

Tracking the Trends

**Future Directions
for Human Services
in Edmonton**

Prepared by: **Community Trends Working Group**

Alberta Family and Social Services

Alberta Health - Mental Health Division - Edmonton

Alberta Career Development and Employment

Edmonton Board of Health

Edmonton Community and Family Services

Edmonton Public Schools

Edmonton Catholic Schools

Edmonton Social Planning Council

United Way of Edmonton and Area

September, 1991

Other Editions:

Tracking the Trends

Future Directions for Human Services in Edmonton
Special Feature on Youth and Seniors - September 1989

Tracking the Trends

Future Directions for Human Services in Edmonton
Special Feature on Families with Children - June 1990

For information on the the first two editions, please contact:

Edmonton Social Planning Council

#41, 9912 - 106 Street

Edmonton, Alberta

T5K 1C3

Telephone: (403) 423-2031

Fax: (403) 425-6244

Photocopying of materials from *Tracking the Trends* for personal use is encouraged,
provided that the source is acknowledged.

Preface

Tracking the Trends: Future Directions for Human Services in Edmonton is the product of the hard work and shared concern of some of the major funders and providers of human services in the Edmonton area. The impetus for this study is the conviction that it is crucial for government departments and community agencies to monitor the significant trends likely to influence the need for human services in the coming decade so that we can better serve the community.

This is the third edition of Tracking the Trends, which we hope will be as widely distributed and as useful as the first two editions. We are particularly pleased that this collective community effort has proven to be so beneficial. While Tracking the Trends cannot be expected to provide immediate answers, it is a useful aid in the ongoing planning of new programs and policy initiatives.

Once again community members have played a very valuable role in providing their insight and experience through a series of focus group meetings arranged by our Working Group. We are therefore very grateful to the people whose expertise is reflected in the special section on trends and service implications for immigrants. We look forward to maintaining this excellent example of community participation as we continue to gain a better understanding of the important trends that will influence the development of human services in Edmonton and its surrounding communities.

Mr. Jonathan Murphy
Executive Director
Edmonton Social Planning Council

Mr. John Lackey
General Manager
Edmonton Community and Family Services

Ms. J. (Anne) Ward Neville
Regional Director
Alberta Family and Social Services

Mr. Hillel Boroditsky
Executive Director
United Way of Edmonton and Area

Dr. Brian Forbes
Regional Director, Mental Health Services
Alberta Health

Mr. R.P. Baker
Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum
Edmonton Public Schools

Dr. James M. Howell
Medical Officer of Health
Edmonton Board of Health

Mr. L.J. Hanak
Superintendent, Program Services
Edmonton Catholic Schools

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	
Part 1 - Major Social and Economic Trends	
Population	3
Ethnic Diversity	4
The Economy	6
Employment	8
Income	10
Safety and Violence	16
Health	17
Physically and Mentally Challenged Persons	18
Housing	19
Summary of Edmonton Statistics	20
Neighbourhood Map	21
Part 2 - Trends and Service Implications for Immigrants	
Immigration - An Overview	23
Immigration - Trends and Service Implications	30
Youth and Adult Immigrants	33
Focus Group and ESL Class Participants	36
Members of the Community Trends Working Group	36

Introduction

Why Track the Trends?

To those who provide funds for human service programming and to the service providers, it is important to have timely information on major social and economic trends in Edmonton. This information not only helps us gain a better understanding of present social conditions and how they may have changed over time, but also helps us to anticipate future changes. While there is no lack of relevant information, the challenge has been to select that which is most germane and then integrate it in a meaningful way.

Tracking the Trends looks at the major social and economic trends likely to influence human services in Edmonton—now and in the near future. The 1991 edition has, as its special focus, trends and service implications as they affect Edmonton's immigrant population.

How was it Done?

The Community Trends Working Group which prepared this third edition of *Tracking the Trends* included representatives from Alberta Family and Social Services, Alberta Health - Mental Health Division - Edmonton, Alberta Career Development and Employment, Edmonton Board of Health, Edmonton Community and Family Services, Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Edmonton Social Planning Council, and United Way of Edmonton and Area. The Working Group:

- reviewed statistical material in the first two editions
- added current information to relevant sections or graphs where possible
- included additional information in response to suggestions made subsequent to the publications of the first two editions.

This section is presented as Part One.

Part Two, "Trends and Service Implications for Immigrants," provides statistical information relevant to immigrants and trends identified through community consultations and implications for the community services upon which they depend. Every sixth resident in Alberta is a first generation immigrant. A total of 34,022 new immigrants came to Edmonton between 1985 to 1990. Edmonton was the number one destination for immigrants to Alberta during this period. While many immigrants manage from a socio-economic perspective, immigrants face a unique set of challenges.

In order to understand more about the human service needs of immigrants, seventy-five 'key informants' participated in one or both parts of a two-phased process. First, they were invited to complete a questionnaire which asked them to identify the major trends and the likely service implications for immigrants. Second, many of these 'informants' took the opportunity to participate in a focus group where the various trends were discussed and ranked, along with the corresponding service implications. The names of those who participated in this important process are listed at the conclusion of the report. This year, we added a new source of data by going 'into the field' and reaching out to people. Particularly, this direct focus approach led to discussion group meetings with high school youth who are first generation immigrants. Similar discussion group meetings were held with adult immigrants. We want to thank these people for telling us about their experiences through their open and honest dialogue.

"An experience in Edmonton reminded me of the problems we had in Chile. When I still could not read English, I sometimes saw pizza delivery vans which I thought were the police taking people to jail."

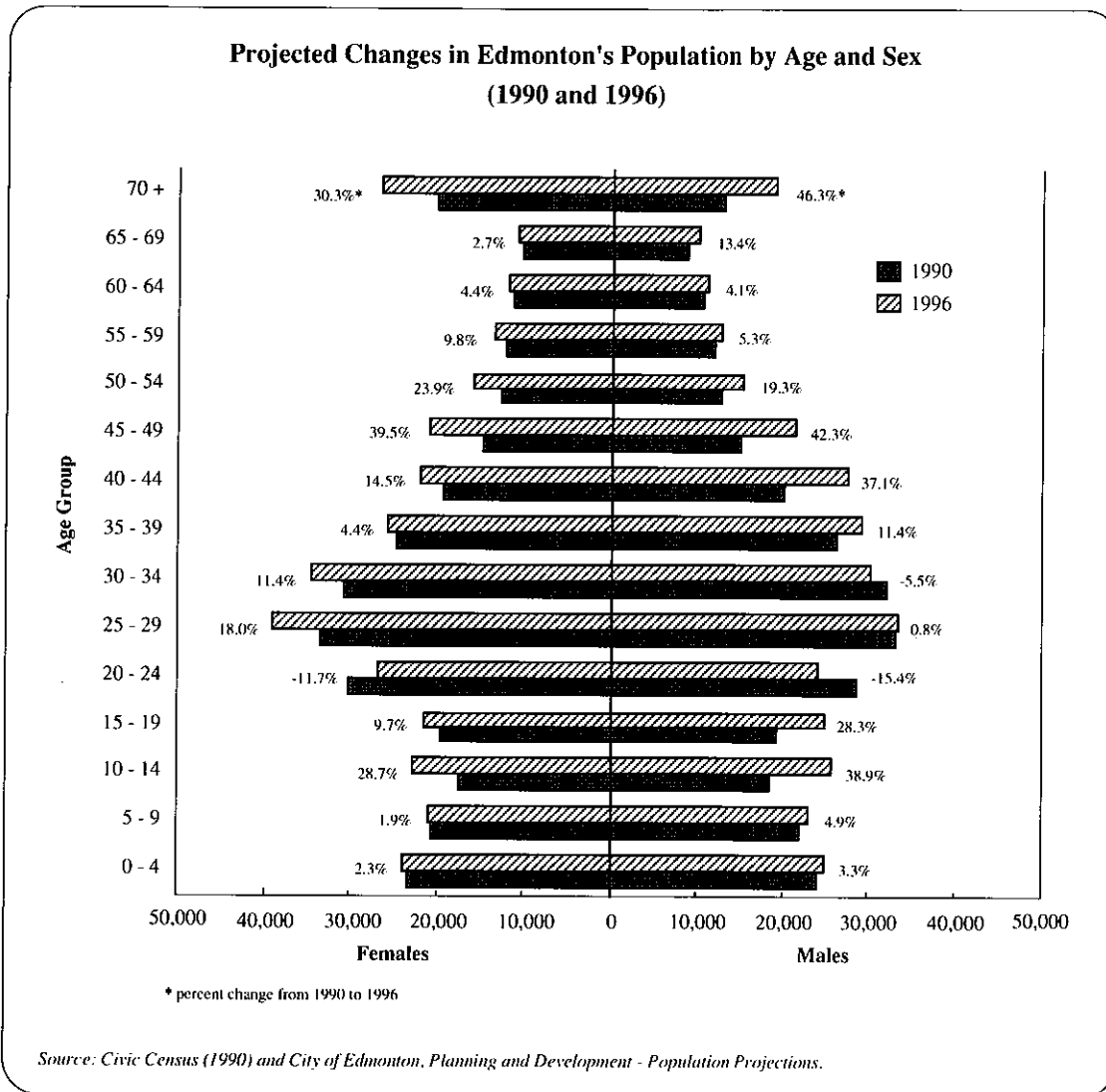
** Recent newcomer to Canada quoted in a newsletter from the New Neighbours Program*

Part 1

Major Social and Economic Trends

Population

In 1990, the Edmonton population was 605,538. This represents an increase of 3.7 percent over 1989. The population is projected to grow by 12 percent to 677,600 by 1996. Throughout the mid and late 1980s, Edmonton's population growth was largely the result of natural increase (births minus deaths), as more people left the city than came to it during this period. Over the next several years, migration to the city is expected to be nearly as important to Edmonton's population growth as natural increase. This anticipated growth in the number of persons moving to Edmonton will be linked to projected stable but slow growth of the local economy.

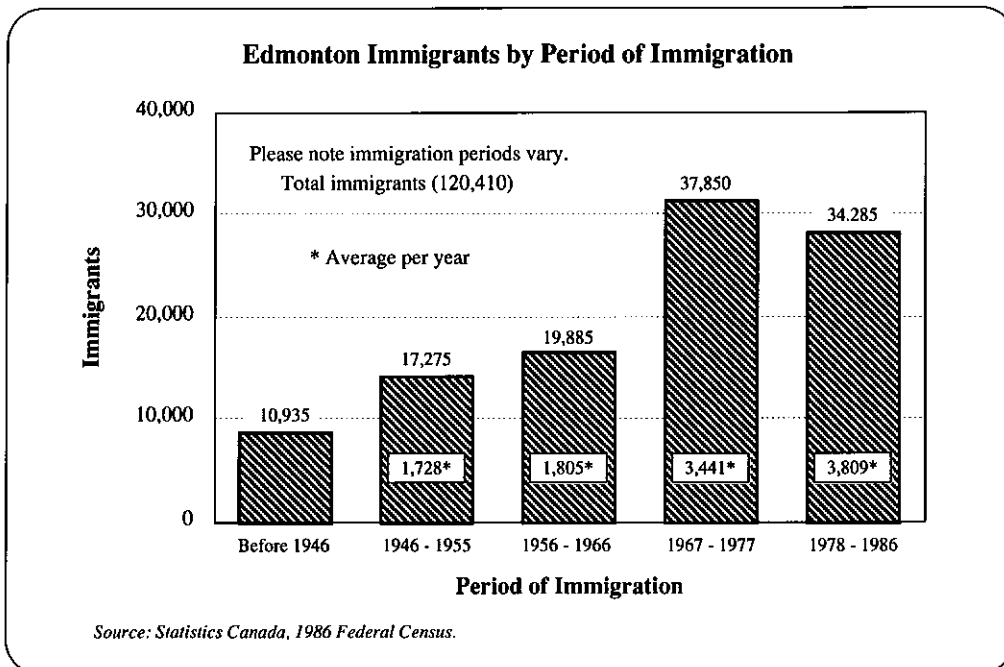
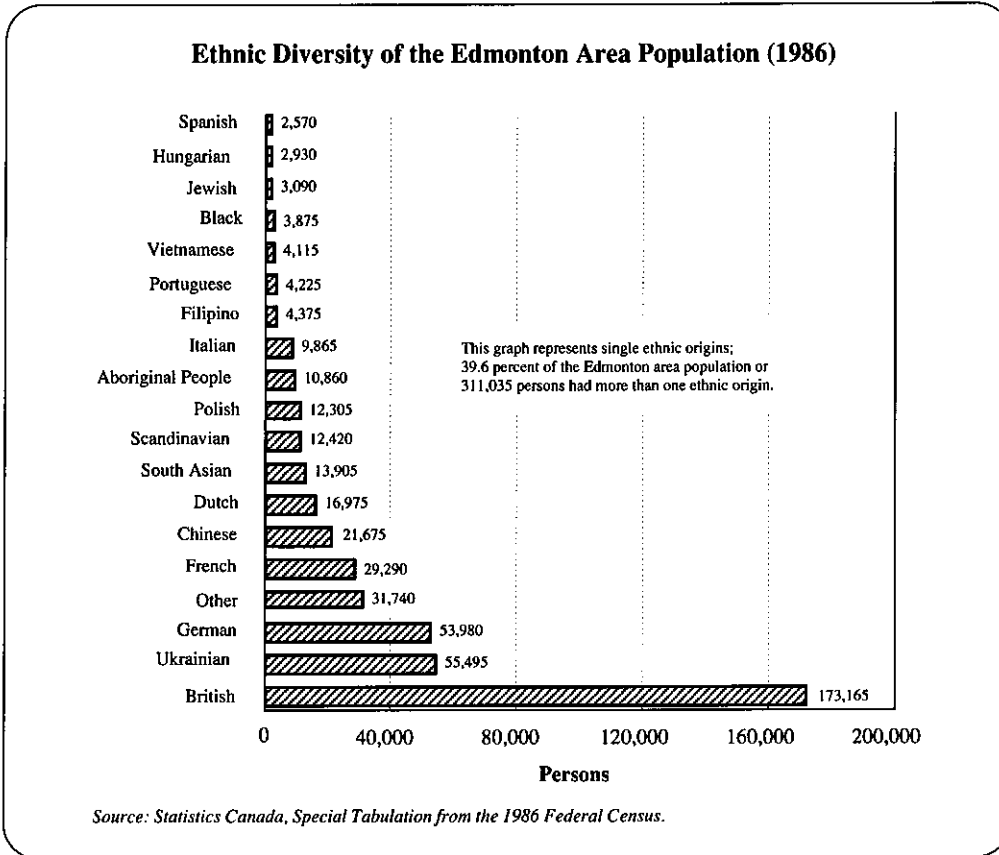


In general, the average age of Edmonton's population will continue to increase. Estimates suggest that between 1990 and 1996, the seniors' portion of the population (persons 65 years of age or older) will increase by approximately 25 percent. By 1996, over 67,000 persons will be in this age group and over 40 percent of these individuals will be 75 years of age or older.

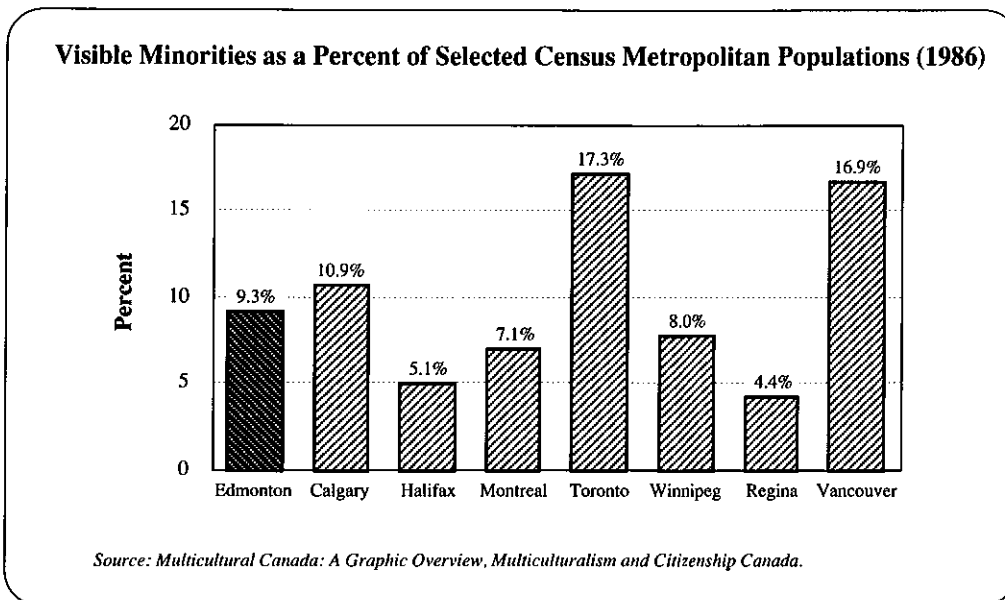
The number of adults 35 to 54 years of age is also expected to increase substantially during this period, from 148,000 to 180,000 persons (22 percent). As well, the minor 'baby boom' of the 1980s will likely result in a significant increase in the number of older children. All other age groups will either increase at a rate below the general average or decline in number.

Ethnic Diversity

According to 1986 Federal Census data, Edmonton is the second most ethnically diverse Canadian city after Winnipeg. One fifth of its population is made up of persons born outside Canada. Prior to the mid 1960s, this immigrant population was predominantly from European countries. Since then, immigrants have come from a broader range of nations, including Southeast Asian and Central and South American countries.



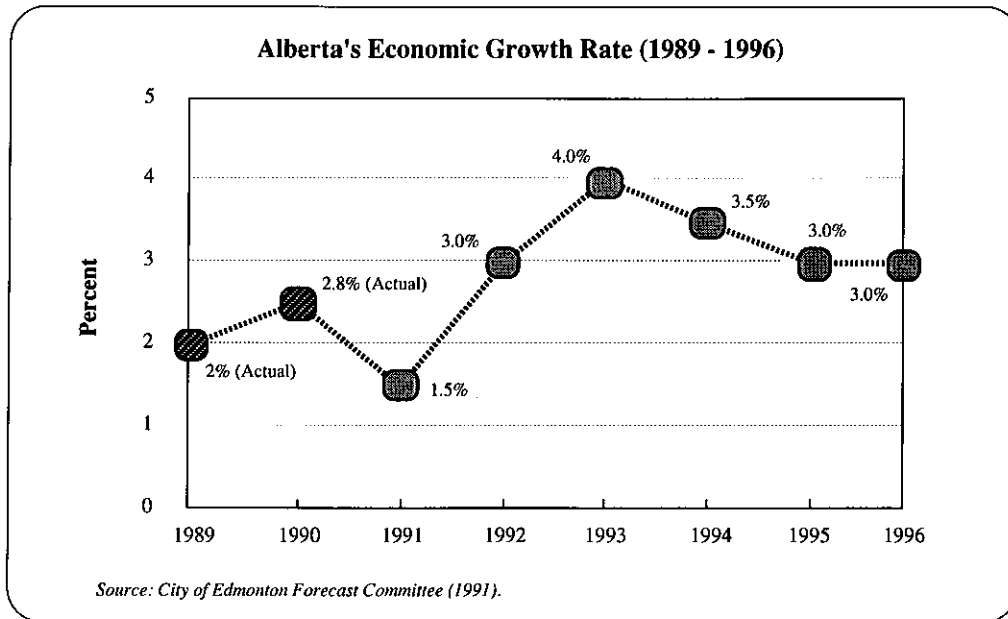
In 1986, about one in ten Edmonton area residents (9.3 percent) belonged to a visible minority*. The two cities with the highest proportions of visible minorities were Toronto and Vancouver with 17.3 and 16.9 percent of their population in this category. Conversely, Regina and Halifax were the two cities with the lowest number of visible minorities with 4.4 and 5.1 percent respectively.



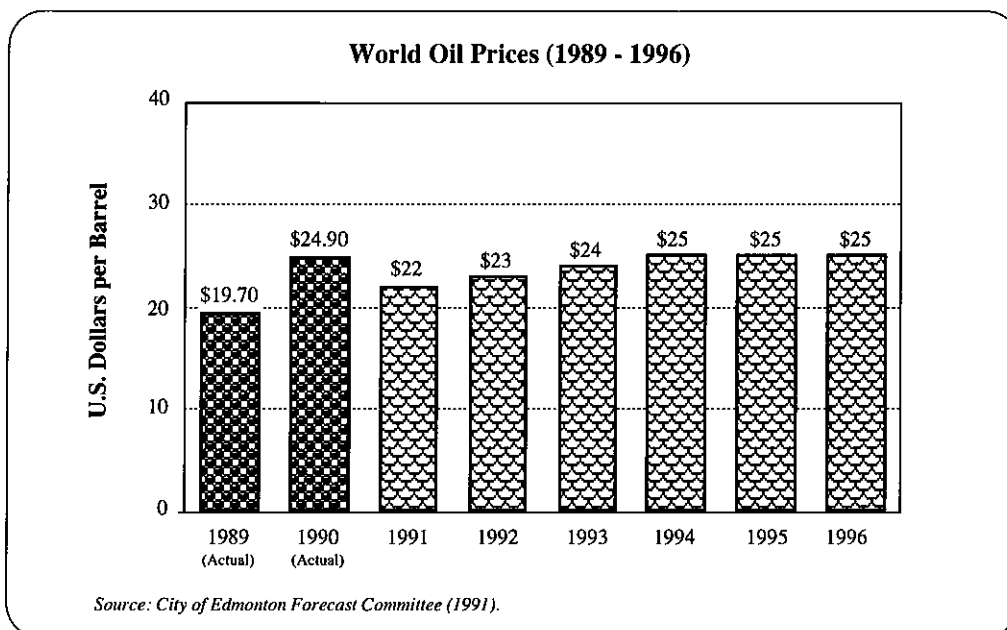
* Visible minorities are defined as belonging to the following ten groups, whether born in or outside Canada: Blacks, Chinese, Filipinos, Indo-Pakistanis, Japanese, Koreans, Latin Americans, other Pacific Islanders, South East Asians, West Asians and Arabs.

The Economy

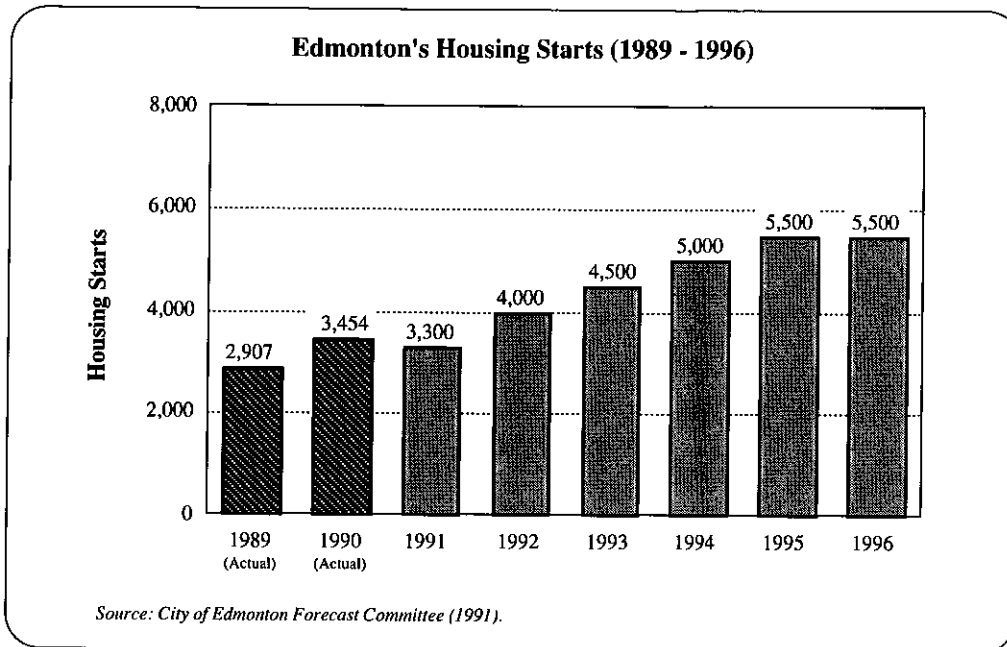
Edmonton's economy is highly dependent on the oil and gas industry. World oil prices, the United States economy, interest and inflation rates, the Goods and Services Tax and major industrial projects will continue to have a significant impact on the Alberta, and therefore, on the Edmonton economy during the next several years. The City of Edmonton's Forecast Committee predicts modest economic growth in 1991 due to relatively high oil prices and major projects in the energy and forestry industries. In addition, the Committee predicts an increase in inflation from 5.4 percent in 1990 to 6.5 percent in 1991 as a result of the Goods and Services Tax. By 1993, inflation is expected to decline to 4 percent.



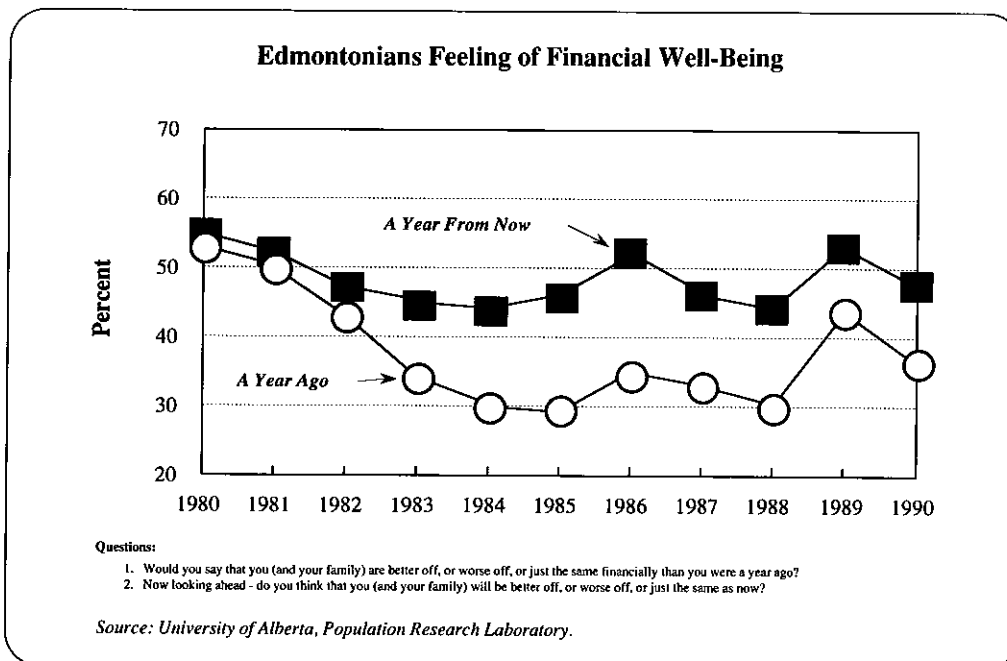
World oil prices increased 26 percent during 1990. Although the Gulf crisis significantly raised the price of oil in the short term, post-war prices decreased and are expected to rise only gradually to about 25 dollars per barrel and remain in this price range to 1996. This projection is based on the assumption that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) will maintain price stability.



According to the City's Forecast Committee, housing starts in 1991 will nearly equal 1990 levels. "Continued population growth through positive net migration, low apartment vacancy rates and lower interest rates will combine to boost housing starts to 4,000 units in 1992 and to 5,500 units in 1995 and 1996, an increase of 8 percent per year."



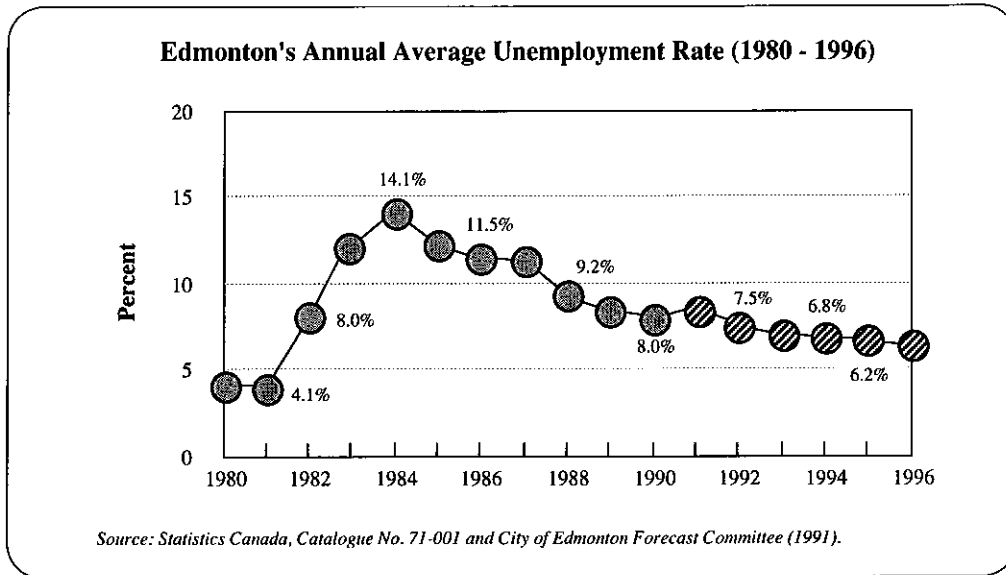
Although Edmontonians' rating of their financial well-being was more optimistic in 1989, this trend reversed in 1990. This reversal may be an indication of the current and projected slowed growth in the Edmonton economy and the perceived negative impact of the Goods and Services Tax.



Employment

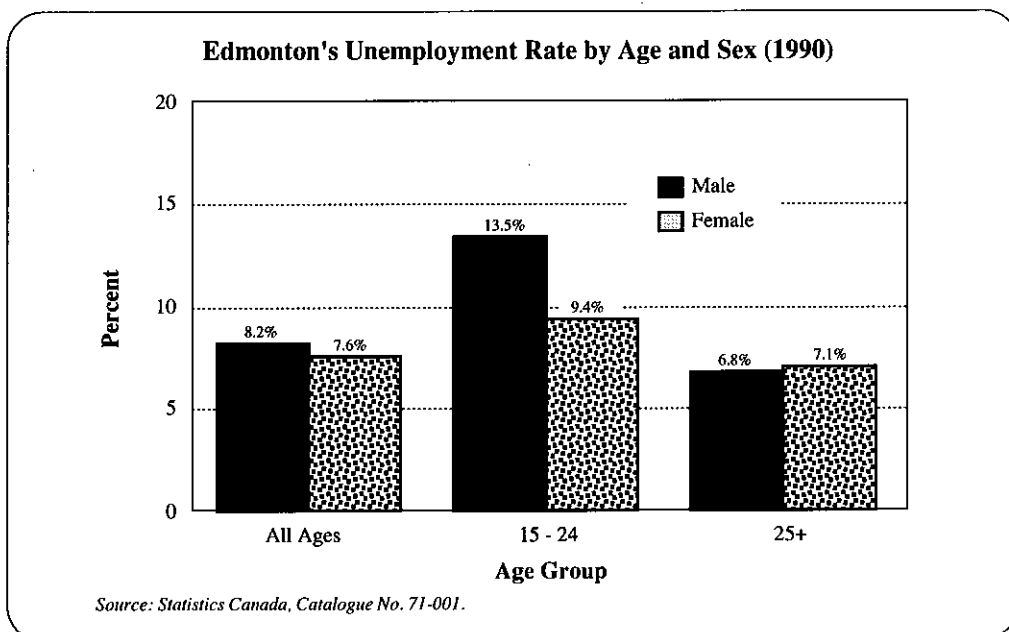
A community's well-being depends greatly on its level of employment. Employment influences spending patterns, social roles, status and self-esteem. Conversely, unemployment is associated with the occurrence of social problems such as poverty, family problems, poor physical and mental health, and substance abuse.

The following figures illustrate several important trends concerning employment in Edmonton.

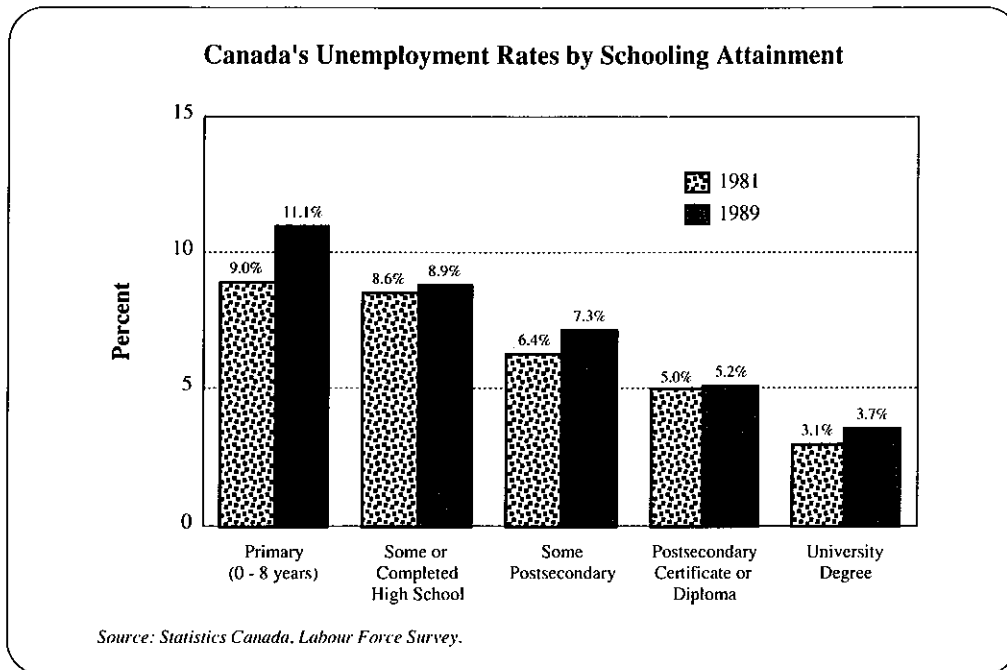


The unemployment rate is expected to continue declining to 6.2 percent by 1996. The exception to this decline is 1991 which, according to the City of Edmonton's Forecast Committee, will experience a marginal increase, "as a result of the slower growth in the provincial economy and budget restraints being implemented by the Provincial Government."

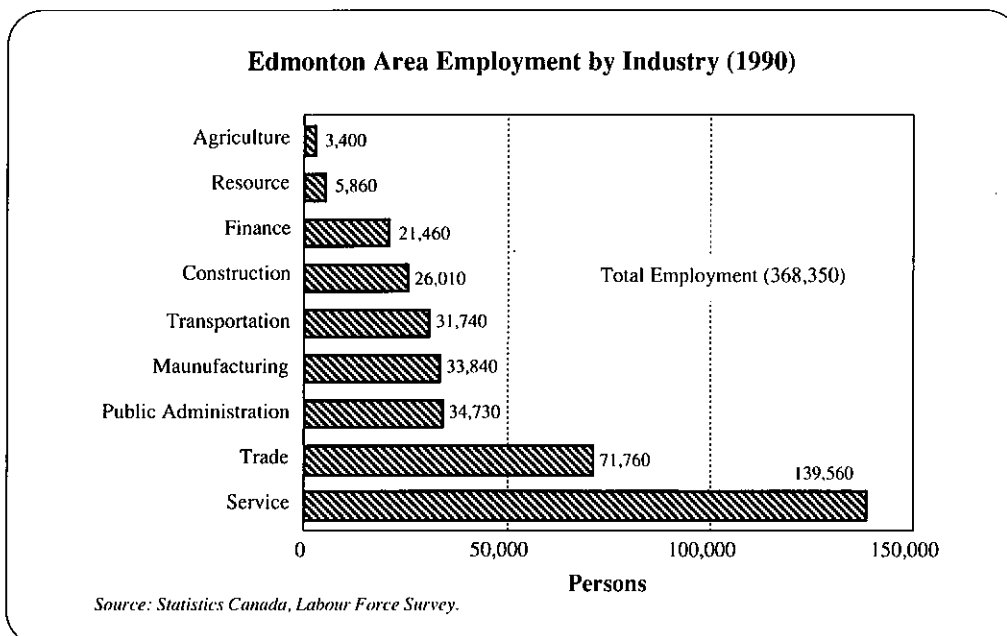
A person's age, and to some extent sex, has a bearing on whether or not employment is found. The unemployment rate for men, in the 15 to 24 year old age group, has been consistently higher than for women in the same age group.



A person's level of education also affects their employment opportunities. The higher the level of schooling, the less likely a person is to experience unemployment. In Canada, an individual with only a primary school education is three times more likely to be unemployed than an individual with a university degree. This relationship changed little between 1981 and 1989.

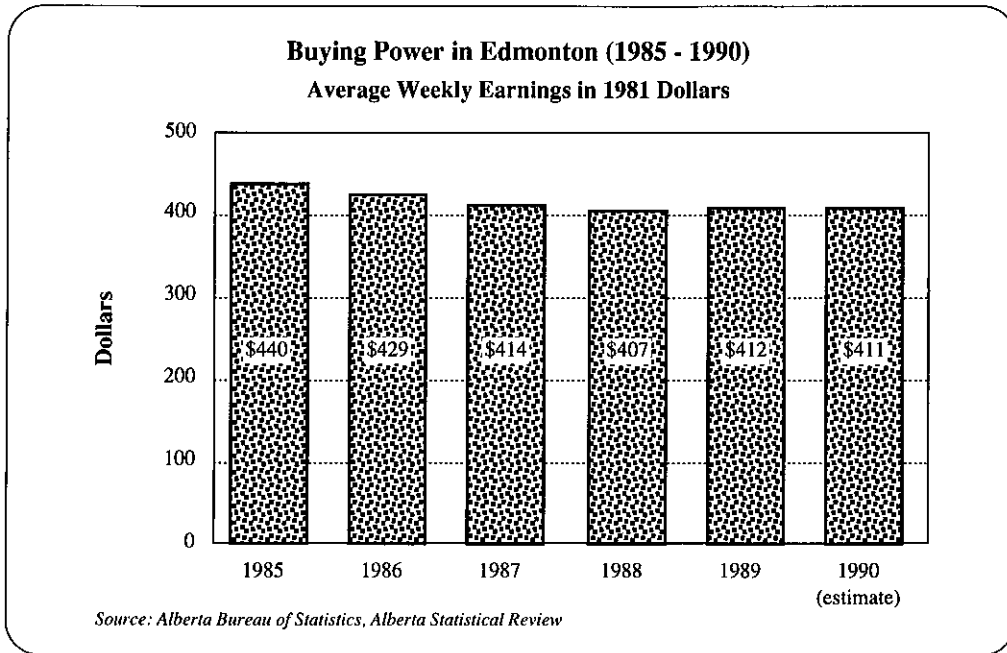


In the Edmonton area, more than one in three employment opportunities in 1990 were in the service sector (community, business and personal services). In comparison, one in five people were employed in the trade sector. These two sectors accounted for nearly 60 percent of all jobs in the region, but continue to be the two lowest paying areas of employment.

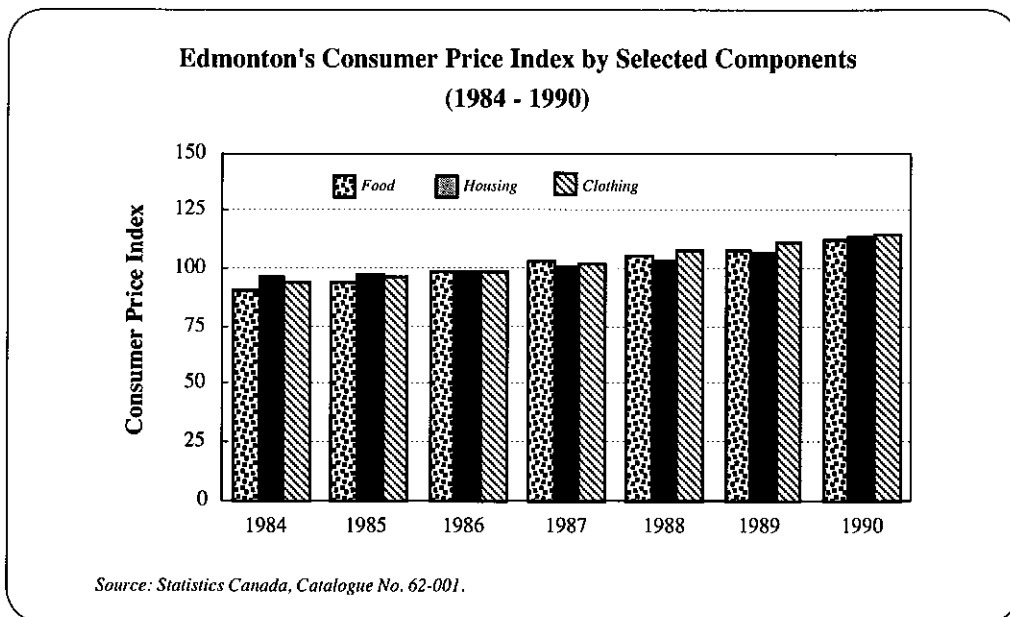


Income

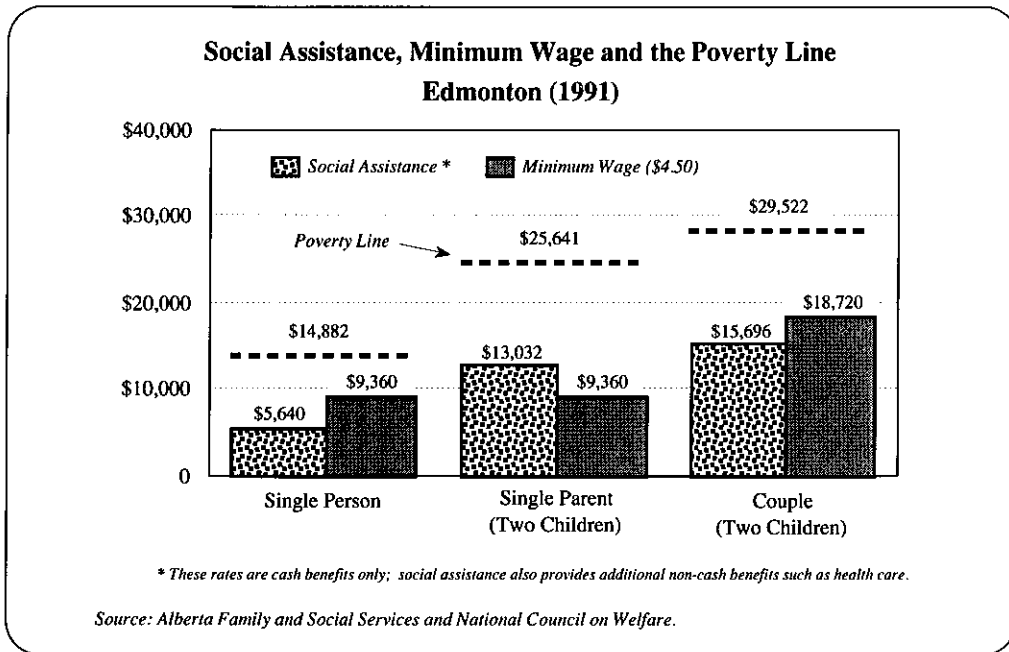
Buying power declined between 1985 and 1990 because average weekly earnings did not keep pace with inflation. However, from 1988 to 1990, the decline stabilized and average wages kept pace with increases in the cost of living.



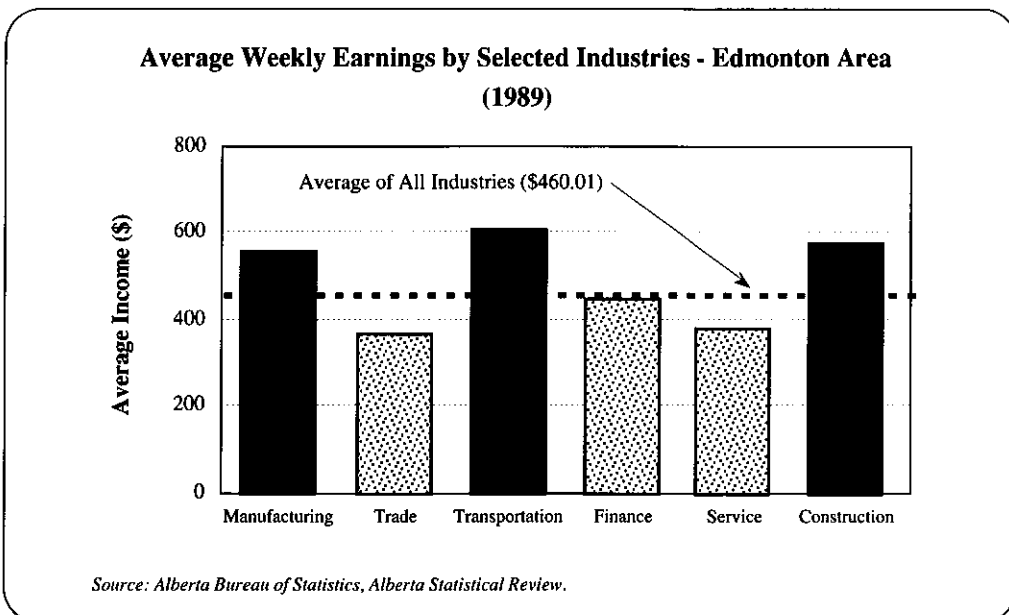
In Edmonton, since the mid 1980s, the price of the 'basics of life' (food, clothing and shelter) increased between three and five percent annually. These increases had the greatest impact on individuals living below the poverty line and those on fixed incomes who spend a higher proportion of their income on basic necessities.



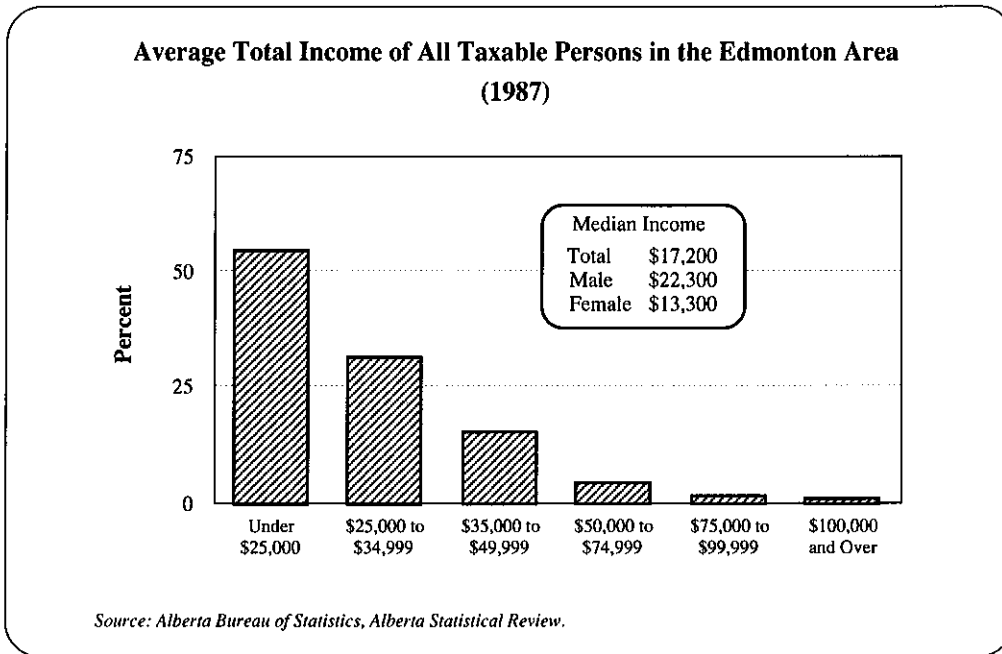
Wages or some source of government financial assistance are the primary sources of income for Edmontonians. As the following figure shows, many of those who are employed in low paying jobs or who receive only social assistance are poor. In 1991, a single person working at the minimum wage in Alberta would have to work 64 hours per week to reach the poverty line. A single parent with two children would have to work 110 hours a week to earn an income equal to the poverty line. In comparison, in 1989, a single person and a single parent with two children had to work 51 and 91 hours per week respectively to reach the poverty line.



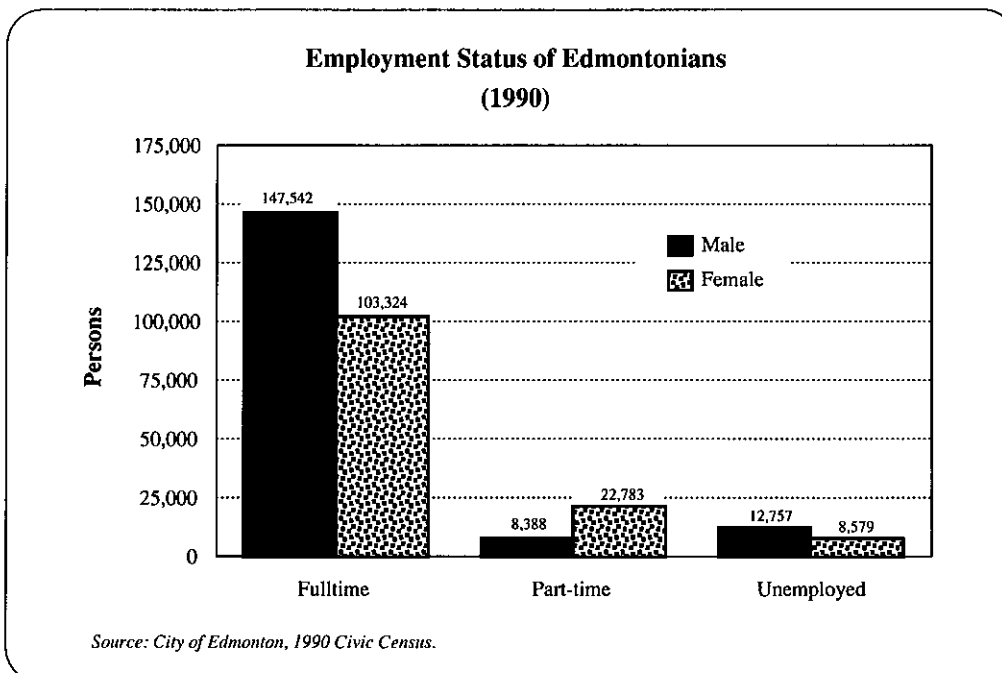
Individuals working in the trade and service sectors of the Edmonton economy had average incomes significantly below the average of all industries. In 1989, the average weekly earnings of service and trade personnel were \$387.31 and \$371.33 respectively, compared to the overall industrial average of \$460.01.



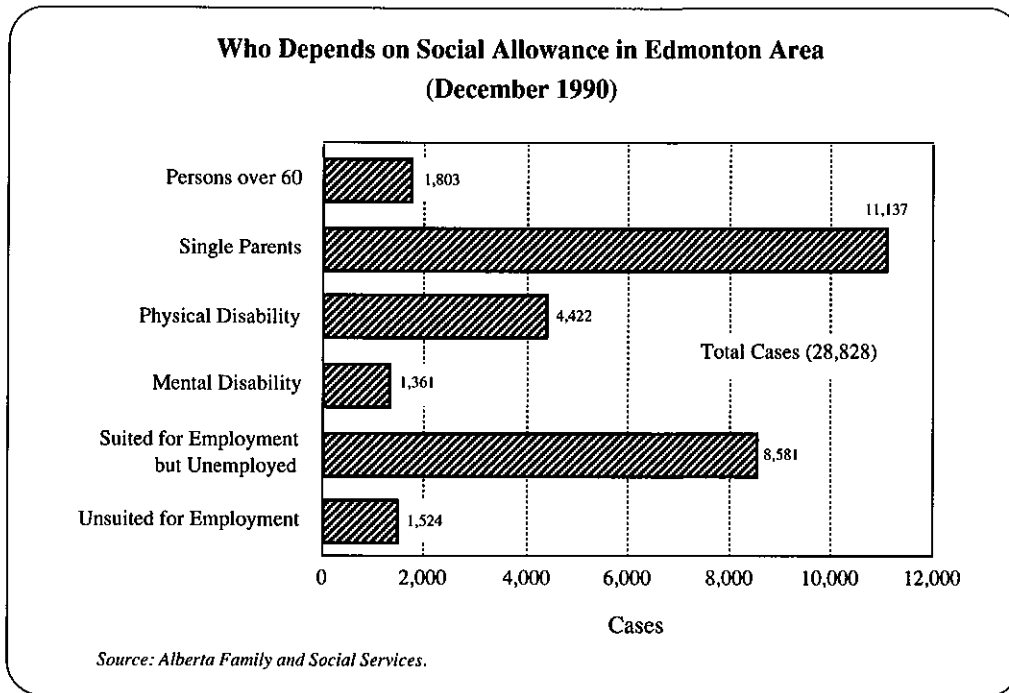
The following figure illustrates the income distribution of persons in the Edmonton area who submitted tax returns for 1987. It includes people who worked full-time, part-time and in temporary jobs during that year. The majority of persons (55 percent) had incomes under \$25,000 dollars. Nearly a third (32 percent) had incomes between \$25,000 and \$34,000.



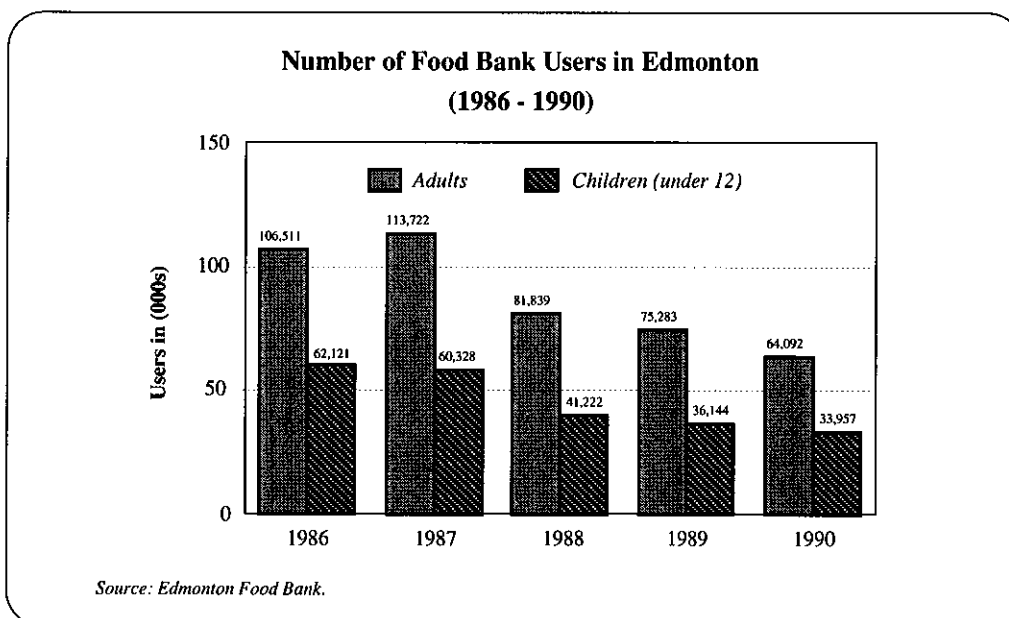
In 1990, more than 250,000 persons were employed full-time and more than 31,000 part-time. Nearly 60 percent of those employed full-time were male, while about 75 percent of those employed part-time were female.



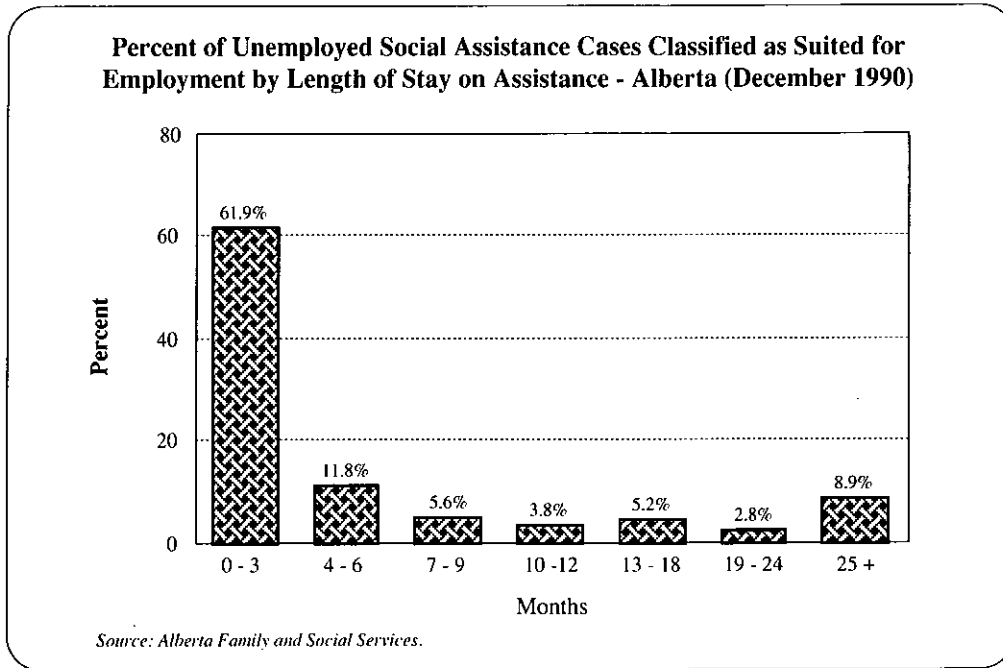
In December 1990, there were nearly 29,000 social assistance cases in the Edmonton area. The majority of assistance recipients fell into either the 'unemployed' or the 'single parent' categories. According to Alberta Family and Social Services, it is estimated that approximately 28,000 children were supported within the social assistance program in the Edmonton area; about 21,000 of these children were from single parent families.



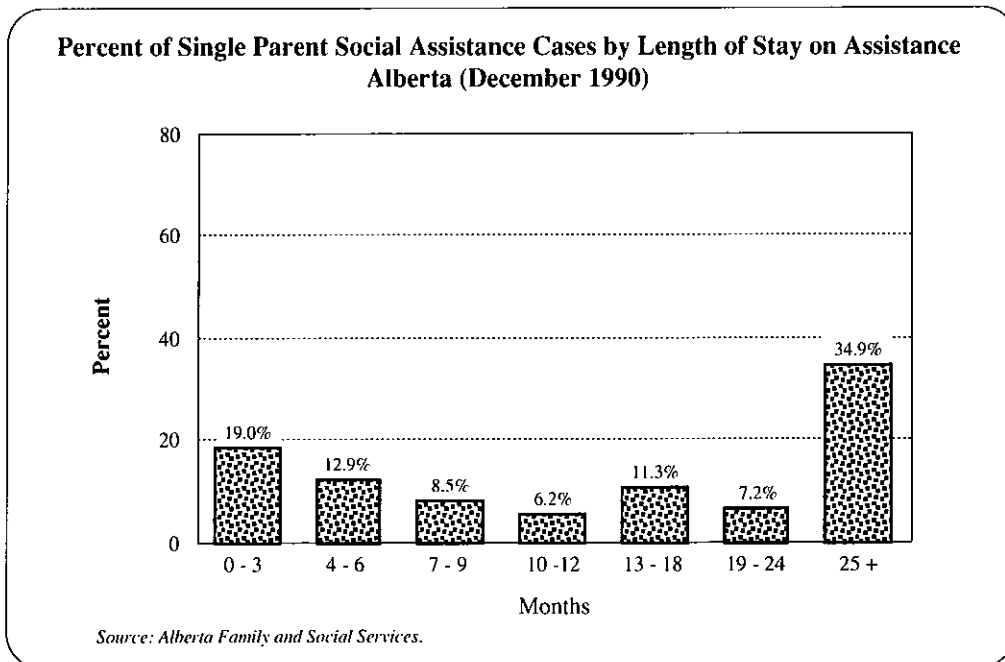
Some Edmonton residents have had difficulty getting the food they need. The Edmonton Food Bank, in conjunction with other agencies, helps to fill the gap by providing hampers and meals. Food Bank usage appears to have declined since 1987. However, according to the Edmonton Food Bank, although the number of hampers have declined, the size of the hampers have increased by 33 percent since 1987.



The following two figures show the December 1990 caseload by the length of time that individuals or families were on social assistance, according to whether they were "unemployed but suited for employment" or "single parents". Most people (61.9 percent) who were unemployed and relying on social assistance received help for three months or less.







Conversely, single parent families tended to require assistance for longer periods of time, with more than half receiving assistance for one year or more.

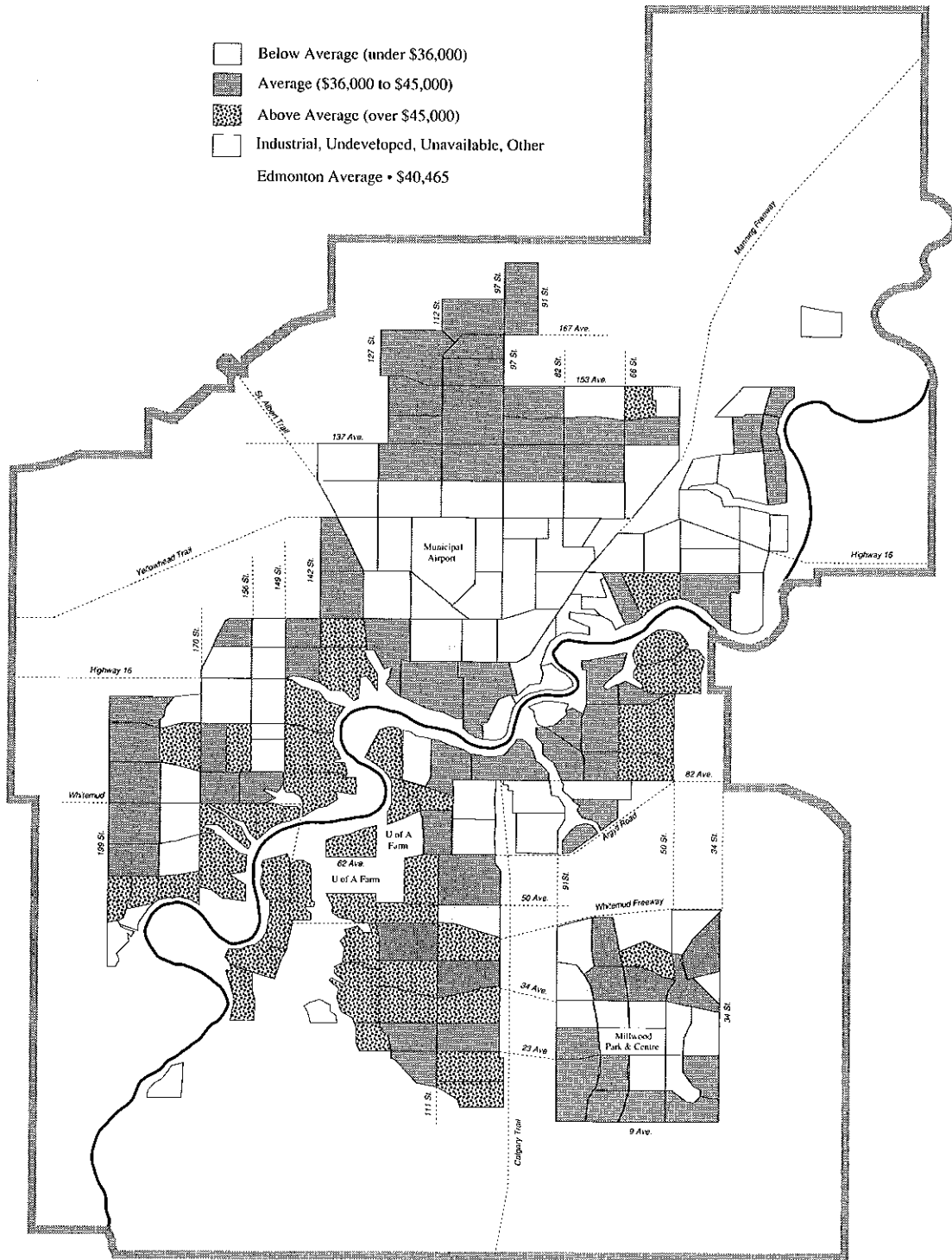


According to Alberta Family and Social Services, about four percent of social assistance cases are potentially fraudulent. This figure is based on studies of similar financial assistance systems across the United States and Canada.

The following map shows average family income by Edmonton neighbourhoods. In general, neighbourhoods north of the the North Saskatchewan river have lower incomes than neighbourhoods south of the river. Neighbourhoods with the highest average family incomes are located in southwest Edmonton, both north and south of the river. (For a map of neighbourhood names, see page 21).

Average Family Income by Neighbourhood in Edmonton (1986)

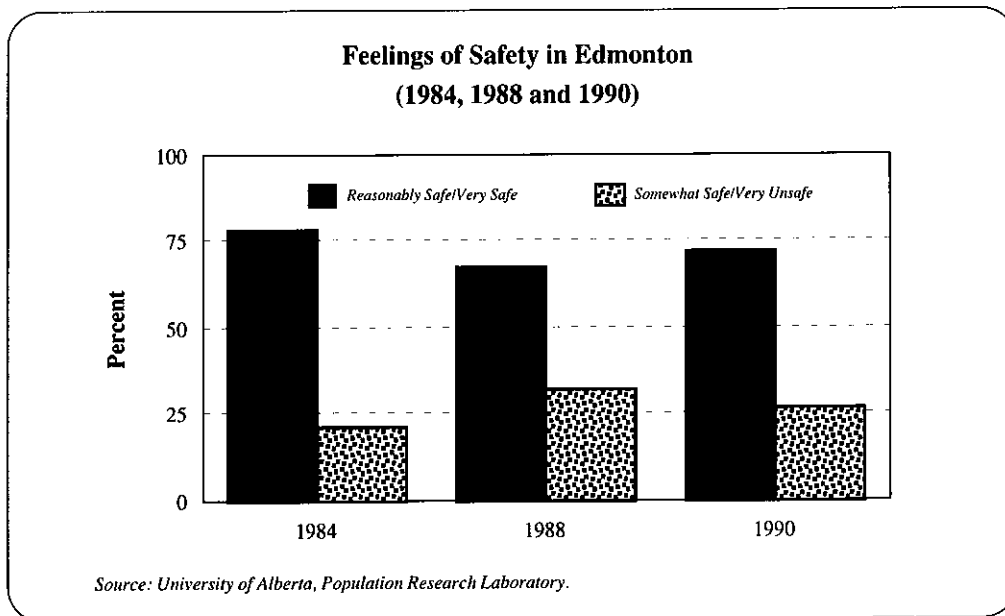
-  Below Average (under \$36,000)
 -  Average (\$36,000 to \$45,000)
 -  Above Average (over \$45,000)
 -  Industrial, Undeveloped, Unavailable, Other
- Edmonton Average • \$40,465



Sources: Edmonton Community and Family Services and Statistics Canada Neighbourhood Data.

Safety and Violence

The figure below illustrates feelings of safety Edmonton residents have about walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark. In 1984, nearly 80 percent of Edmontonians felt reasonably safe or very safe in their communities. By 1988, this figure had declined to 68 percent but by 1990 there had been a slight increase in confidence. Approximately 73 percent of residents felt safe in their neighbourhoods after daylight hours in 1990.



The following table compares the number of reported occurrences of physical violence in Edmonton. From 1984 to 1990, the number of assaults increased substantially in all five categories. During this period, common assaults rose 27 percent, assaults with a weapon 42 percent, aggravated assaults 58 percent, family disputes 29 percent and homicides 13 percent.

**Physical Violence in Edmonton
(1984 - 1990)**

Type of Assault	1984	1987	1990
Common Assault	3797	3875	4923
Assault with a Weapon	920	902	1279
Aggravated Assault	154	133	210
Family Disputes	5348	4654	6019
Homicides	20	24	27

Source: City of Edmonton, Police Services.

Health

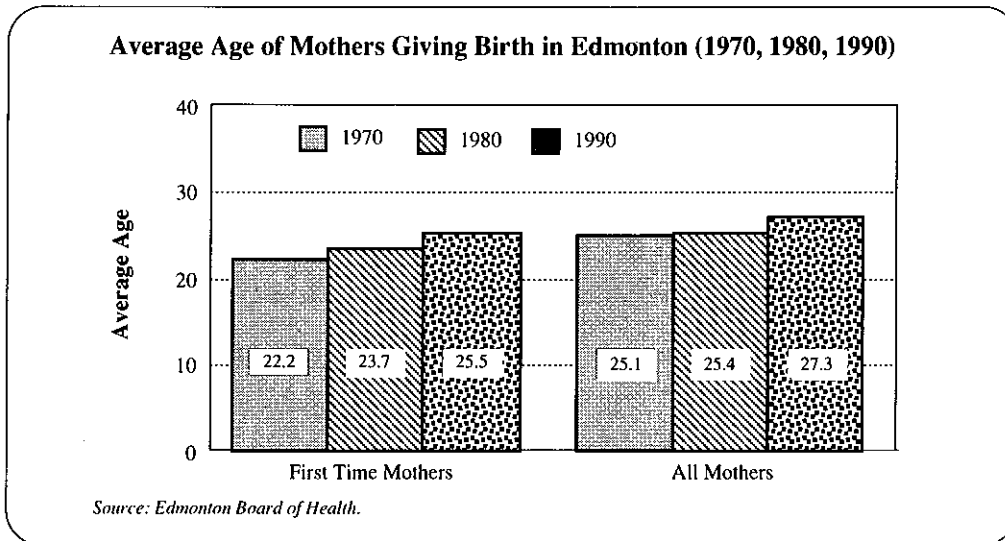
Selected health dimensions are listed below.

Fatal Illness

- In 1990, approximately 26 percent of all deaths were due to heart disease.
- In 1990, about 17 percent of all deaths were attributed to smoking.
- In 1990, the infant death rate in Edmonton was 7.5 per 1,000 births.
- As of June 1991, 109 Edmonton residents had been diagnosed with AIDS and 57 had died.

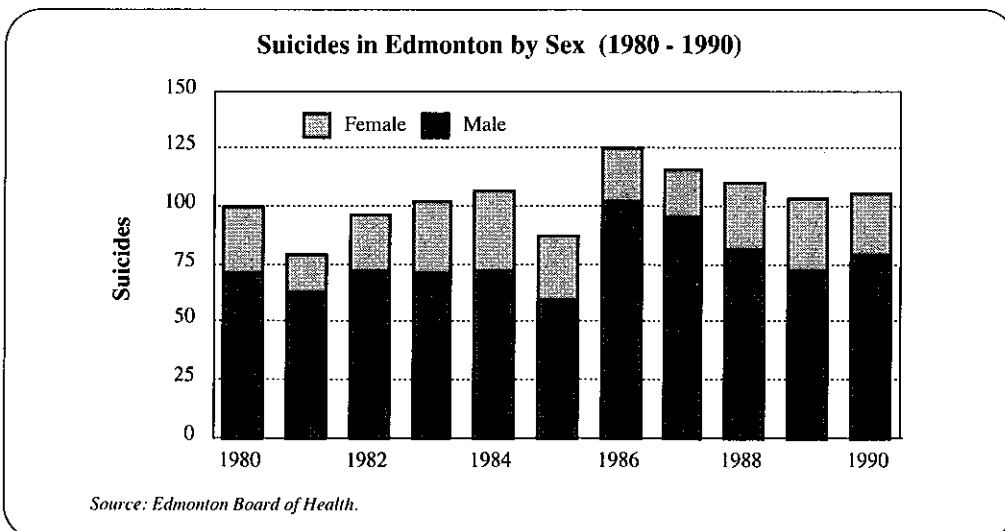
Reproductive Health

- The birth rate for women aged 15 to 19 declined from 46.4 per 1,000 women in 1982 to 38.0 per 1,000 women in 1989. In 1990, this rate increased to 40.3 per 1,000 women.
- The average age at which mothers give birth is slowly increasing.



Emotional/Psychological/Social Health

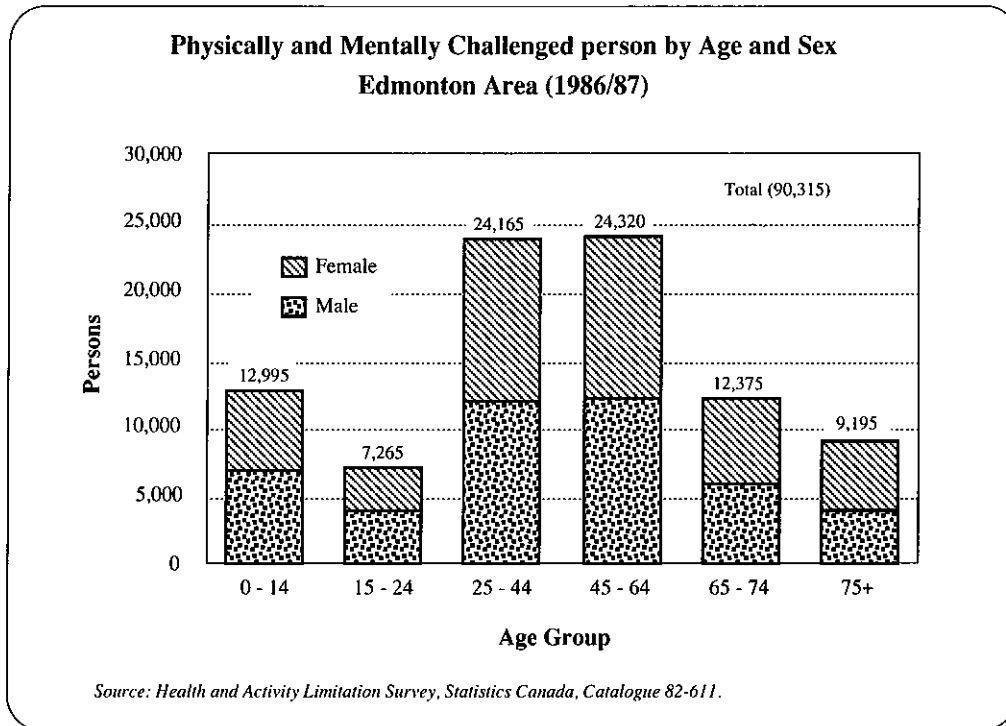
- Suicide rates have fluctuated over the past ten years. Suicide fatalities continue to be far more common for males than females.



Physically and Mentally Challenged Persons

According to the 1986/87 Health and Activity Survey by Statistics Canada, over 90,000 persons, or about 11 percent of the population in the Edmonton Area were physically or mentally challenged.* Other findings of the survey were:

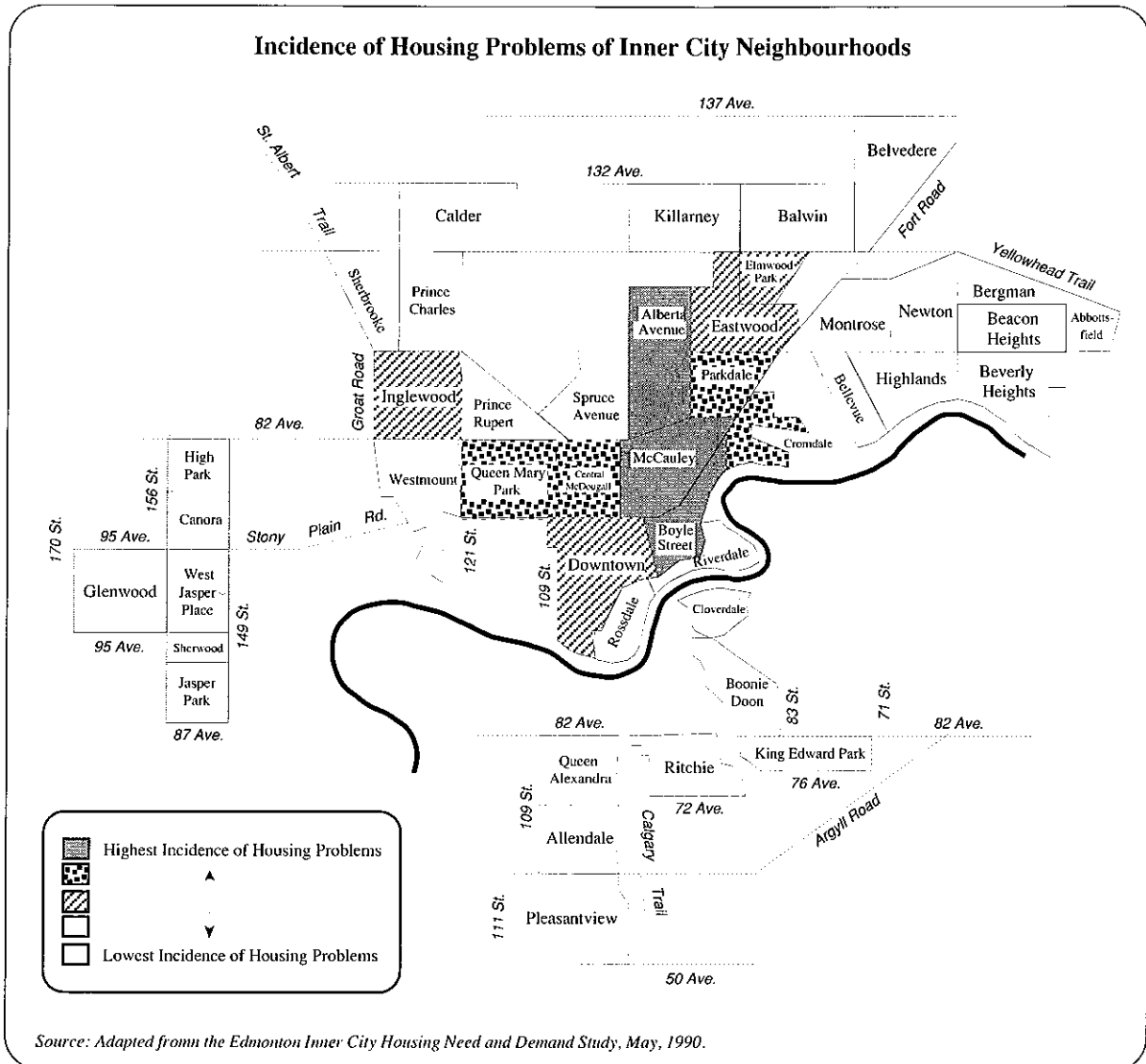
- 14 percent of physically or mentally challenged persons were under 15 years of age.
- 8 percent were between 15 and 24 years of age.
- 27 percent were between 25 and 44 years of age and a similar proportion between 45 and 64 years of age.
- 14 percent were seniors 65 to 74 years of age.
- 10 percent were over 75 years of age or older.
- 51,405 or approximately 57 percent of physically or mentally challenged persons had incomes below \$15,000 per year.
- over 45 percent of physically or mentally challenged persons between 15 and 64 years of age were either unemployed or not in the labour force because of their disabilities.
- mobility, agility and hearing are the major problems among physically or mentally challenged seniors.



* The Health and Activity Limitation Survey used the World Health Organization's definition of physically or mentally challenged persons, which is "... any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being."

Housing

The following map was adapted from a study commissioned by Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, City of Edmonton Community and Family Services, and The Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness. The primary purpose of the study was to assess housing needs and demands in 43 inner city neighbourhoods.



Findings of the study included:

- over 14,000 lower income households in the inner-city had affordability problems (spent at least 30 percent of their incomes on housing and had annual incomes below \$30,000).
- more than 2,200 households in the study area were identified as overcrowded or in housing of poor physical condition.
- almost half of all housing problems within the study area were located in twelve neighbourhoods.
- over half of the households defined as overcrowded were located in the eight neighbourhoods immediately north of the city centre.
- the combined effects of lack of affordability, overcrowding and substandard housing were highest in three neighbourhoods north and east of the city centre.

Summary of Edmonton Statistics

Demographics	1986		1990	
Population	571,506		605,538	
Net Migration	-3,820		14,597	
Natural Increase	7,551		7,069	
Population Segments				
0-4	46,126	(8.1%)	47,971	(7.9%)
5-9	37,081	(6.5%)	43,049	(7.1%)
10-14	33,137	(5.8%)	36,585	(6.0%)
15-19	40,678	(7.1%)	39,573	(6.5%)
20-29	140,162	(24.6%)	126,608	(20.9%)
30-39	100,512	(17.6%)	114,964	(19.0%)
40-49	58,471	(10.2%)	70,343	(11.6%)
50-59	49,791	(8.8%)	50,700	(8.4%)
60-69	36,305	(6.4%)	42,043	(6.9%)
70+	29,243	(5.2%)	33,702	(5.5%)
Seniors (65+)	44,972	(8.0%)	53,304	(8.7%)
Those under 15 as a % of 15 to 64 Year Olds	28.4%		30.1%	
Those 65 and older as a % of 15 to 64 Year Olds	11.0%		12.6%	
Economic				
Alberta GDP (1986 Constant in Millions)	\$56,553		(1989) \$63,143	
Consumer Price Index	100.0		117.6	
Labour Force				
Unemployment Rate	11.5%		8.0%	
Participation Rate	71.6%		71.7%	
Income				
Average Weekly Earnings	\$428.46		\$484.50*	
Family				
Birth Rate (per 1,000 population)	18.9		17.5	
Death Rate (per 1,000 population)	5.7		5.8	
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)	10.0		7.5	
Divorce Rate, Alberta (per 100,000 population)	342		310*	
General Fertility Rate (live births per year to women aged 15-44)	69.5		66.2	
Average Number of Children Born per Woman	1.7		1.8	
Births to Teenagers	765		809	
Percentage of Births to Teenagers	7.1		7.7	
Births to Unmarried Mothers	2,257		2,852	
Births to Unmarried Mothers (% of all births)	20.9		27.0	
Health				
Life Expectancy (Males)	(1987) 73.2			
(Females)	(1987) 79.5			
Percentage of Babies under 2501 grams	7.0		5.9	
Suicides (Total)	127		126	
(Males)	103		83	
(Females)	24		43	

* estimate

Part 2
Trends and Service Implications
for Immigrants

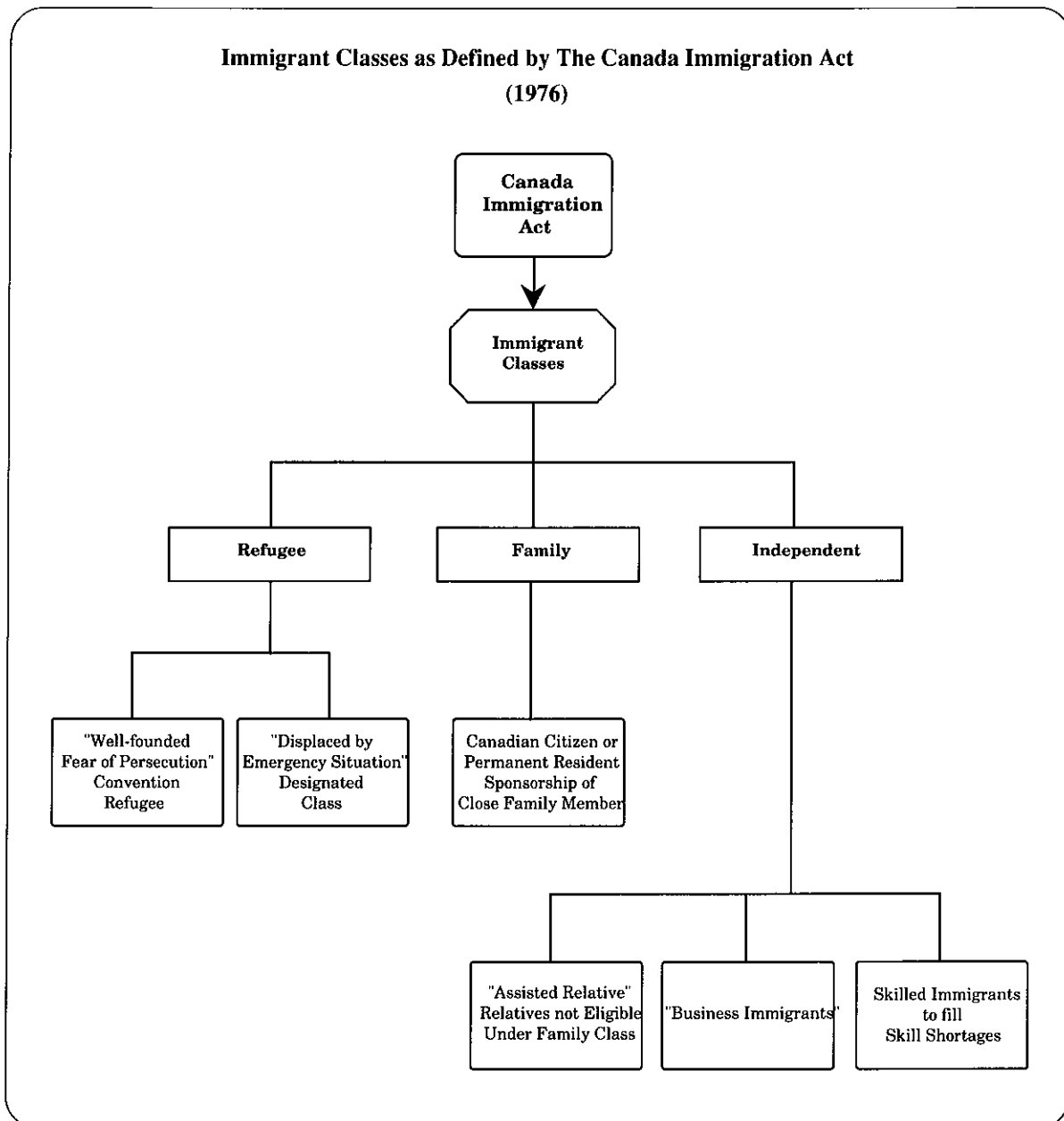
Immigration - An Overview

The following flowchart provides historical highlights of Canadian immigration from Confederation to the present. Over time, immigration to Canada has become restrictive and mirrors the economic and/or political climate of the time.

Time Period	Highlight
Confederation to 1913	Settlement of the West Over 3 million immigrants arrive (400,000 in 1913 alone)
World War I to end of World War II	Restrictive Immigration Policy Immigration nearly ceases during Depression and World War II
Post World War II to 1950s	Admission of "Displaced Persons" from Europe after World War II Establishment of the Main Principles of Canada's Immigration Policy (Mackenzie King, 1947)
Late 1950s to 1962	Official Abandonment of Ethnic Discrimination in Immigration Policy Admission based on Labour Market Considerations and Economic Development 5 Million Persons Arrive during this Period Hungarian Refugee Movement
Mid 1960s to Mid 1970s	Continued Admission of Skilled, Technical and Professional Immigrants A Nine-Point Selection System for Independents established Czechoslovakian and Chilean Refugee Movements
Mid 1970s to Mid 1980s	Immigration Act of 1976 defines 4 National Objectives of Immigration Policy Admission Based on Family Reunion, Skills, and Humanitarian Considerations Three Admissions Categories (Independents, Family, Refugees) Indochinese, East European, Central American Refugee Movements
Mid 1980s to Present	Moderate Controlled Growth of Immigration Levels Major Revision of Immigration Policy Levels Increase, New Integration Strategies Changes in Family Class Definition and Admission of Skilled Workers Immigrants Linked to Economic Needs and Population Grow Family Class continues to be the Highest Processing Priorit New Laws (Bill C55 and C84 on Refugee Determination Procedures)

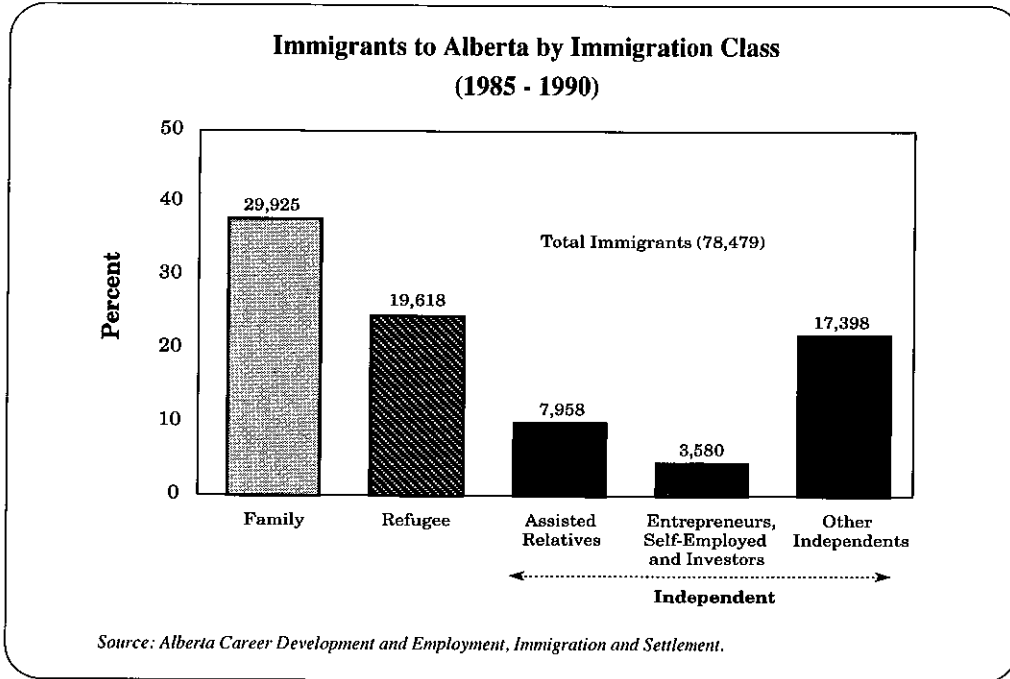
The following figure illustrates Canada's immigration categories as defined by the Canada Immigration Act of 1976. The three broad immigrant categories are: a) refugee, b) family, and c) independent.

- a) **Refugees** are persons who have either left their country because of a well-founded fear that if they stayed they would be persecuted because of their race, nationality, religion, membership in a social group or political opinions, or persons who have been displaced by an emergency situation and are accepted for humanitarian reasons.
- b) **Family class immigrants** are members of an immediate family such as a spouse, children under 21 years of age or parents over 60 years of age. This category also includes relatives such as adult siblings and their dependents.
- c) **Independent** includes skilled workers, entrepreneurs, self-employed individuals and those under a permit from the Minister of Canada Employment and Immigration.

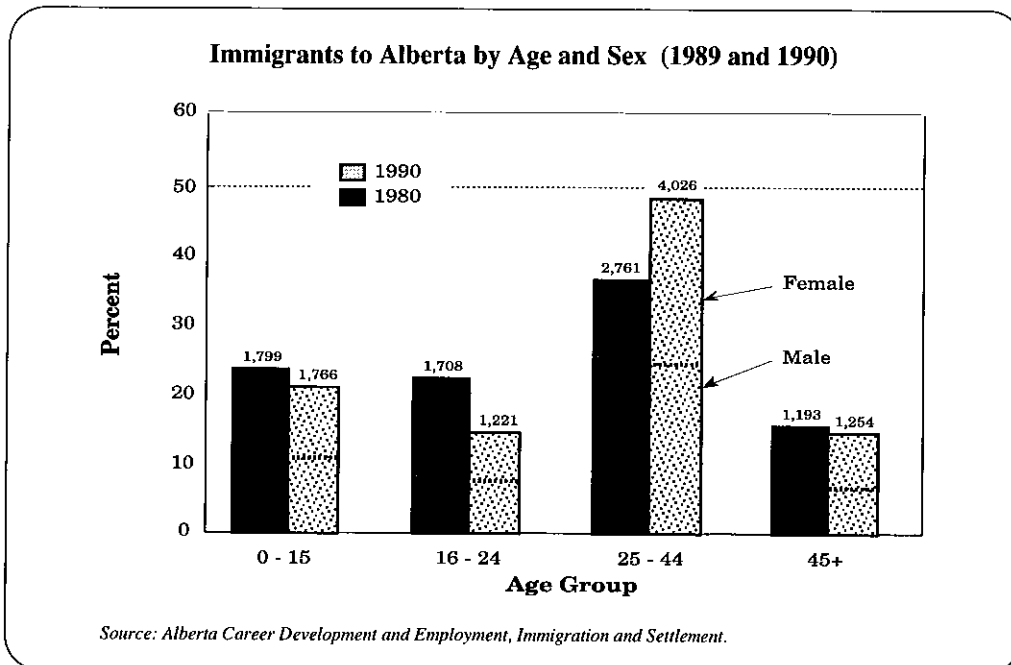


The following graphs present a profile of Alberta immigrants. Edmonton's percentage of newcomers is about 42 percent of the Alberta total in any given year.

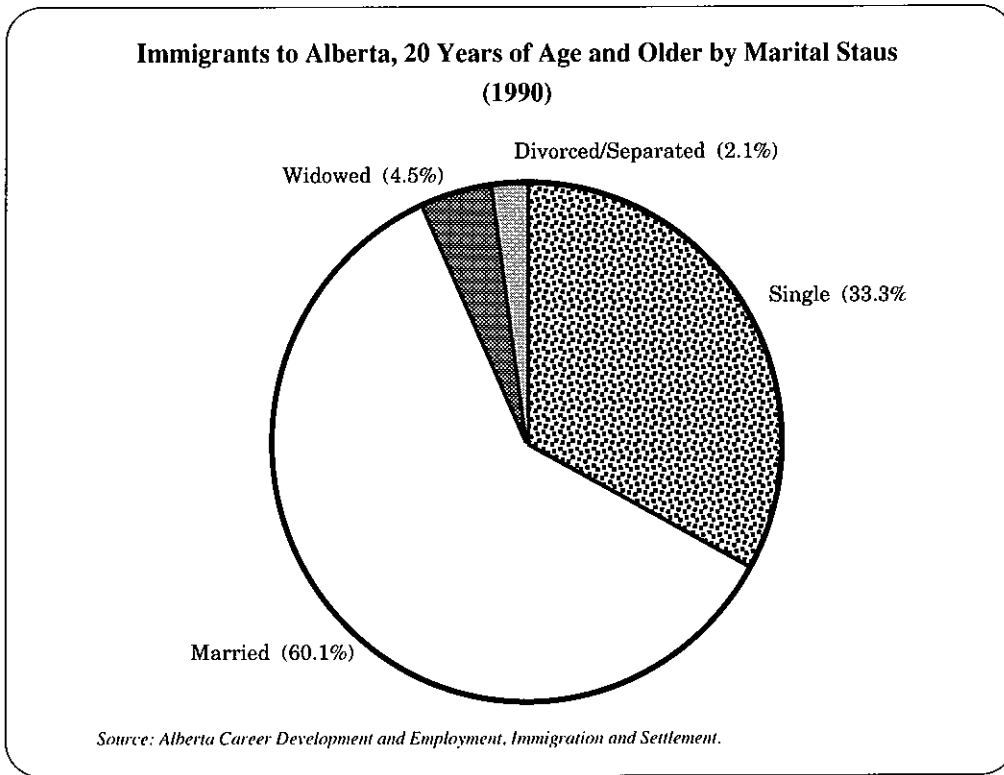
From 1985 to 1990, about four in ten persons (38 percent) who immigrated to Alberta arrived under the family immigrant status. Approximately one in four (25 percent) was admitted as a refugee. The remainder were classified as independent immigrants.



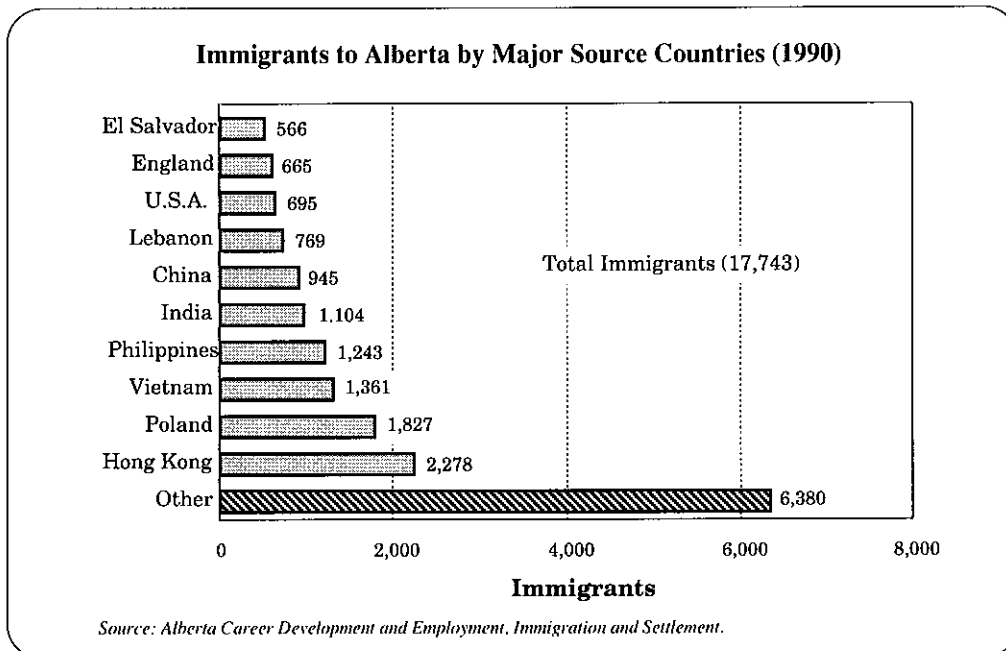
Nearly half of the immigrants to Alberta in 1990 were 25 to 44 years of age compared to less than 40 percent in 1980. About 15 and 22 percent of immigrants were 16 to 24 years of age in 1990 and 1980 respectively. Immigrants were almost equally divided between males and females.



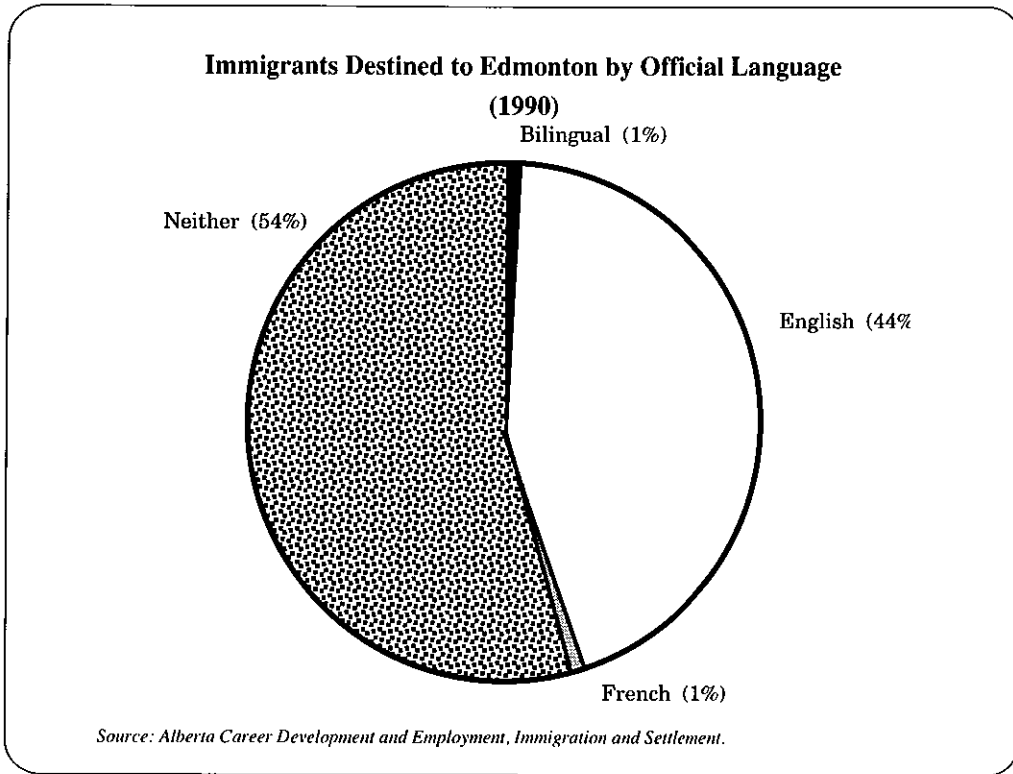
Approximately 60 percent of Alberta immigrants, 20 years of age and older in 1990, were married. Single persons accounted for about a third (33 percent) of immigrants, widowed (5 percent) and divorced and separated persons (2 percent).



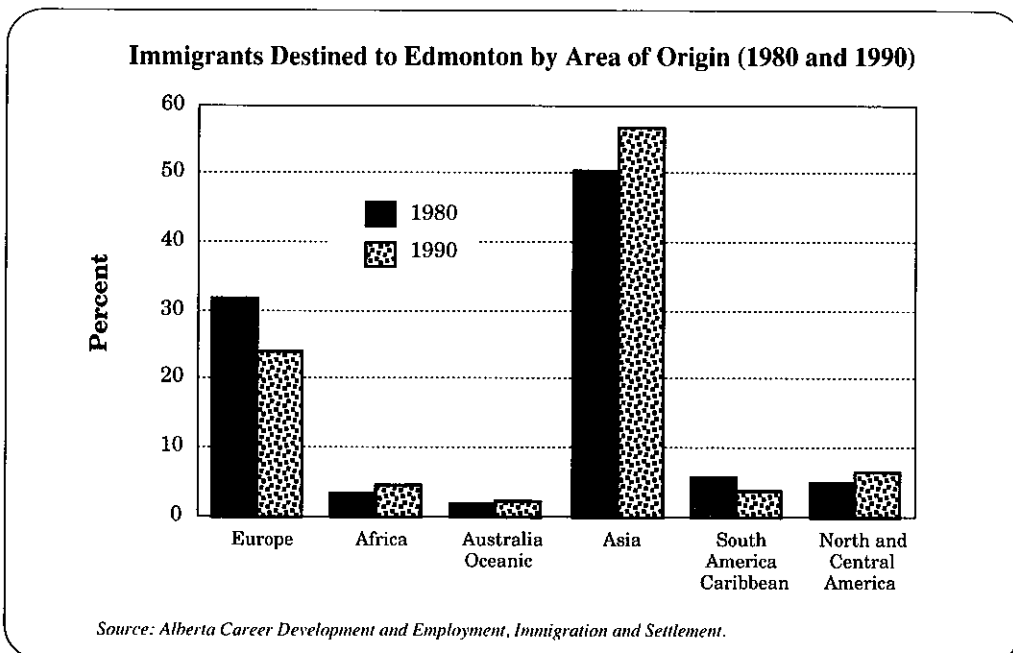
The largest single group of immigrants to Alberta in 1990 was from Hong Kong (2,278 individuals). Polish people (1,827) and Vietnamese (1,361) made up the next largest groups. In 1980, the three largest groups were Vietnamese (3,936), English (2,761) and American (1,472).



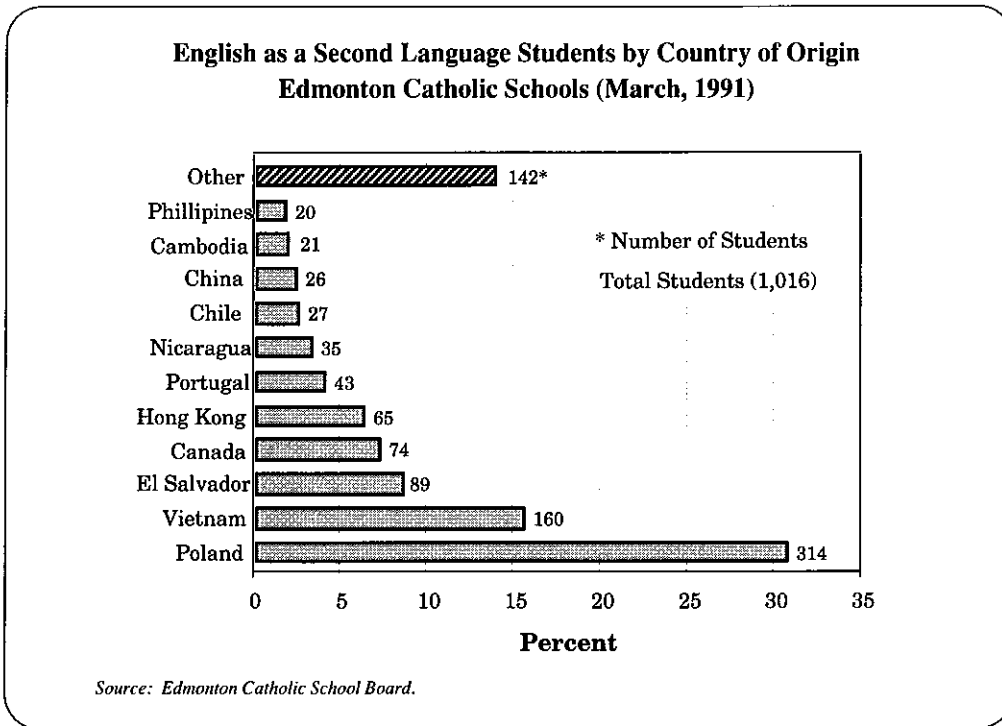
Over half of immigrants to Edmonton in 1990 had no working knowledge of English or French. Forty-four percent understood English, one percent understood both official languages and an equal number understood only French.



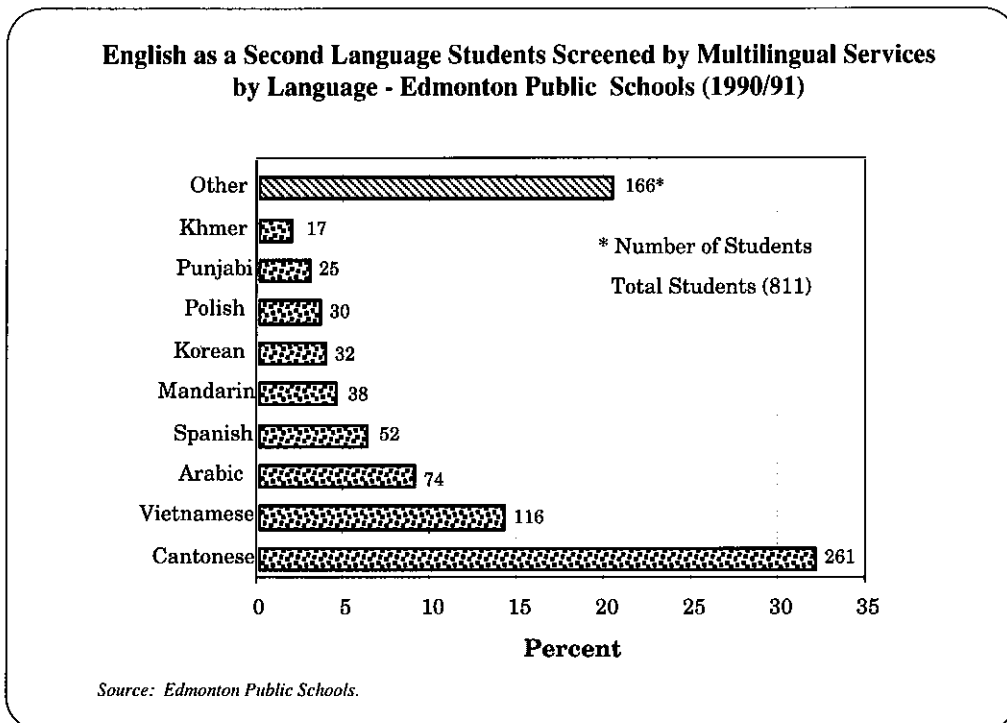
In 1990, over 55 percent of immigrants to Edmonton came from Asia compared to about 50 percent in 1980. Conversely, the proportion of immigrants from Europe declined from 32 percent to about 24 percent during this period.



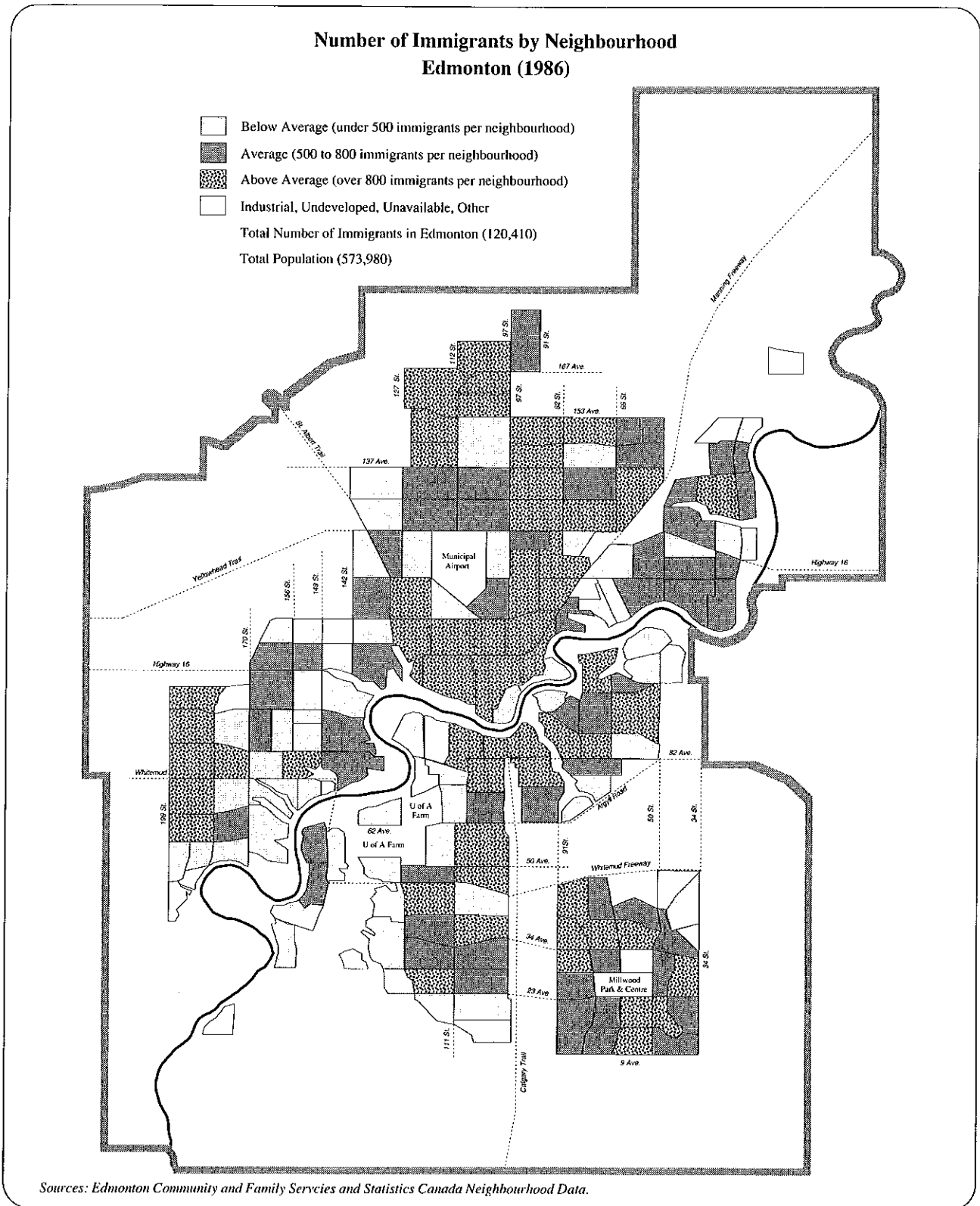
In 1991, over 300 English as a second language (ESL) students in Edmonton Catholic Schools emigrated from Poland; 169 came from Vietnam and 89 came from El Salvador.



By comparison, in 1990/91, 261 English as a second language students screened by Multilingual Services of Edmonton Public Schools spoke Cantonese, 116 spoke Vietnamese and 74 spoke Arabic. It should be noted that only 811 of about 2,100 ESL students were screened by Multilingual Services.



The following map shows the number of immigrants by Edmonton neighbourhood, regardless of period of immigration. In general, immigrants are concentrated in older inner city and newer suburban neighbourhoods.



Immigration - Trends and Service Implications

In order to identify and better understand trends relating to immigration and corresponding service implications for Edmonton, information was collected from the following sources:

- Four classes of adult English as a Second Language students were interviewed and provided information based on their experiences.
- Four classes of junior high English as a Second Language students were interviewed and provided information based on their experiences.
- Seventy-five "service providers" and "key informants" were invited to complete a questionnaire identifying trends and issues that would significantly affect the needs of, and services for, first generation immigrants in the Edmonton community during the 1990s.
- Thirty-six people participated in a small "focus group" discussion of individual trends and implications and identified the most important of these.

Information from these sources is summarized under the three recurring themes of:

- Number and Diversity of Immigrants
- Barriers to Settlement and Employment
- Edmonton's Response and Attitude Towards Immigrants

Trend: Number and Diversity of Immigrants

The majority of informants were in agreement that both the number and diversity of Edmonton's immigrant population will increase during the 1990s. Projections indicate that newcomers will be from a broader range of countries and language groups, with differing ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds, and with varying levels of socio-economic status, education and abilities. It is also likely that the highest portion of immigrants will continue to be families, assisted relatives and refugees.

Implications

Both the numbers and diversity of immigrants will increase the demand on service providers to respond adequately to Edmonton's newcomers.

As a result service providers are likely to be caught dealing with increasingly complex problems and situations in a climate of fiscal restraint. Sensitization to cultural differences, appropriately adapting programs and services, and training personnel will become first priorities for agencies working with immigrants.

All sources agreed that the need for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs will be a priority. With the proportion of immigrants without knowledge of English between 50% and 60%, and with an increase in immigration levels, the numbers of people in need of ESL will increase. The increased demand will necessitate an increase in funding for ESL programs.

Additionally, language programs will need to range from beginning English to pre-University skills and from technical training to literacy. Current programming and funding of ESL is inadequate and will need to be substantially supported financially in the 1990s.

" As the number of immigrants increases, there will be a greater demand for competent, trained and experienced interpreters and for cross-cultural sensitivity . . . "

Focus Group Participant

" We need some in-depth dialogue on cross-cultural understanding and we need it at several levels of society from the school systems and teacher education programs to the public through the media and public forums . . . "

Focus Group Participant

Some of the strategies and ways that agencies offering social and community programs will need to effectively work with and support immigrants are:

- use of trained interpreters and translators to ensure accessibility of services;
- cultural sensitivity when providing counselling or police services to families on issues such as children, youth, the role and rights of women and violence;
- modification to health services and recreation programs that take into account cultural variations;
- adequate support systems from governments and the community to assist immigrants who have few connections — refugees and non-family newcomers;
- outreach initiatives to increase access and lessen the isolation of newcomer groups like seniors;
- design of programs and services which will assist young newcomers to participate and integrate meaningfully in Canadian society, preventing problems like school drop out, youth gangs and unemployment.

" In the past year, I have become aware of the magnitude of the problem of violence against women and children in the immigrant community and of the numerous obstacles to eradicating this situation."

Focus Group Participant

" ... an overwhelming proportion of immigrant families will experience individual, marital, family and community problems that arise out of major cultural changes."

Focus Group Participant

" There is a growing awareness of agencies of the visible and invisible barriers in place for new Canadians regarding the agency service delivery."

Focus Group Participant

Trend: Barriers to Settling and Employment

A high proportion of informants commented on barriers faced by new immigrants settling in Canadian society. Besides the barrier of language, many immigrants, like their counterparts in Canadian society who have limited education, training, or skills, are vulnerable and susceptible to unemployment or very low paying jobs. Restrictions on certification, accreditation and lack of "Canadian work experience" often are insurmountable obstacles for well-educated, highly skilled immigrants. As a result, many immigrants are unable to work in jobs they were trained for in their country of origin, are underemployed, and are not as "productive" as they could be in Canadian society.

Implications

According to participants, if these barriers are not removed or minimized, many immigrants will continue to face undue and unnecessary hardship. High unemployment coupled with low-paying jobs will result in ongoing, long-term poverty and increases in health and social problems, such as family violence, crime and poor nutrition normally associated with living at or near subsistence levels.

More rigorous efforts to capitalize on the talents and expertise of newcomers will require that society end unfair restrictions on certification and accreditation as well as provide educational opportunities for upgrading. In addition, service providers assisting newcomers will have to expand and develop new job training programs.

" Many immigrants have expertise in specific trades but no knowledge of English."

Focus Group Participant

" Poor economic conditions make it increasingly difficult for refugees and other immigrants to find employment or to make gains in the job market. This applies in particular to women and youth. This inability to attain adequate employment prevents immigrants and refugees from establishing themselves financially."

Focus Group Participant

Trend: Edmonton's Response and Attitude Towards Immigrants

The majority of informants predicted that with an increase in the number and diversity of newcomers, discrimination, racism and prejudice would become more pronounced in Edmonton. While it appears that a healthy economy influences Edmontonians to be more tolerant of immigrants, the worsening economic conditions likely in the 1990s will lead to both 'scapegoating' and negative attitudes towards newcomers.

Finally, many Canadians will continue to be divided on the issue of integrating immigrants into the 'mainstream' of society versus maintaining traditional values and cultures.

Implications

In general, informants agreed that there will be more incidents of discrimination and more reaction from those who have been discriminated against through court cases and political action. Virtually everyone suggested that the primary method of promoting the positive impact of newcomers while preventing discrimination, eliminating racism and negative stereotypes is through public education.

Policies promoting multiculturalism by various levels of government have recently come under attack. Many people seem disenchanted with how governments have been handling multiculturalism and are demanding an examination of this concept.

" Ongoing economic uncertainties will foster negative attitudes towards newcomers and opposition to settlement programs."

Focus Group Participant

" Members of immigrant families will continue to experience stress created by different views on integration in the new culture versus preservation of their own culture."

Focus Group Participant

" In spite of our belief in the cultural mosaic, it is mostly lip service paid to that . . . "

Focus Group Participant

Youth and Adult Immigrants

In addition to gathering views about the immigrant experience from service providers, high school students in four ESL classes were encouraged to share their personal recollections of arriving in Canada. Similarly, adults participating in four different ESL classes discussed many of the same questions from their points of view. The responses to these general questions are summarized below.

Both the high school students and the adult students consulted represented a wide range of countries of origin including: Hong Kong, Guatemala, United Arab Republic, Brunei, Poland, India, U.S.S.R., Lebanon, Jordan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Philippines, Portugal, El Salvador, Korea, Bangladesh, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Iran, Afghanistan, Taiwan, Nicaragua, Thailand, China, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Japan and Yugoslavia.

Responses to the questions posed often developed into discussions of the many unfamiliar experiences and confusing transitions immigrants had experienced. Stories of extensive personal loss, renewed hopes, unreal expectations and frustrating societal limitations were very personal and often heartrending. Many of the newcomers came of necessity and reluctantly, bringing with them extensive training and skills. Grateful for a safe haven for their families, many were baffled by their inability to find work utilizing their skills and contribute to the country which gave them shelter. Among the adults, some of the professions and trades represented in the focus groups included physician, nurse, nutritionist, agronomist, economist, teacher, construction worker, hospital lab technologist and auto mechanic.

REASON FOR COMING TO EDMONTON	
<p style="text-align: center;">HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to get a good education • to improve their standard of living • because of unstable, oppressive political situations, or war 	<p style="text-align: center;">ADULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • husband and/or family members here • escape oppressive political situation: find safety and protection • provide better future for their children • visited here before and liked it
EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF EDMONTON OR FEELINGS ABOUT THEIR NEW HOME	
<p style="text-align: center;">HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cold and windy • slower pace of life in Edmonton • boring • lots of space in Edmonton and Canada 	<p style="text-align: center;">ADULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cold • nice people in Edmonton • language is important • difficult to get a job • very happy to get a job • confused, homesick • very strange but very nice

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- the majority of students were met at the airport by relatives
- relatives were identified as the most helpful resource with teachers, the church, and settlement agencies also mentioned

ADULTS

- all arrivals in the past 4-5 years were met at the airport by immigration officials, settlement workers, sponsoring relatives, or ethnic society representatives
- all those listed above assisted with finding immediate shelter

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- the cold weather
- conflict with parents as a result of becoming "Canadianized"
- financial problems: their parents are working at jobs that do not pay the same amount as the job they would have had in their own country
- difficulty making new friends, especially Canadian friends
- not knowing English very well
- ESL classes not available immediately upon arrival; often have to wait 3 or 4 months
- discrimination

ADULTS

- need to work, but English is a problem
- ESL not offered for long enough period (at least one year is needed)
- frustration with inability to use skills and training
- conflict between need for immediate job and need for schooling
- jobs often result in lay offs within one and a half years
- employers try to pay less for the same job to anyone who has an accent or looks different
- first jobs often within ethnic community, so difficult to improve English and move out to another job
- feel like they can't rely on relatives for too long
- miss their family and culture
- want to return for a visit but cannot until their country is at peace
- many lost wealth and status in coming to Canada, which is not understood by the family back home who only know Canada as a wealthy country
- adults don't learn English as quickly and as easily as their children
- surprised at having to start from scratch
- the information they received about Canada before immigrating did not accurately reflect the economic reality

HOPEs AND DREAMS FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- the majority wanted to complete high school and go on to University, College or NAIT
- travel, marriage and employment were also mentioned

ADULTS

- to continue university studies
- to be employed at a "good" job, in a profession or a skilled trade
- to work in his/her profession again

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- almost all the students expected to achieve their hopes and dreams as listed above

ADULTS

- most accepted they would be unable to practice their trade or profession in Canada
- a lot of hard work and retraining
- continued poverty and sacrifice in order to acquire security for their children

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- permit visa students to work while they attend school
- have a club or group for newcomers that includes Canadian students who could provide information about the school and help them meet people
- integrate ESL students into the mainstream sooner
- from a physical perspective, do not keep the ESL department segregated from the rest of the school
- revise the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) requirements so that if the student passes the mainstream English course, they do not have to write the TOEFL
- reexamine the required passing mark for the TOEFL
- increase the flexibility of the ESL classes so students can begin classes as soon as they arrive in Edmonton

ADULTS

- set up an information centre for newcomers at the airport
- establish partnerships with English speaking Canadian families to assist with the language and the culture
- provide realistic information about Canada and Edmonton so immigrants can make informed choices
- provide specific occupational descriptions, outlining skill levels and certification requirements
- develop special work projects to utilize skills of trained workers and apply this work experience to Canadian certification requirements
- provide more and longer opportunities for learning English
- review TOEFL requirements to reflect common usage of English in Canadian society
- discontinue accepting professionals to Canada if they are not to be allowed to work in that profession

Focus Groups Participants

Linda Armstrong	Kathy Johnston	Rod Rode
Nena Jovic-Andrejevic	Veena Khatri	Michaela Roman
Lauri Baldwin	Queena Kline	Pijush Sarker
Heather Halpenny-Crocker	Dorothy Koch	Judy Stewart
Gladys Friedrick	Carol Kwasney	Dini Steyn
Cecile Gibson	Christine Lasalle	Rob Sproule
Ann Goldblatt	Liz McCord	Jim Taylor
Jean Greschuk	Dr. Mirza A. Mohyuddin	Ellen Whybrow
Randy Gurlock	Errol Raman Nair	Lyndall Young
Eugene Ip	Vida Naji	Azeb Zemariam
Iqbal Jamal	Shirley Philips	
Terry Keyko	Helen Ready	

English as a Second Language Class Participants

Community Trends Working Group is grateful to the Edmonton Catholic School District, and notably Christine Clapjack, for allowing access to E.S.L. classes.

In particular, we would like to thank the following teachers for their participation in our field research:

Julie Kendall at J. Percy Page Composite High School; Charlotte MacDonell at Louis St. Laurent Catholic School; Heather Chishlom at Queen Elizabeth Composite High School; Joe Martineau at St. Joseph Catholic High School; Rick Mayer at Grandin Catholic School, and Maureen McGillis, Cathy Faullkner, and Michelle Brown at Sacred Heart Catholic School.

And most importantly, we extend a heartfelt thank you to the many E.S.L. students we talked with about immigration issues and concerns. Your valuable input provided credibility and substance to our report.

Members of the Community Trends Working Group

Donna Rempel	Alberta Family and Social Services
Pat Bronsch	Alberta Health - Mental Health Division - Edmonton
Virginia Smith	Alberta Health - Mental Health Division - Edmonton
Jeanna Baty	Alberta Career Development and Employment
Michael Phair	Alberta Career Development and Employment
Nonie Lee	Edmonton Board of Health
J.P. Lebourgeois	Edmonton Community and Family Services
Eleanor Fisher	Edmonton Public Schools
Elizabeth Crump-Dumesnil	Edmonton Catholic Schools
Jennifer Hyndman	Edmonton Social Planning Council
Jonathan Murphy	Edmonton Social Planning Council
Willie Kwong	United Way of Edmonton and Area
Don Taylor	United Way of Edmonton and Area