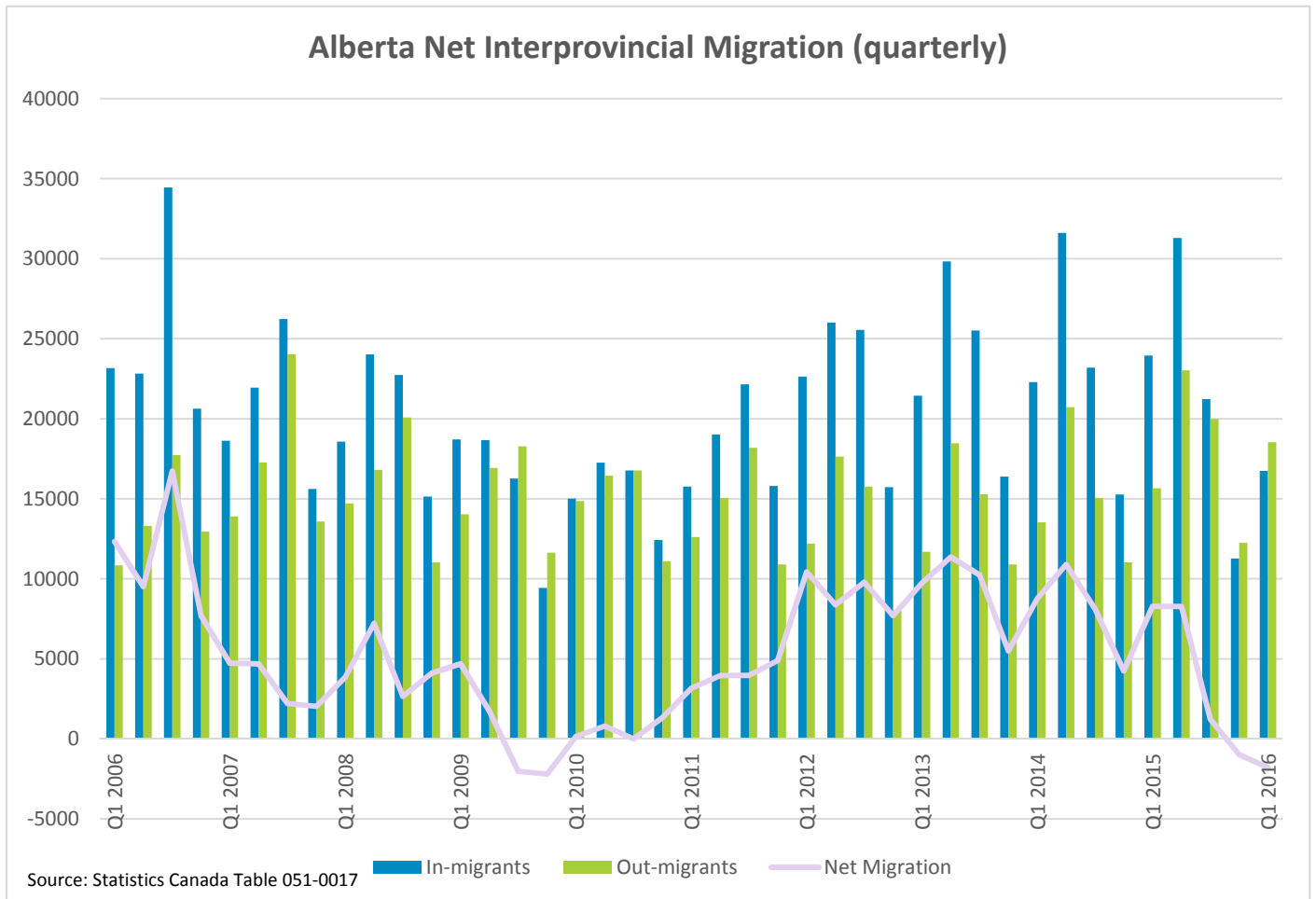
#### RETENTION RATE

In terms of the retention rate of immigrants that initially land in Alberta, the province has considerably high rates. Graph 1c analyzes 10-year retention rates for the 2003 landing cohort. The graph shows a 93% retention of immigrants after the first year of landing, a 90% retention rate after five years, and an 88% retention rate after 10 years.

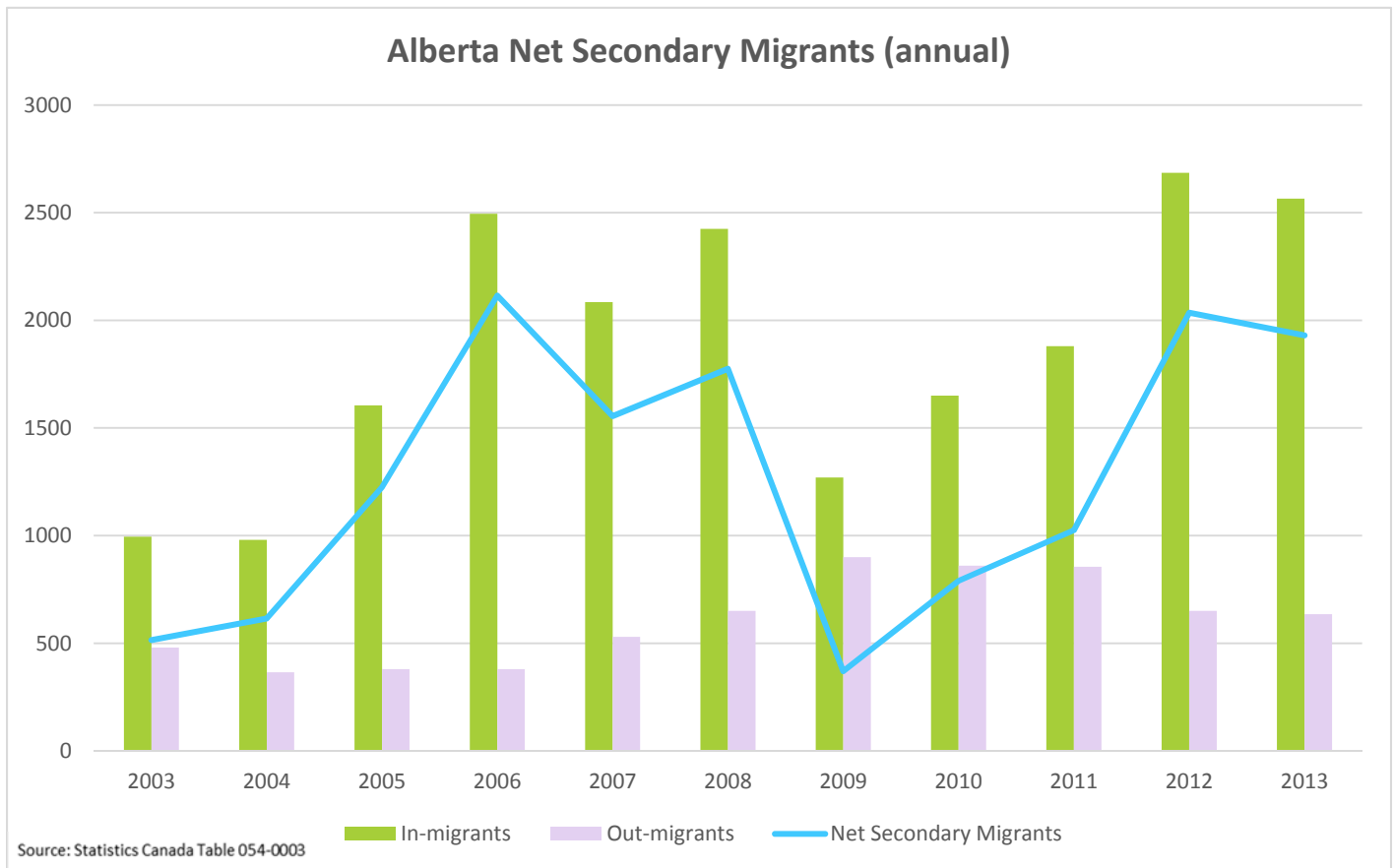
Indeed, these high retention rates have been shown in previous studies. Haan and Prokopenko (2016) analyze secondary migration trends in Canada from 2000 to 2009 and find that Alberta has the highest retention rates of all the provinces. When comparing three-five- and ten-year retention rates for the 2003 landing cohort, the authors find that Alberta maintains the highest rates of all the provinces (p. 14-

16). In addition, Okonny-Meyers (2010) finds that for the 2000 to 2006 landing-year cohort, Alberta had one of the highest retention rates among the provinces (89%), falling only behind Ontario (91%) (p. 4-5).

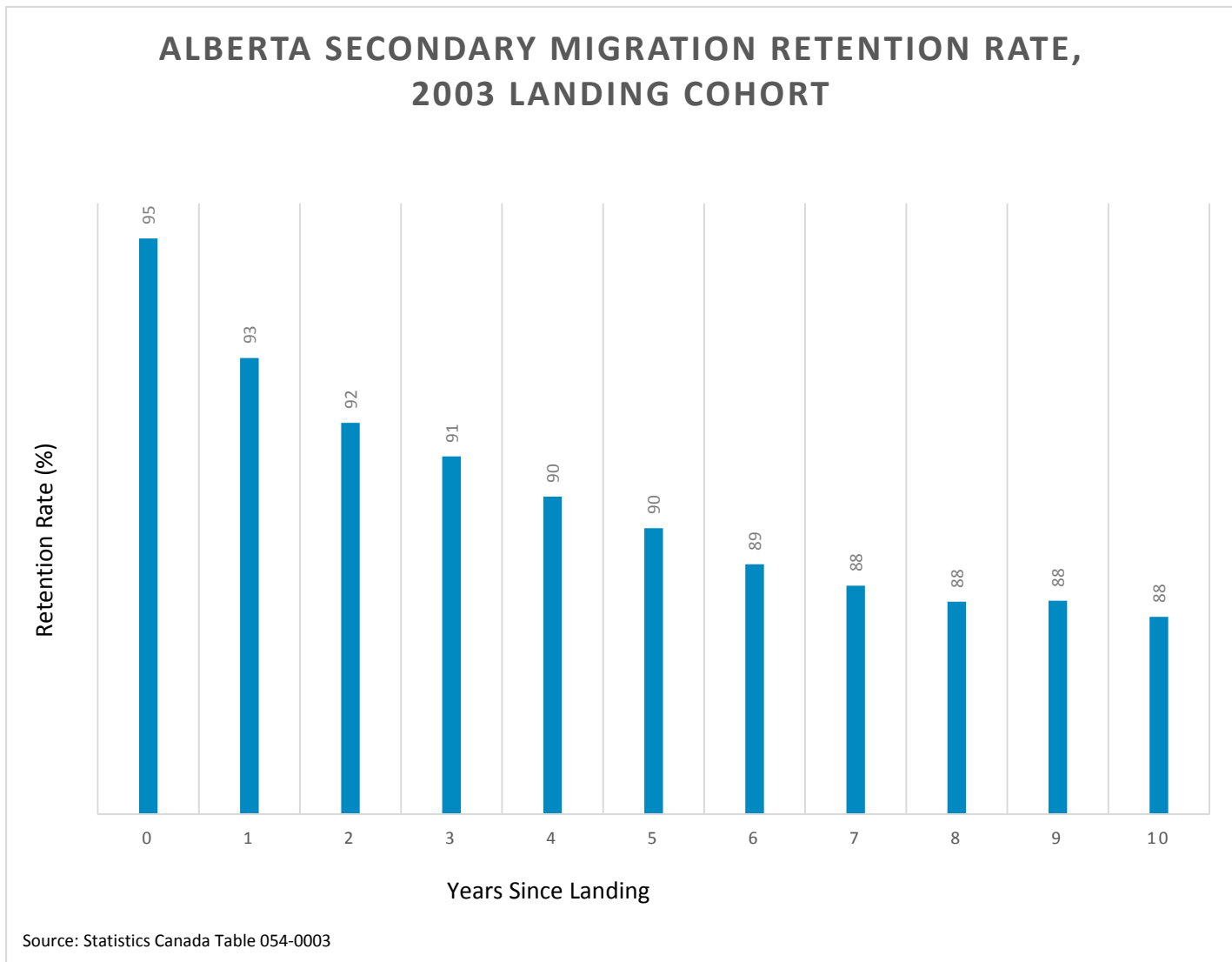
GRAPH 1A) ALBERTA NET INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION:



GRAPH 1B) ALBERTA NET SECONDARY MIGRATION:



GRAPH 1C) ALBERTA SECONDARY MIGRATION RETENTION RATE



# SECTION II:

## CONTEXT OF ALBERTA INTERPROVINCIAL AND SECONDARY MIGRATION

### SECTION II ANALYSIS

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#### COMMODITY PRICE INDEX AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Migration trends for Alberta are closely related to the unemployment rate, which is closely related to the price of oil. As shown in the previous section, the periods of 2009/2010, and most recently 2015/2016, have led to a heavy decline in net migration for Alberta. These downturns in migration fall in line with the decline in the energy price index for the same years, as is observable in Graph 2a, which in turn contributes to the rise in unemployment rates for the province, demonstrated in Graph 2b. Significantly, as evident in Graph 2b, all industries in Alberta witnessed a high unemployment rate in these periods of economic slowdown, although the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction industries particularly experienced higher unemployment rates than average.

Research has demonstrated the correlation between job opportunities/unemployment rates and migration to Alberta. In a study by Bernard and St-Jean (2014) the authors analyze the factors that drive interprovincial migration before individuals migrate from one region to another. The authors find that while distance between provinces plays a role in migration decisions, the overwhelming factor that drives migration is economic differences between provinces, which they note explain interprovincial migration flows to Alberta and Ontario. Indeed, the authors find that individuals “react very strongly to the unemployment rate,” and that across the provinces a one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate increased the probability of migration by 10% (Bernard and St-Jean, 2014).

In addition, Coulombe (2006) investigates the impacts of interprovincial migration on the smoothing of the regional business cycle. The author finds that migration responds strongly to shocks in the economy that last longer than a business cycle. These shocks include “differentials in natural unemployment rates and labour productivity, provinces’ specific structural factors, and oil shocks” (p. 18).

This trend has also been demonstrated for secondary migrants and is even more pronounced. In a study by Ostrovsky, Hou and Picot (2008), the authors compare the migration patterns of immigrants to those of the Canadian-born population and immigrants residing in Canada for over 15 years (comparison group) (p. 16). The authors found that immigrants were more likely to move to Alberta than the comparison group was, responding “strongly to the rising labour demand” in that province (p. 25).

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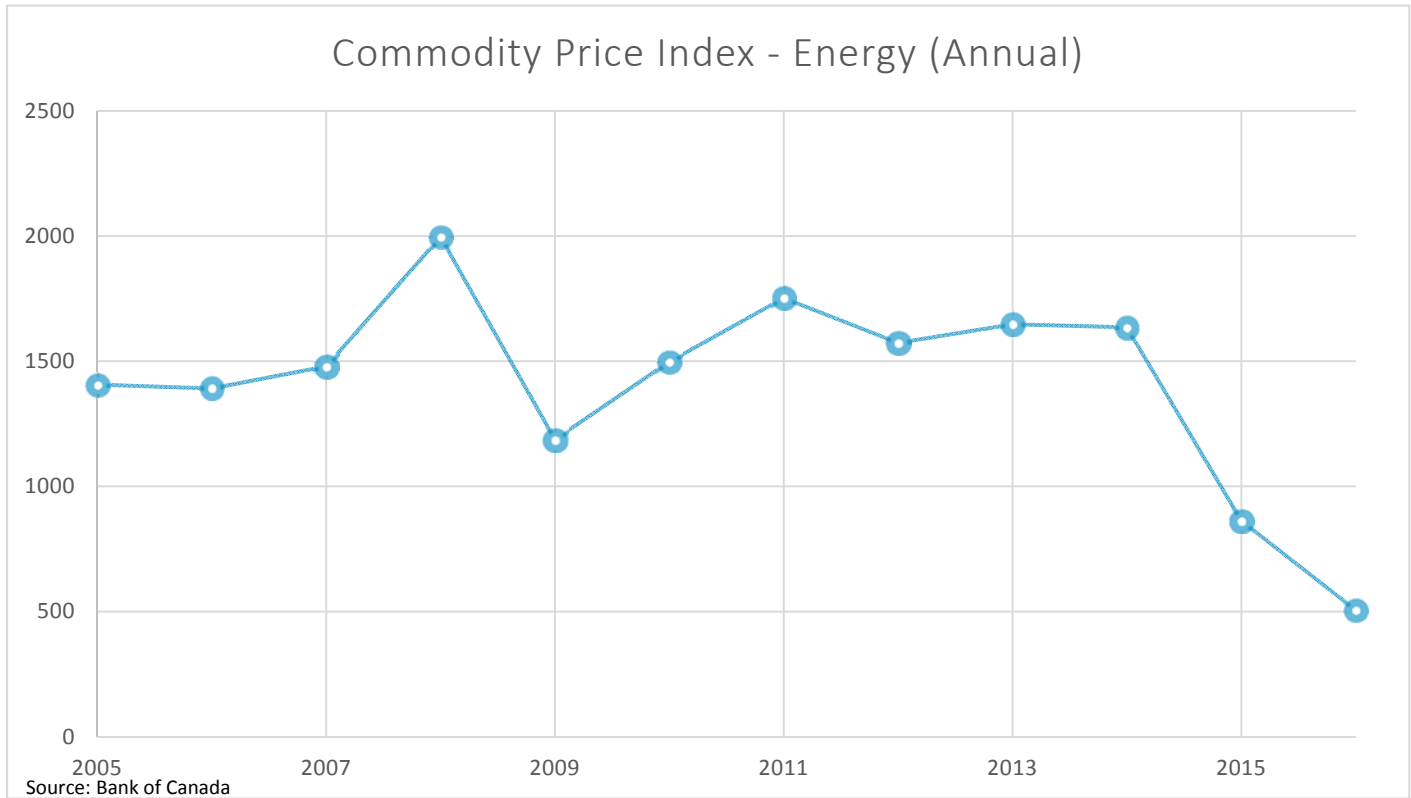
#### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY MIGRATION STATUS

Graph 2c shows that unemployment rates in Alberta differ by migration status. Canadian-born residents and immigrants landed in Canada for more than 10 years have similar unemployment rates. For both of these groups combined, the unemployment rate averaged 6.1% for 2009/2010 and averaged 6.7% for 2015/2016. For immigrants landed more than five to 10 years in Canada, their unemployment rates



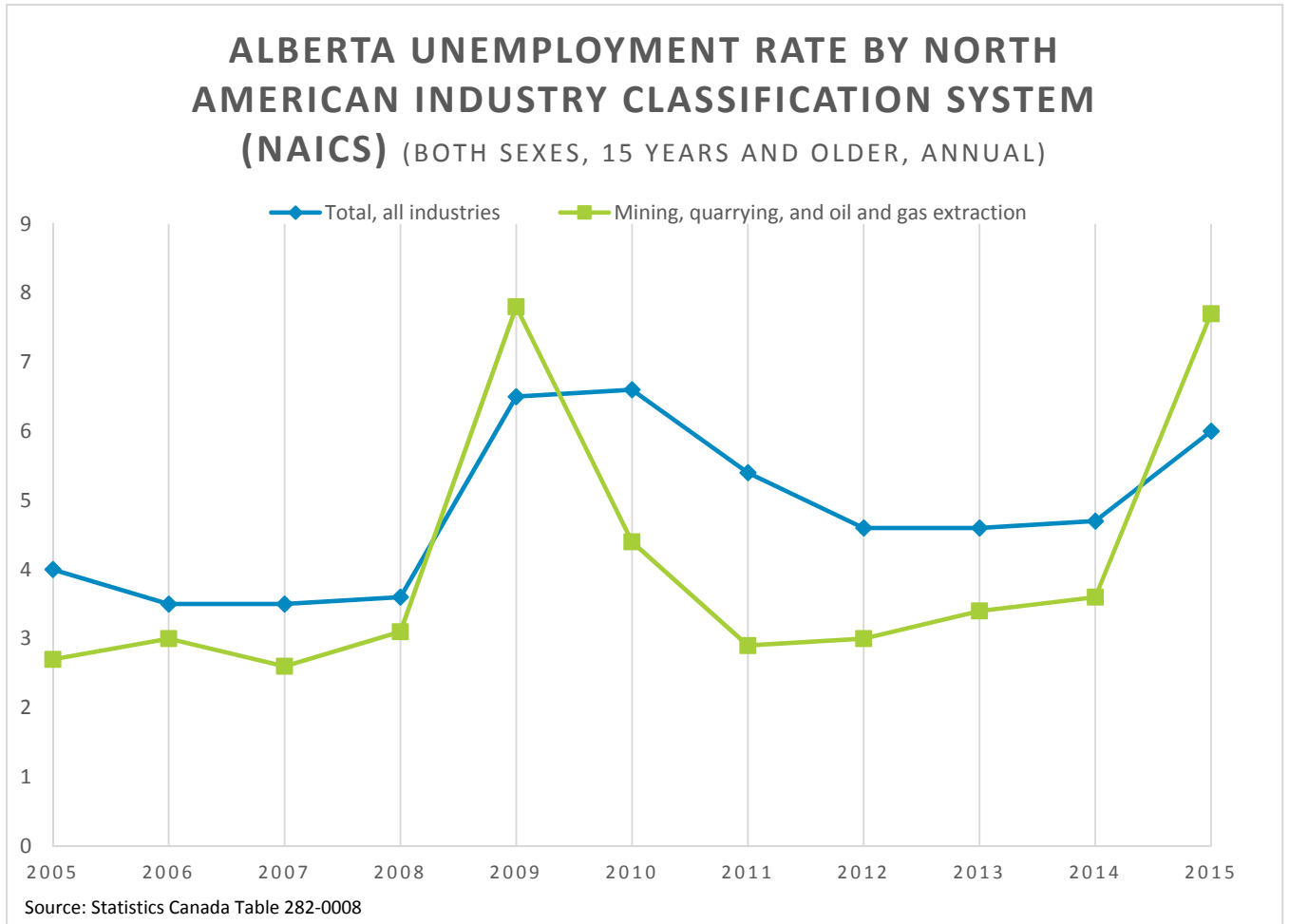
fluctuate, but in recent years have been at the similar levels to those of the Canadian born and immigrants landed in Canada for over 10 years. In 2009/2010 the unemployment rate for this group averaged 9.6%, while for 2015/2016 the unemployment rate averaged 8%. On the other hand, immigrants who have been in Canada for five years or less have much higher unemployment rates than the aforementioned cohorts, averaging 11% in 2009/2010 and 10.3% in 2015/2016.

GRAPH 2A) COMMODITY PRICE INDEX – ENERGY (CRUDE OIL [WTI, BRENT, WESTERN CANADA CRUDE], NATURAL GAS, COAL) <sup>1</sup>

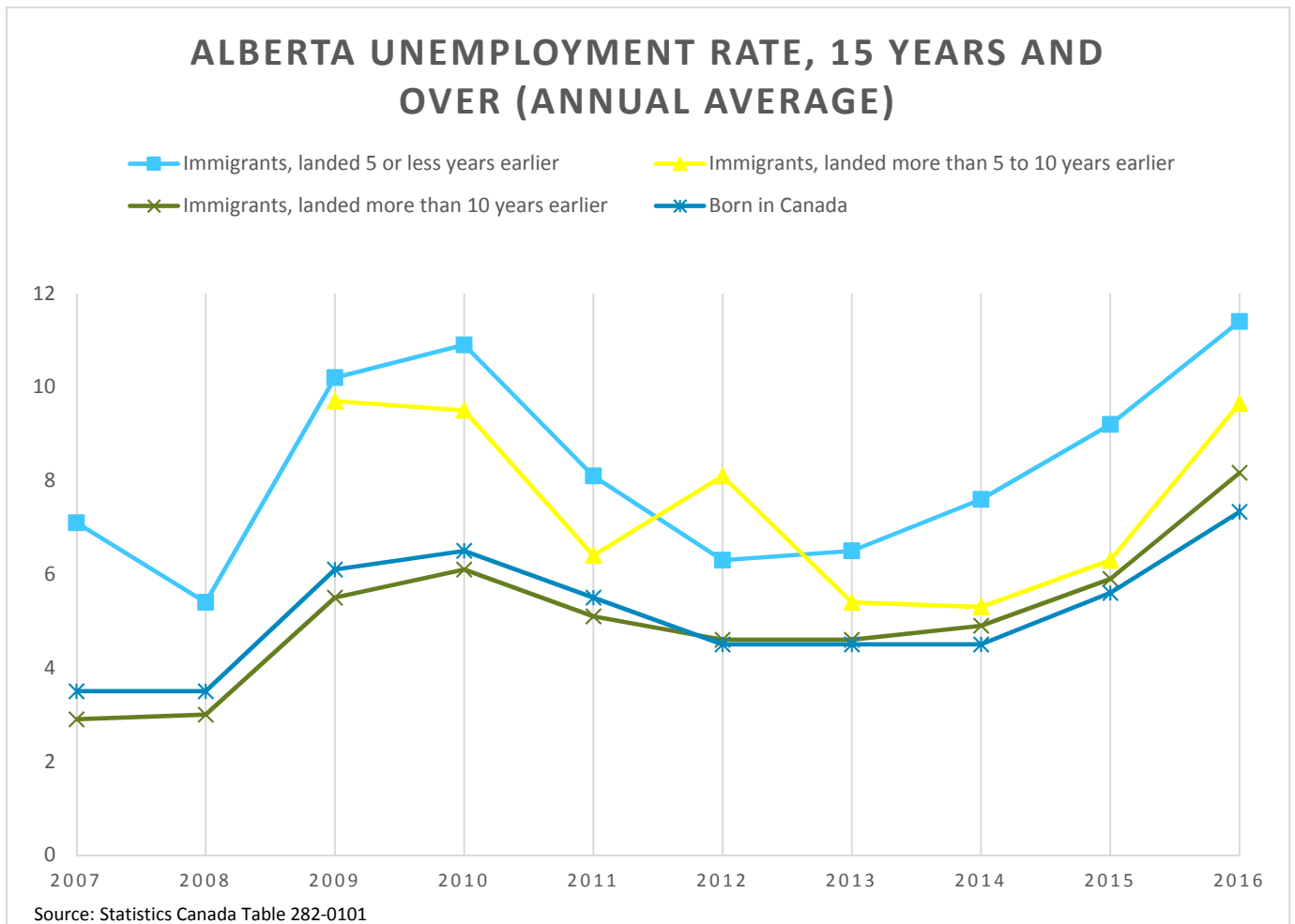


<sup>1</sup> Data for 2016 is January-June monthly average.

GRAPH 2B) ALBERTA UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY NORTH AMERICAN INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (NAICS)



GRAPH 2C) ALBERTA UNEMPLOYMENT RATE<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Data presented is average monthly data for that year. In addition, data for immigrants landed more than 5 to 10 years unavailable for 2007-2008.

# SECTION III:

## PROFILE OF ALBERTA INTERPROVINCIAL AND SECONDARY MIGRANTS

### SECTION III ANALYSIS

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#### NET INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION: GAINS/LOSSES FROM/TO PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

When observing the profiles of secondary and interprovincial migrants, the first thing in our analysis is understanding where the migrants to Alberta are coming from, and which provinces Alberta is losing migrants to. For Alberta, the province has significant gains in both secondary and interprovincial migrants from most provinces, which is observable in Graph 3a and 3b. It is clear from the migration patterns that Alberta loses migrants to other provinces during economic downturns and gains them from provinces during times of economic success. For instance, when analyzing both the secondary and interprovincial migration trends, a decrease in migrants is observable across the provinces for the 2009/2010 period.

For the 2006-2013 period, Alberta gained net secondary migrants predominantly from Ontario, Quebec, the Prairies, and British Columbia. In addition, the only instance where Alberta had a negative net migration was in losing migrants to British Columbia. Similar trends are seen in the case of interprovincial migrants. For the 2006-2016 period, Alberta predominantly maintained a net gain of interprovincial migrants, although there were some years where Alberta lost more migrants to other provinces than it gained. This is particularly evident in the case of British Columbia, where the province experienced a net loss of migrants from the 2007-2010 periods, and again from 2014-2016. Where the province gained interprovincial migrants, they were predominantly from Ontario, Quebec, the Prairies, and British Columbia, which is similar to the gains in secondary migrants.

Other studies undertaken on interprovincial and secondary migrants have noted similar trends in migration flows to and from Alberta. For instance, Haan and Prokopenko (2016) analyze secondary migration trends in Canada from 2000 to 2009 and find that the two “economic centres” of Canada, that is Ontario and Alberta, receive the highest level of secondary migrants (p. 9). For Alberta, secondary migrants moving into the province are mainly from Ontario and the Prairies, while those migrating out of the province mainly move to Ontario or British Columbia (p. 9). In addition, for interprovincial migrants, Willbond (2015) found that during the periods 2001/2002-2011/2012 the highest portion of migrants to Alberta were from Ontario and British Columbia.

The migration trends outlined above can be explained by a number of factors. First, Willbond (2015) notes that interprovincial migration can be explained by the economic standing of a province (growth or decline) and unemployment rates, which explain migration flows from most provinces to Alberta, including Ontario. In addition, the author explains that the geographic proximity of provinces impact migration trends and help explain migration flows between Alberta and British Columbia. Moreover, Bernard and St-Jean (2014) find that a “minority-language effect” can explain the migration of

Quebecers to Alberta, as the authors note that English-speaking Quebecers are more likely to migrate than the rest of the population. Finally, Coulombe (2006) finds rural to urban migration to be one key channel that explains interprovincial migration, and notes that this is seen in the out-migration of individuals from Saskatchewan and Manitoba even when unemployment rates in those provinces are relatively low.

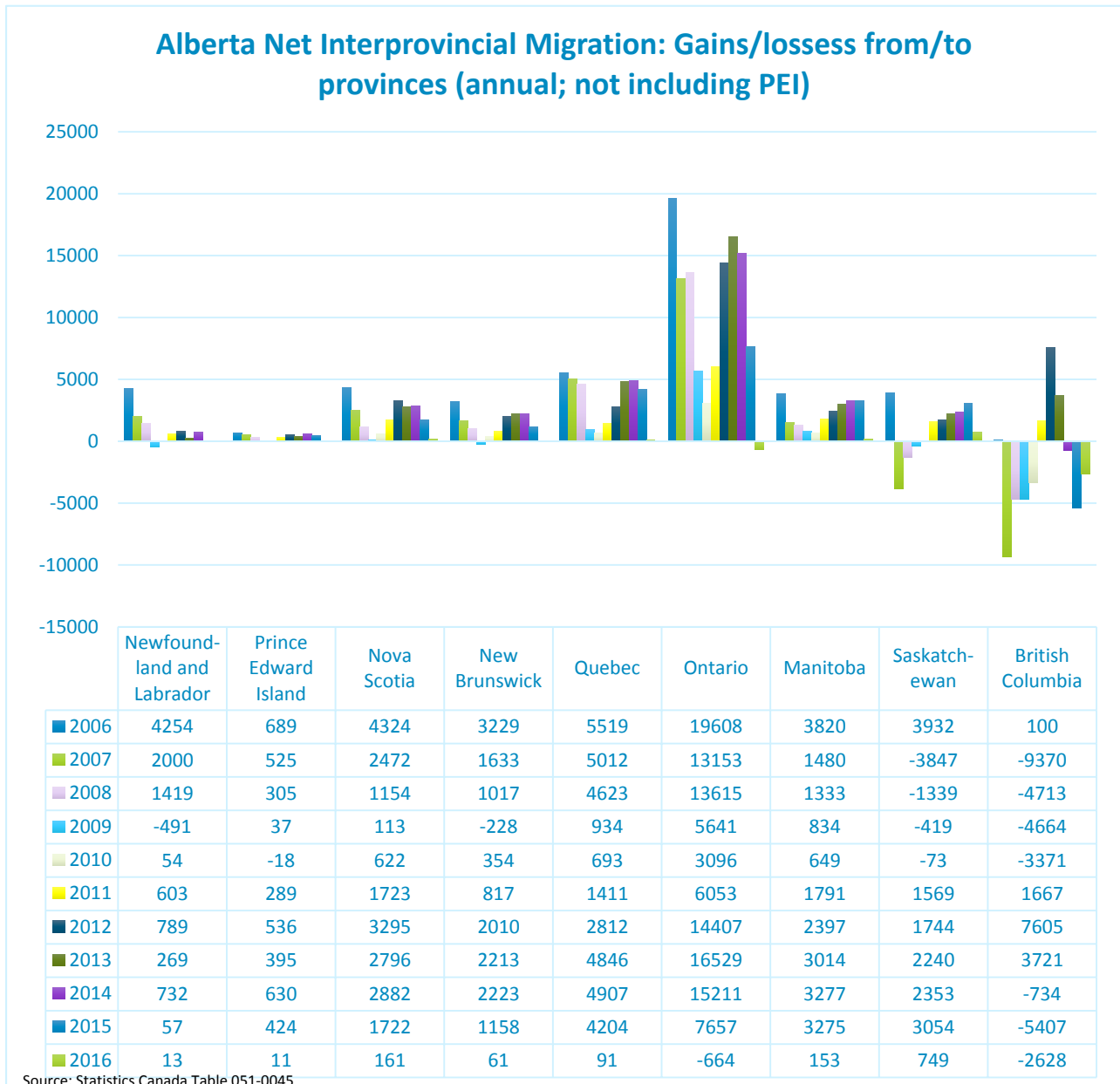
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## AGE AND SEX

When observing migration patterns to Alberta by age and sex, we find very similar trends for net interprovincial and net secondary migrants. In graphs 3c and 3d we find that those migrating to Alberta tend to be young, with the highest proportion of secondary migrants in 2013 being between 25 to 34 years of age, and for interprovincial migrants in 2013/2014 being 20 to 29 years of age. In addition, in Graphs 3e and 3f we see that over a ten year period both interprovincial and secondary migrants have slightly higher portions of males migrating to Alberta than females. With this rate being 56% males compared to females for net secondary migrants moving to the province in 2013, and 58% males to females for net interprovincial migrants moving to the province in 2013/2014. Finally, there is a correlation between the age group that is 20 and under and 35-45 for secondary migrants and 0-19 and 35-45 for interprovincial migrants, indicating that parents are moving with their children in these cohorts.

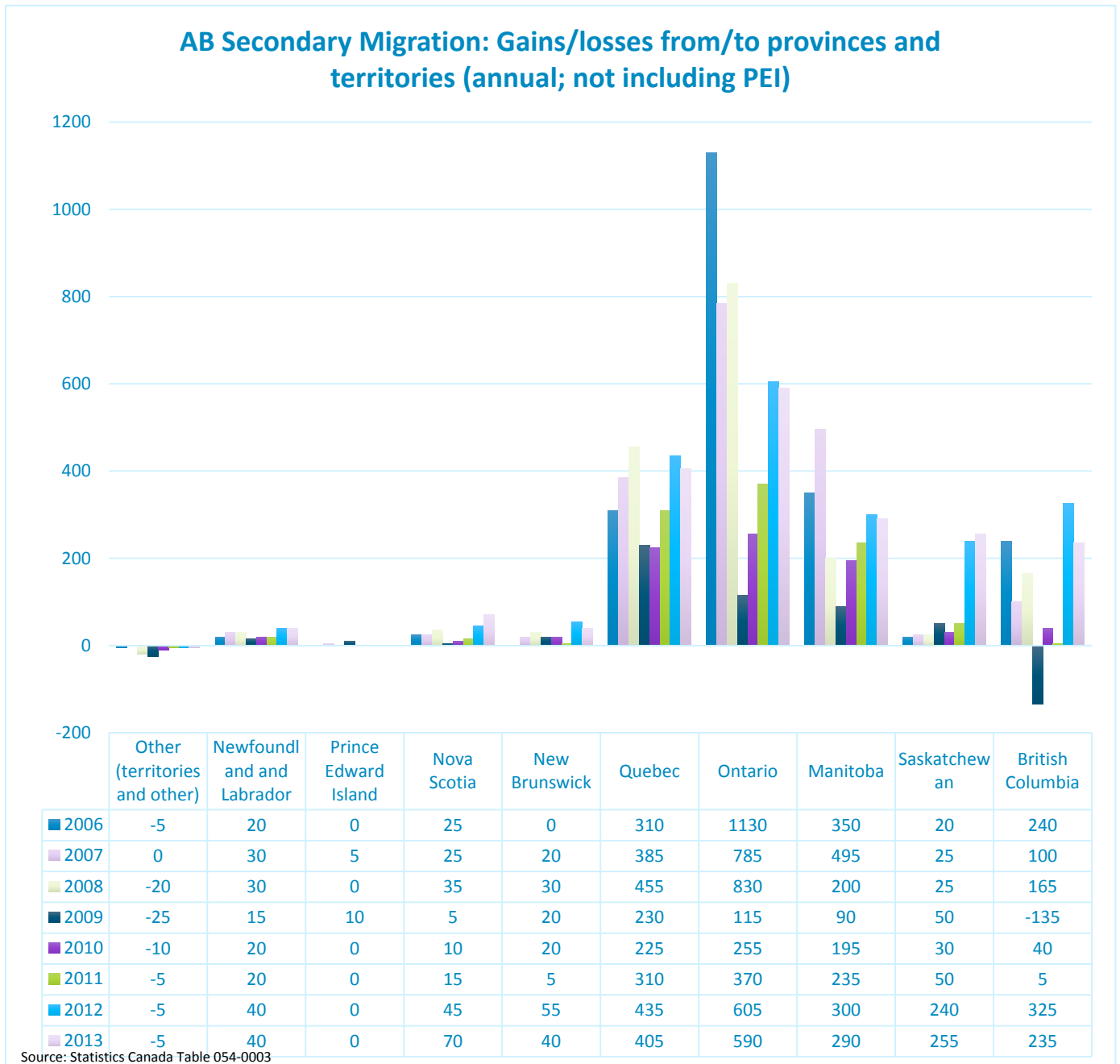
Similar findings have been noted in existing research. Coulombe (2006) finds that persons 44 years of age and younger are more likely to respond to the economic factors that drive migration, which include job opportunities and productivity in provincial economies. This explains the mobility of the 18 to 24 year cohort, and the movement of young families (p. 13-14). In addition, Willbond (2015) finds that interprovincial migration is influenced by the age and sex of migrants, with young males between 20 and 29 more likely to migrate; as well as by the median age of the overall population, with older median ages leading to lower migration rates. Finally, Bernard and St-Jean (2014) found that migrants are generally younger in age; and that unattached individuals and couples with no children were more likely to move compared to couples with children.

GRAPH 3A) ALBERTA NET INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION: GAINS/LOSSES FROM/TO PROVINCES<sup>3</sup>

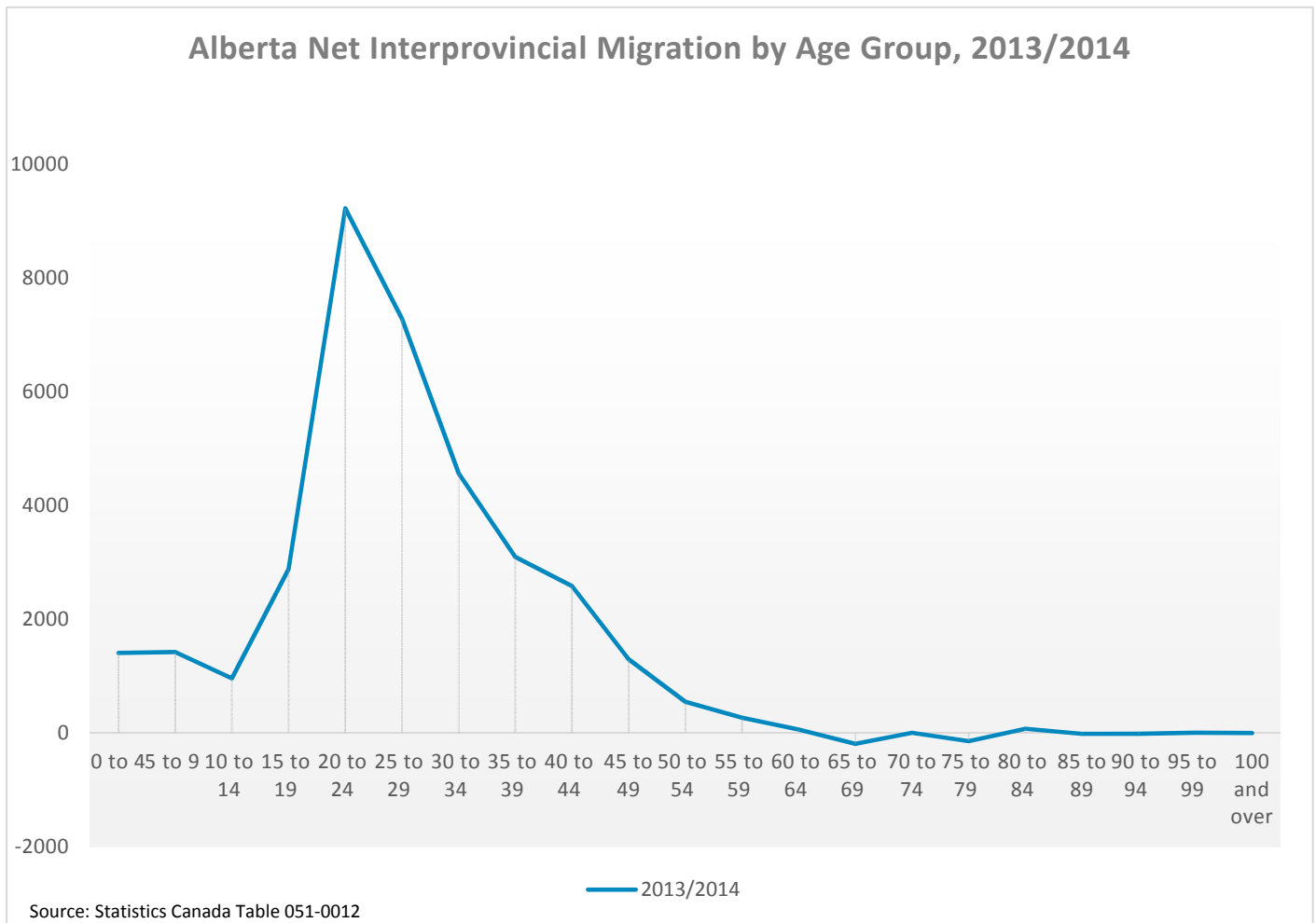


<sup>3</sup> Data presented is annual sum of quarterly data. For 2016, the data is only shown for Q1.

GRAPH 3B) ALBERTA NET SECONDARY MIGRATION: GAINS/LOSSES FROM/TO PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

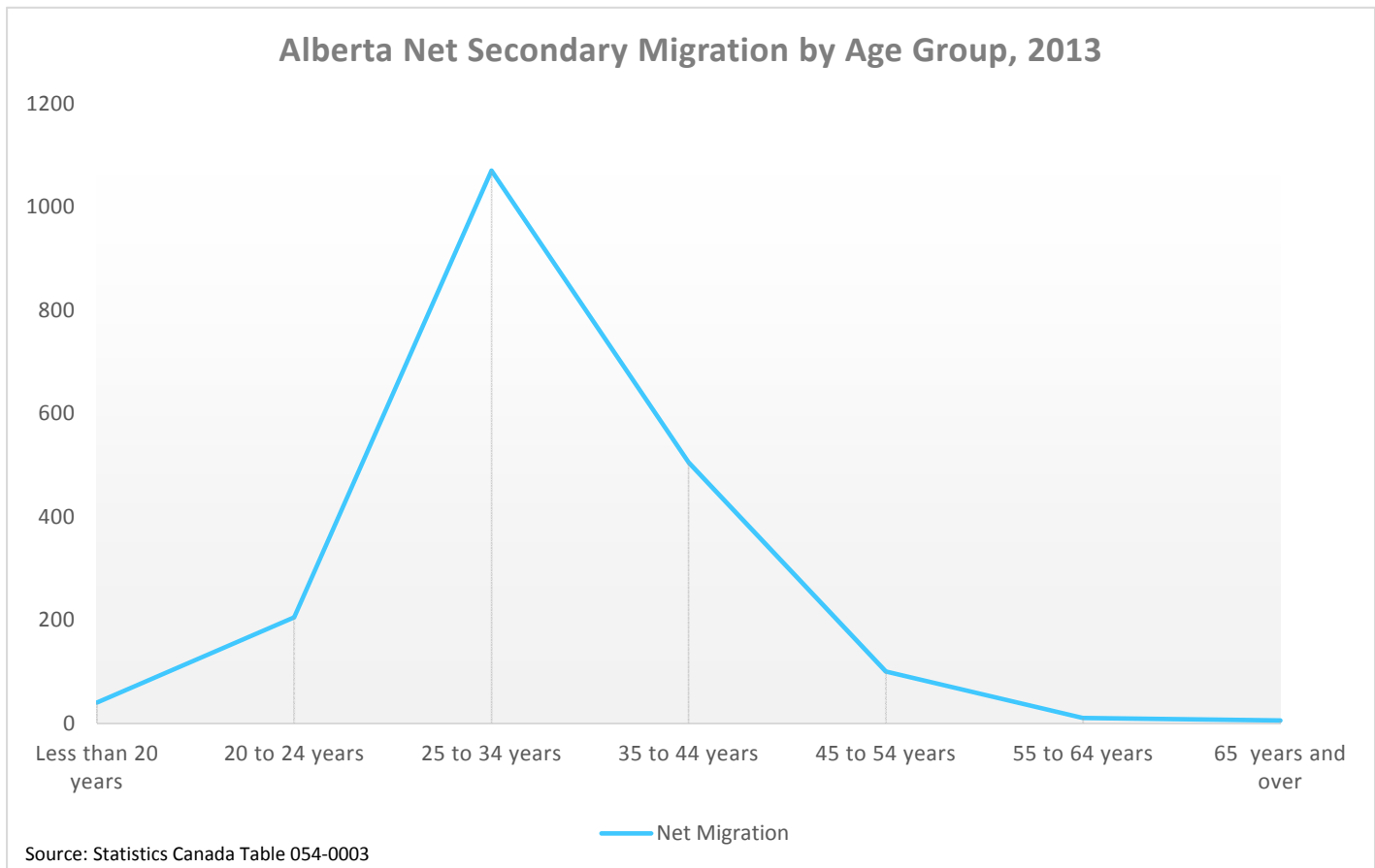


GRAPH 3C) ALBERTA NET INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION BY AGE GROUP

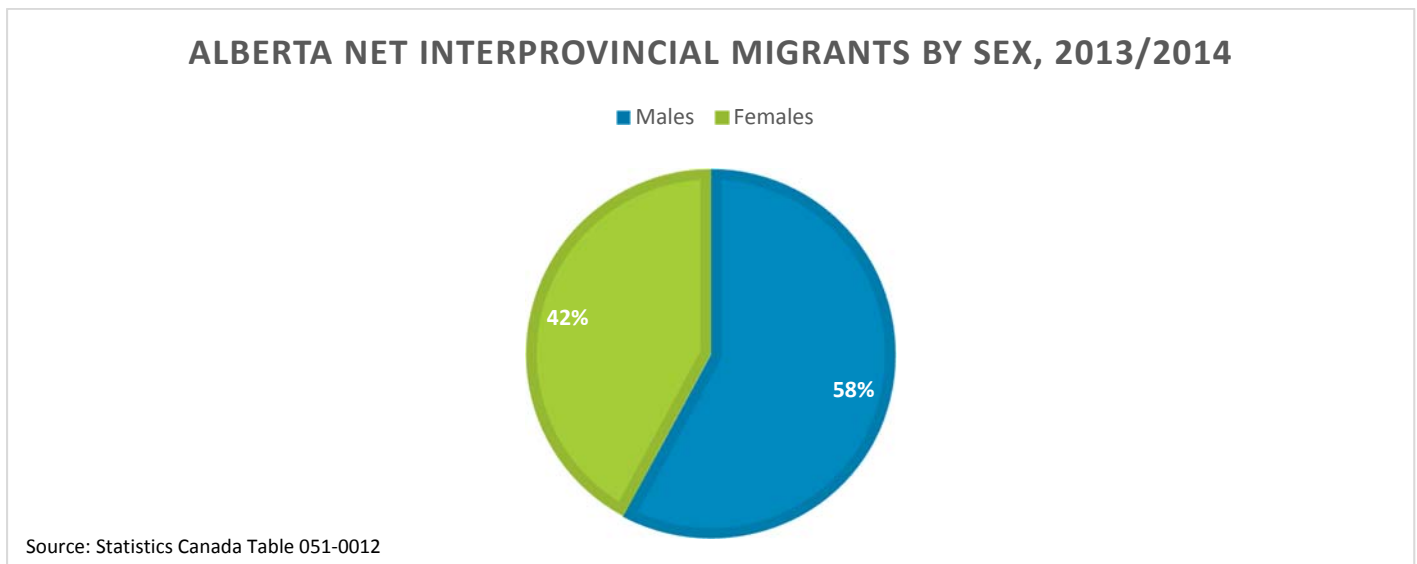
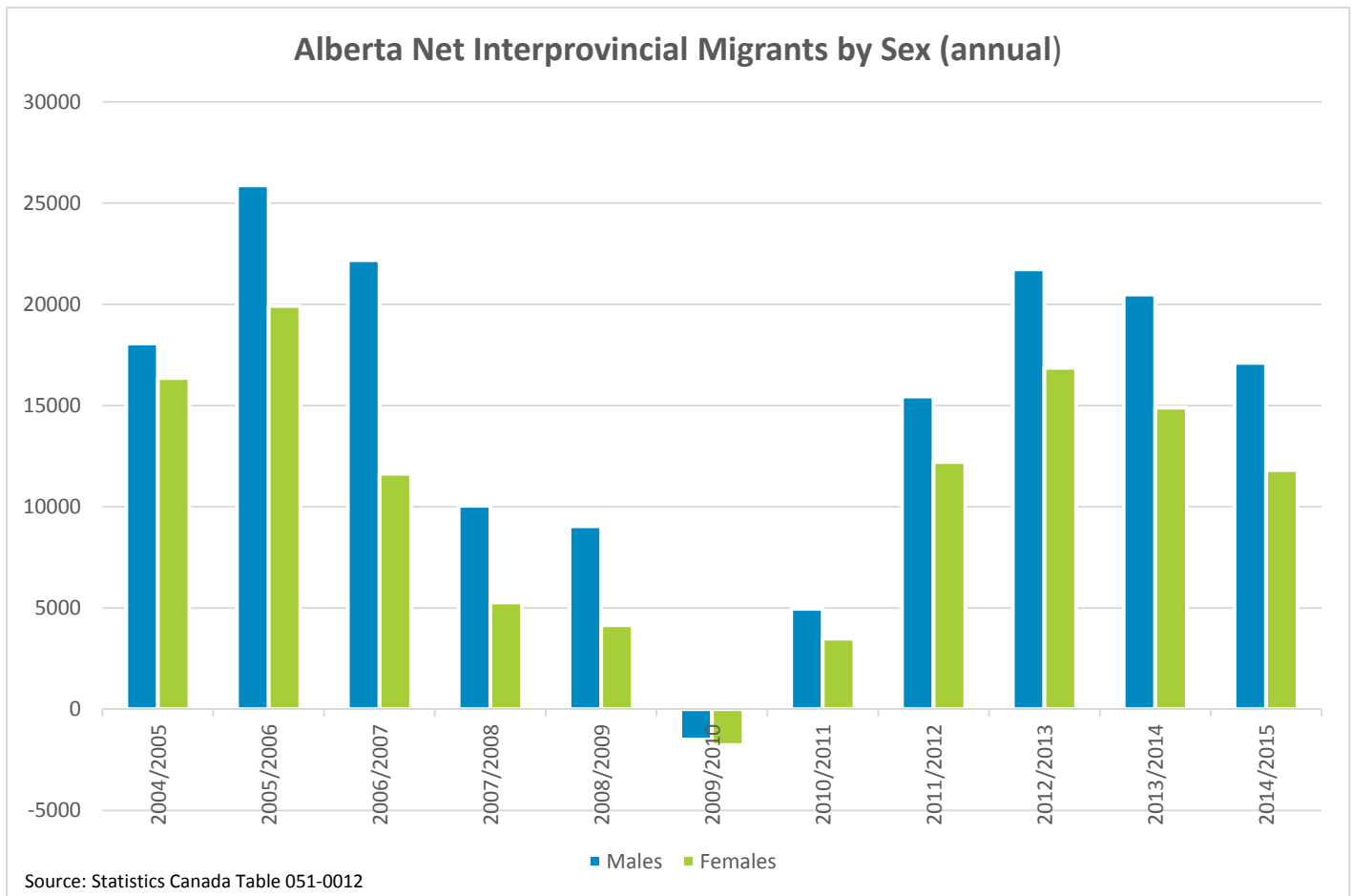




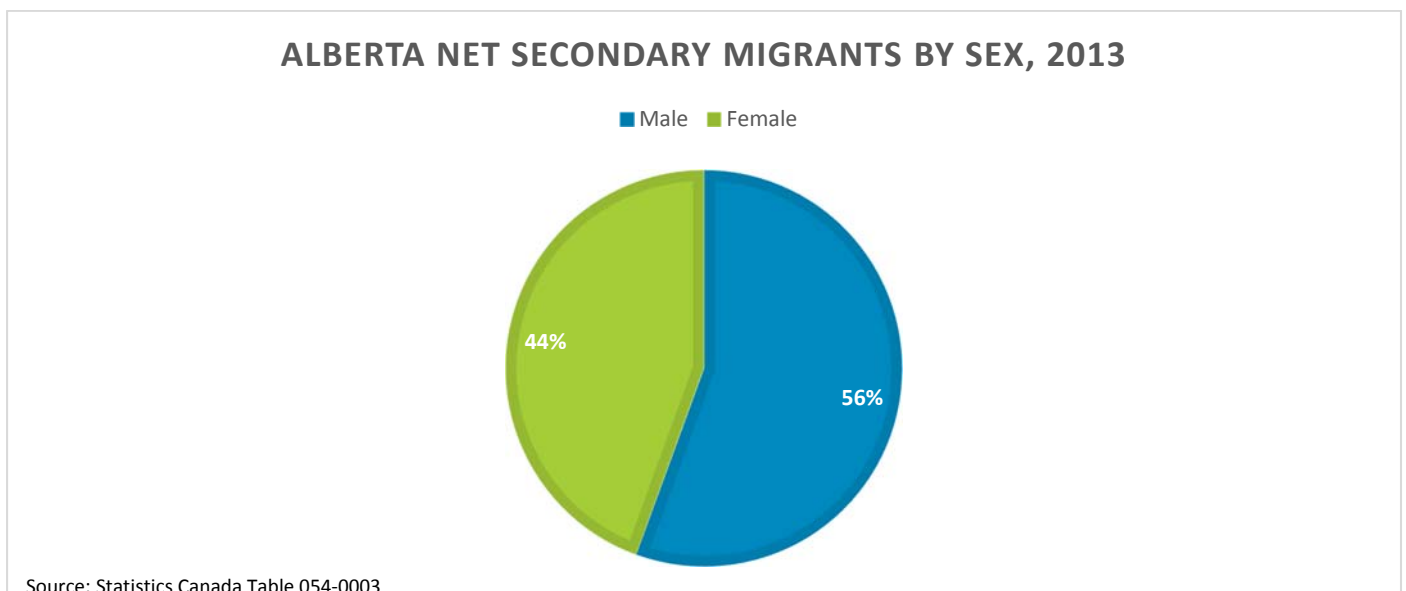
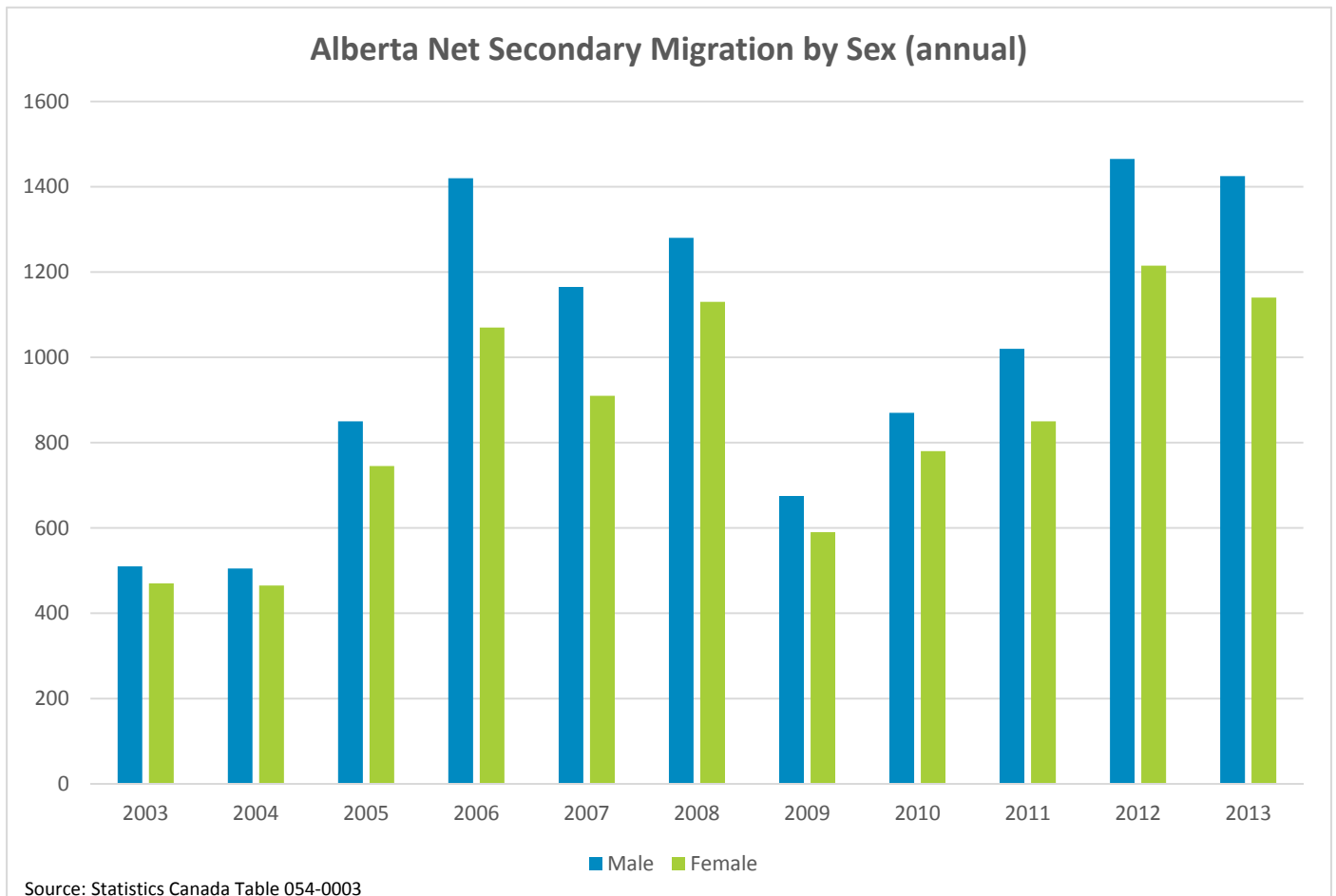
GRAPH 3D) ALBERTA NET SECONDARY MIGRATION BY AGE GROUP



GRAPH 3E) ALBERTA NET INTERPROVINCIAL MIGRATION BY SEX



GRAPH 3F) ALBERTA NET SECONDARY MIGRATION BY SEX



# SECTION IV:

## PROFILE OF SECONDARY MIGRANTS BY IMMIGRATION ADMISSION CATEGORY

### SECTION IV ANALYSIS

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#### SECONDARY MIGRANTS BY IMMIGRANT ADMISSION CATEGORY

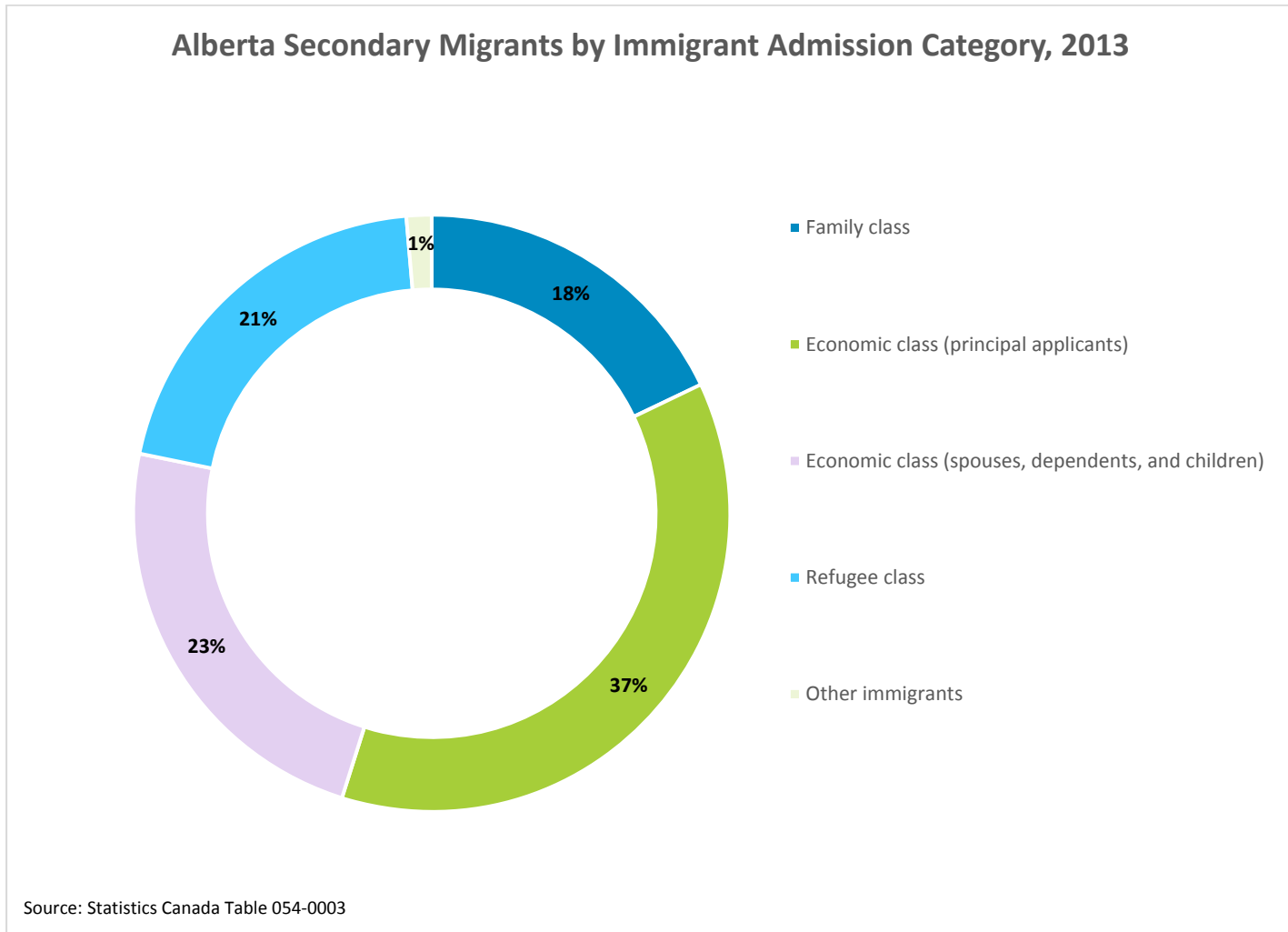
When observing the number of migrants moving into the province by Immigrant Admission Category for the 2013 year (Graph 4a), it is clear that the vast majority of secondary migrants represent the economic class categories (60%). This category is split into principal applicants (37%) and spouses, dependents, and children (23%). Secondary migrants moving in from the refugee class make up the third highest portion (21%), which follows closely by migrants in the family class (18%).

Graph 4b shows which provinces secondary migrants are moving to Alberta from by Immigrant Admission Category for the 2013 year. Of the 2,515 secondary migrants, the greatest portion of them were from Ontario (35%). The category of those moving to Alberta from Ontario were highest for the combined economic class (53%). However, the rates of all four classes were very similar when the two economic categories are not combined.

Following this rate, Quebec and British Columbia both had the second highest number of secondary migrants moving into Alberta, although Quebec had a slightly higher rate. Of those migrating to Alberta from Quebec, the majority were principal economic class migrants (55%), followed by spouse/dependent/children economic class migrants (27%). For secondary migrants from British Columbia, the majority were principal economic class migrants (39%), followed by family class migrants (29%).

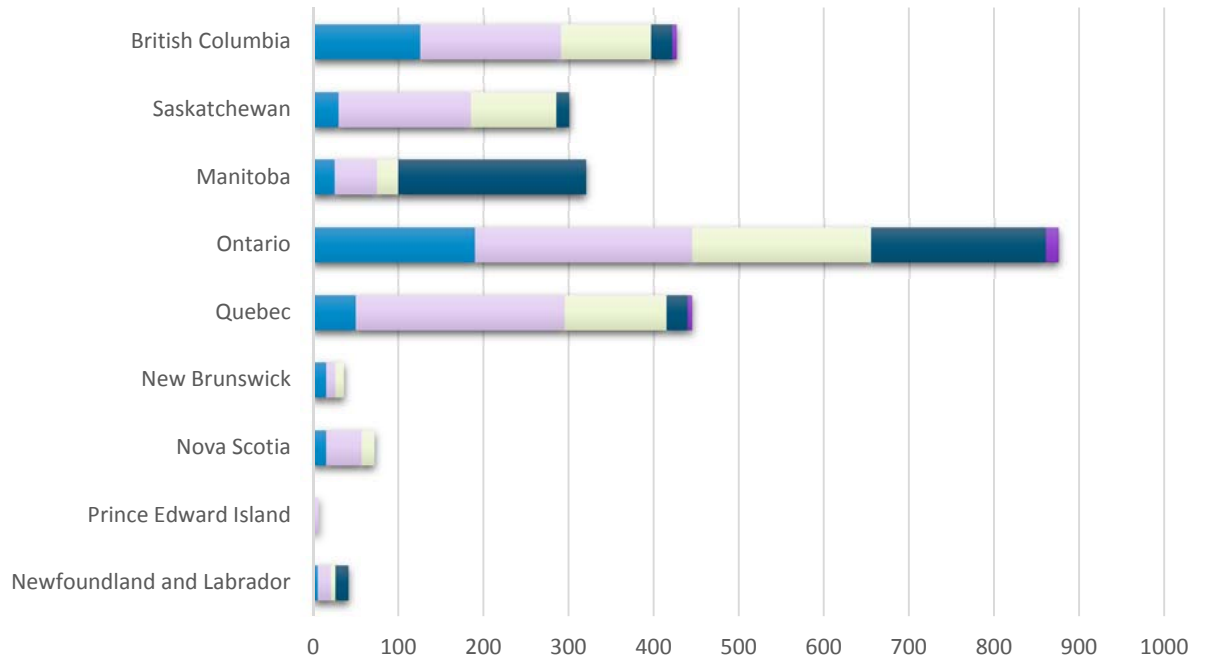
For the Prairies, trends were quite different between the two provinces. Saskatchewan had similar trends of out-migrants by category as Quebec, with the majority of applicants moving into Alberta being principal economic class migrants (52%), followed by spouse/dependent/children economic class migrants (33%). On the other hand, Manitoba was the only province that had more refugees than economic class migrants (of either category) moving to Alberta. Refugees represented 69% of all secondary migrants moving out from Manitoba to Alberta.

GRAPH 4A) ALBERTA SECONDARY MIGRANTS BY IMMIGRANT ADMISSION CATEGORY



PART 4B) ALBERTA SECONDARY MIGRANTS BY PROVINCE OF LANDING AND IMMIGRANT ADMISSION CATEGORY

**Alberta Secondary Migrants by Province of Landing and Immigrant Admission Category, 2013**



	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	British Columbia
Family class	5	0	15	15	50	190	25	30	125
Economic class (principal applicants)	15	5	40	10	245	255	50	155	165
Economic class (spouses, dependents, and children)	5	0	15	10	120	210	25	100	105
Refugee class	15	0	0	0	25	205	220	15	25
Other immigrants	0	0	0	0	5	15	0	0	5

Source: Statistics Canada Table 054-0003

## CONCLUSION

This report analyzed the migration patterns of secondary and interprovincial migrants moving to and from Alberta. A few conclusions can be drawn from the observed migration patterns.

First, it is clear that migrants are primarily moving to Alberta for economic reasons. This is because Alberta has high rates of positive net migration during times of economic prosperity and experiences net losses during economic downturns. The economy in Alberta is closely tied to the oil and gas sectors, thus unemployment rates follow drops in prices of these commodities. It is not surprising, therefore, that migration flows into the province are higher when the price of oil and gas is high (lower unemployment), and lower when the price of oil and gas is low (higher unemployment).

Second, migrants are arriving to Alberta from diverse areas across Canada. Indeed, the findings indicate that Alberta gains positive net migration from most provinces during times of economic prosperity. Finally, Alberta has high retention rates of immigrants initially landing in the province, and has the highest retention rates among the provinces. These high retention rates indicate that the immigrant serving agencies in Alberta are successful at integrating immigrants into the fabric of the province.

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