

2001 CENSUS BULLETIN #3 – POPULATION BY AGE

Greater Vancouver Suburbs Aging Faster Than Core

According to the 2001 Census population by age and gender data recently released by Statistics Canada, the median age of the Greater Vancouver Regional District's (Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area) population reached an all-time high of 37.4 in 2001, up from 35.5 in 1996¹. The median age of regional residents was slightly below provincial and national figures which stood at 38.4 and 37.6 respectively. The decline in birth rates, both within the region and for Canada as a whole, are a major factor in the slowing of population growth and rising median age levels in recent years². In general, most Canadian CMAs had a lower median age than the national average in 2001³. Overall, Greater Vancouver recorded the fifteenth youngest median age of residents among the twenty-seven CMAs across the country, younger than such notables as Montreal (37.9) and Victoria (41.0) but older than Calgary (34.9), Edmonton (35.4) and Toronto (36.2).

Table 1. 2001 Median Age and Population by Age Groups for GVRD Municipalities

Municipality	Median Age 1996	Median Age 2001	Absolute Growth 1996-2001	2001 Population By Age Groups						
				Total Population	Under 20 Years		20 to 64 Years		65 Years and Over	
					Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent
Anmore	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,344	445	33.1%	805	59.9%	65	4.8%
Belcarra	n/a	n/a	n/a	682	170	24.9%	475	69.6%	45	6.6%
Bowen Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,957	860	29.1%	1,800	60.9%	300	10.1%
Burnaby	35.9	37.5	1.6	193,954	43,100	22.2%	124,910	64.4%	25,950	13.4%
Coquitlam	34.6	37.0	2.4	112,890	30,185	26.7%	71,670	63.5%	11,025	9.8%
Delta	35.8	38.3	2.5	96,950	27,375	28.2%	58,805	60.7%	10,760	11.1%
Electoral Area 'A'	n/a	32.7	n/a	8,034	1,765	22.0%	5,400	67.2%	845	10.5%
Langley City	34.5	36.5	2.0	23,643	5,950	25.2%	14,125	59.7%	3,560	15.1%
Langley Township	34.8	37.3	2.5	86,896	25,815	29.7%	51,510	59.3%	9,565	11.0%
Lions Bay	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,379	315	22.8%	920	66.7%	140	10.2%
Maple Ridge	34.3	36.7	2.4	63,169	18,715	29.6%	37,715	59.7%	6,755	10.7%
New Westminster	36.9	38.8	1.9	54,656	10,115	18.5%	36,790	67.3%	7,745	14.2%
North Vancouver City	36.1	38.2	2.1	44,303	8,645	19.5%	29,925	67.5%	5,730	12.9%
North Vancouver District	37.5	39.6	2.1	82,310	22,360	27.2%	50,055	60.8%	9,890	12.0%
Pitt Meadows	33.9	36.3	2.4	14,670	4,285	29.2%	8,895	60.6%	1,485	10.1%
Port Coquitlam	32.8	35.1	2.3	51,257	15,185	29.6%	32,285	63.0%	3,800	7.4%
Port Moody	33.9	36.2	2.3	23,816	6,780	28.5%	15,465	64.9%	1,600	6.7%
Richmond	36.2	38.5	2.3	164,345	40,295	24.5%	104,710	63.7%	19,330	11.8%
Surrey	33.5	35.6	2.1	347,825	99,845	28.7%	210,290	60.5%	37,695	10.8%
Vancouver	35.8	37.2	1.4	545,671	101,255	18.6%	374,080	68.6%	70,320	12.9%
West Vancouver	45.4	47.0	1.6	41,421	9,230	22.3%	23,080	55.7%	9,115	22.0%
White Rock	48.8	50.9	2.1	18,250	2,460	13.5%	10,200	55.9%	5,585	30.6%
Vancouver CMA	35.5	37.4	1.9	1,986,965	476,570	24.0%	1,267,910	63.8%	242,495	12.2%
BC	35.9	38.4	2.5	3,907,738	976,345	25.0%	2,398,310	61.4%	533,090	13.6%

Across the region, the highest median age levels were recorded in White Rock (50.9) and West Vancouver (47.0). According to Statistics Canada, the median age of residents in these two municipalities ranked second and sixteenth oldest respectively among all Canadian municipalities having a population over 5,000 residents⁴. Overall, Qualicum Beach had the nation's highest median age at 58.1.

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

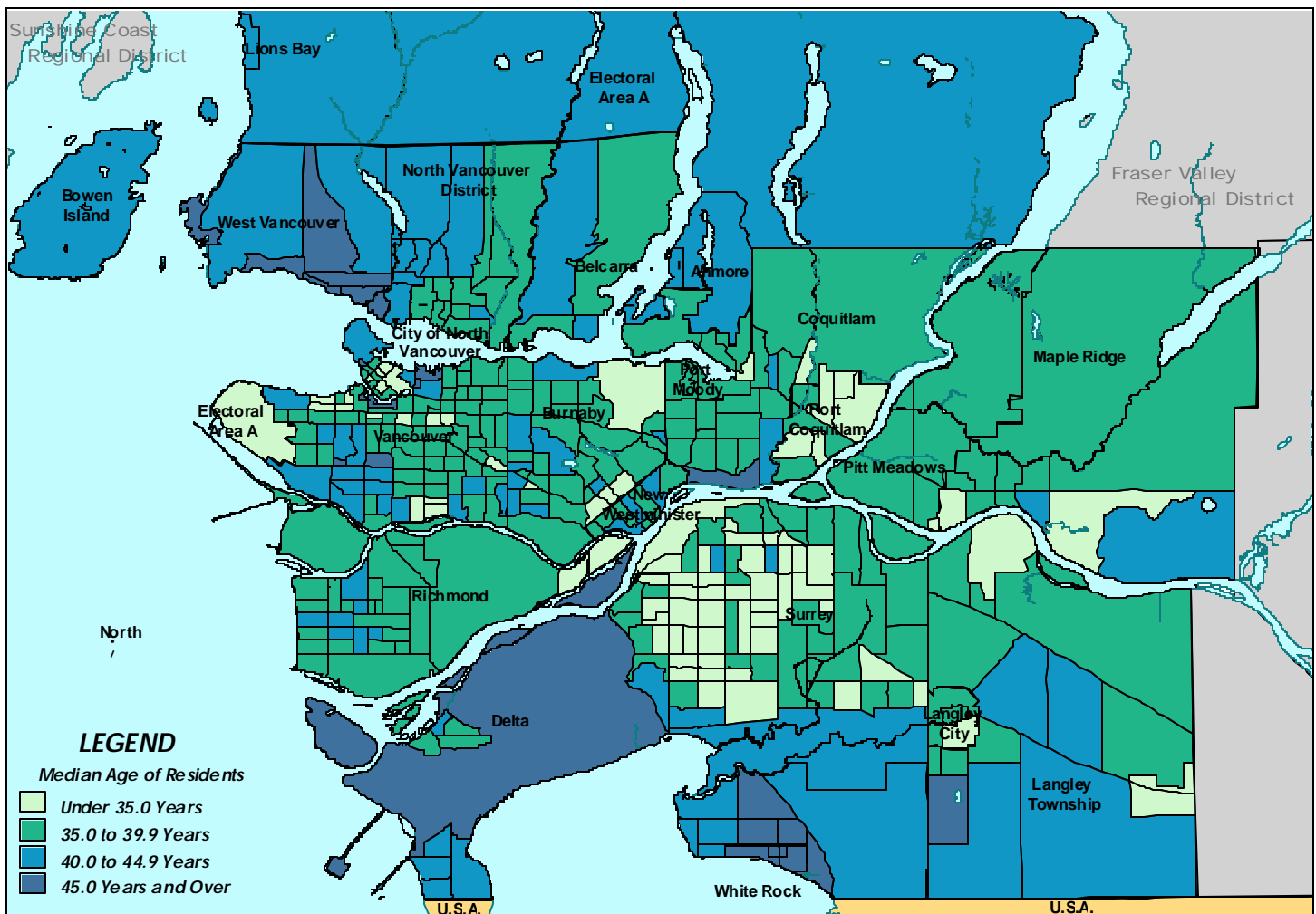
² Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Age & Sex Profile: Canada, July, 2002

³ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Age & Sex Profile: Sub-provincial, July, 2002

⁴ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census Analysis Series – Profile of the Canadian population by sex and age: Canada ages, July, 2002

2001 CENSUS BULLETIN #3 – POPULATION BY AGE

Map 1. Median Age of Population for GVRD Census Tracts, 2001



Greater Vancouver’s suburban populations aged more quickly over the 1996-2001 period than residents living on the Burrard Peninsula. The 2001 median age of residents for each of the region’s core municipalities of Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster increased by less than 2.0 years over 1996, while the median age for the surrounding communities, in most instances, increased by more than 2.0 years in age. Faster aging among the region’s suburban municipalities is consistent with patterns exhibited in CMAs across Canada. Statistics Canada suggests that one explanation for this phenomenon is that younger migrants moving to larger metropolitan regions have a tendency to initially settle in the core municipalities, keeping down median age levels in the core. Meanwhile, the median age levels in suburban communities have been increasing due to, in part, rising incidences of “empty nesters”, where children have moved from home and left behind aging parents⁵.

Rising median age is one indicator clearly signifying that Greater Vancouver’s population is aging. A second and supportive indicator reflecting this trend is observed in the region’s changing profile by age groups. An examination of population change by age cohorts indicates that the recent growth in regional senior populations has outpaced the rise in younger residents. During the 1996-2001 period, the region’s number of seniors aged

⁵ Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Age & Sex Profile: Sub-provincial, July, 2002

2001 CENSUS BULLETIN #3 – POPULATION BY AGE

sixty-five years and over increased by 26,000 (12.0%) persons, while the number of young persons below twenty years of age rose by 25,100 (5.6%) over the same time. Within this period, the region's pre-school population aged 0 to 4, declined by 7,000 (7%) children. On the whole, the majority of Greater Vancouver's 1996-2001 population growth occurred in the 20 to 64 age cohort, which rose by 104,100 people. Hidden within this large cohort was an observed population decline in the region's younger working-age group, 25 to 34. Over the 1996-2001 period, the number of regional residents in the 25 to 34 year age group fell by 6.5% or 20,700 persons. According to Statistics Canada, this pattern is consistent with the broader national trend and is explained largely by the tail end of the baby boom generation being replaced by the considerably smaller baby bust generation.

While Greater Vancouver exhibited distinct changes among its age groups over the two most recent census periods, the observed changes within the region's age group profile are even more dramatic over a twenty-year horizon. Since 1981, the number of seniors in the region has increased 66.2% while the number of young persons, under twenty years of age, has only risen 38.1%. In all, seniors accounted for 12.2% of Greater Vancouver's total population in 2001, up from 11.8% in 1996 and 11.5% in 1981. Conversely, the region's younger residents accounted for 24.0% in 2001, down from 24.6% in 1996 and 27.2% in 1981.

Table 2. 1981, 1996 and 2001 Population by Age Groups for GVRD

Age Group	Population						1996-2001	1981-2001
	1981		1996		2001		Change	Change
	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Percent	Percent
0-4	77,480	6.1%	111,785	6.1%	104,810	5.3%	-6.2%	35.3%
5-9	76,950	6.1%	111,555	6.1%	117,970	5.9%	5.8%	53.3%
10-14	87,035	6.9%	113,705	6.2%	122,610	6.2%	7.8%	40.9%
15-19	103,555	8.2%	114,420	6.2%	131,180	6.6%	14.6%	26.7%
20-24	119,765	9.4%	127,970	7.0%	135,795	6.8%	6.1%	13.4%
25-34	232,480	18.3%	319,070	17.4%	298,330	15.0%	-6.5%	28.3%
35-44	165,100	13.0%	319,245	17.4%	348,605	17.5%	9.2%	111.1%
45-54	136,540	10.8%	245,525	13.4%	304,775	15.3%	24.1%	123.2%
55-64	123,160	9.7%	151,965	8.3%	180,405	9.1%	18.7%	46.5%
65+	145,930	11.5%	216,425	11.8%	242,495	12.2%	12.0%	66.2%
Vancouver CMA	1,267,995	100.0%	1,831,665	100.0%	1,986,965	100.0%	8.5%	56.7%

Recent census figures indicate that an increasingly higher proportion of local seniors are opting to live in Greater Vancouver's suburbs rather than its core municipalities. In 2001, the region's suburban municipalities accommodated 57% of local seniors, up from their 51% share in 1991. Better affordability and improvements in the provision of senior-related services are among the factors making the suburbs increasingly attractive for senior living. This aging also reflects the maturing of the suburbs. Many people have spent their whole lives in these areas and choose to stay there as they become older. Among the region's municipalities in 2001, the largest proportionate share of senior populations was recorded in White Rock (30.6%) and West Vancouver (22.0%). Conversely, the largest proportionate share of young residents was recorded in Anmore (33.1%), followed by Langley Township (29.7%), Maple Ridge (29.6%) and Port Coquitlam (29.6%).

While Greater Vancouver's population is slowly becoming older, the region has not yet felt the full impact of aging - but will do so over the next two decades. According to BC Stats PEOPLE 27, the number of seniors aged sixty-five years and over in the region is projected to 'double' within the next twenty-five years while the number of younger people under twenty years of age is forecast to rise 10% during the same period. The pending shifts in population among Greater Vancouver's younger and older age groups have far-reaching social

2001 CENSUS BULLETIN #3 – POPULATION BY AGE

and economic implications including effects on labour force, economy, and the delivery of programs and services, particularly, health care, housing, transportation and institutional care facilities. One of the strategies of the GVRD's *Livable Region Strategic Plan* is to ensure an equitable distribution of public social and cultural services and facilities⁶.

Proviso

An addendum to this Bulletin outlining median age and age group changes within the context of the Livable Region Strategic Plan's Growth Concentration Area and Regional Town Centres will be completed upon the data's availability in November 2002.

⁶ GVRD, *Livable Region Strategic Plan*, 1996