

The Chinese Head Tax and Chinese Immigration to Canada

Amy Kim

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Research Question

How did the Chinese Head Tax affect selection into immigration and/or immigrant wealth of Chinese immigrants to Canada in the early 20th century?

Outline

1. Background
2. Data
3. Initial Descriptives

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Timeline

- Early 1880s: Influx of Chinese immigrants for construction of Canadian Pacific Railway
- 1885: Chinese Exclusion Act institutes \$50 (1.5k USD) tax
 - Only exceptions for students, merchants, and diplomats
 - Was not applied retroactively, but the tax was required even for re-entry going forward
 - Failure to pay would result in being sent back to China – many immigrants had to borrow money or enter indentured servitude contracts
- 1900: Tax raised to \$100 (3.5k USD)
- 1903: Tax raised to \$500 (16k USD)
- 1923: Chinese immigration banned completely (with very few exceptions)

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Data Sources

- Canadian Census [Details on Canadian Census](#)
 - Currently: at least 5% sample from 1881-1921
 - Entire Full-Count Data? [See Tweet](#)
 - Missing: mid-decade arrivals who exited before subsequent census
- Chinese Registry
 - **Full count** of every person of Chinese origin arriving in Canada from 1885-1949
 - Missing: full count of pre-1885 arrivals
- US Census
 - For now, just a point of comparison
 - Full count data from IPUMS from 1850-1940
 - Missing: income/wealth data

Chinese Immigrants Summary Statistics by Data Source

	CA Census (1901-1921)	Chinese Registry (1885-1924)	US Census (1900-1920)
% Male	0.98 (0.16)	0.98 (0.15)	0.95 (0.21)
% Married	0.55 (0.5)	- -	0.44 (0.5)
Avg. Age at Imm	23.20 (8.99)	25.95 (21.86)	20.92 (9.78)
% Can Read	0.68 (0.47)	- -	0.77 (0.42)
% Labourers	0.20 (0.4)	0.62 (0.48)	0.32 (0.47)
Obs	4230	90946	186523

Summ. Stats by Group in CA Census

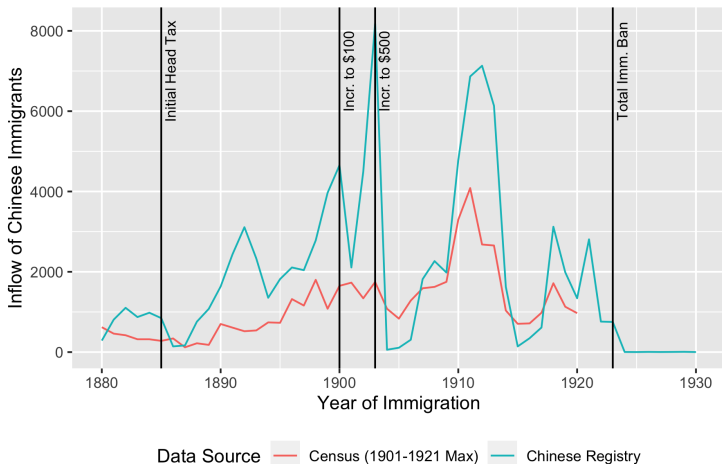
Outline

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Chinese Immigration to Canada by Year and Data Source



Avg Taxes Paid

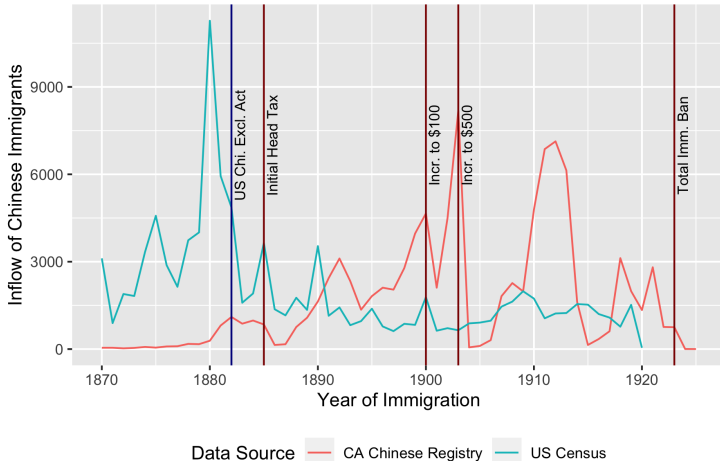
% Taxpayers by Year

Density by Year

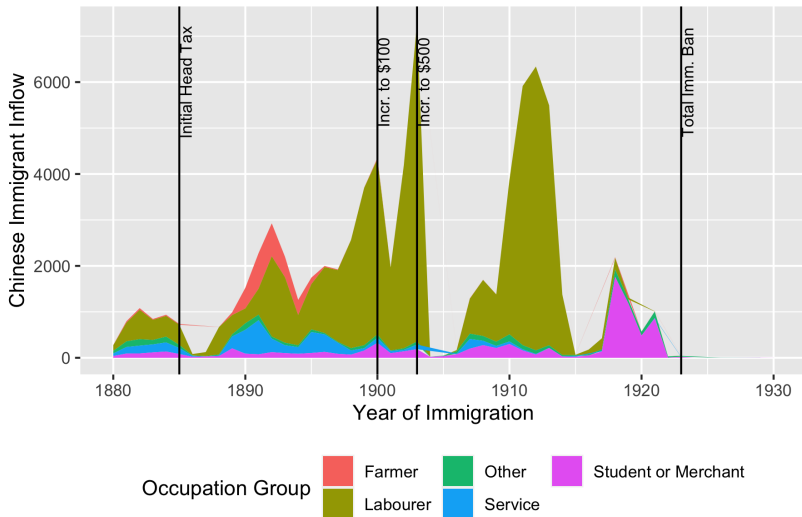
Alt. Calculation

Events in 1910s

Chinese Immigration to Canada vs. US

[All Immigration to US vs. Canada](#)[Immigration to Canada by Country](#)

Chinese Immigration by Occupation Group



Canadian Census Data

Year	Coverage	Sampling Method
1852	20%	Random, clustered sample
1871	1.8%	Stratified sample (8 strata)
1881	100%	Full sample
1891	5%	Random sample ¹
1901	5%	<i>Not Specified</i>
1911	5%	Random sample ²
1921	4%	Random sample ³

Note: China was not listed as a country of origin in the data until the 1881 census. [Back to Slides](#)

¹Also includes 10% of cities and 100% of all large dwellings and some areas of Ontario

²Also includes 10% of large dwellings and 25% of multi-unit dwellings

³Also includes 10% of large dwellings and 20% of multi-unit dwellings

Full-Count Canadian Census Data – Coming Soon!



Shari Eli
@ShariJEli

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The complete-count Canadian censuses from 1861-1921 will become available in 2023 thanks to The Canadian Peoples project led by Kris Inwood. In the meantime, GIS polygon layers for these censuses are now available. Take a look!



Kris Inwood @kris_inwood · Sep 29

GIS polygon layers at subdivision level now available for all Canadian censuses 1851-1921 + digital versions of 19 published census tables at hgiscanada.usask.ca. Created by @HGIS_UofSK & The Canadian Peoples/Les populations canadiennes project thecanadianpeoples.com. #hgis

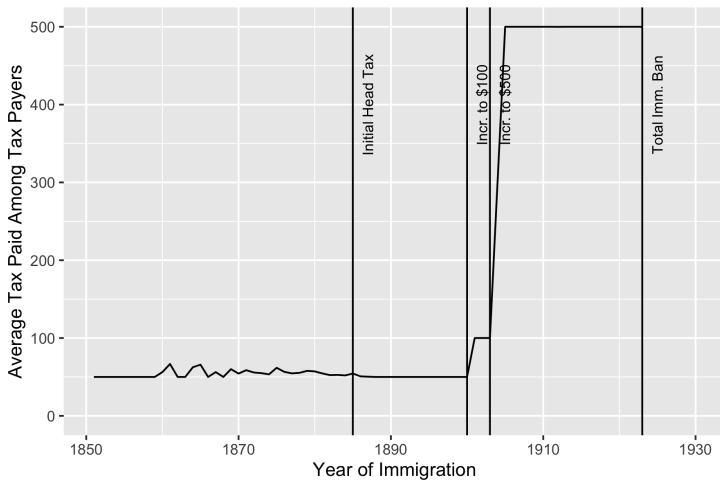
1:29 PM · Sep 29, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Summary Statistics for by Group in Canadian Census

	All	Immigrants	Chinese Imm
% Male	0.52 (0.5)	0.58 (0.49)	0.98 (0.16)
% Married	0.37 (0.48)	0.54 (0.5)	0.55 (0.5)
Avg. Age	26.61 (19.5)	34.64 (17.81)	34.79 (11.74)
% Can Read	0.84 (0.36)	0.91 (0.28)	0.68 (0.47)
Avg. Earnings	734.9 (12756.29)	783.7 (1212.1)	441.6 (296.33)
% Labourers	0.03 (0.16)	0.05 (0.21)	0.20 (0.4)
Obs	1004561	204777	4230

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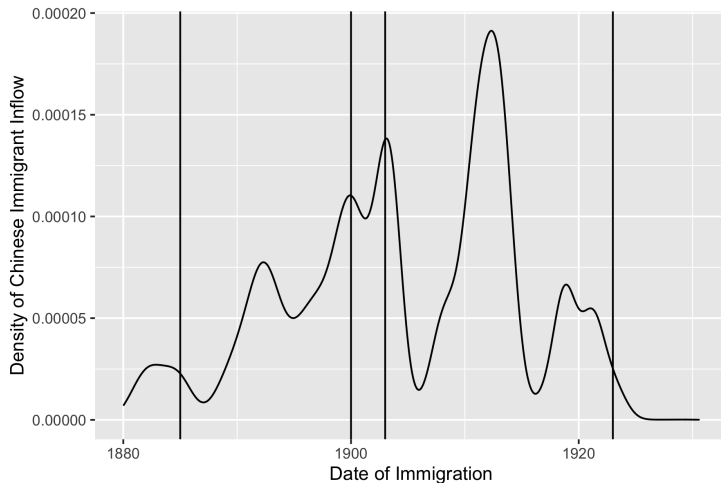
Head Tax Payers: Average Taxes Paid by Year



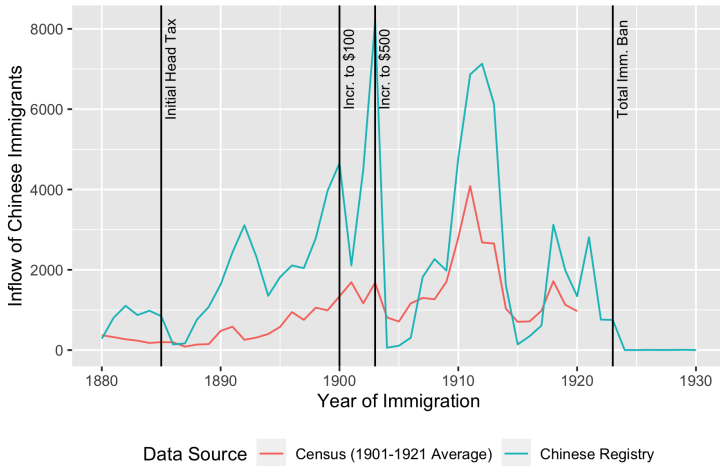
Taxpayers as % of Arrivals by Year

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Density of Chinese Immigration to Canada by Date



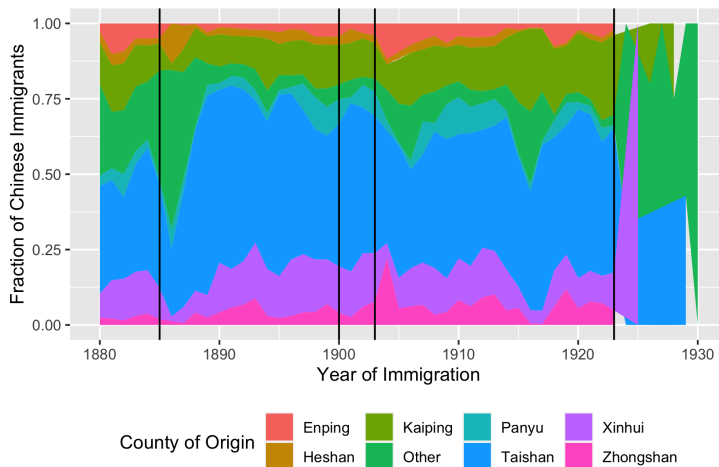
Chinese Immigration to Canada Using Cross-Year Means for Census Data



Relevant Events in the 1910s

- Canada [1910]: Immigration Act of 1910 further restricts immigration, not expands
- Canada [1912]: Head Tax Certificates reissued with photo
 - Unlikely to have such a massive spike just from using other people's certificates
- China: Republic of China established in 1912 following Xinhai Revolution (1911)
 - If this is primary cause of spike, would expect some change in regional origin of Chinese immigrants
[Chinese Immigration by Origin by Year](#)
 - Also would not expect to see spike in immigration from other countries
[Immigration to Canada from Different Countries](#)
- Worldwide: WWI begins July 1914
 - Unclear why most of spike is prior to 1914 – general global unrest?

Chinese Immigration by County of Origin in China

[Back to 1910s Events](#)

All Immigration to Canada vs. US



Immigration to Canada by Year by Country

