

# Immigration and the Changing Social Geography of Large Canadian Cities

by David Ley  
and Annick Germain

*THE 1967 IMMIGRATION ACT* redrafted the social geography of immigration in large Canadian cities. In the 1960s, most immigrants came from Europe. Today, half of the immigrants who arrive each year come from Asia, and large numbers come from Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. This change has implications for the work of physical and social planners, social workers, architects, landscape architects, and other professionals in metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Ottawa-Hull. Thanks to research associated with the federally-funded Metropolis Project, a great deal has been learned in the past five years about immigrants, refugees, and their relationship with the built environment of Canadian cities.

## Immigrants in urban areas

Recent immigration settlement has been far more focused in major cities than in the past. The 1996 census reported that 17.4% of Canadians were immigrants, but this group was heavily concentrated in a few locations: immigrants make up 42% of the population of Toronto's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), the highest proportion in any major centre in North America, closely followed by Vancouver at 35%. In Montreal, the proportion is 18% and in Ottawa-Hull it is 16%. During 1998, three out of four newcomers landing in Canada identified one of these four cities as their destination, with Toronto cited by 42%.

## Variations in immigrant class

There is also a notable variation between cities in their share of immigration categories, which affects requirements for public and private settlement services and housing. Vancouver typically receives the highest share of the economic class (65% of the city's arrivals in 1998 and 70% in 1997). These immigrants are often members of millionaire households arriving through the business immigration program. Vancouver receives the smallest proportion of refugees (5% in 1998).

In contrast, a much higher proportion of refugees is destined for Ottawa-Hull (28% of all arrivals in 1998) and Montreal (20%), with proportionately fewer who qualify as skilled workers. Although Montreal receives its share of business immigrants, the wealthiest of the entry categories, many of these immigrants subsequently move to Toronto or Vancouver.

Toronto receives a smaller share of economic immigrants than Vancouver (58% of arrivals in 1998) and a smaller share of refugees (11%) than Ottawa-Hull or Montreal.

The remaining major entry group, the family class, where family sponsorship and a welcoming social network offset some initial settlement needs, is distributed more evenly (25-30% in 1998) among the four CMAs.

## Changing immigrant origins

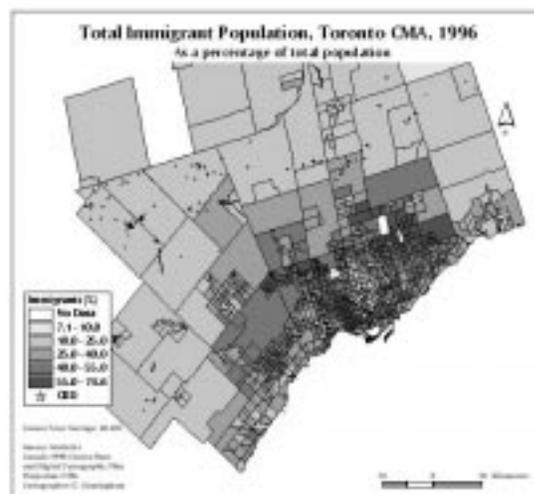
As the following tables show, the geographical origins of immigrants display further diversity between metropolitan areas. Country of origin affects the ease with which newcomers can integrate and the types of services they need. The ability to speak English or French, for example, has been shown to correlate significantly with economic achievement.

## Toronto

Toronto:		
Total Immigrants	#	%
Total	1,772,905	100.0
1 United Kingdom	158,070	8.9
2 Italy	146,515	8.3
3 Hong Kong	110,990	6.3
4 India	99,930	5.6
5 P. Rep. of China	87,615	4.9
6 Jamaica	86,910	4.9
7 Portugal	82,105	4.6
8 Philippines	80,860	4.6
9 Poland	74,220	4.2
10 Guyana	60,705	3.4

Toronto has the most diverse immigrant origins. Its overall profile shows the effects of long-term European immigration, particularly from the United Kingdom and Italy, and more recent immigration from the rest of the world that includes large numbers from Hong Kong, India, and China. Among more recent arrivals, the top five countries of origin are in Asia; the next five include one European country, three Caribbean nations, and a sixth Asian country.

Toronto: Recent Immigrants (1991-96)		
Total	#	%
Total	441,035	100.0
1 Hong Kong	48,535	11.0
2 Sri Lanka	36,735	8.3
3 P. Rep. of China	35,330	8.0
4 Philippines	33,210	7.5
5 India	33,185	7.5
6 Poland	18,605	4.2
7 Jamaica	16,780	3.8
8 Guyana	13,195	3.0
9 Viet Nam	12,290	2.8
10 Trinidad and Tobago	11,375	2.6



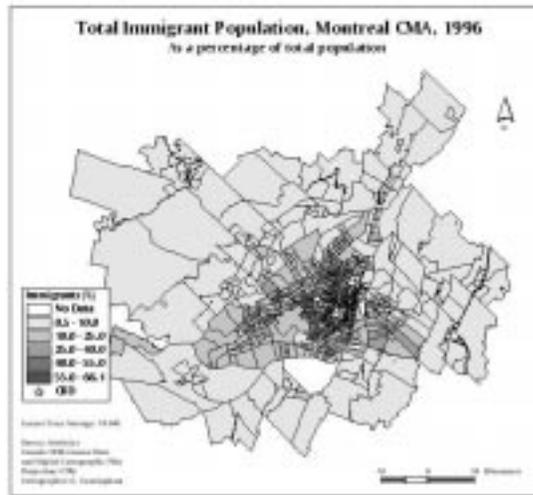
Data on 1998 arrivals indicate an increase in the number of Asian immigrants. Asian nations make up eight of the top ten countries of origin. Only one, Jamaica, has English as mother tongue, and the only European nation is Russia. A distinctive feature of the Toronto CMA is the high level of suburbanization of immigration. The concentration of immigrants is higher in a number of inner suburbs than it is in the old City of Toronto.

**Vancouver**

Vancouver, with its Pacific Rim location, developed an Asian profile earlier. The 1996 census found that the top six countries of origin for immigrants arriving in the 1990s were Asian, and that Asians made up 80% of all immigrants, with only the United Kingdom and the United States representing earlier sources of immigration. The mix of old and new source countries shows up in the overall enumeration of immigrants, where the United Kingdom remained in second position as of 1996, even though immigrants from the United Kingdom, like some other European populations, are aging and declining in number.

**Vancouver:**

Total Immigrants	#	%
Total	633,745	100.0
1 Hong Kong	86,215	13.6
2 United Kingdom	75,415	11.9
3 P. Rep. of China	72,910	11.5
4 India	53,475	8.4
5 Philippines	34,640	5.5
6 Taiwan	29,330	4.6
7 United States	22,685	3.6
8 Germany	17,785	2.8
9 Viet Nam	17,000	2.7
10 Fiji	13,855	2.2



**Montreal**

Quebec has one of the highest rates of immigrant concentration, with almost 90% of the provincial total located in the Montreal CMA. And unlike Toronto, immigrants are largely concentrated in the city itself and its older suburbs.

Although the overall immigrant share of 18% is lower than those of Toronto and Vancouver, the countries of origin are distinctive, with a clear francophone and Latin emphasis among the total immigrant population in 1996, when the leading immigrant sources included Haiti, France, Lebanon, and Viet Nam, as well as the southern European nations of Italy, Greece, and Portugal.

**Montreal: Total**

Immigrants	#	%
Total	586,470	100.0
1 Italy	72,325	12.3
2 Haiti	43,075	7.3
3 France	32,255	5.5
4 Lebanon	26,475	4.5
5 Greece	23,060	3.9
6 Viet Nam	21,920	3.7
7 Portugal	19,910	3.4
8 United Kingdom	17,365	3.0
9 Poland	16,115	2.7
10 United States	15,935	2.7

**Montreal: Recent**

Immigrants (1991-96)	#	%
Total	134,535	100.0
1 Haiti	9,995	7.4
2 Lebanon	9,610	7.1
3 France	7,540	5.6
4 P. Rep. of China	6,650	4.9
5 Romania	5,225	3.9
6 Sri Lanka	4,675	3.5
7 Philippines	4,640	3.4
8 India	4,380	3.3
9 Viet Nam	4,135	3.1
10 Morocco	3,820	2.8

To a lesser extent this trend is also noticeable among those who arrived in the 1990s, although Asians have become well-established and now make up five of the top ten sending countries. But the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of the city has been maintained: in 1998, Algeria and Morocco, nations with few representatives in other cities, emerged in second and seventh ranks (with France in first position).



**Vancouver: Recent Immigrants (1991-96)**

Immigrants (1991-96)	#	%
Total	189,660	100.0
1 Hong Kong	44,715	23.6
2 P. Rep. of China	27,005	14.2
3 Taiwan	22,315	11.8
4 India	16,185	8.5
5 Philippines	13,610	7.2
6 South Korea	6,335	3.3
7 Iran	4,640	2.4
8 United Kingdom	4,040	2.1
9 Viet Nam	3,855	2.0
10 United States	3,640	1.9

The 1998 update shows little change in these trends, although Hong Kong has been replaced by China in the first rank, just as it has in Toronto. During the 1990s, immigrant districts have expanded into suburban communities. There is a concentration of Chinese, mainly from Hong Kong, in Richmond, and of immigrants from India, principally Sikhs, in North Surrey.

**Ottawa-Hull**

Ottawa-Hull has the lowest immigrant population among the four CMAs, lower even than the national average. Nonetheless, in 1996 the Ottawa-Hull CMA was home to more than 160,000 immigrants. The important role of refugees in the metropolitan profile is highlighted by the ranking of arrivals in the 1991-96 period, led by Somalia, and including Yugoslavia, Iran, and Ethiopia in the top-ten list. This gives Ottawa-Hull a singular configuration among Canadian cities.

Ottawa-Hull:		
Total Immigrants	#	%
Total	161,885	100.0
1 United Kingdom	22,860	14.1
2 Lebanon	10,040	6.2
3 United States	7,880	4.9
4 Italy	7,600	4.7
5 P. Rep. of China	6,790	4.2
6 India	6,030	3.7
7 Viet Nam	5,590	3.5
8 Germany	5,575	3.4
9 Poland	5,165	3.2
10 Somalia	4,285	2.6

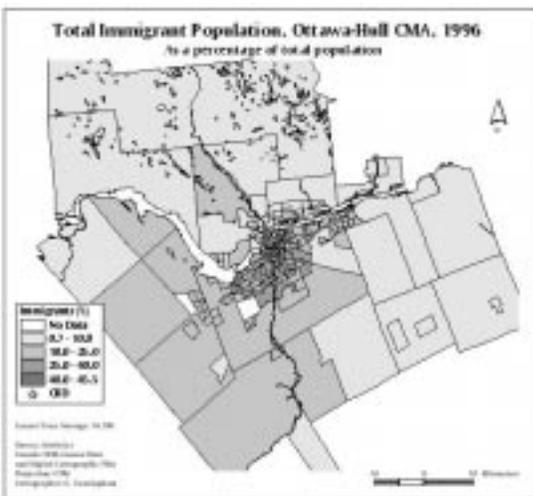
Ottawa-Hull: Recent Immigrants (1991-96)		
	#	%
Total	38,045	100.0
1 Somalia	3,325	8.7
2 P. Rep. of China	3,210	8.4
3 Lebanon	2,935	7.7
4 Viet Nam	1,485	3.9
5 India	1,440	3.8
6 Yugoslavia	1,345	3.5
7 Philippines	1,205	3.2
8 Poland	1,200	3.2
9 Iran	1,070	2.8
10 Ethiopia	1,010	2.7



**Immigrant segregation and multiethnic neighbourhoods**

Residential segregation has always been a feature of Canadian cities. Segregation not only creates poorer areas like Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and immigrant areas like a Little Italy or a Chinatown, but it also affects established, wealthier groups in districts such as Rockcliffe or Westmount. The expansion of new immigrant communities in Canadian cities in the past generation has contributed to a new round of discussion. Should we be concerned that many immigrants tend to settle in ethno-cultural clusters?

A few groups, including Jews and Italians, continue patterns of segregation in second-generation suburban districts. For other groups, continued residential segregation exacts a penalty. Studies in Vancouver have shown that residential concentration of ethnic groups is associated with other forms of separation, including occupational segmentation, in-group marriage, and mother tongue retention, and that all of these forms of separation correlate negatively with personal income. In other words, there is a "bad" consequence of segregation: prolonged spatial segregation can impair economic success.



Aside from those who live in the traditional settlement area in the inner city district west of Bronson Avenue, immigrants are dispersed in a number of nodes throughout the Ontario part of the region. Immigrant numbers are much smaller on the Hull side of the Ottawa River.

First, although segregation does occur in Canadian cities,<sup>1</sup> it seldom approaches the high concentrations noted in black-white studies in the United States. Second, we should remember, as Ceri Peach has noted, that there is both "good" and "bad" segregation.<sup>2</sup>

Good segregation is the concentration of ethno-cultural groups characterized by close social ties and networks of support provided by the extended family, clubs, and places of worship. These institutions provide a nurturing and welcoming community by helping newcomers find shelter and employment within the ethnic economy, offering advice and experience for successful settlement, and sustaining homeland culture through language, religion, and diet. Usually, these communities provide a transitional home, leading after some years, at most a generation, to some degree of integration.

Because segregation levels in Canadian cities are typically moderate, many immigrants share residential space with others of different national origins. Immigrant settlement is not so much a mosaic of "little homelands" as a more subtle model of ethnic diversity.<sup>3</sup> The diversification of recent immigration has created more cosmopolitan landscapes and widespread multiethnic neighbourhoods.

Thirty years ago, for example, Parc Extension, a district of 30,000 people in the middle of the Island of Montreal, was two-thirds Greek. Today, Greeks make up only a third of its population, which includes Indians, Haitians, Sri Lankans, and Latin Americans, among others. Chinatown remains near Old Montreal, but the proportion of Chinese people in the area is much reduced. The proximity of others of diverse origins is now the daily experience of many inhabitants of both central neighbourhoods and the suburbs. In such districts, the real minorities may be the so-called "charter" groups – Canadians of French or British ancestry.

Co-habitation in common spaces, defined both physically and symbolically, has become a dominant feature of urban multiculturalism, whether the contacts are positive or conflictual.

### Housing for immigrants

An important issue concerns the relationship of immigrants to Canadian urban housing markets. Because the incomes of immigrants, especially recent immigrants, are typically lower than those of native-born Canadians, and because immigrants are drawn to more expensive metropolitan housing markets, they often find it difficult to secure affordable housing. Some immigrants deal with this problem by crowding many people into available housing.

In 1996, 21% of all immigrant households suffered core housing need, compared with 17% of the native-born population. ("Core housing need" is a CMHC term that reflects quality and affordability criteria.) Among recent (1991-96) newcomers, 39% of households experienced core housing need. Although their low incomes make them candidates for subsidized housing, immigrants may find themselves at the end of long waiting lists in the major cities. Typically, they enter the rental market and encounter affordability problems in the early years.<sup>4</sup> Evidence from Toronto suggests that some immigrants are stigmatized and face discrimination from landlords.<sup>5</sup>

A common objective is home ownership. Among those who arrived between 1991 and 1996, about 30% own their own homes, while 77% of the households that arrived before 1976 are homeowners, compared to 66% for native-born Canadians.<sup>6</sup> Vancouver is an exception to the national trend. The higher level of economic (particularly business) class entries has accelerated home ownership among recent immigrants, particularly those arriving from Hong Kong and Taiwan. In the other cities, higher proportions of refugees with limited capital face serious housing problems, especially in the tight housing markets of Ottawa and Toronto.

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### Summary

With the relatively high levels of immigration of the recent past, newcomers have narrowed their selection of destinations to a small number of major cities. This paper reviews some of the recent socio-cultural transformations in Canada's four largest cities during the 1990s. We discuss the variation between cities in terms of immigrant class and countries of origin. Three policy issues are briefly addressed: residential segregation, multiethnic neighbourhoods, and relations between immigrants and the housing market. Results are taken from policy-relevant research conducted by the federally-funded Metropolis Project that is examining the impacts and experiences of immigrants in Canada's largest cities.

### Sommaire

Les nouveaux immigrants, en assez grand nombre depuis quelques années, choisissent d'élire domicile dans un nombre restreint de grands centres urbains. Dans cet article, on analyse les changements socioculturels qu'ont connus quatre des plus grandes villes canadiennes au cours de la dernière décennie, en s'attardant à une comparaison de la variation, entre les villes, de la classe des immigrants et de leur pays d'origine. On examine brièvement trois facteurs d'élaboration des politiques : la ségrégation résidentielle, les quartiers multiethniques et les rapports entre les immigrants et le marché de l'habitation. Les données proviennent du projet Metropolis, financé par le gouvernement fédéral, qui analyse, dans une optique d'élaboration de politiques d'aménagement, l'expérience des immigrants dans les plus grandes villes canadiennes.

David Ley is a professor in the Department of Geography, University of British Columbia. He can be reached at: [dley@geog.ubc.ca](mailto:dley@geog.ubc.ca)

Annick Germain is professor at the Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique-Urbanisation in Montreal. Her research focuses on ethnic diversity in neighbourhoods and public spaces, and on municipalities and the management of cultural diversity. With Damaris Rose she has written *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*, recently published by John Wiley & Sons. She can be reached at: [annick\\_germain@inrs-urb.uquebec.ca](mailto:annick_germain@inrs-urb.uquebec.ca)

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