

The Changing Face of Canadian Immigration

According to recent immigration statistics, the characteristics of individuals who emigrate to Canada have changed dramatically over the past four decades. Transformations have occurred in both the volume and country of origin of immigrants. From annual averages around 160 000 during the last half of the 1950s, immigration to Canada declined to annual averages below 150 000 until the late 1980s. At this time, immigration started to increase again to annual averages well above 200 000 during the 1990s.

Changes in the country of origin of immigration streams are even more striking. During the latter half of the 1950s, almost 90% of immigrants came from Europe, and a mere 3% came from Asia (country of last permanent residence). Forty years later, less than 20% came to Canada from Europe while close to 60% came from Asia.

Comparing the origin by specific countries, we see that during the 1950s about 30 percent of all immigrants came from Great Britain. During the 1990s this immigration stream accounted for only 3% of all immigrants. By contrast, 13% of all immigrants to Canada came from Hong Kong in this recent period.

As a result of these trends, demographers expect the ethnic and cultural character of Canada to change markedly in the next century. European-origin citizens will become, for the second time in history, a numerical minority. The transformation will be particularly marked in urban areas since this is the destination of the vast majority of new immigrants.

Source

Statistics Canada, Cansim Matrix 000002.