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Diversity and Concentration in Canadian Immigration

Trends in Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, 1971–2006

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Canada is a country of immigrants. With the exception of the Aboriginal population, everyone in Canada is an immigrant or can trace his or her roots to immigrants.

There have been two major periods of large immigrant flows to Canada in the 20th century. The first occurred in the early 1900s and coincided with the opening of Western Canada. Those who arrived during this period were primarily European migrants, farmers who were attracted by the government's offer of free land. The second took place from the 1950s onwards, following the 1930s Depression and the Second World War (**Figure 1**).

Both the total number of immigrants and immigrants as a percentage of Canada's population peaked in the early 1900s when Canada was a young country with a relatively low population. In 1913, when immigration was at its highest level, Canada received 400,870 immigrants or about 5.3 percent of the country's population. After the Second World War, annual immigrant flows fluctuated, but levelled off between 200,000 and 250,000 annually after 1990, or less than 1 percent of Canada's population.

Debate continues about whether Canada should maintain or expand its population through immigration in the next few decades. Depending on which option is chosen, the annual level of immigration will either be maintained or expanded considerably. The capacity of the country to absorb an increased flow of immigrants is also the subject of considerable discussion.

FIGURE 1 Immigrants to Canada, 1860–2006 Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and Figures, 2006*

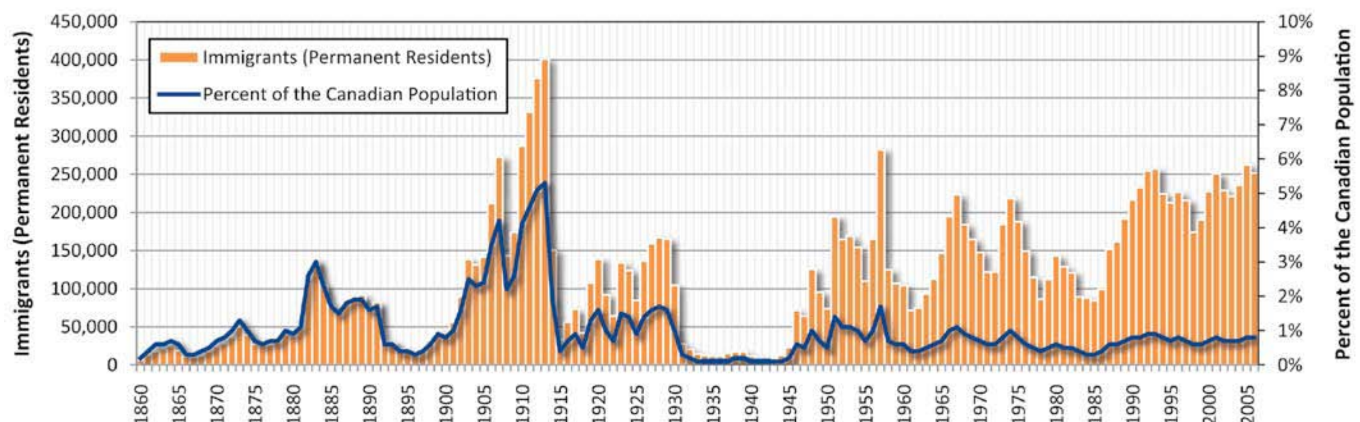

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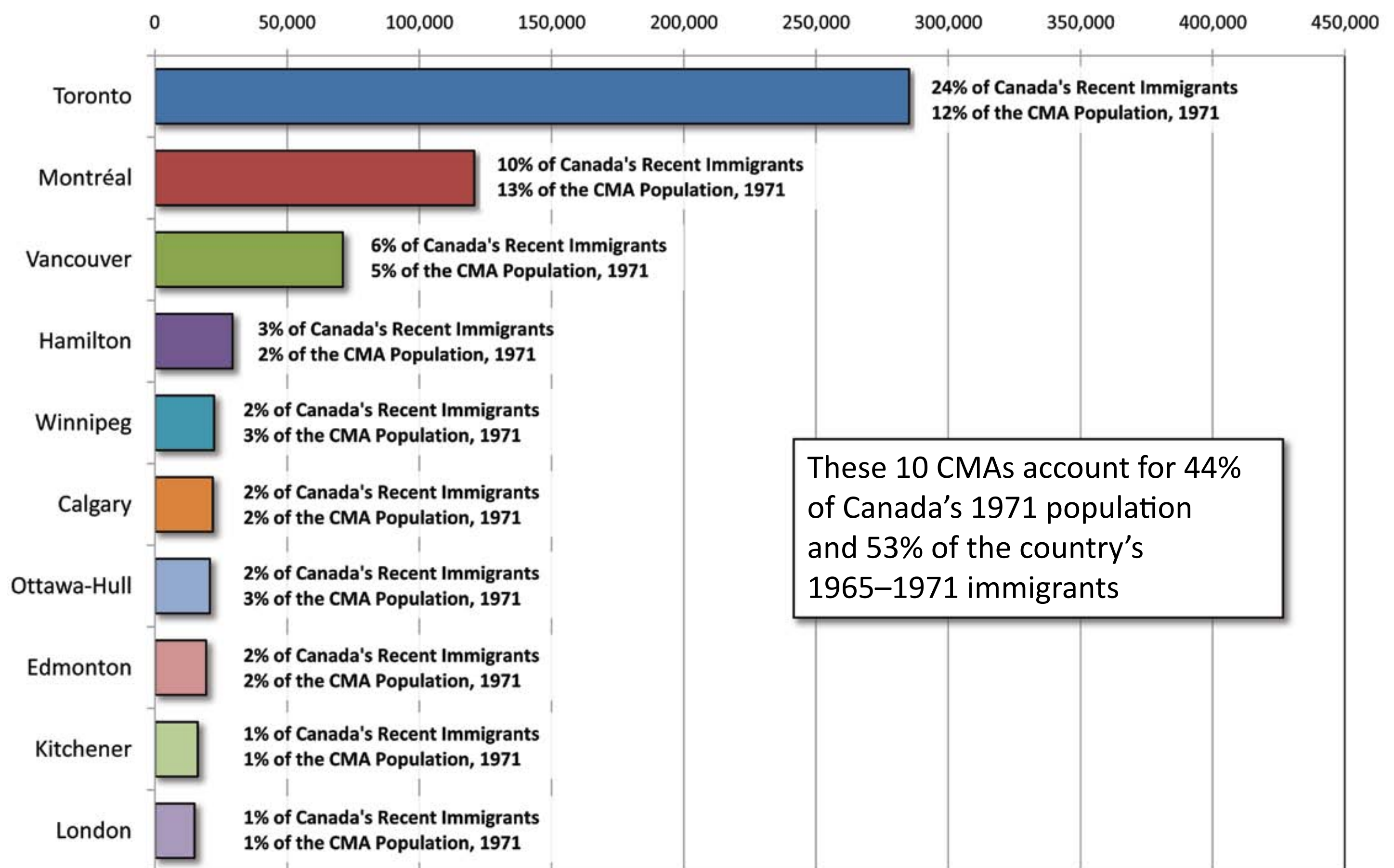
FIGURE 2 Top 10 Census Metropolitan Areas in Canada by Recent Immigrant Arrivals, 1965 to 1971
Statistics Canada, Census Profile Series 1971



Immigration and immigrant settlement in recent decades differs from that of previous periods in three main ways:

1. the increased concentration of immigrants in Canada's major metropolitan centres, especially Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver, the country's largest Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and most important gateway centres for immigrant settlement;
2. the dramatic shift in immigrant origins from Europe to countries in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Africa, and the resulting increase in Canada's visible minority population;
3. the spatial redistribution of immigrants in major immigrant receiving centres resulting from the resettlement of earlier arrivals from inner-city areas to the suburbs and the settlement of many recently arrived immigrants directly in the suburbs.

This report provides an overview of these trends, drawing particularly on 2006 census data. Comparisons are also made with 1971 data. The 35-year period from 1971 to 2006 in which these three trends are apparent reflects shifts in Canadian immigration policy in the 1960s, especially the withdrawal of an exclusionary "white Canada policy," and the introduction of a points system for the selection of economic migrants.

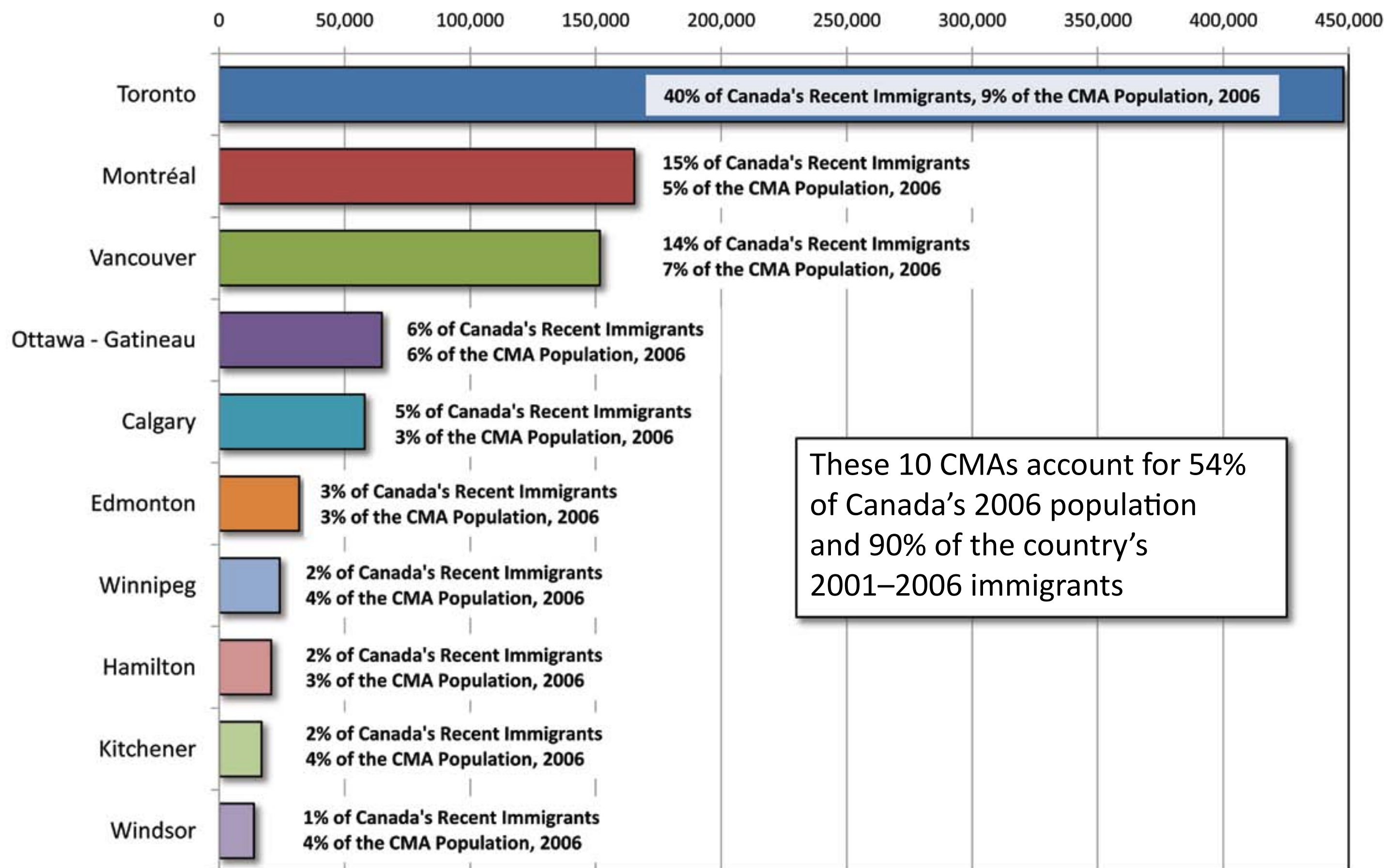
The increased concentration of immigrants in Canada's major metropolitan centres

Figure 2 shows the number of recent immigrant arrivals in the top 10 immigrant receiving centres in Canada, 1965–1971. **Figure 3** provides the same information for recent immigrant arrivals, 2001–2006. Overall, the concentration of recent immigrants in the top 10 CMAs increased dramatically between the two time periods.

In 1971, the top 10 areas accounted for 44 percent of Canada's population and 53 percent of the country's recent immigrants. By 2006, the top 10 areas accounted for 54 percent of Canada's population and an overwhelming 90 percent of the country's recent immigrants. Clearly, recent immigrants are increasingly attracted to Canada's major CMAs. There is also consistency in the membership of the top 10 areas. The top nine immigrant receiving centres were the same in 1971 and in 2006, although the order has changed.

In both time periods, Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver were the pre-eminent gateway centres. In 1971, these three

FIGURE 3 Top 10 Census Metropolitan Areas in Canada by Recent Immigrant Arrivals, 2001 to 2006
Statistics Canada, Census Profile Series 2006



accounted for 40 percent of Canada's recent immigrants; in 2006 they received 69 percent of the country's recent immigrants. Toronto was the most important centre, attracting almost 300,000 immigrants in the 1965–1971 period and about 450,000 immigrants between 2001 and 2006. Toronto's share of Canada's recent immigrant population also increased, from 24 percent in 1971 to 40 percent in 2006.

Although Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver all increased their share of Canada's new immigrants, recently arrived immigrants as a proportion of the metropolitan area's total population declined in Toronto and Montréal, primarily because of the large increase in the overall population of the CMAs.

With respect to the total number of newcomers, Vancouver almost caught up to Montréal in 2006 and may well surpass that city in the next decade. Montréal may have lagged behind not only because of its relatively slow economic growth, but also because the pool of potential migrants from francophone countries is more limited (Rose et al. 2006:4).

The most important reason for immigrants choosing a particular city is the presence of family, friends, and other people of the same ethnicity.

Among the seven other cities, Ottawa-Gatineau and Calgary pulled ahead during this period, accounting for 6 percent and 5 percent respectively of Canada's recent immigrants in 2006. Edmonton also increased its share of newcomers, while Hamilton and Winnipeg fell in the ranking. In all of these centres, however, the proportion of recent immigrants in the city's total population increased in 2006 compared to 1971. This evidence suggests that the medium-sized centres are holding their own as reception centres for new immigrants and in some instances becoming more important.

Why do immigrants choose to settle in large metropolitan areas? Interviews for the *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada,* conducted in 2001–2002 with about 12,000 immigrants who had arrived in the previous six months, found not only that 87 percent of respondents settled in places where they had relatives and/or friends, but also that the most important reason for choosing a particular city is the presence of family, friends, and other people of the same ethnicity who can provide

FIGURE 4 Origins of the Immigrant Population Living in the Toronto CMA in 2006 by Period of Arrival

Percentage of Total Immigrants

100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Before 1961 | 1961-1970 | 1971-1980 | 1981-1990 | 1991-2006

Period of Arrival in Canada

Europe | Central and South America | Caribbean and Bermuda | Africa | Asia

Research on neighbourhood change in Toronto and policy options for more inclusive communities

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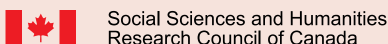
St. Christopher House, a multi-service social agency, is the lead community partner in the CURA project called *Neighbourhood Change and Building Inclusive Communities from Within* (*www.NeighbourhoodChange.ca*).



economic, social, and cultural support, especially in the initial stages of settlement (Statistics Canada 2005). Employment and educational opportunities and quality of life lagged far behind as reasons for choosing larger cities.

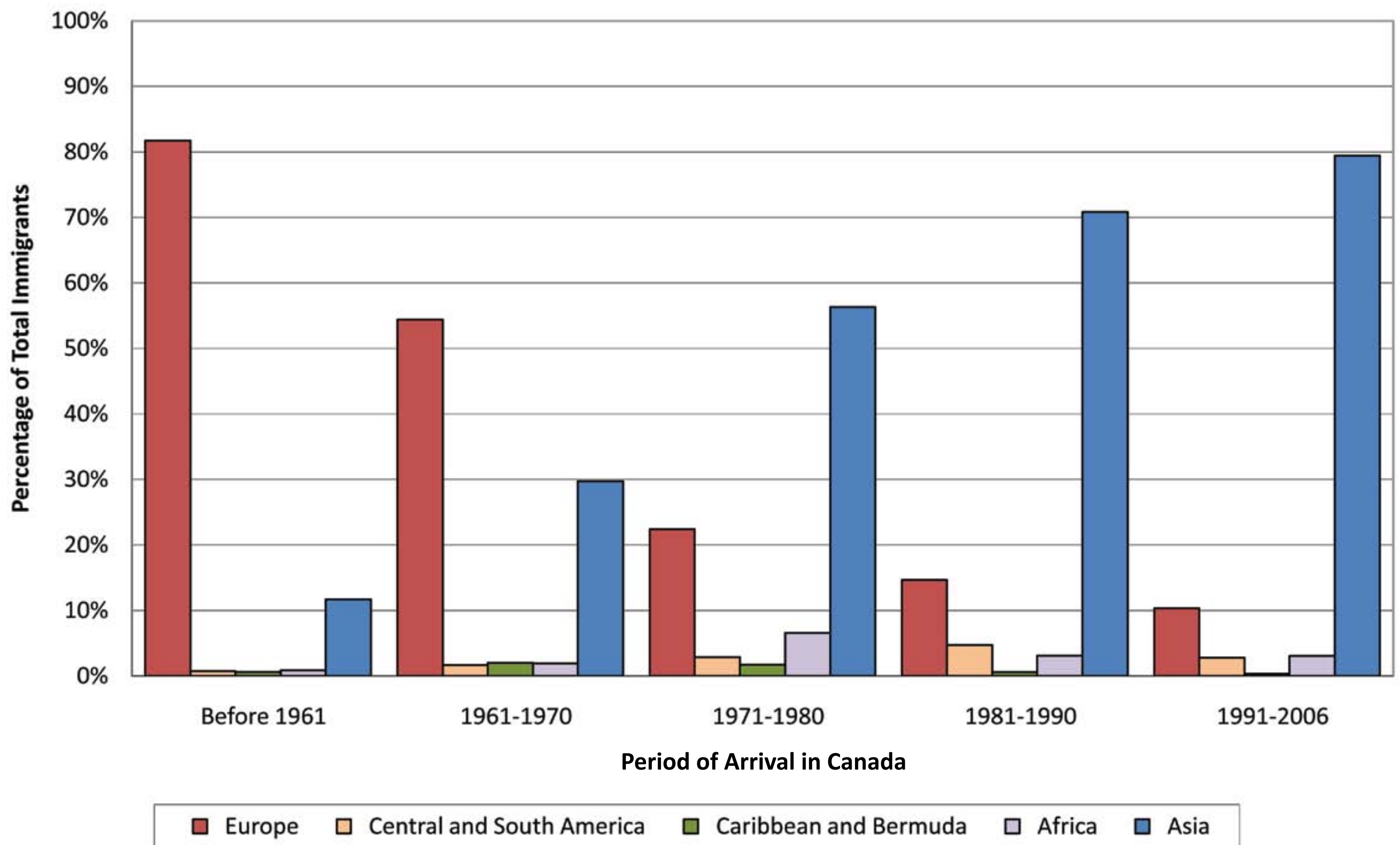
The trend can be seen as self-reinforcing, in that the concentration of immigrant groups in these centres provides a population base for the development or expansion of settlement services, cultural facilities, and ethnic retailing.

Implications of the trends for public policy

The increased concentration of immigrants in Canada's large urban centres represents a policy issue for both the federal and provincial governments. Government officials would prefer a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants, and would especially like to direct newcomers to smaller communities that are losing population and need economic and social revitalization. Some experts argue that the wider dispersion of immigrants would relieve the (assumed) social and economic pressures associated with immigrant concentrations in large metropolitan areas.

In a recent paper based on substantial empirical evidence, Bernard (2008) suggests that the economic integration of newcomers may be achieved more quickly in smaller cities

FIGURE 5 Origins of the Immigrant Population Living in the Vancouver CMA in 2006 by Period of Arrival



and towns. The reasons are debatable, although hypotheses suggest:

1. there may be a lower proportion of university-educated people in smaller places, so well-educated immigrants may have less difficulty competing for jobs that require high levels of education;
2. it may be easier for newcomers to tap into the information network about potential jobs;
3. immigrants may have a greater motivation to become fluent in English or French in places where there are fewer people from their own cultural or linguistic background.

However, the challenges for all levels of government include attracting and retaining newcomers in smaller communities, especially given the absence of broad-scale federal initiatives. For individual municipalities, the challenges include providing settlement assistance and accommodating ethno-cultural diversity to ensure a welcoming environment for newcomers.

Shifts in immigrant origins

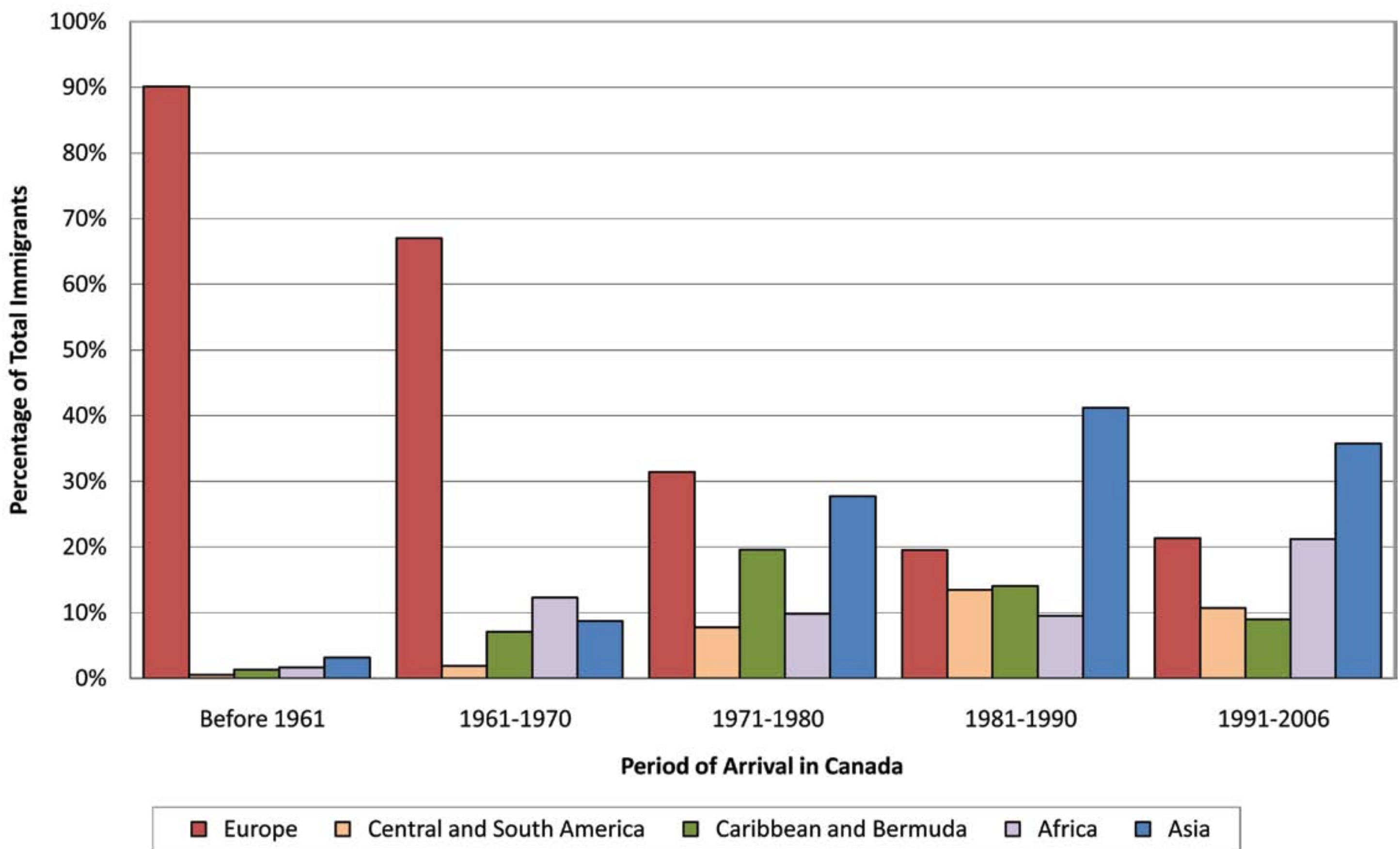
The origins of the recent immigrant population in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal have shifted dramatically in the last 35 years. **Figures 4, 5, and 6** present data from the 2006 census that indicate the origins of the immigrant population living in the three metropolitan areas in 2006 by period of arrival in Canada. The patterns for Toronto and Vancouver are quite similar; Montréal is somewhat different. **Figure 7** presents pie graphs showing a more detailed summary of the place of birth of recent immigrants, 2001–2006, for Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver as well as Canada as a whole.

In 2006 in Toronto and Vancouver, the vast majority of immigrants who arrived in Canada before 1961 came from Europe (Toronto: 92 percent; Vancouver: 82 percent). In contrast, less than 20 percent who arrived in these two cities between 1991 and 2006 came from Europe.

The reverse pattern is true for Asians, especially in Vancouver. In 2006, about 10 percent of Vancouver's immigrant population that had arrived before 1961 came from Asia, compared to almost 80 percent of the immigrant population that arrived between 1991 and 2006.

The shift from a predominantly European population to a mainly Asian population began in the 1970s in Toronto, a little earlier in Vancouver. In Vancouver less than 10 percent of the city's 2006 immigrant population came from any other region of the world.

FIGURE 6 Origins of the Immigrant Population Living in the Montréal CMA in 2006 by Period of Arrival



The origins of Toronto's immigrant population are more varied. Immigration from regions other than Europe and Asia peaked in Toronto in the 1970s, when about 15 percent of the immigrant population that had settled in the city as of 2006 came from the Caribbean, 10 percent from Central and South America, and 5 per cent from Africa. In the succeeding decades, fewer immigrants came from the Caribbean, while the proportion arriving from Central and South America and Africa remained at 10 percent of the 2006 immigrant population or less.

The pattern for immigrants who were living in Montréal in 2006 is more diverse than that of Toronto or Vancouver (**Figure 6**). As with the other cities, the vast majority (90 percent) of immigrants living in Montréal in 2006 who had arrived before 1961 came from Europe, but only 20 percent of Montréal's 2006 immigrant population who arrived between 1991 and 2006 came from Europe. Although most of the immigrants who arrived in this period came from Asia, the percentage of total immigrants from Asian countries (36 percent) is not nearly as high as Toronto (66 percent) or Vancouver (79 percent). Instead, Montréal attracted a higher percentage of immigrants from Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa than either Toronto or Vancouver.

In particular, the proportion of African immigrants in the 2006 immigrant population increased dramatically, from 10 percent who arrived in the 1980s to over 20 percent of those arriving between 1991 and 2006. Montréal attracts immigrants from francophone countries and former French colonies in the Caribbean (Haiti), Northern Africa (Algeria and Morocco), and the Middle East (Lebanon). In part, this pattern reflects the fact that the Québec government can select its own economic-class immigrants and some refugees (Rose et al. 2006:4).

How immigration policy has affected immigration

There are several reasons for the shift in immigrant origins. Perhaps the most important is the change in Canadian immigration policy in the late 1960s from a preference for "white" immigrants to a points system based on criteria such as educational qualifications, occupational skills, and language ability. This policy allowed people from all countries of the world to apply for entry to Canada, regardless of ethnic or racial background. At the same time, the number of Canadian immigration offices overseas was gradually expanded.

Other factors that have affected the observed trends included an increased demand for both high- and low-skilled

employees in the emerging service sector, more emphasis on family reunification and humanitarian migrants, and reduced immigration from Europe as a result of that region's post–Second World War economic recovery.

The shifts in source countries are clearly illustrated in the place-of-birth figures for Canada's most recent immigrants (**Figure 7**). Overall, about 60 percent of Canada's immigrants in 2001–2006 came from Asia, primarily Southern and Eastern Asia, compared to 16 percent from Europe, continuing a trend established in the 1970s. There are, however, substantial differences among the three metropolitan areas. Montréal attracted the largest proportion of immigrants from Europe (23 percent versus 13 percent for Toronto and 10 percent for Vancouver) and the fewest from Asia (31 percent versus 69 percent for Toronto and 79 percent for Vancouver).

In the late 1960s Canadian immigration policy changed from a preference for "white" immigrants to a points-based system.

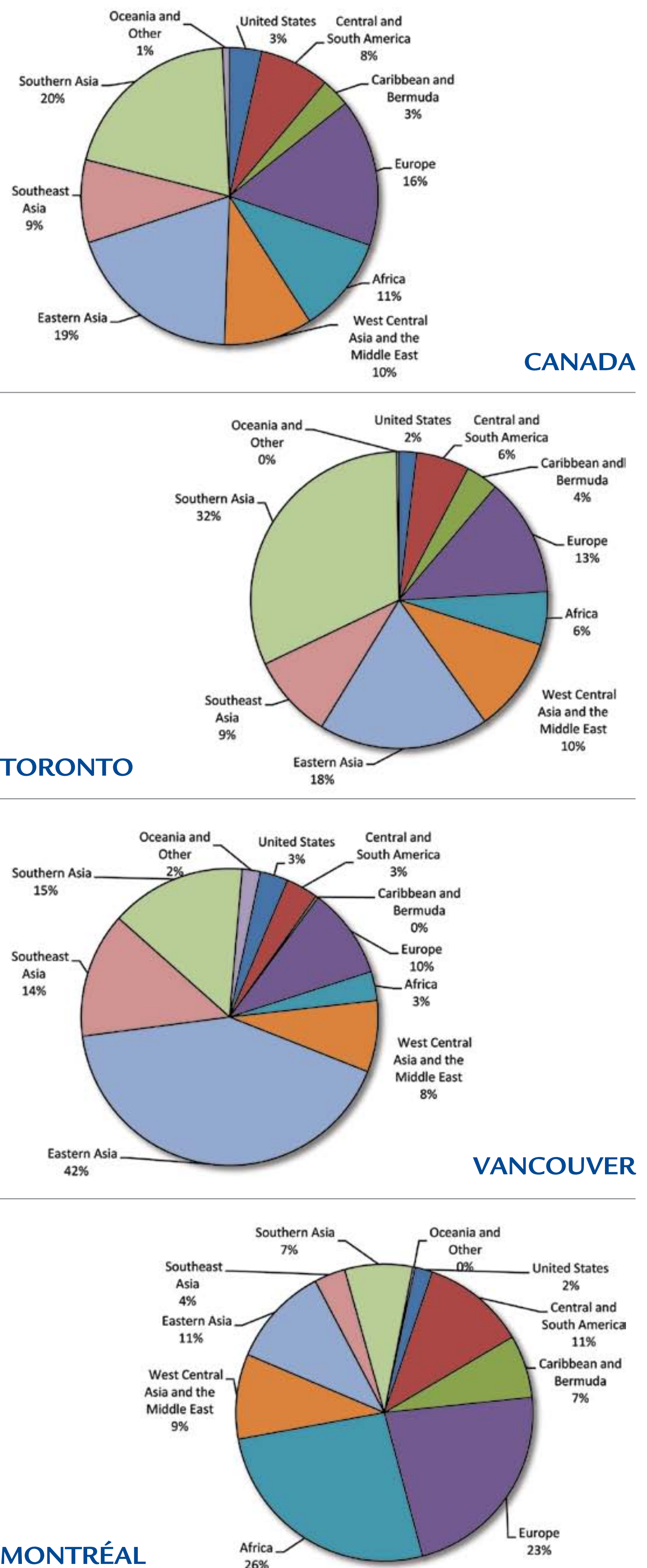
In contrast to Toronto and Vancouver, Montréal received many immigrants from Africa, mostly from countries of Northern Africa with a history of French colonization (26 percent from African countries versus 6 percent for Toronto and 3 percent for Vancouver). The recently arrived Asian population of Toronto and Vancouver also differs. Toronto's Asian population comes primarily from Southern Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and an increasing number from Bangladesh), while Vancouver's Asian population is predominantly from Eastern Asia, especially China. Toronto and Vancouver also attracted many immigrants from Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines.

The decentralization of immigration in Toronto

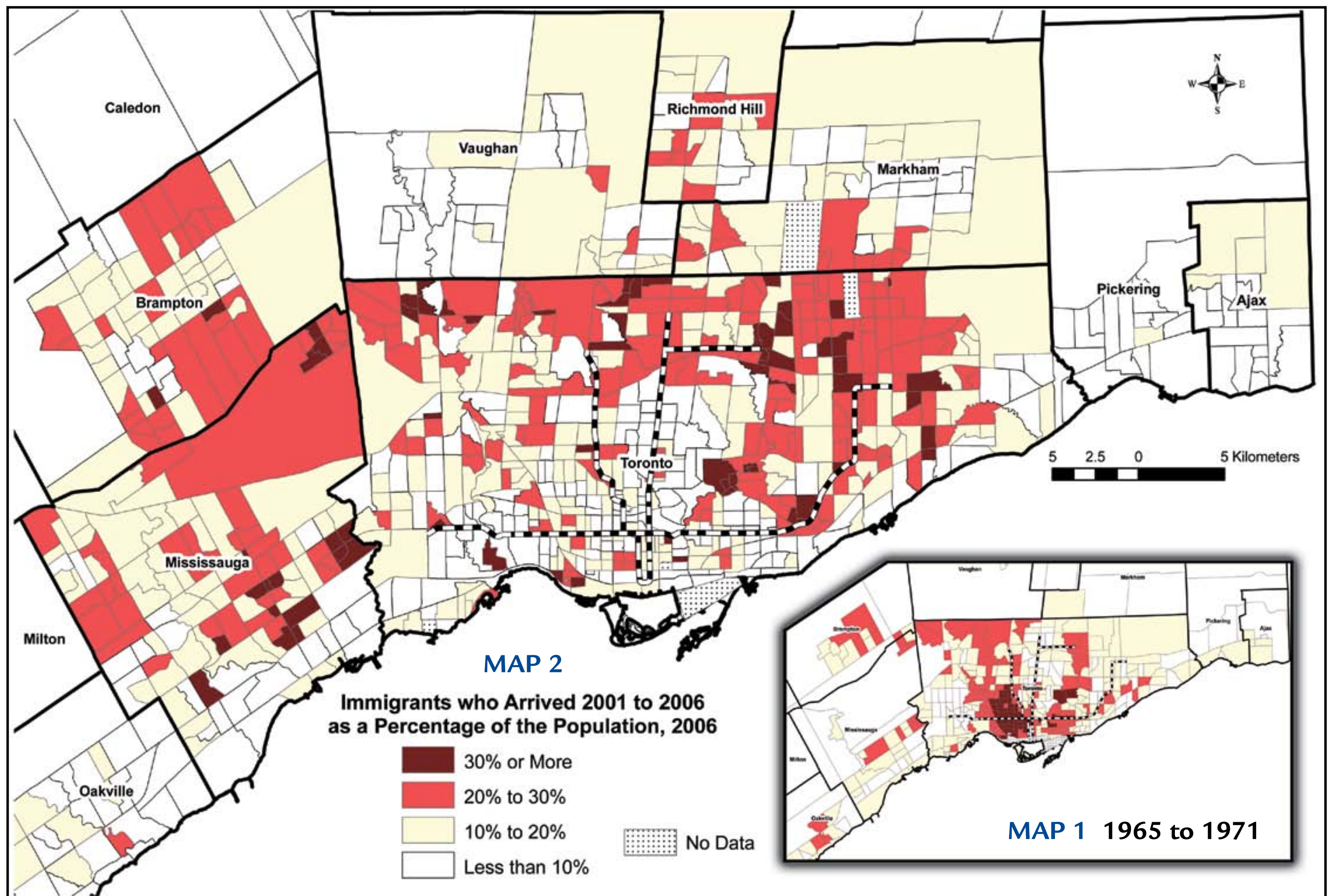
Between 1971 and 2006 there were dramatic changes in the geography of recent immigrant settlement in Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver. We will focus particularly on changes in the spatial distribution of recent immigrants in Toronto, the metropolitan area that received the most newcomers in both 1971 and 2006 and the one with which we are most familiar, and make comparisons with Vancouver and Montréal. In each case the maps cover the most populated parts of the census metropolitan area in 2006. The following publications are helpful in the interpretation of the spatial patterns for each city: Murdie and Teixeira (2003) and Preston et al. (2006) for Toronto; Hiebert (1999) and Hiebert et al. (2006) for Vancouver; and Germain and Rose (2000) and Rose et al. (2006) for Montréal.

In Toronto, immigrants who arrived in the city between 1965 and 1971 settled primarily in immigrant reception areas

FIGURE 7 Place of Birth of Recent Immigrants, 2001 to 2006 – Canada and the Three Largest CMAs



MAP 1 (inset) Immigrant Arrivals in the Toronto CMA, 1965 to 1971 as a percentage of the population, 1971
MAP 2 (large) Immigrant Arrivals in the Toronto CMA, 2001 to 2006 as a percentage of the population, 2006



east and west of the downtown business core (**Map 1, inset**). Most came from southern European countries such as Greece, Italy, and Portugal and attached considerable importance to homeownership. Typically, they purchased relatively inexpensive housing, undertook extensive renovations, and rented parts of the house to other people from their home countries to pay the mortgage. Many were employed in the construction industry and used these skills to renovate their houses.

At the same time, these immigrants revitalized the commercial structure of the areas in which they settled by establishing ethnic businesses. They also developed their own cultural and religious organizations. Subsequently, many of these immigrants capitalized on the increased equity in their inner-city houses to buy more modern and spacious houses in the suburbs. There, they often formed spatially concentrated residential enclaves and developed new or relocated ethnic businesses and institutions.

By 2006, almost all of Toronto's newly arrived immigrants were settling in the suburbs (**Map 2**), a dramatic reversal of the pattern in **Map 1**. The ethnic background and socio-economic status of these newcomers are extremely diverse. Some are relatively low-income immigrants and refugees from Asian, African, and South American countries (located throughout Toronto's inner suburbs), while others are well-educated immigrants from India (Mississauga and Brampton) and China (Scarborough in northeast Toronto, Markham, and Richmond Hill).

There are now two very different groups of recent immigrants in Toronto, both located primarily in the suburbs, but differentiated by socio-economic status and their ability to bid for housing in Toronto's suburban neighbourhoods.

Why did the spatial distribution of Toronto's recent immigrants change so dramatically between 1971 and 2006? For lower-income immigrants there are at least two reasons.

The first is the decentralization of lower-waged employment opportunities from the inner city to the suburbs. A second, perhaps more important, reason is the gentrification of many of the inner-city Toronto neighbourhoods that once housed new immigrants. Housing in well-serviced, affordable, and accessible central city neighbourhoods is no longer an op-

tion for most newcomers. For lower-income new immigrants, this is a form of exclusionary displacement. At the same time, high-rise apartments, which were built in the 1960s and 1970s in the inner suburbs to house young singles and couples who were just starting off in the housing market, have aged and are now relatively affordable for newcomers.

Most newcomers from Africa, Central and South America, and some Asian countries cannot afford to buy a home and must look for housing in high-rise private rental apartments in the inner suburbs. Many of these groups live in large households, resulting in overcrowding and increased wear and tear on the housing units, leading to further physical decline of aging buildings.

These groups of immigrants are disproportionately located in Toronto's "City #3" as defined in CUCS Research Bulletin 41: *The Three Cities Within Toronto.* In City #3, Toronto's inner suburbs, average income levels decreased 20 percent or more between 1970 and 2000, compared to the average for the Toronto CMA. These areas of the city also recorded a persistent decrease in income for each census period from 1980 to 2000. They include most of the areas identified by the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto as "priority neighbourhoods" – areas of extensive poverty in urgent need of enhanced community services.

In contrast, Chinese and Indian newcomers can generally afford homeownership in Toronto's newer suburbs. They tend to live in ethnic enclaves and, like the Southern European immigrants before them, have developed an extensive business and institutional presence. These groups have also brought physical changes to existing neighbourhoods, particularly the development of large Asian malls that have sometimes led to tensions with previously established non-Asian residents.

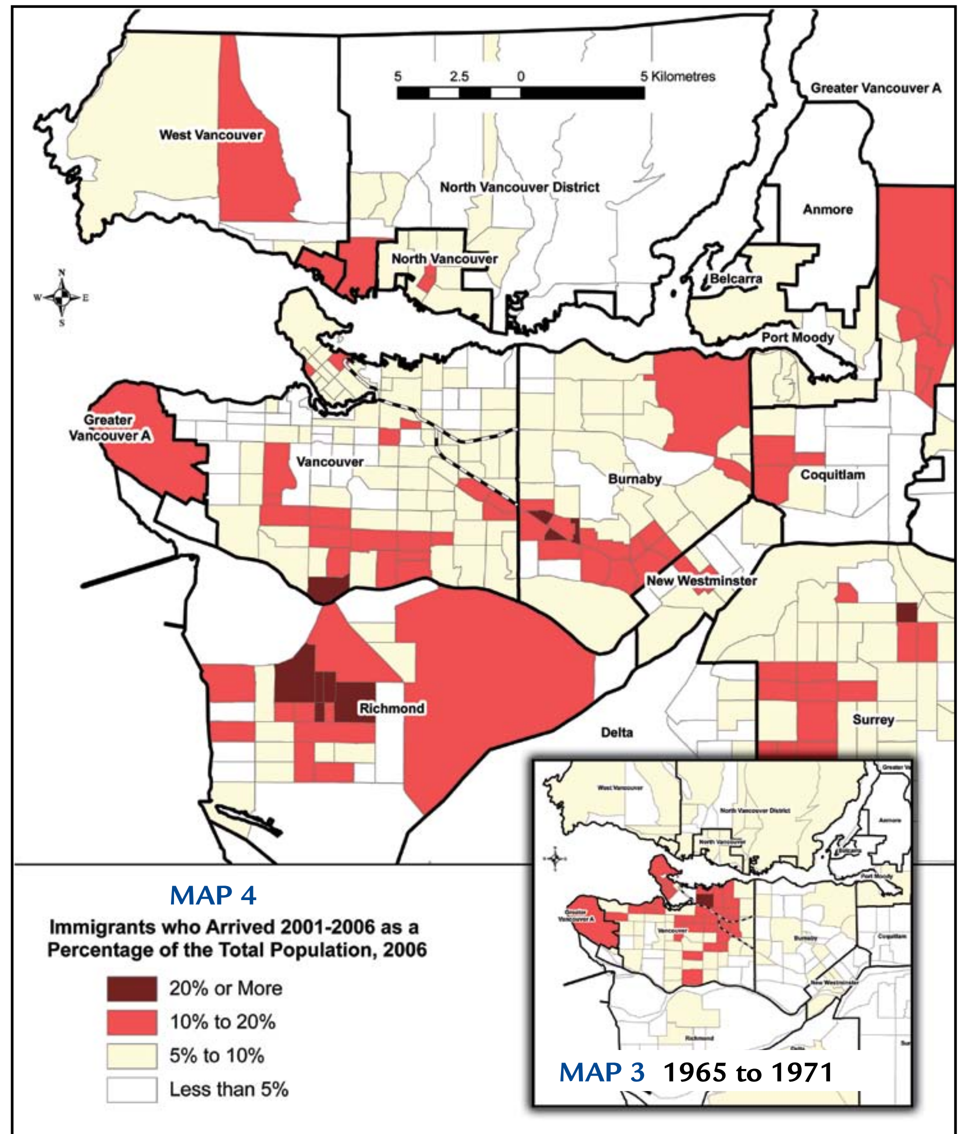
A suburban immigrant population in Vancouver

In Vancouver, changes in the settlement patterns of new immigrants mirror those in Toronto – that is, the focus of settlement has shifted from the central city to the suburbs. Between 1965 and 1971, low-income immigrants, both European and Asian, settled primarily in older areas of the central city, especially East Vancouver, the city's traditional immigrant reception area (**Map 3, inset**). Vancouver's European migrants came from a wide variety of countries and the city did not attract the large numbers of Southern European immigrants that Toronto did during this period.

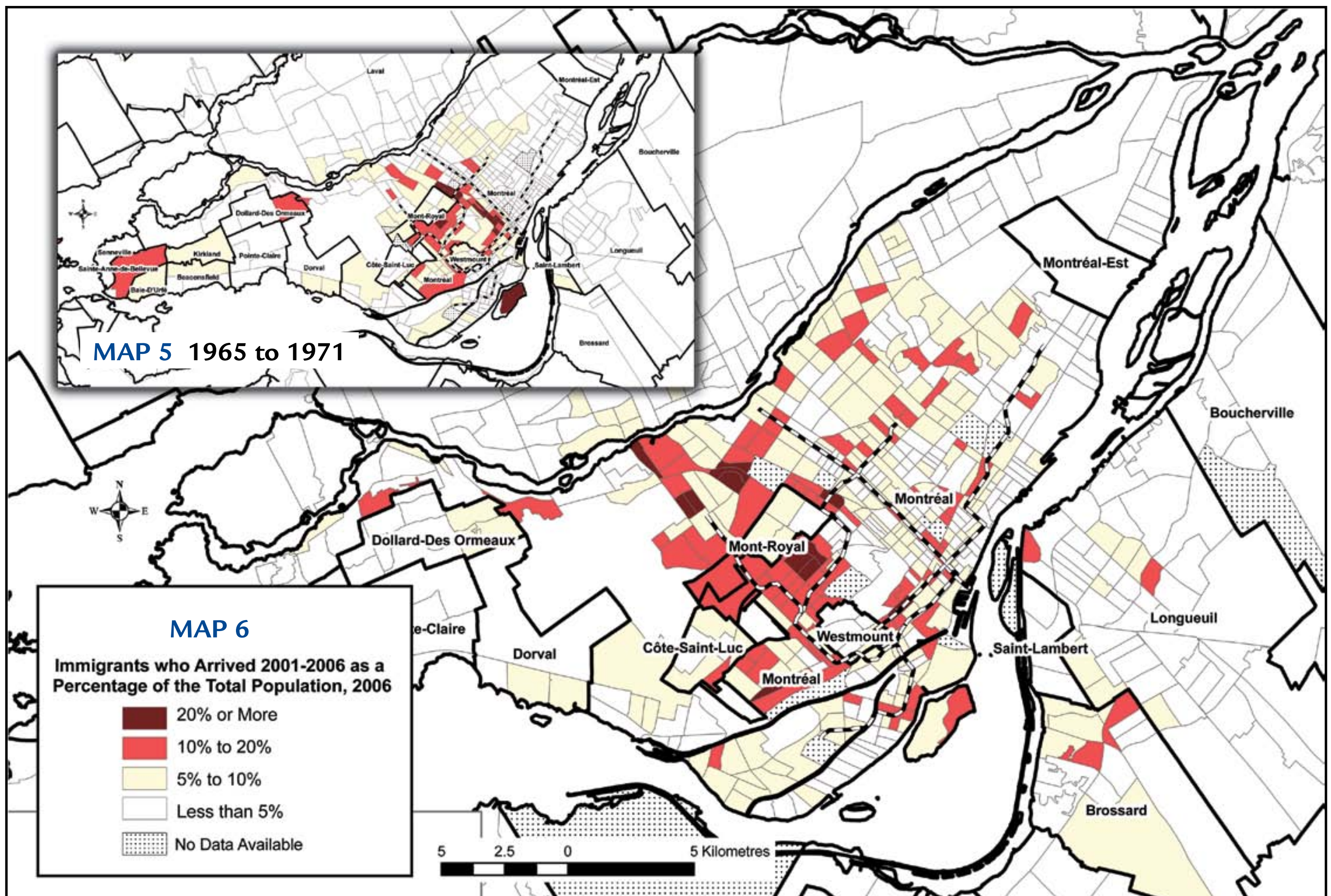
By 2006, Vancouver's recent immigrant population was distinctly suburban (**Map 4**). Immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 were overwhelmingly Asian, primarily from East Asia. These groups are spatially segregated – for example, the Chinese have largely settled in Richmond and the Indians in Surrey.

As in Toronto, gentrification in Vancouver's inner city has affected the location decisions of new immigrants. For the

MAP 3 (inset) Immigrant Arrivals in the Vancouver CMA, 1965 to 1971
as a percentage of the population, 1971
MAP 4 (large) Immigrant Arrivals in the Vancouver CMA, 2001 to 2006
as a percentage of the population, 2006



MAP 5 (inset) Immigrant Arrivals in the Montréal CMA, 1965 to 1971 as a percentage of the population, 1971
MAP 6 (large) Immigrant Arrivals in the Montréal CMA, 2001 to 2006 as a percentage of the population, 2006



most part, however, Vancouver's new Asian immigrants are relatively well-off and, like Chinese and Indian immigrants in Toronto, prefer newly built ownership housing in the suburbs.

New immigrants remain in central Montréal

In contrast to Toronto and Vancouver, the spatial concentration of new immigrants in Montréal did not change much between 1971 and 2006. For the most part, new immigrants from both periods are concentrated on the Island of Montréal, especially in the central part of the Island. Most of the immigrants who arrived in the 2001–2006 period have not settled in the outer suburbs, although there has been an increased tendency for newly arrived francophone immigrants to settle in the traditional French-speaking eastern half of the Island.

Comparing **Maps 5 and 6** it is clear that there is a strong spatial correlation between newcomer settlement in 1965–1971 and 2001–2006. Furthermore, new areas of immigrant settlement in 2000–2006 are largely contiguous to the area settled by newcomers between 1965 and 1971.

Like Toronto, Montréal attracted many southern European immigrants during the 1950s and 1960s. Their initial location in 1965–1971 is reflected in **Map 5 (inset)**: the traditional "immigrant corridor" along Boulevard St-Laurent, and in Mile End and Park Extension. As in Toronto, these immigrants placed a high value on homeownership and the development of a vibrant ethnic economy. For the most part, they bought "plexes" (duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, etc.), renovated them, and lived on the ground level while renting the other flats in the building.

More recently, Italian immigrants have moved to the inner suburbs, especially Saint-Léonard and Rivière-des-Prairies in the northeastern section of the Island, while Greek immigrants cluster in the west end of the Island and Chomedey in southern Laval. In contrast, the lower-income Portuguese have remained more concentrated on Montréal Island, although some have moved to suburban Laval. These groups have not suburbanized to the extent that they have in Toronto.

Immigrants arriving in the 2001–2006 period continue to locate in the same area as those who arrived in 1965–1971, primarily in the centre and northeast part of the Island of Montréal (**Map 6**). Many of the newer areas of immigrant settlement contain postwar low-rise apartments that are relatively affordable for low-income immigrants. An exception is the traditional Boulevard St-Laurent immigrant corridor, which, like central Toronto, has experienced considerable gentrification and is no longer a focus of new immigrant settlement.

The major difference between Toronto and Vancouver on one hand and Montréal on the other is the large number of relatively well-off Asian newcomers who have come to Toronto and Vancouver and can afford to purchase new single-family housing in the suburbs immediately upon arrival.

Many immigrants are more comfortable settling in large-city ethnic enclaves, even if the potential for faster economic integration is better in smaller centres.

The pros and cons of ethnic enclaves

The spatial concentration of immigrants in urban areas raises questions about the neighbourhood effects of the ethnic enclaves in which they live. Does spatial concentration always mean a lack of integration? And how is integration to be measured? These concentrations can provide enhanced social capital through various forms of support from the ethnic community and a population base for the provision of ethnic retailing and community services. At the same time, however, there are questions concerning the implications of such concentrations for functional integration, especially language, education, and the labour market as well as for participation by immigrants in various aspects of society and their sense of belonging to both Canada and their ethnic group.

These issues continue to be debated without a clear resolution. In many ways, successful integration depends on the context within which newly arrived immigrants find themselves, especially the economic and housing conditions of the receiving country and the local municipality.

The challenges of integration and diversity

The increased spatial concentration of newcomers and their inherent diversity presents significant challenges in creating inclusive and welcoming communities. These challenges include attracting immigrants to smaller cities, facilitating immigrant integration in these centres, and minimizing the negative effects of living in large-city suburban enclaves.

Large-scale regional dispersion of immigrants is unlikely without increased federal government commitment and funding, especially for settlement services. At the same time, local communities, especially those whose population is declining, need to promote their cities and regions as desirable locations for immigrant settlement and be prepared to receive newcomers by offering appropriate services and employment opportunities. While some communities are successfully doing this, greater coordination between all levels of government, employers, and the non-governmental sector is needed. To support these efforts, recent evidence suggesting that immigrants do better economically outside large centres needs to be promoted more widely.

The reality, however, is that immigrants are most likely to settle in places where they have family and friends and where there are other people from the same country and cultural background who speak the same language and adhere to the same religion. The dilemma for policymakers is that many immigrants are more comfortable settling in large-city ethnic enclaves, even if the potential for faster economic integration is better in smaller centres.

The increased diversity of newcomers in large cities presents the challenge of providing services in numerous languages, especially given severe financial constraints in the service sector generally and particularly the immigrant service sector. At the same time, immigrant enclaves are forming in the suburbs, while the majority of community agencies are located in the central city.

Suburban ethnic enclaves pose further challenges for service providers and municipal authorities. Accommodating ethnic and religious diversity can be difficult where the location of ethno-specific retail and religious facilities or the desire for different housing forms lead to tensions with long-time residents. Also, newcomers who do not own a car in suburban areas that are not well served by public transportation may find themselves isolated. And Toronto especially is struggling to find ways to help newcomers in inner-suburban neighbourhoods, where declining incomes, deteriorating private rental housing, and safety concerns are making it difficult to maintain shops, the school system, and community services.

The vulnerability of new immigrants in the inner suburbs highlights the importance of providing appropriate settlement services, adequate and affordable housing, educational opportunities, and skills training – all matters that potentially lead to successful integration. Failure to deliver these services, especially to newly arrived low-income immigrants, risks fuelling social tensions that are increasing in other jurisdictions, especially certain West European cities. &

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