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The Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees Across Canada Over Three Decades

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Telling Canada's
story in numbers

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Outline

1. National efforts of resettling Vietnamese refugees in Canada
2. Research objectives and data
3. Economic outcomes over three decades
4. Geographic distribution and the impact of regional contexts



National efforts of resettling Vietnamese refugees in Canada

- Canada welcomed 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees in 1979 and 1980 – the largest single influx of refugees admitted to the country in a short period
- The UNHCR awarded its Nansen Medal to the “People of Canada”
- Over half of the refugees came through private sponsorship – a major policy innovation in refugee admission and resettlement
- Both privately sponsored and government-assisted refugees received financial support for up to a year, but the former received more personalized support



Research objectives

1. Provide a comprehensive overview of Vietnamese refugees' economic outcomes over the three decades after they began their new life in Canada, and compare their outcomes with other immigrants and the Canadian-born population.
2. Examine how the contexts of cities and regions where Vietnamese refugees were located have shaped their economic outcomes.

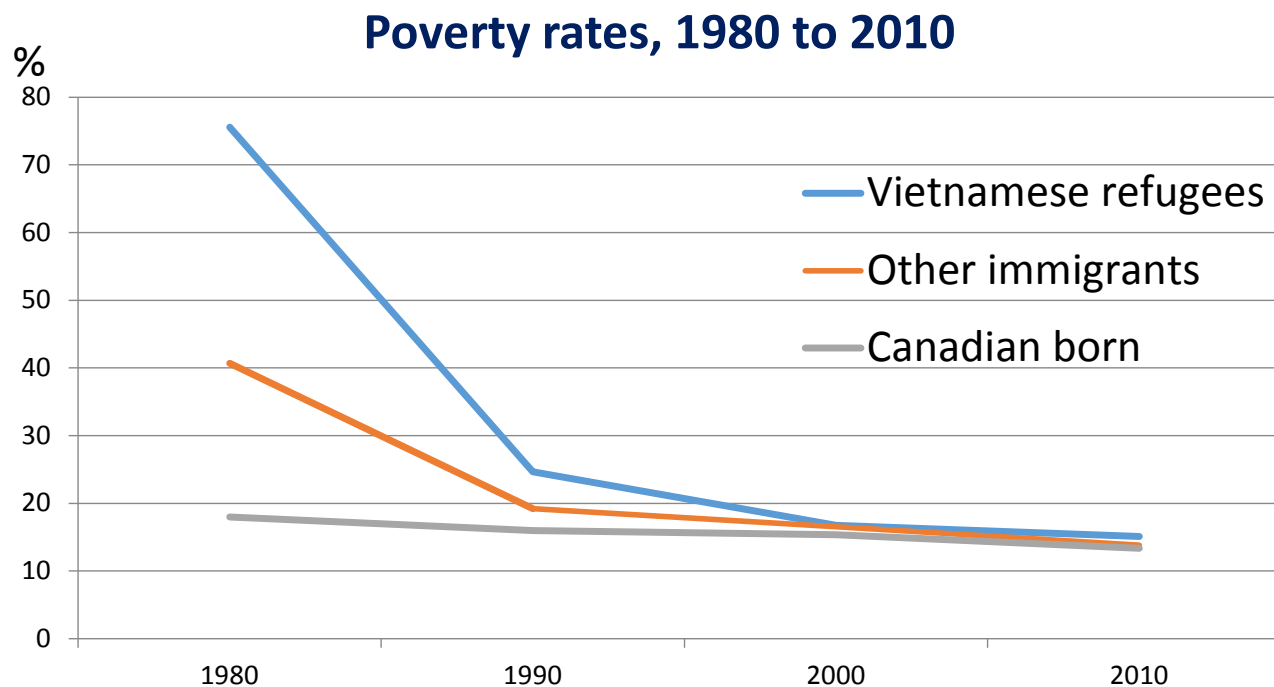
Data and measures

Data: the 1981, 1991, 2001 Canadian censuses 20% microdata files, and the 2011 National Household Survey

Sample: Vietnamese refugees who arrived in Canada in 1979-1980, other immigrants who arrived in the same years, similarly-aged Canadian born population

Outcomes: from the whole group, poverty rates at the family level; for adult refugees, education, employment and annual earnings; for childhood refugees, educational attainment and annual earnings

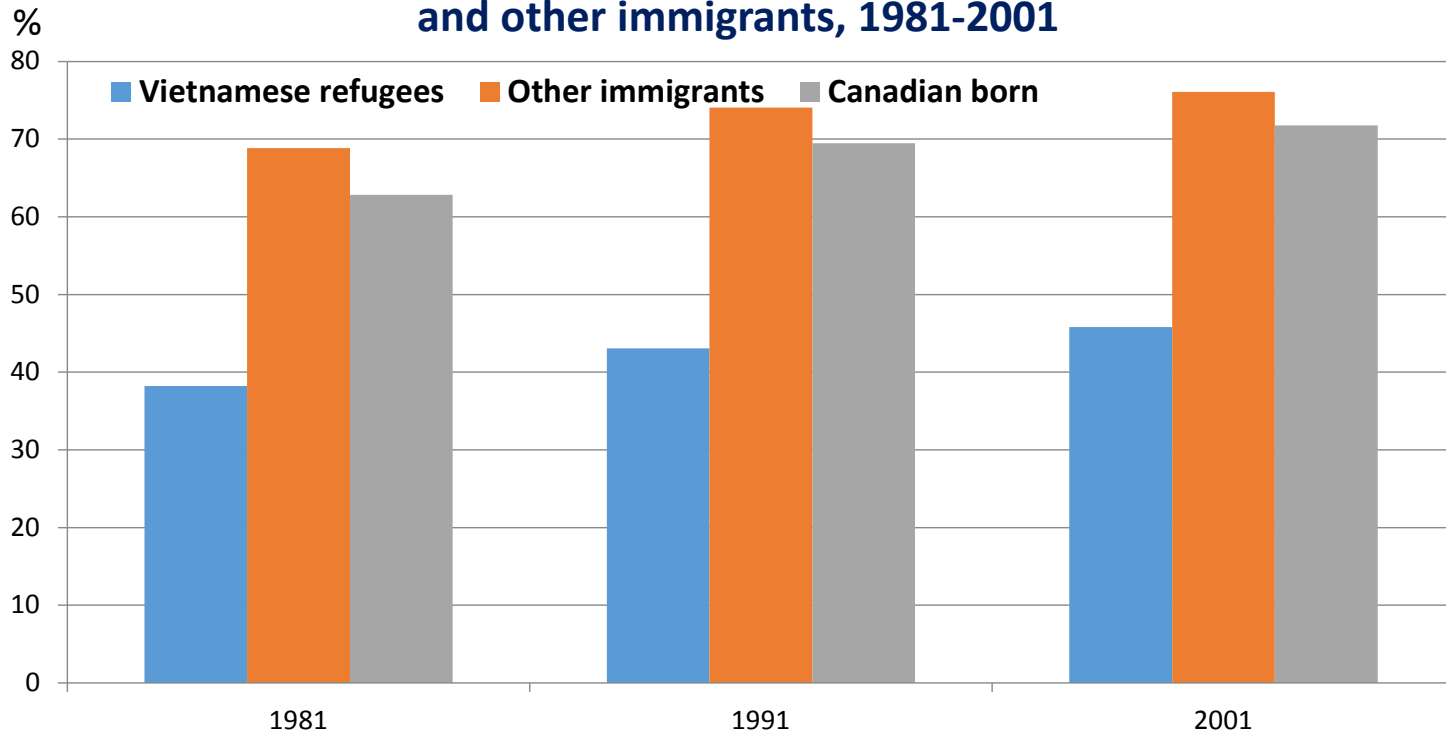
Large initial gap in family economic wellbeing with other immigrants disappeared in 20 years





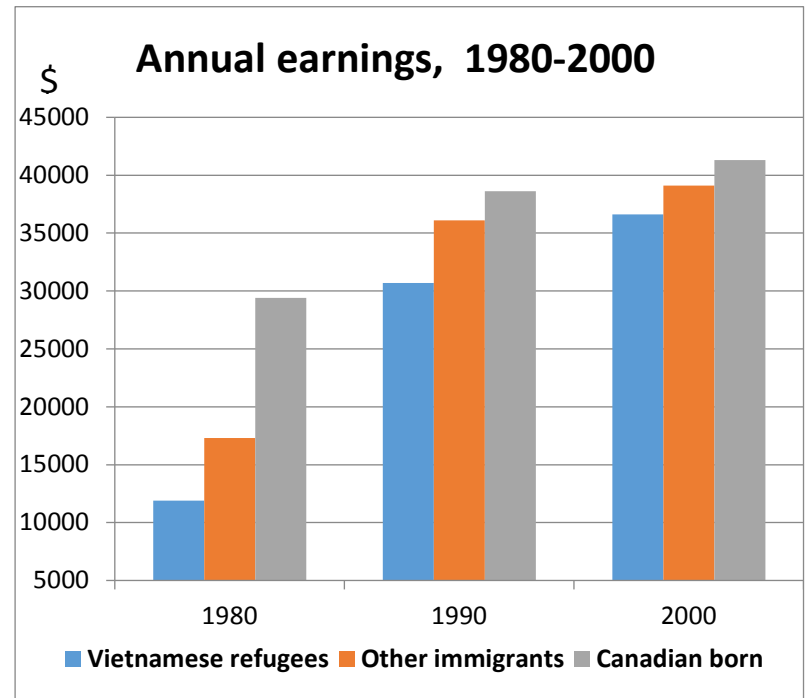
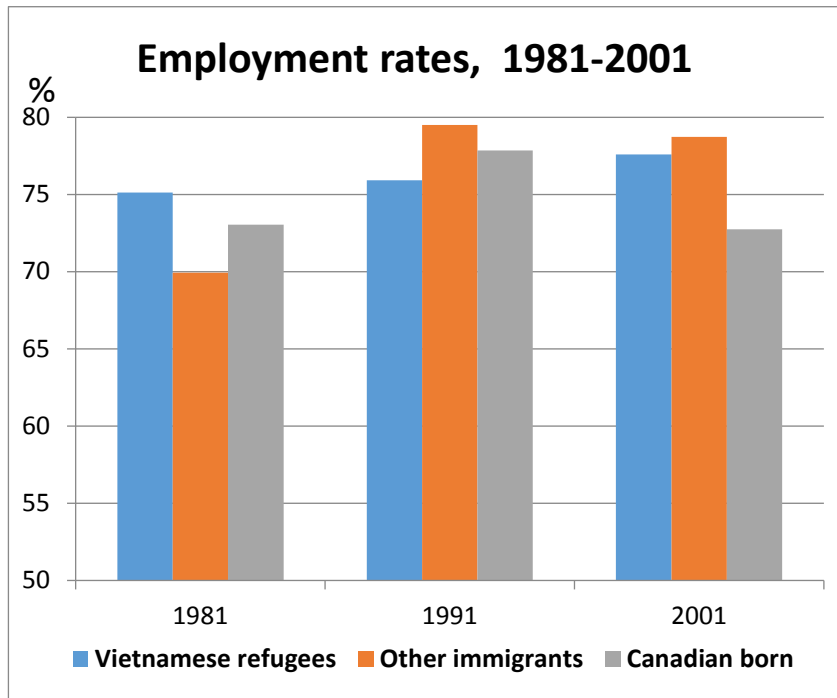
Adult Vietnamese refugees had lower levels of human capital than other immigrants

High school graduation rates among adult Vietnamese refugees and other immigrants, 1981-2001

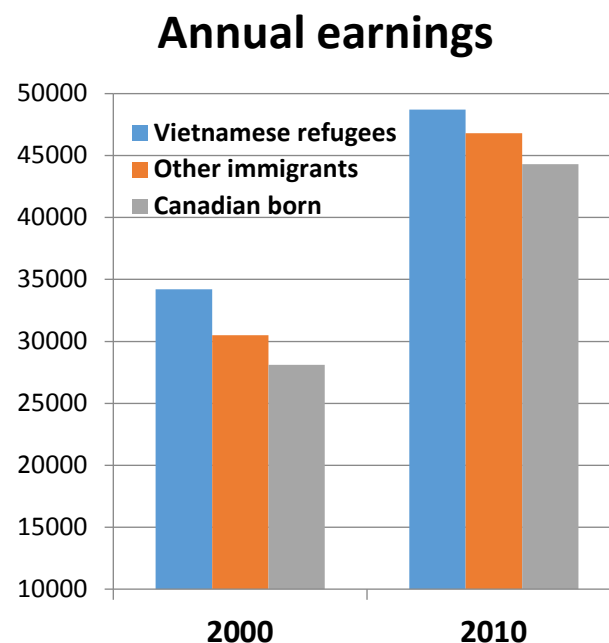
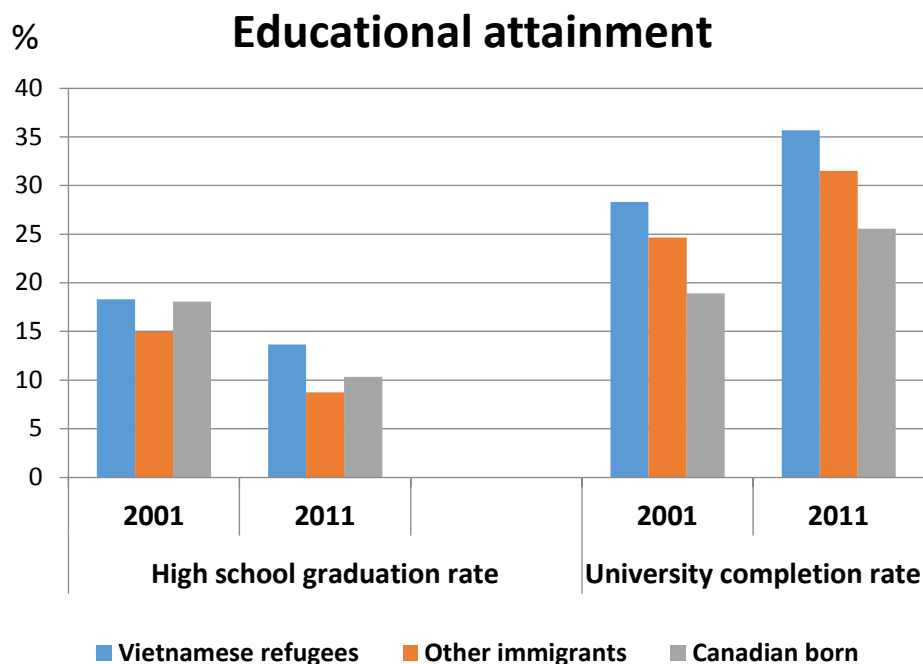




Adult Vietnamese refugees had high employment rates, but large initial earnings gap with other immigrants

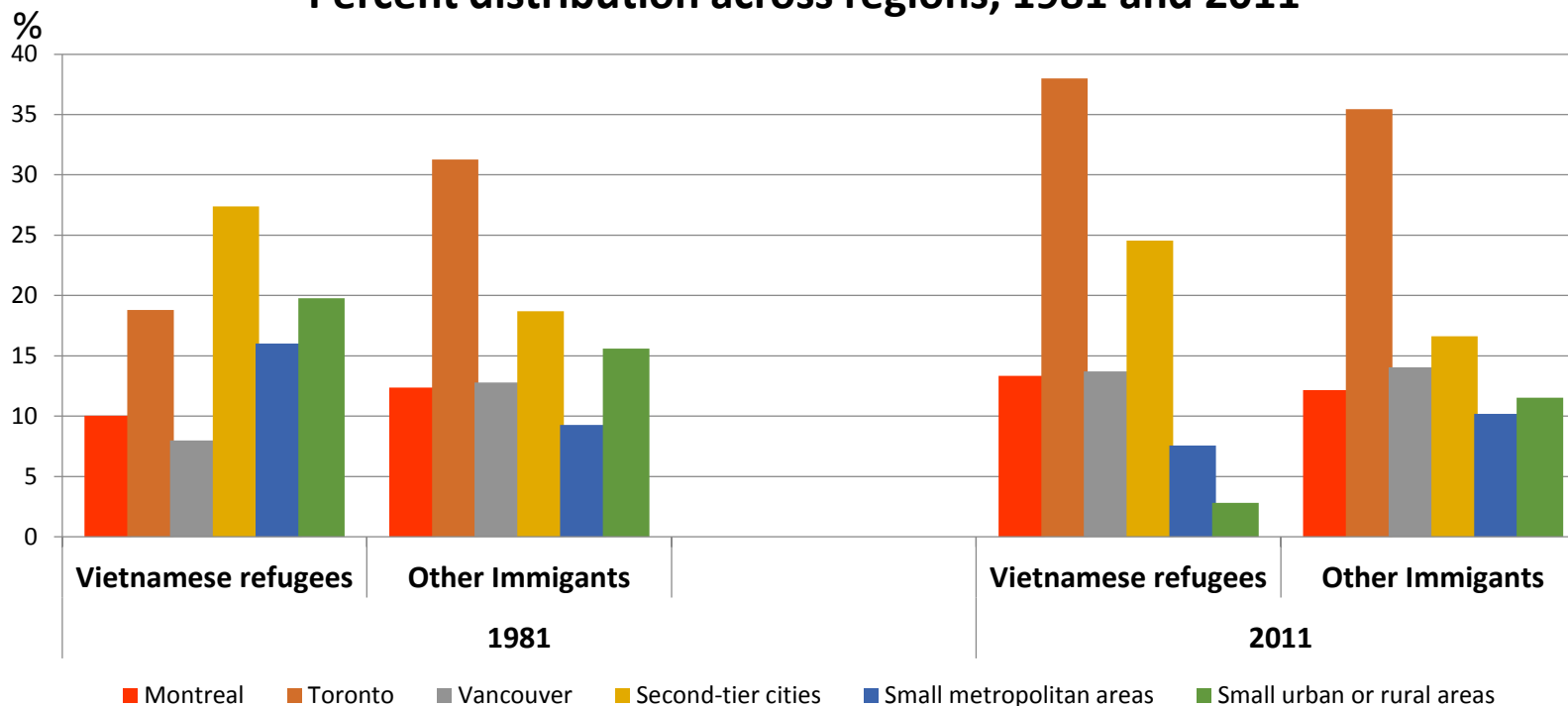


Childhood Vietnamese refugees had more high-school dropouts, more university graduates, higher earnings than other immigrants & Canadian born



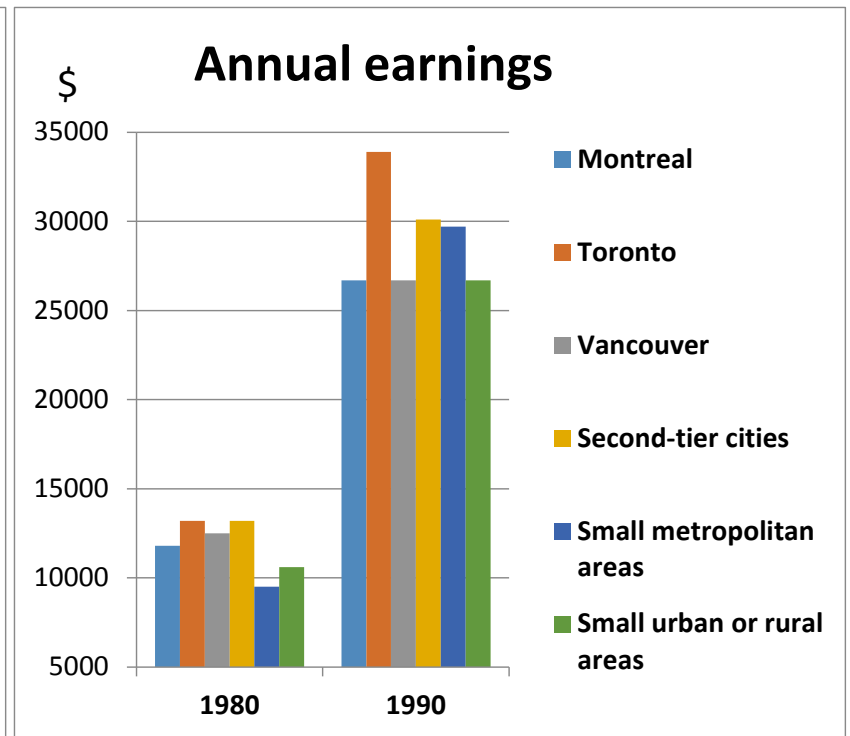
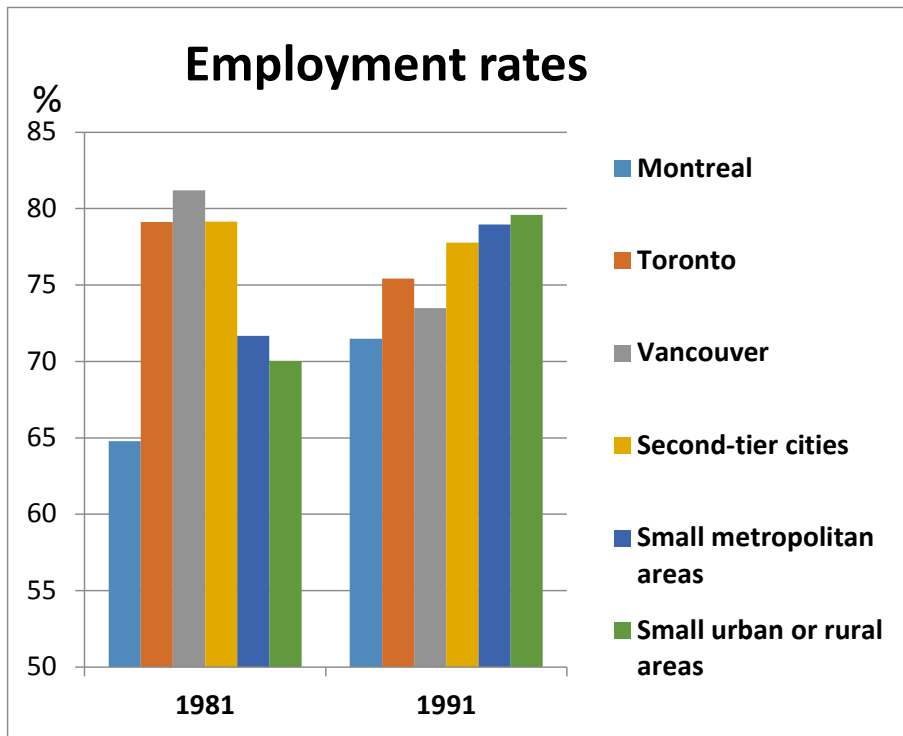
Vietnamese refugees were more evenly distributed in initial destinations, but had higher subsequent mobility than other immigrants

Percent distribution across regions, 1981 and 2011





Large regional variations in adult Vietnamese refugees' employment rates and earnings

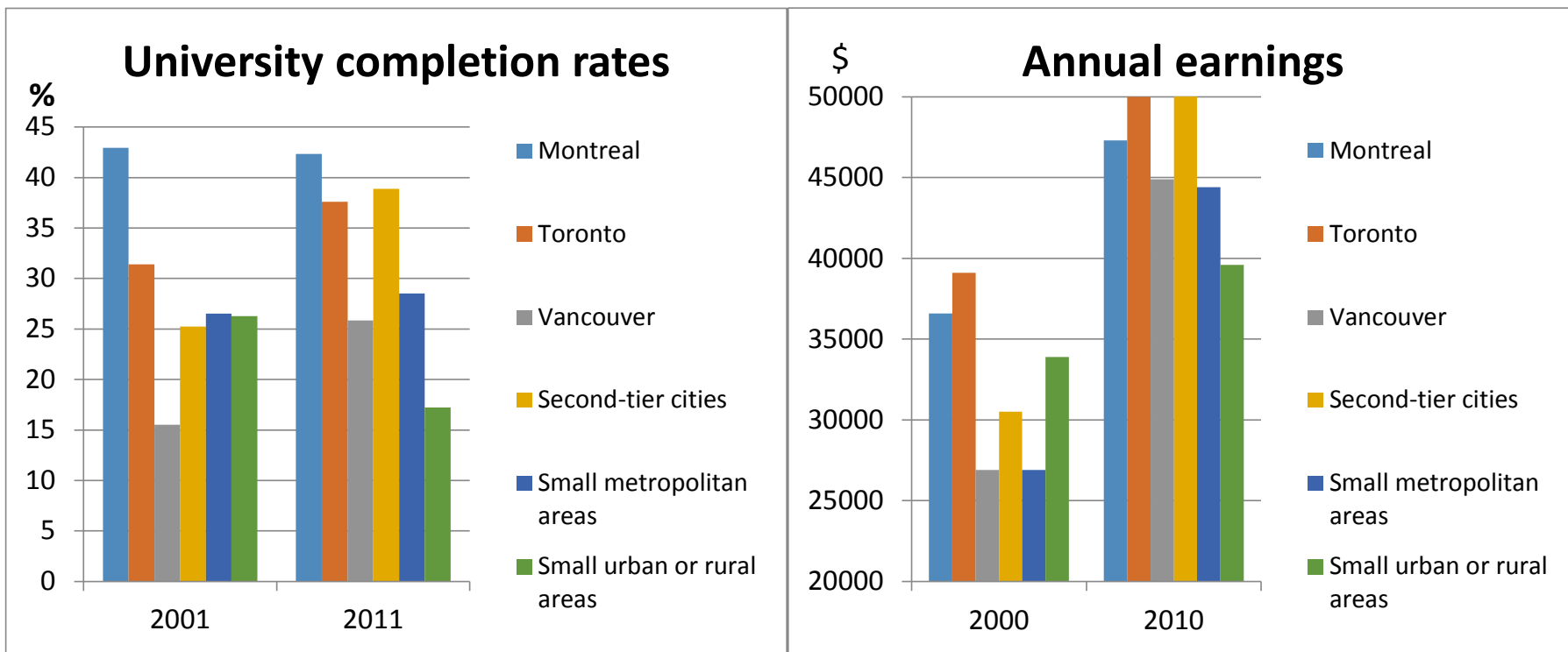




Determinants of regional variations in refugees' labour market outcomes

- **Regional differences in refugees' human capital:** refugees in Montreal had a higher rate of speaking an official language and higher high-school graduation rate than in Toronto and Vancouver
- **Ethnic enclave:** Vancouver and Toronto had large pre-existing Chinese ethnic communities
- **Regional economic condition:** Toronto had a better economic condition than Montreal
- **Selectivity in secondary mobility:** Vancouver and Toronto retained and attracted less successful refugees
- **Other factors:** e.g. support from local communities

Large regional variations in childhood Vietnamese refugees' educational attainment and earnings



Summary – overall economic outcomes

Vietnamese refugees had a very high poverty rate in initial years, but their gap with other immigrants disappeared in 20 years

Adult Vietnamese refugees arrived with little human capital, but they maintained high employment rates, and closed their initial large earnings gap with other immigrants in 20 years

Childhood Vietnamese refugees out-performed other childhood immigrants and similarly-aged Canadian born in educational attainment and earnings when they reached adulthood



Summary – the impact of regional contexts

Vietnamese refugees were more evenly distributed across Canada in their initial destinations than other immigrants, but with a higher subsequent mobility

Some large regional differences in refugees' socioeconomic outcomes, but the patterns varied by the outcome measure and length of residence.

Regional differences in refugees' human capital characteristics, ethnic enclave, and general economic conditions played different roles