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# Special Feature: Labour Market Characteristics of the Immigrant Population in BC

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Since January 2006, Statistics Canada has been collecting data through the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) on the labour market status of immigrants<sup>1</sup> in Canada. We now have one full year of annual data covering immigrants living in BC and Canada. This paper presents highlights from that data.

## The Immigrant Population in BC

According to the 2001 Census, more than one million immigrants were living in BC, and immigrants accounted for 26.1 percent of the total population. Among the provinces and territories BC had the second largest immigrant population—the vast majority of immigrants in BC live in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area. In the Vancouver CMA immigrants represented more than 37% of the population.

According to the 2006 LFS, immigrants accounted for 29 percent of BC population aged 15 and over. Out of the total population in BC, one in five (21%) were immigrants who had been in Canada for more than 10 years, while those landing in Canada between 5 and 10 years ago accounted for 5 percent of the BC population.

## Employment and Labour Force Participation

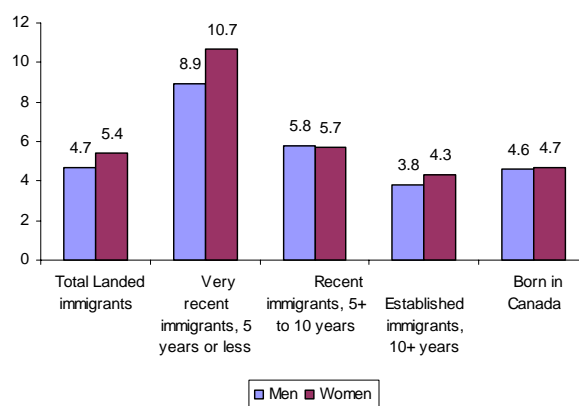
In a time when the British Columbia labour market has been performing extremely well, with an average unemployment rate of 4.8 percent in 2006,<sup>2</sup>

very recent immigrants (5 years or less) had an unemployment rate of 9.7 percent—more than double the rate of Canadian-born British Columbians. Established immigrants (immigrants

to Canada for more than 10 years) are finding work far more easily than very recent immigrants, with an incidence of unemployment of 4.0 percent, which is below the BC average.

While the unemployment rates for Canadian-born British Columbian men and women have been very similar in the last year (4.6 percent and 4.7 percent respectively), immigrant women appear to have more difficulty in finding work than immigrant men, with the exception of recent immigrant women (5 to 10 years) where the unemployment rate is very similar.

Immigrant women have higher unemployment rates than Immigrant men



Source: Labour Force Survey 2006

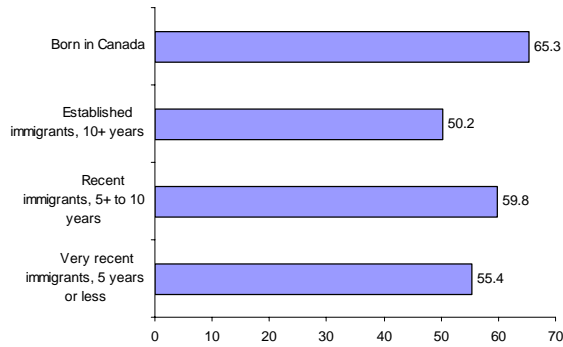
Overall, men have higher labour force participation rates than women (70.4 and 61.0 respectively), this holds true for immigrants and Canadian-born British Columbians. However, immigrant women have much lower labour force participation rates than their Canadian-born counterparts.

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<sup>1</sup> Immigrant population refers to people who were foreign born and have been permitted by immigration authorities to live in Canada permanently.

<sup>2</sup> Among the working aged population (15 plus).

**The labour force participation rates of immigrant women aged 15 plus are less than Canadian-born British Columbians**



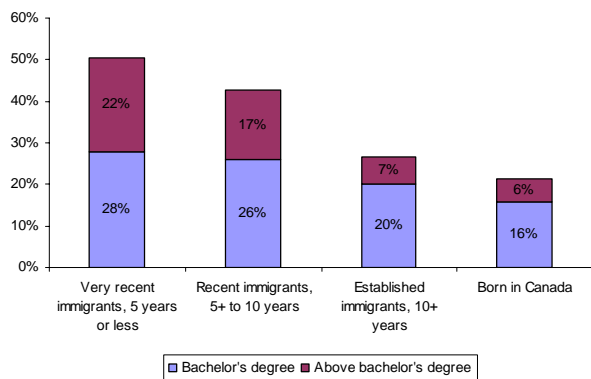
Source: Labour Force Survey 2006

**Education**

In 2006, 11 percent of British Columbians aged 25–54 did not have a high school diploma or a post-secondary credential. The proportion of the population without a high school diploma or a post-secondary credential is the same for immigrants and Canadian-born British Columbians.

On the other end of the spectrum, 25 percent of British Columbians had a university degree. On average, landed immigrants to BC are much more likely to have a university education. In 2006, very recent immigrants to BC were more than twice as likely as Canadian-born British Columbians to have a university degree—50 percent compared to 21 percent.

**Immigrants much more likely to have a university education**

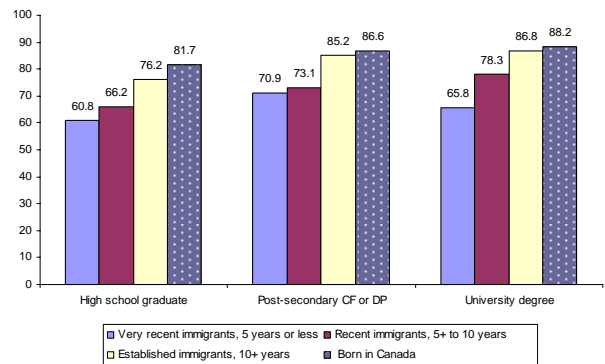


Source: Labour Force Survey 2006

In 2006, very recent immigrants (aged 25-54) experienced higher unemployment rates, regardless of their level of education. The unemployment rates for Canadian-born British Columbians decreased with education obtainment; however, for very recent immigrants unemployment rates remained unchanged. For example, very recent immigrants with a university education (bachelor's degree or higher) had an unemployment rate that was almost three times the unemployment rate of their Canadian-born counterparts—9.4 percent vs. 3.2 percent. On the positive side, established immigrants (10 years plus), with a university education had a lower unemployment rate than their Canadian-born counterparts—2.1 percent compared to 3.2 percent.

Regardless of education level, both very recent and recent immigrants had employment rates<sup>3</sup> lower than those for Canadian-born British Columbians. Very recent immigrants with a university degree experienced the largest gap (a 22.4 percentage point gap) between their employment rates compared to their Canadian-born counterparts.

**The gap in employment rates between Immigrants and Canadian-born British Columbians varies depending on education levels**



Source: Labour Force Survey 2006

**Youth**

Young immigrant women age 15 to 24 experienced more problems in finding work than their Canadian-

<sup>3</sup> The employment rate (or the employment/population ratio) is the number of persons employed expressed as a percentage of the population 25-54).

born counterparts. The unemployment rate for young women immigrants was 8.3 percent compared to 7.1 percent of their Canadian-born counterparts. Overall, young Canadian-born British Columbian women have higher labour force participation rates than their immigrant counterparts (70.8 and 61.0 respectively). On the other hand, young immigrant men had lower unemployment rates than their Canadian-born counterparts—7.6 percent compared to 9.4 percent.

### Occupations and Industry

Overall, the distribution of total landed immigrants across occupational groups is remarkably similar to the distribution of Canadian-born workers. Landed immigrants are more likely to work in natural and applied sciences and related occupations and occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities, and less likely to work in trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations.

When considering only very recent immigrants, there does appear to be an entry effect in which immigrants are less likely to obtain employment in high-skilled occupations. For example, very recent immigrants are only half as likely as other immigrants or Canadian-born workers to obtain employment in management occupations. Very recent immigrants are also considerably less likely to work in business, finance, and administrative occupations, and are more likely to work in sales and services and occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities.

The entry effects described above tend to disappear, but with varying amounts of time depending on the occupational group considered. For example, recent immigrants are equally as likely as Canadian-born workers to be employed in management occupations, but it is not until immigrants are established that they are equally as likely to be employed in health related occupations.

Although the overall distribution of landed immigrants across occupational groups appears quite similar to the distribution of Canadian-born workers, other factors (such as educational attainment) should also be considered when interpreting these findings.

### Labour Force Survey Immigration Questions

- (1) In what country was....born?
- (2) Is...now, or has he/she ever been, a landed immigrant in Canada?
- (3) In what year did...first become a landed immigrant?
- (4) In what month? (asked only if landed in previous 5 years)
- (5) In what country did...complete his/her highest degree, certificate or diploma?

### Definitions of immigrant types used by the Labour Force Survey

*Very recent immigrant:* individuals who have been landed immigrants to Canada for 5 years or less.

*Recent immigrant:* individuals who have been landed immigrants to Canada between 5 and 10 years.

*Established immigrant:* individuals who have been landed immigrants to Canada more than 10 years.

*Other:* Persons residing in Canada who were born outside of Canada and are not landed immigrants. Examples of people in this category include temporary foreign workers, live-in caregivers, Canadian citizens born outside Canada and those with student or working visas.

**Source:** The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market in 2006: First Results from Canada's Labour Force Survey, Catalogue no. 71-606-XIE2007001 ISSN: 1914-6299