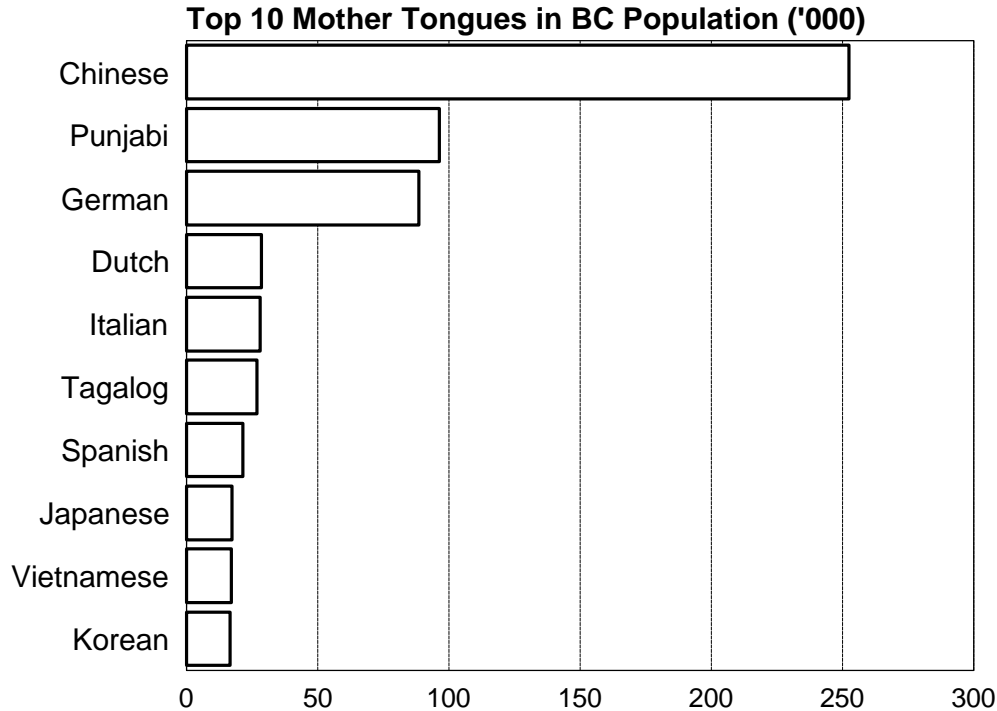


### Focus on Language in BC: Mother Tongue & Home Language

In 1996, more than 853,000 persons in BC reported having a single mother tongue other than English . . .



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Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the Census. In 1996, 3,639,815 British Columbians reported having a single mother tongue and 49,940 reported multiple mother tongues. Of those having a single mother tongue, 76.5 per cent reported English, 1.5 per cent reported French, 0.3 per cent reported aboriginal languages, and the remaining 21.7 per cent reported other non-official languages as their mother tongue.

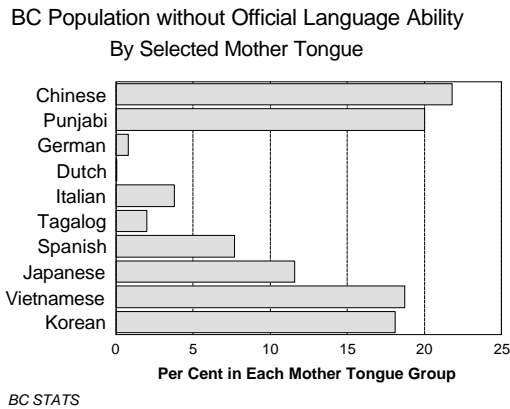
Chinese mother tongue represented the largest non-English mother tongue group in the province. In 1996, 252,405 persons in BC reported a single mother tongue of Chinese. This represented 31.5 per cent of

all respondents of a single mother tongue of non-official languages, or 6.8 per cent of the overall BC population. Punjabi and German were the second and third most common single mother tongue, reported by 96,220 and 88,400 persons, respectively.

About 12 per cent of the BC population who reported a single non-official mother tongue have neither English nor French language ability. This ratio is even higher for people with Chinese or Punjabi mother tongue. Approximately 20 per cent of the people with either Chinese or Punjabi mother tongue had no official language ability in 1996.



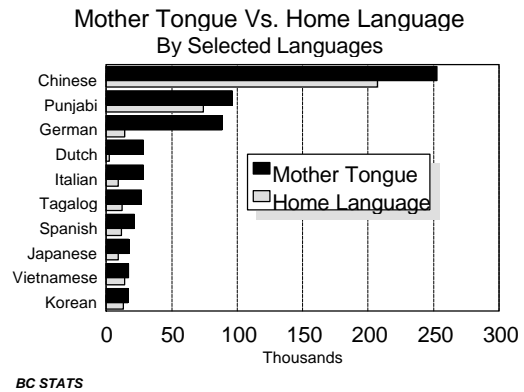
The majority of people who reported a single mother tongue of a non-official language were immigrants. In 1996, of those who reported a single mother tongue other than English or French, 74.2 per cent were immigrants, 2.8 per cent non-permanent residents, and 23.0 per cent non-immigrants.



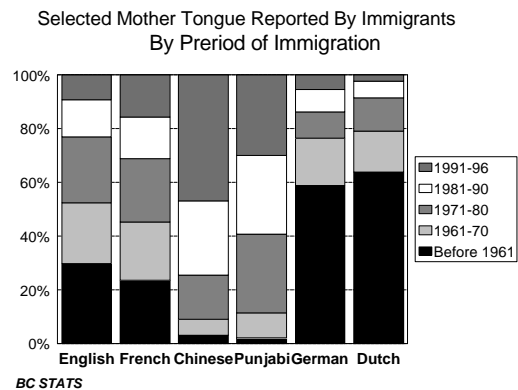
Also, due to the high inflow of Asian immigrants to the province over the past two decades, European mother tongue, while still the major group outside of English in 1996, has decreased in its proportion while Asian mother tongue increased when compared to the 1991 Census. Sixty-two per cent of the population who reported Chinese as their mother tongue were immigrants who arrived in Canada after 1981.

Home language refers to the language that is most often spoken at home by the individual at the time of census. Since it is common that some people speak English at home although their mother tongue is non-English, the number of people who reported English as their home language was higher than the number who reported English as mother tongue. This occurred commonly with immigrants who came to Canada at a very young age from non-English speaking countries and who later spoke mainly English at home while still having a non-English mother tongue from their parents. For example, there were 252,405 persons who

reported Chinese as their mother tongue while only 207,250 reported Chinese as their home language in 1996.



A comparison between the number of persons who reported a certain mother tongue and the number who reported the same language as their home language provides some indication about adoption of English as the main spoken language among various ethnic groups. Also, recent immigrants were more likely to report their mother tongue as their home language when compared to immigrants who have been in Canada for a longer time. As a result, due to the recent high inflow of Asian immigrants, the difference between the number who reported mother tongue and home language was smaller in Asian language groups than in the European language groups.



## B.C. Population By Mother Tongue By Type of Response - 1996

Mother Tongue	Single Response	Multiple Response	Mother Tongue	Single Response	Multiple Response
English	2,785,020	48,960	Russian	11,480	670
French	53,035	7,635	Serbian	3,305	105
Algonquin	-	-	Serbo-Croatian	2,535	20
Attikamek	-	-	Slovak	2,600	65
Blackfoot	115	-	Slovenian	1,460	30
Cree	1,330	400	Ukrainian	14,775	1,355
Malecite	-	-	Slavic languages, n.i.e.	1,710	100
Micmac	15	-	Latvian (Lettish)	630	25
Montagnais-Naskapi	-	-	Lithuanian	420	40
Ojibway	350	75	Estonian	1,340	25
Oji-Cree	-	-	Finnish	5,535	250
Algonquian languages, n.i.e.	25	40	Hungarian	11,220	570
Carrier	1,505	675	Greek	6,470	395
Chilcotin	590	110	Armenian	745	25
Chipewyan	15	10	Turkish	910	30
Dene	45	-	Turkic languages, n.i.e.	45	-
Dogrib	-	-	Amharic	785	10
Kutchin-Gwich'in (Loucheux)	10	-	Arabic	4,750	460
North Slave (Hare)	-	-	Hebrew	710	70
South Slave	130	20	Maltese	215	35
Athapaskan languages, n.i.e.	505	115	Somali	910	75
Haida	170	60	Tingringa	390	40
Mohawk	10	10	Semitic languages, n.i.e.	200	-
Iroquoian languages, n.i.e.	10	-	Bengali	635	25
Kutenai	105	15	Gujarati	6,035	725
Shuswap	550	170	Hindi	15,905	1,785
Thompson (Ntlakapamux)	410	190	Konkani	90	25
Salish languages, n.i.e.	1,535	310	Kurdish	480	70
Dakota/Sioux	65	10	Marathi	125	10
Tlingit	15	-	Pashto	255	-
Tsimshian	375	85	Persian (Farsi)	13,155	510
Gitksan	1,060	140	Punjabi	96,220	6,515
Nishga	675	115	Sindhi	1,660	155
Nootka	460	125	Sinhalese	430	30
Wakashan languages, n.i.e.	900	165	Urdu	2,365	225
Inuktitut (Eskimo)	45	-	Indo-Iranian languages, n.i.e.	595	60
Aboriginal languages, n.i.e.	455	130	Kannada	45	-
Italian	28,060	1,565	Malayalam	390	20
Portuguese	14,085	540	Tamil	1,135	110
Romanian	3,505	85	Telugu	50	-
Spanish	21,585	2,035	Dravidian languages, n.i.e.	-	-
Romance languages, n.i.e.	105	35	Japanese	17,270	565
German	88,400	3,770	Korean	16,690	300
Yiddish	705	90	Chinese	252,405	6,465
Dutch	28,475	1,140	Sino-Tibetan languages, n.i.e.	1,505	85
Flemish	520	20	Lao	990	55
Frisian	475	10	Thai	755	50
Danish	7,475	225	Khmer (Cambodian)	990	135
Icelandic	535	70	Vietnamese	16,985	880
Norwegian	3,980	315	Austro-Asiatic languages, n.i.e.	100	15
Swedish	3,605	425	Malay-Bahasa	1,550	135
Germanic languages, n.i.e.	690	160	Tagalog (Pilipino)	26,810	4,485
Gaelic languages	470	255	Malayo-Polynesian languages, n.i.e.	3,445	495
Welsh	355	80	Asiatic languages, n.i.e.	30	-
Celtic languages, n.i.e.	-	-	Swahili	250	70
Bulgarian	520	-	Bantu languages, n.i.e.	385	35
Byelorussian	15	-	Twi	265	15
Croatian	7,280	270	Niger-Congo languages, n.i.e.	430	35
Czech	5,960	170	African languages, n.i.e.	255	40
Macedonian	140	10	Creoles	280	80
Polish	18,325	605	Other languages	870	410

Prepared By: BC STATS

Source: Census 1996 - Statistics Canada

n.i.e. = Not Included Elsewhere