

## Business Indicators ♦ July 2006

### British Columbia Population Projections

Each year, BC Stats projects the population of the province and its regions, based on demographic and economic trends, modified to take into consideration possible future changes. This cycle, just published, is known as PEOPLE 31 and was completed in May 2006.

#### Introduction

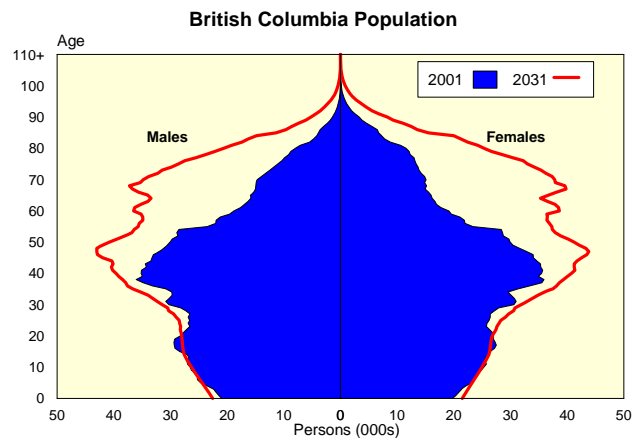
The demands for public services, such as schools, hospitals and roads, are closely related to population size and characteristics. In addition, marketing strategies of businesses are greatly influenced by the size and structure of the population. As a result, reliable population projections are an essential tool for planners in both the private and public sectors.

As we move into this new century, British Columbia faces unique challenges within Canada. Some of the major issues emerging in our province include:

- managing population growth that will put pressure on our urban communities, our environment and government resources;
- recognizing the changing ethnic make-up of the population and the need for better understanding of the values of cultural diversity;
- a health care system that must meet the needs of a growing and aging population; and
- growing economic and income disparities between our province's regions and people.

The following are some demographic highlights from PEOPLE Projection 31:

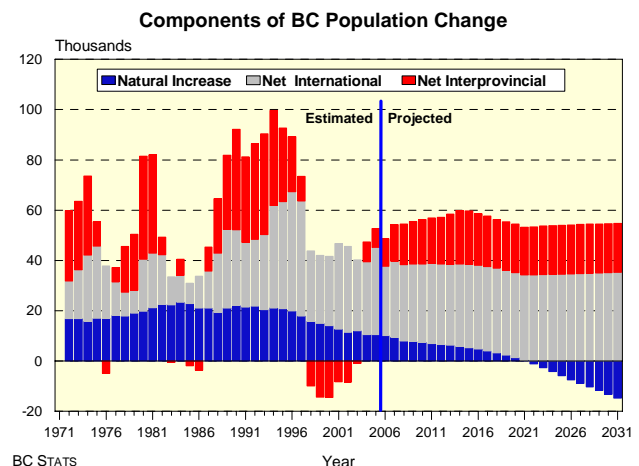
#### Becoming an older population



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The British Columbia population is getting larger and older. Between 2001 and 2031, the population will have increased by over 37%. The median age of the population will have increased from 37.9 to 46.2 years.

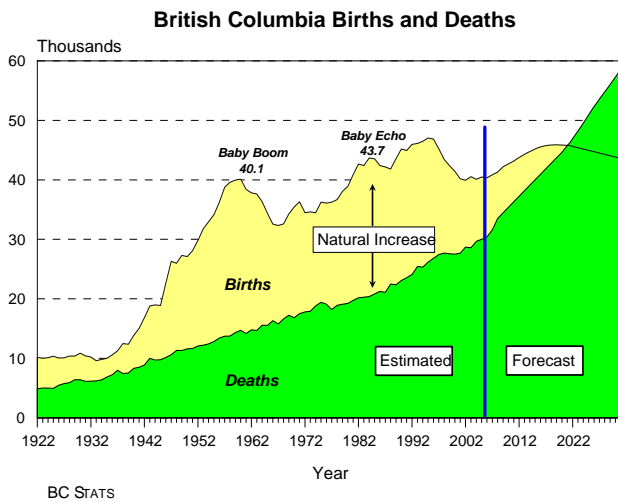
#### Migration the most important factor



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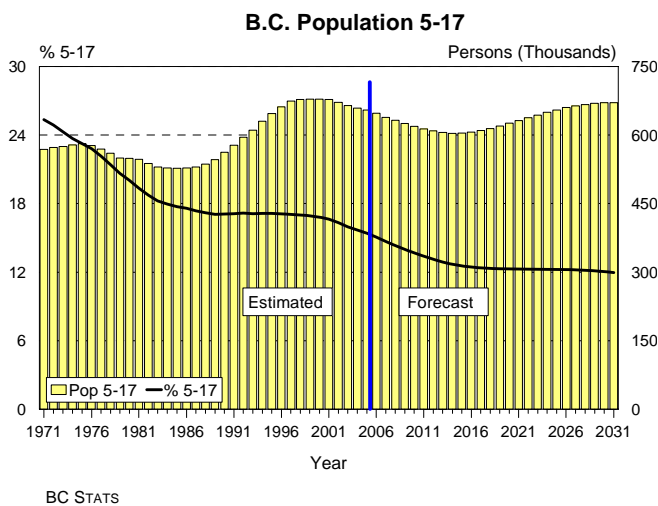
The major factor driving population growth will be migration to British Columbia. Between 2005 and 2031 international migration will account for 64% of the projected population gain, followed by interprovincial migration at 36%, and natural increase at less than one percent.

**Deaths will surpass births**



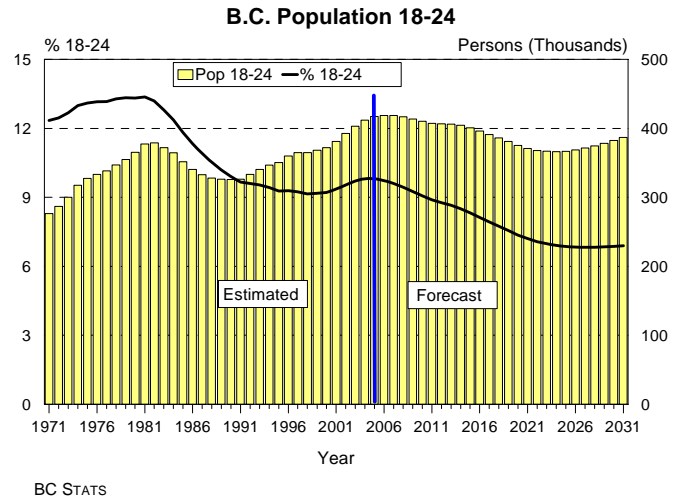
Even though the number of births in British Columbia will continue to rise, the contribution of natural increase to the overall population growth will decrease. Near the end of the forecast the number of deaths will exceed the number of births.

**Declining share of school age group**



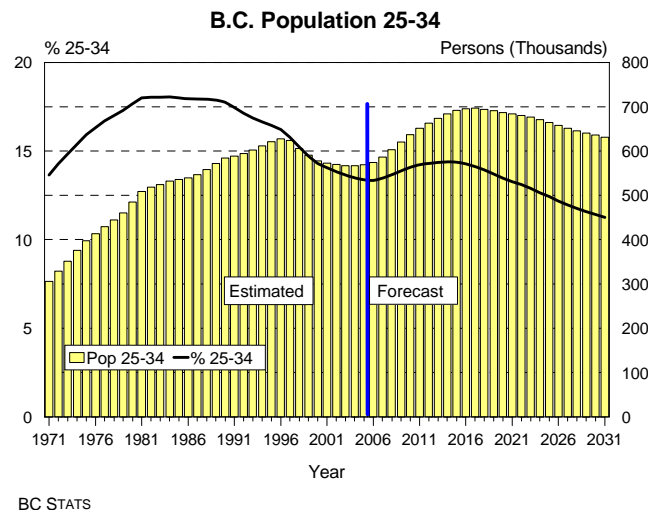
The population of school age (5-17 years) will decline slightly over the next ten years or so, but will then begin a slow increase up to recent levels by 2031. However, its share of the total provincial population will decline.

**Post-secondary cohort changes little**



The population of post-secondary school age (18-24 years) will remain relatively constant over the next decade but its share of total population will decline over the projection period.

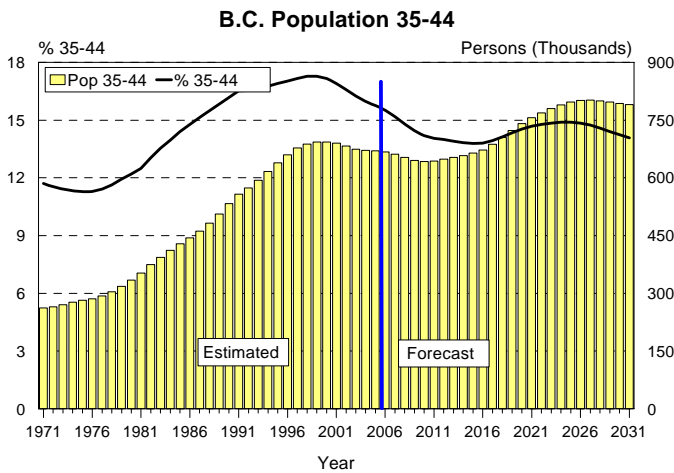
**Increase in first-time householders**



The population aged 25–34, which is generally associated with first time household formation, is expected to increase in absolute numbers and share over the next decade, then slowly decline for the remainder of the projection period.

**Trailing edge of baby-boom cohort**

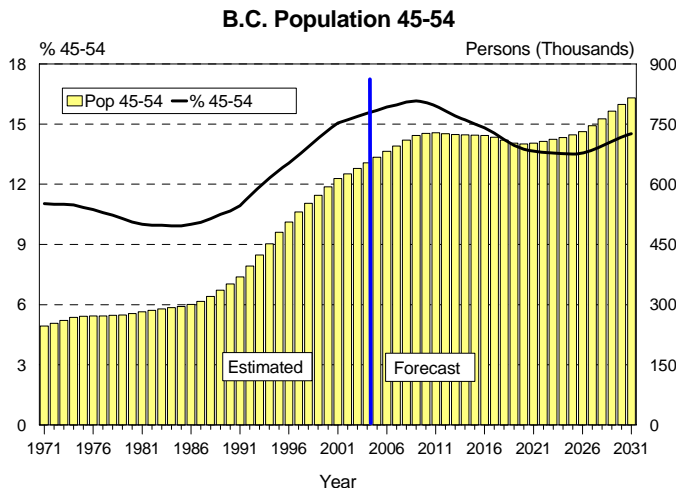
The population currently aged 35–44 includes the youngest of the baby-boom cohort, now aged 41–44. The population in this age group is expected to fall slightly over the next ten years, and then return to strong growth.



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**Competition for top positions**

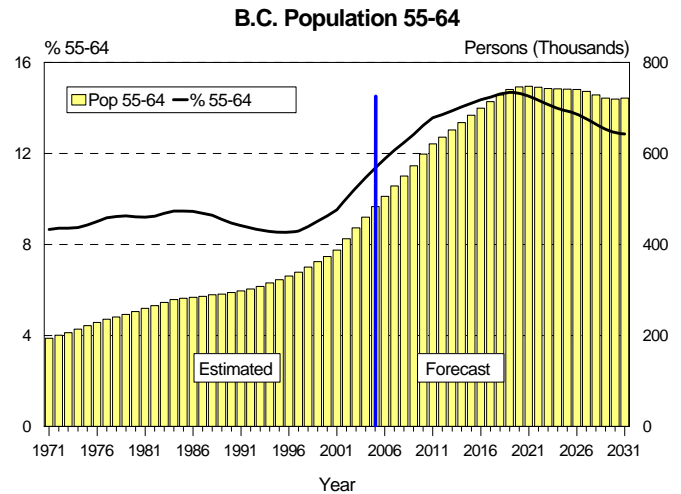
The population of mature labour force age (45–54 years) went through a period of slow growth for a couple of decades. In the last ten years this growth has increased in part due to the entry of older baby-boomers into this age group. As a re-



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sult, the population is increasing significantly. This will have repercussions on the labour force, especially in terms of meeting career goals. Many people in this age group will be competing for a limited number of higher level jobs.

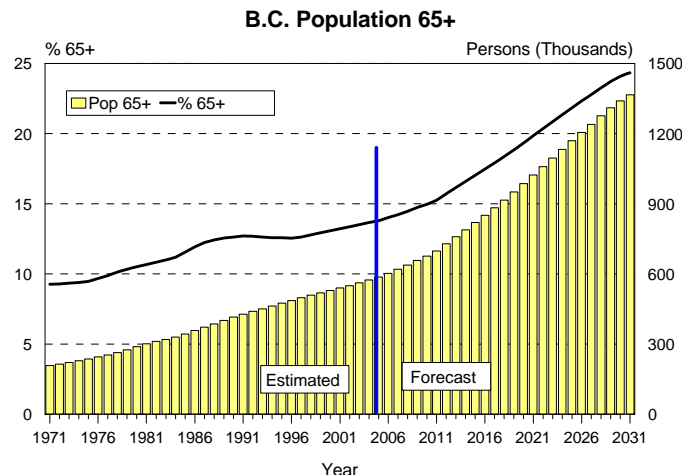
**Early retirement options**



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Both the share and size of those aged 55–64 will increase strongly in the first 15 years of the projection. If greater numbers of this age group opt for early retirement (before 65) the effect may be felt in increased turnover in the labour market and greater demand for retirement housing and services.

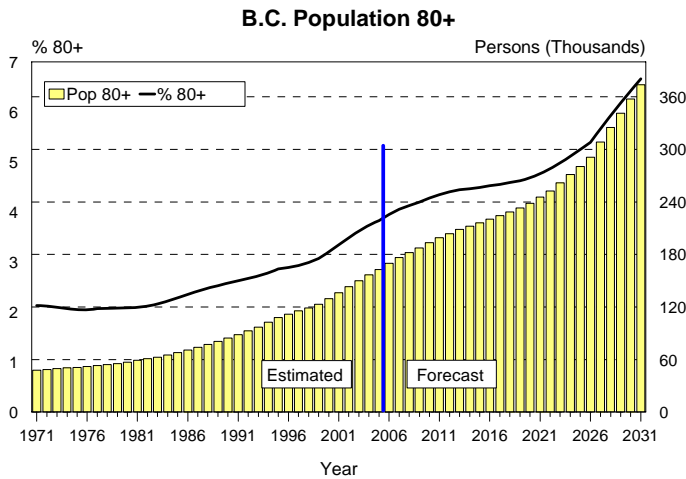
**Senior age group becoming larger**



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Both the share and overall population of retirement age (65+) will continue to increase sharply (from 13.2 per cent in 2001 to 24.4 per cent in 2031). This will result in a significant increase in regionally focused demand for community services for this group.

**Health costs rise with longevity**



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The very senior population (80+) will also increase significantly, growing from 3.3 per cent of the population in 2001 to 6.7 per cent in 2031. This increase will have a serious impact on health care expenditures given the higher per capita health costs associated with people older than 80.

Detailed projections, each 13 pages long in Adobe Acrobat PDF format, include a map, "Economic and Demographic Notes", four pages of population pyramids and charts, "Components of Change", "Special Age Groups", "Five Year Age Groups by Sex", are available for BC, the eight development regions, the 28 regional districts, the 89 local health areas, 59 school districts, and a number of special areas of local interest. Total population summaries appear free on our Internet site.

Both the PDF reports and comma-delimited data files are available for purchase from the BC Stats webstore:

[www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/store.htm](http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/store.htm)

Prices for individual areas vary from \$6 to \$1.25 for the PDF report, and \$12 to \$2.50 for the data files (including the PDF report), depending on how many regions are purchased.

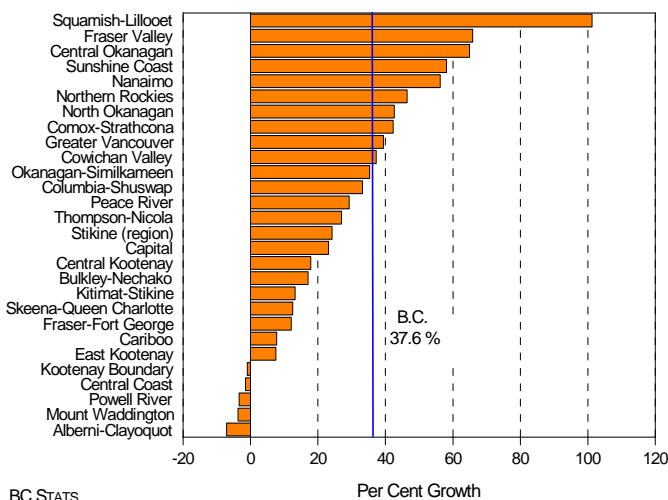
## Regional Population Projections

### Regional District Population Growth

There are substantial disparities with respect to projected growth among the 28 British Columbia Regional Districts. Southern regions of the province will likely see much higher growth rates than regions in the north.

**Figure 12**

PEOPLE 31 Regional District Population Growth  
2001-2031



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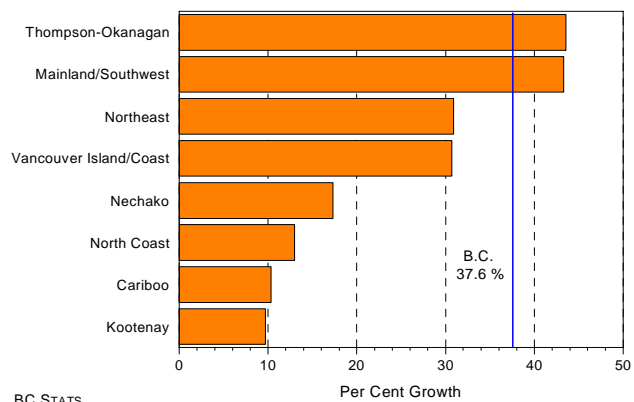
One of the reasons for this is that the economic base in the northern regions is far more resource dependent than the Lower Mainland, the lower portion of Vancouver Island, and the Okanagan. The regions that are expected to experience a decline tend to be those that are heavily dependent on resource extraction industries.

### Development Region Population Growth

Figure 13, which depicts growth by Development Region, exhibits strong growth in the southwest. Both the Mainland-Southwest and Thompson-Okanagan regions are expected to experience over 40 per cent growth over the 2001 to 2031 period. The slower growth in the Kootenay region is largely due to the anticipated sluggish growth in mining and forestry activity, due in part to resource constraints and increased productivity. An anticipated increase in tourism activity in the East Kootenays will enhance the growth prospects for the region.

**Figure 13**

PEOPLE 31 Development Region Population Growth  
2001-2031

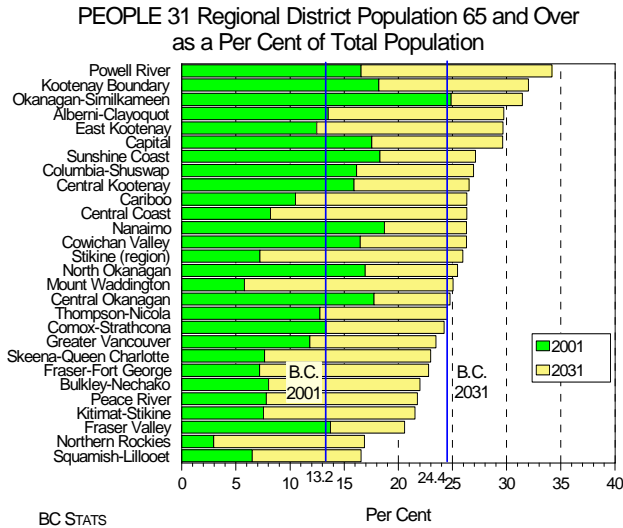


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**Regional District Population 65+**

There are regional differences with respect to age as well. Currently, the population 65 and over (as a percent of total population) is much smaller in most of the remote areas, and greater in the more populous, southern regions of the province.

**Figure 14**



This is largely a combination of the greater access to services (particularly those related to health care) in the larger centres, and the more pleasant climate of the southern regions, which attracts the elderly looking for a place to retire.

The Regional District chart in Figure 14 indicates that some regions will experience proportionately larger increases in the per cent of population over 65. In many of these cases, this is the result of differential rates of migration to or from an area. Migrants tend to be younger than the population at large. Hence, in regions of high net inflows of population the aging process is slowed. Alternatively, where there is a net outflow, population aging accelerates.

**Development Region Population 65+**

On a larger scale, the Development Regions show a similar pattern of a more aged population in the south. However, some regions to the north will see proportionately larger increases in the proportion of the population over 65.

**Figure 15**

