

Immigrant incomes stagnant

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Sun Media

Despite being more skilled and educated, immigrants are no better off financially than they were in the early 1990s, says a Statistics Canada report.

That means far more immigrants are low-income earners than Canadian-born people — low-income rates were 3.2 times greater for immigrants in 2004, compared to 3.5 times two years earlier.

In the 1990s, immigrant low-income

rates were never higher than triple Canadian-born residents, states the report, which found 18.5% of immigrants during their first four years in the country were in the low-income bracket from 1992 to 2000.

The demand for trades positions has left many more highly educated newcomers without work, said Fariborz Birjandian, executive director of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society.

"They're integrated but not at the level of their education," said Birjandian. "We are losing quite a bit, about

\$4 to \$5 billion a year in not utilizing the skills they bring to Canada."

He said the situation undermines the widespread belief immigrants are coddled and given unfair advantages once they arrive.

"It costs \$40,000 to \$50,000 for them to come here and that's a fortune for them," he said.

Birjandian added most recent immigrants come from countries culturally distant from Canada, which slows their integration.

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