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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IMMIGRANT AND VISIBLE MINORITY POPULATIONS IN CANADA

Highlights

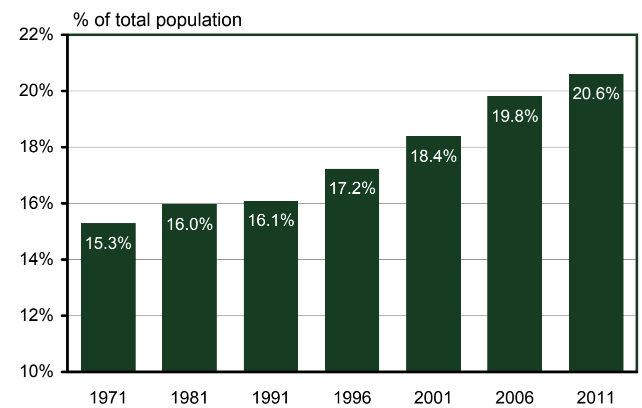
- The first release from the 2011 National Household Survey enumerated nearly 6.8 million immigrants and 6.3 million visible minorities in Canada. These figures represent nearly 21% and 19% of the total population, respectively, highlighting the increasingly diverse nature of Canada's demographic makeup.
- Asia continued to be the largest source region of newcomers to Canada. However, the proportion arriving from the region declined in 2011 relative to 2006. An increasing share is instead coming from Africa, the Caribbean and South & Central America. The data also showed a rising number of immigrants settling in the Western provinces as opposed to British Columbia and Ontario.
- The 2011 NHS showed a continued concentration of both immigrants and visible minorities in Canada's major urban centres. More than 90% of both groups chose to settle in one of the nation's 33 census metropolitan areas.
- The diversity of Canada's population was also reflected in the over 200 languages spoken in the country. One-fifth of Canadians had a mother tongue that was neither French nor English, the same proportion as in 2006.

The first release from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) provided a much needed update to the rapidly changing ethnic and immigrant makeup of Canada. In this brief report, we highlight a few of the key trends related to the immigrant and visible minority communities. We must note that the NHS replaced the long-form census used previously. Importantly, participation in the NHS was voluntary, in contrast to the long-form census. Data comparability over time is thus an issue. However, comparability issues aside, we summarize the key trends and issues related to immigrants to shed light on recent developments. In this report, the terms "immigrant" and "foreign-born" are used interchangeably.

Immigrants: an overview

In 2011, the NHS enumerated nearly 6.8 million immigrants (defined as anyone born outside Canada) living in Canada. This figure represents nearly 21% of the total population and is the greatest share of foreign-born population in the G8 (Chart 1). This proportion has been on a steady upward trend since the 1971 census. At the time, immigrants accounted for just 15% of Canadians. Since 2000, net immigration has accounted for over two-thirds of population growth and Statistics Canada has estimated that within four decades, that share could rise above 90% (Chart 2).

CHART 1: IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA BY CENSUS YEAR



Source: Statistics Canada, Censuses of Population, National Household Survey

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Identifying the major source regions and countries

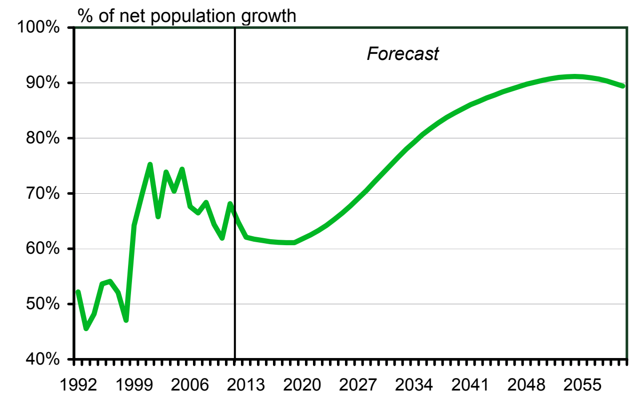
Asia including the Middle East continues to be the major source region for Canada's immigrants. However, 2011 continued the decline in the proportion coming from Asia. The region's share fell relative to the previous census, from 60% in 2005 to 56.9% in 2011. An increasing share instead came from the Caribbean, Central & South America, and Africa, which in total accounted for one-quarter of total immigrants between 2006 and 2011 (Chart 2).

Of the close to 1.2 million immigrants that arrived between 2006 and 2011, more than one-third came from three countries alone – the Philippines (13.1%), China (10.5%) and India (10.4%). The Philippines recorded the largest increase of any country between intercensal periods. While an already substantial 75,000 immigrants arrived from the country between 2001 and 2005, this figure doubled to more than 150,000 between 2006 and 2011. Its share of immigrants also nearly doubled, from 7.6% to its current 13.1%. In contrast, the number of immigrants arriving from China and India (Canada's major source countries in previous censuses) declined, from a combined 270,000 (27%) to 240,000 (21%) over those same years.

Where do immigrants tend to settle?

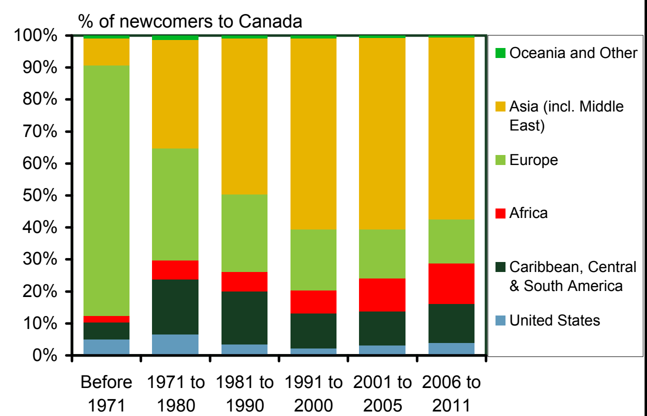
The settlement pattern of immigrants is one area that has seen seismic shifts in recent years. Ontario and British Columbia traditionally received the lion's share of newcomers to Canada each year. Between 1991 and 2000, more than three-quarters of immigrants settled in the two provinces alone. However, by 2006-2011, that share had fallen to less than 60%. In contrast, the proportion settling in the Prairie Provinces has surged. There are two reasons for this shift. First, the economic outperformance of those provinces has implied better job and economic opportunities for newcomers. Second, the development of Provincial Nominee Programs (PIPs), which allows provinces to nominate directly and fast-track immigration applications, has had a substantial impact on immigration flows. Manitoba was one of the first (and to this day the most successful) provinces to implement such a program in the late-1990s – as a result, its share of national newcomers has more than tripled, from 1.6% in the 1991-2000 period to 5.0% between 2006 and 2011. The three Prairie Provinces combined have nearly doubled their share of immigrants from 10.3% to 19.7% over that timeframe. The Atlantic Provinces have also seen success in their PIPs: the share of newcomers settling in the

CHART 2: NET IMMIGRATION SHARE OF POPULATION GROWTH



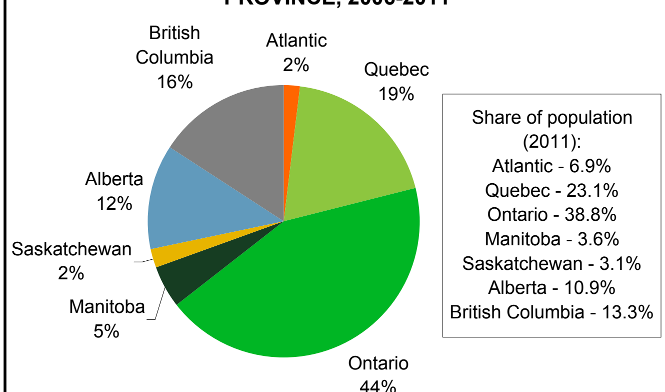
Source: Statistics Canada

CHART 3: IMMIGRANT SOURCE REGIONS



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey

CHART 4: SHARE OF IMMIGRATION BY PROVINCE, 2006-2011



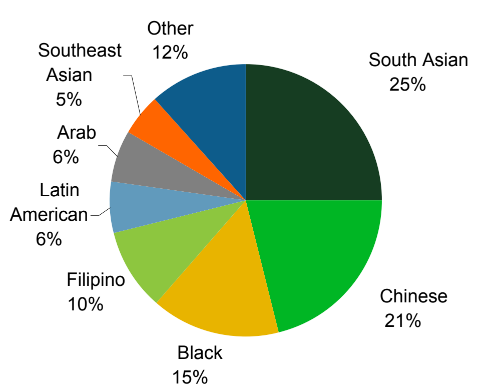
Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey four provinces has doubled from 1.0% to 2.0%. Meanwhile, Québec has seen consistent increases in its share over time and is now the destination of nearly 20% of newcomers, up from 12.7% between 1991 and 2000 (Charts 4 and 5).

It is worth noting that immigrants choose overwhelmingly to locate in Canada's urban centres (otherwise known as census metropolitan areas, or CMAs), regardless of the province. Of the 6.8 million immigrants present in 2011, 91% lived in one of Canada's 33 CMAs. By far, the highest concentrations were in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver (playfully known as MTV). The three metro areas are home to 63.4% of all immigrants and 62.5% of those who arrived between 2006 and 2011. Among the three, Toronto stands out as home to the largest immigrant community. More than 2.5 million immigrants call Toronto home and account for nearly half of the region's population. They also represent nearly two-fifths of the entire immigrant population in Canada.

Visible minorities: an overview

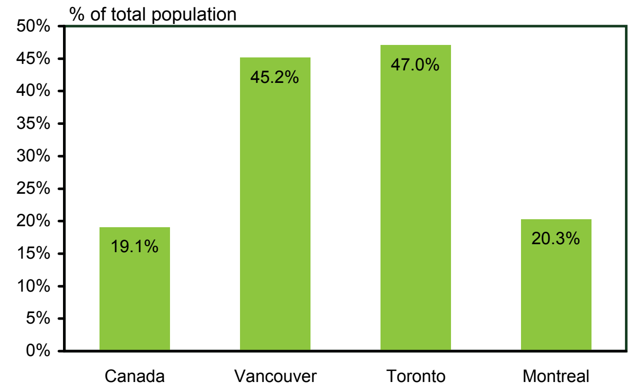
The NHS also enumerated the share of the Canadian population that identifies as a visible minority (VM), another increasingly important part of the country's demographic makeup. In the 2006 Census, 5.1 million people, or 16.2% of the population, reported being a member of the VM community. By 2011, this figure had increased to 6.3 million, or 19.1% of the population. Statistics Canada noted that the increase in the VM population was mainly due to the sizeable immigration from outside Europe – 78% of newcomers to Canada who arrived between 2006 and 2011 are visible minorities, up slightly from the 75% who arrived in the 1990s. The NHS noted that the two largest visible minority groups in the country are South Asians (which include those from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc) and Chinese (which include those from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong), numbering 1.6 million and 1.3 million, respectively. The black community was the third largest at 945,000. Together, the three groups accounted for 11.7% of the total population and over 60% of the VM community (Chart 5). Interestingly, the shift away from India and China as major source countries has led to a decline in this figure – these three groups accounted for more than 65% of the visible minority population in 2001.

CHART 5: VISIBLE MINORITIES IN CANADA, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey

CHART 6: VISIBLE MINORITY SHARE OF POPULATION



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey

Visible minorities continue to congregate in Canada's metro areas

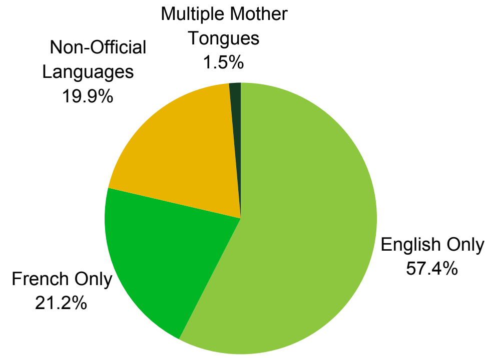
Similar to the settlement pattern of immigrants, visible minorities tend overwhelmingly to locate in Canada's urban centres. More than 95% of the visible minority community lives in a CMA, while 70% live in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver alone. Toronto was home to the largest population of visible minorities – numbering 2.6 million, the region's VM community represents 47% of its total population and 41% of the entire visible minority population in Canada (Chart 6). Vancouver followed closely in second. Its 1 million-strong visible minority population accounted for 45% of its total population.

Multilingualism growing

One-fifth of Canadians in 2011 had a mother tongue that was neither French nor English, the same share as in the 2006 census. However, the proportion of the population that reported having multiple mother tongues increased from 1.2% to 1.5% from 2006-2011. Panjabi was the most common non-official language with 1.3% of the population reporting the language as their mother tongue. This was followed closely by Italian, Spanish, and Cantonese, each with a 1.2% of share. Tagalog (the official language of the Philippines) was the fastest growing non-official language in Canada, accounting for the mother tongue of more than 12% of newcomers to Canada between 2006 and 2011.

The shift in immigration away from countries like India and China are reflected in the languages spoken in Canada. While the Indo-Aryan languages (such as Panjabi, Hindi, Urdu, etc) and the various dialects of Chinese account for 30% of those whose mother tongue is a non-official language, their prevalence is falling. In 2006, they accounted for 40% of newcomers' mother tongues. This proportion fell to just 30% as of 2011. Recent changes to federal immigration policy have placed more emphasis on official language capacity. As a result of the policy change, there are concerns that the share of immigration coming from China and South Asia may continue to decline in the years ahead. Although, it is worth noting that rising living standards in these regions is and will continue to be a contributing factor to falling immigration flows.

CHART 7: MOTHER TONGUES OF CANADIANS, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey

Bottom line

The first release of the National Household Survey further solidifies the importance of immigration and visible minorities in the country's demographic makeup. Canada, along with most of the developed world, has a rapidly ageing labour force – much of the nation's future economic prosperity hangs on the ability to attract foreign workers and integrate them successfully into the labour market. Fortunately, Canada is well-placed relative to many of its international counterparts on both fronts. However, newcomers still face significant challenges related to language skills and foreign credential recognition. These barriers have led to a widening gap in earnings and labour market outcomes between foreign-born and Canadian-born citizens. Given that Canada will soon be competing with all other advanced economies for this same pool of skilled labour, it is critical that we overcome these barriers in order to unlock the full potential of such an important part of the Canadian population.

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