



Goal: A Good Start

Vancouver's children have the best chance of enjoying a healthy childhood.

Healthy City for All Target

- ❑ By 2025: at least 85 per cent of Vancouver's children are developmentally ready for school when they enter kindergarten.

Indicators in this Fact Sheet

- Vancouver's Child Population
- Aboriginal Children
- Children's Health Outcomes
- School Readiness
- Children in Low Income Families
- Licensed childcare Supply

Key Findings

- Vancouver has the **lowest proportion** of children aged 0-12 of any large city in Canada.
- **More than a third** of kindergarten students in Vancouver are considered not ready for school.
- Metro Vancouver has the **second highest rate** of children in low income families among major urban regions in Canada.

Why it Matters

A good start in life is critical for our long term health and well-being. Our living conditions and experiences as children affect not only our healthy development in childhood but our health throughout life. A growing body of research and evidence points to just how critical our first six years, from conception to school entry, are. They are characterised by rapid brain development that is affected by a wide range of experiences from our interactions with people to our interactions with the physical environment.

Our physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual development as children is affected by the presence or absence of loving and secure attachments, the safety and security of our housing and neighbourhoods, the level of our parent's education and family income, access to clean air, clean water, nutritious food, quality child care, culture and recreation, and health care services.

Children who have a good start in life do better at school, secure better paid jobs, and enjoy better physical and mental health as adults. Conversely, children who do not experience a good start are at greater risk of doing poorly at school, enjoy fewer economic opportunities as adults, are more likely to be involved in criminal activities and problematic substance use, and have poorer physical and mental health throughout their lives.

The early years are therefore a time when investment can have a profound and long-lasting impact on the health and well-being of individuals and communities. While quality care and learning opportunities are critical to any child having a good start, they can also mitigate some of the more negative impacts of a bad start—children in highly vulnerable environments can benefit greatly from additional care and support. Investment in quality care and learning is not only investment in children; it is also an investment in the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the whole city.

About This Fact Sheet

This series reports on social indicators and trends related to the 12 long-term goals of the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy. More information on the Strategy is available online at vancouver.ca/healthycity4all. *A Good Start* explores indicators of the health and well-being of Vancouver's children, providing information on a number of measures relating to the long-term goal of ensuring that more of Vancouver's children are ready for school.

Social research is always imprecise and uncertain. Collaboration, replication and information sharing are crucial to building a more complete and rigorous picture of health and well-being in Vancouver. Readers are encouraged to provide feedback, ask questions and to engage in exploring and interpreting the information presented here.

Areas of Study

Information in this fact sheet is presented for a number of different geographies. Comparisons between Vancouver and other cities refer to individual local governments, as defined by Statistics Canada's census subdivisions. Comparisons between Metro Vancouver and other regions refer to census metropolitan areas. Within the City of Vancouver, this fact sheet provides information organized in three ways. Two of these, local planning areas (neighbourhoods) and local health areas, are illustrated below:



Readers should note that the Dunbar-Southlands local area includes the Musqueam First Nation near the Fraser River, but it is excluded from citywide figures unless otherwise noted. Note also that neighbourhood-level data collected through the Early Development Instrument (EDI) combines some neighbourhoods: Arbutus-Ridge and Shaughnessy are reported together, as are South Cambie and Riley Park.

The six local health areas that make up the Vancouver Health Service Delivery Area include the City of Vancouver, the Musqueam First Nation and the University of British Columbia endowment lands.

One indicator in this fact sheet is reported using elementary school catchment areas.

Engaging with Data Sources

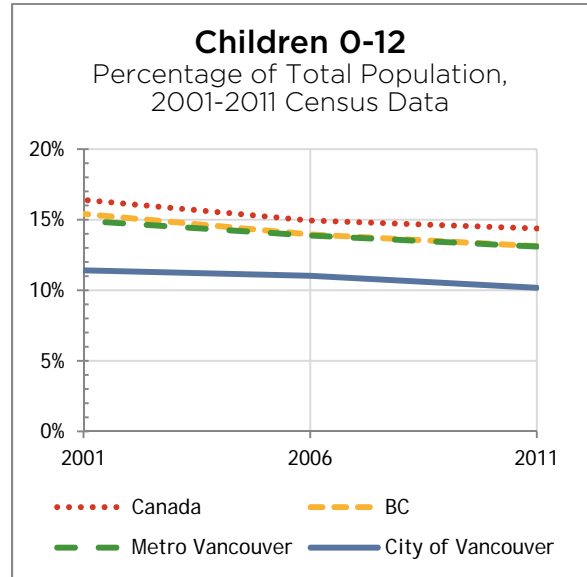
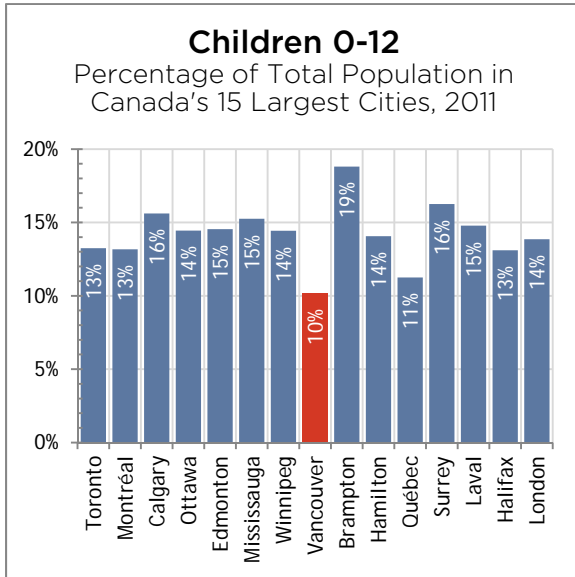
Sources used are noted in each section of this fact sheet. Key online resources include:

- Information from Statistics Canada's Census of Population and National Household Survey is available online at statcan.gc.ca. Custom neighbourhood profiles ordered by the City of Vancouver are available at data.vancouver.ca.
- BC Statistics population projections and socio-economic profiles are available at bcstats.gov.bc.ca.
- Early Development Instrument statistics are available from earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi.

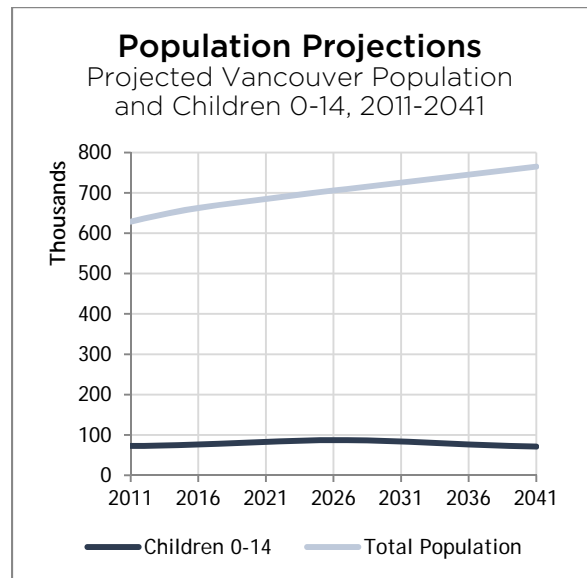
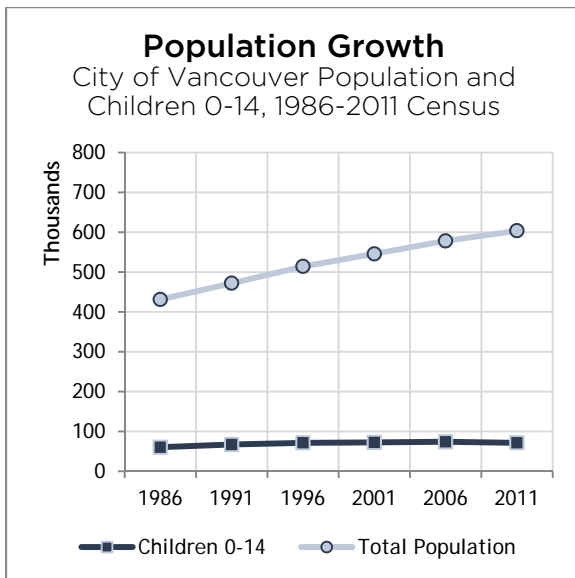
Indicator: Vancouver's Child Population

Vancouver has relatively fewer children than other cities. As of 2011, 10 per cent of the City of Vancouver's population was aged 12 or under. Vancouver had the lowest proportion of children 0-12 of any Canadian municipality with a population of more than 100,000.

While this statistic warrants attention, it needs to be remembered that this is also related to the unique structure of the Metro Vancouver region: the City of Vancouver contained only 26 per cent of the region's population in 2011 and had a higher concentration of multi-family housing than other cities.



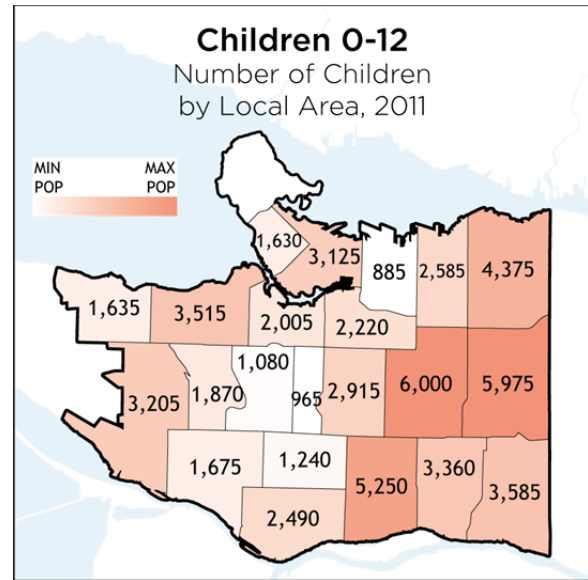
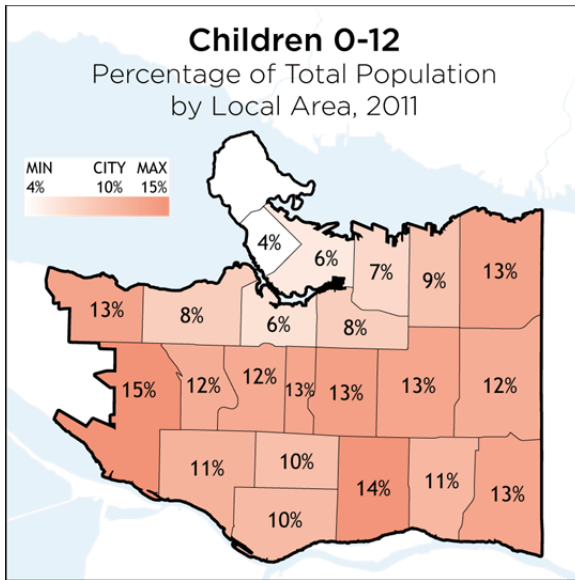
Children as a percentage of Vancouver's population have declined over time. This is largely due to an aging population: in Vancouver, the absolute number of children has been steady, though the most recent census period from 2006 to 2011 has shown a small decline. On average, censuses since 1986 have shown a three per cent increase in children aged 0-12 in Vancouver, compared to a seven per cent increase in the overall population. Note, though, that the number of Aboriginal children has grown at a faster rate.



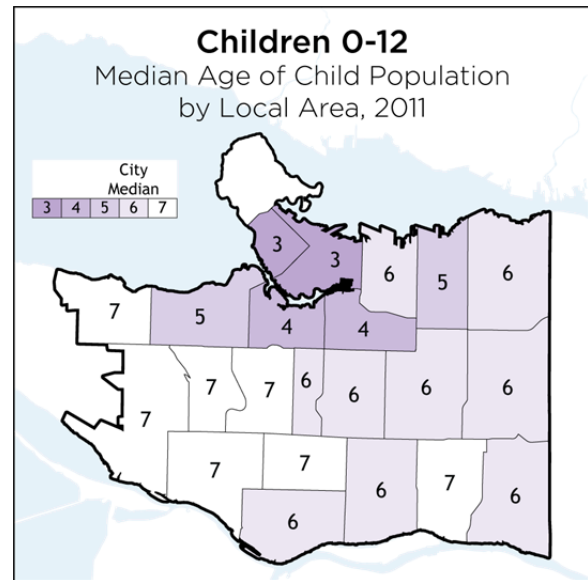
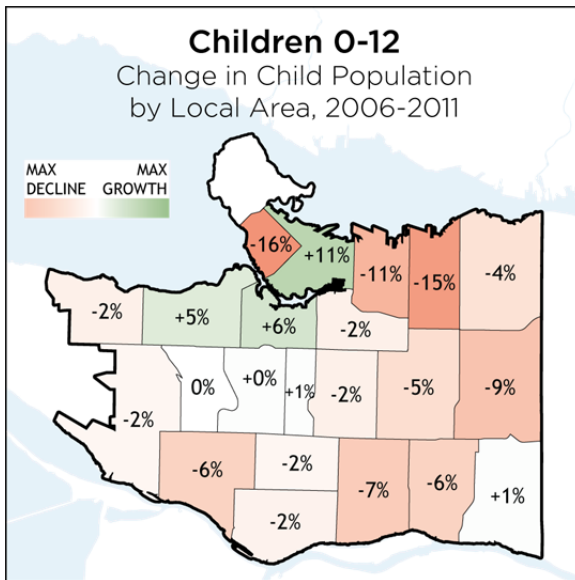
Provincial population projections show a similar overall picture. Vancouver's general population will increase steadily but the number of children will fluctuate slowly, making up a decreasing proportion of Vancouver's total population. Note, though, that there are many variables and trends that may impact the validity of this projection.

Social Indicators and Trends 2014: A Good Start

Neighbourhoods farther away from Downtown tend to have proportionally more children. The 2011 census revealed a clear pattern in the distribution of children as a share of each neighbourhood's total population. However, because the total population varies considerably in Vancouver's neighbourhoods, patterns in the absolute number of children are less clear.



The distribution of children may be changing. From 2006 to 2011, Downtown, Fairview and Kitsilano saw an increase in the number of children, in contrast to citywide trends. There were also interesting patterns in the median age of children in each neighbourhood.



Neighbourhoods closer to downtown have tended to have relatively younger children, raising questions about housing choice, affordability and service provision across the city. Providing licensed childcare and child-friendly amenities for younger children through development in central neighbourhoods may help make these areas more appealing for young families.

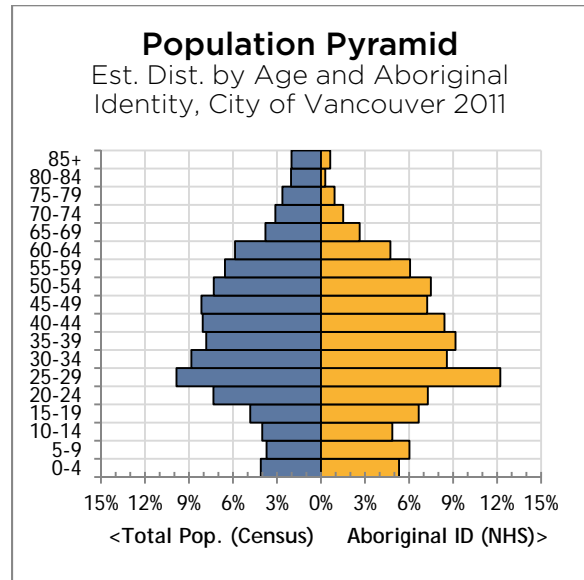
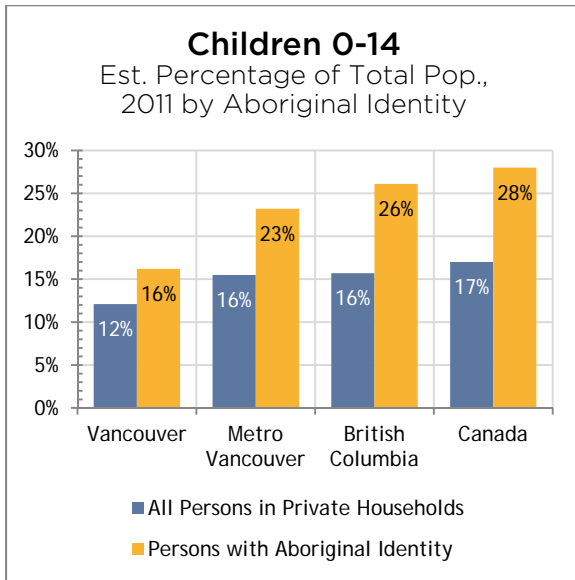
Data Sources

Information in this section has been adapted from Statistics Canada's 1986-2011 Census of Population. Population projections were prepared for the City of Vancouver in 2012 by Urban Futures.

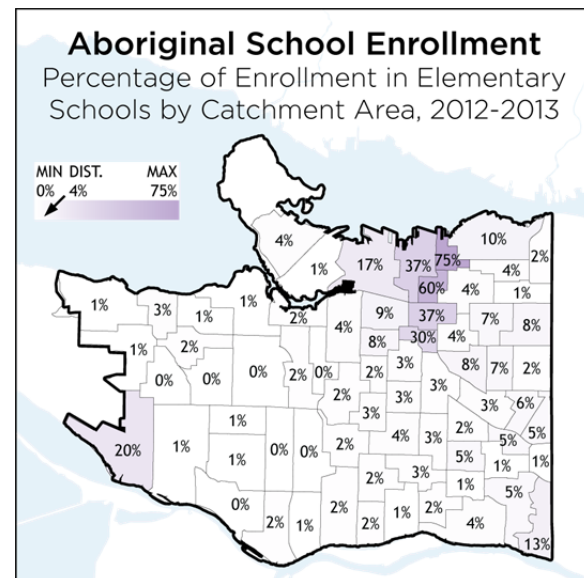
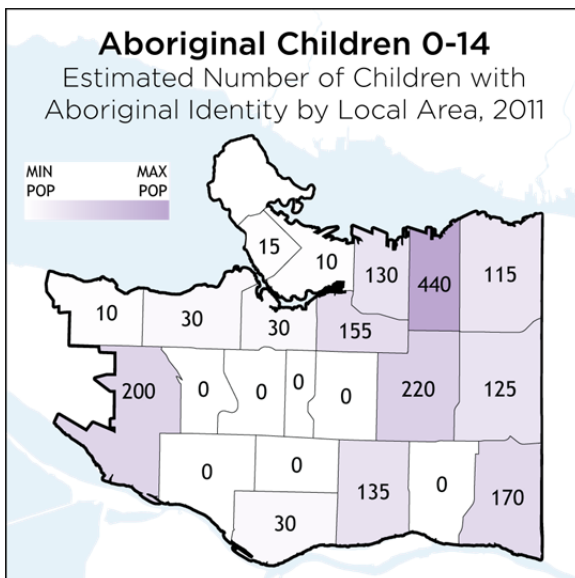
Indicator: Aboriginal Children

Social, economic, environmental and cultural factors are strong influences on children’s start in life. In Canada, Aboriginal people, including persons of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identity, experience more inequities and vulnerability than the general population. Present and past policies and actions, such as the Indian residential school system, continue to impact Aboriginal communities today. An urban Aboriginal people survey found that cultural connectivity, giving back to one’s community, and being close to family and friends were viewed as indicators of success, more valued than financial wealth. Seeing Aboriginal children complete their education is also an aspiration caregivers have for the next generation.

The Aboriginal population is younger than the general population, with proportionally more children and youth and fewer seniors. In 2011, the median age of Vancouver’s overall population was 39.7 years, while the median age of persons in private households with Aboriginal identity was estimated to be 34.6.



Within Vancouver, Aboriginal children are heavily concentrated in a few areas. In 2012-2013, public elementary schools in Grandview-Woodland had the most concentrated Aboriginal student populations, followed by schools near the Musqueam Nation and in the Strathcona area. Sir William MacDonald, Britannia, Admiral Seymour and Grandview schools had the proportionally largest populations of Aboriginal students. This uneven distribution reflects the overall distribution of people with Aboriginal identity within Vancouver.



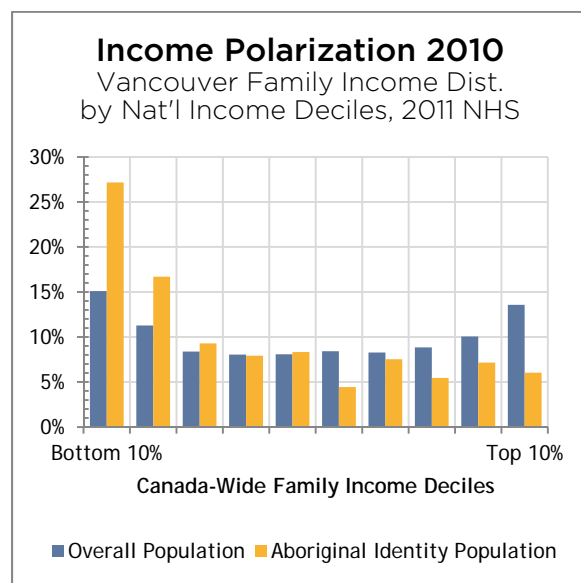
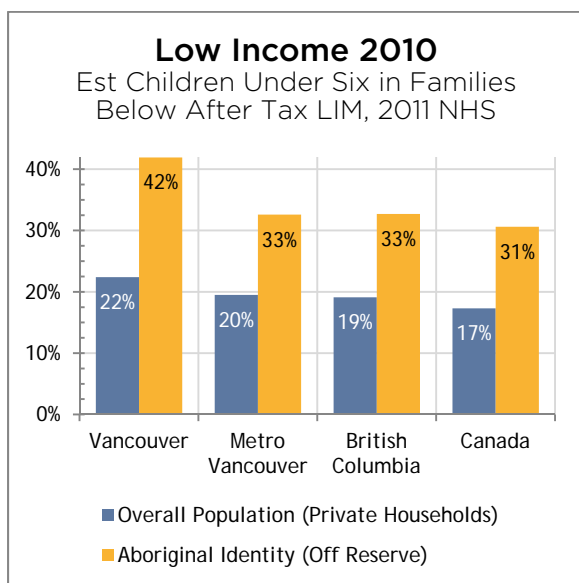
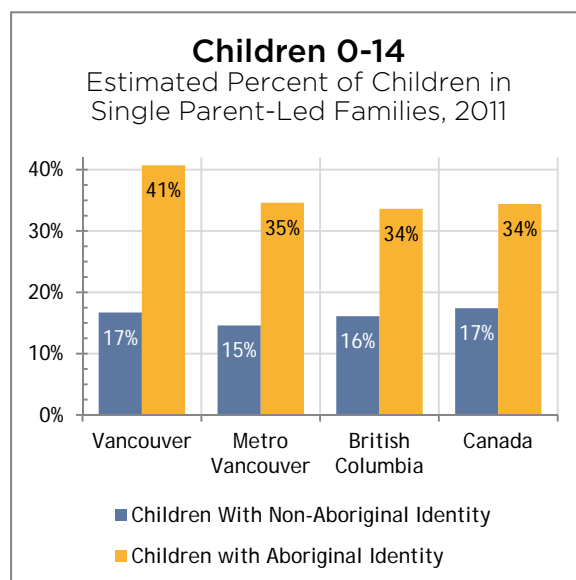
Social Indicators and Trends 2014: A Good Start

In 2011, an estimated 40 per cent of Aboriginal children under 15 were living in a single parent household. Aboriginal children were more likely to live with either their mother, or with another caregiver. For both the overall population and the Aboriginal population, approximately 80 per cent of lone parent-led families were led by a single mother.

Three per cent of Aboriginal children were living with grandparents, compared to less than one per cent of the overall population. Twelve per cent were stepchildren, compared to seven per cent of the overall population. Almost half of foster children in British Columbia were Aboriginal.

Beyond financial success, Aboriginal people in Vancouver define success as living a balanced lifestyle, being close to family and friends, and having a strong connection to one's culture. In the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, 91 per cent of respondents felt it was very important to raise healthy, well-adjusted children to contribute to their community.

Aboriginal children are more likely to live in low income families. As discussed later in this document, income statistics from the 2011 National Household Survey cannot be compared to other measures, but comparisons can be made between groups within the survey. Low income rates for Vancouver Aboriginal children under six were almost twice that of the overall child population in 2010. More than one in four Aboriginal people in Vancouver had family incomes in the bottom 10 per cent of family incomes in Canada.



Data Sources

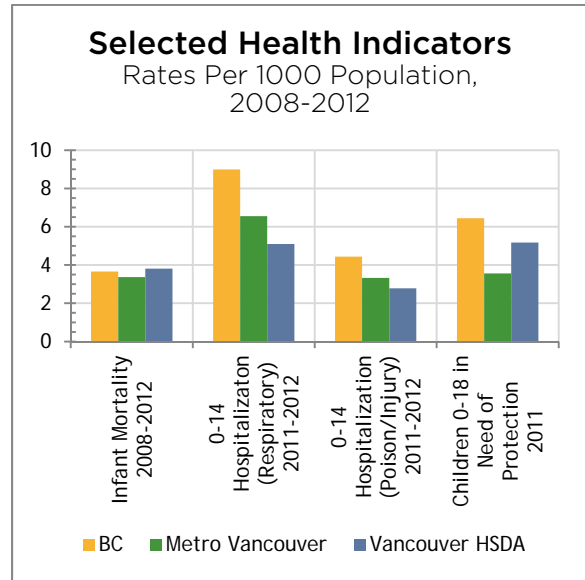
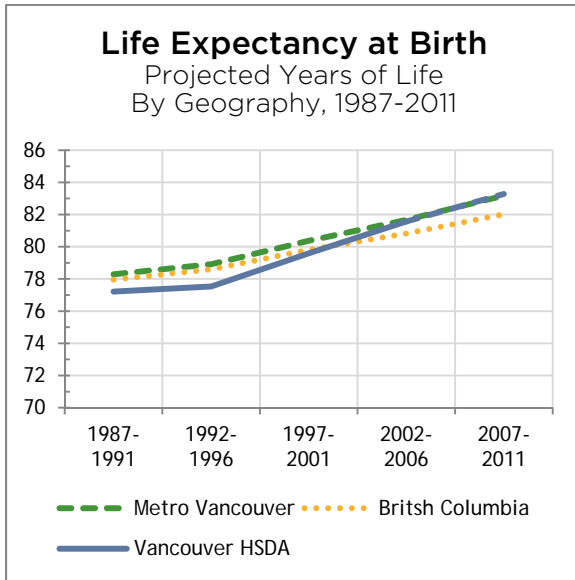
Population, family type and income estimates are from Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey.

School enrollment data is available from the BC Ministry of Education; summary statistics can be downloaded through the BC Government's data catalogue at data.gov.bc.ca. Note that not all students in a catchment area necessarily attend their designated school.

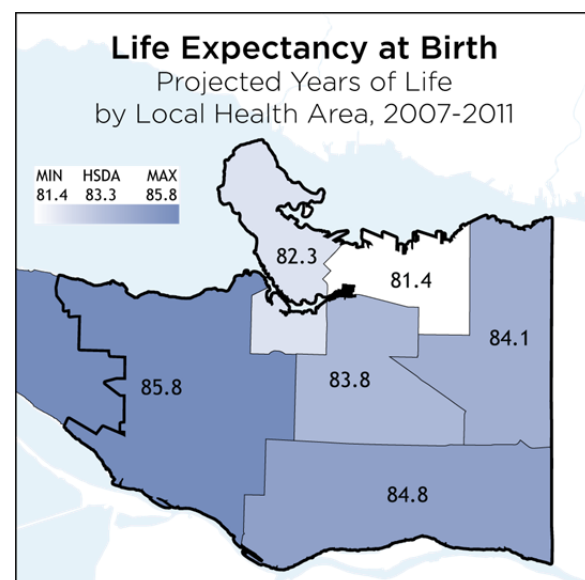
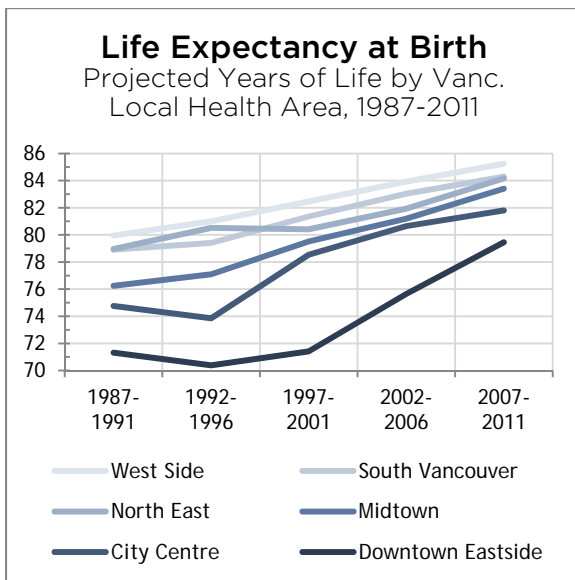
Information about the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study can be found at uaps.ca.

Indicator: Children's Health Outcomes

Life expectancy has increased, but many children's health indicators present a mixed picture. Compared to the region and the province, the most recent statistics available showed the Vancouver Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA) having a lower rate of hospitalization, but higher rates of infant mortality. Vancouver had a higher rate of children in need of protection, as defined and reported by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, than the Metro Vancouver region, but a lower rate than the province overall.



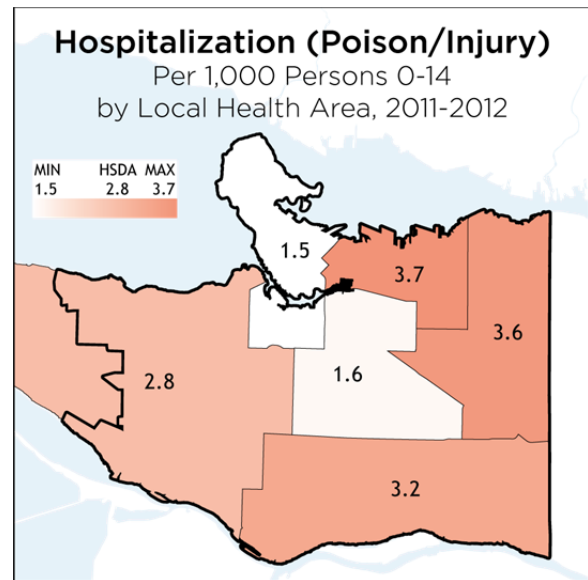
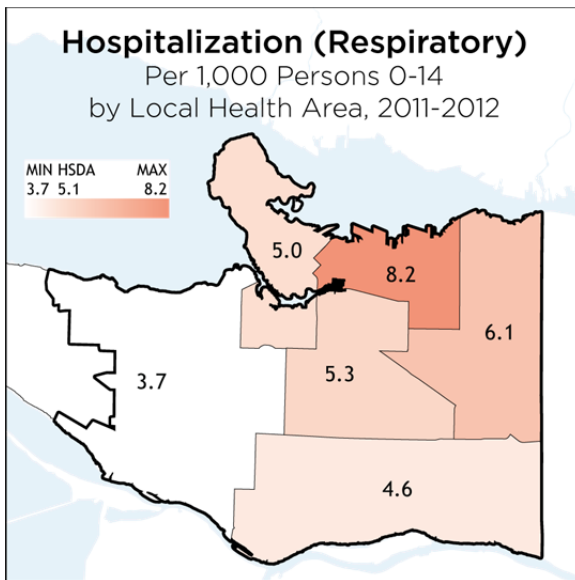
There are health inequities between children in different parts of Vancouver. Over time some inequities have been reduced: differences in life expectancy, in particular, have become much less acute than in the past, particularly as acute health issues in the Downtown Eastside have been addressed. Life expectancy remains lowest in the Downtown Eastside health area: someone born in the area from 2007 to 2011 could expect to die four years earlier than someone in the West Side health area. However, the difference is smaller than it has been in the past.



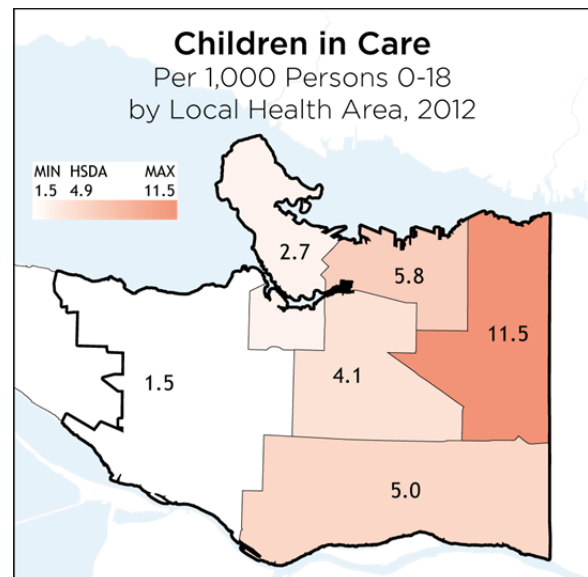
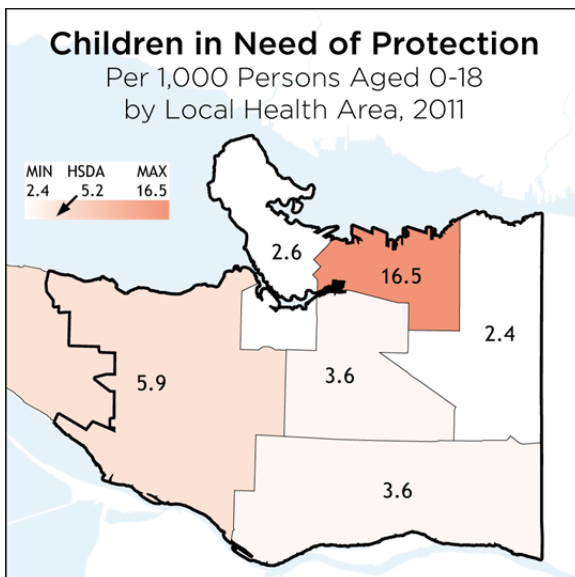
There are still notable differences in physical, social and emotional vulnerabilities among children in different parts of the city.

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Children's hospitalization rates show different patterns. In 2011 and 2012, the highest rate for both respiratory-related and poison or injury-related hospitalization was found in the Downtown Eastside local health area, but the lowest rates were found in different areas. Children in the West Side health area were least likely to be hospitalized for respiratory issues, but children in the City Centre health area were least likely to be hospitalized for poisoning or injury.



Among the health indicators discussed on the previous page, the most dramatic differences between local health areas were seen in the rates of children in need of protection in 2011. Juxtaposing these statistics with the rate of children in government care shows that rates vary substantially across the city, but in different ways. The highest concentration of children considered in need of protection in 2011 was found in the Downtown Eastside health area, while the highest rate of children in care in 2012 was in the North East health area.



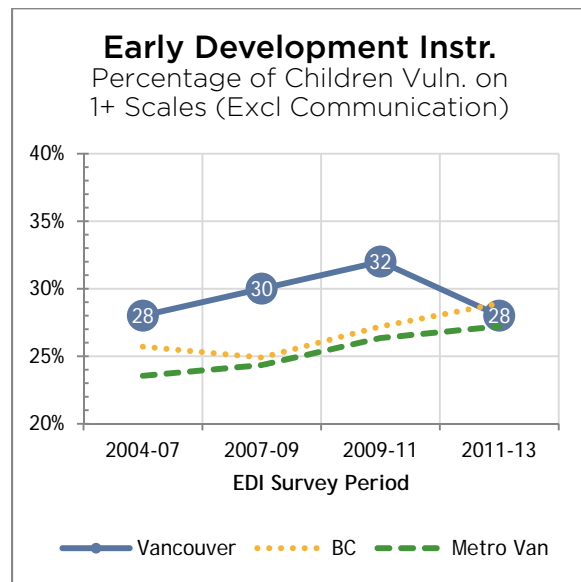
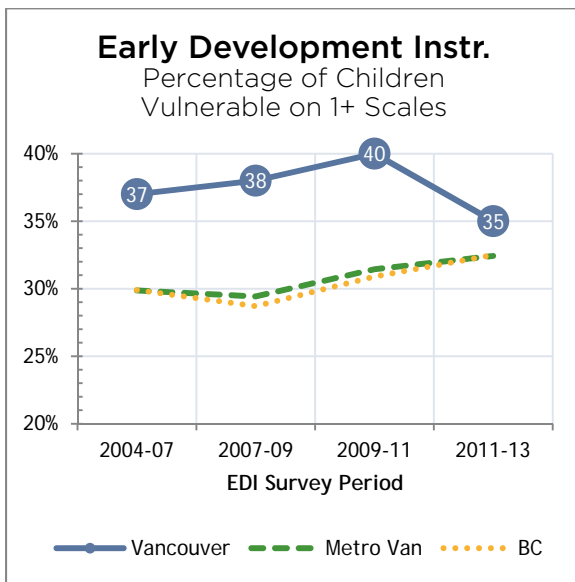
Data Sources

Information in this section is adapted from the BC Ministry of Health and the BC Vital Statistics Agency, as compiled in BC Statistics socio-economic profiles.

Indicator: School Readiness

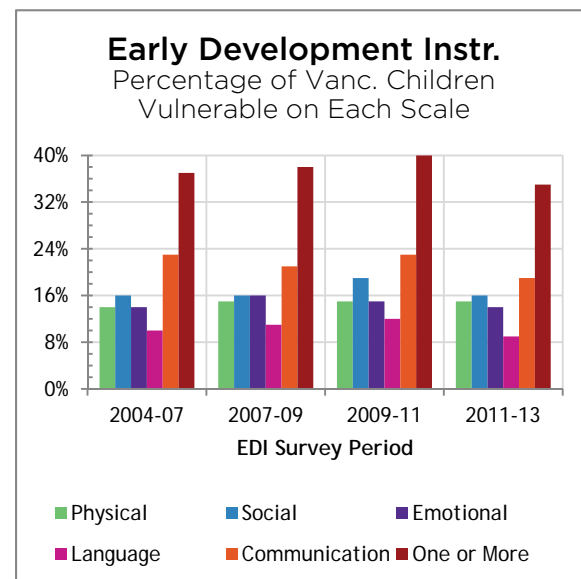
The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a tool developed by researchers at the Offord Centre, McMaster University and pioneered by the University of British Columbia (UBC)'s Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) to regularly measure and report on children's readiness for school across the whole population. The EDI measures children's development on five scales: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge. Children scoring below established vulnerability cut-offs are considered more likely to be limited in development than those scoring above. The EDI is a voluntary survey that has been administered in four waves from 2004 to 2013 across the province.

Using the "vulnerable on one or more scales" measure, **Vancouver's children have consistently had higher vulnerability scores than the regional or provincial average.** In 2011-2013, 35 per cent of Vancouver's children were considered vulnerable; this means that they were likely to experience challenges in one or more areas of their development. If overall vulnerability excluding the communication scale is used, 28 per cent of children were still considered vulnerable, slightly lower than the overall provincial figure.



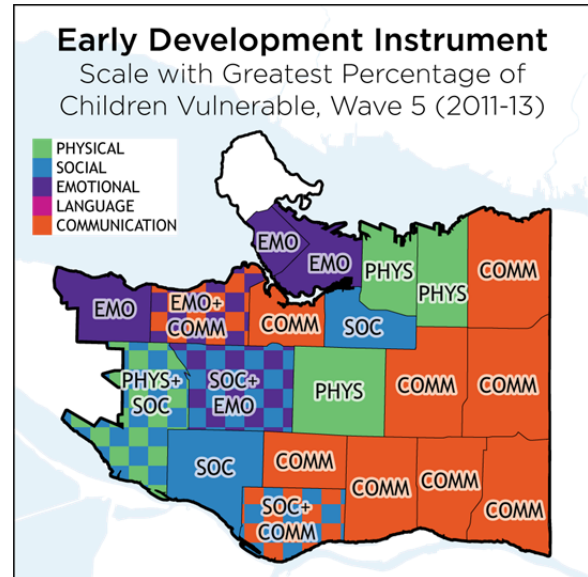
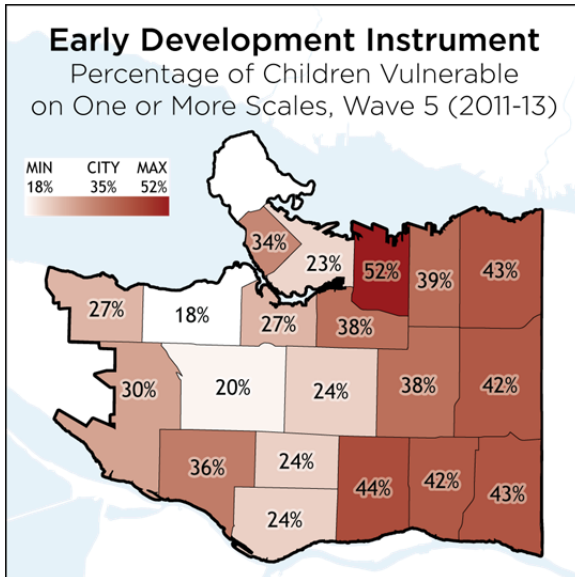
Based on 2011 census data, there were some 4,700 children aged five years in Vancouver. If 35 per cent were more likely to experience challenges in their development, this means that over 1,600 children in just one year entered school with limitations that impacted their readiness for school.

Some vulnerability is due to congenital or diagnosable medical conditions. Approximately 3-5 per cent of children are born with these conditions, and they may encounter unavoidable vulnerabilities that may impact their development. However, most of the vulnerability measured in Vancouver is avoidable. HELP considers vulnerability rates greater than 10 per cent to be avoidable. By creating environments in which children can thrive, the vast majority of children can develop optimally and experience a good start in life.



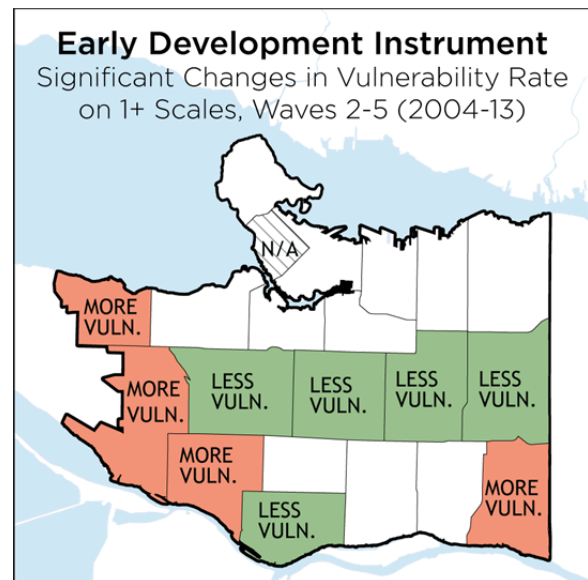
Social Indicators and Trends 2014: A Good Start

Within Vancouver's neighbourhoods, child vulnerability mirrors other socioeconomic and demographic trends. The map below left illustrates the proportion of children considered vulnerable in the most recent EDI survey. Strathcona had the greatest proportion of children considered vulnerable while Kitsilano had the smallest proportion. Children in east side neighbourhoods were generally more likely to be considered vulnerable, but the differences were not always great. Different neighbourhoods showed different patterns of vulnerability as well; the map below right illustrates the scale on which the greatest rate of vulnerability was seen.



Change over time shows a mixed picture in Vancouver's neighbourhoods. Overall, Vancouver children were less likely to be considered vulnerable in the most recent survey than they were ten years ago. However, different neighbourhoods have changed in different ways.

Using thresholds published by UBC HELP, it is possible to calculate whether changes in vulnerability are statistically significant. Vancouver's overall change from 38 per cent of children in 2004-2007 to 35 per cent in 2011-2013 is considered a significant reduction. Over the same period, four neighbourhoods have seen significant increases in the rate of children considered vulnerable: West Point Grey, Dunbar-Southlands, Kerrisdale and Killarney. By contrast, Marpole, Arbutus-Ridge, Shaughnessy, South Cambie, Riley Park, Kensington-Cedar Cottage and Renfrew-Collingwood have a significantly lower rate of vulnerability on the most recent survey compared to the 2004-2007 period. Change in all other neighbourhoods has not been considered significant, and the sample size in the West End has been too small to calculate significance.



Data Sources

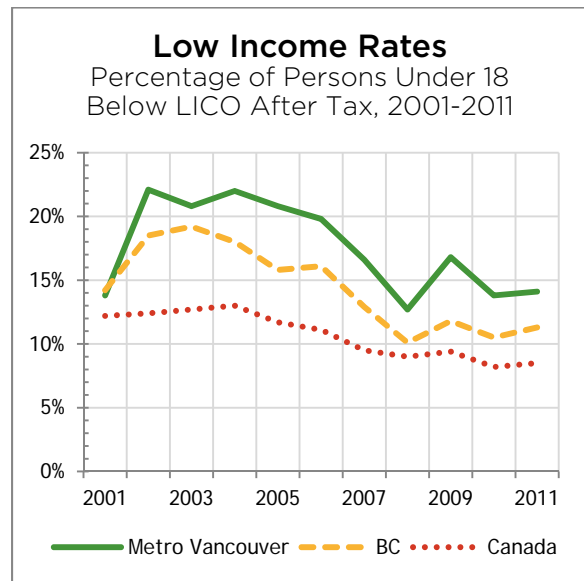
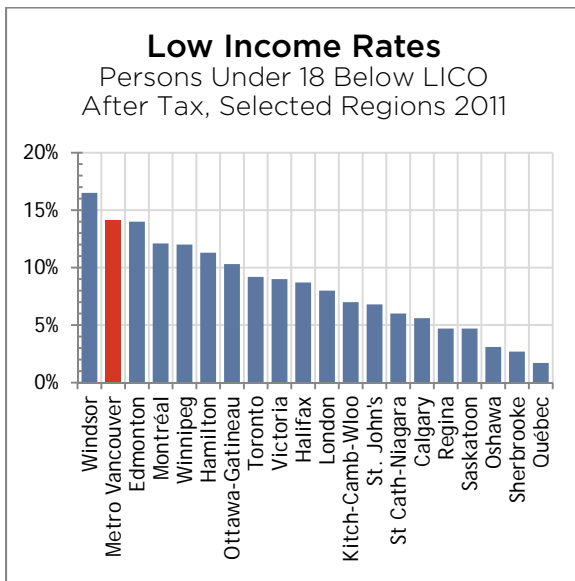
Statistics in this section are adapted from information published by UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP). Information about the EDI, including methods, maps, data tables and a bibliography, can be accessed at earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi.

Indicator: Children in Low Income Families

Income is itself a determinant of a health and well-being, and it also influences the quality of many other areas such as: housing choices; food security; access to education and employment; working conditions; transportation choices; recreation activities; and social inclusion. Families with low incomes are more likely to experience both material and social deprivation.

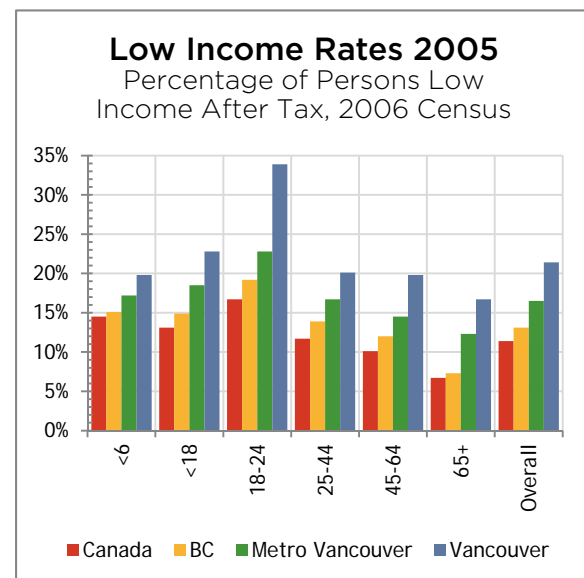
Low income measures are not measures of poverty *per se*, but they are often used to suggest the prevalence of poverty. There are many measures of low income status; the most commonly used has been the after-tax low income cut-off (LICO). This figure is based on a family's relative expenditures on a basket of basic household goods. The LICO uses a baseline, determined by a survey of families in 1992, identifying the income level at which a family spent 20 percentage points more than the average family on basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. Although imperfect, this facilitates comparisons across years, geographies, ages and family types.

In 2011, Metro Vancouver had the second highest rate of persons under 18 in low income families among all major census metropolitan areas in Canada. In recent years, this rate has consistently been higher in Metro Vancouver than the overall provincial and national rate. However, there is an overall trend of low income rates declining over the medium term.



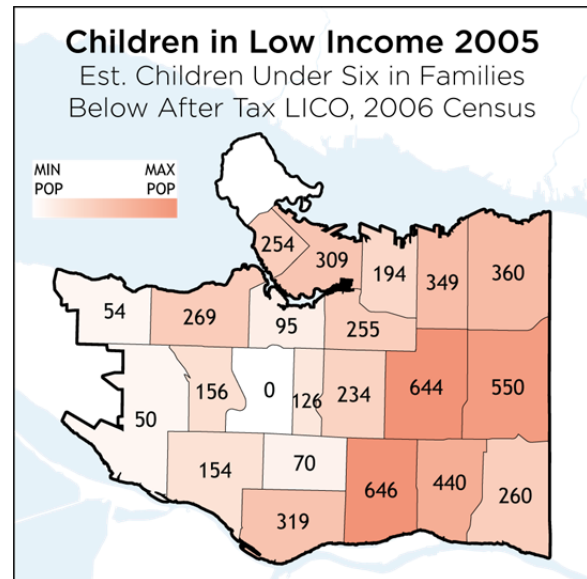
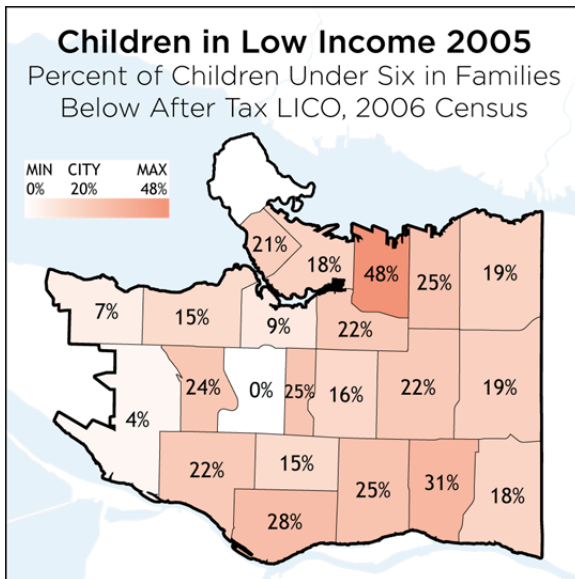
Comparative low income cut-off data specific to Vancouver from the 2011 National Household Survey are not available. The best available data for comparison are from the 2006 census, which provided a more detailed breakdown of low income status by age group and geography in 2005.

Based on 2006 data, the City of Vancouver had a greater low income rate than the region, the province or the country across all age groups. The likelihood of living with low income increased as children aged: nearly 20 per cent of Vancouver children under six years of age, 23 per cent of all children and youth under 18, and over a third of youth aged 18 to 24 were living below the low income cut-off in 2005.

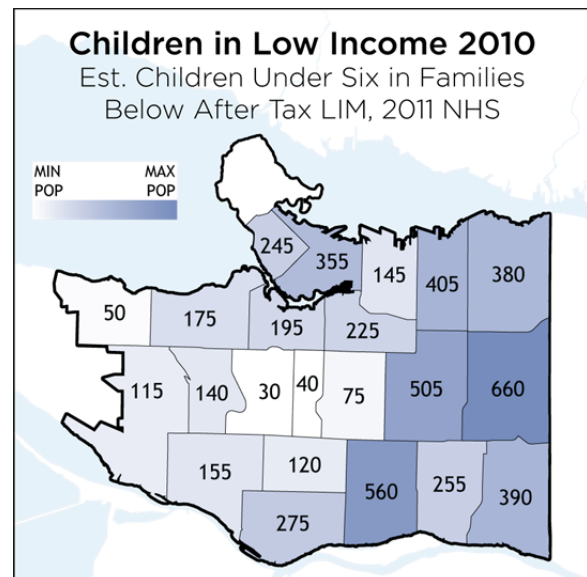
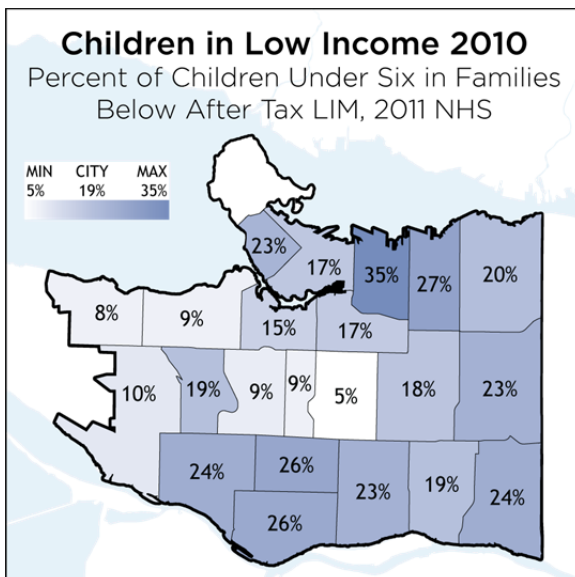


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There were also wide disparities in the rates of children in low income families between Vancouver's neighbourhoods. Nearly half of the young children (under six years) in Strathcona were considered low income, while Shaughnessy counted no children below the low income cut-off (LICO). Beyond these two areas, however, trends were mixed: Dunbar-Southlands and West Point Grey had the lowest low income rates for children, but Arbutus-Ridge and Kerrisdale had relatively high rates. The highest rate outside Strathcona was found in Victoria-Fraserview. Sunset, Kensington-Cedar Cottage and Renfrew-Collingwood reported the greatest absolute number of low income children in the 2006 census.



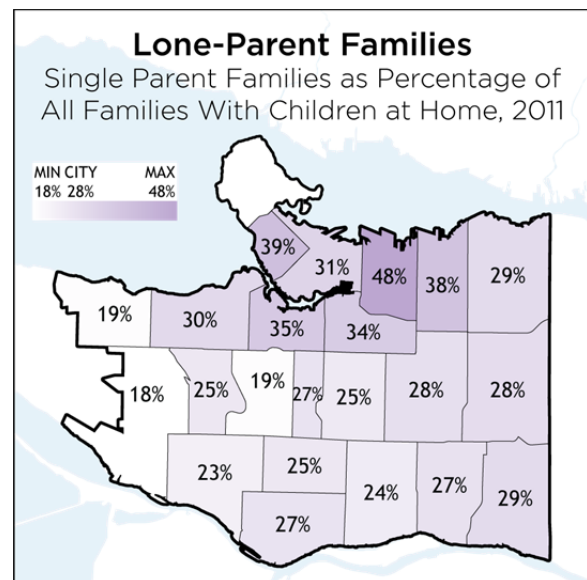
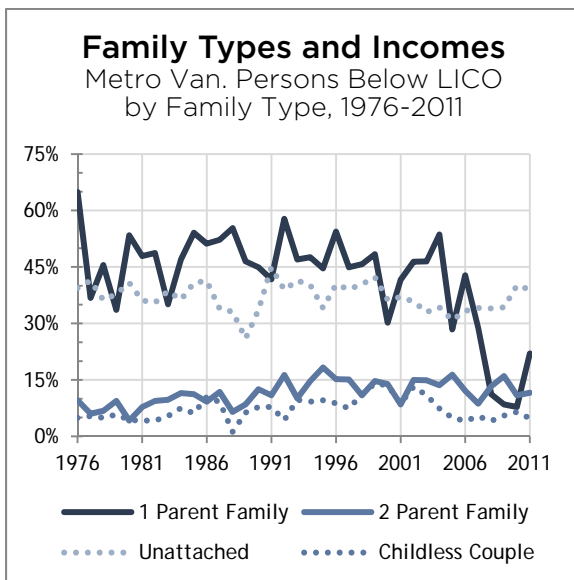
As mentioned, income data from the 2011 National Household Survey are not comparable; low income rates for 2010 based on the survey were calculated using the low income measure (LIM), a relative measure of low incomes. The maps below are thus not comparable to the maps above, but they do provide a more recent approximation of the relative likelihood of children growing up in poverty in different parts of the city.



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Family type is a predictor of low income status. Families led by a lone parent generally have lower incomes than two-parent families. In Metro Vancouver, the median after-tax income for lone parent-led families reported on the 2006 census was 58 per cent of the median for couple families. Except for 2008 to 2010—which may be outlier data—low income rates in Metro Vancouver have consistently been much higher for lone parent-led families than other family types.

For this reason, it is not surprising that the rates of lone-parent families in Vancouver in 2011 were similar to low income rates; again, Strathcona had the highest proportion of lone-parent families while Shaughnessy, Dunbar-Southlands and West Point Grey had the smallest. The vast majority of lone parent-led families for all areas were led by female parents.



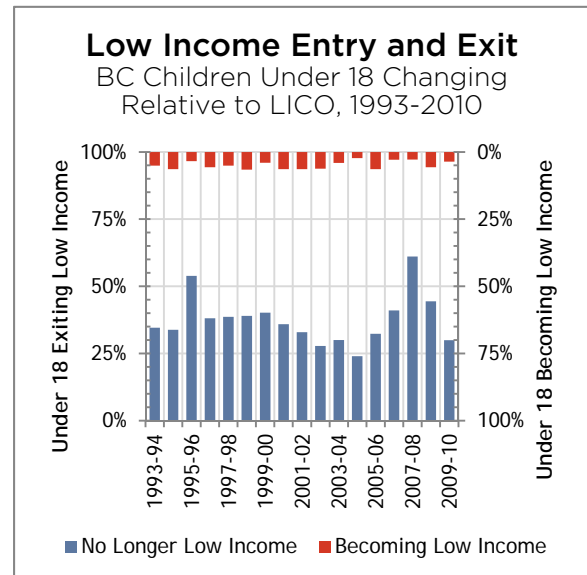
Although overall low income rates are relatively steady, many individual children do leave low income situations. From 2009 to 2010, for instance, 30 per cent of BC children under 18 who were in low income families in 2009 were no longer low income in 2010. Meanwhile, just four per cent of children whose family income was above the low income cut-off became low income.

This is not a complete picture, nor entirely positive news: from 2009 to 2010, 70 per cent of BC children stayed in low income families. But these statistics do suggest that there are more children exiting poverty than entering it.

Data Sources

Annual and comparative income statistics over time are adapted from Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, accessible at statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=75-202-x.

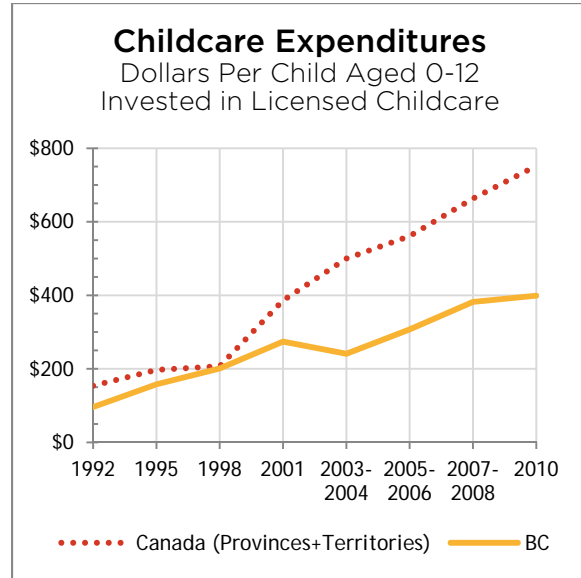
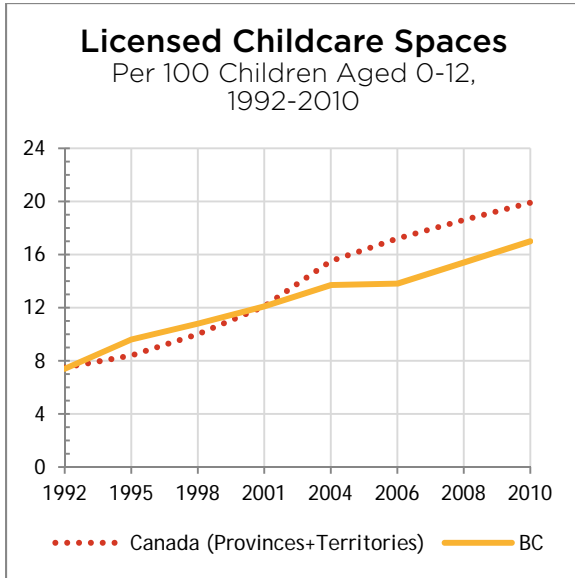
Other information in this section has been adapted from Statistics Canada's 2006 and 2011 Census of Population.



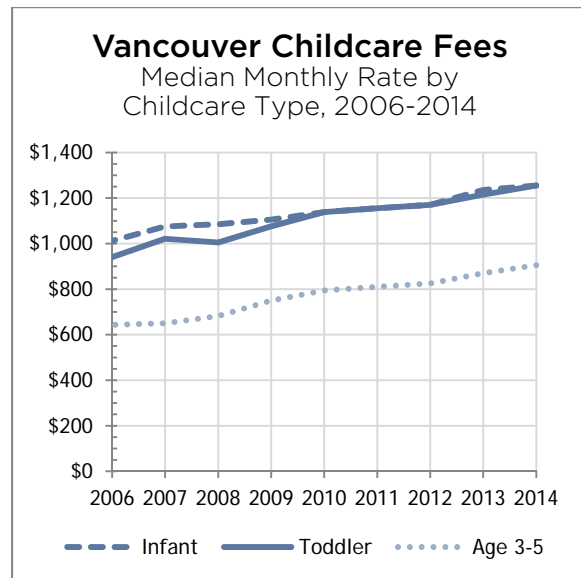
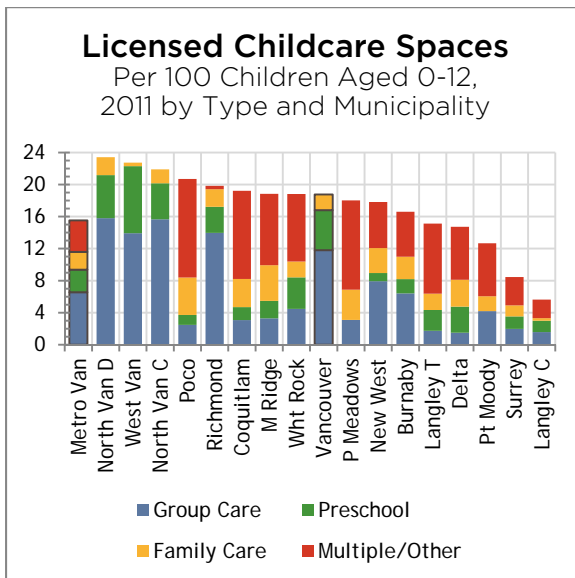
Indicator: Licensed Childcare Supply

Affordable, accessible and high-quality childcare is a key element of a good start. Investing in childcare pays off in a number of ways, including: increased labour force participation, particularly for women; improved school readiness; and positive early development. However, many families cannot access or afford childcare.

Achieving a good start for all depends upon provincial policy and funding, though the City of Vancouver continues to facilitate the development of licensed childcare through land use decisions, development levies, municipal grants and capital projects. In 2010, British Columbia's per child expenditure was fifth highest among the provinces and territories, and it had the sixth most spaces per child. As other provinces have made greater investments in childcare, British Columbia is falling behind the national average.



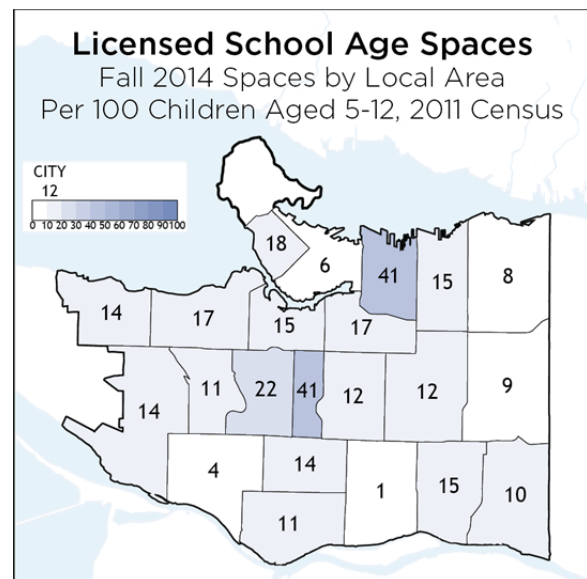
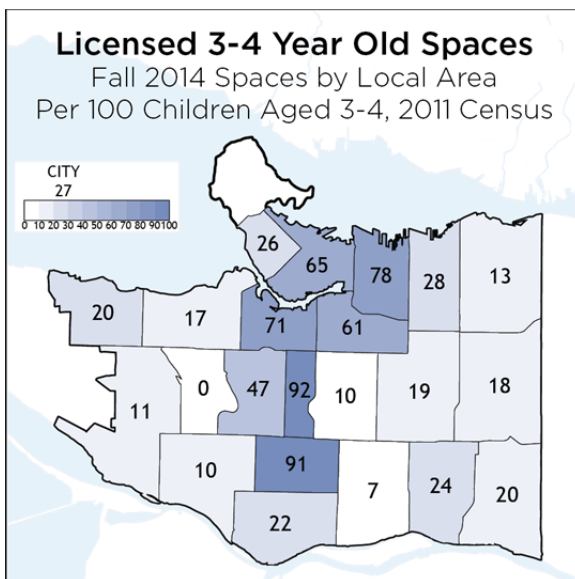
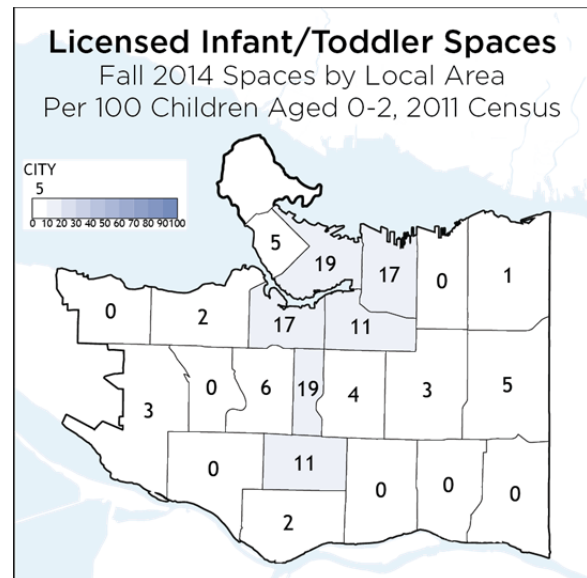
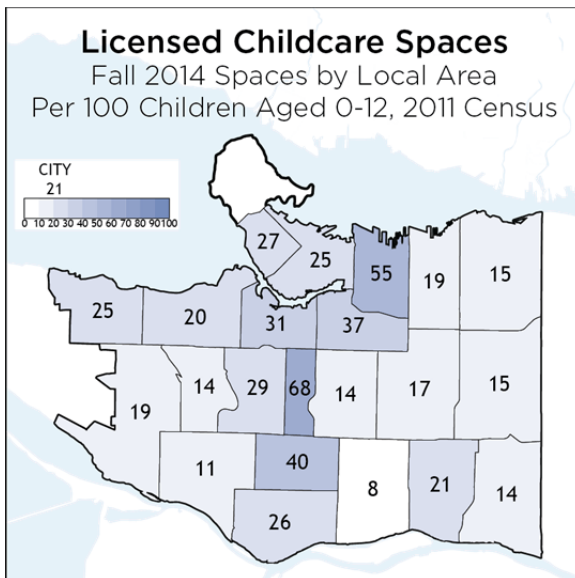
Within Metro Vancouver, the City of Vancouver is in the middle of the pack in the provision of licensed childcare. However, as of 2011, most of Vancouver's childcare spaces were in group care facilities, which are considered a higher quality, more stable, longer term option than family care.



Childcare in Vancouver is expensive and increasing faster than inflation. In 2014, the median monthly fee for infant or toddler care was about \$1,250. Between 2006 and 2014, median monthly fees increased by 24 per cent for infant spaces, 34 per cent for toddler spaces and 41 per cent for three-to-five year-old spaces. The Consumer Price Index in Metro Vancouver increased by approximately 11 per cent over this period.

Social Indicators and Trends 2014: A Good Start

Childcare supply is inadequate in most Vancouver neighbourhoods, and few infant/toddler spaces for children under three years of age exist overall. The maps below illustrate the per-child supply of licensed spaces for each age group in 2011. A lack of accessible, affordable childcare makes Vancouver a less desirable place to live for many families.



Although there is a clear deficit in childcare spaces, fully assessing the need for childcare must also take into account community demographics, vulnerabilities, employment and transportation networks. The numbers presented here are just one element of assessing the status and need for childcare in Vancouver.

Data Sources

Data on childcare spaces and fees within the City of Vancouver are compiled and maintained by West Coast Child Care Resource Centre, wstcoast.org. Information on the City's role in childcare is found at vancouver.ca/childcare.

Comparative childcare spaces across provinces are adapted from statistics compiled for the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Multilateral Framework for Early Learning and Child Care, ecd-elcc.ca. Comparisons across Metro Vancouver municipalities were compiled by Metro Vancouver for a 2011 Child Care Inventory report, October 28, 2011.

Child populations are adapted from Statistics Canada's 2011 Census of Population.

Toward a Healthy City for All

The indicators presented here raise several questions about the path to a good start for Vancouver's children:

- What can Vancouver do to become more livable, affordable and attractive to young families?
- How can vulnerabilities that Vancouver's children face, such as poverty, be addressed?
- The City of Vancouver has committed to supporting an integrated, affordable public system of early care and learning. How can this vision be achieved?

Answering these questions will be a complex challenge, requiring partnerships between the City of Vancouver, other levels of government, service providers and the private sector.

The City's Role



Many of the factors that give rise to inequality and vulnerability among children are beyond the City's direct control. The City of Vancouver does not provide childcare or other social services directly. However, key areas that the City can show leadership include:

- **Planning communities** to be welcoming, safe, inclusive and sustainable for families.
- **Supporting children and families** and **building community capacity** through policy, grants and support to community facilities and organizations.
- **Continuing to facilitate childcare** through development, infrastructure and grants.
- **Advocating** for accessible, affordable childcare policies and funding.
- **Engaging the city** in developing coordinated strategies in these areas.

Priority Actions

Some specific actions the City may undertake include:

- **Further advocacy** for enhanced parental leave and employment benefits for families.
- **Continued advocacy** for a comprehensive, affordable, high-quality public early care and learning system.
- The development of a citywide **childcare amenity plan**.
- **Continued facilitation** of new childcare spaces across the city.
- **Convening** of partners to support Aboriginal children and families.
- **Continued support** to families and children through City grants and initiatives.

Your Turn

Achieving a healthy city for all will require ideas and action on the part of governments, agencies, organizations and the private sector. It will also require all Vancouverites to take part. **A Good Start** is a collective goal for all of us:

- How can we collectively reach the goal that 85 per cent of Vancouver's children will be ready for kindergarten by 2025?

Learn more and get involved at vancouver.ca/healthycity4all.