

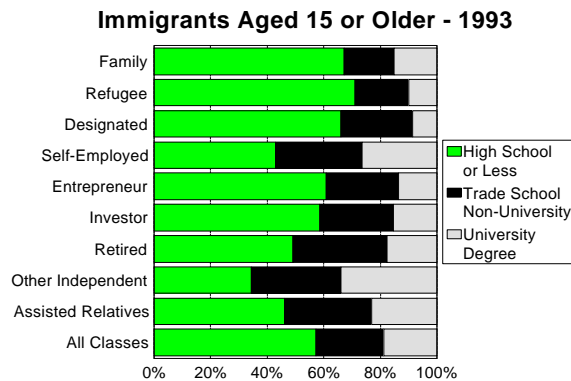
Special Feature: Recent Immigrants to British Columbia

Recent immigrants who come to British Columbia exhibit a wide diversity in their social/cultural background, economic, and demographic status. While these differences help to enhance our multicultural society, they affect many of our immigration related settlement policies and programs.

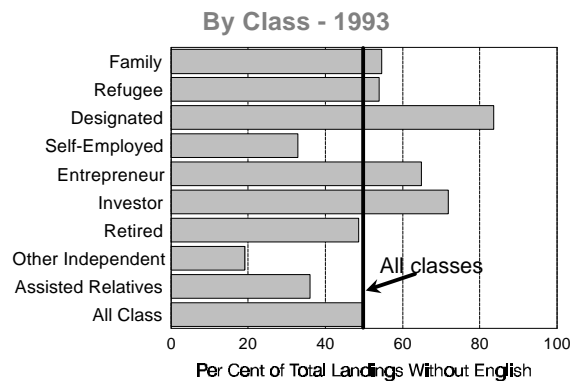
Relative to the national average, British Columbia has been receiving a higher proportion of immigrants in the independent economic classes¹, and fewer in the Family or Refugee classes. Also, British Columbia has long been the most popular destination for immigrants applying under the Retired Class. In 1994, more than half (53 per cent) of all British Columbia's landings were in either the business class or independent worker class, and 39 per cent in the Family or Refugee/Designated classes. On the national level, 46 per cent were in the economic classes, and 51 per cent were in Family or Refugee/Designated classes.

Applications for immigration to Canada under the economic classes are assessed under a point system which considers the applicant's ability to adapt and contribute to Canadian society, whereas applications under Family or Refugee classes are assessed under different criteria. As a result, the average level of education qualification tends to be higher for those who come to B.C. under the economic classes relative to those who come under the Family/Refugee classes. In 1993, 67 per cent of those who came under Family/Refugee classes reported secondary or less education, compared to 48 per cent of those who came under the economic classes. Furthermore, 23 per cent of the economic immigrants possessed an university degree compared to 15 per cent of the Family/Refugee immigrants.

B.C. Immigration By Class By Education



B.C. Immigrants English Language Ability



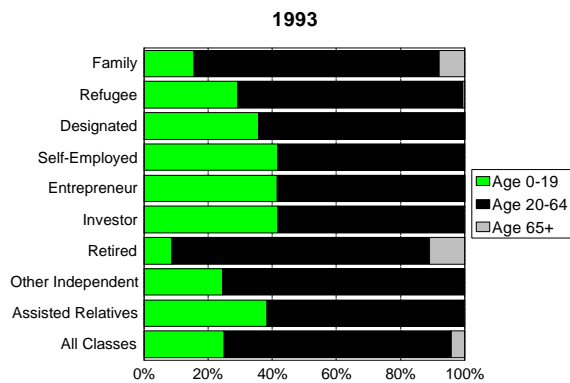
English language proficiency is another factor that affects the immigrant's ability to integrate into Canadian society, as well as affecting the costs of immigrant settlement programs. In

¹ Economic classes include immigrants in the Entrepreneur, Investor, Self-employed, Assisted Relatives, and Other Independent classes. Also see the Glossary Section at the end of this Highlights for more information.

1993, half of the newcomers to B.C. were unable to speak English at the time of landing. English language ability also varied between immigrants in different classes. Immigrants in the Designated and Convention Refugee classes reported the lowest level of English language proficiency, while those in the Other Independent Class reported the highest. Investor and Entrepreneur immigrants, although assessed under a selection system, reported a lower than average level of English language ability. This may be a result of the relatively higher number of dependents without English language ability who accompany the Investor or Entrepreneur immigrant.

The high proportion of B.C. immigrants who were unable to speak English may also be due to the relative high share of immigrants from non-English speaking countries. Over the last two decades, the major source of immigrants to B.C. and Canada have shifted from the USA and European countries to Asian countries. In 1994, 79 per cent of all B.C. landings came from Asia. Also, the top five immigrant source countries, which made up 69 per cent of B.C. landings, were all Asian countries.

B.C. Immigration By Class By Age



Another element that affects provincial programs is the age of immigrants. The age of immigrants will affect the demand for a number of provincial programs, in particular education and health care services. However, statistics show that the proportion of immigrants of working age was higher than those who were of school or retirement ages. In 1993, 71 per cent of all B.C. landings were between 20 and 64 years of age. Only 25 per cent were under the age of 20, and 4 per cent were 65 and older. Even in the Retired

Class, which should include a relatively higher proportion of immigrants aged 65 and over, only 11 per cent of immigrants were actually older than the age of 65 due to the fact that accompanying family members tended to be younger than 65.

The new five year immigration plan announced by the federal government in November 1994 indicated that the total immigration level to Canada in 1995 will drop to approximately 190,000 to 215,000 persons. Total landings in the Family and economic classes will fall within the range of 166,000 to 183,000 persons, whereas total landings in the Refugee Class will increase slightly to the range of 24,000 to 32,000 persons. As a result, it is expected that total landing in B.C. for 1995 will also decrease to approximately 36,000 persons, representing about 18 per cent of the national total. However, the distribution of B.C. immigrants by class is not expected to change significantly as a result of this newly announced plan. For 1995, it is anticipated that the distribution of B.C. landings by class will be approximately 58 per cent for the economic classes, 38 per cent for the Family Class, and 4 per cent for Refugee/Designated classes. In the future, it is expected the current distribution in immigrant classes will be maintained since family reunification, humanitarian commitment, and economic development have always been the major themes in the development of Canadian immigration policies.