



Canadian immigration and citizenship



Focus question

Students will learn about the immigration system in Canada and the process for becoming a Canadian citizen. Using case studies, they will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that immigrants face. Students will also discuss the values inherent to Canadian citizenship.

Time

2 class periods

Grade level

9-12

Subject/topic

Geography, History, World issues, World geography, Civics and citizenship

Materials

- Immigration in Canada infographic
- Case study worksheet
- Electronic device with internet access

Learning goals

Students will:

- Discuss the difficulties of moving to a new country and the aspects of everyday life that might be challenging to a newcomer.
- Learn about the immigration process in Canada and relevant terminology.
- Investigate the different immigration programs available in Canada and the paths to citizenship.
- Reflect on the broader implications of citizenship in Canada, such as how it relates to multiculturalism and reconciliation.

Lesson implementation

Minds on

Moving to a new country is never easy. Visiting a place as a tourist may be fun and exciting but actually living in that same place can be a stressful and challenging experience. Have students imagine that they are going to attend university in a new country or are moving to a foreign city for work. Brainstorm tasks they would need to undertake on a daily basis (e.g., using public transit), weekly basis (e.g., buying groceries), and monthly basis (e.g., paying bills) to live in their new country. Create a chart on the board (or use a collaborative brainstorming tool like a [Google Jamboard](#)) to record students' ideas. Ask students how these tasks might be complicated by cultural or linguistic barriers.

Next, turn the discussion to the topic of immigration. Explain to students the concept of push and pull factors. Push factors are conditions or pressures that push people to leave their home or their country of origin. Pull factors are incentives or opportunities that pull or draw people to a new place. Often, the reasons behind a person's choice to leave one country and come to another are a combination of push and pull factors. These factors can be personal, political, economic, cultural, religious, and/or environmental.

Display the Immigration in Canada infographic and use it to generate discussion. Consider the following questions:

- Over the course of Canada's history, what are some reasons that people have chosen to immigrate?
- Have the push/pull factors changed over time? If so, in what way have they changed?
- How have demographics changed in terms of who is immigrating to Canada?
- What challenges might newcomers have faced in Canada in the 1800s? 1900s? Now? (Consider not only sociocultural changes but also technological changes.)

Explain to students that although some things have become easier in terms of immigration (e.g., forms of transportation, communication methods), the process of coming to live in a new country can still be very complicated and the immigration system is challenging to navigate. There are a number of factors that can prove to be stressful, such as dealing with language barriers and cultural differences; having the necessary digital literacy skills to fill out online applications or to find relevant information; having enough personal savings or financial support to make the move; dealing with the uncertainty of approvals and long waiting times; and much more.

Action

Students will do a choose-your-own-adventure style of case study to learn about the immigration process in Canada and to better understand the challenges newcomers face. Students can work individually or in small groups to complete the Case study worksheet.



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Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Patterns and Trends
- Interrelationships
- Geographic Perspective

Inquiry Process

- Formulate questions
- Gather and organize
- Interpret and analyze
- Evaluate and draw conclusions
- Communicate

Geospatial Skills

- Foundational elements
- Technology

To begin, present students with the following fictional profiles of individuals looking to immigrate to Canada:

1. International student studying at a Canadian university who wants to live in Canada permanently
2. Grandparent(s) wanting to join their family in Canada (Students will need to consider how to bring them over from the perspective of the family.)
3. Young worker looking for new opportunities (Students can choose their career/skills and whether they are looking for employment or to start a business.)
4. Refugee
5. Parent(s) with children (Students can choose whether they are coming to join their spouse in Canada, immigrating together as a family, or immigrating as a single parent.)

Students will choose one of these basic profiles to use as a case study. First, Have students fill out Step 1 in their worksheet before moving on to the research portions in Step 2 and 3. Encourage students to use their imagination and create a scenario to fill out the background of their chosen individual. They should flesh out their profiles with details, so that when they move on to do their research their character will feel like a real person with motivations, desires, weaknesses, and strengths. Students are welcome to draw on their own experiences or to imagine the experiences of immigrants in recent times (e.g., Syrian or Ukrainian refugees).

**If you want to increase the difficulty of the exercise, do not allow students to choose the United States or any English-speaking country as a country of origin for their fictional case study.*

Once all students have filled out Step 1, direct them to the government of Canada's [Immigration and citizenship website](#). Students can use the information found on this website to fill out Steps 2 and 3 (they can also refer to the websites listed in the Additional sources section). Encourage students to do their own research as well for their case study profiles.

Allow time for students to complete the worksheets before reviewing what they learned.

If students worked individually, gather students into small groups based on their fictional profile. Have students discuss what they found in their research with other students who had chosen the same profile. Once students have reviewed their worksheets, bring everyone together for a class discussion. Guide discussion using the following questions:

- What did you find most challenging in your research?
- What steps or requirements in the immigration process surprised you?
- How has doing this research changed your perspective on immigration?
- What are some of the barriers that immigrants might encounter in the immigration process?
- What did you learn that was new or surprising about the process of gaining citizenship?
- How has your research changed how you view citizenship in Canada?



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Conclusion and consolidation

Have students write a short reflection piece on the research they just completed. Ask them to share how they felt having to navigate the immigration system. How has this experience made them feel about their own identity and place within Canadian society?

Conclude the lesson with a discussion about the broader implications of immigration and citizenship. Ask students the following questions:

- Are there certain privileges that make it easier for someone to immigrate or settle in Canada? If so, what are they? How has this changed over the course of immigration history?
- What does Canadian citizenship mean to you? What values are we meant to uphold as citizens?
- Indigenous Peoples have had little say in immigration policies throughout Canada's history. How does reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples fit in with immigration and citizenship?
- Canada prides itself in its multiculturalism. How do we support all cultures to feel welcome and included in Canada?

Extend your geographical thinking

- **Expanded immigration timeline:** Using the Immigration in Canada infographic as a starting point, have students research different immigration waves that they could add to the timeline of immigration. Students can work in small groups or individually to create a brief information card about their chosen event/group/period in history. Afterwards, gather students together and create a patchwork timeline of students' information cards.
- **Citizenship timeline:** Using the Immigration in Canada infographic as inspiration, have students research important laws and policies that have affected immigration and citizenship in Canada throughout history. Ask students to work together to create a poster timeline of these events.
- **Create a how-to guide:** Have students choose an immigration stream to research in depth. Have them create a one-page guide or poster of key points that a person in that stream would need to know before applying to immigrate to Canada.
- **Create your own Citizenship Test:** Have students consider what questions they think are important to ask someone on a citizenship test. They should create a list of questions that reflect Canadian society and/or history.
- **Case studies:** Have students choose an ethnic group (or a group defined by another factor, such as religion), to research their history in Canada. Ask students to consider some of the following: the push and pull factors that caused people to immigrate to Canada; whether they came in one or multiple waves of immigration; where they settled and how they were treated in Canada; and important figures with this ethnic background and their contributions to Canadian society (e.g., famous Japanese-Canadians).



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- **Profiles:** Students can research a famous Canadian with an immigrant background and create a profile of their life. Ask students to consider some of the following: when, why, and how they came to Canada; where they settled in Canada; what they are known for or how they have contributed to Canadian society; and whether or not their immigrant background played a role in their decision-making/career.
- **Historical perspective:** Indigenous Peoples were dispossessed of their lands and territories, often to make way for settlers or new industries. Have students research how new communities of settlers developed alongside or at the expense of Indigenous communities. Consider inviting in a speaker from a local Indigenous organization or group to talk about the importance of treaties and/or how reconciliation can go beyond land acknowledgements.
- **Compare and contrast:** Have students research immigration to other countries and compare the programs/policies to Canada. Students can choose a country they might want to immigrate to and find out what steps they would need to take to make the move.
- **Connect with your community:** Encourage students to research and brainstorm ways in which they can help make immigrants, refugees, and/or new Canadians feel welcome in their community. Students can start at the level of their school and work to create a welcoming environment that celebrates diversity (e.g., holding a fair with foods from around the world).
- **Canada 101:** For newcomers to any country, there is always some sort of culture shock. Have students create a guide for what to expect of life in Canada, focusing on everyday tasks, common and seasonal activities, and/or social norms.

Additional resources

- [Immigration and citizenship: Immigrate to Canada](#)
- [Immigration and citizenship: Canadian citizenship](#)
- [Immigration and citizenship: Help Centre](#)
- [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada: Study Guide – Discover Canada](#)
- [Canadaim: Work in Canada](#)
- [Statistics Canada: 150 years of immigration in Canada](#)
- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Immigration to Canada](#)
- [Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21: Immigration History](#)
- [Canada Guide](#)
- [Canadian Geographic Re:Location](#)