

National Household Survey

September 18, 2013

Spotlight on Immigrants in Alberta

Following our previous 2011 Highlights on the first release of the National Household Survey (NHS), this analytical article provides more in-depth examination of the NHS data focusing specifically on immigration, place of birth, citizenship and language in Alberta.

Almost one out of five Albertans was an immigrant

According to the 2011 NHS, about 18% (645,000) of all Albertans were immigrants, just under the national average of 20%. These figures represent all immigrants (those who were foreign-born), regardless of when they arrived. Some of these individuals came to Canada many years ago, while others arrived more recently. Among the provinces, Alberta ranked third after Ontario and British Columbia in terms of the share of immigrants of the total population (Figure 1), even though Alberta had the fourth largest population in the nation. In 2011, Alberta was home to about 9.5% of the nation's 6.8 million immigrants.

Recent immigrants represent those who arrived between 2006 and 2011. Over 144,000 recent immigrants reside in Alberta, representing 12% of Canada's overall immigrants. Ontario became home to the largest share of Canada's recent immigrants (43%), followed by Quebec (19%) and British Columbia (16%).

Asia was the predominant place of birth of recent immigrants

Almost six out of ten Albertans who immigrated to Canada during the past five years were born in Asia (Figure 2). More specifically, in the Asian immigrant category, the Philippines (35%) and India (20%) were major origin countries followed by China (13%). The next top countries of birth were the United Kingdom, United States, Pakistan, Mexico, Nigeria and Colombia.

The top birth places of immigrants to Canada have shifted over time. Prior to 1991, European immigrants represented the largest group of immigrants in the country and the province. Now, the top birth place for immigrants is Asia and the Middle East, accounting for 57% of total immigrants in Canada and 59% in Alberta. The 2011 NHS showed that individuals born in Africa accounted for 5% of immigrants who arrived in Canada prior to 1991 and this percentage has increased to 12% in the past five years.

Immigrant population:

Persons who are, or have ever been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities.

Data Quality:

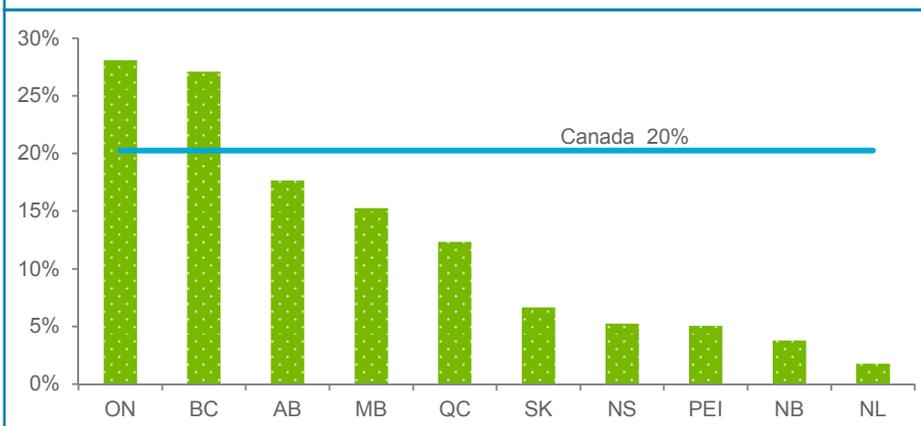
All data in this publication refer to people residing in private households. The NHS estimates for citizenship and immigration at the national level are comparable to the 2006 and 2001 censuses; however, a non-response bias does exist for certain populations and for certain geographic areas. For instance, the NHS estimate for the population born in the Philippines is overestimated at a national level, while for Pakistan it is underestimated. Also respondents living on Indian reserves in Canada were not asked the questions on citizenship, landed immigrant status and year of immigration.

Data Quality Indicators:

Two data quality indicators are presented: the global non-response rate and the imputation rate by question. The global non-response rate is the key criterion that determines whether or not the NHS results will be released for a given geographic areas.

See the National [Household Survey User Guide](#) for more information.

Figure 1: Immigrants as Share of Population, Provinces, 2011



Most immigrants were in the core working-age group

For many years, Canada has both targeted and received immigrants who belong in the working age group, between 25-44 years of age (Figure 3). The age pattern of immigrants to Canada is relatively stable across time periods and geographic regions (Figure 3). Regardless of the particular period of immigration, most immigrants (about 41%) were between the ages of 25 and 44 when they arrived in Canada. Alberta tended to have a slightly higher share of the working age (25 to 44 years) and younger children (aged 14 and under) compared to Canada, Ontario and British Columbia (BC). In contrast, Alberta had a relatively smaller share of older immigrants (aged 45 and over) while BC had a slightly larger proportion. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the higher share of immigrants to BC is due in part to the family unification category. Canada and Alberta's need for individuals to participate in the labour market and economy continue to be a strong driver of the country's immigration policy.

Recent immigrants disproportionately in the core working ages

When focusing on immigrants who arrived just 5 years prior of responding to the NHS, the vast majority of recent immigrants in Alberta were in the core working age group of 25-54 (Figure 4). For every 100 recent immigrants, about 60 were aged 25 to 54 years. In comparison, 43% of the Canadian-born population were in this age group. For the younger population, both immigrants and non-immigrants shared very similar proportions. However, the size of the older non-immigrant population (aged 55 years and over) has tripled that of immigrants (20% vs. 6%).

Most immigrants held a Canadian citizenship

The longer an immigrant lived in Canada, the more likely they were to be Canadian citizens. Among those who were eligible¹

¹ To become Canadian citizens, adult immigrants must have resided in Canada for at least three years in the past four years before applying. Children under the age of 18 do not need to meet this residence requirement.

Figure 2: Region of Birth of Immigrants by Period of Immigration, Alberta

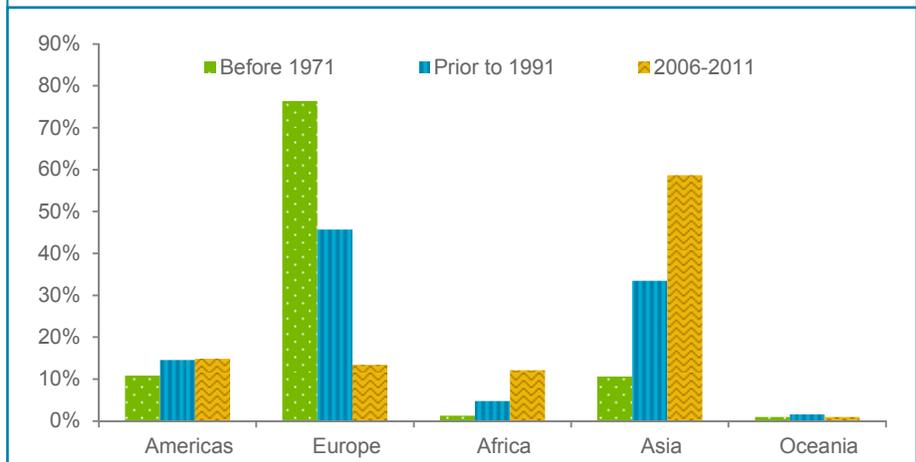


Figure 3: Distribution of Immigrants by Age at Immigration, Selected Regions, 2011

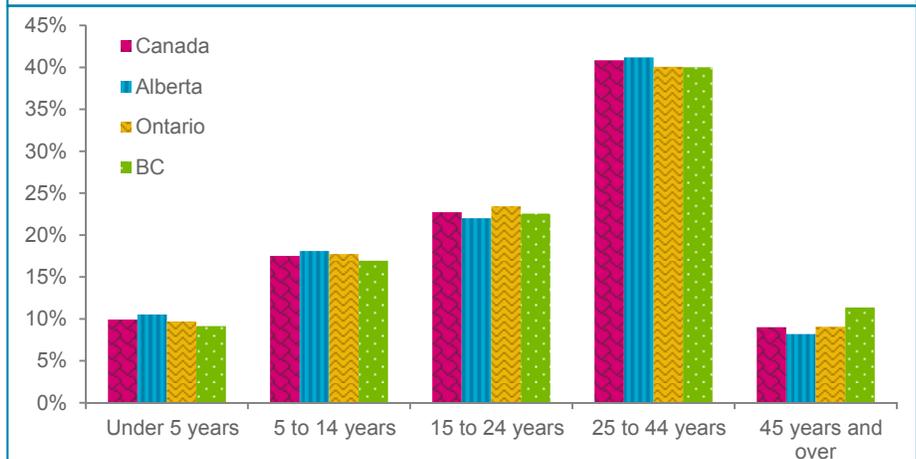
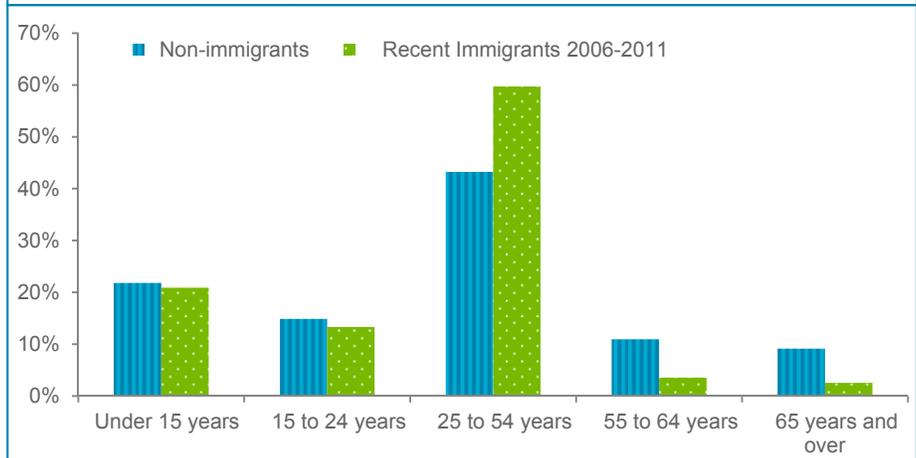


Figure 4: Distribution of Non-Immigrants and Recent Immigrants by Age Group, Alberta, 2011



in 2011, 84% of immigrants in Alberta held a Canadian citizenship. Among those, 92% of Albertans who had immigrated before 1971 held Canadian citizenship². In contrast, only about 43% of the eligible immigrants who arrived between 2006 to 2007 held Canadian citizenship. Recent immigrants were more likely to hold multiple citizenship. Only 1% of Canadian citizens by birth held multiple citizenship compared to 14% of Canadian citizens by naturalization. The rate was even higher (24%) for those who became naturalized Canadian citizens in 2006-2007.

Among immigrants holding multiple citizenship, the top five countries of origin included the United Kingdom, United States, Pakistan, Poland and the Philippines.

The distributions of generation status varied across provinces

Generation status refers to whether or not an individual and/or their parents were born in Canada. It identifies persons as being first generation (both individuals and their parents are foreign born), second generation (individuals who themselves are born in Canada and have at least one parent born outside Canada) or third generation (persons who are born in Canada with both parents also being born in Canada).

The share of the population in each generation depends on immigration flows to the different provinces, especially in the last few decades. For example, the Atlantic Provinces have received relatively few immigrants (both historically and recently), and so the vast majority of their population were third generation or greater in 2011 (around 90%). Ontario and British Columbia, where more than half of Canada's immigrants resided, had the largest portion of first generation individuals (30% for Ontario and 29% for BC). Third generation immigrants accounted for about 47% in each of the two provinces. Alberta and the rest of Prairie Provinces had about 60% of their population as third generation.

The majority of the first generation Albertans (immigrants) knew English (95%) and spoke non-official languages (70%) as their mother tongue³. The NHS showed that almost 99% of second generation immigrants spoke English as official language and only 17% could speak other foreign languages. In other words, a large proportion of the children of immigrants reported English as their mother tongue, which was different than their parents' mother tongue.

Most immigrants spoke English

The vast majority of immigrants in Alberta (95%) knew at least one official language, a level similar to the national average. Of the Albertan immigrants with knowledge of an official language, 89% spoke English only, compared to 77% for Canada. Among recent immigrants, 88% of those immigrants to Alberta had knowledge of English only.

Among recent immigrants in Alberta whose mother tongue was a non-official language, 92% could speak English. The most commonly used mother tongue was Chinese.

Majority of immigrants lived in Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan centres

An overwhelming majority of immigrants chose to live in the Calgary and Edmonton Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA). The 2011 NHS estimated that 85% of immigrants in Alberta resided in Calgary (49%) and Edmonton (36%) CMAs. In comparison, 66% of Alberta's overall population lived in those two CMAs. Recent immigrants were also more likely to be living in the two major centres (84%). Following Calgary and Edmonton CMAs, the Census Agglomeration (CA) of Wood Buffalo had the next highest number of recent immigrants (5%) in Alberta.

With a 2011 NHS estimate of more than 300,000, the Calgary CMA had a larger immigrant population than the Edmonton CMA. Calgary had 35% more immigrants and 3% fewer non-immigrants than

About the NHS

During the Spring/Summer of 2011, the National Household Survey collected social and economic information from a random sample of 4.5 million Canadian households. Participation in the survey was voluntary.

As with any voluntary survey, a non-response may be a significant source of error in the survey results. The risk of non-response bias rises rapidly as response rate drops, because non respondents tend to have different characteristics than the respondents, thus compromising the ability of the survey results to represent the true population.

Despite content similarities with previous long form censuses and the NHS, comparability may be compromised. Issues with data quality will be especially more prevalent for small populations (i.e. finer levels of geography and/or specific subgroups).

Users are advised to consult the reference materials provided by Statistics Canada to ensure appropriate use and analyses of NHS data.

See the [National Household Survey User Guide](#) for more information.

² Those immigrants who landed between 2008 and 2011 were not eligible to apply for Canadian citizenship because of the residency requirement.

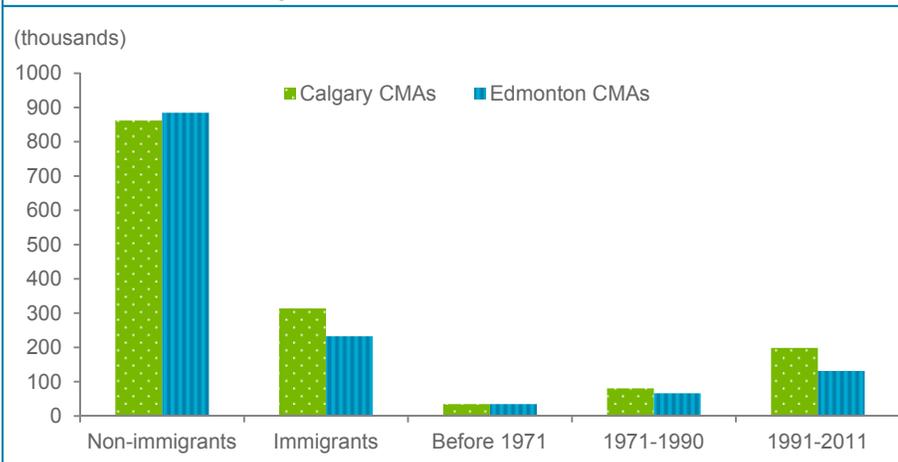
³ Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual on May 10, 2011.

Edmonton, despite both CMAs having similar population sizes. The significant difference in immigrant populations in Calgary and Edmonton was mainly driven by immigrants who landed in Canada over the last two decades (Figure 5).

Over half of immigrants in Alberta's CMAs were born in Asia

Both Calgary and Edmonton had very similar distributions of immigrants in terms of region of birth. For example, more than 50% of immigrants were born in Asia (including the Middle East) in each of the CMAs (Table 1). The Philippines, India and China were the top three countries of birth in both CMAs, followed by the United Kingdom. The second largest group was people from Europe followed by the Americas. However, Lethbridge, the city that had the next largest number of immigrants, had a different composition with European-born immigrants accounting for almost 50% of its total, followed by immigrants who were born in the Americas. The National Household Survey is one of the richest sources of in-depth information about the foreign-born population in Alberta and Canada. More information is available at [Statistics Canada - National Household Survey - Topics, 2011](#).

Figure 5: Immigrants by Period of Immigration in Calgary and Edmonton Census Metropolitan Areas



Contact:

Emily Wang

780.427.8855

Jennifer Hansen

780.427.8811

Table 1: Place of Birth of Immigrants for Census Metropolitan Areas and Selected Census Agglomerations in Alberta

Place of Birth of Immigrants	Alberta		Calgary CMA		Edmonton CMA		Lethbridge CA		Red Deer CA	
Americas	102,045	14%	43,675	13%	29,860	12%	3,610	25%	1,960	19%
Europe	191,495	27%	80,435	24%	66,145	26%	6,890	49%	3,145	30%
Africa	59,630	8%	28,365	8%	23,700	9%	780	5.5%	645	6%
Asia	351,260	49%	184,865	54%	134,370	52%	2,730	19%	4,525	44%
Oceania	10,935	2%	4,610	1%	4,200	2%	175	1%	115	1%
Total		100%		100%		100%		100%		100%