



**Title:** The Economic Integration of Immigrants in Metro Vancouver

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**Research Questions:** What is the extent of labour market participation, the level of employment earnings, and the utilization of social assistance among immigrants to the Metro Vancouver area? How do these figures vary among immigrants who come from different parts of the world and through different admission categories?

**Importance:** Nearly all of the studies examining the economic consequences of immigration to Canada are conducted using census data and executed at the scale of the whole country. In this study, information from the Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB) has been compiled about the economic participation of immigrants living in Metro Vancouver who landed in Canada between 1989 and 2004. The IMDB is built from a combination of the admission records of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and information from the tax records of immigrants (the confidentiality of individual tax files has been fully protected). It therefore provides an accurate record of the characteristics of immigrants at the time of their arrival in Canada and their subsequent economic activity. This is essential information for understanding the impacts of Canada's (and British Columbia's) immigrant selection system at the scale of everyday life in the metropolitan region.

**Findings:** The level of economic participation varies a great deal between groups. As would be expected, Principal Applicants admitted to Canada through the Skilled Worker category (based on the points system) were most likely to find employment and earned the highest wages of any group. Their success, however, is largely determined by their proficiency in an official language *at the time of their arrival in Canada*, illustrating the salience of communication as the "bottom line" in the Vancouver job market. After language, level of education is the next most important factor shaping economic outcomes for this and other groups. The economic situation of most other admission groups was less favourable and rather similar. This is surprising, as one might expect Refugees to be faring worse in the labour market than, for example, Family Class immigrants, or the spouses of Skilled Workers, but this is not the case. In fact, Business Class immigrants appear to face the highest hurdles in Vancouver's economy, more so than Refugees. Variations in the economic situation of immigrants from different parts of the world are also significant. Again, surprisingly, the least well-off group in Metro Vancouver's labour market are those coming from Eastern Asia, the largest group in the region. Finally, the utilization of social assistance among immigrants is much lower than that for the British Columbia population as a whole, except for Refugees (though it is not particularly high even for that group).

**Implications:** This study highlights the importance of language in the Canadian immigrant selection system. If current selection policies are maintained, greater effort should be devoted to language training for newcomers. The study also shows that the selection system is operating largely as it was designed to do. That is, the points system appears to be effective in admitting immigrants who are employable and economically self-sustaining. Results for Refugees are better than expected, however, while those for Business Class immigrants are worse. The latter program should be carefully evaluated to assess whether it is meeting its objectives.