

Navigating Canada's permanent residence landscape in 2026

Canadian Immigration Webcast Series

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The big picture: permanent residence in 2026



The big picture

What's changed

- Lower overall PR targets compared to recent years
- Economic immigration still dominates, but demand exceeds supply
- Headline admission numbers include dependents. Fewer principal applicants than expected



Structural shift

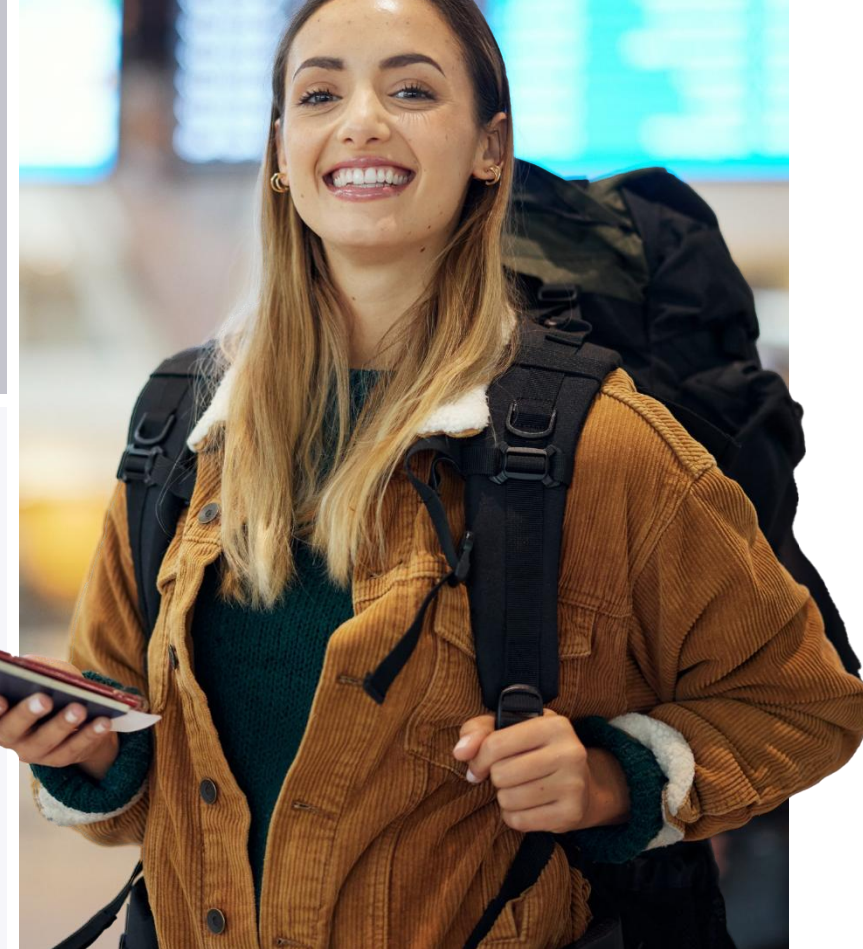


PR is no longer broadly accessible

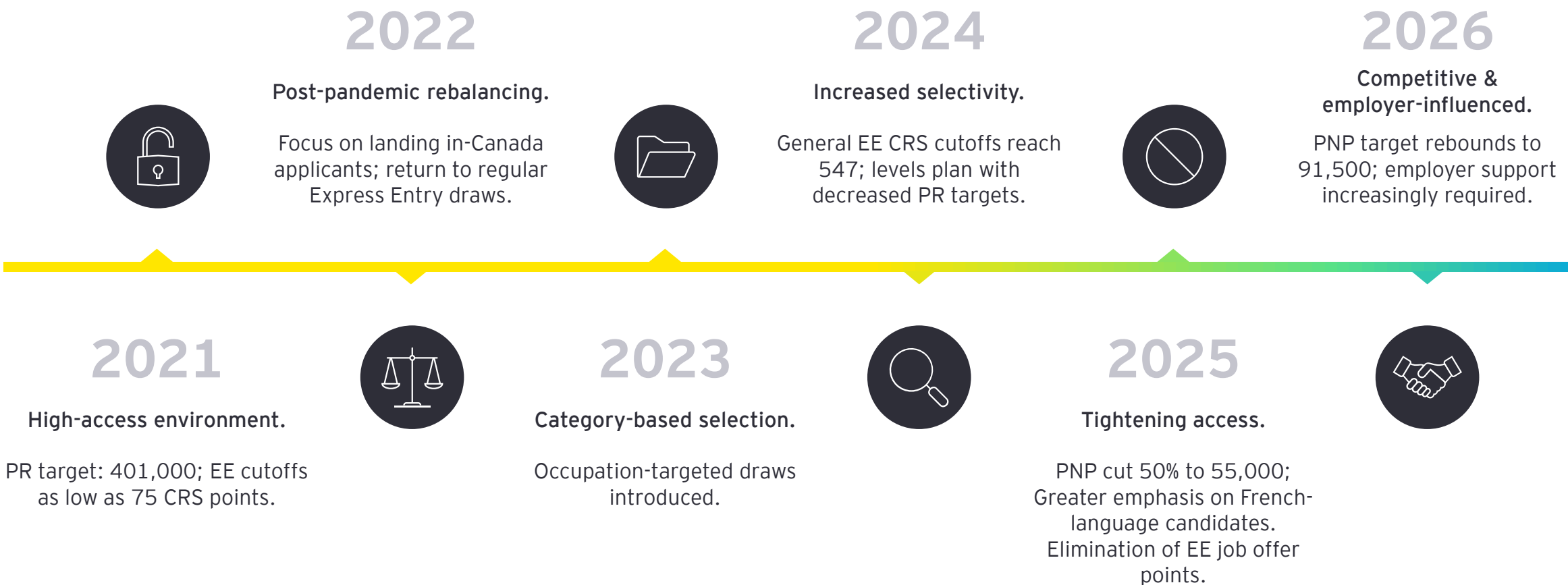


Increased focus on:

- Labour market needs
- Targeted occupations
- French-speaking candidates
- In-Canada applicants



How economic permanent residence has evolved



PR in Canada has shifted from a broadly accessible system to a targeted, competitive, and policy-driven model.

Express Entry: current reality



Express Entry: Current Reality

- Invitation-based system
- Eligibility ≠ invitation
- Job offers no longer help with invitation in most cases
- Category-based draws prioritize specific profiles, making it more competitive for the general pool of applicants

Outcomes depend on:

- Draw type (general or category specific)
- Number of invitations issued
- Pool competitiveness

What employers need to know:

- Being “eligible” does not mean PR is realistic
- Very limited options for employers to support in Express Entry
- Strong candidates today may not remain competitive in the future
- Possible revamp of Express Entry points system being considered later in 2026

The system is competitive, and still evolving



Targeted PR Measures



Targeted permanent residence measures



New pilot initiatives supporting PR transitions



Expanded pathways for specific cohorts

Limitations

- Restricted to targeted groups
- Often tied to existing applicants or regions
- Not feasible across most employee populations
- Pilot programs are temporary and may not be renewed



Provincial Nominee Programs



Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs)



Structural shift

- Provinces now control selection and eligibility to a greater extent.
- Strategically, PNPs are becoming central to PR access.



Employer role

- Many PNP pathways require employer support.
- Employers must take on formal obligations, not just filling out a form.



Reality check

- No guarantee of invitation/nomination/PR approval.
- Programs remain quota limited and competitive.

Provincial Nominee Programs

National trends

Increasing focus on:

- Wage levels
- Occupation alignment
- Economic contribution
- Regional priorities

Provincial variability

- Programs differ significantly across provinces.
- Rapid policy changes.
- Increasing shift towards targeted selection.



Employer pressure points



Employer pressure points

What employers are experiencing

- Increased PR requests from employees
- Many candidates are eligible, but not competitive

Where delays occur

- Invitation stage
- Nomination stage

PR timelines matter less than getting into the system



Permanent residence support policies



Permanent residence support policies

Why employers are formalizing PR support

- Growing employee demand
- Limited viable pathways
- Increased employer involvement required

Most employees meet baseline eligibility.
Fewer are competitive in selection systems.

What leaders need to know:

- PR sponsorship is a company decision, not an employee entitlement.
- Involves legal and operational commitments.
- Requires structured governance.
- May not lead to PR being obtained even with employer support.

Employers are moving from ad hoc to structured PR frameworks.



Permanent residence support: policy design

Common policy elements

- Business-driven eligibility (tenure, role, location)
- Formal approval framework (BU + HR + central oversight)
- Defined scope of support (costs, dependents)
- Documentation and controls (agreements, clawbacks)
- Clear expectation management

When demand exceeds capacity, consider:

- Role criticality
- Retention risk
- Scarcity of skills
- Leadership pipeline
- Alignment with realistic PR pathways

PR support is discretionary and business driven.



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