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The CCSVI Wave Sweeps Saskatchewan



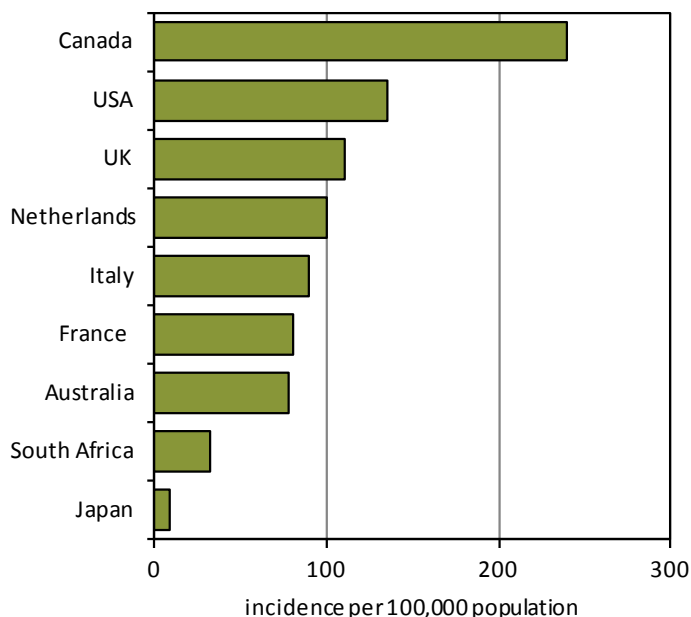
By Amy Zarzeczny
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Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, complex and unpredictable neurological disease that can affect both

physical and cognitive functioning. It can affect people of all ages, although it is most commonly diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 40. Treatments are available to help manage some symptoms and sometimes slow the progression of the disease, but currently there is no cure. Canada has the unfortunate distinction of having one of the highest incidence rates of MS in the world, and Saskatchewan's incidence rate is among the highest in the country (see Figures 1 and 2).

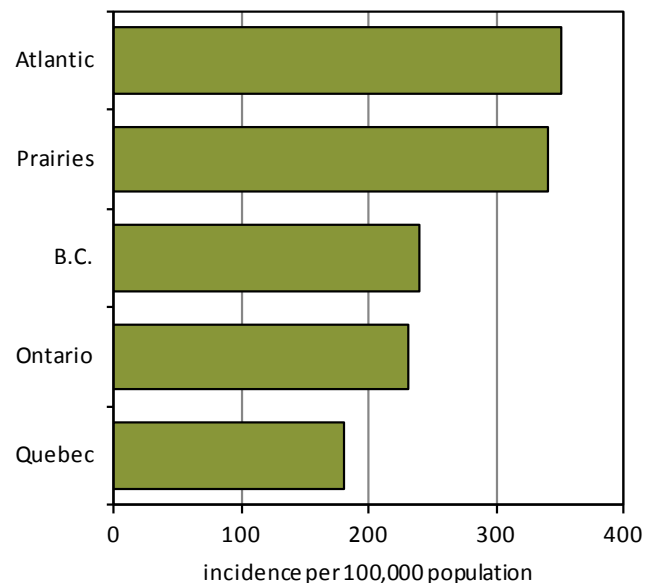
The cause of MS is a matter of considerable debate. MS is often characterized as an autoimmune disorder, but speculation also surrounds the influence of genetics, environmental triggers and vitamin D deficiency, among other possibilities. One particularly controversial theory is that narrowed or blocked veins in the head and neck interfere with the efficient removal of blood from the brain and spinal cord, leading to a build-up of iron and the subsequent

Figure 1: Estimated Prevalence of MS in Selected Countries, 2008



Source: MSIF Atlas of MS database

Figure 2: Estimated Prevalence of MS, Canada, 2005



Source: Beck C, Metz L, Svenson L, Patten S. 2005.
Regional variation of multiple sclerosis prevalence in Canada

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degeneration of myelin (the protective covering around nerve cells) seen in MS sufferers. This theory was proposed by Dr. Zamboni, an Italian vascular surgeon, who started investigating MS when his wife was diagnosed with the disease. He called the condition chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI). Zamboni proposed treating CCSVI using a balloon angioplasty procedure – coined “liberation therapy” – to widen the affected veins. Another approach others have since adopted is the insertion of stents to keep the veins open. Published in 2009, Zamboni’s initial results from testing this experimental treatment were remarkable, albeit with some significant methodological weaknesses (it was a non-blinded study of 65 patients which did not control for placebo effects or the spontaneous recovery common to the relapsing-remitting form of MS).

The suggestion that MS may have physiological origins with a surgical solution triggered strong but varied reactions around the globe and both between and within different stakeholder groups. Many in MS research and clinical care communities reacted with skepticism and strong words of caution about pursuing this line of treatment without more evidence about its safety and efficacy. Others expressed great excitement and hope that this treatment might be the long-awaited cure for MS. Indeed, CCSVI and its liberation therapy have captured the hopes of many MS sufferers and their supporters, particularly in Canada.

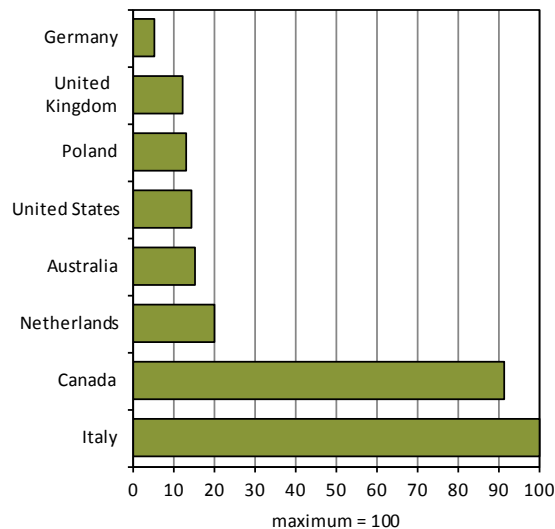
Liberation therapy has also given rise to a new facet of the medical tourism market. It is not currently available in Canada’s public health care system, but clinics offering the new treatment, often at significant expense, have sprung up in different countries and Canadians are active participants in this market. Blogs, Facebook and other online forums are full of anecdotal reports of sometimes astonishing improvements following liberation therapy. However, as liberation therapy does involve surgery it is not without its risks, and reports of disappointing regressions and adverse effects including strokes, vein damage, bleeding in the brain and even death are also surfacing.

Figure 3: Google Searches for "CCSVI" by Week, World, Jan 2009 to date



Source: Google Insights, Sept 2012

Figure 4: Google Searches for "CCSVI" by Country, Jan 2009 to date



Source: Google Insights, Sept 2012

At present, the scientific evidence surrounding CCSVI and liberation therapy is equivocal at best. No one has been able to replicate Zamboni’s initial results and scientific and medical communities remain divided in their opinions about the merits of the theory. When taken together, results from current research leave some important and fairly basic questions unanswered, including the nature of CCSVI and its relationship to MS (e.g., cause vs. effect vs. incidental vs. unrelated). Lack of standardized diagnostic criteria is also a challenge.

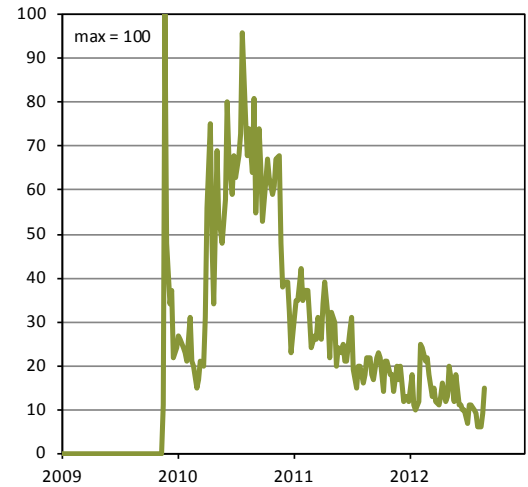
Saskatchewan was the first province in Canada to allocate public funds in support of clinical trials for liberation therapy, proceeding in advance of federal commitments.

One particularly fascinating element of the CCSVI story is the degree to which the media, social networking and patient communities have converged to mobilize a strong and vocal advocacy movement calling for widespread availability of CCSVI testing and treatment or, at the very least, for large-scale clinical trials. This swell of public interest surrounding CCSVI appears to have been particularly strong in Canada. Indeed, while the topic barely registered in some countries, a national debate has been triggered in Canada complete with a defeated private members' bill promoting a national strategy for CCSVI (Bill C-280). Using Google searches as a measure, Internet search traffic about CCSVI has been higher in Canada than any other country, but for Italy (Zamboni's home), with Saskatchewan leading the country (see Figures 3 to 6).

The Saskatchewan public's interest in CCSVI and liberation therapy has been reflected in the Provincial Government's resource allocation decisions. Saskatchewan was the first province in Canada to allocate public funds in support of clinical trials for liberation therapy, proceeding in advance of federal commitments (see Figure 7). As is reflected in Figure 8, the province is currently expending more public funds for clinical CCSVI research than any other province or territory.

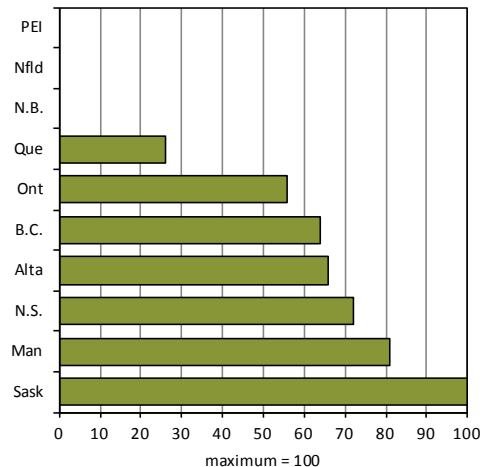
The first government-supported Saskatchewan resident selected to participate in a blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial for liberation therapy being run out of Albany, New York received his surgery in August, 2012, amidst a considerable amount of media coverage. The Saskatchewan government's commitment to moving clinical research into liberation therapy forward appears to be fairly well-supported by various segments of the public, particularly those who so vocally advocated for government action. This on-going research will hopefully produce valuable results and improve understanding about this contentious theory.

Figure 5: Google Searches for "CCSVI" by Week, Canada, Jan 2009 to date



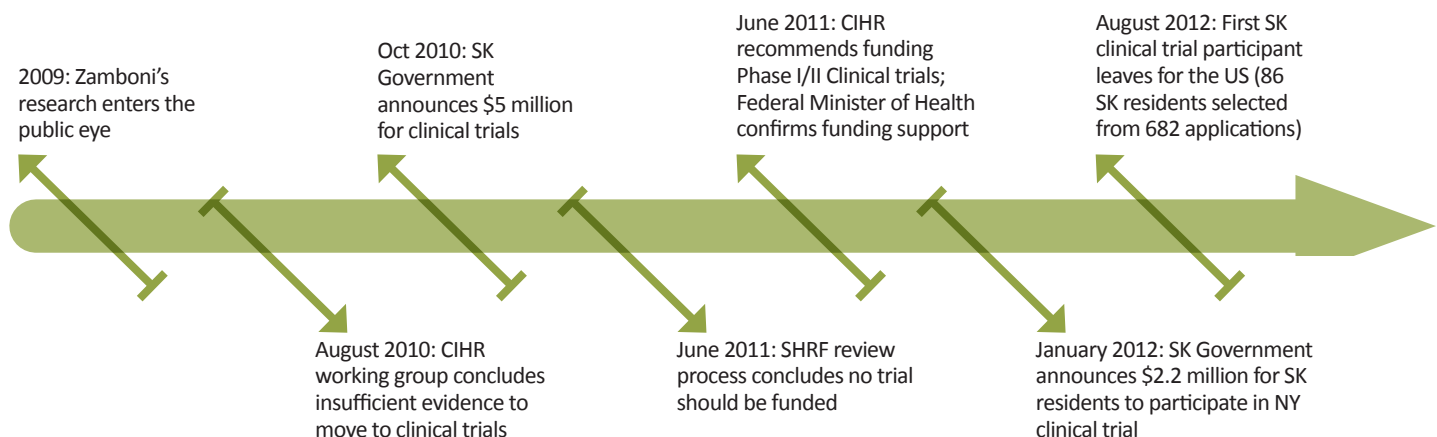
Source: Google Insights, Sept 2012

Figure 6: Google Searches for "CCSVI" by Province, Jan 2009 to date



Source: Google Insights, Sept 2012

Figure 7: Timeline of Selected Funding



Source: CIHR and SK Government news releases, SHRF website and Picard & Favaro, 2009

However, the story of liberation therapy is also being closely watched for several other reasons, including the potential precedent it sets for health policy decision-making. It has been suggested that “[p]erhaps for no other condition has social media been as effective in promoting a medical theory as with chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency” (Fox, 2011 at 1824), and another commentator proposed that “the [CCSVI] case indicates the unprecedented pressures that politicians and funders worldwide can now face to alter research priorities even in the absence of credible scientific evidence” (Chafe et al. 2011). Indeed, in an era of financial restraint, the influence public pressure - buoyed by the power of social media - may have on health and science priority-setting create important implications for how these policy choices are made. Many people in Canada and elsewhere will remain closely tuned in to see how this particular story ends.

Figure 8: Funding Commitments Related to Liberation Therapy Across Canada

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	AMOUNT	INITIATIVE
British Columbia	\$700,000	Patient registry – collecting data on patients who have had liberation therapy elsewhere
Alberta	\$1,000,000	Observational study of patients who have had liberation therapy elsewhere
Saskatchewan	\$5,000,000	Clinical trials - Did not proceed (Sask Health Research Foundation determined none of the submitted proposals should be funded).
	\$2,200,000	Clinical trials in partnership with team in Albany, NY
Manitoba	\$5,000,000	Commitment to partner on SK's clinical trials, which did not proceed
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$400,000	Observational study of patients who have had liberation therapy elsewhere
Yukon	\$250,000	Commitment to partner on SK's clinical trials, which did not proceed

Source: MS Society of Canada's CCSVI website

Sources:

Chafe R, Born K, Slutsky A, Laupacis A. 2011. “The rise of people power” *Nature* 472: 410-411.

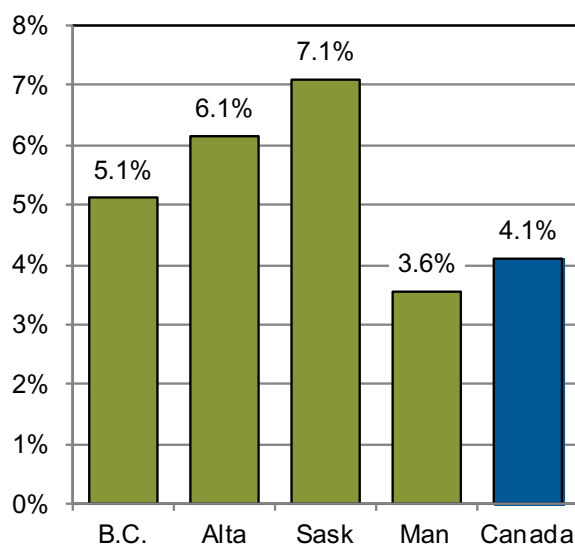
Fox RJ: Chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency: A Kuhnian paradigm shift or another fad?. *CMAJ* 2011, 183(16): 1824-1825, at 1824.

Picard A, Favaro A. “Researcher’s labour of love leads to MS breakthrough” *The Globe and Mail*, 20 November 2009

STAT FACTS

Earnings for paid employees are increasing at well above the rate of inflation both in the West and in Canada as a whole. Compared with a year ago, average weekly earnings in July were up 7.1% in Saskatchewan and 6.1% in Alberta to bring the year-to-date increases to 5.2% and 3.0% respectively. A tight labour market is the main reason.

Annual Increase in Average Weekly Earnings Including Overtime, July 2012



Youth Bullying Victimization

By Lihui Zhang, Assistant Professor, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy
and Rahatjan Judge, Analyst, Saskatchewan Research Data Centre, Statistics Canada

Bullying continues to be an issue that draws much public attention in Canada and around the world, due to its serious consequences often covered by media, for example, suicide. Fewer people realize that even less publicized cases can have significant and long-lasting negative impact on both victims and bullies, which in turn leads to a less cohesive and less productive social environment thus a less well-off society.



In this article, we will look at the extent of self-reported bullying victimization among 12-17 year old youth in western Canada in comparison to the Canadian average during the period of 1998-2008, using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). The survey is conducted biennially by Statistics Canada and sponsored by Human Resources and Social Development Canada¹.

The data analysis that follows will first examine the likelihood of victimization for 12-17 year old youth over the ten years from 1998 to 2008² in a cross-sectional analysis. The second, longitudinal analysis, will show the average number of times that a youth reported any victimization experience out of the three times that he/she is surveyed between age 12/13 and age 16/17. In a nutshell, with longitudinal analysis the same youth is followed over time whereas with cross-sectional analysis this is not necessarily the case. Relative to cross-sectional analysis, longitudinal analysis has the advantage of being able to provide information on long-term or chronic victimization throughout one's teenage years.

We consider three kinds of self-reported victimization in this analysis: verbal abuse, threat of violence, and physical assault. Below are the survey questions³.

- **Verbal Abuse:** During the past 12 months, how many times did someone say something personal about you that made you feel extremely uncomfortable?

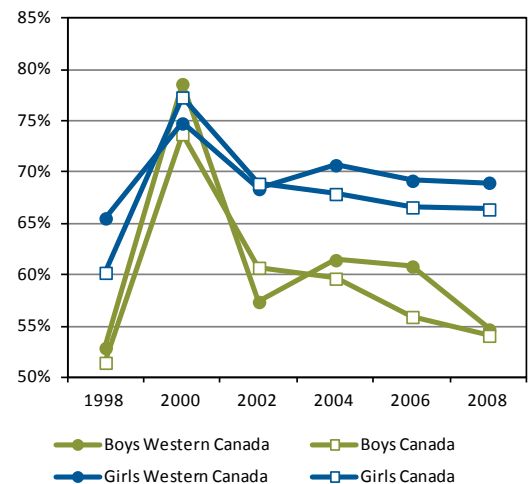
- **Threat of Violence:** During the past 12 months, how many times did someone threaten to hurt you but did not actually hurt you?

- **Physical Assault:** During the past 12 months, how many times did someone physically attack or assault you?

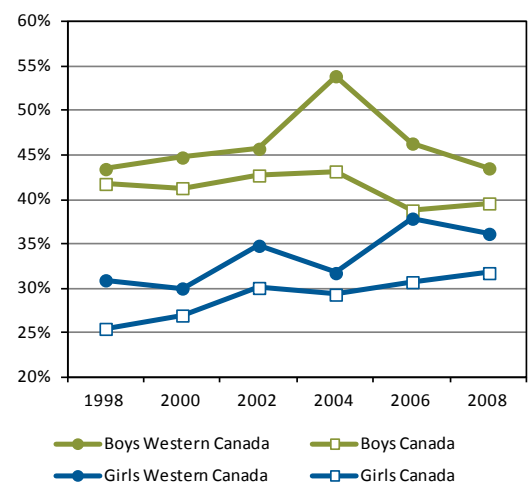
We present three figures that illustrate the cross-sectional results and three figures that represent the longitudinal results. Figure 1 is a cross-sectional comparison of the likelihood of verbal abuse for boys and girls in western Canada versus in Canada. It is apparent that in most years girls are more likely to be subject to verbal abuse than boys. There does not appear to be significant differences between western Canada and the Canadian average. In all years, over half of the boys report being verbally abused and over 60% of the girls report such experience. Since year 2000, the trends seem to be getting lower both for boys and for girls.

If we look at the likelihood of a threat of violence from cross-sectional analysis in Figure 2, boys in western Canada consistently have a higher rate of being threatened than their counterparts from the rest of the country. The same is true for western Canadian girls. Though girls are less likely than boys to be victims of a threat, there appears to be a tendency for this gap to decrease, because of the upward trend in girls' self-reported violent threat experience.

**Figure 1: The Likelihood of Verbal Abuse
12-17 Year Old Boys and Girls**



**Figure 2: The Likelihood of the Threat of
Violence, 12-17 Year Old Boys and Girls**



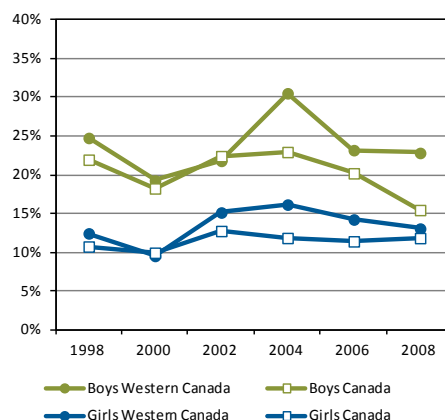
¹ The NLSCY is one of the surveys recently discontinued by Statistics Canada.

² The youth age range in 1998 is 12-15 rather than 12-17, as the oldest youth in the NLSCY sample was 15 in 1998.

³ The questions listed here are asked of 16-17 year olds. For 12-15 year olds, these questions are asked separately regarding victimization at school or elsewhere (including at home).

The cross-sectional results for physical assault are somewhat similar to those for the threat of violence, as presented in Figure 3. Overall, boys are about twice as likely as girls to be assaulted. Both boys and girls in western Canada have higher likelihood of being assaulted than their peers in the rest of Canada, particularly in recent years. The highest point in the figure is 30% meaning that 30% of boys surveyed in 2004 were assaulted. Even though this rate has declined since then, by 2008 it was still at 23%. Though the difference between western Canada and Canada seems to have narrowed, western girls were still reporting a non-negligible 13% assault rate by 2008.

Figure 3: The Likelihood of the Physical Assault, 12-17 Year Old Boys and Girls



Whereas Figures 1 to 3 capture results from the cross-sectional data, Figures 4 to 6 capture results for our longitudinal data analysis. To recap, here we show on average how many times out of the three times that a youth is surveyed between ages 12/13 and 16/17 this youth has reported a specified type of victimization experience. The maximum would be three; the minimum zero.

In Figure 4, we observe that there is a fairly large variation among four western provinces in terms of long-term verbal bullying. In comparison with the other two western provinces and the rest of Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan have the highest occurrence of long-term verbal bullying for both boys and girls. For example, the value 1.8 for Saskatchewan girls means that on average a teenage girl in Saskatchewan reports being verbally abused 1.8 times out of the three times she was surveyed between 12 to 17 years old. In contrast, this number is only about 1.6 in B.C. and Manitoba, which is below the Canadian girls' average of 1.68.

Figure 4: Number of Periods Reported Verbal Abuse Between Ages 12-17

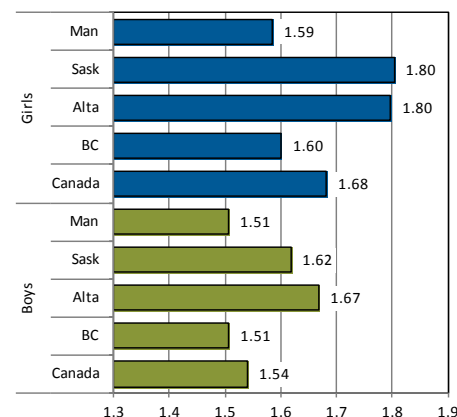
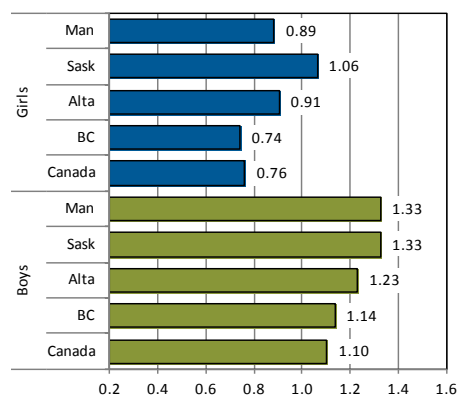


Figure 5: Number of Periods Reporting the Threat of Physical Violence Between Ages 12-17



are between 12 and 17. Again, Saskatchewan girls stand out with a number at 0.54. For boys residing in all four western provinces, the occurrence of long-term assault is more likely than their counterparts in other Canadian provinces, though the gap between B.C. and the Canadian average is small.

Figure 6: Number of Periods Reporting Physical Assault, Ages 12-17

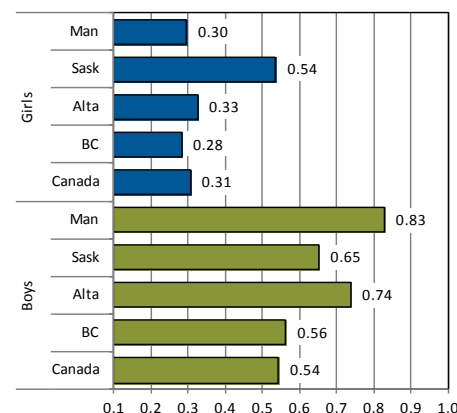


Figure 5 presents the longitudinal profile of physical violence threat. As one can see, on average boys and girls in western provinces experience more long-term threats than elsewhere, except for girls in B.C. Boys in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and girls in Saskatchewan particularly stand out. For instance, an average Saskatchewan girl reports being threatened at least one of the three times she is surveyed. This is even more likely for boys. And finally in Figure 6 we present the likelihood of boys and girls ever being assaulted when they

verbal abuse, but it is still non-negligible.

- In recent years western Canada especially Alberta and Saskatchewan have been leading the country in terms of economic indicators but it is not clear that it is doing as well in terms of a social indicator as is studied here, that is, violence against youth.

The results reported in this article may of course be subject to any reporting or attrition bias that may be present in the data. With this caveat in mind, the evidence may be summarized as follows:

- Girls are more likely to be victims of verbal bullying while boys are more likely to be victims of assault or the threat of physical bullying.
- Verbal abuse is highly prevalent, especially for girls.
- Physical assault is less common than the threat of assault, which in turn is less common than

Across all three types of bullying considered in this analysis, the prevalence and/or persistence in at least some of the western provinces are considerably higher than the Canadian average. To change this reality is challenging, in part because of the fact that bullying can go undetected in many cases. Thus, it is even more important that policy efforts are coordinated by multi-level government in multiple areas, including education, health, criminal justice, and social services, just to name a few.

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 1998-2008

First Nation Education: Policy and Political Legitimacy

By John D. Whyte, Policy Fellow, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy

It is well known that the Aboriginal population in Canada has lower levels of socioeconomic status in general and lower levels of completed formal education in particular. Using statistics from the 2006 Statistics Canada census, the most recent statistical information available, the extent of this significant public policy problem can be quantified.

Among all Aboriginal adults¹ living in the three prairie provinces in 2006, Figure 1 shows 48% have not completed high school. This is double the rate for the non-Aboriginal population in these same provinces. At the other end of the scale, 31% of Aboriginal adults were post-secondary graduates compared with 49% for non-Aboriginal population.

This low level of completed education is not uniform across the prairies as Figure 2 shows. Using the proportion of the population who have completed grade 12 as the statistical measure, the levels of education are noticeably lower and the differences with the non-Aboriginal population are correspondingly higher in Manitoba and Saskatchewan than in Alberta.

There are also differences within the Aboriginal population as Figure 3 shows. The level of education is noticeably lower and the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal gap correspondingly wider among men and among those who report a First Nations identity. Of more concern is that this low level of completed education is not improving. This is evident in the fact that among the population where one would expect an improvement in education levels, namely young people, the gap is still wide. In 2006, only 34% of Aboriginal people 15 to 24 years of age had completed high school compared with 59% of the non-Aboriginal population. This gap of 25% is wider than among those a generation older, namely 45 to 54 years of age.

Figure 1: Completed Education for Adults (15 & older), Prairie Provinces, 2006

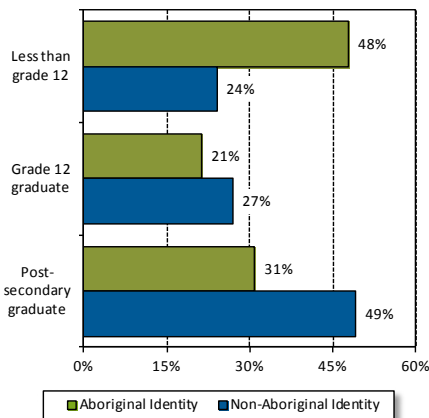


Figure 2: Percentage of the Population with At Least Grade 12, 2006

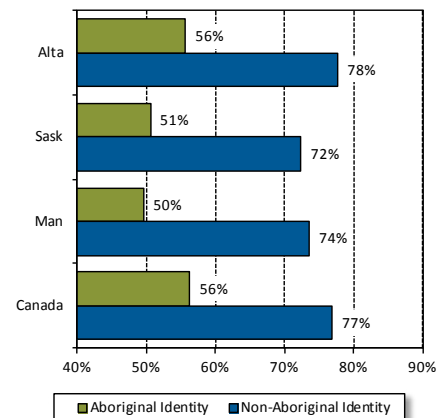
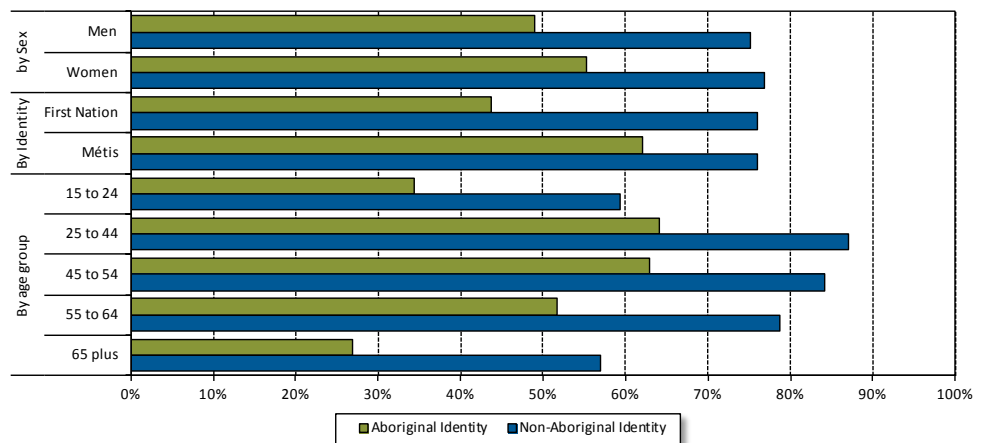


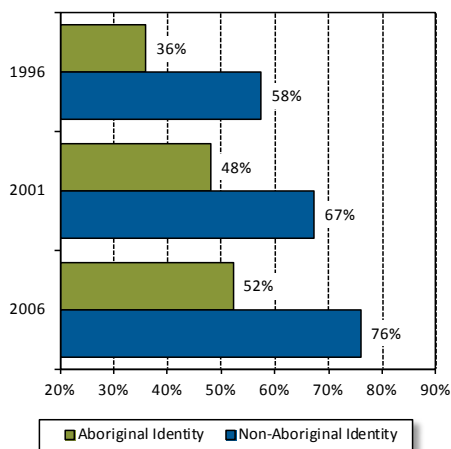
Figure 3: Percentage of the Population with At Least Grade 12, 2006, Prairie Provinces



Further evidence of a lack of progress is that, as Figure 4 shows, the education level for the Aboriginal population increased from 1996 to 2006 but not as quickly as in the non-Aboriginal population. Most of the gains were made in the five years from 1996 to 2001; the gap between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations widened in the five years from 2001 to 2006.

There are many competing theories about how this situation arose and what needs to be done to fix it. In the balance of this article, we focus on the elementary and secondary parts of the education system for the First Nations population.

1 The concept of Aboriginal "identity" is used to measure the Aboriginal population in these data. Aboriginal adults people are those who report that they are Aboriginal or are members of a First Nation or are registered under The Indian Act are considered as Aboriginal. The adult population includes those 15 years of age and older.

Figure 4: Percentage of the Population with At Least Grade 12, Prairie Provinces

Educational attainment for First Nation students living on Reserve is below that of non-Aboriginal students. As an indicator of over-all economic inclusion and social development this measurement has real significance in that Grade 12 completion gives young people an ability to determine their future course of life in a way that barely exists for those who do not complete high school. Grade 12 students with a competitive average, who have attended a school with good academic standards, have real choices. They have before them the options of university, training, job, artistic endeavours and, possibly, entrepreneurial initiatives. Those who do not complete Grade 12 typically face unemployment, poverty and dependence – on others, on the state or on self-harming activities.

From another perspective, however, this marker fails to reveal enough about conditions for academic success. Recent American research points to the significant impact of social factors such as acceptance, belonging and expectations on intellectual capacity². Success likely also depends on the academic character of schools – on whether the habit of educational enjoyment that students can experience in elementary schools is modeled and instilled, and on whether there are the academic supports and the general spirit of academic success that secondary

schools can present. Academic success, it seems, depends also on the success of early literacy and numeracy training and the capacities for intellectual engagement and self-learning that this produces. Possibly, the comfort with school that successful programs of early childhood education give also produces long-term academic success. The habits of learning experienced in infancy and early childhood, and parental encouragement of, and engagement with, discovery are likely to set the course for school achievement.

Notwithstanding the complexity of children's academic formation, the logical place to start seeking educational improvement is through developing better schools. Discovering how to improve First Nation schools was the mandate given in June 2011 by Shawn Atleo, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and John Duncan, the federal minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to the First Nation Education National Panel. The National

education costs. This is in spite of the higher costs associated with smaller scale schools, teacher recruitment challenges, remoteness, the costs of special cultural education and needs for social intervention with students bearing many challenges. In addition, many first Nation schools are in deplorable physical condition and are crowded³.

The second important finding is that there is, in fact, no First Nation education system. The Indian Act sections on education offer no guidance. They deal only with truancy and sectarian rights. There is generally no connection between schools, no economies of administration, no joint initiatives, no standards, no regulations to protect children's interests, no statutory entitlements to funding, and inadequate supports and services.

A third important finding is that this poor situation for First Nation education is not, in fact, universal. In self-government agreements,

Academic success, it seems, depends also on the success of early literacy and numeracy training and the capacities for intellectual engagement and self-learning that this produces.

Panel held hearings across Canada with First Nation people – students, parents, teachers, administrators, elders and chiefs – and with other officials and experts. It issued its report in February of this year.

The first important finding of the National Panel was that governmental funding of First Nation schools – both operating funding and capital funding – is inadequate and, more to the point, is not comparable to provincial

First Nation education jurisdiction has been recognized and in some instances that jurisdiction is being developed in co-operation with provincial education systems. In addition there are a handful of tri-partite education agreements – the Mi'kmaq Kima'matnewy Agreement in Nova Scotia and the B.C. First Nations Education System, for example. They create supportive ties with provincial authorities, develop learning programs, develop resources for culturally appropriate education and enter into stable funding agreements.

2 See, Anne Murphy Paul, "It's Not Me, It's You", New York Times, October 8, 2010, at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/07/opinion/sunday/intelligence-and-the-stereotype-threat.html?nl=opinion&emc=edit_ty_20121008&r=0

3 Comparative funding calculations have been controversial. The website for The Chiefs Assembly on Education, October 1-3, 2012, Gatineau, QC, contains an analysis, "Average per-student funding, First Nation schools and provincial schools, 1996-2011" that shows that for 2010-2011 First Nations school funding per student was just two-thirds that for per student provincial school funding. (see, http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/events/fact_sheet-ccoe-8.pdf). Recent statements from Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Duncan and AANDC officials have placed funding for First Nation students at nearly double the Assembly's figure for per student support of First Nation schools.

The National Panel's structural solutions began with basing First Nation education reform on the needs of children. It recommended that a new First Nation Education Act enshrine basic entitlements:

- to have safe and healthy schools;
- to have sophisticated programs of skills instruction;
- to reflect Indigenous language and culture in the school experience;
- to have the cultural aspect of education continue as students transfer to provincial schools; and
- to ensure that essential conditions for learning, such as a feeling of safety, enough to eat, a proper place to sleep, are available.

Some have criticized this aspect of the report as adopting old style educational progressivism based on children's preferences but the National Panel did not recommend student directed priorities in learning but, rather, the guarantee of conditions necessary for meaningful and effective life preparation through education.

The Panel's most controversial recommendations related to two ideas for developing an education system. The first recommendation is the formation of regional First Nation education boards. These would be involved in finances, recruitment, setting curricula, providing special needs, developing cultural programs and supervising facilities. These boards would take over school funding and administration from individual First Nation chiefs and councils and, in this way, would represent a depletion of local political influence. This, naturally, has been a source of criticism.

The second structural recommendation is to create a joint AFN/Government of Canada Education Commission that would be able to participate in the federal government's First Nation education budgeting process, would play a facilitative role in the formation of regional school boards (but, after three years, a mandatory role) and would develop evaluation processes to determine if education achievement was improving. The objection to this plan is based on a First Nation sense that social development of First Nations cannot be effectively achieved through national regulatory agencies, as opposed to government supported First Nation self-government initiatives. The recent Chiefs

Assembly on Education, sponsored by the Assembly of First Nations, rejected both the development of a single national education structure and the imposition of education reforms that have not been developed in, and by, First nation communities.

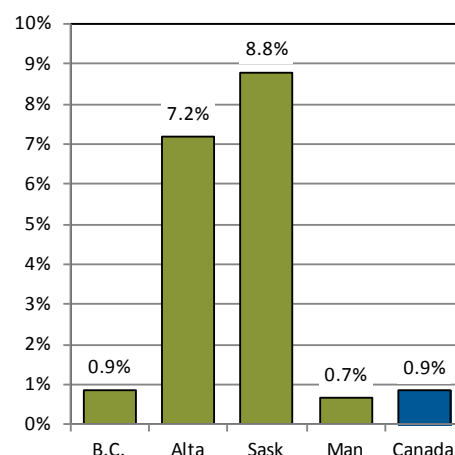
First Nation education is generally weak because it has been neglected by government, both as a matter of public policy and as a matter of providing incentives and encouragement to First Nations. This is sadly ironic. It represents a failure to live up to aspirations of expressed in treaties. In negotiating the numbered treaties education support was important to First Nations. The leaders knew that settlement would produce a much-altered world, with new challenges for First Nation people. They asked for, and were promised, support in training children for effective participation in the rapidly changing world. It is a tragic failure that the hope behind that aspiration was violated, first, by the Indian Residential School system and, then, by an inadequate school system. The basic question is whether the proposed new federal First Nation education legislation will reflect a new collaborative approach to reforming and improving the educational experience of First Nation children.

The answer is not clear. Some First Nation leaders see in the National Panel's report the repetition of an obsolete method of answering the challenges that face First Nation communities. Other see a recipe for genuine education improvement and, hence, a brighter, more inclusive future for First Nation youth. It is hardly surprising, nor is it inappropriate, that the path to a creating a better situation for First Nation peoples and their children has led the challenge to improve First Nation education into familiar debates over the legitimate source of programs and reforms for social development and the question of political authority.

STAT FACTS

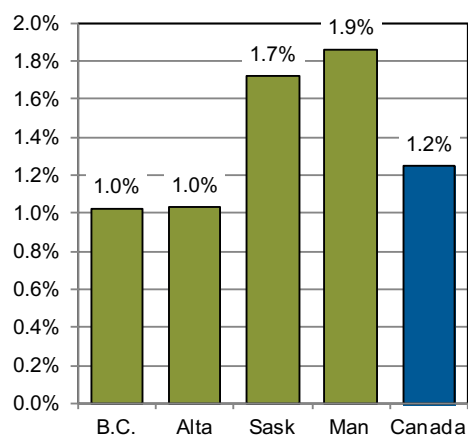
Consumer spending is growing at unsustainable levels in Alberta and Saskatchewan with year-over-year increases at 7.2% and 8.8% respectively for July. This brings the year-to-date increases to 9.2% and 7.5% respectively. Spending is much more subdued in B.C. and Manitoba with July increases below 1.0% and year-to-date increases of 4.2% and 3.4% respectively.

Annual Increase in Retail Sales, July 2012



The rate of inflation for western consumers remains low, ranging from 1.0% in B.C. and Alberta to 1.9% in Manitoba. Transportation and shelter costs are still increasing but much more slowly than in the past. The annual rate of inflation in the West is estimated at 1.5% for the calendar year 2012.

Annual Rate of Consumer Price Inflation, August 2012



Households, Families, and Living Arrangements



By Doug Elliott, Editor

There is a wealth of useful information for public policy professionals in the most recent release from the 2011 Statistics Canada

Census. This release has data on marital status, family structures, living arrangements, and households.

Statistics about families and living arrangements are as complex as some of today's extended and blended families. The key to understanding the numbers is to know how Statistics Canada defines "households" and "families" and to keep track of whether we are counting individuals, households, or families (see box for definitions). This article covers only a few elements of the release, focussing on the number of households, the children living at home, and living arrangements for seniors. All of the statistics refer to the aggregate of the four western provinces; space constraints prevent an extensive discussion of differences by province or city.

Households and Population

The connection between household size and population is important. The demand for housing is driven by three factors:

- population growth;
- the number of destroyed or abandoned dwellings; and
- the average number of persons per dwelling.

Economists often fail to consider the third factor when looking at supply and demand.

Measured by the number of persons, and excluding collective households, the average household in the West had 2.55 persons in 2011, the same as in 2006. Figure 1 shows that this stability follows thirty years of declines in the average number of persons per household. Average household size in Canada, on the other hand, continued to decline between 2006 and 2011 and is now below the western average.

The largest households in 2011 were in Manitoba (2.59) and Alberta (2.62); the smallest were in B.C. (2.49) and Saskatchewan

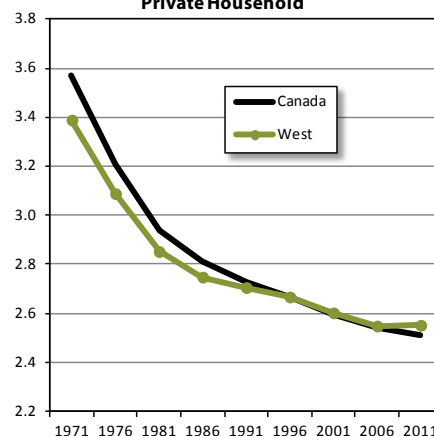
Definitions

~ A "family" is defined as a married couple (with or without children of either or both spouses), a couple living common-law, or a lone parent with at least one child living in the same dwelling. A couple may be of the same sex.

~ A "household" is a person or group of persons (other than temporary or foreign residents) who occupy a private dwelling. A "private dwelling" in turn is defined as a separate set of living quarters which has a private entrance either directly from outside or from a common hall, lobby, vestibule or stairway leading to the outside. Apartments and most basement suites are therefore considered as separate dwellings.

~ Persons living in collective households – special care homes, prisons, Hutterite colonies, and nursing homes, for example – are not included in these statistics.

Figure 1: Average Number of Persons per Private Household



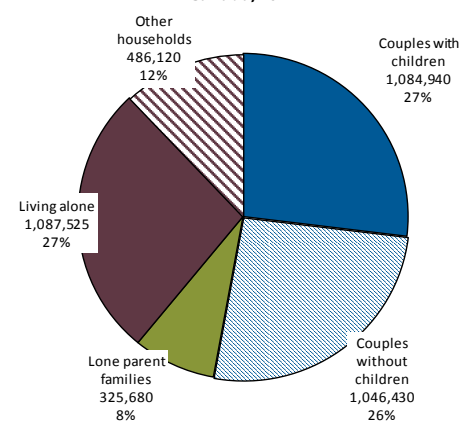
(2.52). From 2006 to 2011, the average household size increased slightly in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, declined in B.C. and was stable in Alberta.

Why did average household size level stop declining? Many factors were involved including:

- an increase in the number of births;
- a tendency for older children to remain at home;
- a slowing of the rate of increase in the number of lone-parent families; and
- fewer widows and widowers.

There was also an increase in the number of multi-family households, possibly because of the increase in housing costs.

Figure 2: Types of Households, Western Canada, 2011



In effect, this means that the demand for new housing was mainly driven by population over the past five years.

Living Arrangements

What many people consider a "traditional" family is a married couple (of different sexes of course) and their children. This kind of family is becoming quite rare in the West. Of the four million western households in 2011, only one in four (27%) were comprised of couples with children (see Figure 2). In fact, the most common household in 2011 was a person living alone and there were almost as many households comprised of couples without children as there were couples with children.

The households comprised of couples without children living at home are mainly young adults without children and older “empty-nesters” – those whose children have left the family home.

Figure 3 shows that the fastest growing type of household between 2006 and 2011 was the small “other” category – typically an extended family or a household comprised of two unrelated persons sharing an apartment.

The number of two-parent households with children living at home grew by only 2.5% between 2006 and 2011. This compares with 8.8% for the number of couples without children and 7.8% for those living alone.

Age of Children

Statistics Canada considers only “never-married” children when counting children who are living at home. The numbers include those who have moved back home after a period away.

Almost four in ten (38%) of the children living at home are in the 5 to 14 age group but the size of this age group declined from 2006 to 2011 (see Figures 4 and 5). Instead, the number of children living at home is increasing most quickly at the extremes of the age spectrum with increases of 16.9% among those 25 and older and 14.9% among those under five years of age. In 2011, fully 53% of westerners 20 to 24 years of age and 19% of those 25 to 29 years of age were still living in the parental home. The proportions are noticeably higher among men than among women.

In 2011, 22.7% of the children living at home were in lone-parent families and another 8.3% were in two-parent households where the parents were not married. This leaves 69% of children who are living in households with two parents who are married.

Seniors

Two thirds of the 1.3 million seniors (those 65 years of age and older) in the West were living with their spouse in 2011 (see Figure 6). Of the remaining third, most were living alone with a small proportion living with relatives or non-relatives. (Note that seniors living in specialized

The demand for housing is driven by three factors: population growth; the number of destroyed or abandoned dwellings; and the average number of persons per dwelling.

Figure 3: Changes in the Number of Households by Type, 2006 to 2011, Western Canada

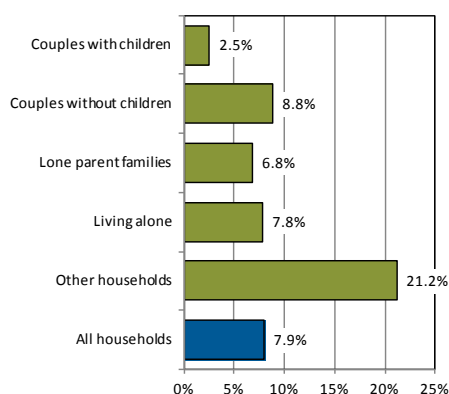


Figure 4: Number of Children Living at Home, by Age Group, Western Canada, 2011

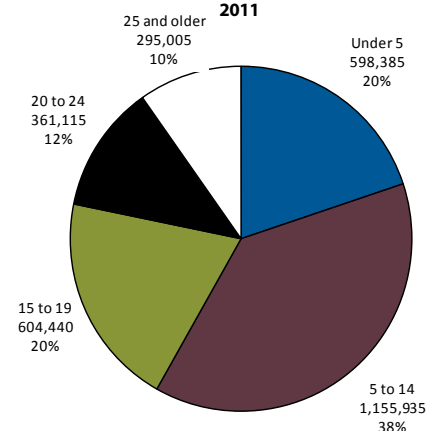
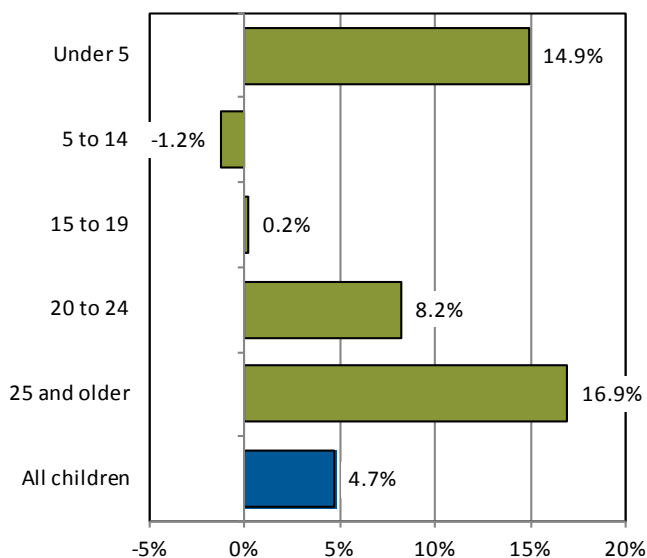


Figure 5: Changes in the Number of Children Living at Home, by Age Group, 2006 to 2011, Western Canada



seniors complexes will be classified as living alone; this is qualitatively different from those living alone in a single-detached dwelling.)

These proportions vary dramatically by age and sex. Among seniors, 35% of women live alone compared with 17% of men. Among those 85 years of age and older, the proportion who are living alone increases to 49%.

From 2006 to 2011, the number of seniors increased by 11% but the number living alone increased by only 3% so the prevalence of seniors living alone is declining. Instead we see an increase in the prevalence of seniors living with their partners.

Figure 6: Living Arrangements for Seniors (65 years of age and older), Western Canada, 2011

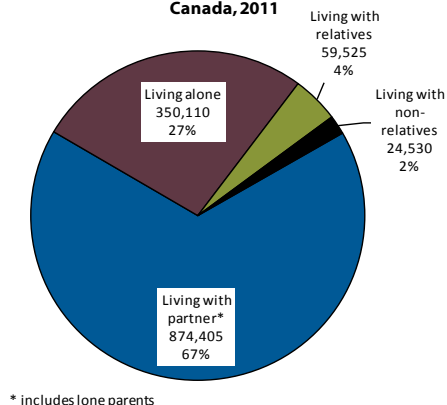
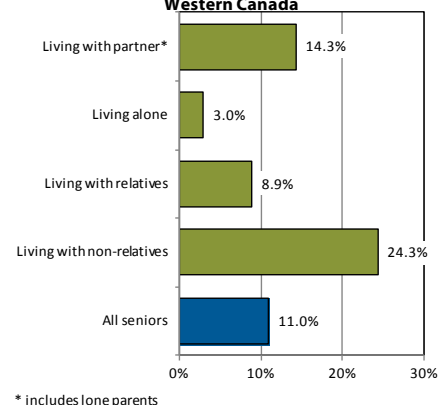


Figure 7: Changes in the Living Arrangements of Seniors, 2006 to 2011, Western Canada



Next Census Release

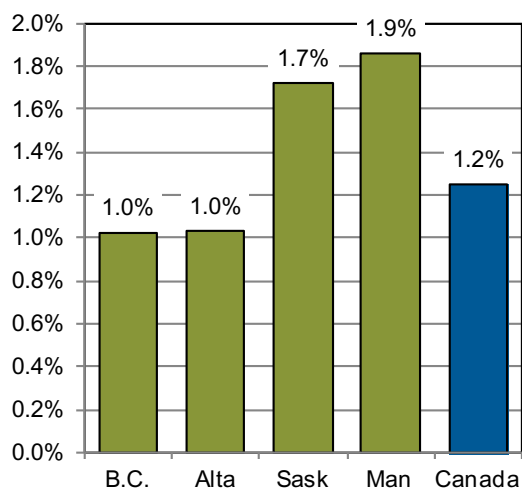
The census information about the physical structure of the dwellings including tenure, year of construction, and condition will not be released until the summer of 2013. The statistics about language, the last of the releases from the census "short form", will be available on October 24, 2012.

Source: Statistics Canada Census

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Annual Rate of Consumer Price Inflation, August 2012



The population in the four western provinces grew by 1.7% from July 2011 to July 2012. This is the fastest rate of growth in several years and well above the national average of 1.1%. Alberta and Saskatchewan are growing more quickly than Manitoba or B.C. International and interprovincial migration are the main drivers.

Annual Increase in Population, July 2012

