This chapter provides background material on BC based on selective demographic characteristics. The original Atlas provided information on physical, climatic, and demographic characteristics, but because there have been no changes or updated data on the physical and climatic variables from those previously presented, we have not included them in this edition of the Atlas. Interested readers are referred to the original Atlas for these indicators and characteristics, which included physiography, precipitation-free days, hours of bright sunshine, seasonal trends in precipitation, and recent changes in maximum and minimum temperatures. The “wellness” of ecosystems and the physical environment (air, water, land, sea, biodiversity, toxic contaminants, climatic change, and sea) has been well researched. Interested readers can find the most recent documentation elsewhere (Ministry of Environment, 2007).

As a context for many of the data and maps that occur in the following chapters, the material presented here focuses on key demographic indicators that help describe the population of BC at the HSDA level, which is the primary administrative unit used for mapping purposes in this Atlas. The first three maps show total population, population density, and female population, and give a sense of where the population is in BC and also some idea of urbanicity and rurality. Research has shown that the rural population tends to be less well than those living in urban areas, and there are major differences in gender from a wellness perspective (Virtue et al., 2010). The next four maps show the proportion of the population in four key age categories: birth to 11 years; 12 to 19 years; 20 to 64 years; and 65 years and over. The last three categories are used extensively throughout the Atlas.

Next are six maps that focus on two key sub-populations in the province whose levels of wellness are known to be different from those of the average population in BC. The first group is the Aboriginal population, and the relative importance of this group by location is provided, while the second group deals with characteristics of the immigrant population.

The next five maps provide a more detailed description of the population in each HSDA in the province. The HSDAs are organized in five groups based on the five geographical Health Authorities in BC: Interior; Fraser; Vancouver Coastal; Vancouver Island; and Northern.

A final map provides a sense of the overall distribution of the population in the province. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.
Population distribution within the province

The maps opposite provide important indicators of the geographical distribution of the population within BC, based on HSDA boundaries. The HSDA boundary set was chosen as it is the dominant administrative unit used in this Atlas. When viewed in conjunction with the nighttime map presented at the end of the chapter, a better perspective can be provided about the province’s population and the majority of wellness maps that follow. Data are based on the P.E.O.P.L.E. 35 model population estimates (BC Stats, 2010b), when BC had an estimated population of 4,455,210 residents, with an annual 5 year growth rate of 1.4%.

Percent of total population

There are three main population regions in BC. More than four in every ten (43.45%) people in the province are found in three HSDAs in the urban lower mainland in the southwest corner of the province. Fraser South (15.62%), with a 5 year annual growth rate of 2.0%, and Vancouver (14.44%) and Fraser North (13.39%), both with an annual 5 year growth rate of 1.5%, clearly dominate the population distribution within BC. Neighbouring HSDAs, such as North Shore/Coast Garibaldi, Richmond, and to a lesser extent Fraser East, also help to make up an ever-expanding lower mainland region, and when their populations are included, six in every ten people can be found in this region, which continues to grow and attract new residents.

The second major population region is also in the extreme southwest of the province on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, where 8.25% of the province’s population resides, and which has been growing at an annual rate of 1.1% for the last 5 years. Okanagan, in the southern interior of the province, is the third major population region, with 7.88% of the province’s population. It is the fastest growing HSDA in the province, with an annual growth rate of 2.2% since 2004.

Population density

Provincially, BC had an average population density of 4.66 per square kilometre. Vancouver dominates the province in terms of population density. As noted in the table, this HSDA had a population density of approximately 4,810 people per square kilometre. Next in importance was Richmond, with 1,246 people per square kilometre. Other lower mainland HSDAs were also prominent, particularly Fraser South and Fraser North. The only other HSDA with a relatively high population density was South Vancouver Island. Generally, population density was high in the southwest of the province, while the whole of the northern half of BC and much of the interior had very low population densities. Most of the population in the north and interior are located in small towns and communities with one or two notable exceptions.

Female population

There are major differences in wellness between genders (McKee et al., 2010) and women live longer than men (see life expectancy in Chapter 13), so it is important to view the relative distribution of genders throughout the province. Overall, 50.39% of the province’s population is female. The relative figures vary throughout the province, with a high of 51.65% females in South Vancouver Island and a low of 48.04% in Northeast. Higher relative concentrations of females are also found in Richmond and in Okanagan, while the northern HSDAs have the lowest concentrations.
The British Columbia Demographic Context

Population distribution within the province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.26 - 15.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.25 - 8.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21 - 6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.79 - 3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.52 - 1.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BC Stats
P.E.O.P.L.E. 35

Population density /sq. km.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50.89 - 51.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.30 - 50.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.00 - 50.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.03 - 49.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.04 - 49.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BC Stats
P.E.O.P.L.E. 35
Population age patterns

Many of the wellness maps are based on population age cohorts, especially the wellness indicators derived from the CCHS 4.1, so this group of indicators provides a brief analysis of how key population cohorts are distributed throughout the province. Again, the population data are provided for 2009 and are derived from P.E.O.P.L.E. 35 from BC Stats. The data are provided at the HSDA level and show the percentage of population in any HSDA in four different age categories: under 12 years; 12 to 19 years; 20 to 64 years; and 65 years and over. The key age category for “ranking” HSDAs is the 20 to 64 age cohort, and this is shown in the top left corner on the page opposite. As can be seen from the table and maps opposite, there are fairly major geographical differences in the population of HSDAs based on these age categories.

Population 20 to 64 years old

More than six in every ten (63.46%) individuals provincially were in this mid-age population cohort in 2009, a marginal increase from 2005 (63.31%). This age cohort is broad in nature and includes young people still in post secondary education, but the dominant group is the post-war “baby boomers,” which is a major demographic group in BC and elsewhere. This age cohort is mainly involved in the workforce and family formation and child rearing.

There were major differences in the relative importance of this age group throughout BC. More than seven in ten (70.46%) people in Vancouver were in this cohort, compared with 60% or less in Okanagan, Central Vancouver Island, and Fraser East. The highest HSDAs were found in the urban lower mainland, including Vancouver, Fraser North, and Richmond (all above 65%).

Population less than 12 years old

This youngest age cohort had a fairly large geographical spread in values. While the provincial average was 11.96% of the total population, this ranged from a high of 17.05% in Northeast to a low of 9.94% in Vancouver and 10.13% in South Vancouver Island. Generally, lower values were more prevalent in the lower mainland and the southern half of Vancouver Island, while the higher values were characteristic of the northern half of the province.

Population 12 to 19 years old

Individuals in this youth cohort are mainly in the school system. Nearly one in ten (9.84%) in the province were in this age cohort in 2009. Values ranged from 7.23% in Vancouver to 12.59% in Northwest. Generally, the highest values were found in the northern half of the province, while lower values were evident in South Vancouver Island and in the Okanagan.

Population 65 years and over

This seniors age cohort accounted for 14.73% of the province’s population in 2009. The large majority in this cohort were retired. There were major geographical differences among the HSDAs, with Okanagan and Central Vancouver Island having the highest percentages (both with approximately 20%), while Northeast had only 8.56% of its population in this cohort. Geographically, the northern half of the province had the lowest percentages in this age cohort, while the highest were in the southern interior of the province, as well as Central Vancouver Island.
Population age patterns

Ages 20-64 (%)
- 63.89 - 70.46
- 62.79 - 63.88
- 61.15 - 62.78
- 60.03 - 61.14
- 59.26 - 60.02

Ages < 12 (%)
- 14.08 - 17.05
- 12.03 - 14.07
- 11.18 - 12.02
- 10.74 - 11.17
- 9.94 - 10.73

Ages 12-19 (%)
- 11.09 - 12.59
- 10.34 - 11.08
- 10.12 - 10.33
- 9.81 - 10.11
- 7.23 - 9.80

Ages 65+ (%)
- 17.35 - 20.01
- 16.02 - 17.34
- 13.03 - 16.01
- 11.58 - 13.02
- 8.56 - 11.57

Source: BC Stats
P.E.O.P.L.E. 35
Although the proportion of the BC population who identified as Aboriginal was only 4.81% in the 2006 census (BC Stats, 2010b), up from 4.39% in 2001, they are an important sub-group of the BC population, especially from a health and wellness perspective. In a recent report on the health and well-being of BC’s Aboriginal population, the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, noted that although there had been some improvements since an earlier report, significant gaps in health and wellness assets relative to the general BC population still remained (Kendall, 2009). Of the more than 196,000 individuals who self-identified as Aboriginal in 2006, approximately two-thirds were North American Indian (First Nations), with the other major group identifying as Metis (Norton, 2008).

Overall, the Aboriginal population is much younger than the general BC population, with 37% aged 19 or younger, compared to 22% for the BC population as a whole. The Aboriginal population has grown more rapidly than the non-Aboriginal population because of higher birth rates (Kendall, 2009).

Percent Aboriginal population

Although provincially the Aboriginal population represented only a small portion of the population, there are major differences geographically throughout the province. Nearly one-third (30.03%) of the population in Northwest was Aboriginal in 2006, an increase from one-quarter in 2001, while in Richmond, in the extreme southwest of the province, less than one percent self-identified as Aboriginal.

Generally, HSDAs in the northern half of the province, along with the central interior (Thompson Cariboo Shuswap), had the highest percentages of Aboriginal population (all above 11%). At the other extreme, the urban HSDAs of the lower mainland (Fraser South, Vancouver, Fraser North, and Richmond) had the lowest proportion (2% or less) of their population who were Aboriginal.

Distribution of Aboriginal population

Of the approximately 196,000 Aboriginal people in BC, nearly one-quarter were found in just two HSDAs in 2006: Thompson Cariboo Shuswap (11.89%) and Northwest (11.33%). Richmond had the lowest proportion, with less than one percent (0.65%). Small percentages also resided in the southeast of the province (Kootenay Boundary and East Kootenay), where only 4% of the Aboriginal population were found.
Aboriginal population distribution within the province

Aboriginal population (%)
- 11.28 - 30.03
- 5.69 - 11.27
- 4.11 - 5.68
- 2.03 - 4.10
- 0.73 - 2.02

Distribution of Aboriginal population (%)
- 9.19 - 11.89
- 6.84 - 9.18
- 5.28 - 6.83
- 2.13 - 5.27
- 0.65 - 2.12

Female Aboriginal population (%)
- 53.11 - 53.61
- 52.21 - 53.10
- 51.05 - 52.20
- 50.30 - 51.04
- 49.02 - 50.29

Source: BC Stats, 2006 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada
Recent immigrants and language

Immigrant population refers to people who were foreign-born and have been granted citizenship, landed immigration or refugee status by Canadian authorities. According to the 2006 census, 27.5% of BC's population was foreign born, compared with 26.1% in 2001 (Ip, 2008a).

Within the BC population as a whole, foreign-born individuals are an important sub-group, and one that is increasing in importance. New arrivals, particularly new immigrants, tend to be healthier than native-born Canadians, partly because the population is younger, often better-educated (an important wellness asset), and have received medical screening prior to immigrating to Canada (McDonald & Kennedy, 2004). Further, there is often a degree of self-selection of potential immigrants which can affect the wellness of new immigrants (Ng et al., 2005). Over time, however, this health and wellness gap tends to fade as new immigrants take on some of the lifestyle characteristics of native-born Canadians (Guslulak, 2007).

Within Canada, BC was second only to Ontario in terms of the proportion of foreign-born people in the population. More than half (53.4%) of the foreign-born population came from Asia, primarily Mainland China, India, Hong Kong, the Philippines and the Middle East, while 31.2% were born in Europe. More than half had been living in Canada for more than 15 years. On balance, immigration has shifted in the past 15 to 20 years from European origin to Asian origin (Ip, 2008a).

From a gender perspective, 52% of the foreign-born population was female and the large majority was in the 25 to 54 age cohort. Nearly one quarter of the BC population indicated they were from a visible minority in 2006, and the populations of Richmond (65.1%) and Vancouver (51.1%) were more than half visible minorities, while Fraser North and Fraser South were about one third visible minorities.

Recent immigrants

Recent immigrants are those individuals who entered Canada between 2001 and 2006. They constituted 4.36% of BC's population in 2006. The geographical distribution was quite concentrated. More than 1 in 10 (10.82%) of Richmond's population were recent immigrants, followed by Vancouver and Fraser North (both over 7%). Other HSDAs in the urban lower mainland region of the province also had relatively large percentages (mostly over 5%) of recent immigrants in their populations, while the remainder of the province's HSDAs had less than 2%.

### Recent immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Service Delivery Area</th>
<th>Recent immigrants (%)</th>
<th>Change in recent immigrants since 2001 census (%)</th>
<th>Foreign language spoken at home (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Richmond</td>
<td>10.82</td>
<td>-3.76</td>
<td>43.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Vancouver</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>-2.15</td>
<td>32.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Fraser North</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>23.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Fraser South</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>21.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 North Shore/Coast Garibaldi</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>10.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Fraser East</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>11.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 South Vancouver Island</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Okanagan</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 Northeast</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 Central Vancouver Island</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Kootenay Boundary</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 Northwest</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 North Vancouver Island</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Thompson Canwo Shuswap</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 East Kootenay</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 Northern Interior</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>-0.58</td>
<td>15.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Change in recent immigrants since 2001

Richmond's recent immigrant population had fallen by 3.76 percentage points, while Vancouver and Fraser North saw reductions of approximately 2 percentage points. Elsewhere in the province, the majority of HSDAs witnessed a slight rise in the percentage of their populations who were new immigrants.

### Foreign language spoken at home

Approximately 16% of the population spoke a language other than English or French in the home in 2006. The major foreign languages spoken were Chinese (nearly 240,000 over age 15 years) and Punjabi (nearly 96,000 over age 15 years) (Ip, 2008b). Again, this was most prevalent in the urban lower mainland HSDAs, with 43.35% in Richmond speaking a foreign language in the home. Nearly a third did so in Vancouver and over 20% did so in Fraser North and Fraser South. Outside of the lower mainland HSDAs, 5% or less spoke a foreign language at home. It is worth noting that 9% of foreign-born people in BC had no English language ability, while nearly 15% of those who arrived between 2001 and 2006 had no English (Ip, 2008a).
Recent immigrants and language

**Recent immigrants (%)**
- 5.85 - 10.82
- 1.83 - 5.84
- 0.75 - 1.82
- 0.72 - 0.74
- 0.56 - 0.71

**Change in recent immigrants since 2001 census (%)**
- 0.17 to 0.48
- 0.10 to 0.17
- -0.12 to 0.10
- -1.92 to -0.12
- -3.76 to -1.92

**Foreign language spoken at home (%)**
- 21.15 - 43.35
- 5.21 - 21.14
- 3.19 - 5.20
- 2.55 - 3.18
- 2.01 - 2.54

Source: BC Stats from 2006 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada
East Kootenay: HSDA 11

East Kootenay had one of the smallest populations of any HSDA in 2009 (less than 80,000). Half of the population was located in Cranbrook (population density more than 700 per square kilometre), followed by Kimberley (8% of the population), Creston and Fernie (both 6% of the population), and Golden and Sparwood (both 5% of the population). One third of the HSDA's population was scattered in rural areas. Most of the population was located in river valleys in this mountainous area. East Kootenay had the lowest proportion (2%) of visible minorities in its population, while nearly 6% of its population was Aboriginal.

Kootenay Boundary: HSDA 12

In 2009, close to half (47%) of the 79,000 population of this southeastern HSDA was scattered throughout the HSDA in rural areas. The remainder of the population was distributed in about a dozen small communities, the largest of which was Nelson with more than 12% of the population. Castlegar and Trail had about 10% each of the HSDA’s population, followed by Grand Forks (5%) and Rossland (4%). Population tended to be in valley areas in what is quite a mountainous area. Population densities were highest in Warfield (more than 900 per square kilometre), Nelson (800 per square kilometre), and Fruitvale (over 700 per square kilometre). Only about 2.5% of the population was visible minorities, while nearly 5% was Aboriginal.

Okanagan: HSDA 13

There were over 350,000 people in this HSDA in 2009, with more than one-third in Kelowna (population density over 500 per square kilometre). Vernon and Penticton each had over 10% of the population, while Summerland, Lake Country, and Coldstream each had a little over 3%. Penticton’s population density was approximately 760 per square kilometre. Spallumcheen, Peachland, Osoyoos, Oliver, Armstrong, and Enderby collectively had 8% of the population. These smaller communities were compact, with population densities of 300 to 800 per square kilometre. Many communities were located in the central part of the HSDA, running north south in the Okanagan Valley. Less than 5% of the population was visible minorities, and 4.6% self-identified as Aboriginal.

Thompson Cariboo Shuswap: HSDA 14

This HSDA had a population of almost 225,000 in 2009, and 38% resided in Kamloops, with a density of nearly 300 per square kilometre. Other notable communities were Salmon Arm (8%) and Williams Lake (5%), while Revelstoke and Merritt had over 7% of the population between them. About 35% was scattered throughout the HSDA in rural areas. Only about 4% of the population was visible minorities, while over 11% self-identified as Aboriginal.
Community population

- 0 - 1,000
- 1,000 - 10,000
- 10,000 - 50,000
- 50,000 - 100,000
- 100,000+

Source: BC Stats 2010b

**Fraser South: HSDA 23**

Located to the south of the Fraser River, Fraser South had the largest population of any HSDA with an estimate of nearly 700,000 residents in 2009. The City of Surrey had approximately 63% of the total population, followed by Delta and Langley district municipalities with approximately 15% each. Population densities, however, were highest for the City of White Rock, with well over 3,500 people per square kilometre. It was the fastest growing HSDA in BC, and more than one third of its residents were visible minorities, particularly South Asian (20%) and Chinese (5%).

**Fraser North: HSDA 22**

Fraser North lies to the north of the Fraser River in the lower mainland of the province. With a population of nearly 600,000 in 2009, it was the third largest HSDA in BC. There were seven communities with populations of over 15,000, and two villages (Anmore and Belcarra) with a combined total population of about 2,500. Burnaby had almost 40% of the HSDA’s population, followed by Coquitlam (over 20%) and Maple Ridge, New Westminster, and Port Coquitlam (all with more than 10% each). New Westminster had the highest population density (over 3,300 per square kilometre), followed by Burnaby (over 2,300 per square kilometre). Port Coquitlam and Port Moody both had population densities well in excess of 1,000 per square kilometre. Close to 40% were visible minorities (the third highest HSDA in BC), primarily Chinese (more than 17%) and South Asian (more than 6%).

**Fraser East: HSDA 21**

Farther inland lies Fraser East, which straddles the Fraser River and is increasingly being viewed as part of the lower mainland region of the province. It had a population of 280,000 in 2009, and approximately half of the region’s population resided in Abbotsford, with a population density of more than 360 per square kilometre. Chilliwack had half the population of Abbotsford and, in turn, Mission had half the population of Abbotsford. Hope, Kent, and Harrison Hot Springs, farther east up the Fraser Valley, while all were well-defined communities, had relatively small populations. Nearly 16% were visible minorities, dominated by South Asian (almost 11%), and close to 6% of the population were Aboriginal.
Richmond: HSDA 31

Approximately 83% of the HSDA is comprised of the City of Richmond with a population close to 195,000 people, and a population density of more than 1,500 per square kilometre. The remaining area, sparsely populated, consists of land suitable for farming. It had a younger population than the BC average and has grown faster than the province as a whole over the last decade. Nearly two thirds (65.1%) of its residents were visible minorities, with Chinese (43.6%) dominating the ethnic mix, followed by South Asian (5.5%) and Filipino (5.5%).

Vancouver: HSDA 32

The City of Vancouver had a population of over 640,000 in 2009. With a population density of nearly 5,500 per square kilometre, it was by far the most densely populated part of BC. Proportionately more of its population was in the 25 to 64 age group than the rest of BC. More than half (51.1%) of its population was from a visible minority group, second only to Richmond, and the most prominent groups were Chinese (51.1%), followed by South Asian (5.6%) and Filipino (4.9%).

North Shore/Coast Garibaldi: HSDA 33

The North Shore/Coast Garibaldi HSDA consists of two large non-contiguous regions with a variety of urban, rural, mountain, and water body areas. The overall population of the HSDA was nearly 280,000 in 2009, but approximately one third of the population was located in the District Municipality of North Vancouver, in the lower mainland (southern) portion of the HSDA. The neighbouring City of North Vancouver and District Municipality of West Vancouver, which were about the same population size, comprised a second third of the population. The City of North Vancouver was notable because of its compactness, with a population density of approximately 4,000 per square kilometre. Heading north from West Vancouver are several smaller but important settlements, including Squamish (more than 6% of the HSDA’s population) and Whistler (4%) and Pemberton. Approximately 8% of the residents in this sub-area were Aboriginal.

The western part of the southern block of the HSDA consists of what is called the “Sunshine Coast,” and is accessible only by ferry or sea plane. There are several smaller communities, but the key ones are Powell River in the extreme west, which had more than 5% of the HSDA’s population, and Sechelt and Gibsons, which, combined, made up about 5% of the HSDA’s population. Bowen Island, as its name suggests, is an island community with less than 3% of the HSDA’s population.

The northern block of the HSDA is remote and had very few residents. The major population area was the Bella Coola Valley, which had a population of less than 3,000 in 2009, more than half of whom were Aboriginal.
South Vancouver Island: HSDA 41

In 2009, the South Vancouver Island HSDA had a population of approximately 370,000, with most people residing in the east of the HSDA. It is comprised of many individual municipalities, but most of the population was concentrated in the four core municipalities of Saanich (31.4%), the provincial capital of Victoria (22.6%), Oak Bay (5.2%), and Esquimalt (4.9%). While Saanich had a population density of more than 1,000 per square kilometre, Victoria's density was more than 4,000 per square kilometre. Esquimalt had a density of over 2,400 people per square kilometre, while Oak Bay's population density was somewhat less than 1,800 per square kilometre. The dominant visible minority group was Chinese (3.6%), followed by South Asian (2.1%). Aboriginal people represented 3.3% of the HSDA's population.

Central Vancouver Island: HSDA 42

With a population of more than 260,000 in 2009, Central Vancouver Island had a variety of separate municipalities, most of which are on the east coast. Nanaimo had approximately one-third of the HSDA's population (more than 1,000 people per square kilometre), followed by North Cowichan (over 11% of the population). A full third of the population, however, was found scattered through the region in rural areas. While Duncan had only about 2% of the HSDA's population, with a density of over 2,500 per square kilometre, it had the highest population density of any of the municipalities. Approximately 8% of the population was Aboriginal.

Northern Vancouver Island: HSDA 43

With a population of around 120,000 in 2009, North Vancouver Island was the least populated of the three HSDAs on Vancouver Island. Nearly 60% of the population was concentrated in three municipalities, Campbell River (26%), Courtenay (20%), and Comox (12%). Courtenay and Campbell River had population densities of over 800 per square kilometre. One third of the population was scattered in rural areas with a population density of less than 1 per square kilometre. A few small villages were located on the north part of the Island and the extreme west coast, all of which were quite remote. Fully 10% of the population was Aboriginal.
With a population of only 75,000, this HSDA had the second smallest population in the province. It had also lost population over the past 10 years. Close to 50% of the population was scattered throughout the region in rural areas, while 45% was concentrated in four municipalities: Prince Rupert (over 17%), Terrace (over 15%), Kitimat (over 12%), and Houston (over 4%), all in the southern part of the HSDA. Much of the HSDA consists of mountainous areas dissected by river valleys where population density was very low, and even in the population centres, population density was only in the order of 300 per square kilometre. The HSDA also has an important offshore component, Haida Gwaii, consisting mainly of mountains and forests with a few small villages, including Masset, Queen Charlotte City, and Port Clements. One third of the population was Aboriginal.

The Northeast had only about 68,000 individuals. Approximately half of the population was found in Fort St. John (27%), Dawson Creek (17%), and Fort Nelson (7%), all with population densities of more than 400 per square kilometre. Approximately 36% of the population was scattered throughout the HSDA in rural areas, while the remaining population was located in Chetwynd, Taylor, Hudson’s Hope, and Pouce Coupe. Over 13% of the population was Aboriginal.
This map provides a visualization of how the population was distributed through the province in 2006, based on the census. One of the key points to note for those not familiar with BC is that much of the province is uninhabited, and where population does occur, it is clustered primarily in the southern most quarter.

Key population concentrations occur in the extreme southwestern part (lower mainland) of the province, and the southern tip and eastern part of Vancouver Island, which lies off the southwest coast of the mainland. In the southern central part of the mainland, population is concentrated in a north to south line in the Okanagan Valley. In the southeast of the province, population is centred on small communities, again often located in river valleys.

In the central interior part of the province, population is concentrated in several communities running in a general northwest to southeast direction, and settlements are usually in river valleys. Population in the northern half of the province is very sparse, with a concentration in small communities in the northeast.

Recent population growth has mostly been focused in the lower mainland, Okanagan Valley, and southern and eastern Vancouver Island. As such, the general geographical pattern will have changed very little since the 2006 census.
Summary

As noted already, the majority of the population in the province is far from equally distributed throughout the province and the most rapid population growth has taken place in those areas where there is already the greatest concentrations and densities of population: the lower mainland, especially Metropolitan Vancouver, along with South Vancouver Island, the Nanaimo area on the central part of Vancouver Island, and the Okanagan region.

While most of the province’s population resided in these areas, the geography of the Aboriginal population was quite different from that of the BC population as a whole. Many lived in designated reserves, which are often very small and can be remote, some being accessible only by water. Approximately 26% of Aboriginal people lived on these reserves in 2006, down from 30% in 2001. North Shore/Coast Garibaldi, Northwest, and Thompson Cariboo Shuswap had the highest proportion of their Aboriginal population living on these designated reserves. Aboriginal males were more likely to live on reserve than Aboriginal females (Norton, 2008), although females outnumbered males overall. Aboriginal people were more likely to reside in the north and central regions of the province. Overall, the Aboriginal population was much younger than the province’s population as a whole.

New immigrants to Canada who lived in BC were very much concentrated in the urban lower mainland, where there was an already large concentration of immigrants. Since 2001, however, there has been a small but noticeable trend of some new immigrants settling elsewhere in the province—a trend that has been noted in other provinces of Canada (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2009). A language other than English or French spoken in the home was quite common in the higher immigrant population regions, and there were many new immigrants who had very little command of English or French in 2006.

There has been little relative change in overall geographical patterns between the 2001 and 2006 censuses. The north continued to have a much higher proportion of its population in the younger age cohorts and was below average for the senior cohort. Parts of the lower mainland had proportionately more people in the mid-age cohort, while Central Vancouver Island, Okanagan and Kootenay Boundary had higher percentages of seniors, many of whom had moved from elsewhere to retire in those areas.