



BRITISH COLUMBIA
REAL ESTATE
ASSOCIATION



Living Together: The Foreign- and Canadian-Born Residents of the Lower Mainland

Overview

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Background

In August 2006, the Real Estate Foundation of BC and BCREA provided funding to the Urban Futures Institute to compare and contrast the housing occupancy patterns of Canadian-born and foreign-born Lower Mainland residents by their period of immigration, visible minority status and community of residence.

Using data from the 2001 Census, the research examines the similarities and differences in housing occupancy of these groups of residents, according to a single-demographically-based parameter: the age-specific household maintainer rate (the number of people who are primarily responsible for the household's financial support in an age group divided by the total number of people in the same age group).

Part I of the research focuses on the average number of people who live in households, and the family living arrangements of these people; part II focuses on the structure type and tenure of the dwelling maintained by people in each age group.

Findings

Three major themes emerge from the research:

1. Relationships between people determine housing occupancy patterns; e.g., the foreign-born population is more likely to maintain family households with children present, as well as multi-family households, than is the Canadian-born population.
2. The overall lifecycle patterns for all groups have roughly the same shape, indicating that age has a much greater influence on housing occupancy than does place of birth or period of immigration.
3. The longer foreign-born people live in Canada, the closer their age-specific household maintainer rates are to those of the Canadian-born population.

Specific highlights include:

- Overall, and on an age-specific basis, foreign-born residents maintained larger households than did Canadian-born residents; overall, Canadian-born residents were more likely to maintain a household than were foreign-born residents.

- Canadian-born residents had a greater propensity to maintain households in single detached and apartment dwellings, while foreign-born residents had a greater propensity for attached ground-oriented housing.
- More recent immigrants were more likely to maintain larger households than their earlier-immigrant peers.
- Apartments represent an entry point into the housing market for younger recent immigrants.
- Foreign-born residents are increasingly likely to own their own dwellings the longer they live in Canada.
- Recent immigrants of Chinese descent had a higher maintainer rate for single detached dwellings; other visible minorities for attached ground-oriented dwellings; and non-visible minorities for apartments.
- Recent immigrants of Chinese descent were more likely to be owner-occupiers, while non-Chinese visible minorities and non-visible minorities were more likely to rent.
- Residents of Vancouver/University Endowment Lands (UEL) were more likely to maintain smaller households and less likely to maintain larger households than residents in the Lower Mainland as a whole; the opposite was true for Surrey/Delta/White Rock.
- Compared to the region as a whole, residents of Vancouver/UEL were more likely to maintain households in higher-density forms of accommodation; residents of Surrey/Delta/White Rock were more likely to maintain households in lower-density dwellings.

Application

The study assists REALTORS® in serving immigrant clients. These research results were also used by the Design Centre for Sustainability at UBC's Sustainability by Design for phase one of its project, which examined how housing, land use, jobs and transport could be designed, delivered and distributed in the decades ahead, while ensuring more livable and sustainable communities.

More information

Both parts of this research are available on BCREA's REALTOR Link® page (www.realtorlink.ca), under Publications & Hot Topics and on the Association's Quality of Life website (www.qualityoflife.bcrea.bc.ca), under Research.