Feature Article – Where do the children play?

Overview

One of the more important demographic groups to take into consideration when looking at population change are females who are having children as their presence means that there is the potential for population increase. Where mothers choose to live can have a profound impact on population change. The migration of females during their reproductive years, as well as their fertility, highlights a major change in population growth in BC.

Not all females bear children, nor do they stay in one place. Therefore, in order to examine the impact of reproductive females it is helpful to consider the change in the number of births over time, as well as changes in fertility rates. It is also helpful to consider the migration of females, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 34, as well as the migration of young children, since families may be motivated to move after a child is born.

For BC, the total fertility rate has declined between 1987 and 2003 from 1,625 to 1,378 births per thousand women.

Births

The measure of the change in number of births does not give us a clear picture of an individuals' fertility behaviour, because it does not count people of childbearing age. The change in number of births may result from a change in the number of females of child bearing age (15-49) or a change in the propensity to bear children (fertility). A change in the number of females of child bearing age may be a result of the natural aging of the population and/or a result of migration. Nonetheless, an examination of a change in number of births by geographic area can highlight areas that are more or less attractive to families.

A look at the change in the number of births for all local health areas (LHAs) in BC shows that the vast majority of jurisdictions had fewer births in 2003 compared to 1986. This is a result of women having fewer children as well as changes in the number of females of child bearing years (15 to 49). Provincially, the average number of children each female has in her lifetime has been declining over the last few decades. For BC, the total fertility rate (TFR) has declined between 1987 and 2003 from 1,625 to 1,378 births

per thousand women. [1] Nonetheless, some LHAs showed an increase in births.

Almost all of the LHAs outside of the Lower Mainland had a decrease in births. The largest decline was for the Prince George LHA with 623 fewer births between 1986 and 2003. The only LHA with a primarily resource-based economy to show an increase was the Peace River North LHA in the north east. Prince George had a marginal increase in number of females of child bearing years (1.5%), while Peace River North had a 16% increase, primarily a result of positive net migration. It is likely that the increase in prosperity from oil and gas exploration and extraction over this time period had an influence on family formation.

In 2003, almost all of rural BC showed a decrease in number of births compared to 1986. The only exception was the Fort St. John area.

LHAs with the largest decrease in number of births between 1986 and 2003

LHA NAME	DIFFERENCE
Prince George	-629
Greater Victoria	-270
Peace River South	-269
Alberni	-242
Kamloops	-199
Trail	-191
Smithers	-185
Fernie	-177
Quesnel	-173
Vancouver Island North	-167
Cariboo-Chilcotin	-152
Richmond	-138
Kitimat	-129
Powell River	-125
Terrace	-122
Prince Rupert	-118

Victoria and Richmond share similarities with rural BC in terms of change in number of births.

Out of 83 LHAs, only 16 had an increase in the number of births and all but four (Central Okanagan, Summerland, North Peace River, and Saanich) were in the Lower Mainland. Even though the total fertility rate has been declining, the Lower Mainland has experienced an increase in the number of births. The number of females age 15 to 49

[1] *TFR represents the number of births 1,000 women would have over their lifetimes if they experienced the same age specific fertility rates of women, aged 15 to 49, in the time period shown in that region.*

grew rapidly in many of the LHAs in the Lower Mainland, in large part due to positive net migration.

LHAs with an increase in births between 1986 and 2003

LHA NAME	DIFFERENCE
Surrey	1,515
Abbotsford	468
Burnaby	289
Vancouver	240
Central Okanagan	190
Coquitlam	156
Maple Ridge	115
New Westminster	110
Chilliwack	109
Howe Sound	64
Saanich	37
Peace River North	30
Langley	28
Summerland	12
Delta	9
Mission	7

In 2003, all but three LHAs in the Lower Mainland showed an increase in births compared to 1986.

A closer look at the Lower Mainland shows that Surrey had the greatest increase with 1,515 more births followed by Abbottsford, Burnaby, and Vancouver. Only three LHAs in the Lower Mainland had a decline in the number of births between 1986 and 2003: Richmond, North Vancouver, and West Vancouver. Of these, Richmond received the largest number of migrants, many of whom were new to Canada, but they were far less prone to reproduce than people moving to Surrey.

Both Richmond and Surrey are attractive to new Canadians but differ in terms of fertility.

An unusual area in the Lower Mainland is Langley where there was an increase of only 22 births between the years 1986 and 2003, much lower than its neighbours to the east and west. For families, the distance to Vancouver may be too great, but if economic activity continues to move east along the Fraser River, it is not unreasonable to assume that the number of families, and subsequently births, may rise in the future.

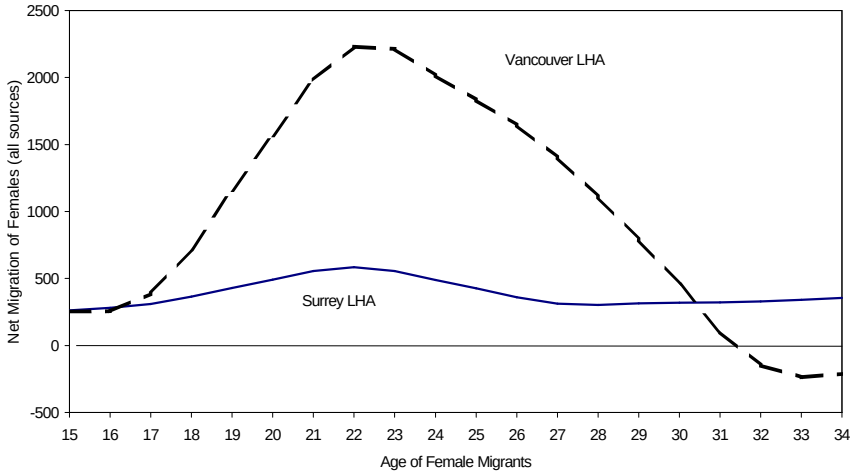
Net Migration

Core areas tend to be very attractive to people between 18 and 24 years of age. Migration out of the family home is most often in the direction of large urban centres for education, socialization, and employment, particularly

when there are few local job opportunities. For those youth already living in core areas, migration out of the home may be deferred. After a prolonged adolescence, they may move to start a family. While net migration to the core for females 18 to 24 was highly positive between 1996 and 2001, net migration was negative for females in their early thirties.

Vancouver's net migration becomes negative for females in their early thirties

Net migration of females, 15 to 34 between 1996 and 2001 for Surrey and Vancouver

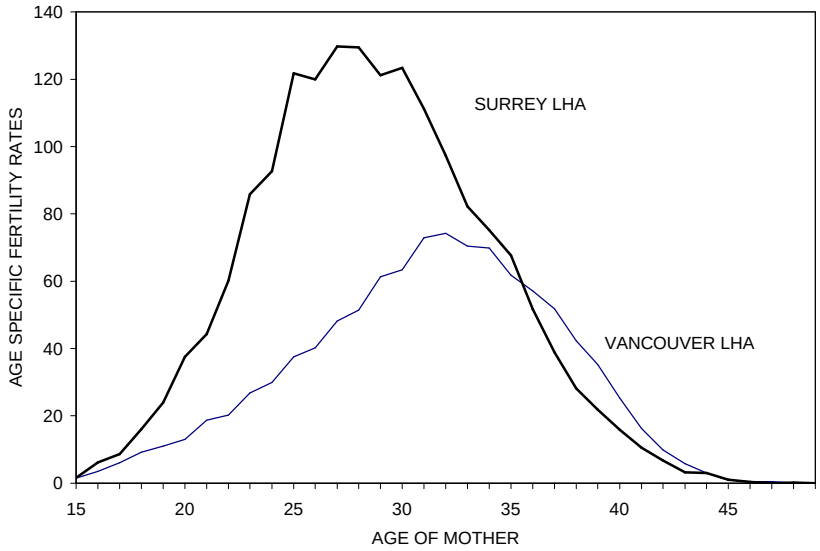


Migration out of the core to the surrounding bedroom communities allows people to maintain their social and economic ties while providing for family needs. Surrey is only one of the options available for people moving out of Vancouver. It offers an affordable alternative for families and consequently the fertility rates are higher here than in Vancouver. Surrey also is home to many new Canadians. Nonetheless, the total fertility rate for Surrey was lower in 2003 compared to 1986.

Age Specific Fertility Rates

The age specific fertility rates (averaged over the years 2001 to 2003) are much higher in Surrey than in Vancouver and tend to be highest for females in their mid to late twenties, while they are highest for females in their early thirties in Vancouver. For females in their early thirties in Vancouver, net migration becomes negative.

Age Specific Fertility Rates – Surrey and Vancouver (Average over 2001 to 2003)



Over 16,000 more children moved out of Vancouver than in since the early eighties.

Child Migrants

Not only does Surrey maintain positive net migration for females in their early thirties but it is also home to far more child migrants than Vancouver. Between 1996 and 2001, there were 4,300 more 'out' migrants than 'in' migrants between the ages of 0 and 6 years for Vancouver while there were close to 1,000 more children moving into Surrey than out.

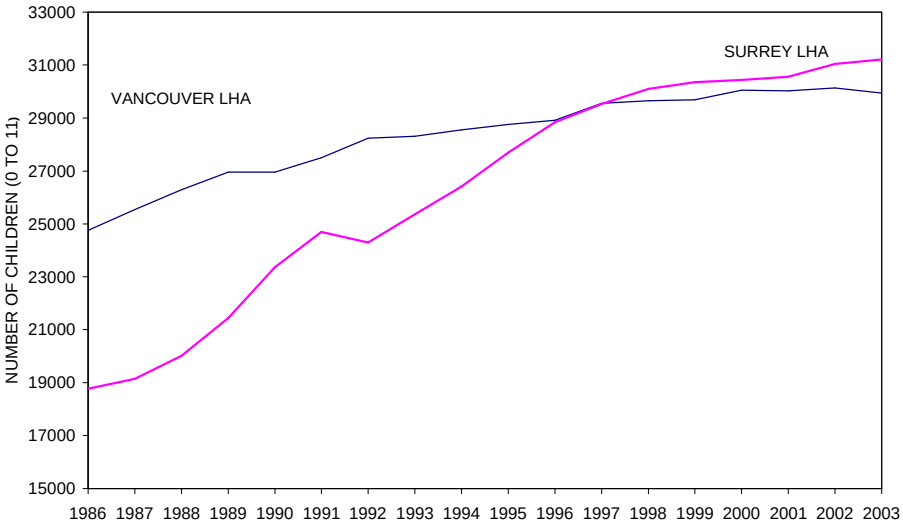
Close to 10,000 more children moved in to Surrey than out since the early eighties.

Number of net migrants 0 to 6 years of age

LHA NAME	1986	1991	1996	2001
Surrey	2,013	4,251	2,693	996
Vancouver	-3,335	-4,280	-4,250	-4,300

Combined with relatively high fertility rates, the strong in-migration has meant that the number of young children living in Surrey has grown rapidly over the last twenty years.

Population estimates of Children 0 to 11 Years of age in Surrey and Vancouver, 1986 to 2003



Summary

Between 1986 and 2003, efforts were made to encourage greater concentration of residents in the Lower Mainland in an attempt to reduce the environmental and economic costs of transportation. Higher density areas are being designed to attract and house people of all age groups, including families. Yet, while young adults may move to core areas for education, work, and socializing, they have been prone to move out when they are having and raising children. Child rearing usually occurs outside of the core areas in bedroom communities where accommodations provide greater access to the ground level, are more affordable and are family-oriented. Nonetheless, more children are being born in Vancouver as well, although not to the same extent.

The continuous positive net migration of females between the ages of 15 and 34, along with higher fertility rates, and the rapid increase in the number of children in Surrey, highlights an important change in population in the Lower Mainland. Over the next thirty years, migration patterns of females of reproductive age may change, and fertility rates may also vary; however, if current trends continue, Surrey may soon be home to the largest population in BC.