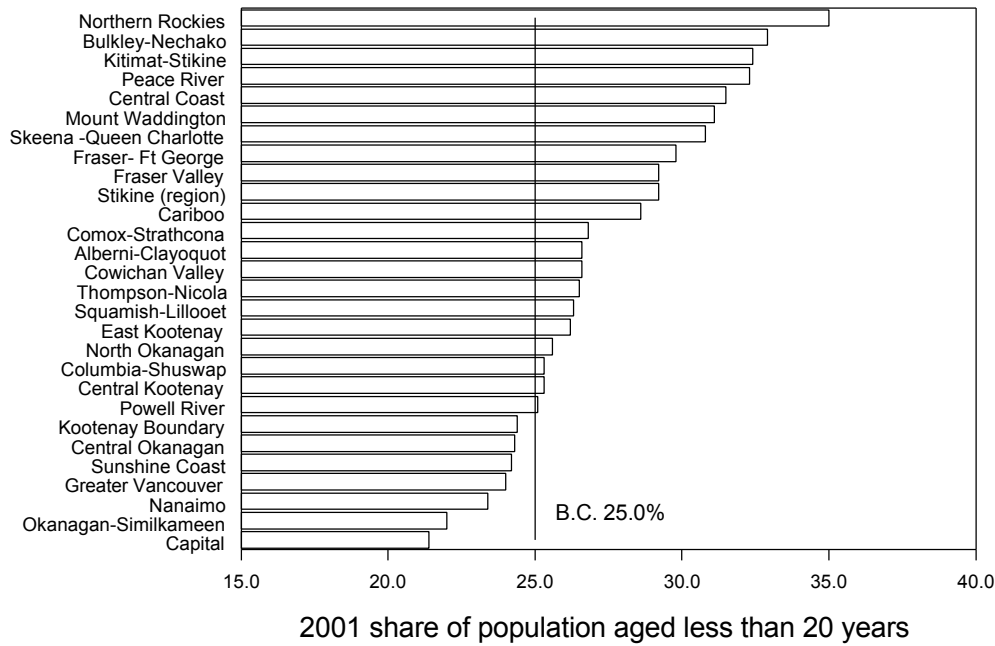
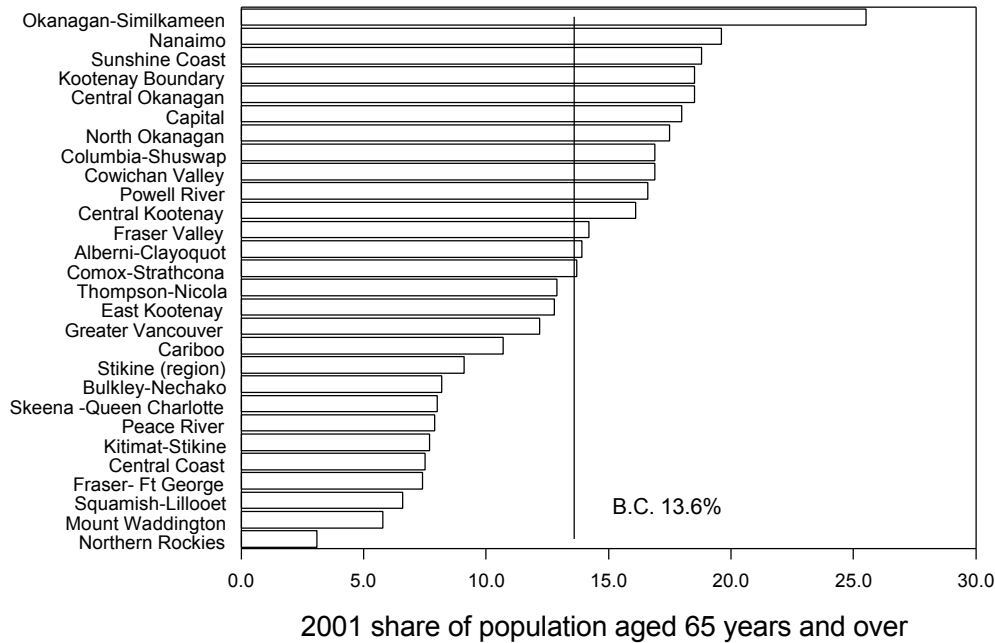


Feature Article: Where do the young and old live?

Higher proportions of young people live in the northern parts of the province...



...while the Okanagan and Vancouver Island are home to larger shares of seniors.



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The population of the province is generally aging, as the number of births declines and life expectancy increases. As this aging occurs, the contribution of natural increase (births less deaths) to population growth will become less important while growth from migration, especially from other countries, will become a more dominant factor. Since migrants tend to be younger than the resident population, they act to slow the aging process to a certain degree. Some areas of the province receive few migrants and are mainly dependent on natural increase for their growth, while other regions attract many migrants. The information recently released from the 2001 Census gives us a current snapshot of the age structure of the population in different parts of the province and shows the combined effects of these factors.

Between 1996 and 2001, the provincial population grew by 4.9%. However, the growth was all in the 45 and older age groups, with the older working-age population (ages 45-64) increasing 21% and seniors (ages 65 and over) increasing 12%. The very old population (aged 85 and over) expanded by one third. Over the last five years, the younger working-age population (ages 20-44) actually declined by 3%, while the population under 20 decreased slightly. These different growth patterns resulted in the older working-age group increasing from 22% of the population to 25% between 1996 and 2001. The seniors share increased by almost one percentage point to 13.6% of the population, while the younger working-age group declined to 36% of the population and young people decreased to 25%. The median age¹ of the population increased by 2.5 years over the 5 year period, reaching 38.4 in 2001.

¹ Median age is the point where exactly one-half of the population is older and the other half is younger.

Despite the increase in the proportion of seniors in British Columbia, four other provinces had larger shares. Saskatchewan with 15.1% seniors topped the list, followed by Manitoba, Nova Scotia and PEI. Only Quebec (24.2%) and New Brunswick (24.8%) had a smaller share of young people than British Columbia.

It is worth noting that the use of age 64 as the upper limit to the working age population is for convenience. In fact, the age at which people move from working to being retired has become more variable.

Regional Districts

Which parts of the province have the largest concentration of the different age groupings? The patterns are quite different between the northern and southern parts of the province, as factors such as the availability of different types of jobs, services required by different age groups, climate and so on play a role in the suitability of an area for people of different ages.

Among the 28 regional districts Okanagan-Similkameen is the one with the largest share of seniors (25.5% of its population), followed by Nanaimo and Sunshine Coast. At the other extreme, only 3% of Northern Rockies population, 6% of Mount Waddington and 7% of Squamish-Lillooet are seniors. The distribution of the working-age population differs quite dramatically between the 45-64 and 20-44 age groups. Sunshine Coast, Stikine and Powell River have around 30% of their population in the older group, while Northern Rockies has only 18% of its population in this group, followed by Peace River and Squamish-Lillooet with 21%. On the other hand, Squamish-Lillooet and Northern Rockies have around 45% of their population in the younger working-age group, while

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Okanagan-Similkameen and Sunshine Coast have about 26% of their population in the younger group.

2001 Age Structure				
Regional District	Per Cent			
	<20	20-44	45-64	65+
Alberni-Clayoquot	26.6	31.6	27.8	13.9
Bulkley-Nechako	32.9	36.1	22.9	8.2
Capital	21.4	34.4	26.2	18.0
Cariboo	28.6	33.5	27.2	10.7
Central Coast	31.5	37.3	23.5	7.5
Central Kootenay	25.3	30.4	28.2	16.1
Central Okanagan	24.3	32.1	25.1	18.5
Columbia-Shuswap	25.3	30.3	27.4	16.9
Comox-Strathcona	26.8	31.8	27.7	13.7
Cowichan Valley	26.6	29.7	26.7	16.9
East Kootenay	26.2	33.2	27.7	12.8
Fraser- Ft George	29.8	38.2	24.5	7.4
Fraser Valley	29.2	34.4	22.2	14.2
Greater Vancouver	24.0	39.4	24.4	12.2
Kitimat-Stikine	32.4	35.8	24.1	7.7
Kootenay Boundary	24.4	28.7	28.4	18.5
Mount Waddington	31.1	36.7	26.5	5.8
Nanaimo	23.4	29.4	27.6	19.6
North Okanagan	25.6	30.3	26.6	17.5
Northern Rockies	35.0	43.6	18.2	3.1
Okanagan-Similkameen	22.0	25.7	26.9	25.5
Peace River	32.3	38.5	21.4	7.9
Powell River	25.1	29.2	29.0	16.6
Skeena -Queen Charlotte	30.8	36.4	24.7	8.0
Squamish-Lillooet	26.3	45.8	21.3	6.6
Stikine (region)	29.2	33.0	29.2	9.1
Sunshine Coast	24.2	26.9	30.0	18.8
Thompson-Nicola	26.5	33.9	26.8	12.9
British Columbia	25.0	36.3	25.1	13.6

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, 95F0486XCB01001
Prepared by: BC STATS.

Northern Rockies has the largest share (35%) of young people under 20, followed by other northern parts of the province - Bulkley-Nechako, Kitimat-Stikine and Peace River. Capital and Okanagan-Similkameen, have around 22% of their population under the age of 20.

Municipalities

At the time of the 2001 Census there were 154 incorporated municipalities² in the province. Municipalities range in size from the City of Vancouver with over half a million

² Since the 1996 Census three new municipalities have been formed, Wells in Cariboo Regional District, Sooke in Capital Regional District and Bowen Island in Greater Vancouver Regional District.

people to municipalities that have a population of less than 1,000. The following information will generally relate to places with more than 1,000 people.

There are a number of municipalities that have traditionally had high concentrations of seniors. This has not changed dramatically in 2001 but Qualicum Beach, with 38% of its population 65 years of age and over, has continued to top the list of places with the largest proportion of seniors. The median age increased to a remarkable 58.1 years. In 2001 Osoyoos, Keremos, Oliver, Sidney, Parksville and White Rock also have more than 30% of their population in the senior ranks. At the other extreme, Whistler, Mackenzie, Pemberton and Fort Nelson all have less than 3% of their population in the senior group.

2001 Age Structure				
Municipality	Per Cent			
	<20	20-44	45-64	65+
Oldest				
Qualicum Beach	15.5	16.0	30.5	38.1
Osoyoos	14.7	18.4	29.6	37.3
Keremeos	18.3	20.0	25.0	36.7
Oliver	21.6	21.7	23.7	33.1
Sidney	18.2	24.2	25.0	32.6
Parksville	20.8	23.3	25.1	30.8
White Rock	13.6	27.6	28.2	30.6
Youngest				
Burns Lake	33.0	36.6	19.2	11.3
Mackenzie	33.0	41.7	22.9	2.4
Anmore	33.1	38.0	24.1	4.9
Chetwynd	33.5	43.2	17.5	5.8
New Hazelton	33.6	37.5	20.4	8.6
Fort Nelson	34.4	45.6	17.1	2.9
Telkwa	35.8	39.5	19.6	5.2
British Columbia	25.0	36.3	25.1	13.6

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada, 95F0486XCB01001
Prepared by: BC STATS.

Although a number of small communities have larger shares of their population between the ages of 45 and 64, North Saanich with 36% and West Vancouver with 31% also have significant numbers of people in this age group. All municipalities in the province have at least 12% of their

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population aged 45 to 64 and as the baby boomers age, the relative size of this group will continue to grow.

The large share of people in the younger working-age group in Squamish-Lillooet and Northern Rockies regional districts noted above reflects the dominance of this age group in Whistler (63%), Pemberton (60%) and Fort Nelson (46%). The resort nature of Whistler gives it and the neighbouring community of Pemberton very different age profiles than other places.

A number of northern communities have the highest proportion of children: Telkwa (36%), Fort Nelson, New Hazelton and Chetwynd (34%). Communities with relatively few children are in many cases those with a large share of seniors, such as White Rock, Osoyoos and Qualicum Beach.

Data on mobility and migration, which will be available in December 2002, will provide information on how these factors have influenced population growth and the age structure of different parts of the province.

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