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## Immigration Near the Washington-BC Border

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# BORDER POLICY BRIEF

Focus: Immigration Near the Washington - B.C. Border

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Web Address: [www.ac.wvu.edu/~bpri](http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~bpri)

**Introduction.** There are social and economic consequences associated with integration of immigrants, particularly when immigration occurs at a rapid pace, as has been the case in the Pacific Northwest. An understanding of underlying trends can be useful to policy-makers. This report examines recent trends in immigration near the Washington—British Columbia border, with a particular emphasis upon Whatcom County and the Lower Fraser Valley (LFV). The analysis focuses upon the time period from 1980 through the present and is based upon U.S. and Canadian census data. The analysis further focuses upon four groups of immigrants that are popularly perceived as significant within the region: Hispanic, Chinese, Russian, and Asian Indian. For each group, the arrival of immigrants is tracked both spatially and over time, with an eye toward discerning trends that are mirrored on each side of the border, as well as trends that differ.

There are several complications resulting from reliance upon census data. The two nations collect data at different intervals

that was collected for the first time in the 2001 census.

Figure 1 maps Hispanic population density along the Washington — B.C. border. The most current value of the ratio of Hispanic persons per 10,000 total persons is shown within each geographic district. Table 1 shows the growth in the Hispanic population over time within Washington counties.

The figure and table immediately reveal the extent to which Hispanic immigration is influenced by the border. Within the U.S., Hispanics are a major presence along the entire span of the border, although the population density is highest in Okanogan and Whatcom counties. Within Whatcom County itself, Hispanics are more prevalent in the rural census tracts than the urban, as can be seen in Figure 2. A stark contrast is found in B.C., with relatively low densities throughout the Lower Mainland, and a slight gravitation toward the most urbanized areas, such as Vancouver and Surrey.

**Chinese.** Throughout the study period, the U.S. Census has consistently reported the number of persons that consider

Figure 1. Hispanics Per 10,000 Persons  
B.C.—Washington Border, Year 2000/2001

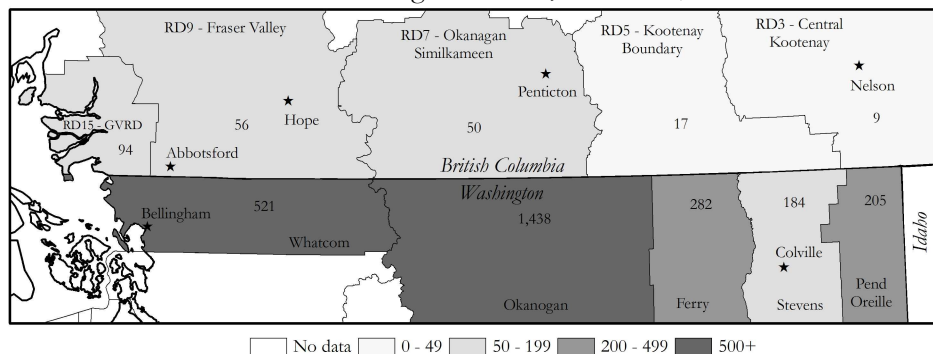


Table 1. Hispanic Population Growth  
Washington Border Region  
Hispanics Per 10,000 Persons

Year	Whatcom	Okanogan	Ferry	Stevens	Pend Oreille
1980	66	106	3	24	0
1990	291	833	135	156	135
2000	521	1,438	282	184	205

and have different categories and metrics of ethnicity. In addition, within each country there are changes in methodology over time. Census tracts have been merged or deleted, and ethnic categories have been changed. A summary of methodology is appended to this report, and each of the group-specific discussions that follows is prefaced by comments upon significant methodological details.

**Hispanic.** The U.S. Census has consistently provided a metric meant to count all persons of Hispanic/Latino origin, regardless of race. The figures and tables in this section use that metric, which was called “Persons of Spanish origin” in 1980, “Hispanic origin (of any race)” in 1990, and “Hispanic or Latino (of any race)” in 2000. In Canada, no single metric was used consistently over the four-census span from 1986 through 2001, making it difficult to establish trends over time. This difficulty is moot, though, because of the relatively small size of the Hispanic population within B.C. We make use of a metric called “Latin American—visible minority population”

Figure 2. Hispanics Per 10,000 Persons  
Whatcom County & LFV, Year 2000/2001

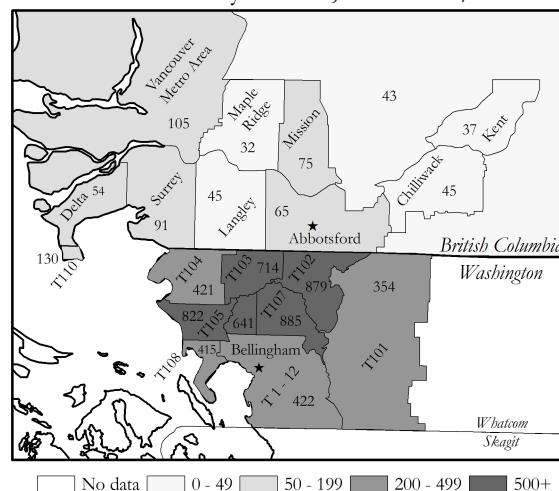


Figure 3. Chinese Per 10,000 Persons  
Whatcom County & LFV, Year 2000/2001

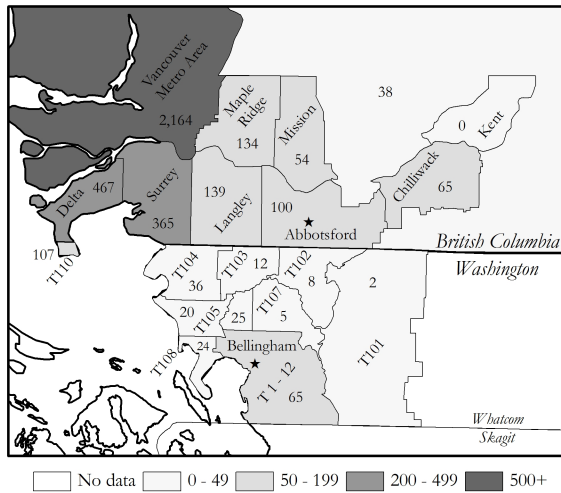


Table 2. Chinese Population Growth in LFV  
Chinese Per 10,000 Persons

Year	Vancouver	Surrey	Delta	Langley	Maple Ridge	Mission	Abbotsford	Chilliwack	Kent
1986	958	136	143	61	119	57	58	82	127
1991	1,426	201	200	77	99	10	115	39	29
1996	1,977	348	313	113	144	39	89	53	0
2001	2,164	365	457	139	134	54	100	65	0

themselves of Chinese race. In Canada there has likewise been a consistent category comprised of persons identifying themselves as Chinese, with a single ethnic origin. This analysis relies upon these two metrics.

Figure 3 maps Chinese population density within Whatcom County and the LFV, and Table 2 shows the growth in the Chinese population within the LFV. The data show that Chinese immigration has likewise been strongly influenced by the border, as the population densities are much higher in B.C. The map also shows a marked concentration of Chinese persons within the urban areas both north and south of the border, with the highest densities found in Vancouver and Bellingham, respectively. Traversing east toward Idaho, low population densities prevail in the rural districts both north and south of the border (e.g., 8 per 10,000 in Stevens County, and 46 per 10,000 in the Kootenay—Boundary district). A map of the entire border is not provided because no additional insight is revealed by such a map.

**Russian.** Throughout the study period, the U.S. Census has estimated the number of persons of Russian and of Ukrainian ancestry. When considering ancestry, it is common for a person to have a mixed heritage, and census officials therefore allow a person to report primary ancestry, secondary ancestry, etc. Our intent is to analyze recent immigrants, and we therefore have used the metrics with the narrowest focus — i.e., for

1980, the value for “single ancestry group,” and for 1990 and 2000, the value for “first ancestry.”

In general, the Canadian census has provided an expanding choice of ethnic categories over time. A Ukrainian category was available from 1986 through 2001, but a Russian category was provided for the first time in 1996. It seems likely that some Russians reported themselves within the Ukrainian category in earlier censuses, as is evidenced by a large drop in the number of persons reporting Ukrainian ethnicity once the Russian category was added (e.g., for B.C. as a whole, a drop from 52,760 Ukrainians in 1991 to 40,650 in 1996, coinciding with the inaugural 1996 count of 15,375 Russians).

Figure 4 maps combined Russian and Ukrainian population density along the Washington — B.C. border. The figure reveals diametrically opposed patterns, with the highest density present at the east in B.C. and at the west in Washington. Prior research has discussed the history of Russian/Ukrainian immigration within the Pacific Northwest.<sup>1</sup> A wave of Russian/Ukrainian immigration took place in the early 1900s, with much of the influx accommodated in rural eastern regions both north and south of the border, including the Okanagan Valley and the Palouse. Ignoring Whatcom County for the moment, Figure 4 reflects this early immigrant wave, including the slightly elevated densities in Stevens and Ferry counties.

Recent Russian/Ukrainian immigration has been associated

Figure 4. Russians/Ukrainians Per 10,000 Persons  
B.C.—Washington Border, Year 2000/2001

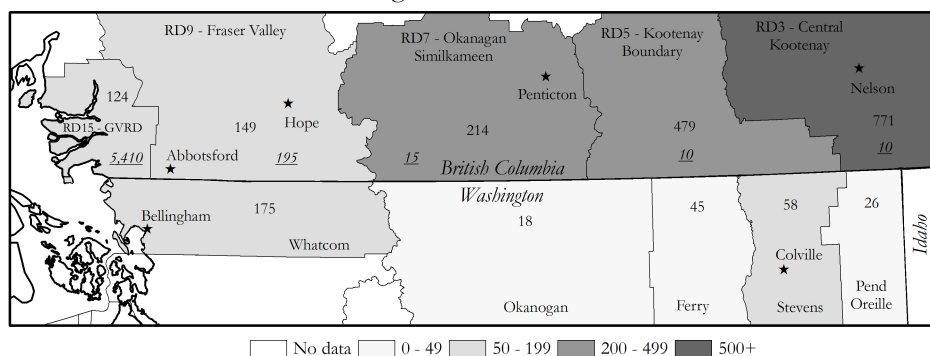


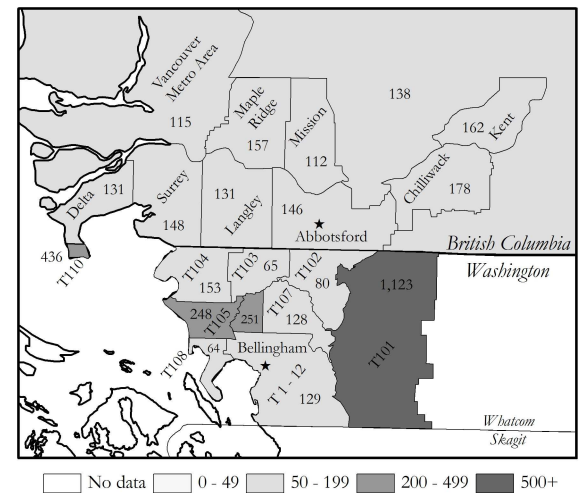
Table 3. Russian/Ukrainian Population Growth  
in Whatcom County  
Russians/Ukrainians Per 10,000 Persons

Year	Tract 101	Tract 102	Tract 103	Tract 104	Tract 105	Tract 106	Tract 107	Tract 108	Tract 110	Tracts 1 - 12
1980	0	4	34	41	27	51	0	0	0	59
1990	40	32	19	125	49	21	23	35	76	76
2000	1,123	80	65	153	248	251	128	64	436	129

with the breakup of the Soviet Union, and differing national policies have affected the result. In the U.S., evangelical Christians from Russia and the Ukraine have been granted refugee status consistently since 1989. This status provides entry to the U.S., as well as financial and educational assistance for a period after arrival. Under this policy, relocation is feasible even for relatively poor and/or unskilled persons. The presence of a fledgling religious congregation can serve as a magnet for subsequent immigrants, resulting in rapid growth at discrete places. Figure 5 shows the presence of this immigration dynamic within Whatcom County, with Tract 101 (which includes Kendall, Peaceful Valley, and Paradise Lakes) the most striking example. Table 3 displays the rapid influx that has occurred in some census tracts.

In contrast, Canada has not granted refugee status to Russian/Ukrainian Christians since the early 1990s. Recent immigrants have therefore qualified for entry pursuant to other categories, such as “skilled worker.” These recent immigrants have settled in the Greater Vancouver area, rather than the rural areas settled decades ago by their countrymen. In both the 1996 and 2001 censuses, data were collected identifying the number of *recent* immigrants from both the Russian Federation and the Ukraine. Using a single underlined italic value per B.C. district, Figure 4 also shows the sum of Russian and Ukrainian recent immigrants, for the 1996 and 2001 censuses

Figure 5. Russians/Ukrainians Per 10,000 Persons  
Whatcom County & LFV, Year 2000/2001



combined. Note the almost complete absence of recent immigrants in the eastern districts, as contrasted with the concentration of 5,410 immigrants in the GVRD.

**Asian Indian.** Throughout the study period, the U.S. Census has consistently reported the number of persons that consider themselves of Asian Indian race. That value is used in this analysis. In Canada a greater choice of ethnicities was available over time. In 1991 an East Indian classification first became available, and by 2001 there were several classifications of South Asian ethnicity. This report combines the “single response, population by ethnic origin” values for the following classifications: East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi.

Figure 6 maps Asian Indian population density along the Washington — B.C. border. The figure shows high densities in the western districts of B.C., tapering lower to the east, with some corresponding density present in western Washington. Figure 7 provides a close-up of the pattern in Whatcom County and the LFV. The figure shows a “spillover” effect from the LFV into Whatcom County, with the border apparently serving as a barrier to the spillover. Prior research has discussed the significant presence of Asian Indians within B.C., with emphasis upon the fact that many immigrants have chosen to settle within the agricultural regions to the south and southeast of Vancouver.<sup>2</sup> Asian Indians are major participants in the raspberry farming sector, which has become a very sig-

Figure 6. Asian Indians Per 10,000 Persons  
B.C.—Washington Border, Year 2000/2001

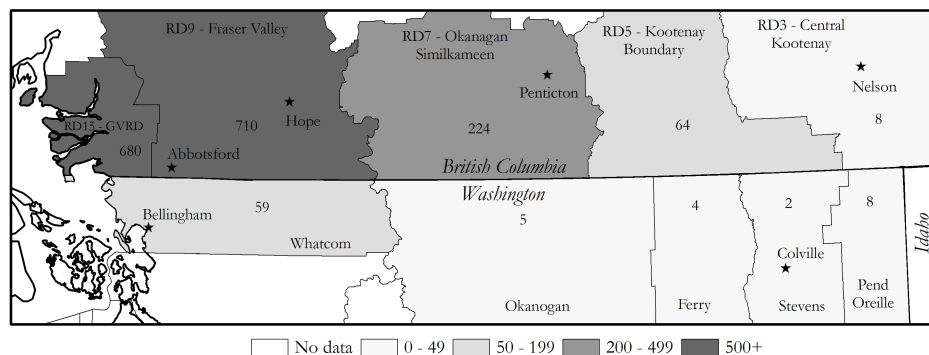


Figure 7. Asian Indians Per 10,000 Persons  
Whatcom County & LFV, Year 2000/2001

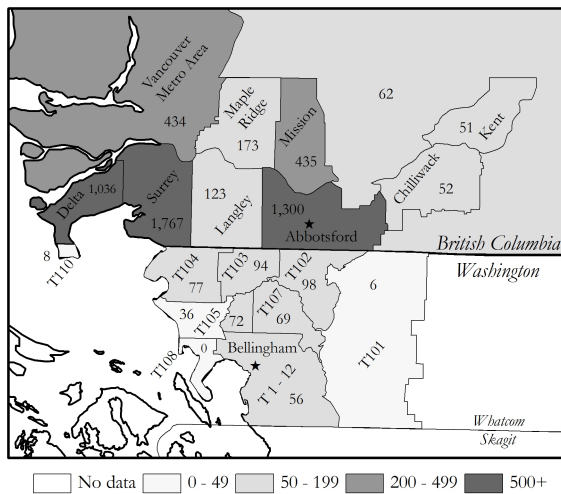


Table 4. Asian Indian Population Growth  
in Selected Abutting Districts  
Asian Indians Per 10,000 Persons

Year	Lower Fraser Valley		
	Surrey	Langley	Abbotsford
1991	790	65	568
2001	1,767	123	1,300
1990	10	8	60
2000	77	94	98
Year	Tract 104	Tract 103	Tract 102
	Whatcom County		

nificant sector in the region. With agricultural land prices lower in the U.S., some Canadian farmers (including some of Asian Indian ethnicity) have chosen to expand their operations by purchasing nearby fields in northern Whatcom County. Table 4 shows the temporal lag of the spillover. Asian Indian immigrants were already a significant presence in the LFV in 1991, whereas settlement in Whatcom County began in earnest the following decade.

**Methodology.** For 1990 and 2000, U.S. Census data was gathered from the “American FactFinder” portion of the U.S. Census internet site at the URL listed below. For 1980, data was found in U.S. Census official publications. Certain tracts used in the 1980 census were subdivided in subsequent censuses (e.g., tract 103 from 1980 is now divided into tracts 103.01, 103.02, and 103.03). For this analysis, the boundary of the original parent tract was used, and data for the child tracts in subsequent years was combined for comparability.

Canadian census data was gathered from the E-STAT internet site provided by Statistics Canada. The URL is listed below, but the site is available only by subscription. Census geography changed substantially from 1986 to 2001, with certain districts eliminated and/or absorbed by neighboring districts. The large districts shown in Figures 1, 4, and 6 are current. Analogous to the above-described process applied to U.S. data, we combined sub-district data as necessary in order to accurately arrive at a data value for each municipal district shown in Figures 2, 3, 5, and 7.

## References.

- <sup>1</sup> Hardwick, Susan Wiley. 2005. The Ties that Bind: Transnational Migrant Networks at the Canadian-U.S. Borderland. *The American Review of Canadian Studies*. Winter: 667—682
  - <sup>2</sup> Richardson, Kathrine. 1998. What is So Enticing Over the Border?: Whatcom County, Washington, and the Greater Vancouver Area. *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*. Vol. 21, No. 2: 277—293
- U.S. Census URL: [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)  
 E-STAT URL: <http://estat.statcan.ca/cgi-win/CNSMCGLEXE?ESTATFILE=EStat\English\E-Main.htm>