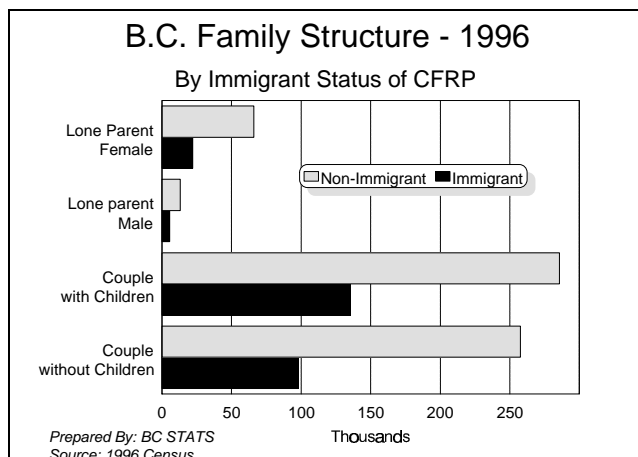
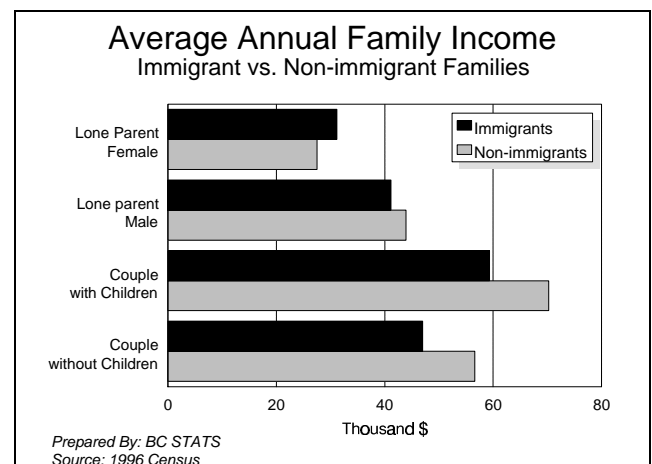


## Family and Income Characteristics of BC's Immigrant Population

According to the 1996 Census, there were 1,008,440 families in British Columbia. In approximately 32 per cent of families (317,400) the census family reference person was an immigrant. A census family reference person (CFRP) is the person who answered the census questions on behalf of the rest of his/her family member(s), and who is usually the head of the family. For simplicity, the term *"Immigrant Families"* in this article refers to census families having an immigrant CFRP. However, this does not necessarily mean that all members of the family are immigrants.

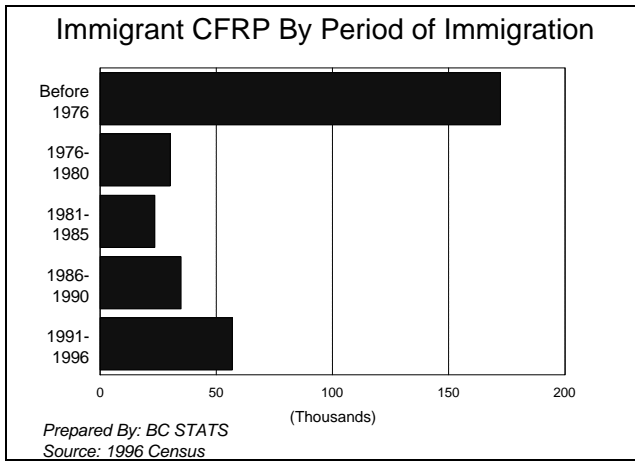
Due to the high inflow of immigrants to B.C. over the last decade, the number of immigrant families has increased from 260,810 in 1991 to 317,400 in 1996. Of those immigrant families in 1996, about 12 per cent were lone parent families, up from the 10 per cent observed in 1991. However, this was relatively low when compared to the 15 per cent observed in non-immigrant families in 1996. Male lone parent represented 18 per cent of all immigrant families with a lone parent. This was slightly higher than the 17 per cent observed in their non-immigrant counterpart. Of immigrant families with two spouses, 59 per cent have children and 41 per cent are without children. This difference was smaller in non-immigrant families in which 52 per cent had children and 48 per cent had no children living with them.

A significantly higher proportion of immigrant families belonged to the low income group<sup>1</sup> when compared with the non-immigrant counterpart. In 1996, 21 per cent of immigrant families were in the low income group, compared to only 12 per cent of non-immigrant families. In 1996, average annual family income was \$51,839 for immigrant families and \$58,761 for non-immigrant families. Average government transfer payments for immigrant CFRP was \$5,116, about 10 per cent lower than the \$5,588 received by non-immigrant CFRP. One of the reasons for this difference could be the fact that, due to recent immigrants' short residence and work history in Canada, a higher proportion did not qualify for certain transfer payments such as Employment Insurance, Canadian Pension Plan, and Old Age Security.

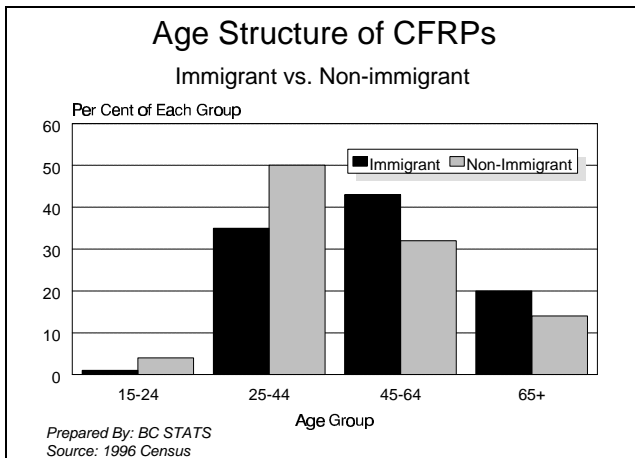


More than half of the immigrant CFRPs arrived in Canada prior to 1976. However, of those who came after 1976, a majority immigrated between 1991 and 1996. A high percentage of earlier immigrant CFRPs were born in Europe or the United States, whereas a majority of those who came during the later period were born in Asia.

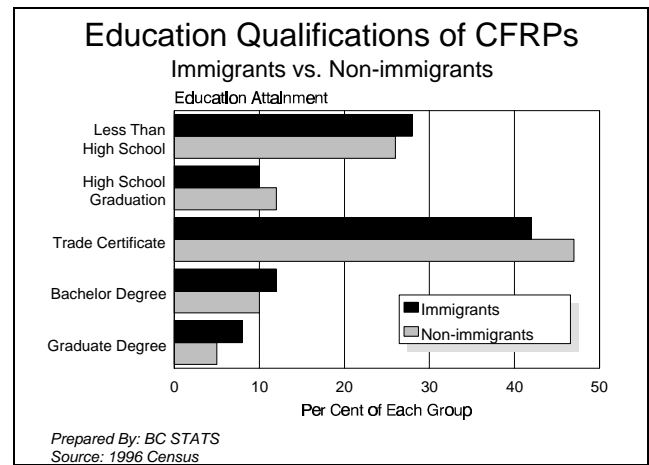
<sup>1</sup> Low income group are economic families or unattached individuals in a given classification below the low income cut-offs which is a function of family size and degree of urbanization where the families or individuals resided. For details see Statistics Canada 1996 Census Dictionary Cat. No. 92-351-XPE.



Age structure of immigrant CFRPs differed considerably from their non-immigrant counterpart. A higher percentage of the non-immigrant CFRPs were in the younger age groups while a relatively higher proportion of immigrant CFRPs were in the older age groups. In 1996, only one per cent of the immigrant CFRPs were in the 15-24 age group and about 20 per cent in the 65+ age group, whereas 4 per cent of the non-immigrant CFRPs were in the 15-24 group and 14 per cent in the 65+ group.



Noticeable differences in education attainment were also observed between immigrant and non-immigrant CFRPs. Of immigrant CFRPs aged 25 or older, a relatively higher proportion had less than high school graduation and also a higher proportion had an university degree when compared to their non-immigrant counterpart. On the other hand, a slightly higher proportion of non-immigrant CFRPs had trade school or other non-university certificate.



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