

1. Population Demographics

The size and characteristics of a population shape the fundamental components of a community. Analysis of population characteristics allows governments, health agencies, school districts, and other organizations to meet the current needs of the citizens, and shape future growth for the well-being of the community. Please note that the Comox Strathcona Regional District (RD) split into the Comox RD and Strathcona RD on Feb 15, 2008.



1.1 Population Growth

From the census years of 2001 to 2006, the population growth in the Comox Valley of 5.9% was slightly greater than the provincial population growth of 5.3%.² Gender percentages in the Comox Valley remain unchanged from previous reports and are the same as the provincial percentages: 49% male, and 51% female.

Table : Population Growth of Comox Valley

Location	2001	2006	% Change	2008 Estimate	% Change
Comox	11,391	12,136	6.5%		
Courtenay	19,166	21,940	14.5%		
Cumberland	2,633	2,762	4.9%		
Regional District A	4,748	4,885	2.9%		
Regional District B	7,013	7,219	2.9%		
Regional District C	7,448	7,441	-0.1%		
Regional District K	1,982	2,169	9.4%		
Totals	54,381	58,552	5.9%	63,239 ³	7.4%
British Columbia	3,907,738	4,113,487	5.3%		

Source: BC Stats, 2006 Census Profiles. All figures are adjusted to 2006 boundaries.

According to census estimates, the overall number of children in BC families increased by 1.2% between 2001 and 2006, compared to BC's total population growth of 5.3% over the same period.⁴

² BC Stats, 2006 Census of Canada: Census Profiles.

³ BC Stats, Sub-Provincial Population Estimates: Health District 71. Accessed April 2009.

⁴ BC Stats, Business Indicators: Children in BC Families, 2007.

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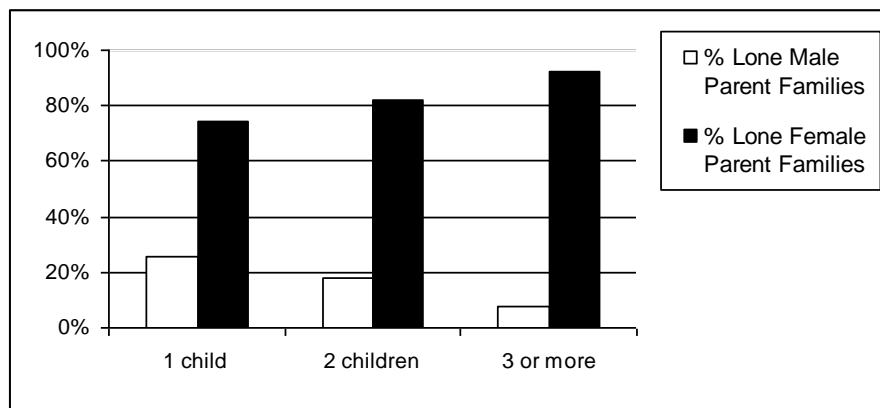


1.2 Lone Parent Families

Socio-economic conditions faced by members of lone parent families vary considerably from families headed by two parents. Lone parent families often face issues related to poverty, unemployment, and various stress-related conditions.

Of the 1.2 million children living in BC families in 2006, 22% lived in lone parent families: the same percentage as in 2001. Although the percentage of children living in male lone parent families was slightly higher than in 2001, the average number of children in male lone parent families was lower than in female lone parent families.⁵ This trend is also apparent in Comox Valley lone parent families.

Figure : Comparison of Male & Female Lone Parent Families in the Comox Valley 2006



Source: BC Stats, British Columbia Municipal Census Populations - 2006 Census Profiles.

Of the 8,740 families in the Comox Valley with children at home in 2006, 29% were lone parent families. Figures for prior years in the Comox Valley adjusted to the 2006 boundaries were not available for comparison. The Comox Valley 2006 rate is significantly higher than the 22% BC rate for lone parent families.

The median total income for all census couple families in British Columbia in 2005 was \$65,000,⁶ for census lone parent families, the median total income was \$27,800.⁷ A 2006 study examined the two decades between 1984 and 2004 and found that lone mothers experienced the highest degree of volatility in earnings of any family type.⁸

⁵ BC Stats, Business Indicators: Children in BC Families, 2007.

⁶ Stats Canada, Median total income, by family type, by province and territory: Couple Families.

⁷ Stats Canada, Median total income, by family type, by province and territory: Lone Parent Families.

⁸ Stats Canada, The Daily, Friday, October 20, 2006. Study: Earnings Instability.

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In 2006, females headed 78.6% of lone parent families in the Comox Valley, slightly less than the BC rate of 79.8%, and less than the 2001 rate of 87%.

Related Indicators: Housing – Food Security – Employment and Economy



1.3 Number of Families

The 2006 census shows that just over half of the families in the Comox Valley had no children at home. The average number of children at home is 0.87 per family: slightly below the provincial average of 1.04 children per family.

Table : Number of Families and Children at Home in the Comox Valley – 2006 Census

Location	# of Families	# of Children	% No Children	% With Children	Average # of Children
Comox	3,685	3,160	50%	50%	0.86
Courtenay	6,335	5,615	48%	52%	0.89
Cumberland	740	810	42%	58%	1.09
Regional District A	1,605	1,145	57%	43%	0.71
Regional District B	2,275	1,930	53%	47%	0.85
Regional District C	2,280	2,185	49%	51%	0.96
Regional District K	665	425	61%	39%	0.64
Totals/Averages	17,585	15,270	51%	49%	0.87
British Columbia	1,161,420	1,202,145	41%	59%	1.04

Source: BC Stats, British Columbia Municipal Census Populations - 2006 Census Profiles.

No adjusted figures are available for the 2006 municipal boundaries in the years of 1996 and 2001. Table 2 above is intended to show only the trend toward an increase in families and a decrease in the number of children in the Comox Valley as well as provincially. According to BC Statistic's census profiles for 2001 and 2006, the number of children living at home decreased, while the number of seniors (people over 65) living in the community increased.⁹ Another possible clue as to why there are fewer children in the face of an increasing population is in the range of ages. In 1991, the main distribution of the population resided in the 20 – 44 age range. That distribution has shifted to the 45 – 64 range, a time in people's lives when the children have left home.¹⁰ (See Figure 6: Comox Valley Population by Gender & Age)

⁹ BC Stats, 2001 Census Profile: CSRD and 2006 Census Profile: CSRD. Accessed April 2009.

¹⁰ BC Stats, 2001 Census Profile of British Columbia's Regions, CSRD, and 2006 Census Profile - Summary Version: Comox-Strathcona, CD. Accessed April 2009.

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Table : Number of Families and Children at Home in the Comox Valley and BC - 1996-2006 Comparison

Comox Valley				
Year	Census Families	No Children	Children	Avg. # of Children
1996	15,935	44%	56%	1.8
2001	16,465	46%	54%	1.0
2006*	17,585	51%	49%	0.9
British Columbia				
Year	Census Families	No Children	Children	Avg. # of Children
1996	1,008,440	39%	61%	1.8
2001	1,086,030	44%	56%	1.1
2006*	1,161,420	41%	59%	1.0

Source: BC Stats, Census of Population and Housing, 2004 – 2001 boundaries: and – 2006 boundaries.

Related Indicators: Student/Educator Ratios – The Aging Population



1.4 Marital Status

Following provincial court rulings in 2003, vital statistics registries in British Columbia started registering marriages of same-sex couples. Statistics Canada now publishes data on three types of marriages: opposite-sex marriage, male same-sex marriage and female same-sex marriage. Common-law relationships, civil unions, and partnerships registered with partnerships registries are excluded from these statistics.

Table : Comox Valley Marital Statuses - 2006

Location	Single	Legally Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Common-law
Comox	22.3%	56.7%	2.9%	9.8%	8.5%	7.5%
Courtenay	29.4%	46.6%	4.5%	12.2%	7.3%	10.4%
Cumberland	32.8%	41.1%	5.4%	12.3%	8.3%	13.4%
Regional District A	24.7%	56.0%	3.0%	10.6%	5.7%	12.0%
Regional District B	23.8%	58.5%	3.2%	10.1%	4.5%	9.6%
Regional District C	26.9%	55.7%	3.2%	9.6%	4.7%	11.3%
Regional District K	26.6%	46.3%	3.2%	17.4%	6.1%	14.7%
Totals/Averages	26.5%	51.9%	3.7%	11.2%	6.7%	10.3%
Comox Valley	Single	Legally Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Common-law
1996	24.9%	56.2%	3.9%	9.6%	5.7%	
2001	25.9%	53.0%	3.9%	9.6%	5.7%	
2006	26.5%	51.9%	3.7%	11.2%	6.7%	10.3%

Source: BC Stats, British Columbia Municipal Census Populations - 2006 Census Profiles.

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In 2006 in the Comox Valley, the marital status of people aged 15 years and over in single, divorced, and widowed categories increased. Legally married percentages decreased by 4.3% compared to 1996 and 1.1% compared to 2001. Common-law status was 10.3% in 2006.

Comox Valley had significant differences to BC marital statuses in three categories in 2006: 5.6% less single people, 2.8% more divorced people, and 2.1% more people in common-law relationships.

The number of marriages solemnized in BC dropped from 22,000 in 2001 to 20,660 in 2006.¹¹ However, the number of same-sex couples in Canada rose by 33% from 2001 compared to the opposite-sex rate of 6%. In 2006, same-sex couples made up 1% of all Canadian families. About half of all same-sex couples in Canada live in the metropolitan areas of Toronto (21%), Montréal (18%), and Vancouver (10%). The 2006 census collected data on same-sex married couples for the first time, as a result of the legalization of same-sex in 2005. About 17% of same-sex couples were married couples, whereas, married opposite-sex couples made up 69% of all Canadian families.¹²



1.5 The Aging Population

The faces one sees on the streets of our communities are older than what one typically sees elsewhere. The baby boomers are now in their 50s or 60s, and many of them are moving to the Comox Valley because of its moderate temperatures, lush environment and cultural diversity. The number of senior citizens in our community is also growing for similar reasons. They have decided that the Valley is a great place to retire. Retirement is a misnomer. Many people continue to work in their 50s and beyond, even if part-time. Our older citizens are often the people who spend their energies and time volunteering for many community organizations. Their increasing numbers will continue to influence the way our community grows.

As of 2006, there were 10,665 people over the age of 65 in the Comox Valley, or 18.2% of the population. This is higher than 2003 at 16%, and the 2006 BC rate of 14.6%. By 2031 the people in BC aged 65 and over will represent 24.2% of the population.¹³

¹¹.Stats Canada, Marriages by Province and Territory.

¹² Stats Canada, Canada Social Trends: Census Snapshots of Canada – Families. Accessed April 2009.

¹³ BC Progress Board, Strategic Considerations for BC's Future: Issues and Trends 2007 Report.

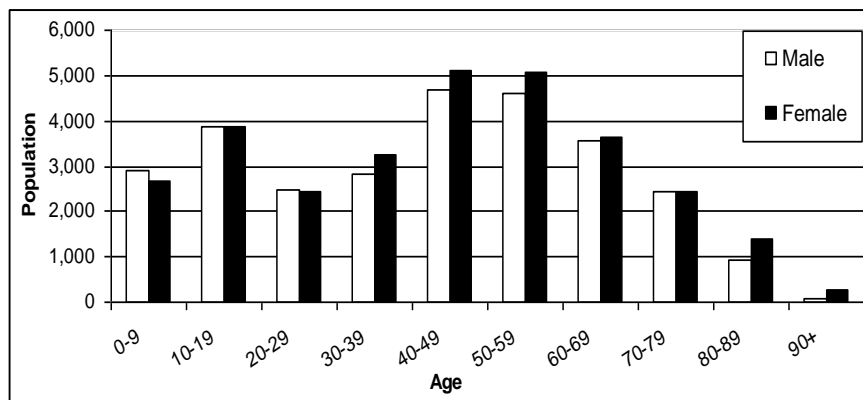
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Table : Comox Valley and BC Population 65 and Over, including Projections

Year	Comox Valley	BC
2006	10,665*	566,135*
2011	11,754**	695,600^
2016	13,832**	846,000^
2021	16,318**	1,015,000^

Source: BC Stats, 2006 Census Profiles* (figures adjusted to 2006 boundaries), Invest Comox Valley**, and British Columbia Population Forecast – 07/07, Table 3: Selected Age Groups.

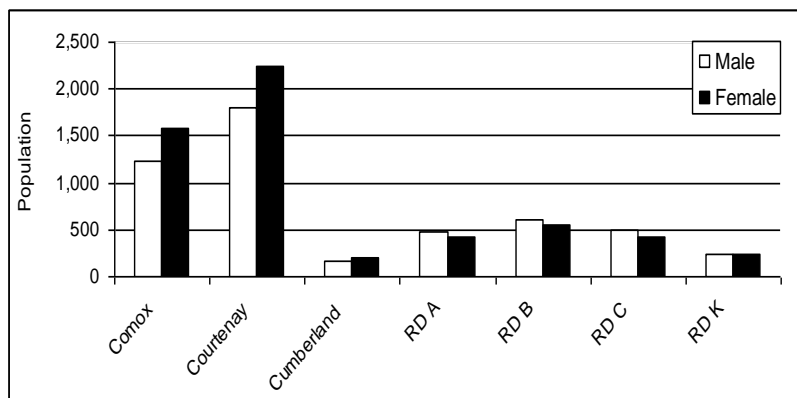
Figure : Comox Valley Population by Gender & Age



Source: BC Stats, British Columbia Municipal Census Populations - 2006 Census Profiles.

The heaviest concentrations of people over the age of 65 in the Comox Valley are in Courtenay and Comox.

Figure : Comox Valley Seniors by Area



Source: BC Stats, British Columbia Municipal Census Populations – 2006 Census Profiles.

Related indicators: Health section, Housing

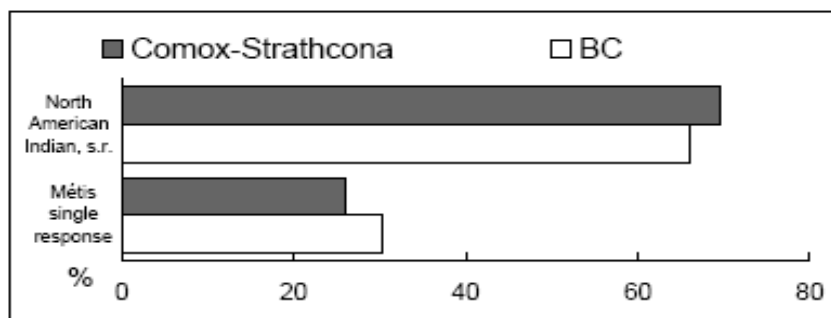


1.6 Aboriginal Identity

In 2006, the Aboriginal population in BC increased slightly to 4.8%¹⁴ from 4.4%¹⁵; the percentage during the same time period remained constant in the Comox Valley at 7.2%.¹⁶

The composition of the Aboriginal population in the Comox Valley is predominately North American Indian (69.7%) and Métis (25.9%); BC's distribution is similar.

Figure : Predominate Aboriginal Identities 2006 - BC/Comox Valley



Source: Stats Canada, 2006 Census – Profiles of Diversity – BC & Comox-Strathcona.

On average, BC's Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population. In BC in 2001, 48% of Aboriginals and 31% of non-Aboriginals BC's population were under 25 years old.¹⁷ This decreased slightly in 2006 to over 43% of Aboriginals and 29% of non-Aboriginals. The median age of Aboriginals in BC was 26.8 in 2001 and 28 in 2006 compared to non-Aboriginals at 38.4 in 2001 and 41 in 2006. The Aboriginal population aged 65 and over in 2006 was 5% contrasted to 15% of non-Aboriginals.¹⁸

In 2001 in BC, marital and family statuses differed for Aboriginals. Aboriginals (24.2%) were half as likely to be legally married as non-Aboriginals (51.2%), twice as likely (14.4%) as non-Aboriginals (7.2%) to be in common-law relationships; and Aboriginal

¹⁴ Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch, Profile of Diversity in British Columbia.

¹⁵ BC Stats, 2001 Census Fast Facts: BC Aboriginal Identity Population.

¹⁶ Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch, Profile of Diversity in BC Communities, 2001 and 2006, Comox-Strathcona.

¹⁷ BC Stats, 2001 Census Fast Facts: BC Aboriginal Identity Population, Age Distribution.

¹⁸ BC Stats, Business Indicators, February 2008. The Aboriginal Population in BC and Recent Trends in Off Reserve Aboriginal Labour Force Participation.

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families were twice as likely (29.8%) as non-Aboriginal families (14.7%) to be lone parent families.¹⁹

Related Indicators: Lone Parent Families – Diversity – Affordable Housing

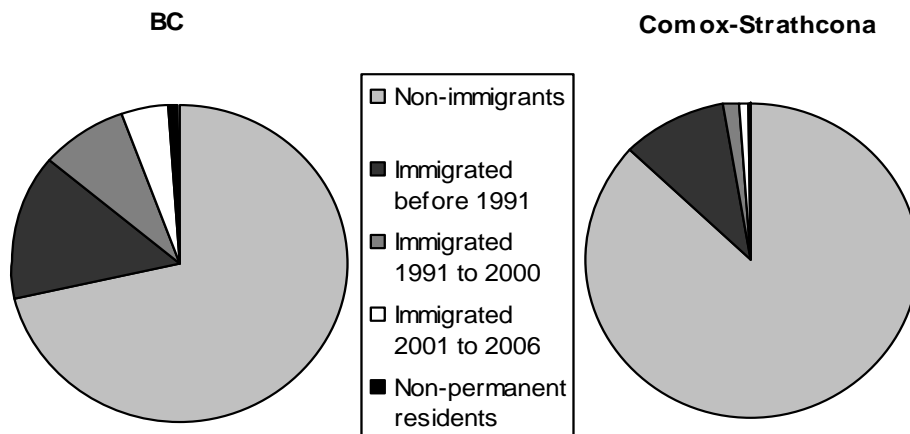


1.7 Diversity

Diversity of a population is simply a description of where people come from, and what their ethnic origins are. A diverse community is thought to enhance cultural richness. However, acceptance of differences and employment opportunities are issues that influence the migration of people from other ethnicities.

As shown in Figure 9 below, Comox-Strathcona's 87% Canadian-born population is significantly higher than BC's 71%. The greatest inflow of immigrants for Comox-Strathcona and BC was experienced before 1991. In 2006, the generation status of 63% of Comox-Strathcona's immigrants was third generation or more compared to 45% of BC's immigrants.²⁰ The 2006 census shows the percentage of visible minorities in Comox-Strathcona is only 3%; this is significantly lower than BC's 25%.²¹

Figure : Ethnic Origins - BC & Comox-Strathcona Regional District



Source: Stats Canada, 2006 Community Profiles- Comox-Strathcona

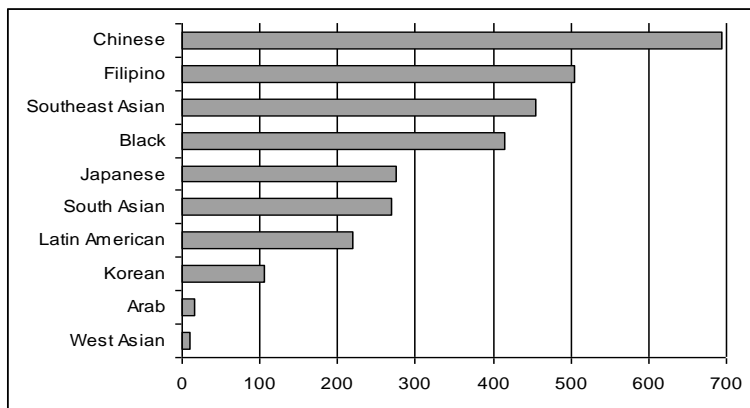
¹⁹ BC Stats, 2001 Census Fast Facts: BC Aboriginal Identity Population, Family Status and Living Arrangements.

²⁰ Stats Canada, 2006 Community Profiles- Comox-Strathcona.

²¹ Ibid.

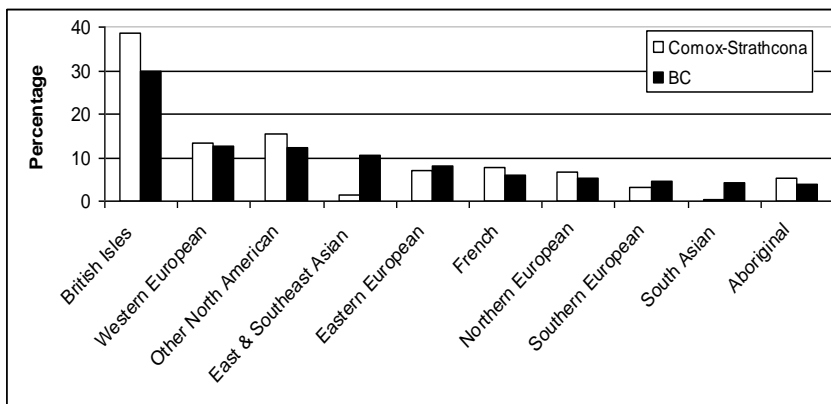
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Figure : Visible Minorities Population Characteristics - 2006 - Comox-Strathcona



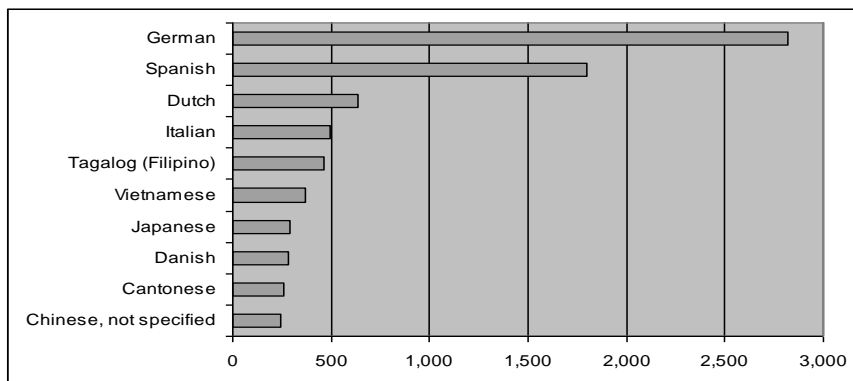
Source: Stats Canada, 2006 Community Profiles- Comox-Strathcona.

Figure : Top Ethnic Ancestry Origins - BC & Comox-Strathcona



Source: Ministry of Attorney General, Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch. Profile of Diversity in BC and Profile of Diversity in BC Communities 2006 - Comox-Strathcona.

Figure : Non-official Languages Spoken (English & French excluded) - Comox-Strathcona



Source: Ministry of Attorney General, Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch. Profile of Diversity in BC and Profile of Diversity in BC Communities 2006 - Comox-Strathcona.

Related Indicators: Employment and Economy