



Labour Market and Immigration Division
REFUGEE IMMIGRANTS
2004 - 2008

FEBRUARY 2010

FACT SHEET

Refugee Immigrants to British Columbia, 2004-2008

According to the United Nations, there were close to 15.2 million refugees worldwide in 2008.¹ As part of the international community and to meet its humanitarian obligations, Canada has a long standing tradition of providing protection and permanent residency to refugees from around the world.

Canada's immigration and refugee system protects two groups of individuals. As a signatory to the *United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Canada offers asylum to "Convention Refugees". These are individuals outside their country of nationality who have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group.

In addition to Convention Refugees, Canada also admits "Protected Persons". This group of individuals is defined in several United Nations Conventions including the *Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. Canada protects and offers permanent residences to these individuals whose removal to their country of origin would subject them personally to a danger of torture, a risk to their life, or a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

Refugee Levels

From 2004 to 2008, 150,777 Convention Refugees and Protected Persons became Permanent Residents (new immigrants) of Canada through the Refugee Class. This represented 12.2% of immigrants to Canada. Of all provinces and territories, Ontario received the most refugee immigrants during this period with 86,313 (or 57.2% of Canada's refugee total). Quebec was second with 32,108 (21.3% of Canada) followed by Alberta with 10,853 (7.2% of Canada).



B.C. welcomed 9,832 refugees during this period, an average of 1,966 annually, and fourth among provinces and territories. While B.C. received 16.7% of total immigrants to Canada between 2004 and 2008, the province received 6.5% of refugees.

The term Refugee in this document refers only to refugees who have been accepted as Permanent Residents of Canada. Refugee immigrants are also referred to as Refugee Class immigrants. The statistics and figures do not include Refugee Claimants who have not been granted Permanent Resident status.

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2008 Global Trends

Table 1: Number of Refugee Immigrants to Provinces, 2004-2008

Provinces	2004	2004 % of Canada	2005	2006	2007	2008	2008 % of Canada
Alberta	2,210	6.8%	2,248	2,334	2,216	1,845	8.4%
British Columbia	2,367	7.2%	2,159	1,891	1,883	1,532	7.0%
Manitoba	1,252	3.8%	1,094	1,238	1,170	972	4.4%
Ontario	18,341	56.1%	21,892	18,704	15,516	11,860	54.3%
Quebec	7,383	22.6%	7,165	7,104	5,934	4,522	20.7%
Saskatchewan	560	1.7%	614	626	617	552	2.5%
Atlantic Provinces	569	1.7%	600	599	610	566	2.6%
Canada Total	32,687	100.0%	35,776	32,499	27,955	21,860	100.0%

*Refugee immigrant totals for the territories were suppressed due to small numbers.

Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Refugee immigrants account for a small share of total immigrants to B.C. when compared to other provinces. Between 2004 and 2008, refugees made up 4.8% of total immigrants to B.C., the lowest of all provinces. The highest share was Newfoundland where refugees represented 27.9% of total immigrants to that province. This was followed by Saskatchewan (19.6%) and Quebec (14.4%).

There are several ways for asylum-seekers to become Permanent Residents. They can be selected abroad for resettlement in Canada through the assistance of the Government of Canada or private sponsorship. Asylum seekers may also arrive in Canada and then seek refugee protection (Refugee Claimants). The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), an independent administrative tribunal, decides on claims for refugee protection made by persons in Canada, who are also referred to as Asylum Refugees or In-Canada Refugees.

Of the total 9,832 Refugee Class immigrants who arrived in B.C. from 2004 and 2008:

- 42.7% (4,202) were Government Assisted Refugees (GARs);
- 32.2% (3,168) were Asylum Refugees;
- 13.0% (1,283) were Refugee Dependants; and
- 12.0% (1,179) were Privately Sponsored Refugees.

*This report includes all of these above categories unless otherwise stated.

Asylum Refugees are also referred to as Refugees Landed in Canada, and as Protected Persons in Canada.

Refugee Dependants are family members of a Refugee Landed in Canada and who were residing abroad or in Canada at the time of application.

For further definitions of refugee categories visit: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2008/glossary.asp>

Source Countries

Source countries of refugees to B.C. change from year to year as world events unfold. As a result, source countries of refugees tend to vary more from year to year than for total new immigrants to B.C. In 2008, B.C. received refugees from 70 different countries (based on country of citizenship).

The top source countries of refugees to B.C. arriving between 2004 and 2008, were Afghanistan (1,129 arrivals), Myanmar (881), Iran (875), Mainland China (816), Iraq (573), Colombia (510), Sudan (390), Ethiopia (321), Sri Lanka (294), and Somalia (272).

Table 2: Top 10 Source Countries of Refugee Immigrants to B.C, 2004-2008 (based on country of citizenship)

	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008
Mainland China	306	Afghanistan	288	Afghanistan	235	Myanmar	406	Iraq	261
Afghanistan	283	Mainland China	208	Iran	175	Afghanistan	232	Myanmar	220
Iran	247	Iran	135	Mainland China	157	Iran	141	Iran	177
Sudan	125	Colombia	132	Myanmar	133	Iraq	112	Afghanistan	91
Indonesia	121	Sudan	109	Colombia	131	Mainland China	92	Ethiopia	72
Fiji	116	Sri Lanka	98	Sudan	89	Colombia	75	Colombia	62
Colombia	110	Somalia	75	Ethiopia	84	Vietnam	71	D.R. Of Congo	56
Iraq	104	Ethiopia	71	Sri Lanka	62	India	67	Mexico	56
Sri Lanka	66	Pakistan	69	India	54	Somalia	53	Somalia	54
Pakistan	60	Myanmar	68	Mexico	52	Mexico	51	Mainland China	53
Other Countries	829	Other Countries	906	Other Countries	719	Other Countries	583	Other Countries	430
B.C. Total	2,367	B.C. Total	2,159	B.C. Total	1,891	B.C. Total	1,883	B.C. Total	1,532

* Due to small values, Stateless and Not Stated are included in "Other Countries".

Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

By world region, over the past ten years increasing proportions of refugees settling in B.C. came from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while the proportions coming from Europe and Central Asia declined.

Age and Gender Distribution of Refugees

The age and gender distribution of refugee immigrants to B.C. tend to be slightly different than immigrants arriving from other immigration classes. On average, refugees are younger than other immigrants. Furthermore, a slight

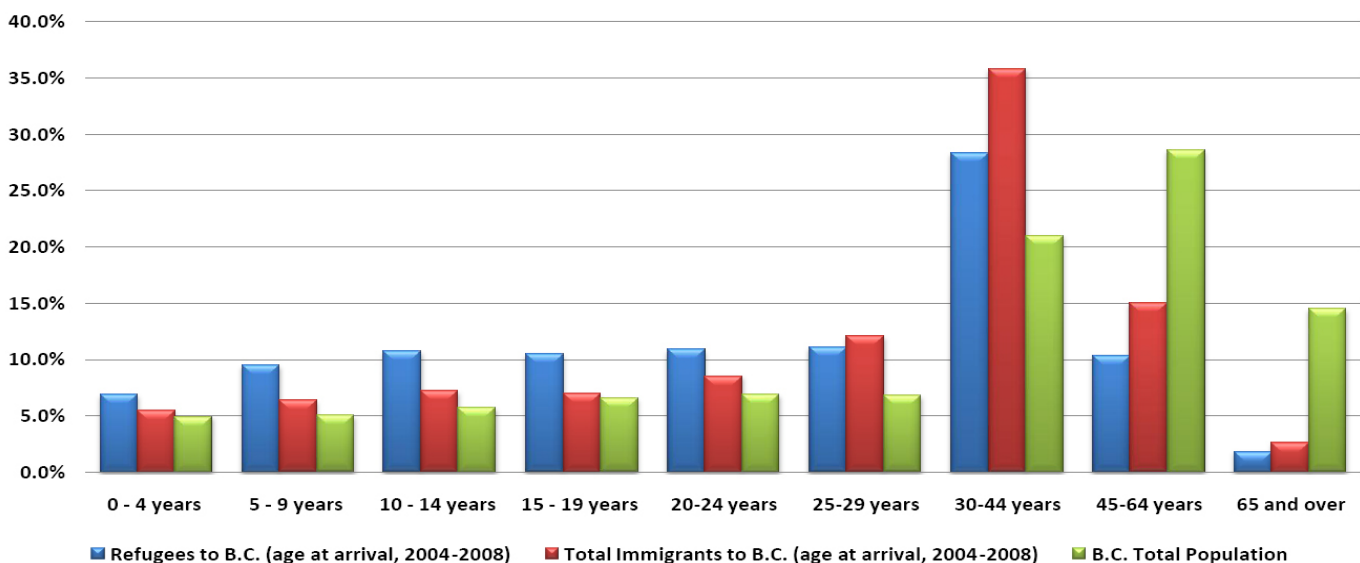
majority of refugees are males while overall, there were more female immigrants to B.C.

Nearly half (48.4%) of all refugees to B.C. were under the age of 25 at the time of arrival, compared to 34.6% of all immigrants. In comparison in 2008, only 29.1% of B.C.'s total population was under 25 years old.

Only 10.3% of the refugees to B.C. during this period were between 45 and 64 years old compared to 15.0% of total immigrants to B.C. and 28.6% of B.C.'s total population.

Chart 1:

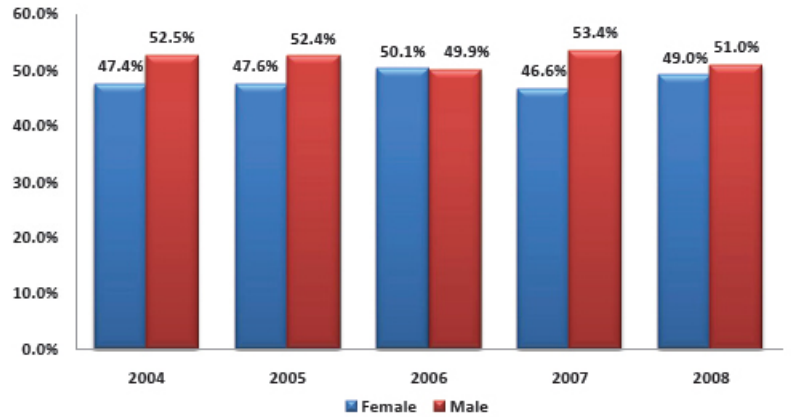
Higher proportions of refugees are children and youth when compared with all immigrants to B.C. and B.C.'s total population



Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada and BC Stats

Of the 9,832 refugees who arrived in B.C. during this period, 51.9% were males and 48.1% were females. This was nearly identical to the national trend (51.4% males vs. 48.6% females). While male refugee immigrants accounted for a greater share to B.C. than female refugee immigrants, overall, there were more female immigrants to B.C. (52.4%) during this period than males (47.6%). This was mostly due to the large number of female immigrants in the Family Class and Live-in Caregiver Class.

Chart 2: Number of Refugee Immigrants to B.C. by Gender, 2004-2008



Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Official Language Ability

Of refugees arriving in B.C. between 2004 and 2008 (aged 15 and over), 56.6% had official language ability (English or French) at the time of arrival, compared to 65.0% for all arriving immigrants.

Official language ability varied widely by refugee category. It was highest among Asylum Refugees (94.7%), followed by Privately Sponsored Refugees (41.6%), Refugee Dependants Abroad (36.3%) and Government Assisted Refugees (28.9%). Official language ability of Asylum Refugees was particularly high possibly because they lived in Canada as temporary residents (generally Refugee Claimants) before acquiring Permanent Resident status.

Educational Attainment

Education levels of refugees to B.C. are lower than immigrants arriving in other immigration classes. This is likely because refugees are selected based on humanitarian considerations, rather than human capital or educational attainment, as in several other immigration classes.

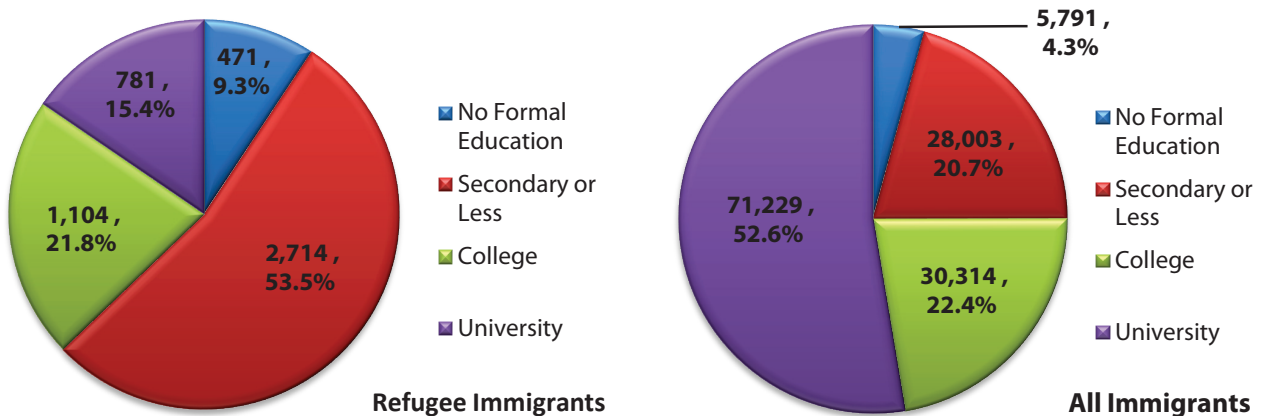
From 2004 to 2008, 62.8% or 3,185 adult refugees (aged 25 and over) had a primary or secondary school education, or no formal education, as their highest level of education. This is compared to 25.0% or 33,794 among all immigrants to B.C.

While a much greater proportion of new immigrants have a university degree compared to Canadian-born in B.C., the percentage of refugee immigrants with a university education was lower than Canadian-born. From 2004 to 2008, 15.4% of refugee immigrants stated university as their highest level of education compared to 52.6% of all immigrants and 23.3% of Canadian-born.

14.2% of the refugees with a university degree came from Afghanistan (based on country of citizenship). This was followed by Colombia (10.0%), and Iran (8.8%).

Census 2006 data was used to determine the educational attainment of the Canadian-born population in B.C.

Chart 3: Education Level of Refugees and All Immigrants to B.C., Aged 25+ (2004-2008 Arrivals)



Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Refugee Children and Youth

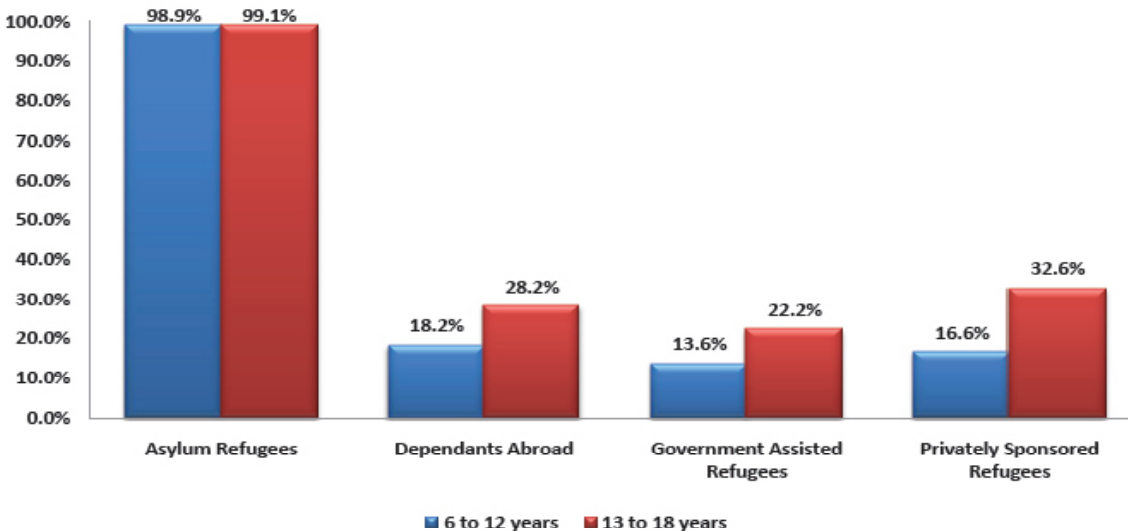
Refugee children and youth are an important and large component of the refugee immigrant population to B.C. Between 2004 and 2008, B.C. welcomed 3,479 refugee children and youth (aged 18 or less), which accounted for 35.4% of all refugee arrivals. Of all refugee children and youth, approximately one-quarter were 5 years or younger (849, or 24.4%), 40.1% between 6 and 12 years old (1,395) and over one-third between 13 and 18 years (1,235, or 35.5%).

31.3% of primary school-aged refugees (children 6 to 12 years old), and 39.0% of secondary school-aged refugees (youth 13 to 18 years old) arrived with official language

ability. These rates were nearly the same as for children arriving in other immigration classes.

Levels of official language ability, however, varied widely by refugee category. Between 2004 and 2008, 98.9% of Asylum Refugee children and 99.1% of Asylum Refugee youth had official language ability. In comparison, official language ability for other refugee categories was low. For instance, only 13.6% of Government Assisted Refugee children and 22.2% of Government Assisted Refugee youth had official language ability.

Table 3: Official Language Ability (English or French) at the time of arrival of school-aged refugees (arriving 2004-2008)



Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Destination Within B.C.

Compared to all immigrants arriving to B.C., refugees are more likely to settle in the Greater Vancouver area. 95.0% of refugees arriving between 2004 and 2008 settled initially in Greater Vancouver, compared to 86.7% of all new immigrants to B.C.

Economic Outcomes of Refugees

Data and analysis on the economic outcomes specific to refugees are limited. Major sources of economic and labour force information such as the Census and the Labour Force Survey do not distinguish between immigrants arriving through different entry classes. However, the Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB) tracks some aspects of the settlement and integration experiences of refugees by reporting on their earnings and sources of income after arrival in Canada.

As with immigrants as a whole, studies based on IMDB data have shown that economic outcomes for refugees improve in successive years after arrival in Canada.

This is illustrated, in part, by the fact that refugees arriving more than ten years ago show higher levels of income and much lower reliance on social assistance payments than refugees who have arrived more recently (see Table 4, limited to Government Assisted Refugees and Privately Sponsored Refugees). The data in Table 4 do not, of course, take into consideration the different composition of each arrival cohort or the conditions under which they arrived.

The varied economic outcomes for refugees are contingent on a myriad of factors that include not only the education and skills of individual refugees, but also health (physical and mental), economic and social conditions at and after the time of arrival, as well as changes in selection and resettlement procedures for refugees.

This is also reflected in where refugees have come from. Outcomes for refugees from Africa and Southeast Asia, in particular have shown less improvement or even some decline (depending on the measure and time of arrival) over time.

While outcomes for refugees overall do improve with time in Canada, levels of income for refugees are not only lower than those of immigrants in most other classes immediately after arrival in Canada, but also remain relatively low many years after arrival. Similarly, rates of social assistance use remain higher than for other immigrants.

Despite differences in economic outcomes, refugees are generally more satisfied with their experiences in Canada than Economic Class immigrants.² These differences in levels of satisfaction can in part be attributed to differences in expectations and motivation upon arriving in a new country. Based on the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), refugees are also more likely to report that their experience in Canada had been better than expected compared to Economic Class immigrants.

² Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, A Portrait of Early Settlement Experiences

Table 4:
Average income and social assistance rates in 2005 of refugee tax-filers (18 years and over) living in B.C. by period of arrival in Canada

Period of Arrival	Refugee Category	Average total income (2005)	% receiving social assistance income (2005)
1991 - 1995	Government Assisted Refugees and Privately Sponsored	\$20,110	7.1%
1996 - 2000	Government Assisted Refugees and Privately Sponsored	\$19,103	10.8%
2001 - 2004	Government Assisted Refugees and Privately Sponsored**	\$10,114	31.2%

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Data Base (IMDB) Custom Tabulation

**Note: The figure showing a high proportion of the most recent refugee arrivals receiving social assistance income is likely influenced by government programs that give income support to Government Assisted Refugees for a minimum of 1 year after arrival in Canada. Data Source: Statistics Canada and CIC, Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB).

You can find more research, reports and statistics about Refugees and Immigrants from the following sources:

Government of British Columbia:

http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/communities/facts_trends/index.html

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/menu-research-stats.asp

Immigration and Refugee Board

<http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/eng/pages/index.aspx>

Immigrant Services Society of B.C.

<http://www.issbc.org/publications>

Metropolis B.C.

www.mbc.metropolis.net

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

www.unhcr.org

For more information on the Refugee Immigrants Fact Sheet, contact:

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