

Title: Pathways to Immigrant Employment in the Port-Logistics Sector

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Research Question:

This paper explores the diverse pathways that have resulted in the differential employment of immigrants in the port-logistics sector in the BC Lower Mainland. How do immigrants find work in the port-logistics in the BC Lower Mainland? How do pathways to employment differ by industry subsector and occupation?

Importance:

We looked at the whole port-logistics sector because the port – often taken to mean the waterfront and marine terminals – alone cannot operate efficiently without connecting infrastructure, warehouses, trucks, and workers. Examining how immigrants find employment in the various segments of a single but diverse sector can add to our overall understanding of immigrant labour market outcomes.

Research Findings:

Although still under-represented relative to the immigrant share of overall employment in the BC Lower Mainland, between 1991 and 2006 the share of immigrants increased from one-fifth to one-third of all port-logistics workers. Different immigrant populations are concentrated in specific subsectors: three-fifths of the immigrants in the trucking subsector are of South Asian origin, three-fifths of the immigrants in the freight transport arrangement (FTA) subsector are of East Asian origin. Differential subsector growth alone does not explain the differential share of jobs held by immigrants. Port-logistics employment patterns and hiring practices are shaped by the variable demand for transportation services and the employer's desire for flexibility in employment. In the port and warehousing subsectors, formal and informal social regulations make it difficult for many immigrants to gain a foothold. There are, however, indications that this is changing in the warehousing subsector. Earnings and other labour market outcomes for immigrants lag behind those of non-immigrants in the two subsectors in which they have a greater share of employment, trucking, and FTA. The trucking subsector labour market now resembles an immigrant niche. The FTA subsector resembles other advanced service sectors in which a combination of education and experience, as well as knowledge of markets, commodities, and languages is required.

Implications:

The story of immigrants in the port-logistics sector in the BC Lower Mainland is closely tied up with how the industry has changed. The structure, operation, and efficiency of port-logistics networks depend on who is doing the work, how they are recruited and retained, and how they communicate with each other.