

highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Force

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate climbed to 9.0% (seasonally adjusted) in March.** Only the Atlantic provinces had higher rates than BC. The rise was the result of an increase in the labour force (+0.8%) coupled with a smaller increase in employment (+0.6%).

The Canadian unemployment rate fell 0.2 percentage points to 7.7% in March. Unlike BC, Canadian employment (+0.6%) grew faster than the labour force (+0.4%), resulting in the decline in the unemployment rate. Alberta and Manitoba, at 5.0%, have the lowest rate of unemployment in the country. Newfoundland and Labrador (16.6%) continues to have the highest rate, although there was an improvement of 1.2 percentage points from February to March.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Five of the seven regions in BC recorded double-digit unemployment rates in March.** The North Coast & Nechako region posted the highest rate (14.6%, 3-month moving average). Only Mainland/Southwest (8.5%) and Northeast (7.3%) had single-digit rates. The Northeast continues to benefit from the strong oil and gas sector. Although Vancouver Island/Coast had 10.2% unemployment, its largest centre, Victoria, had a rate of only 7.9%, lower even than Vancouver (8.4%).
- **Public sector employment in BC (seasonally adjusted) was down 2.5%, on average, in the first quarter of 2002 compared to the fourth quarter of 2001.** At the same time, employment in the private sector experienced an average increase of 2.1%, after declining through much of 2001. The number of self-employed increased marginally (+0.4%) in the first quarter compared

Source: Statistics Canada

to the previous three months.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Full-time employment grew 1.1% (seasonally adjusted) in March, while the number of people working part-time fell 1.3%.** Both men (+0.9%) and women (+0.2%) experienced an increase in employment. For men, the increase was for both full-time (+0.5%) and part-time (+3.4%), whereas for women, part-time employment dropped significantly (-3.6%), while full-time employment was up (+2.1%).

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Both the goods and services sectors in BC experienced increases in employment in March.** With the exception of construction (-1.8% seasonally adjusted), all other major goods producing industry groups experienced a rise in employment. On the service side, the increase was driven mainly by increases in the community and personal services groups, particularly the "other services" category (+5.1%) where employment jumped by almost 14,000.

Year-to-date, employment in the goods-producing industries has dropped 5.5% (unadjusted) compared to the first three months of 2001, led by declines in the forest sector as the effects of the softwood lumber dispute with the United States are being felt. Employment in both forestry & logging (-16.1%) and wood manufacturing (-12.3%) has fallen considerably compared to the first quarter of last year.

The service-producing sector has had marginal employment growth (+0.3%) in the first quarter compared to the same period last year. This is despite significant declines in finance, insurance & real estate (-7.4%) and

Did you know...

Major League Baseball's payroll topped \$2 billion this year...more than the GDP of some countries

both federal (-14.2%) and provincial (-9.1%) government employment. There were significant year-over-year increases in health care & social assistance (+8.4%) and education (+2.7%).

Source: Statistics Canada

The Economy

- **In February, the Help-wanted Index for BC remained flat (0.0%, seasonally adjusted).** Nationally, the index gained 1.6%. New Brunswick saw the largest increase (+3.3%), followed by Prince Edward Island (+2.8%) and Ontario (+2.3%). Saskatchewan experienced the largest drop (-3.0%).

Source: Statistics Canada

- **On March 31, 2000, the consolidated net debt of federal, provincial, territorial and local governments was \$830.4 billion down 2.2% from March 31, 1999.** Per-capita net debt dropped to \$27,066, the lowest level since 1994. Net debt as a percentage of GDP fell to 80.6% from 89.8% in 1999. BC's net debt (the consolidation of provincial and local government debt) was \$14.3 billion or \$3,522 per capita. Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest per capita net debt (\$16,952), followed by Quebec (\$13,965). Only Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories had no net debt.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Department store sales (including concessions) in British Columbia and the Territories were up 4.4% (unadjusted) in February compared to the same month in 2001.** Nationally, sales were up 8.9%. The increase for the combined region of BC and the Territories was the lowest in the country. The region comprised of Newfoundland and Labrador and PEI experienced the largest percentage growth in sales, recording a whopping 28.5% increase.

Source: Statistics Canada

Tourism

- **In the last quarter of 2001, national tourism spending slipped 1.2% (seasonally adjusted) as both domestic (-0.4%) and non-residential demand (-3.1%) dropped.** The main driving force behind these declines was reduced spending on air transportation (-5.8%) which pushed total transportation expenditure down 2.8%. Spending on accommodation made mar-

ginal gains (+0.8%) in the fourth quarter as an increase in domestic expenditures (+5.5%) offset a decline by non-residents (-3.8%). Tourism demand for food and beverage services remained fairly flat (-0.1%) as a 1.1% fall in spending by non-residents outweighed a 0.7% increase in domestic tourism spending.

In 2001, national tourism expenditures slipped 0.1% as a result of weakened demand by non-residents (-1.3%). Spending by domestic residents grew 0.4%. Spending on accommodation fell 3.7% and transportation expenditures dropped 1.2%. Tourism demand for food and beverage services rose 2.1%.

Source: Statistics Canada

Internet

- **In 2001, the value of customer orders over the Internet jumped 43.4% to \$10.4 billion.** Overall, 22.4% of enterprises used the Internet to buy goods or services, up from 18.2% in 2000. Only 6.7% of businesses sold goods or services over the Internet. Information and cultural industries were most likely to buy and sell over the Internet, as 51.8% businesses made a purchase over the Internet and 20.1% used the Internet for sales. Internet sales captured 0.5% of total operating revenue. A total of 70.8% of businesses used the Internet and 28.6% had a web site.

Source: Statistics Canada

Education

- **In 1998/99, the number of students enrolled in trade/vocational and preparatory training programs in Canada fell 4.0% to 240,133.** Enrolment in trade/vocational programs dropped 10.6% but the number of students registered in a preparatory training program climbed 10.5% to 86,456. Job-readiness training and orientation programs saw a 33.0% increase in enrolment.

Source: Statistics Canada

- **Prices for educational goods and services increased faster than the overall inflation rate in 2000.** It was the second straight year that the Education Price Index exceeded the Consumer Price Index.

Source: Statistics Canada

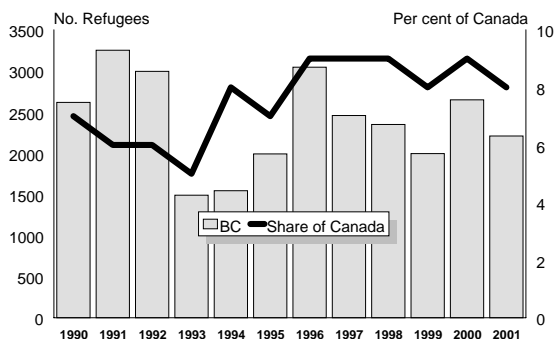
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Refugee Immigrants to British Columbia

Accepting and settling refugees has always been an important theme in Canada's immigration policy. It is estimated that about 23,000 to 30,400 refugees will be admitted to Canada during 2002...

Historically, the number of refugee immigrants arriving in British Columbia has been small relative to other provinces such as Quebec and Ontario. Over the past decade, the annual number of refugee immigrants to B.C. has been less than three thousand people, representing between six to seven per cent of all landings in the province. This accounted for less than ten per cent of all refugees who arrived in Canada during the last ten years.

B.C. Refugee Immigrants

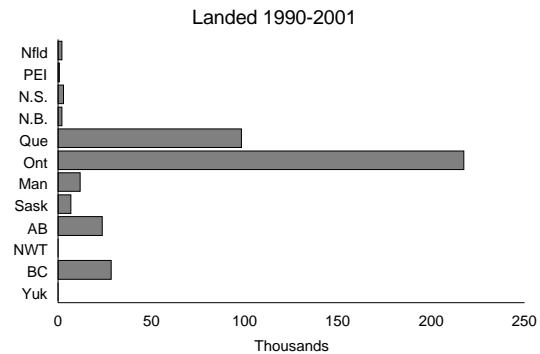


B.C.'s share of refugees has been steady and never exceeded its share of total Canadian immigrants. B.C.'s share of refugees remained at about 8 per cent even at the peak immigration period during the mid 1990s when the province attracted more than 20 per cent of immigrants to Canada.

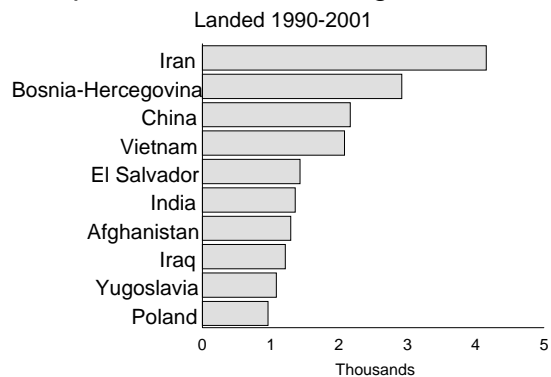
Also, during the early 1990s when refugees represented more than 20 per cent of all new comers to Canada, B.C. share of total refugees was still at about 6 to 7 per cent.

Over the last decade, most refugees destined for B.C. arrived from countries in the Middle-East and Asia with Iran being the top source. The top

Refugees by Province of Destination



Top 10 Sources of Refugees to B.C.



ten sources of refugees accounted for about 65 per cent of all refugees landed in the province during that time. Vietnam and Poland, the two dominating sources of refugees during the 1980s, have now moved down in the top ten list.

Generally speaking, refugees to Canada can be divided into two major categories—those who are sponsored privately and those who are sponsored by government. Over the last decade, most refugees to B.C. were admitted under the sponsorship of a government body. The trend also indicated that fewer refugees were privately sponsored in recent years.

Until recently, refugee immigrants could also be sub-categorized into two classes, namely Convention Refugees and Designated Classes. Convention refugees are those who suit the definition of a refugee stipulated by the United

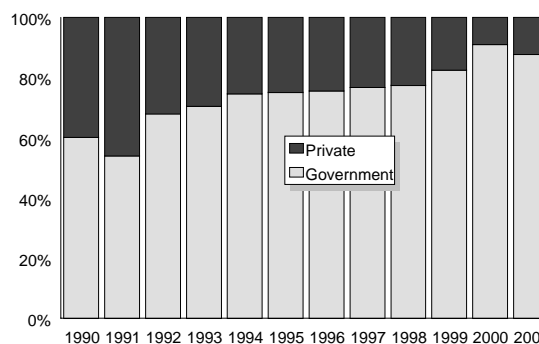
Nations, whereas persons in the Designated Classes include those who face similar situations in being refugees but do not satisfy the strict definition of a convention refugee.

Compared with the overall immigration to B.C., refugees are relatively younger. For those who landed between 1990 and 2001, a higher proportion of refugees was in the 25–34 age group. Also, contrary to the overall landings in the province, where a higher proportion of immigrants were female, male refugees outnumbered female refugees in most age groups. Males represented about 60 per cent of all refugees landed during the given period.

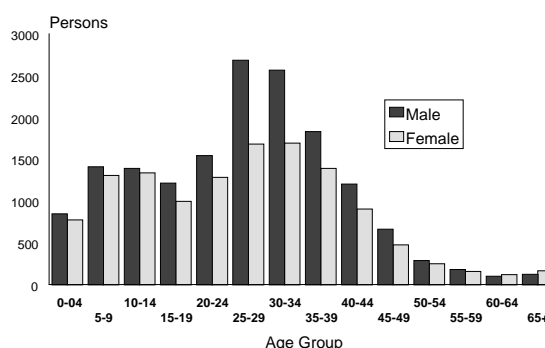
Education qualifications of refugees were relatively lower than those of other immigrants. Over the period 1990–2001, there were approximately 60 per cent of refugees aged 20 and over who had only secondary or less education, comparatively higher than the 44 per cent observed for the non-refugee immigrants.


English language ability of refugees was only slightly lower than that of the non-refugee immigrants. At time of landing during 1990–2001, 54 per cent of refugees reported having no English language ability, which is only marginally higher than the 50 per cent reported by non-refugee immigrants. Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Persian, Vietnamese and Farsi were the most often spoken languages by refugees who came during 1990–2001.

B.C. Refugees by Sponsorship
Landed 1990-2001



B.C. Refugees By Gender By Age
Landed 1990-2001



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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/01	% change on one year ago
BC	4,108.0	0.9
Canada	31,185.8	0.9
GDP and INCOME		% change on one year ago
<i>(BC - at market prices)</i>	2000	
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$ millions)	127,564	5.8
GDP (\$ 1997 millions)	124,464	3.9
GDP (\$ 1997 per Capita)	30,664	3.1
Personal Disposable Income (\$ 1997 per Capita)	19,029	3.1
TRADE (\$ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Jan	2,672	-11.5
Merchandise Exports (raw) Jan	2,119	-29.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Jan	3,279	7.0
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on one year ago
<i>(all items - 1992=100)</i>	Feb '02	
BC	115.9	2.9
Canada	116.9	1.5
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on one year ago
<i>(seasonally adjusted)</i>	Mar '02	
Labour Force - BC	2,131	1.0
Employed - BC	1,940	-1.6
Unemployed - BC	191	37.6
		Mar '01
Unemployment Rate - BC (percent)	9.0	6.6
Unemployment Rate - Canada (percent)	7.7	7.0
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Apr 3/02	Apr 4/01
Prime Business Rate	3.75	6.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	5.00	6.70
- 5 year	7.30	7.25
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Apr 3/02	Apr 4/01
<i>(avg. noon spot rate)</i> Cdn \$	1.5889	1.5694
US \$ <i>(reciprocal of the closing rate)</i>	0.6289	0.6359
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE		% change on one year ago
<i>(industrial aggregate - dollars)</i>	Mar '02	
BC	663.44	2.0
Canada	647.71	2.7

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, } Statistics
 Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Canada
 Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics
 For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bankofcanada.ca

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2001 Census results

Population and dwelling counts from the 2001 Census were released on March 12th. Data is posted to our site. Follow the link at the centre of our home page.



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Released this week by BC STATS

- Tourism Sector Monitor, March 2002
- Migration Highlights, Fourth Quarter 2001

Next week

- Labour force Statistics, March 2002