

Canada's newest workers

Tina Chui and Mary Sue Devereaux

New workers are not all young people emerging from the education system to make their way into the job market – a substantial number are immigrants, new not only to the workforce, but also to Canada.

Immigration is a major source of new workers. In 1991, Canada's workforce included about 366,000 people aged 15 and over who had immigrated during the 1986 to 1991 period.¹ They brought a range of skills and experience that enabled them to find employment in a variety of occupations. As well, they reflected the shift in immigrant origins toward Asia, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, which began in the 1970s.

This article profiles Canada's "newest" workers: people who entered the country from 1986 to 1991, and who at the time of the 1991 Census were employed (see *Data source and definitions*). It compares their characteristics with those of Canadian-born workers.²

Over one-quarter of the increase in employment

Recent immigrants represented 28% of the increase from 1986 to 1991 in the number of people employed in Canada. However, their impact on different age groups varied. Fully 49% of the increase in the number of 25 to 34 year-old workers was attributable to recent immigrants. Their contribution to growth in the number of older workers was substantially less –

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Data source and definitions

The data in this article are from the 1991 Census and refer to the population aged 15 and over, excluding residents of institutions.

The **immigrant** population consists of people who are, or have been, landed immigrants. Landed immigrants have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently. Non-permanent residents – that is, refugee claimants and persons holding student or employment authorizations or Minister's permits – are not included in the immigrant population.

Workers (the employed) include all persons working for wages or salaries, working in their own busi-

ness, farm or profession, or working without pay in a family farm or business during the reference week (the week before Census day, June 4, 1991).

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The **employment rate**, or the employment/population ratio, is the number of employed persons in a particular group (age, sex, immigrant status, etc.) expressed as a percentage of the population in that group.

Full-time or part-time employment is determined on the basis of the number of hours worked in the reference week. Persons who worked 30 or more hours were full-time workers; those who worked less than 30 hours were part-time workers.

15% at ages 35 to 44, 10% at ages 45 to 64, and 7% at age 65 and over.³

Because recent immigrants are less likely than people born in Canada to be employed (see *Un-*

employment), they contribute less to employment growth than to population increase. While recent immigrants accounted for 28% of the increase in the number employed from 1986 to 1991, they

Unemployment

The **unemployed** include mainly persons who, during the week before Census Day (June 4, 1991) were without work, had actively looked for work in the past four weeks, and were available for work in the reference week. Together, employed and unemployed persons constitute the **labour force**. The **unemployment rate** for a particular group (age, sex, immigrant status, etc.) is the number of unemployed in that group expressed as a percentage of the labour force for that group.

In June 1991, the unemployment rate of recent immigrants was 17.7%, compared with 10.1% for Canadian-born adults. Among

men, the rates were 17.1% for recent immigrants and 10.2% for the Canadian-born. The corresponding rates for women were 18.4% and 10.0%.

The discrepancy in unemployment rates held at all ages. For example, the rate among recent immigrants aged 25 to 34 was 16.9%, compared with 10.6% for their Canadian-born contemporaries. At ages 35 to 44, the figures were 15.9% and 8.0%, respectively. And while unemployment among the Canadian-born tended to decline at older ages, this was not the case for recent immigrants. The rate was 20.4% for recent immigrants aged 45 to 64, two-and-a-half times the figure for the Canadian-born (7.6%).

were responsible for 39% of the increase in the population aged 15 and over.

Entering the workforce

In 1991, the employment rate of the 652,000 people aged 15 and over who arrived after 1985 was 56%.⁴ The comparable figure for the Canadian-born was 62%.⁵ This disparity held among men and women and prevailed at almost every age⁶ (Table 1).

Because people are most likely to immigrate when they are young adults, the age structure of the recent immigrant workforce is younger than that of the Canadian-born (Chart A). In 1991, 42% of recent immigrant workers were aged 25 to 34, compared with 30% of the Canadian-born. The share of 35 to 44 year-olds was also slightly higher among the immigrant group. Conversely, relatively few recent immigrant workers were older. For instance, the proportion aged 45 to 64 was half the figure for the Canadian-born.⁷

The proportions of women in the recent immigrant and Canadian-born workforces are virtually the same. In 1991, women accounted for 44% of recent immigrant workers and 45% of the Canadian-born. And regardless of age, women's shares of the two workforces were almost identical.

“Polarized” educational attainment

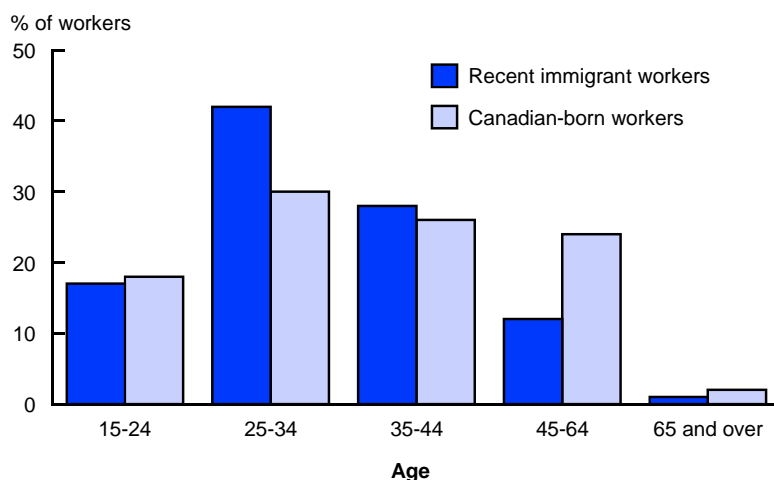
The educational attainment of recent immigrant workers tends to be somewhat “polarized.” That is, while a higher proportion of them are university graduates, the proportion with relatively little formal education also exceeds that of the Canadian-born. In 1991, 22% of recent immigrant workers had university degrees, compared with 14% of Canadian-born workers. At the same time, 9% of the immigrant group had less than Grade 9 versus 6% of Canadian-born workers.

Table 1
Employment rates* of recent immigrants and the Canadian-born population

	Both sexes		Men		Women	
	Recent immigrants**	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants**	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants**	Canadian-born
	%					
Total	56	62	64	69	49	55
Age						
15-24 years	44	57	46	58	41	56
25-34 years	66	78	74	84	59	71
35-44 years	68	80	76	87	60	73
45-64 years	48	62	60	73	37	52
65 years and over	10	9	15	14	6	5
Education						
Less than Grade 9	38	28	51	39	29	18
Secondary (with or without completion)	48	56	55	65	42	48
Some postsecondary	61	72	65	78	57	67
Trade certificate or diploma	64	71	70	74	56	63
Non-university certificate or diploma	69	77	75	83	64	71
University degree	70	83	75	87	63	80

Source: Census of Canada, 1991
 * Employment/population ratio
 ** People who immigrated to Canada between January 1986 and May 1991

Chart A
Recent immigrant workers* tend to be young adults.



Source: Census of Canada, 1991
 * People who immigrated to Canada between January 1986 and May 1991 and who were employed during the week before June 4, 1991

This overall polarization reflects the characteristics of 25 to 44 year-olds who make up such a large share of recent immigrant workers. At ages 25 to 44, 28% of recent male immigrant workers had university degrees, compared with 17% of the Canadian-born. For female workers, the corresponding figures were 24% and 17%.

At the other end of the education continuum, 7% of recent male immigrant workers aged 25 to 44 had less than Grade 9 versus 3% of the Canadian-born. For women, the proportions were 7% and 2%, respectively.

Educational attainment generally increases the likelihood of employment: in 1991, employment rates were highest among people with postsecondary credentials and lowest among those with less than Grade 9. Even so, recent immigrants with post-secondary education were less likely than the Canadian-born to be employed. The opposite was the case for those with relatively little formal education: 38% of recent immigrants with less than Grade 9 were working in 1991, compared with 28% of the Canadian-born.

Employment rates vary by origin

European countries used to be the leading source of Canada's immigrants, but beginning in the 1970s, the picture changed. Asia, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa now account for the majority of immigrants.

This shift in immigrants' origins is reflected in the recent immigrant workforce (Chart B). Half of recent immigrant workers were from Asia: 18% from Eastern Asia, 14% from South East Asia, 10% from Southern Asia, and 7% from Western Asia and the Middle East. Together, Africa, Central and South America, and the Car-

ibbean and Bermuda made up another 22% (see *Geographic regions*). Nearly a quarter (24%) of recent immigrant workers were from European countries, with the largest number (10%) coming from Eastern Europe, and 5% from the United Kingdom. The United States was the birthplace of 3%.

The employment rates of recent immigrants vary with their place of birth (Table 2). In 1991, the highest rate (82%) was among men from Northern Europe, while rates for those from Western and Southern Europe, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Oceania also exceeded the average for the Canadian-born (69%). The men with the lowest rate – 55% – were from Western Asia and the Middle East.

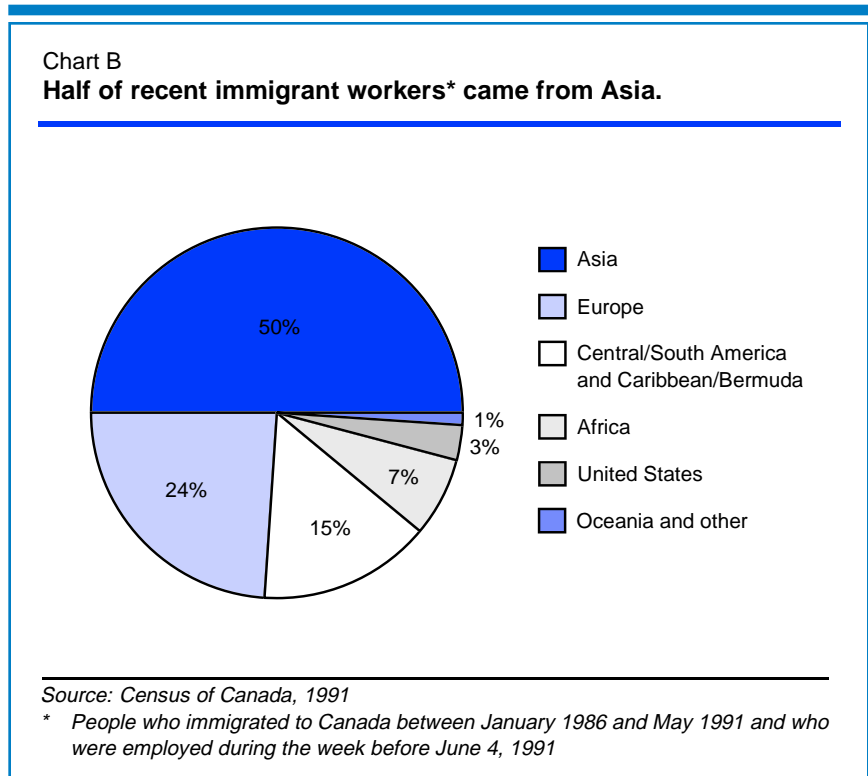
The pattern was similar for women. Employment rates among those from Northern and Western Europe, South East Asia, the

United States, and the United Kingdom surpassed the level for the Canadian-born (55%), while the rate of those from Western Asia and the Middle East was particularly low (32%).

Most full time ... few self-employed

The majority of workers – recent immigrant or not – have full-time jobs. Among men, the proportions employed full time in 1991 were almost the same for recent immigrant and Canadian-born workers: 84% and 85%. By contrast, the proportion of female workers with full-time jobs was higher for recent immigrants: 72% versus 68%.

Recent immigrants are less likely than the Canadian-born to be self-employed. Among male workers, 10% of recent immigrants were self-employed in 1991 versus 13% of the Canadian-born. The corresponding figures for female workers were 5% and 6%.



Geographic regions

The Census place of birth question asked respondents to indicate their country of birth according to national boundaries existing on June 4, 1991. At that time, places such as the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia were nation-states. The countries included in the geographic regions are:

CENTRAL AMERICA: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama.

CARIBBEAN AND BERMUDA: Anguilla, Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Virgin Islands (British), and Virgin Islands (U.S.).

SOUTH AMERICA: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

EUROPE

Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechten-

stein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, and Switzerland.

Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the U.S.S.R.

Northern Europe: Republic of Ireland (Eire), Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and United Kingdom.

Southern Europe: Albania, Andorra, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Vatican City State, and Yugoslavia.

AFRICA

Western Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde Islands, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, St. Helena and Ascension, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Eastern Africa: Burundi, Comoros, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Republic of Djibouti, Réunion, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somali Democratic Republic, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Northern Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara.

Central Africa: Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Zaire.

Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Republic of South Africa, and Swaziland.

ASIA

Western Asia and the Middle East: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Republic of Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates.

Eastern Asia: Hong Kong, Japan, Macao, Mongolia, North Korea, People's Democratic Republic of China, South Korea, and Taiwan.

South East Asia: Brunei, Indonesia, Kampuchea, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Union of Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

Southern Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Republic of Maldives, and Sri Lanka.

OCEANIA: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam (U.S.), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Island, Republic of Belau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, U.S. Pacific Trust Territories, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, and Western Samoa.

Jobs held by men

The occupational profile of recent immigrants differs from that of the Canadian-born. In 1991, recent male immigrant workers were more likely than those born in Canada to be in service, clerical, product fabricating, or processing/machining jobs, but less likely to be in managerial, sales, primary or construction occupations. The representation of both groups in professional⁸ positions was about the same (Table 3).

Within particular occupation groups, the areas in which immigrants were employed differed as

well. For example, of those in services, food and beverage preparation accounted for close to half of recent immigrant men, compared with just over a quarter of those born in Canada (Table 4). On the other hand, 9% of the immigrant group, but 38% of the Canadian-born, worked in protective services.

Among professionals, 52% of recent immigrant men were in natural sciences, engineering or mathematics, versus 39% of the Canadian-born. By contrast, recent immigrants' representation in teaching and social sciences was relatively low.

Occupations also vary by place of birth. Male workers from the United States (52%), Western (44%) and Northern (40%) Europe, Eastern Asia (40%) and Africa (32%) were more likely than the Canadian-born (29%) to have managerial or professional occupations. About one-fifth of men from South East Asia, Central and South America, Eastern Asia, and Western Asia and the Middle East were in service occupations, approximately double the figure for the Canadian-born. Relatively large proportions of men from South East Asia (17%), Oceania

Table 2
Employment rates* of the Canadian-born population and recent immigrants by place of birth

	Both sexes	Men	Women
		%	
Canadian-born	62	69	55
Total recent immigrants**	56	64	49
Northern Europe†	75	82	68
Western Europe	67	78	58
United Kingdom	65	76	56
United States	63	73	56
Southern Europe	62	72	51
Oceania/other	62	73	53
South East Asia	60	63	58
Eastern Europe	57	64	50
Africa	57	64	48
Caribbean/Bermuda	56	60	54
Southern Asia	54	65	42
Central/South America	53	62	45
Eastern Asia	53	61	46
Western Asia/Middle East	46	55	32

Source: Census of Canada, 1991

* Employment/population ratio

** People who immigrated to Canada between January 1986 and May 1991

† Excluding United Kingdom

(15%), Eastern Europe (15%), Central (14%) and South (15%) America, and the Caribbean (15%) worked in product fabricating.

While few recent immigrants were in primary occupations (2%), the exceptions were men from Western Europe (12%) and Central America (7%). Construction jobs, accounting for 8% of all recent male immigrant workers, were held by more than a third (35%) of those from Southern Europe.

Relatively high proportions of men from the Caribbean (14%), Africa (14%) and Southern Asia (12%) were in clerical positions. Sales jobs, generally uncommon among recent immigrants, were held by at least 12% of male workers from Africa, Eastern Asia, and Western Asia and the Middle East.

Jobs held by women

As was the case for men, the occupational distribution of recent immigrant women varied from that of the Canadian-born. While clerical jobs ranked first for both groups, 27% of recent immigrants held such positions, compared with 33% of the Canadian-born.

Recent female immigrants were also less likely than Canadian-born women to work in managerial or professional occupations. For both groups, the leading professional occupations were in medicine and health. However, recent immigrant professionals were more likely than those born in Canada to be in natural sciences, engineering and mathematics, and less likely to be teachers.

The proportion of recent female immigrant workers in services surpassed the figure for the Canadian-born: 23% versus 15%. Within the services category, food and beverage preparation accounted for about a third of recent immigrants, but almost half of Canadian-born workers. Personal

Table 3
Occupations of recent immigrant and Canadian-born workers

	Men		Women	
	Recent immigrants*	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants*	Canadian-born
Total employed ('000)	203	5,751	163	4,750
	%			
Managerial/administrative	11	14	7	11
Professional	15	14	17	23
Clerical	9	7	27	33
Sales	8	10	8	10
Service	17	10	23	15
Primary	2	7	1	2
Processing/machining	8	6	3	2
Product fabricating	11	8	9	2
Construction	8	10	-	-
Other**	10	13	5	3

Source: Census of Canada, 1991

Note: Because of rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.

* People who immigrated to Canada between January 1986 and May 1991 and who were employed during the week before June 4, 1991

** Includes transportation and equipment operating, material handling, other crafts and equipment operating, and occupations not classified.

Table 4
Recent immigrant and Canadian-born workers in service and professional occupations

	Men		Women	
	Recent immigrants*	Canadian-born	Recent immigrants*	Canadian-born
In service occupations ('000)	34	565	37	718
			%	
Proportion of all workers	17	10	23	15
All service workers	100	100	100	100
Protective services	9	38	1	6
Food and beverage preparation	47	27	32	46
Lodging and accommodation	3	2	6	4
Personal services	3	4	31	27
Apparel and furnishings	3	2	4	2
Other	34	28	25	15
In professional occupations ('000)	31	814	27	1,101
			%	
Proportion of all workers	15	14	17	23
All professional workers	100	100	100	100
Natural sciences, engineering and mathematics	52	39	15	7
Social sciences	6	12	11	14
Religion	3	2	1	1
Teaching	14	21	19	30
Medicine and health	15	13	45	41
Artistic, literary and recreational	10	12	9	7

Source: *Census of Canada, 1991*

Note: Because of rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.

* People who immigrated to Canada between January 1986 and May 1991 and who were employed during the week before June 4, 1991

services represented 31% of the recent immigrant group and 27% of those born in Canada.

Employment in product fabricating was also more common for recent immigrant than Canadian-born workers: 9% compared with 2%.

As was true for their male counterparts, women's occupations varied with their birthplace. Managerial or professional positions were held by 49% of women from the United States and almost 40% of those from Northern and Western Europe, well above the figure for the Canadian-born (34%).

Clerical jobs accounted for 39% of female workers from Africa and 35% of those from Eastern Asia, compared with 33% of Canadian-born women. Around a third of women from Southern and Eastern Europe, Central America, South East Asia, and Oceania were in service occupations, about double the proportion for the Canadian-born. The highest proportions of recent immigrant women in product fabricating were from Southern Europe (17%) and Central and South America (14%), Southern Asia (14%), and South East Asia (12%).

Summary

The "newest" workers reflect the shift of immigrants' origins away from European countries toward Asia, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. But given the diversity of recent immigrants' backgrounds, it is all but impossible to generalize about their labour market experiences. For example, a relatively large proportion of them have university degrees, but at the same time, they are more likely than the Canadian-born to have less than Grade 9. Recent immigrants also hold a wide range of jobs – many find employment in professional or managerial occupations, while others work in services or product fabricating.

Employment rates of recent immigrants tend to be lower than those of people born in Canada. However, chances of finding a job shortly after arriving vary with the immigrant's age, sex, education, and birthplace. □

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Notes

1 Immigrants who arrived in 1991 would have come in the first five months of the year, as the Census was conducted on June 4.

2 The Canadian-born are Canadian citizens by birth. Most were born in Canada, but a small number were born in other countries to Canadian parents.

3 From 1986 to 1991, the total number of 15 to 24 year-old workers actually decreased from 2.3 to 2.2 million, reflecting the decline in the size of this age group. However, the downturn in the

number of young workers was somewhat moderated by the addition of 61,000 recent immigrant workers aged 15 to 24.

4 In 1993, the employment rate for recent immigrants (those who immigrated in the previous five years) was 50% compared with 57% for the Canadian-born. This drop in employment rates for both recent immigrants and the Canadian-born was probably due to general economic and labour market conditions, but some variation may reflect survey sampling. The recent data are from the 1993 Survey of Consumer Finances, whereas the 1991 data are from the Census.

5 As time spent in the country lengthens, employment rates rise. By 1991, the rate for immigrants who arrived in the 1981 to 1985 period was the same as that of the Canadian-born (62%).

6 Including people aged 65 and over in the calculations lowers the employment

rate of the total Canadian-born population. This is because the Canadian-born in this age range are numerous (more than 2 million), but very few of them are employed. Excluding this age group from the calculations widens the gap between the employment rates of recent immigrants and people born in Canada. The 1991 rate for recent immigrants aged 15 to 64 was 59% versus 69% for the Canadian-born.

7 Differences in the age distributions of recent immigrants and the Canadian-born affect the overall employment rates of the two groups. These differences can be summarized by using what is known as "age standardization." This involves assuming that recent immigrants have the same age distribution as the Canadian-born and then, using the employment rates already noted for each age group, recalculating the **overall** employment rate for recent immigrants. When the two age

distributions are made the same, the employment rate for recent immigrants falls to 51%.

8 Includes occupations in natural sciences, engineering and mathematics; social sciences and related fields; religion; teaching and related fields; medicine and health; and artistic, literary, recreational and related occupations.

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