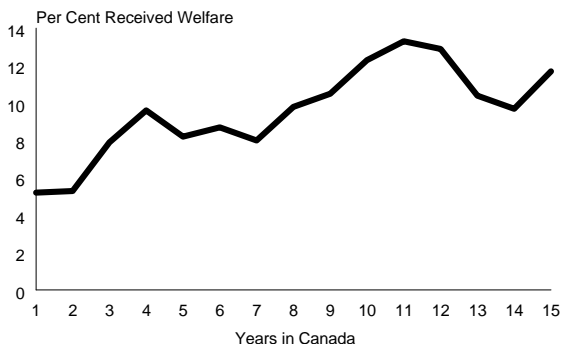


**Contrary to the general belief that immigrants are more likely to depend on welfare benefits during their initial settlement period, statistics show that immigrants who have been in Canada between 10 and 12 years are more likely to receive welfare benefits ...**

Approximately 8.4 per cent of the B.C. immigrant population (aged 15+) who came to Canada between 1980 and 1995 received welfare benefits during the 1995 tax year. This proportion was much lower than the 14.2 per cent observed for the immigrant population in the whole country. The average annual welfare income reported during 1995 was \$6,226 for immigrants in B.C. and \$7,216 for immigrants in Canada. Welfare programs are primarily administered under provincial or municipal jurisdictions and hence cross province comparisons are sometimes not valid. As a result, this article focuses mainly on characteristics of the portion of B.C. immigrant population who reported any welfare income for the 1995 tax year and who arrived in the country during the 1980-1995 period.

The degree to which immigrants depend on welfare benefits is affected by a number of factors. These may include the background of immigrants upon arrival in Canada and changes in their financial, family and health status while in Canada, as well as the state of the economy and job market. In general, immigrants who have been in Canada for about 10 to 12 years are relatively more likely to receive welfare benefits than those who have been in Canada for a shorter or longer period.

**Per Cent B.C. Immigrants on Welfare in 1995**  
By Year in Canada after Landing



**New Data Makes Studies of Mobility and Performance after Landing Possible**

New studies are made possible by using data available from the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) developed jointly by Statistics Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This database is created by combining income tax records from Revenue Canada and immigration records for a sample of immigrants who arrived in Canada between 1980 and 1995. By comparing an immigrant's province of initial landing and the province of residence as indicated on the same immigrant's tax return, interprovincial mobility of this immigrant can be determined. Also, indicators can be developed to examine certain characteristics of immigrants, such as their earnings, for a period after they arrived in Canada.

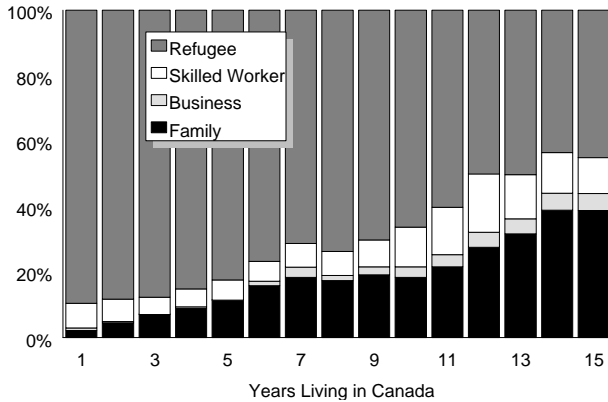
The sample in the database is large enough to be representative for the general immigrant population who landed between 1980 and 1995. For example, the actual number of immigrants aged 15 and older who landed in B.C. between 1980 and 1995 was about 347,789 persons. The sample contained within the IMDB was 194,565 immigrants, about 56% of the actual total landings. This is the fifth feature article utilizing the IMDB.

It is generally believed that immigrants in the refugee and designated classes tend to rely more on welfare benefits than those in other classes due to a possible lack of financial assets, supporting relatives or even job skills. However, examining how long the immigrant welfare recipients have been in Canada reveals an interesting fact about welfare usage by different classes of immigrants. While a very high percentage of refugee immigrants received welfare benefits initially after landing, refugee immigrants gradually became less dependent on welfare payments as they become more established in Canada.

On the other hand, for immigrants in other classes, especially family classes, the proportion who were welfare recipients has grown larger the longer they have been in Canada. This observation might be explained in part by the fact that all immigrants admitted under the family classes were required to be sponsored by family members already in Canada. These family members are responsible for giving financial support for a period of up to ten years to

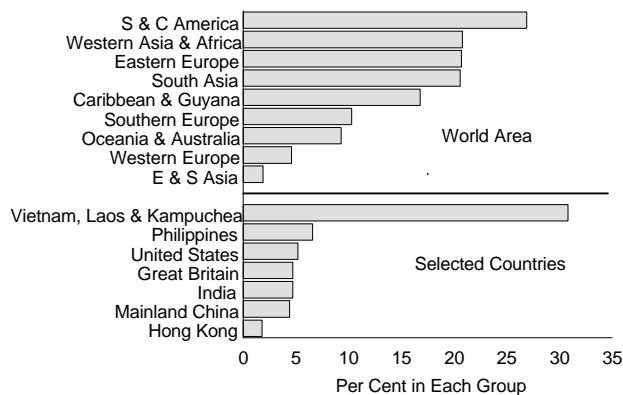
the relatives that they sponsored. During this period, welfare benefits received by the immigrants are accumulated as debt owed to the government. This might also explain the trend discussed earlier where a higher proportion of immigrants became welfare recipients 10 to 12 years after landing.

**B.C. Welfare Receiving Immigrants By Class By Landed Year**  
1995 Tax Year



Comparing the origins of immigrants indicates that a relatively higher proportion of immigrant welfare recipients came from Eastern Europe, Western Asia, Africa and South/Central America. These world areas have been the main sources of refugee and designated immigrants to Canada over the past few decades and hence represented a relatively higher proportion of welfare recipients. In particular, more than 30 per cent of immigrants from Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea reported having received welfare benefits in 1995.

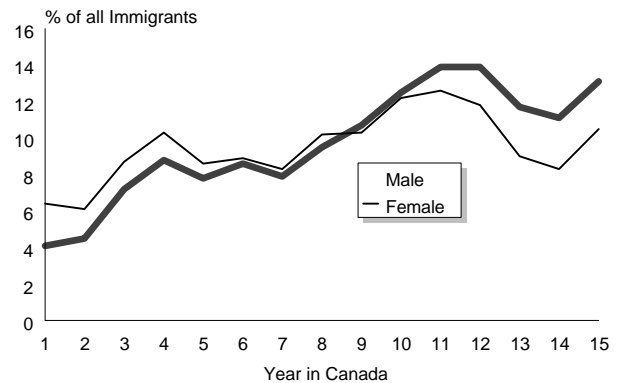
**B.C. Immigrant Welfare Recipients By Source**  
1995 Tax Year - Landed 1980-1995



Male immigrants are slightly more likely than their female counterparts to have received welfare benefits. In 1995, 52 per cent of immi-

grants who received welfare were men and 48 per cent women. However, female immigrants received a higher amount of welfare income than their male counterparts. Average annual welfare income reported was \$6,667 for female and \$5,823 for male immigrants. Also, relative to female immigrants, a higher proportion of male immigrants received welfare in their earlier years of settlement and lower levels later. During the study period, it was after living about eight years in Canada when female immigrants became more likely than male immigrants to be welfare recipients.

**Per Cent B.C. Immigrants on Welfare - 1995**  
By Gender By Years in Canada



Other characteristics that seem to relate to welfare usage include the education and English language ability of immigrants. Statistics show that immigrants who had lower education levels at the time of arrival tended to be more likely to receive welfare benefits. Compared to the overall average of 8.4 per cent of all immigrants who received welfare, 12.2 per cent of those who had less than 10 years of education received welfare. All other immigrants who had 12 years or higher education represented less than the overall average in the welfare recipient group. Also, comparing immigrants by official language ability, those who had no English language ability at time of landing tended to be more likely to receive welfare benefits.