



Immigrant Demographics Surrey, 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
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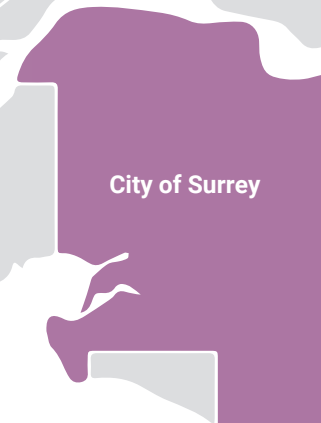
About the City of Surrey

Surrey is B.C.'s second largest municipality, home to more than 500,000 people, mostly living within a rapidly growing central city but with many as well in agglomerations such as Cloverdale and South Surrey, as well as areas that are largely rural in nature. It is bordered by the United States to the south, the City and Township of Langley to the east, the Fraser River to the north, and the City of Delta, the City of White Rock and Pacific Ocean to the west.

Surrey Libraries has 10 locations.

Land Acknowledgement

NewToBC acknowledges that Surrey is located on the traditional territories of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Qayqayt, Musqueam and Tsawwassen First Nations.



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.

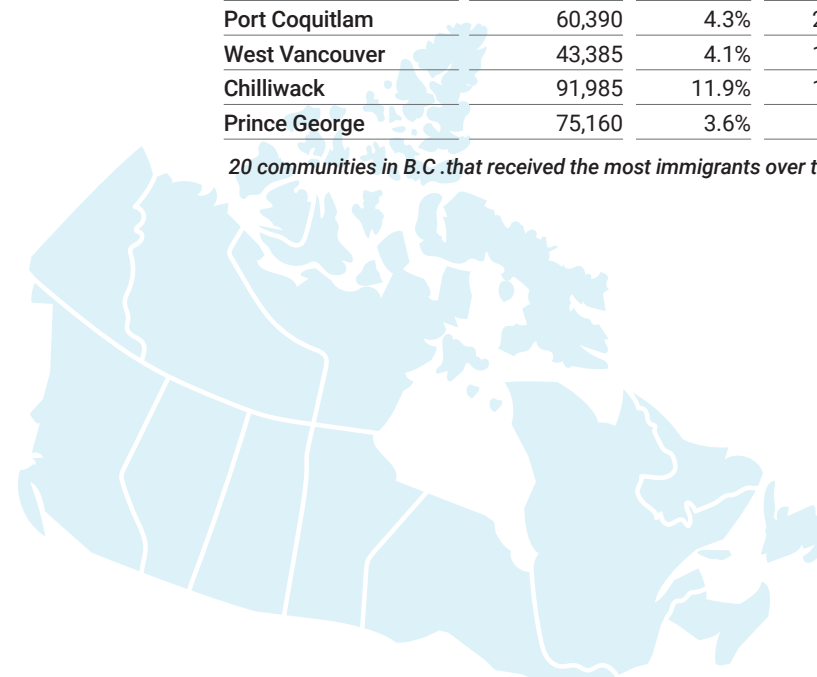
Immigration to British Columbia

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, Surrey was the 2nd 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)



During the last census period Surrey continued to welcome immigrants at a faster pace than B.C. or Greater Vancouver, but nevertheless saw its proportion of new immigrants significantly exceeded by other suburban municipalities as well as certain cities outside of Greater Vancouver.

Immigration to the City of Surrey

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

Year	Surrey			Greater Vancouver		
	Total Pop #	Immigrant Pop #	Total Immigrant Pop %	Total Pop #	Immigrant Pop #	Total Immigrant Pop %
2021	562,565	250,870	44.6%	2,607,010	1,089,185	41.8%
2016	517,887	220,155	43.0%	2,463,431	989,540	40.8%
2011	468,251	187,845	40.5%	2,313,328	913,310	40.0%
2006	394,976	150,230	38.0%	2,116,581	831,265	39.6%
2001	347,821	114,730	33.0%	1,986,965	738,555	37.5%

Population and Immigration Trends: (2001 - 2021)

- ▶ Immigration is an essential driver of population growth, contributing 63% of net population growth between 2001 and 2021.
- ▶ The immigrant proportion of the population is slightly higher in Surrey than in Greater Vancouver.
- ▶ Immigrant population growth slowed slightly in the 2016-2021 period.

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 Surrey's recent immigrants was 32.7, compared to 48.2 for total immigrants and 32.6 for the Canadian-born.
- ▶ In 2021, core working-age immigrants (25-54 years) made up 63% of recent immigrants and 52% of the total immigrant population, significantly higher than the 33% for the Canadian-born.
- ▶ Only 6% of recent immigrants were 65 or over, compared to 20% of immigrants and 12% of the Canadian-born peers.
- ▶ At 29%, young people aged 0-14 were a much more significant proportion of the Canadian-born than for immigrants (4%) and recent immigrants (16%).

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

Period of Arrival

Almost 60% of immigrants to Surrey arrived since 2001.

- ▶ Census 2021 shows that recent immigrants made up 16% (39,910) of the immigrant population, slightly higher than Greater Vancouver's regional level of 14%.
- ▶ 31% of Surrey's immigrants had lived in Canada for less than 10 years, higher than the 26% for Greater Vancouver.

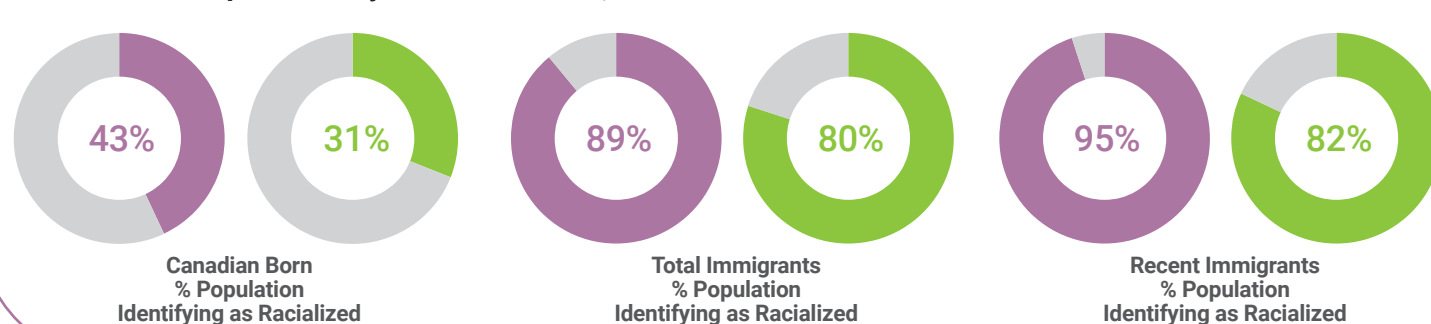
	Surrey		Greater Vancouver	
	#	%	#	%
Total Immigrants	250,870	100%	1,089,185	100%
2016 to 2021	39,910	16%	154,815	14%
2011 to 2015	36,500	15%	133,920	12%
2001 to 2010	68,225	27%	259,830	24%
1991 to 2000	52,225	21%	255,480	23%
1980 to 1990	25,845	10%	126,865	12%
Before 1980	28,165	11%	158,270	15%

Immigrant Arrivals by Period of Immigration (Census 2021)

Age	Surrey			Greater Vancouver		
	Canadian-born #	Total Immigrants %	Recent Immigrants #	Canadian-born #	Total Immigrants %	Recent Immigrants #
Total	271,815	100%	250,870	100%	39,910	100%
0 to 14 yrs	78,775	29%	10,885	4%	6,275	16%
15 to 24 yrs	46,300	17%	17,260	7%	4,590	12%
25 to 54 yrs	88,340	33%	130,455	52%	25,200	63%
55 to 64 yrs	26,995	10%	41,080	16%	1,615	4%
65 yrs +	31,410	12%	51,185	20%	2,230	6%

Age Distribution - Surrey (Census 2021)

Racialized Groups in Surrey



- ▶ A significant majority of Surrey residents consider themselves members of a racialized group (also termed visible minority). In upcoming censuses this may even be true of the Canadian-born population, 43% of whom already describe themselves as such.

- ▶ The proportion of the population in racialized groups is considerably higher than in the overall Greater Vancouver region.

While Surrey has a larger racialized population than Greater Vancouver, recent immigration trends indicate continued growing diversity in the region overall.

Countries of Origin

India is a prominent source, followed by a diverse assortment of countries.

- ▶ In the 2021 census, 46% of recent immigrants were born in India, up from 41% in 2016.
- ▶ China and the Philippines were also significant contributors, although, in the case of China, at a significantly lower rate than in Greater Vancouver or B.C.
- ▶ Surrey welcomes more refugees than many other B.C. municipalities. Four common source countries—Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and Nigeria—figured in its top 10 list. Of these, only Syria appeared in B.C. and Greater Vancouver's top 10 rankings.

Surrey			B.C.			Greater Vancouver		
	#	%		#	%		#	%
Total Immigrants	250,870	100%	Recent Immigrants	39,905	100%	Recent Immigrants	197,425	100%
India	95,905	38%	India	18,240	46%	India	39,390	20%
Philippines	29,510	12%	China	4,425	11%	China	31,450	16%
China	23,850	10%	Philippines	4,000	10%	Philippines	21,220	11%
U.K.	8,320	3%	Syria	1,360	3%	U.S.	8,760	4%
Korea, South	6,995	3%	Korea, South	1,005	3%	Korea, South	7,670	4%
Viet Nam	6,425	3%	Pakistan	905	2%	U.S.	7,225	4%
Pakistan	5,705	2%	Iraq	760	2%	Iran	5,850	3%
Taiwan	5,540	2%	U.S.	655	2%	Brazil	5,125	3%
U.S.	3,720	1%	Nigeria	475	1%	Syria	4,955	3%
Iraq	3,095	1%	Viet Nam	455	1%	Australia	3,280	2%
Other places	61,805	25%	Other places	7,625	19%	Other places	62,500	30%

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

Immigration Arrival Categories

A large proportion of Surrey's immigrants arrive in the economic class.

- ▶ In Census 2021, 58% of recent immigrants arrived in the economic class, compared to 47% of all immigrants. Both numbers are lower than in Greater Vancouver, but Surrey's tally among recent immigrants approaches that of the larger region.
- ▶ Correspondingly, the proportion arriving in the family class has been dropping. Only 30% of recent immigrants were sponsored by family, compared to 42% of the total immigrant population.
- ▶ 11% of Surrey's recent immigrants were refugees, a higher proportion than Greater Vancouver's regional level of 8%, but in line with the national level.

Immigration Category	Surrey		Greater Vancouver	
	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants
	#	%	#	%
Total Immigrants	222,705	100%	39,905	100%
Economic immigrants	104,340	47%	23,135	58%
Principal applicants	42,025	19%	11,260	28%
Secondary applicants	62,310	28%	11,875	30%
Immigrants sponsored by family	93,225	42%	12,070	30%
Refugees	23,605	11%	4,445	11%
Other immigrants	1,540	1%	260	1%

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, China, and the Philippines were the top three source countries for recent immigrants to Surrey, Greater Vancouver and B.C.

Languages Spoken

A majority of immigrants speak non-official languages at home, but the proportion is dropping.

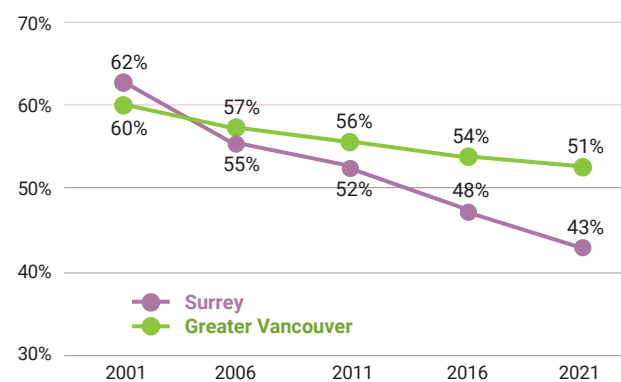
- ▶ In Census 2021, 64% of recent immigrants spoke non-official languages most often at home, higher than Greater Vancouver's regional level of 56%.
- ▶ However, in 2016 the proportion was 69%, indicating a slight drop during the 2016-2021 period.
- ▶ In line with source country data, Punjabi remains the most commonly spoken home language among Surrey's immigrants, with one in four speaking the language at home. Mandarin and Tagalog are a distant second and third.

Surrey			Greater Vancouver			
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Immigrants	250,870	100%	Recent Immigrants	39,910	154,820	100%
Non-official languages	144,040	57%	Non-official languages	25,370	86,615	56%
Punjabi (Panjabi)	66,180	26%	Punjabi (Panjabi)	10,520	21,675	14%
Mandarin	19,680	8%	Mandarin	3,615	13,095	8%
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	10,380	4%	Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	1,745	6,160	4%
Hindi	6,195	2%	Arabic	1,590	4,515	3%
Korean	5,355	2%	Hindi	1,300	4,180	3%
Yue (Cantonese)	4,895	2%	Korean	810	4,105	3%
Vietnamese	3,955	2%	Iranian (Persian)	4,105	3,670	2%
Arabic	3,285	1%	Arabic	560	3,505	2%
Spanish	3,120	1%	Urdu	450	3,335	2%
Urdu	2,885	1%	Yue (Cantonese)	350	2,510	2%
Other non-official languages	18,110	7%	Gujarati	320	19,865	13%
			Other non-official languages	4,110		

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

Percentage of population with English as a mother tongue

- ▶ Over time the percentage of the whole population speaking English only as a mother tongue has dropped significantly, and at a faster rate in Surrey than in Greater Vancouver.



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, 12% of Surrey's recent immigrants spoke non-official languages often at work, compared to 11% of the total immigrant population and 10% in Greater Vancouver.
- ▶ By comparison, in 2016, 23% of Surrey's recent immigrants and 18% of Greater Vancouver's recent immigrants spoke non-official languages at work.

Surrey		Greater Vancouver	
Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	
	%	%	%
Non-official languages	11%	Non-official languages	10%
Punjabi (Panjabi)	6%	Punjabi (Panjabi)	4%
Mandarin	2%	Mandarin	2%
Yue (Cantonese)	1%	Yue (Cantonese)	1%

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

Religious Affiliation

Sikhism is a prominent local feature of Surrey's religious diversity.

	Surrey	G. Van.
Religion	Total Immigrants %	Recent Immigrants %
Total	100%	100%
Buddhist	3%	3%
Christian	30%	25%
Hindu	7%	13%
Jewish	0%	0%
Muslim	8%	11%
Sikh	33%	32%
Traditional (N. American Indigenous) spirituality	0%	0%
Other religions and spiritual traditions	0%	0%
No religion and secular perspectives	18%	16%

Immigrants and religious affiliation (Census 2021)

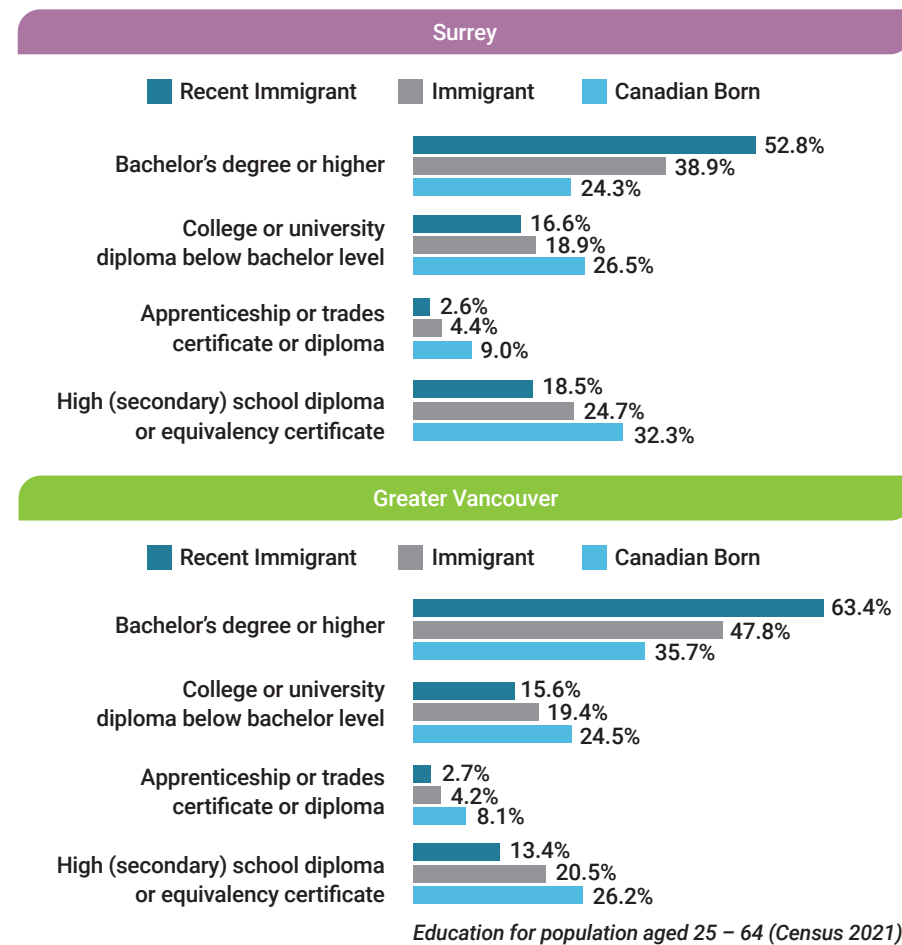
- ▶ About one third of both immigrants and recent immigrants identify themselves as Sikhs, compared to 11% in Greater Vancouver. Sikhs narrowly exceed Christians in both immigrant categories.
- ▶ Hindu and Muslim affiliations, religions which are also associated with the Indian subcontinent, are growing rapidly as well, to 13% and 11% respectively among recent immigrants.
- ▶ Only 16% of recent immigrants to Surrey identified as secular, less than half the proportion in Greater Vancouver (38%).

Education Levels

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

Recent immigrants between the ages of 25 and 64 were highly educated, with 53% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. This is significantly higher than the proportion among Canadian-born residents (24%) and the total immigrant population (39%), but lower than the proportion among recent immigrants in Greater Vancouver (63%).

Compared to the previous census period, education levels rose significantly. In 2016, 43% of recent immigrants and 32% of immigrants had a bachelor's degree or higher.



Labour Force Participation

Immigrants account for one-half of Surrey's work force.

Census 2021 reported that immigrants and recent immigrants represented 50% and 8% of Surrey's labour force, respectively, a marginal increase from the corresponding rates of 49% and 7% in census 2016.

About 9% of Surrey's labour force in 2021 consisted of non-permanent residents, including students and temporary workers.

Unemployment levels in the vicinity of 9% were about the same for each of immigrants, recent immigrants and the Canadian-born. Those numbers were temporarily elevated due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

	Surrey			Greater Vancouver		
	Canadian Born	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants	Canadian Born	Total Immigrants	Recent Immigrants
Population aged 15 years and over	193,040	239,985	33,630	1,035,580	1,053,850	135,165
In the labour force	125,185	155,190	24,760	708,255	655,110	101,265
Participation rate (%)	64.8%	64.7%	73.6%	68.4%	62.2%	74.9%
Employment rate (%)	58.8%	59.2%	66.7%	62.8%	56.5%	68.1%
Unemployment rate (%)	9.3%	8.5%	9.3%	8.2%	9.0%	9.1%

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

Occupations

Compared to the Canadian-born, immigrants are more likely to work in transportation, manufacturing, and professional, scientific, and technical services.

In 2021, health care and social assistance remained the largest occupational sector for immigrant workers, accounting for 13% of immigrants (though only 9% of recent immigrants), proportions slightly higher than in the Greater Vancouver region at 12%.

Recent immigrants are most likely to work in transportation and warehousing (13%), retail trade (12%) and construction (11%) sectors. The three sectors are also prominent employers of immigrants overall.

Due to Covid 19, employment in the accommodation and food service sector was reduced by more than a third for both immigrants and new immigrants in Census 2021. Employment in the sector has largely recovered since.

Industry	North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)		
	Canadian Born Surrey	Total Immigrants Surrey	Recent Immigrants Surrey
62 Health care and social assistance	11%	13%	9%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	7%	12%	13%
44-45 Retail trade	13%	10%	12%
31-33 Manufacturing	6%	10%	9%
23 Construction	10%	9%	11%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	7%	7%	10%
72 Accommodation and food services	5%	6%	7%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	5%	5%	6%
61 Educational services	8%	5%	4%
81 Other services (except public administration)	4%	4%	3%

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 income of recent immigrants doubled from \$17,331 in 2015 to \$35,600 in 2020. Also rising significantly was the median income of immigrants and the Canadian born, up about 40% to \$37,200 and \$42,000 respectively.
- Surrey residents generally earned slightly less than their counterparts in Greater Vancouver.

Employment Income

- Census 2021 reported better employment outcomes for recent immigrants. About 30% of Surrey's recent immigrant labour force worked full-time for an entire year with employment income in 2020, up from 17% in 2015.
- Recent immigrants who worked full-time and for an entire year earned \$49,600, up 43% from \$34,685 in 2015.
- Full-time recent immigrant workers earned 11% less than immigrants and 26% less than the Canadian-born. In 2016, the comparable gaps were 23% and 30%

(continued on page 12)

(continued from page 11: Income)

- ▶ Despite this, a larger proportion of recent immigrants lived in poverty. 14% of Surrey's recent immigrants had total income of less than \$10,000, compared to 9% of immigrants and 10% of the Canadian-born population.

Low Income

- ▶ Census 2021 shows that recent immigrants were still more likely to live on a low income. In 2020, 13.8% of Surrey's recent immigrant population aged 15 years and

over were in the low-income bracket, compared with 9.3% of all immigrants and 7.1% of the Canadian-born. Overall, Surrey had a slightly smaller proportion of low-income residents than did Greater Vancouver.

- ▶ Surrey has seen a significant reduction in the percentage of low-income residents since 2015, when 31.4% of recent immigrants and 17.0% of immigrants lived on a low income.

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.



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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