

Feature Article: 20 YEARS OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS TO BC

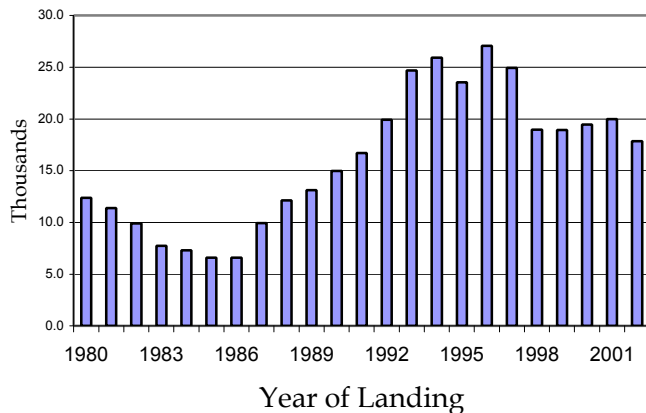
Jennifer Hansen, Population Analyst

Over the last two decades, the number of female immigrants to British Columbia has been generally increasing from a low of 6,610 persons in 1985, to a high of 27,057 persons in 1996. Figure 1 shows the trend of female immigration from 1980 to 2002.

Most female immigrants from Asia

Most female immigrants arrive from Asian countries. Over the 20 year time period, this trend has become more pronounced. Table 1 presents the top five areas of last residence for female immigrants who landed in Canada from 1981 to 1990 and from 1991 to 2001 and expressed an intention to settle in BC. In the earlier time period of 1981-1990, the majority of female immigrants were residing in Asian countries before arriving in Canada (62%). This proportion increased during the period 1991-2001 to 79%, while the proportion arriving from three of the other top five areas declined substantially. Only Africa retained its share at 3%.

Figure 1: Female Immigrants to British Columbia



Vancouver is the preferred destination

The intended destination of the vast majority of immigrants is Greater Vancouver. If anything, the status of Vancouver as a preferred destination has increased over time. The share of female immigrants to BC whose intended destination was Greater Vancouver increased by about 13 percentage points from 1981-1990 to 1991-2001.

This increased proportion, of course, came from the other potential destinations. Both Greater Victoria and other BC areas became less popular as immigrant destinations over the 20-year period.

Table 1: Top Five World Areas of Last Residence- Females Destined for BC

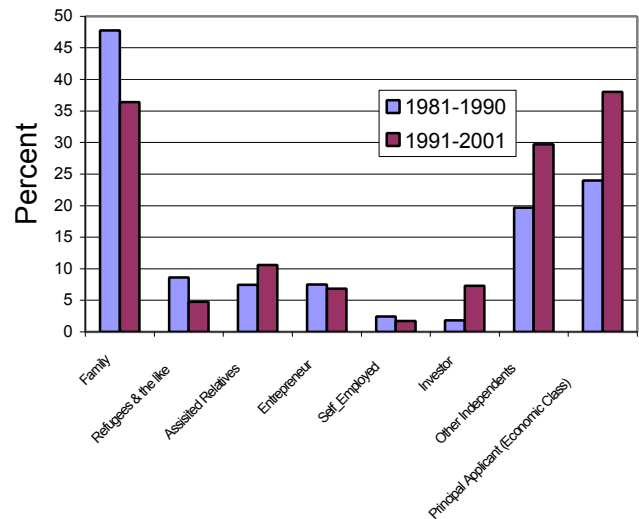
	1981-1990	1991-2001
Asia	62%	79%
Europe	21%	12%
N & C America	11%	5%
Africa	3%	3%
Oceania	3%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Increasing Proportion of Economic Class Immigrants

Figure 2 indicates that there have been some shifts in the class under which female immigrants have been accepted. Significantly fewer females were admitted under the Family Class in 1991-2001 than in the previous decade. The categories of Investor and Other Independents included a larger proportion of female immigrants in 1991-2001 than in 1981-1990. Furthermore, 38% of female principal applicants in 1991-2001 were admitted as economic immigrantsⁱ compared to 24% in 1981-1990.

Figure 2: Class of Female Immigrants to BC



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Feature Article: 20 YEARS OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS TO BC

More female immigrants intend to work

Table 2 demonstrates that 42% of females who landed in 1991-2001 stated an intention to work, up from 33% in 1981-1990. Numerous factors likely influence the intention to work. One of these factors may be educational qualifications. Female immigrants with higher levels of education seem more likely to express an intention to work upon arrival. In the period 1981-1990, 59% of immigrant females with a Bachelors degree intended to work, whereas only 28% of those with secondary schooling or less intended to work. During the period 1991-2001, 71% of female immigrants who landed with a Bachelors degree declared an intention to work compared with 31% of those with secondary education or less. The increase in the proportion of females intending to work may also be a function of the increasing numbers of females as principal applicants in the economic classes. Over the two time periods, an increased proportion of females indicated an intention to come to BC to study.

Table 2: Percentage of Female Immigrants by Work Intention

	1981-1990	1991-2001
Intend to Work (Employee)	23%	19%
Intend to Work (Occupation Unspecified)	9%	22%
Intend to Work (Self-Employed)	1%	1%
Student	18%	21%
Not Intend to Work	49%	36%

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Half of female immigrants need language training

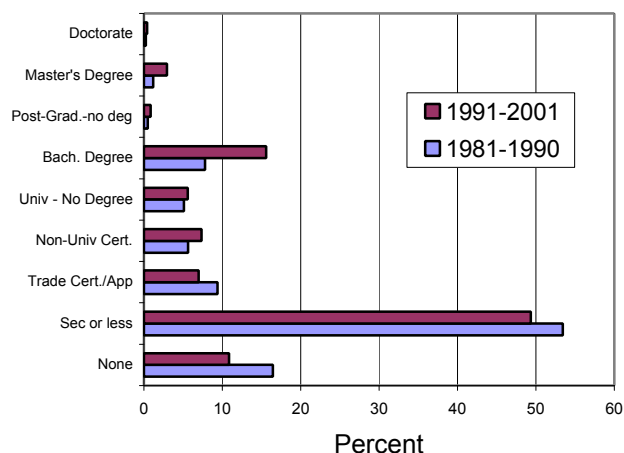
Language competency remains an important issue and the proportion of female immigrants who report no English skills has remained relatively stable over the past two decades. Half the female immigrants to BC in the 1981-1990 period possessed no language skills in English. Between 1991 and 2001, this percentage increased slightly, with 51% reporting no English language skills. Among immigrants, fewer females than males claimed some competency in English in both time periods. According to self-reports, 52% of males possessed language skills in English in both time

periods, compared to 49% and 50% of females in 1981-1990 and 1991-2001 respectively.

Education level of female immigrants increasing

The majority of females who arrived in Canada in the 1981-1990 period had secondary schooling or less. About 17% of immigrant females to BC reported no education at all. Females who landed in the 1991-2001 period demonstrated a dramatic increase in educational attainment among immigrants, particularly with regard to higher university degrees. During this later period, only 11% of females reported no education. Sixteen percent of immigrant females held a Bachelors degree, up from 8% during the earlier period. The proportion of females holding graduate degrees and certificates increased from about 1.5% in 1981-1990 to almost 3.5% in 1991-2001.

Figure 3: Educational Attainment of Female Immigrants To BC, 1981-1990 and 1991-2001



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Language training still an important issue

The number of female immigrants who report no English language ability will likely remain high if the number of Asian immigrants remains at the current level. The stock of immigrants who have minimal English skills will likely increase, with the addition of approximately 50% of new females immigrants each year to the population of previous immigrants still engaged in the process of improving language skills. As such, English language training continues to be very important, particularly in the Greater Vancouver area, where recent immigrants tend to settle. Language

Feature Article: 20 YEARS OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS TO BC

training is essential for female immigrants who have lower levels of education, since they are more likely to report weaker English language skills than their more highly educated counterpartsⁱⁱ. Language ability influences an immigrant's ability to settle in, and allows her greater access to opportunities and services in the community.

Earnings gap for full-time workers

The limitations that a lack of English ability imposes may be one of the reasons for a wage gap between immigrant and non-immigrant females in BC. In 2000, the average income of a non-immigrant female working full-time for a full year was \$36,679. In the same year, female immigrants to BC who arrived in the period 1991-2001 earned only 76% of this figure, or \$27,766. The picture was better for female immigrants who had been in Canada for a longer period of time. Those who arrived in 1981-1990 earned about 88% of the average for non-immigrant females.

Part time workers

The earnings gap between immigrant and non-immigrant females is less noticeable for part-time or part-year workers. Non-immigrant females in BC reported an average income of \$16,336 in 2000. Immigrant females who arrived in 1991-2001 earned only 81% of this figure in the same year. However, those who arrived earlier, in 1981-1990, exceeded the earnings of non-immigrant females in 2000. Part-time work may be less influenced by factors such as language ability, since many part-time opportunities do not require extensive language skills.

Table 3: Female Earnings in BC, 2000
Immigrant vs. Non-Immigrant Populations

	Full Time		Part Time	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Non Immigrant	\$36,679		\$16,336	
Arrived in 1981-1990			Arrived in 1991-2001	
	\$32,138	\$16,923	\$27,766	\$13,206
All Female Immigrants	\$32,138	\$16,923	\$27,766	\$13,206
From Asia	\$30,144	\$16,670	\$26,257	\$12,566
From UK	\$38,354	\$18,125	\$34,028	\$18,993

Source: 2001 Census

Asian immigrants earn less than immigrants from the UK

A comparison of the earnings of female immigrants from Asia and those from some English-speaking countries seems to support the idea that the earnings of immigrant females may be influenced by language ability. As well, settlement into the cultural landscape of BC is likely an easier task for immigrants from English-speaking countries than for those from Asia. For example, a comparison between Asia and the United Kingdom (Table 3) demonstrates that female immigrants from Asia, working full-time, earned considerably less than those from the United Kingdom.

Female immigrant earnings by age

Table 4 demonstrates the differential in earnings between immigrant and non-immigrant full-time workers by age. For all groups, the youngest workers earn the least. For non-immigrants, average earnings increase with increasing age. However, the earning pattern by age for immigrants is different. Immigrants aged 45 to 64 years from both the UK and Asia earned less than younger immigrants in the prime working ages of 25 to 44 years.

Table 4: Female Earnings (Full Time) in BC
Non-Immigrants vs. Immigrant by Age, Landing
Period and Area of Origin, 2000

		15-24 years	25-44 years	45-64 years
Non-Immigrant		\$19,949	\$36,703	\$40,059
From UK	1991-2001	\$19,645	\$36,382	\$31,043
	1981-1990	\$19,693	\$40,447	\$39,163
From Asia	1991-2001	\$18,215	\$27,336	\$25,690
	1981-1990	\$22,205	\$30,563	\$30,377

Source: 2001 Census

Lower earnings for most recent arrivals

Regardless of age, earnings vary with the amount of time an immigrant has been in Canada. Those immigrants who are longer-term residents report higher earnings than more recent arrivals.

Feature Article: 20 YEARS OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS TO BC

Wage gap between Asian immigrants and non-immigrants widens with age

There is little difference between the average earnings of most female immigrants from the United Kingdom and those of non-immigrant females in BC. In contrast, most immigrants from Asia earn substantially less than both non-immigrants and immigrants from the UK. The earnings of the youngest Asian immigrants most closely approximate the earnings of non-immigrants. However, the gap between non-immigrant and Asian immigrant earnings is substantial in the older age groups, with the most recent immigrants aged 25-44 years earning only 74% of the earnings of the corresponding non-immigrant population.

ⁱ Economic immigrants include those in the Assisted Relatives, Other Independents, Entrepreneur, Self-employed, or Investor Class.

ⁱⁱ Over the 20-year period, 15% of female immigrants with no education reported some English language ability whereas about 83% of females with a Bachelors degree claimed to be skilled in English.