



Immigrant Demographics Abbotsford, BC

2023

About the **NewToBC** Immigrant Demographic Profiles

NewToBC is pleased to share this 3rd edition of its **Immigrant Demographic Profiles**; the first edition was developed in 2013 and the second in 2018. Using Census 2021 data, profiles have been created for the 14 Greater Vancouver / Fraser Valley communities that received the greatest number of new immigrants over the last census period (2016 – 2021).

The profiles include useful data on countries of origin, languages spoken, age at immigration, education levels,

employment, income, religion, and more. Library staff and community service providers have found these profiles invaluable for service planning and funding proposals. Immigrants, the business community and others have found the information useful in understanding their communities and their newest residents.

To learn more about **NewToBC** and its work and for a glossary of terms, see the back page.

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Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

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About the Abbotsford

Abbotsford is located in the Greater Vancouver region of British Columbia, adjacent to Metro Vancouver and the Canada-United States border. In Canada, Abbotsford is bordered by the Township of Langley to the west, the Fraser River and Mission District to the north, and Chilliwack City to the east.

There are three Fraser Valley Regional Library branches within Abbotsford.

Land Acknowledgement

NewToBC acknowledges that Abbotsford is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Stó:lō people, the Semá:th First Nation and Mathxwí First Nation.

The National Picture

In 2021, Canada welcomed a record number of immigrants — 406,000. Immigrants made up 23% of Canada's total population, also a new high. Nearly 70,000 chose B.C. in 2021; this marked the second-highest level of international immigration to B.C. on record.

Geography	Total Pop 2021	Immigrant Pop 2021	Immigrant Pop Total 2021	Recent Immigrant Pop 2021	Recent Immigrant Pop Total 2021
	#	#	%	#	%
Canada	36,991,981	8,361,505	23.0%	1,328,240	3.7%
Ontario	14,223,942	4,206,585	30.0%	584,680	4.2%
British Columbia	5,000,879	1,425,710	29.0%	197,425	4.0%
Quebec	8,501,833	1,210,600	14.6%	202,740	2.4%
Alberta	4,262,635	970,970	23.2%	193,175	4.6%
Manitoba	1,342,153	257,620	19.7%	58,370	4.5%
Saskatchewan	1,132,505	137,620	12.5%	43,115	3.9%
Nova Scotia	969,383	71,565	7.5%	21,385	2.2%
New Brunswick	775,610	44,120	5.8%	16,040	2.1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	510,550	14,250	2.8%	4,265	0.9%
Prince Edward Island	154,331	11,765	7.8%	4,860	3.2%
Yukon	40,232	5,385	13.6%	1,125	2.8%
Northwest Territories	41,070	4,145	10.3%	815	2.0%
Nunavut	36,858	1,165	3.2%	240	0.7%

100% sample data for total population and 25% sample data for immigration status (Census 2021)

- ▶ The number of immigrants settling in B.C. almost doubled between 2016 and 2021; 38,085 arrived in 2016 and 69,470 in 2021.
- ▶ In Census 2021 British Columbia's 1.42 million immigrants represented 17% of the national total. Only Ontario, with 4.2 million, had more.
- ▶ 29% of all British Columbians were born outside of Canada, similar to Ontario's 30% and notably higher than the national level of 23%.
- ▶ During the census period, B.C. welcomed 14.9% of Canada's recent immigrants; Ontario welcomed 44%.
- ▶ NOTE: Census 2021 encompasses a portion of the Covid period, when immigration levels were low, and does not capture the strong post-Covid increase.

Immigration to British Columbia

These were the 20 B.C. municipalities attracting the largest numbers of immigrants during the Census period – 2016 to 2021.

- ▶ In Census 2021, 76.4% of all B.C.'s immigrants and 78.4% of recent immigrants resided in Greater Vancouver.
- ▶ Recent immigrants accounted for more than 80% of total population growth in Greater Vancouver.
- ▶ In 2021, Abbotsford was the 6th largest recipient of recent immigrants to B.C.

Geography	Total Pop 2021	Total Pop Growth 2016-2021	Immigrant Pop 2021	Immigrant Total Pop 2021	Recent Immigrant Pop 2021	Recent Immigrant Total 2021	Immigrant Pop Growth 2016-2021	Immigrant Pop Growth 2016-2021
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
British Columbia	4,915,945	7.8%	1,425,715	29.0%	197,425	4.0%	133,040	10.3%
Greater Vancouver	2,607,010	7.5%	1,089,185	41.8%	154,815	5.9%	99,645	10.1%
Vancouver	650,380	5.2%	274,365	42.2%	41,360	6.4%	11,595	4.4%
Surrey	562,565	10.0%	250,870	44.6%	39,910	7.1%	30,715	14.0%
Burnaby	245,725	6.8%	123,795	50.4%	18,920	7.7%	8,650	7.5%
Richmond	208,400	6.0%	125,600	60.3%	13,705	6.6%	7,295	6.2%
Coquitlam	147,465	6.8%	67,540	45.8%	8,595	5.8%	6,480	10.6%
Abbotsford	150,800	8.8%	43,190	28.6%	6,130	4.1%	4,970	13.0%
New Westminster	78,055	11.7%	29,265	37.5%	5,050	6.5%	4,890	20.1%
Delta	107,270	6.4%	35,560	33.1%	4,325	4.0%	4,320	13.8%
Langley, Township	130,960	13.1%	29,890	22.8%	3,805	2.9%	7,395	32.9%
North Vancouver, City	57,505	10.2%	22,020	38.3%	3,585	6.2%	2,090	10.5%
Kelowna	141,760	14.2%	21,635	15.3%	3,545	2.5%	3,795	21.3%
Saanich	115,505	3.3%	26,040	22.5%	3,405	2.9%	1,285	5.2%
North Vancouver, District	87,385	3.0%	28,195	32.3%	3,340	3.8%	1,690	6.4%
Victoria	87,890	7.6%	17,575	20.0%	3,065	3.5%	1,635	10.3%
Nanaimo	97,020	10.7%	15,620	16.1%	2,260	2.3%	2,500	19.1%
Maple Ridge	89,860	11.0%	20,230	22.5%	2,160	2.4%	4,770	30.9%
Port Coquitlam	60,390	4.3%	20,765	34.4%	2,135	3.5%	2,335	12.7%
West Vancouver	43,385	4.1%	19,815	45.7%	2,080	4.8%	1,200	6.4%
Chilliwack	91,985	11.9%	13,600	14.8%	1,610	1.8%	2,615	23.8%
Prince George	75,160	3.6%	7,710	10.3%	1,440	1.9%	280	3.8%

20 communities in B.C. that received the most immigrants over the last census period (2016 – 2021)

Between 2016 and 2021, the City of Abbotsford continued to experience faster growth in both its total population (8.8%) and immigrant population (13.0%), when compared to Greater Vancouver (7.5% and 10.1%).

Immigration to the City of Abbotsford

Recent censuses underline the role of immigration in the City's population growth.

Year	Abbotsford			Greater Vancouver		
	Total Pop #	Immigrant Pop #	Total Immigrant Pop %	Total Pop #	Immigrant Pop #	Total Immigrant Pop %
2021	150,800	43,185	28.6%	2,607,010	1,089,185	41.8%
2016	141,397	38,220	27.6%	2,463,431	989,540	40.8%
2011	133,497	33,930	25.9%	2,313,328	913,310	40.0%
2006	124,258	31,950	25.7%	2,116,581	831,265	39.6%
2001	115,495	27,030	23.4%	1,986,965	738,555	37.5%

Population and Immigration Trends: (2001 - 2021)

▶ Over the past two decades, from 2001 to 2021, the immigrant population in Abbotsford has increased by 60%, doubling the growth rate of the total population at 31%. Immigration contributed to 46% of the growth in Abbotsford during this period.

▶ Immigrants as a percentage of population has steadily risen from 23.4% in 2001 to 28.6% in 2021, a significantly faster rate of increase than in Greater Vancouver.

Immigrants by Age Group

Census data illustrates the emphasis placed on those of core working age within Canada's immigration system.

▶ Immigration is a key economic solution to Canada's aging population. In 2021, the average age of Abbotsford's recent immigrants was 33.6, compared to 51.0 for its total immigrants and 36.1 for the Canadian-born population.

▶ In 2021, core working-age immigrants (25-54 years) accounted for 63% of Abbotsford's recent immigrants and 50% of

its total immigrant population, significantly higher than the 35% among the Canadian-born.

▶ Only 6% of recent immigrants were aged 65 or over, considerably lower than the 26% of immigrant and 15% of Canadian-born seniors.

▶ The Canadian-born population showed a notably higher proportion (24%) of young people between the ages of 0-14, compared to

immigrants (3%) and recent immigrants (13%). In part, this is due to the influx of young adult immigrants over the past couple of decades, now with children.

Immigration is playing a significant role in addressing Canada's low birth rate and its aging population.

Period of Arrival

The City of Abbotsford and the Greater Vancouver region exhibit a similar pattern in the distribution of immigrants based on the period of their arrival.

▶ Census 2021 shows that Abbotsford's recent immigrants made up 14% (6,130) of its immigrant population, equal to Greater Vancouver's regional level.

▶ 27% of immigrants had lived in Canada for less than ten years, slightly higher than the 26% of Greater Vancouver's population.

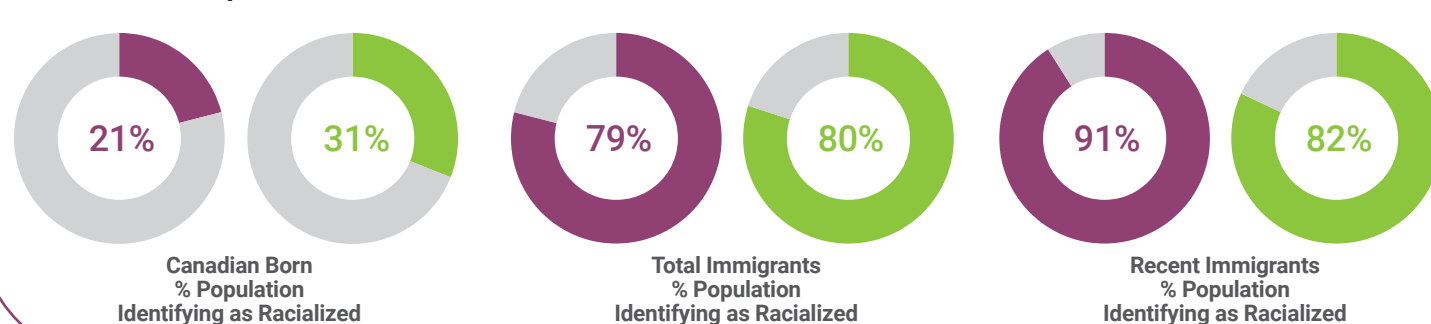
	Abbotsford		Greater Vancouver	
	#	%	#	%
Total Immigrants	43,190	100%	1,089,185	100%
2016 to 2021	6,130	14%	154,815	14%
2011 to 2015	5,630	13%	133,920	12%
2001 to 2010	11,210	26%	259,830	24%
1991 to 2000	8,575	20%	255,480	23%
1980 to 1990	4,475	10%	126,865	12%
Before 1980	7,165	17%	158,270	15%

Immigrant Arrivals by Period of Immigration (Census 2021)

Age	Abbotsford			Greater Vancouver		
	Canadian-born #	Total Immigrants %	Recent Immigrants %	Canadian-born #	Total Immigrants %	Recent Immigrants %
Total	100,680	100%	43,185	100%	6,125	100%
0 to 14 yrs	24,480	24%	1,305	3%	805	13%
15 to 24 yrs	15,005	15%	2,155	5%	735	12%
25 to 54 yrs	34,775	35%	21,745	50%	3,840	63%
55 to 64 yrs	11,530	11%	6,600	15%	400	7%
65 yrs +	14,890	15%	11,400	26%	355	6%

Age Distribution - Abbotsford (Census 2021)

Racialized Groups in Abbotsford



▶ A significant majority of both immigrants and recent immigrants identify as members of a racialized group, also known as visible minorities.

▶ The proportion of racialized groups among recent immigrants in Abbotsford is almost 10% higher than in the Greater Vancouver region.

The percentage of the total immigrant population identifying as racialized is almost the same in Abbotsford (79%) and Greater Vancouver (80%).

Countries of Origin

India is the predominant country of origin for immigrants in Abbotsford, followed by a diverse assortment of countries.

- ▶ Almost six out of ten (59%) recent immigrants to Abbotsford were born in India, followed by, in distant second, the Philippines (6%), and third, Syria (4%).
- ▶ About 10% of B.C.'s recent immigrants from India live in Abbotsford, more than triple the city's share (3%) of total recent immigrants.

Abbotsford				B.C.				Greater Vancouver			
	#	%		#	%		#	%		#	%
Total Immigrants	43,190	100%	Recent Immigrants	6,130	100%	Recent Immigrants	197,425	100%	Recent Immigrants	154,820	100%
India	23,830	55%	India	3,600	59%	India	39,390	20%	India	30,545	20%
U.K.	2,315	5%	Philippines	375	6%	China	31,450	16%	China	28,970	19%
Philippines	1,730	4%	Syria	265	4%	Philippines	21,220	11%	Philippines	15,090	10%
U.S.	1,395	3%	Pakistan	145	2%	U.S.	8,760	4%	Korea, South	6,125	4%
Netherlands	895	2%	Korea, South	125	2%	U.K.	7,670	4%	Iran	5,615	4%
Viet Nam	885	2%	U.S.	120	2%	Korea, South	7,225	4%	U.S.	5,460	4%
Korea, South	850	2%	China	100	2%	Iran	5,850	3%	Brazil	4,625	3%
China	845	2%	U.K.	80	1%	Brazil	5,125	3%	U.K.	4,555	3%
Germany	820	2%	Congo	65	1%	Syria	4,955	3%	Syria	3,380	2%
Pakistan	565	1%	Russia	60	1%	Australia	3,280	2%	Mexico	2,460	2%
Other places	9,060	21%	Other places	1,195	19%	Other places	62,500	30%	Other places	47,995	29%

Top 10 Places of Birth, by Total and Recent Immigrant Populations (Census 2021)

Immigration Arrival Categories

Abbotsford has witnessed a surge in immigrants arriving in the economic class and a decrease in the proportion of immigrants sponsored by family.

- ▶ Census 2021 reported that 44% of recent immigrants in Abbotsford arrived in the economic class. While this figure is still lower than the 63% for Greater Vancouver, it represents a 10% increase compared to the Census 2016 period.
- ▶ Conversely, the proportion of recent immigrants arriving in Abbotsford under the family class has decreased to 45% in 2021 from 63% in 2016.
- ▶ Abbotsford has a relatively high proportion of refugees, including 8% of total immigrants and 11% of recent immigrants.

Immigration Category	Abbotsford				Greater Vancouver			
	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants				
Total Immigrants	36,025	100%	6,130	100%	930,915	100%	154,820	100%
Economic immigrants	10,505	29%	2,685	44%	554,240	60%	97,715	63%
Principal applicants	4,425	12%	1,365	22%	225,255	24%	52,940	34%
Secondary applicants	6,080	17%	1,315	21%	328,990	35%	44,775	29%
Immigrants sponsored by family	22,560	63%	2,730	45%	282,705	30%	43,515	28%
Refugees	2,795	8%	675	11%	81,155	9%	12,880	8%
Other immigrants	165	0%	45	1%	12,805	1%	710	0%

Number of Immigrants by Immigration Category (2021). Reflects admission category and applicant type for the immigrant population in private households who landed between 1980 and 2021 - 25% sample data

*Note: 'Other immigrant' refers to a person who was granted permanent resident status under a public policy or humanitarian and compassionate cases.

India, the Philippines and Syria were the top three source countries for recent immigrants to Abbotsford.

Languages Spoken

The majority of immigrants in Abbotsford speak non-official languages, specifically Punjabi at home.

► In line with source country data, Punjabi maintains its dominant position as the most spoken home language among Abbotsford's immigrant (45%) and recent immigrant population (43%).

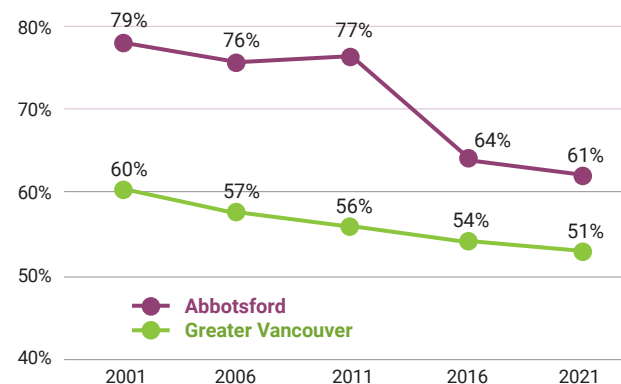
► The proportion of immigrants and recent immigrants speaking non-official languages at home is significantly higher than in Greater Vancouver.

Abbotsford			Greater Vancouver		
	#	%		#	%
Total Immigrants	43,190	100%	Recent Immigrants	6,125	100%
Non-official languages	25,320	59%	Non-official languages	4,130	67%
Punjabi (Panjabi)	19,220	45%	Punjabi (Panjabi)	2,650	43%
Korean	600	1%	Arabic	345	6%
Vietnamese	525	1%	Hindi	155	3%
Mandarin	490	1%	Korean	105	2%
Arabic	465	1%	Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	95	2%
Spanish	425	1%	Russian	75	1%
Hindi	420	1%	Urdu	70	1%
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	410	1%	Gujarati	65	1%
Urdu	300	1%	Mandarin	60	1%
Yue (Cantonese)	270	1%	Spanish	55	1%
Other non-official languages	2,195	5%	Other non-official languages	455	7%
			Recent Immigrants	154,820	100%
			Non-official languages	86,615	56%
			Mandarin	21,675	14%
			Punjabi (Panjabi)	13,095	8%
			Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	6,160	4%
			Korean	4,515	3%
			Yue (Cantonese)	4,180	3%
			Iranian (Persian)	4,105	3%
			Arabic	3,670	2%
			Spanish	3,505	2%
			Portuguese	3,335	2%
			Hindi	2,510	2%
			Other non-official languages	19,865	13%

Top 10 Non-official Languages Spoken at Home (Census 2021)

Percentage of population with English as a mother tongue

► Over time, there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of residents who speak English only as their mother tongue. This figure dropped from 79% in 2001 to 61% in 2021, a faster decline than in Greater Vancouver, particularly during the Census 2011-2016 period.



Language Trends (2001-2021) - By % of Population with English Only as a Mother Tongue

Languages Spoken at Work

The vast majority of immigrants speak English at work, and the proportion is growing.

► In 2021, 18% of Abbotsford's recent immigrants spoke non-official languages often at work, representing a significant decrease from the 34% reported in the 2016 Census. This decline suggests a

positive shift towards increased English language proficiency and integration into the local workforce among recent immigrants.

Abbotsford		Greater Vancouver	
Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Recent Immigrants
	%		%
Non-official languages	16%	Non-official languages	18%
Punjabi (Panjabi)	14%	Punjabi (Panjabi)	16%
Vietnamese	0.5%	Korean	0.6%
Mandarin	0.3%	Spanish	0.2%
		Non-official languages	10%
		Mandarin	4%
		Punjabi (Panjabi)	2%
		Yue (Cantonese)	1%

Languages Spoken Most Often at Work By % of immigrant population aged 15 years and over (Census 2021)

Religious Affiliation

Abbotsford has a significant population of Sikh immigrants.

	Abbotsford	G. Van.
Religion	Total Immigrants %	Recent Immigrants %
Total	100%	100%
Buddhist	1%	3%
Christian	27%	30%
Hindu	5%	8%
Jewish	0%	1%
Muslim	3%	10%
Sikh	50%	11%
Traditional (N. American Indigenous) spirituality	0%	0%
Other religions and spiritual traditions	1%	1%
No religion and secular perspectives	13%	38%

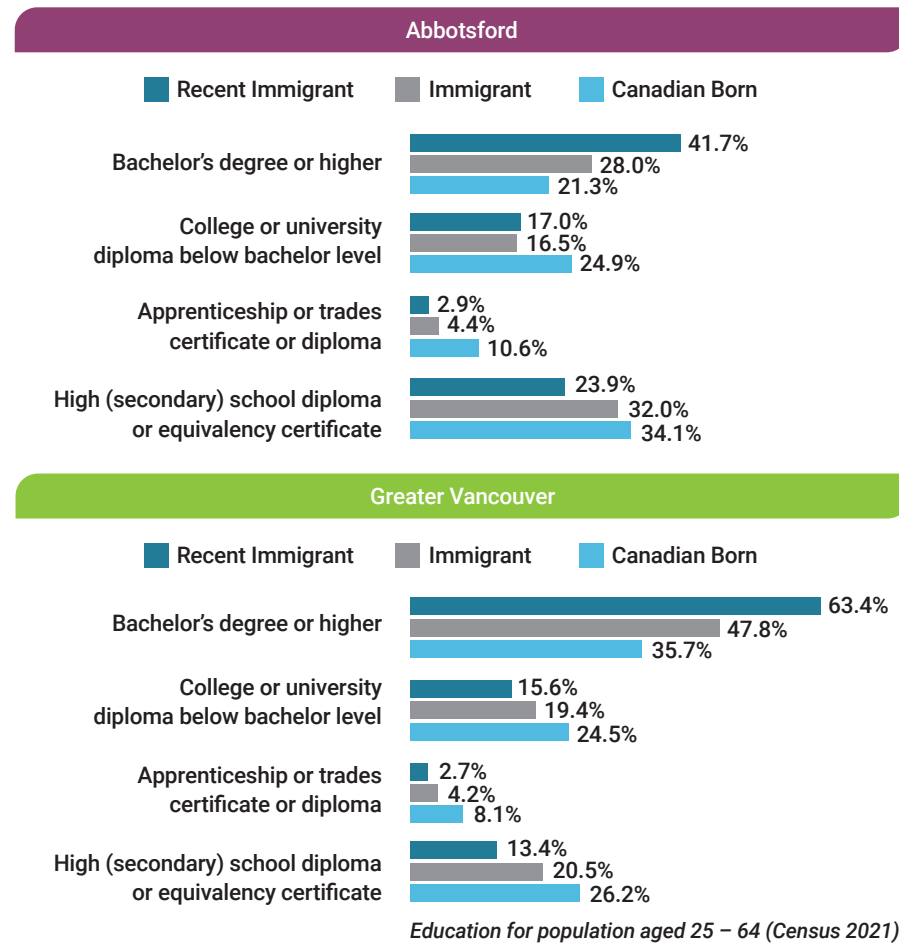
Immigrants and religious affiliation (Census 2021)

- About half of Abbotsford's recent immigrants identify as Sikh, compared to 11% in Greater Vancouver.
- Christianity is the second largest religious affiliation, with 23% of recent immigrants and 27% of total immigrants so identifying.
- Only 9% of recent immigrants identify as having no religion, whereas in Greater Vancouver the percentage is 38%.

Education Levels

Immigrants are highly educated, with recent immigrants the most educated of all.

- Recent immigrants in Abbotsford between the ages of 25 and 64 are more likely to have advanced education, with 41.7% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. This proportion is significantly higher than that among Canadian-born residents (21.3%) and the total immigrant population (28%).
- Compared to the previous census period, education levels rose significantly. In 2016, 32.3% of recent immigrants and 23.2% of immigrants had a bachelor's degree or higher.
- However, the attainment of advanced education among Abbotsford's population is significantly lower than in Greater Vancouver.



Labour Force Participation

Immigrants account for one-third of Abbotsford's workforce.

- Census 2021 reported that immigrants and recent immigrants represented 32% and 5% of Abbotsford's labour force, respectively, which is similar to the levels in the census 2016 period.
- Among Abbotsford's recent immigrants, 13.4% were unemployed, significantly higher than the 9.3% for the total immigrant labour force and 7.1% for the Canadian-born.
- In both Abbotsford and Greater Vancouver, recent immigrants displayed a much higher participation rate than the other two groups.

	Abbotsford			Greater Vancouver		
	Canadian Born	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Canadian Born	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants
Population aged 15 years and over	76,200	41,885	5,325	1,035,580	1,053,850	135,165
In the labour force	50,575	25,940	3,985	708,255	655,110	101,265
Participation rate (%)	66.4%	61.9%	74.8%	68.4%	62.2%	74.9%
Employment rate (%)	61.6%	56.2%	64.9%	62.8%	56.5%	68.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	7.1%	9.3%	13.4%	8.2%	9.0%	9.1%

Employment / unemployment rates for population aged 15 years and over (Census 2021)

Occupations

Immigrants in Abbotsford are more likely to work in agriculture, transportation and manufacturing sectors compared to their counterparts in Greater Vancouver.

- The top three occupational sectors for immigrants in Abbotsford were transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, accounting for more than 40% of the total immigrant workforce. The same three sectors employed only 25% of the Canadian born population.
- Approximately 10% of Abbotsford's immigrants work in the agriculture sector, compared to only 1% in Greater Vancouver.

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)			
Industry	Canadian Born Abbotsford	Total Immigrants Abbotsford	Recent Immigrants Abbotsford
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	5%	16%	14%
31-33 Manufacturing	8%	13%	15%
62 Health care and social assistance	12%	12%	11%
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	4%	9%	10%
44-45 Retail trade	13%	9%	10%
23 Construction	12%	8%	9%
72 Accommodation and food services	5%	6%	8%
81 Other services (except public administration)	5%	4%	3%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4%	4%	5%
61 Educational services	8%	4%	2%

Distribution of Top Ten Occupations - By % labour force population aged 15 years and over. Sorted by % immigrant labour force

Income

The income of immigrants has risen significantly, and now approaches that of the Canadian-born.

Total Income

- Census 2021 reported a notable increase in income across all groups.
- The median income of recent immigrants in Abbotsford almost doubled, from \$17,988 in 2015 to \$32,400 in 2020. Also rising significantly was the median income of immigrants and the Canadian born, up more than 35% to \$35,600 and \$40,400 respectively.
- Abbotsford's labour force generally earned less than their counterparts in Greater Vancouver.

Employment Income

- Census 2021 reported improved employment outcomes for recent immigrants. Approximately 30% of Abbotsford's recent immigrant labour force worked full-time for an entire year and earned employment income in 2020, a significant increase from 15% in 2015.
- Recent immigrants in Abbotsford who worked full-time and for an entire year had earnings of \$45,600, showing a 33% increase from \$34,346 in 2015.

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(continued from page 11: Income)

- ▶ Abbotsford exhibits larger disparities between recent immigrants and the other two groups. In Census 2021, full-time recent immigrant workers earned 14% less than the city's overall immigrant population and 27% less than the Canadian-born workers, while the gaps in Greater Vancouver were 6% and 20% respectively.

Glossary of Terms

Census refers to the population Census of Canada, which is taken at five-year intervals and counts persons and households and a wide variety of characteristics to provide a statistical portrait of the country.

Total Population refers to the total population counts in private households of a specific geographic area, regardless of immigration status on Census Day.

Canadian-born refers to a person who was born in Canada. The Canadian-born population also includes a small number of persons born outside Canada who are Canadian citizens by birth.

Immigrant refers to a person who is or has ever been a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. In the 2021 Census of Population, 'Immigrant' includes immigrants who were admitted to Canada on or before May 1, 2021.

Recent immigrant refers to a person who obtained landed immigrant or permanent resident status in the five years preceding a given census. In Census 2021, this refers to the period from January 1, 2016, to May 11, 2021.

Greater Vancouver is a regional district (Census Division) often known as **Metro Vancouver**. It is comprised of 21 municipalities, one electoral district and one First Nation (Tsawwassen). It borders the Strait of Georgia to the west, the U.S. border to the south, Abbotsford, and Mission to the east, and unincorporated mountainous areas to the north.

Notes:

- ▶ Total population data in each chart or table may vary slightly due to different data sources, i.e. 100% data and 25% sample data from Census profiles.
- ▶ Totals in each chart or table may vary slightly due to rounding.

Low Income

- ▶ Census 2021 shows that recent immigrants were still more likely to live on a low income. In 2020, 9.1% of Abbotsford's recent immigrant population aged 15 years and over were in the low-income bracket, compared with 7.9% of the total immigrant population and 8% of the Canadian-born.



NewToBC partners with libraries and community service providers to develop, deliver, and promote services and resources that support immigrant settlement and integration in communities across British Columbia. NewToBC uses innovative approaches and emerging technologies to deliver three key activities.

1. **NewToBC** operates the **Library Champions Project** in communities across B.C.
2. **NewToBC** develops, updates, and disseminates a variety of library and settlement information resources for new immigrants and B.C.'s community of Service Provider Organizations that are available via the NewToBC website.
3. **NewToBC** uses social media platforms to share information about settlement resources, volunteer opportunities, and no cost workshops, training and community events of interest to new immigrants.

Go to our **Facebook, Twitter, Instagram** and **LinkedIn** feeds to find out more.

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