



## BRITISH COLUMBIA BUSINESS INDICATORS

November 1996

### British Columbia Then and Now

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, British Columbia joined Confederation. To commemorate the anniversary, this article shows how some of the major characteristics of the province and its people have changed since the late 1800s. In some cases, data for 1871 weren't available so the earliest available data is presented.

#### The People

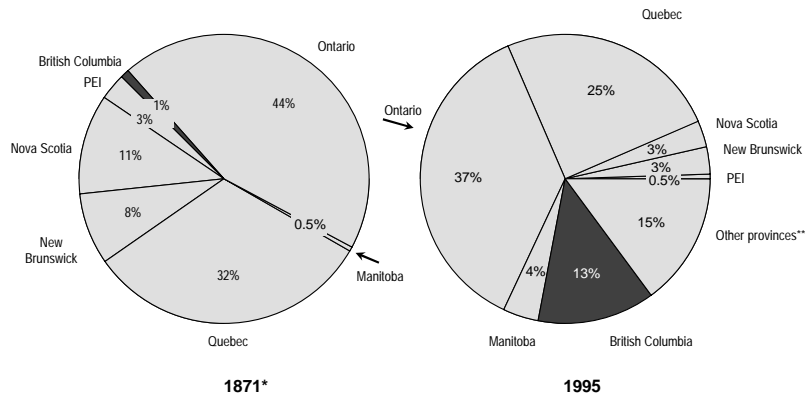
##### then...

- In 1871, there were 36,247 people living in British Columbia—only one per cent of Canada's population.
- Manitoba was the only province with fewer people than British Columbia. Three times as many people lived in Prince Edward Island as in British Columbia.
- In 1881, women made up about 40 per cent of the population.
- Half of the province's population was under the age of 30, and one in three residents of British Columbia were less than 20 years old.
- The population was mainly rural. Only 12 per cent of the people in the province lived in an urban area.
- Half of the people living in British Columbia were aboriginals. The non-aboriginal population was mainly comprised of people of European ancestry, who made up 35 per cent of the population. Nine per cent of the population were Chinese, with the remaining five per cent comprised of other Asians, Africans, and people from other ethnic groups.

##### ...and now

- British Columbia's population was 3,766,045 in 1995—almost 13 per cent of the national total.
- British Columbia has the third largest population in the country, after Ontario and Quebec. Prince Edward Island, in contrast, is now Canada's smallest province.
- Slightly over half of the population are women (50.3 per cent).
- About 40 per cent of British Columbia's population is less than 30 years old. Those under the age of 20 make up about a quarter of the population.
- The population is concentrated mainly in urban areas. Eight out of 10 British Columbians live in an urban centre.
- In the 1991 census, three-quarters of British Columbians with one ethnic origin identified themselves as European<sup>1</sup>. Four per cent were aboriginal, and nine per cent were Chinese. Other Asians make up a growing share of the province's population. Among those of European ancestry, 28 per cent are from continental Europe, up from just 3 per cent in 1881.

## Provincial Population Share, 1871 and 1995

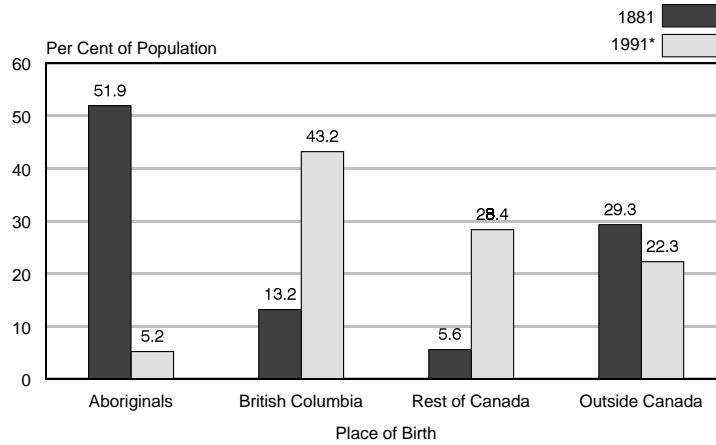


\* Total excludes Newfoundland and the Northwest Territories (present-day Alberta, Saskatchewan, Yukon and NWT).

\*\* Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, and the two territories have all joined Canada since the turn of the century.

Source: Statistics Canada

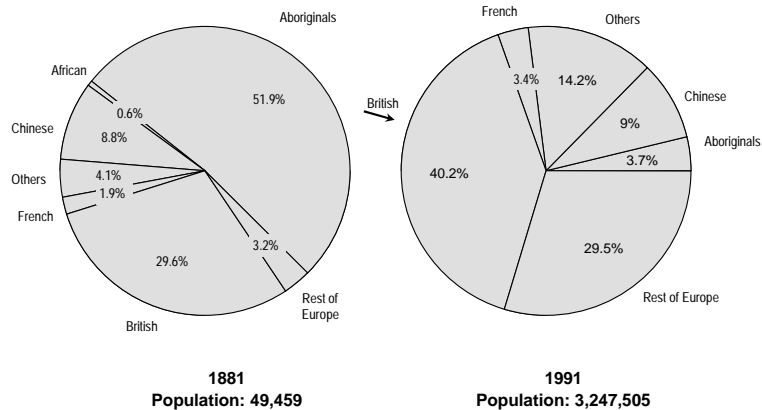
## Place of Birth of British Columbia Residents



\* Data for Aboriginals includes 94,615 people of mixed ancestry.

Source: Statistics Canada

## Ethnic Background of BC Residents, 1881 and 1991



\* Based on 1,952,855 single-origin responses.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census

## **The Labour Market**

### **then...**

- In 1881, British Columbia had a work force of about 24,000 people.
- About half of the workforce were either labourers (4,075), miners (2,792), farm workers (2,498), fishermen (1,850) or hunters (856). There were 52.9 agriculture workers for every 1,000 inhabitants of the province.
- There were 261 people engaged serving drinks and stimulants, or as hotelkeepers, and 225 people who worked in food services.
- There were almost as many clergymen or other ministers of religion (111) as teachers (116). The province had 90 lawyers, judges, law court officers and “students”, and 103 physicians, surgeons and druggists.

### **then...**

- Exports from British Columbia totalled \$1.9 million in 1872, 2 per cent of the national total.
- The value of imports entering the country via British Columbia was \$1.8 million, just under 2 per cent of the Canadian total.
- Canada’s major trading partner was Great Britain, followed by the United States.
- In 1871, gold was the province’s most important mineral product. Eighty-three per cent (\$1.8 million) of Canada’s gold production came from British Columbia.
- Nova Scotia and British Columbia were the country’s major coal-producing areas. British Columbia produced a tenth of Canada’s total coal output (\$243,000) in 1874.

### **then...**

- In 1878, there were 50 common schools and 7 graded schools. The total number of pupils was 4,273, of which 2,332 were boys and 1,941 were girls. There was one high school in Victoria, employing two teachers, with an enrollment of 61 pupils
- Most of the common schools had only one teacher. There were about 31 students per teacher in the common schools.
- Spending on teachers’ salaries totalled \$39,732. Total government spending on schools was \$48,411— about \$1 per capita or \$11 per student.

### **...and now**

- In 1995, the province had a labour force of 1,935,000 people, of which 1,762,000 were employed.
- About one per cent of the work force is employed in primary mining, fishing and trapping. Two per cent of the province’s work force is employed in agriculture— 7.5 agriculture workers for every 1,000 people in the province.
- 137,500 people worked in the accommodation and food service industry (including those “serving drinks and stimulants”).
- There were 121,400 workers in education, 163,600 workers in health care, and 6,600 people employed by religious organizations in 1995. Three out of every four workers are employed in service industries.

### **...and now**

- British Columbia’s total exports in 1995 reached \$26.9 billion, 11 per cent of total Canadian exports.
- Imports cleared through customs in British Columbia totalled \$19.6 billion, making up 9 per cent of total Canadian imports.
- British Columbia’s major trading partners are the United States and Japan.
- In 1995, the value of gold production in British Columbia has been surpassed by production of copper, molybdenum, zinc and aluminum.
- British Columbia continues to be a major producer of coal. However, markets have shifted away from Europe and the United States towards Japan.

### **...and now**

- In 1995, there were 1,697 public schools in British Columbia, with a total enrollment of 609,515. 81,000 full-time and 77,000 part-time students attend universities, colleges and institutes in the province.
- On average, there are about 17 pupils for every teacher working full-time in a public elementary-secondary school in the province.
- The British Columbia government spent \$5.6 billion on education and training in 1995/96 —about \$1,490 per capita or \$7,296 per student.

## **Trade and Commerce**

## **Education**

## Crime and Justice

### then...

- British Columbia's crime rate (based on the number of **convictions** per 100,000 population) was 603. The murder rate was 2.
- There were 55 convictions for indictable (tried by judge and jury) offences in 1885, and another 243 summary convictions. There were 32 convictions for violent crimes including 1 murder and 2 rapes. Of the remaining 266 crimes, 47 were for property offences and 108 for drunkenness.
- Just under 70 per cent of all people charged with crimes in 1885 were convicted.

### ...and now

- British Columbia's crime rate (based on the number of **incidents**<sup>2</sup> per 100,000 inhabitants) was 13,898 in 1995. The murder rate was 3.
- In 1995, there were 523,406 crimes reported to the police. There were 53,300 violent crimes reported including: 120 murders, 4,940 sexual assaults, and 5,999 robberies. In addition, there were 323,747 property offences, and 146,359 other criminal code offences.
- 70 per cent of violent crimes are cleared (result in a charge, dismissed due to lack of evidence, or dealt with outside the courts). Reported property and other offences have lower clearance rates and narcotic-related offences a higher rate.

## Government

### then...

- Sixty-one people worked for various levels of government in 1881. Another 35 were employed by municipal governments, including those who worked as policemen.

### ...and now

- In 1995, the provincial government employed 37,900 workers and the federal government employed 30,800 in B.C. Municipal government payrolls totalled 29,900.

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<sup>1</sup> In the 1991 census, there were 1,956,610 single-origin responses. Forty per cent of British Columbians indicated more than one ethnic origin. Their responses are not included in these figures.

<sup>2</sup> Not all criminal incidents result in the laying of charges. Similarly, when a charge is laid, it does not necessarily result in a conviction. This means that the incidence rate in 1995 is not strictly comparable with the conviction rate given for 1885. It should be viewed as a rough indicator only.