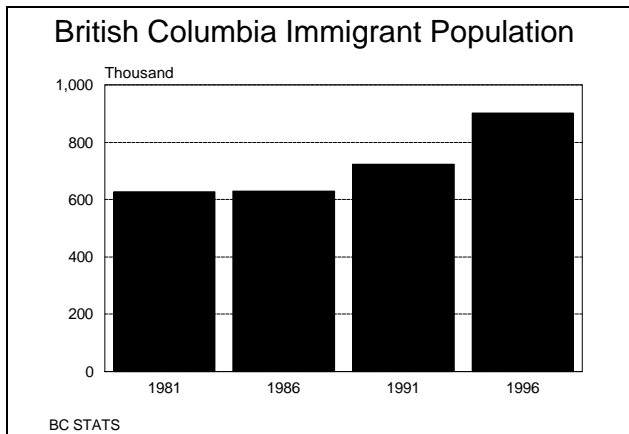


Special Feature: B.C. Immigrant Population, Ethnicity and Language

Recently released data from the 1996 Census provides new information about the immigrant population living in the province. This newly available information is particularly relevant to the analysis of the social, economic and demographic characteristics of recent immigrants. For example, about one in every four of the immigrants living in B.C. as of the 1996 Census arrived in Canada between 1991 and 1996. The high level of immigration from Asian countries has shifted the ethnic mosaic of the B.C. population. The result is that a higher proportion of the population now has a mother tongue other than English. This feature article will summarize some of this information now available from the 1996 Census.

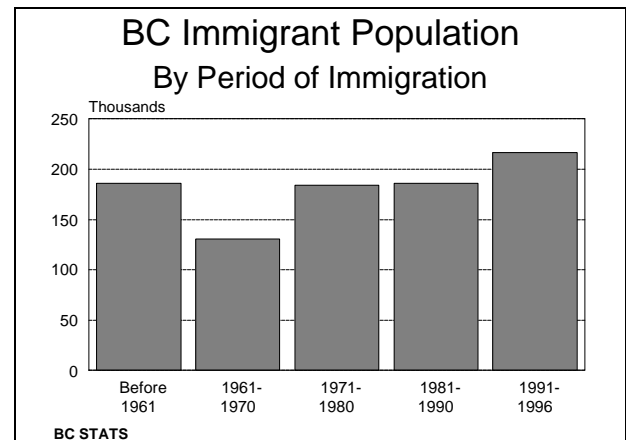
Immigrant Population

Immigrant population refers to the population that are largely foreign born and granted landed immigrant status by the Canadian immigration authorities. The proportion of the BC immigrant population has increased rapidly due to the high inflow of immigrants in the last few years. Since 1993, BC has become the second most popular province of destination for Canadian immigrants. During the 1991-96 period, BC received more than a quarter million immigrants. Net international migration is now the most important contributor to the province's population growth.



The number of immigrants living in BC as of the 1996 Census was 903,190 persons, which represented about one-quarter of the overall population of the province. This represented an increase of 25 per cent from the 723,170 immigrants living in the province in 1991, or about 22 per cent of the overall population.

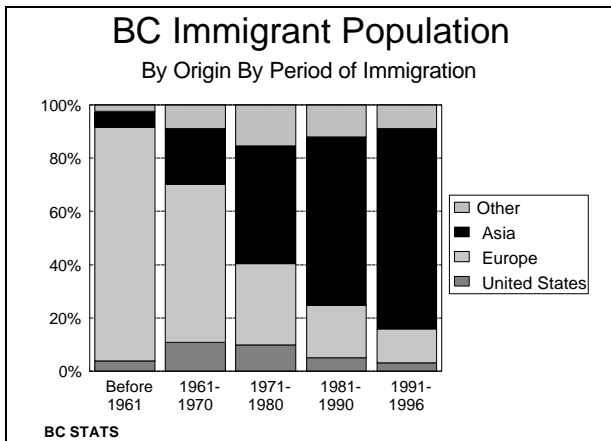
In 1996, BC's share of the total immigrant population of Canada was 18 per cent, much higher than the provincial population share of 13 per cent. At 25 per cent, BC had the fastest immigrant population growth rate in Canada, followed by Ontario with a 15 per cent increase between the two censuses. The overall growth in immigrant population in Canada was also 15 per cent.



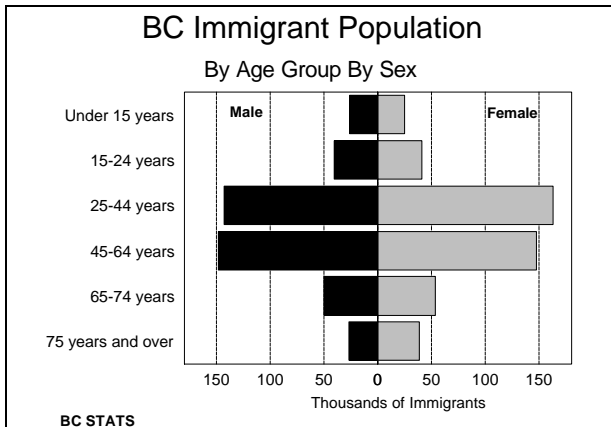
Due to the current high inflow of immigrants to the province, recent immigrants landed between 1991 and 1996 represented the largest share (24 per cent) of the overall BC immigrant population. The group of immigrants who arrived prior to 1961 has decreased in proportion from 30 per cent in 1991 to 21 per cent in 1996. Immigrants landed after 1971 made up almost two-thirds of the overall immigrant population in 1996.

More than 70 per cent (633,745) of BC's immigrants live in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) where immigrants made up more than one-third of the regional population. For immigrants who lived within the Vancouver CMA during the 1996 Census,

13.6 per cent arrived in Canada prior to 1961, 32.9 per cent arrived between 1961 and 1980, and 53.5 per cent came after 1980.



Most immigrants are aged 25 to 64, accounting for two-thirds of the overall immigrant population. Male immigrants, accounting for 48 per cent of the total, were slightly fewer than female immigrants. This is primarily due to the fact that there has been generally more female immigrants coming to BC each year.

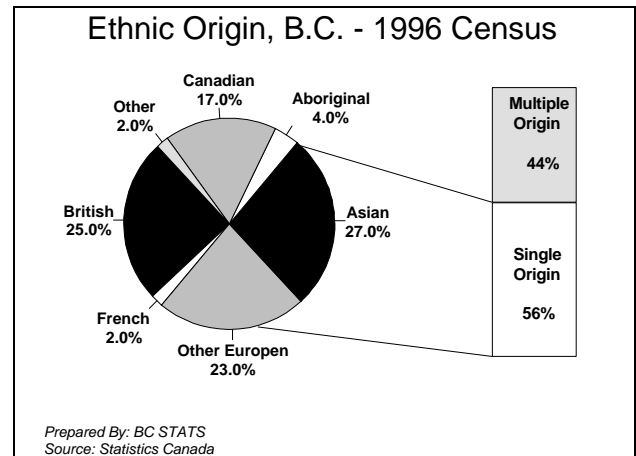


Ethnic Origin of B.C. Population

Ethnic origin, as defined in the Census, refers to the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which an individual's ancestors belonged. It pertains to the ancestral "roots" or origins of the population, and should not be confused with place of birth, citizenship or nationality. The ethnic mosaic of BC's immigrant

population continues to shift as the share of the immigrant population who were European born dropped from 49.5 per cent in 1991 to 40.1 per cent in 1996, while those who were Asian born increased from 33.8 to 44.4 per cent. However, immigrants who were born in the United Kingdom still represented the largest single group (16.6%) of BC immigrants, followed by Hong Kong (9.9%), China (8.7%), India (8.2%), and the United States (6.1%).

Data from the 1996 Census indicated that 56 per cent of the B.C. population belonged to a single ethnic origin and 44 per cent belonged to more than one ethnic origin (multiple origins). This represented 2,064,200 and 1,625,555 British Columbians, respectively.

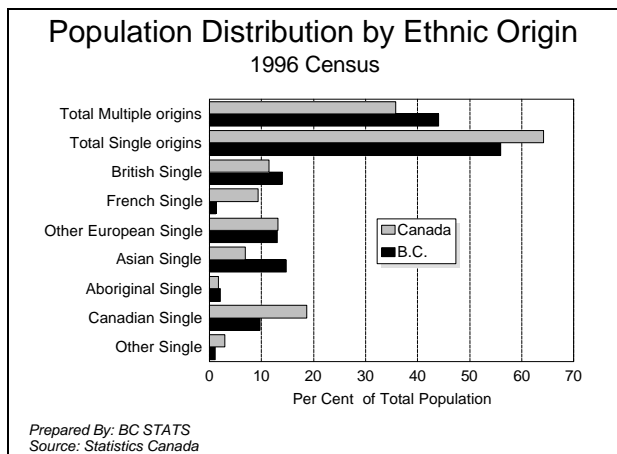


While British origin still led the other ethnic groups, representing 25 per cent of the total population who reported a single ethnic origin, the number of persons who reported a single British origin has decreased significantly between the 1991 and the 1996 Census. This was largely a result of the increase in the number of people choosing Canadian as their ethnic origin. This increase was due mainly to a modification¹ of the 1996 Census form where, for the first time, "Canadian" was included as an example for the different choices of ethnic origin.

This modification encouraged some people to choose Canadian as their ethnic origin in

¹ See Statistics Canada publication Cat. No. 11-001E, Feb 17/98 for a description of the modification.

1996, even though they may have reported a different ethnic origin in past censuses. It is believed that a high percentage of these respondents would have reported British as their ethnic origin in past censuses. In 1991, 812,470 persons living in B.C. reported a single British origin, whereas in 1996 only 515,495 persons did so. On the other hand, there were 357,280 persons (297,960 more than in 1991) who reported a single Canadian origin in the 1996 Census, which represented 17 per cent of all British Columbians who reported a single ethnic origin.

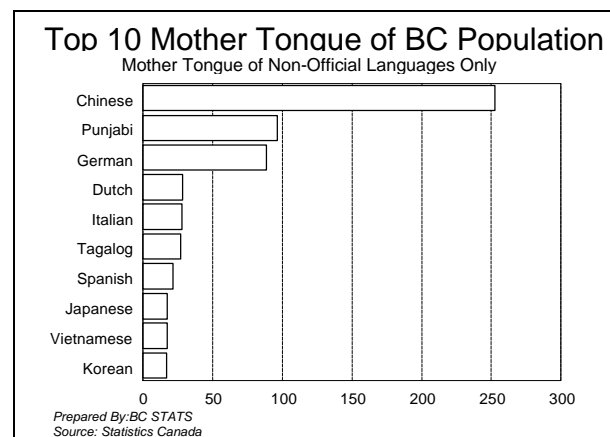


After British and Canadian, Chinese was the next largest ethnic group representing 14 per cent of the B.C. population with a single origin, followed by German and East Indian with six per cent each. Aboriginal origin accounted for four per cent of all the single origin group.

Compared to the overall Canadian population distribution by ethnic group, B.C. has a higher proportion of its population who belonged to more than one ethnic origin. Also, B.C. had a higher proportion who reported having a single ethnic origin of British or Asian, and a lower proportion who reported French or Canadian. B.C. had a slightly higher proportion who belonged to the Aboriginal group than the national average.

Mother Tongue & Home Language

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.

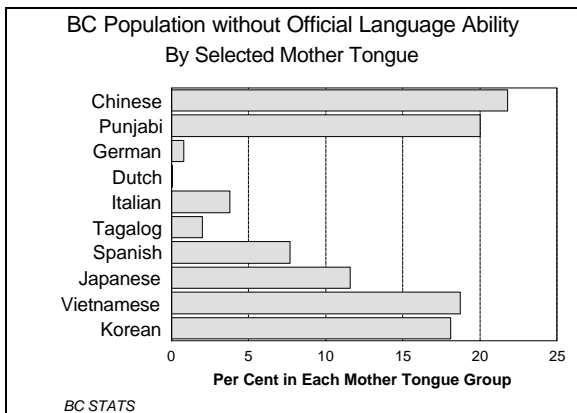
About 12 per cent of the BC population who reported a single non-official mother tongue have neither English nor French language ability. This ratio is even higher for people with Chinese or Punjabi mother tongue. Approximately 20 per cent of the people with either Chinese or Punjabi mother tongue had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

Top 10 Single Response Ethnic Origins for B.C.

Ethnic Origin	1996			1991			1986		
	Number	% of Total Pop.	% of Single	Number	% of Total Pop.	% of Single	Number	% of Total Pop.	% of Single
British	515,500	14%	25%	812,470	25%	42%	871,075	31%	49%
Canadian	357,280	10%	17%	30,320	1%	2%	14,640	1%	1%
Chinese	280,585	8%	14%	181,185	6%	9%	112,605	4%	6%
German	130,330	4%	6%	156,635	5%	8%	148,280	5%	8%
East Indian	120,645	3%	6%	89,265	3%	5%	60,045	2%	3%
Aboriginal	76,430	2%	4%	74,420	2%	4%	61,125	2%	3%
Dutch	60,765	2%	3%	66,525	2%	3%	62,945	2%	4%
French	47,910	1%	2%	68,795	2%	4%	68,965	2%	4%
Italian	46,525	1%	2%	49,265	2%	3%	46,755	2%	3%
Ukrainian	40,650	1%	2%	52,760	2%	3%	48,195	2%	3%
Total Single	2,064,200	56%	100%	1,952,855	60%	100%	1,759,810	62%	100%
Total Pop	3,689,755	100%		3,247,505	100%		2,849,585	100%	

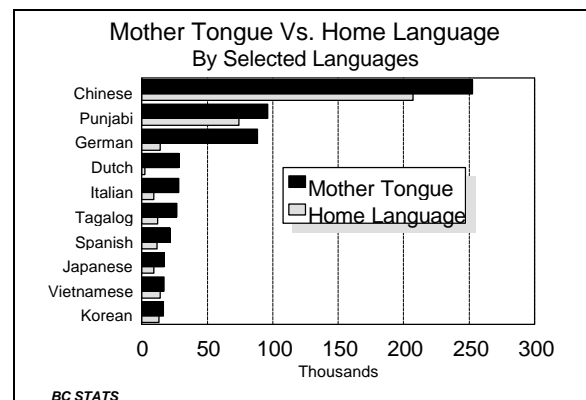
Source: Statistics Canada 1986, 1991 & 1996 Censuses

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.

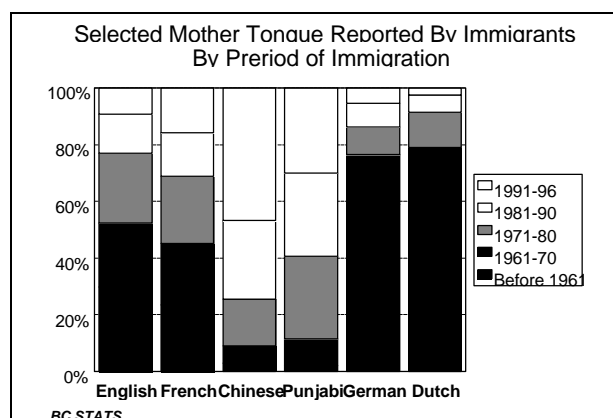


Also, due to the high inflow of Asian immigrants to the province over the past two decades, European mother tongues, while still one of the major groups outside of English in 1996, have decreased in its proportion while Asian mother tongues increased when compared to the 1991 Census. Sixty-two per cent 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.



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