



Canada's Vital Signs 2011

Executive Summary

The process of economic recovery has led to widespread and growing inequities across the country – between rural and urban, rich and poor, fat and thin, young and old, educated and uneducated, and so on. And while all signs indicate that Canada is weathering the economic storm aptly, it is doing so in an uneven manner across the country.

2011 marks the fifth anniversary of Canada's Vital Signs. This year's report revisits many of the national indicators that were first reported on in 2008. It is a canvas marked by obesity, personal bankruptcy, youth unemployment, and child poverty. Yet it is also characterized by strong improvements in indicators regarding safety, education, the environment, and community belonging. A brief snapshot of these findings is provided below. For more detail, please refer to the Research Findings.

- **According to first half of 2011 stats, the youth unemployment rate in Canada is almost twice the overall rate (14.7% vs 7.8%); but in many other OECD countries the ratio is closer to 4 to 1.** The ratio in Canada has remained fairly consistent since 1997 and, overall, youth have not been as hard hit this time around as they were in the last two recessions. Amongst major cities in early 2011, especially high rates of youth unemployment, in excess of 14%, have been seen in Toronto, Halifax and Ottawa.
- **Obesity is one of the easiest health conditions to recognize; yet finding a remedy is proving difficult.**ⁱ The most recent statistics (2010) show that 18.1% of Canadian adults self-report that they are obese, an increase of 3 percentage points since 2003. The prevalence rate is even higher, according to measured height and weight dataⁱⁱ – about 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 11 children.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Over the last decade, the personal bankruptcy rate in Canada has been trending upwards while business bankruptcies have been on the decline.** In 2010, there were 92,694 consumer bankruptcies in Canada – an increase of 23.4% since 2000. In comparison, there were 4,072 business bankruptcies – a decrease of 59.5% over the same time period.
- **More than 1 in 7 children in Canada live in poverty, according to the 2009 after-tax Low Income Measure (LIM).** The prevalence of child poverty varies greatly across Canada's cities, from a low of 5.7 % in Quebec City to a high of 19.7% in Vancouver.
- **With increased access to municipal recycling programs, regular composting of kitchen waste is on the rise in Canada.** In 2009, 43.0% of Canadian households composted their kitchen garbage– up 6 percentage points since 2007. Although more

households compost yard (50.0%) than kitchen waste, the proportion that do fell by 22 percentage points during the same time period.

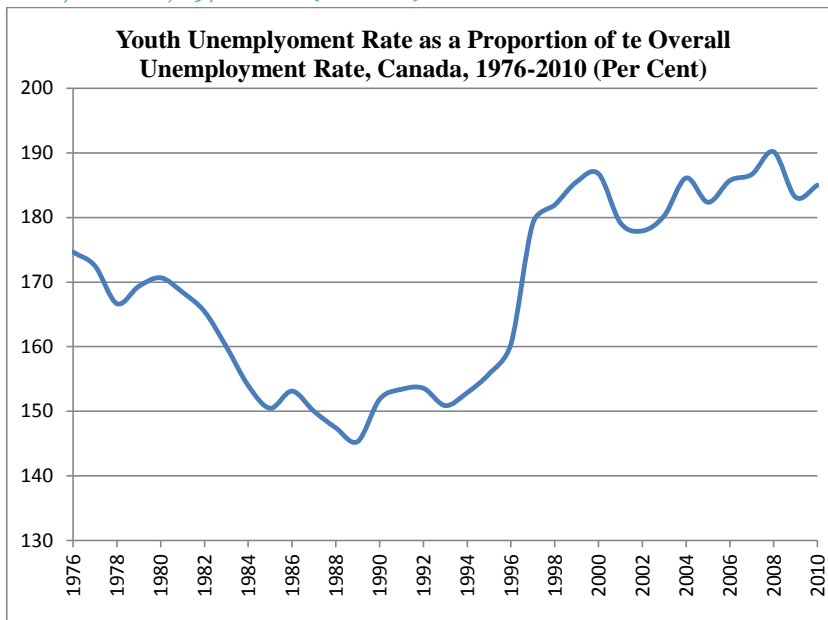
- **Nearly eighty percent of Canadians (aged 15 and over) have a high school diploma** – an increase of almost 18 percentage points between 1990 and 2010. High school non-completion rates vary across the country, depending on the local availability of jobs that do not require extensive education credentials.
- **Although Canada experienced employment growth in 2010, positive change was not uniform across the country.** A total of 17,041,000 Canadians were employed in 2010, an increase of 1.4% from the previous year. Among Vital Signs communities, the highest rate of employment growth was in the Kelowna CMA (+8.1%). However, half of the Vital Signs communities experienced negative growth, the lowest being in Kingston (-3.3%).
- **Less and less Canadians are being indicted with traffic crimes.** The national rate for criminal traffic violations fell 12.6% between 1998 and 2010, from 469 to 410 offences per 100,000 persons. Impaired driving, which accounts for the majority of all traffic crimes (60.3% in 2010), has declined 14.9% since 1998.
- **Voter turnout in the recent federal election was at its second-highest level since 2000.** In May 2011, voter turnout was at 61.4% - up 2.6 percentage points since the previous federal election in 2008. Federal voter turnout is lowest in Alberta, where the winning party earned the highest popular vote.
- **Rental vacancy rates for two bedroom units fluctuate widely across Canada.** The generally accepted benchmark for a healthy residential rental vacancy rate is 3%. Of this year's Vital Signs communities, one-third had vacancy rates below the threshold, indicating that the supply of rental properties in these communities is too low.
- **More Canadians attend theatrical performances than art festivals and classical music performances.** Nearly half of all residents (age 15 and over) of Vital Signs CMAs had attended at least one theatrical performance in 2010. In comparison, the level of attendance at cultural or artistic festivals or classical or symphonic music performances was 40.8% and 17.7% respectively, with popular music concert attendance at 38.9%.

Getting Started – Youth Unemployment

Across the globe, youth are facing bleak job prospects. In the first half of 2011, the seasonally unadjusted Canada-wide unemployment rate for youth in Canada was 14.7 percent. The news is not all negative though. On the plus side, Canadian youth are faring much better than those in other industrial countries, where youth unemployment rates average 20 percent.¹

Looking a bit deeper, since 1997, Canada has held steady in terms of the gap between the overall unemployment rate and that of younger people: approximately twice the rate of the labour force as a whole (for the first half of 2011, 14.7 per cent vs. 7.8 percent, figures 1 and 2). In comparison, since the recession of 2008, several countries across the OECD² are experiencing large gaps between their youth and adult unemployment rates. For example, New Zealand, Sweden, and Luxembourg are now facing four-fold differences.³

Figure 1 - Youth Unemployment Rate as a Proportion of the Overall Unemployment Rate, Canada, 1976-2010 (Percent)



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

Germany has the lowest gap, and this is largely attributed to its successful apprenticeship system.

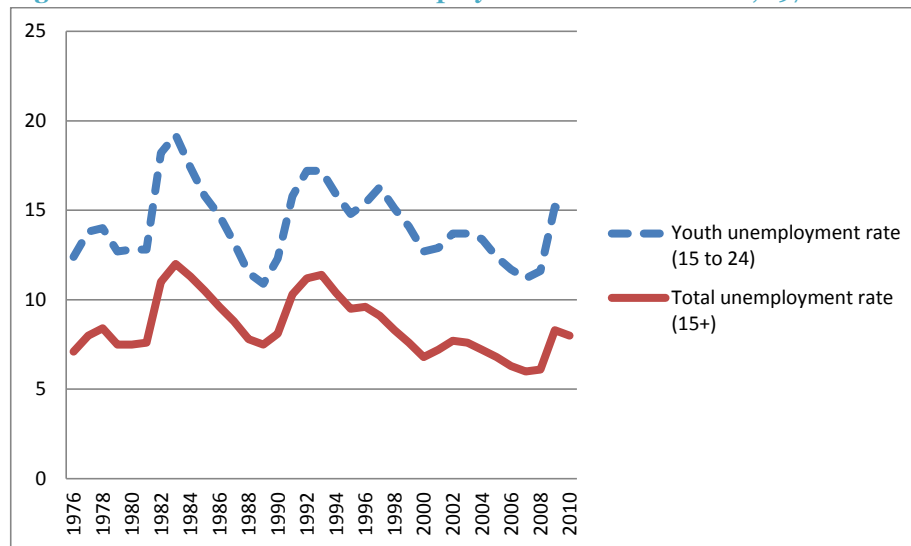
¹ The Economist online (2010, December 16). Young and jobless. Retrieved from http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2010/12/youth_unemployment

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

³ Scarpetta, S., Sonnet, A., & Manfred, T. (2010). Rising youth unemployment during the crisis: how to prevent negative long-term consequences on a generation? OECD. Retrieved from [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf/?cote=DELSA/ELSA/WD/SEM\(2010\)6&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf/?cote=DELSA/ELSA/WD/SEM(2010)6&doclanguage=en)

In Germany, youth can train for 350 different kinds of jobs, such as an industrial mechanic, baker or hair stylist. Even university students may be an “Azubi” (trainee), splitting their time between studying and earning money while gaining practical experience in fields such as biotech or aerospace. Apprenticeships give employers several years to train workers in company-specific skills and assess their abilities, and many trainees are offered full-time employment upon completion.^{4, 5}

Figure 2 - Youth versus Total Unemployment Rates in Canada, 1976-2010



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

Young people have always been more prone to higher unemployment rates than older, more experienced workers, which can lead to frustration and social problems. Recent international events, like the riots in the United Kingdom, have brought the issue of high youth unemployment rates to the forefront of public attention. While the situation in Canada is currently much better than many OECD countries, we need to pay attention to the long-term implications of our unemployment gap and to what might happen if it were to grow if our economy continues to waver.

So far, Canada’s youth are weathering the economic storm. Since we last reported on this issue, the national youth unemployment rate has dropped slightly from a recessionary peak of 15.2 percent in 2009. And, the recent rates are noticeably lower than during the previous recessions of the early 1980s and mid-1990s⁶.

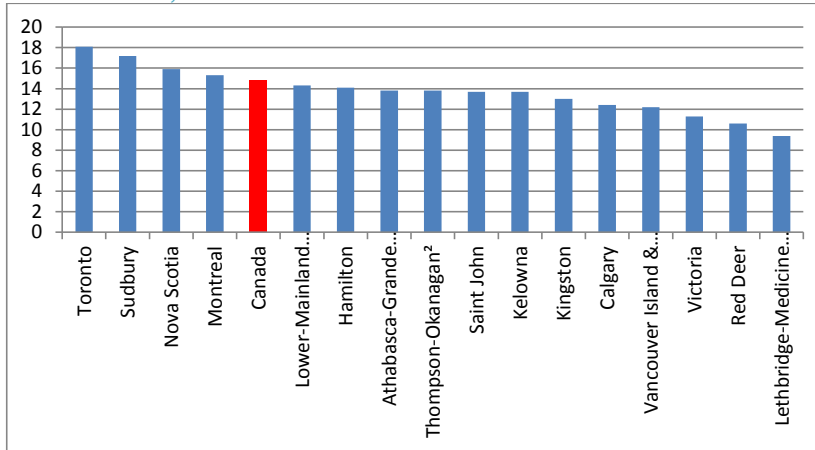
⁴ Rawe, J. (2006, April 11). How Germany keeps kids from dropping out. Time. Available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1182439,00.html>.

⁵ Ewing, J. (2009, October 7). The apprentice: Germany’s answer to jobless youth. Businessweek. Available at http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/09_42/b4151033735128.htm.

⁶ Labour Force Historical Review, 1996-R, cat. 71F0004XCP, Ottawa: Statistics Canada

But, when we look deeper within Canada, significant regional differences were evident in 2010. Across Vital Signs communities, youth unemployment rates ranged from a high of 18.1 percent in Toronto to a low of 9.4 percent in Lethbridge-Medicine Hat in 2010 (figure 3).

Figure 3 - Unemployment Rates for Youth (15 to 24 years), Vital Signs Communities, 2010



¹- Includes Sunshine Coast and Squamish

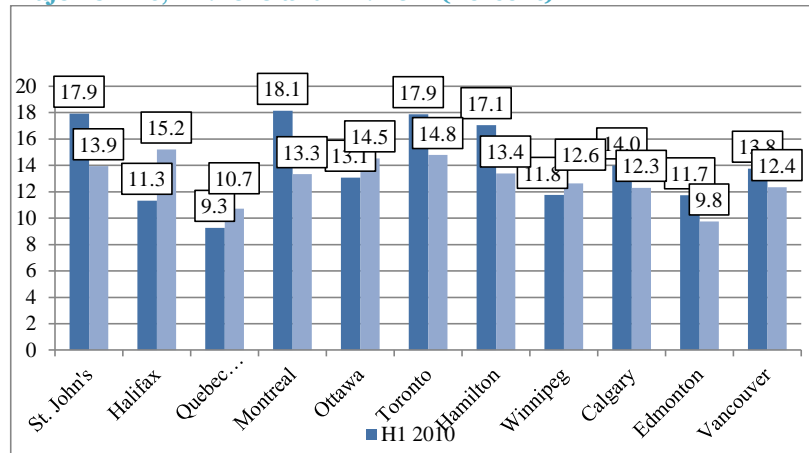
²- Includes Golden, Columbia-Shuswap A, Penticton, and Vernon

³- Includes Powell River

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

Among Canada's major CMAs, Halifax had the highest seasonally unadjusted youth unemployment rates in the first half of 2011 (15.2 percent), followed by Toronto (14.8 percent). This represented an improvement over the first half of 2010, where Toronto and St. John's saw youth unemployment rates of 17.9 percent respectively.

Figure 4 - Seasonally Unadjusted Unemployment Rates for Youth (15 to 24 years), Major CMAs, H1:2010 and H1: 2011 (Percent)



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

Researchers report that early spells of unemployment create permanent “scarring” – lower future earnings and increased likelihood of unemployment, as well as lower job satisfaction, happiness and health.⁷ The longer the unemployment period lasts, the longer the negative effects are likely to last. Getting off to a good start, therefore, not only has a profound influence on individuals’ later working life, but also on their social well-being.

In general, Canadian youth are faring better than in many other industrial countries, yet they are still facing higher unemployment rates than adults over 25. It is critical that this issue be addressed with systemic and sustainable solutions.

Health – Obesity

Obesity is one of the easiest health conditions to recognize; yet finding a remedy is proving difficult.⁸ Even with increased attention and action on the part of policymakers, business and the not-for-profit sector, our obesity rates continue to rise and rise. The most recent statistics (2010) show that 18.1 per cent of Canadian adults self-report that they are obese, an increase of 2.8 percentage points since 2003 (figure 1).⁹ The

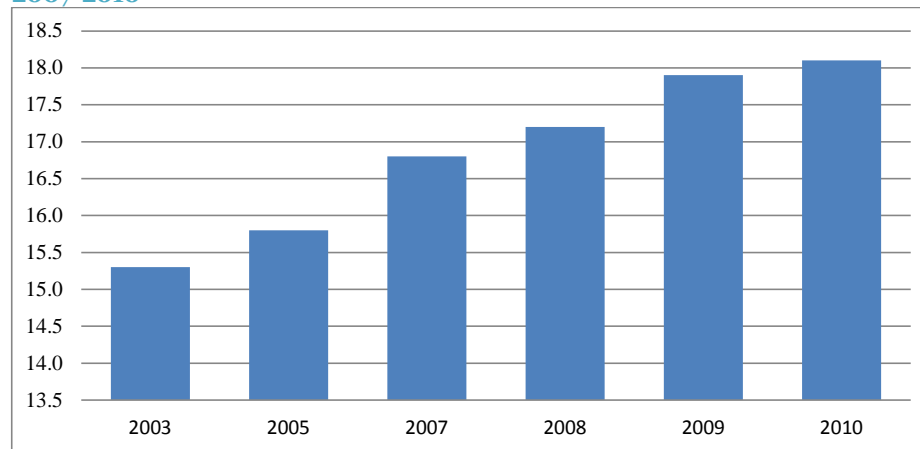
⁷ Scarpetta, S., Sonnet, A., & Manfred, T. (2010). Rising youth unemployment during the crisis: how to prevent negative long-term consequences on a generation? Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved from [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf/?cote=DELSA/ELSA/WD/SEM\(2010\)6&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf/?cote=DELSA/ELSA/WD/SEM(2010)6&doclanguage=en).

⁸ Shannon, M. (2011). The history of obesity in children. Retrieved from <http://www.livestrong.com/article/364363-the-history-of-obesity-in-children/#ixzz1VstQ61Qz>.

⁹ The most common tool for measuring obesity today is the body-mass index (BMI). From a statistical standpoint, a person with a BMI of 30 or greater is considered obese. However, the BMI measurement can be misleading as it does not account for percentage of body fat or bone mass (i.e. a muscular person may have a high BMI), but in general, it is considered to be a useful indicator.

prevalence rate is even higher, according to measured height and weight data¹⁰ – about 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 11 children.¹¹

Figure 1 - Self-reported Obesity Rates (age 18 and over) in Canada, 2003, 2005, and 2007-2010



Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Indicator Reports.

The figures are startling and alarms about the growing obesity epidemic in Canada have been sounded with increasing severity over the past decade.^{12,13} In an effort to curb the problem, governments at all levels have introduced a variety of policy interventions, including:^{14,15}

- Better food labeling
- Limiting the availability of “unhealthy” foods in schools
- Maternal child health programs
- Physical activity guides for children and youth
- Programs to support healthy eating in Aboriginal communities
- Reducing trans fat in the food supply

¹⁰Estimates of obesity differ depending on whether they are self-reported or direct measures. Research studies have found that self-reports typically underestimate weight and overestimate height. [Shields, M., Connor Gorber, S., & Tremblay, M. (2008). Estimates of obesity based on self-report versus direct measures. Health Reports (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 82-003), 19(2). Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2008002/article/10569-eng.pdf>].

¹¹ Public Health Agency of Canada and Canadian Institute for Health Information (2011). Obesity in Canada. Retrieved from <https://secure.cihi.ca/estore/productFamily.htm?locale=en&pf=PFC1636>.

¹² Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (2003). The growing burden of heart disease and stroke in Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.cvdinfobase.ca/cvdbook/En/Index.htm>.

¹³ Canadian Institute for Health Information (2003). Obesity in Canada: Identifying Policy Priorities. Retrieved from http://secure.cihi.ca/cihiweb/products/CPHI_proceed_e.pdf.

¹⁴ House of Commons Canada (2007). Healthy weights for healthy children. Report of the Standing Committee on Health. Retrieved from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=2795145&File=0>.

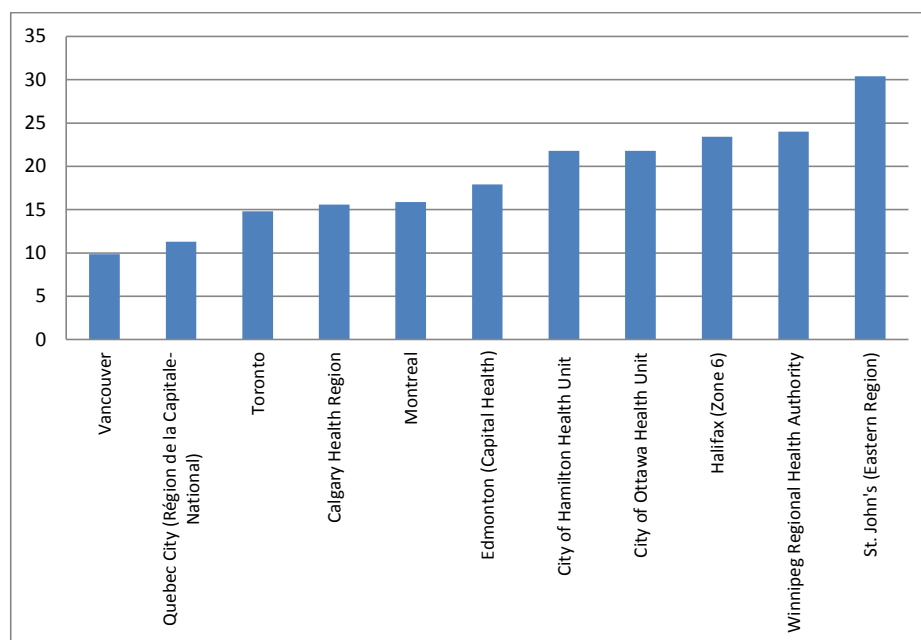
¹⁵ Parliament of Canada (n.d.). Government response to the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Health: Healthy weights for healthy children. Available at: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=3067091&Language=E&Mode=1>.

- Revisions to Canada’s Food Guide
- Tax incentives to promote physical activity

In 2007, the Federal Government introduced two such initiatives – funding for the re-launch of ParticiPACTION¹⁶ and the Children’s Fitness Tax Credit. Both of these initiatives are intended to encourage and support physical activity in daily life. The fitness credit, for example, provides parents with tax savings of up to \$75 per child (i.e. 15 per cent of a maximum \$500 in eligible sports and recreation fees). This saving can be increased by another \$75 if the child has a disability.

So, are we making a difference? Not yet. In general, the prevalence of obesity across Canada has increased, and this trend does not appear to waning. Among the major Canadian CMAs (Census Metropolitan Areas) in 2010, the lowest self-reported obesity rates are found in Vancouver (9.8 per cent), Quebec City (11.3 per cent), and Toronto (14.8 per cent), and the highest rates are in St. John’s (30.4 per cent), Winnipeg (24.0 per cent), and Halifax (23.4 per cent) (figure 2).

Figure 2 - Obesity Rates (age 18 and over) in Major CMAs, 2010



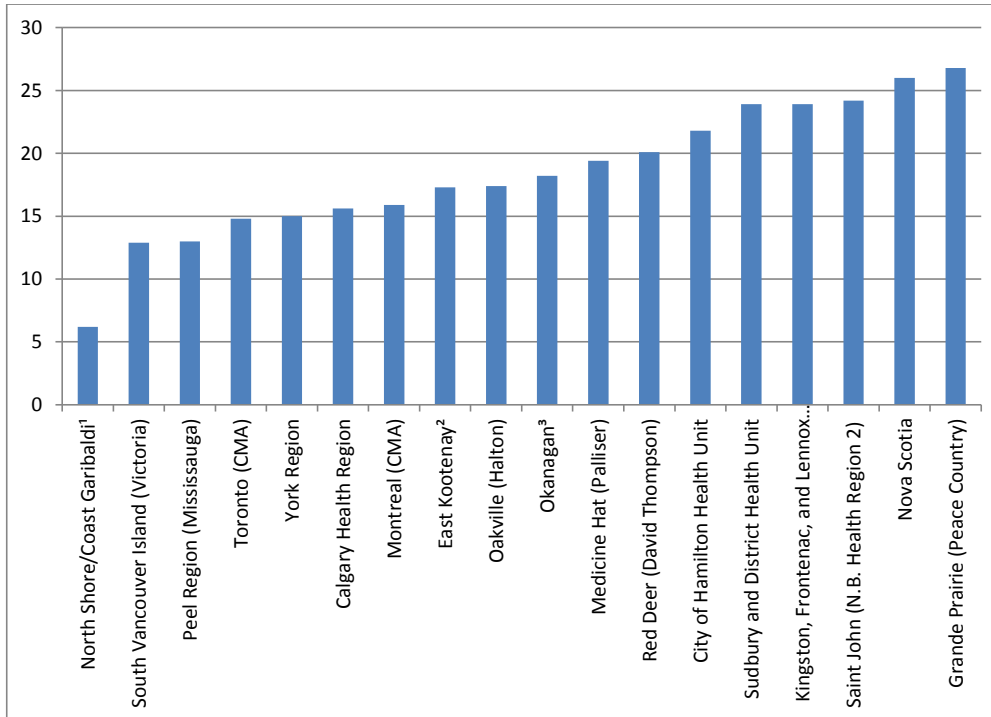
Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Indicator Reports.

Among Vital Signs communities, both the lowest and highest rates are attributed to populations living in small town communities – Sunshine Coast, Squamish and Powell River, BC and Grand Prairie, Alberta (6.2 per cent and 26.0 per cent in 2010 respectively), and the obesity rates for

¹⁶ <http://www.participaction.com>

urban centers are all over the map (figure 3).

Figure 3 - Obesity Rates (Age 18 and Over) In Vital Signs Communities, 2010



¹- Includes Sunshine Coast, Squamish, and Powell River

²- Includes Golden and Columbia-Shuswap A

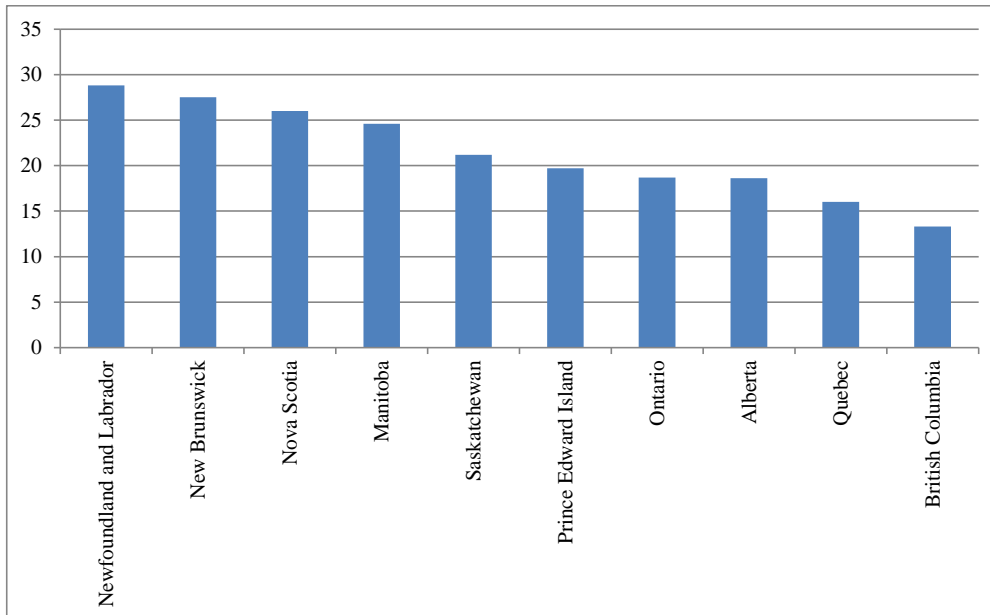
³- Includes Kelowna, Penticton, and Vernon

Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Indicator Reports.

As illustrated below, obesity is widespread across the country (figure 4). The economic toll of which is currently estimated to range from \$4.6 to \$7.1 billion annually.¹⁷

¹⁷ Public Health Agency of Canada and Canadian Institute for Health Information (2011). Obesity in Canada. Retrieved from <https://secure.cihi.ca/estore/productFamily.htm?locale=en&pf=PFC1636>.

Figure 4 - Obesity Rates (Age 18 and Over) By Province, 2010, Per Cent



Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Indicator Reports

Obesity occurs when a body consumes more calories than it burns, resulting in an over-accumulation of body fat. In the past, people believed that obesity was simply caused by overeating and under-exercising. Although these are major contributing factors, we now recognize that obesity is a complex health problem involving a mix of genetic, lifestyle, cultural, social, behavioural, and environmental factors.

Scientific knowledge of obesity is still evolving and incomplete, but the health risks that have been associated with it are many. They include common ailments like high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, breathing problems, and joint pains, as well as chronic conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Obesity has also been related to other non-medical problems such as low self-esteem, discrimination, and difficulty finding employment. In other words, it negatively affects not only one's health and life expectancy, but also general quality of life.

Today, there are more obese people living in Canada than ever. The conditions that led to this epidemic are complex and multi-faceted. Experts tell us that while there are a variety of government-led strategies in place, a coordinated and multi-faceted approach is missing. The Government of Alberta recently launched a new Obesity Initiative that coordinates multiple strategies combining prevention and interventions. Estimating that obesity costs the Alberta taxpayer over \$1.4 B annually in health care system costs, reduced quality of life and lost productivity, the government will be investing almost \$11 M in the first year of a five year plan that includes weight-management training for health care providers, community education and

increased access to bariatric surgery. Amongst Vital Signs communities those in Alberta have amongst the highest obesity rates, with Grande Prairie topping the list at 26.8 per cent of adults. As part of the Obesity Initiative a new specialty care clinic featuring bariatric surgery will be established in Grande Prairie to serve Northern populations.

Economy – Consumer and Business Bankruptcies

Despite the recent economic downturn, businesses are faring better than consumers when it comes to ‘staying in the black.’ Over the past decade, business bankruptcies have been cut in half, while personal bankruptcies have grown. In 2010, there were 4,072 business bankruptcies – a decrease of 59.5% since 2000. In comparison, there were 92,694 consumer bankruptcies in Canada – an increase of 23.4% over the same time period (figures 1 & 2). Both rates fluctuated with the introduction of changes to existing bankruptcy laws but these alone do not explain the sharp trends.

Figure 1 - Business and Consumer Bankruptcies in Canada, 2000 and 2010

	Business Bankruptcies	Consumer Bankruptcies
2000	10,055	75,131
2010	4,072	92,694
% Change	-59.5%	+23.4%

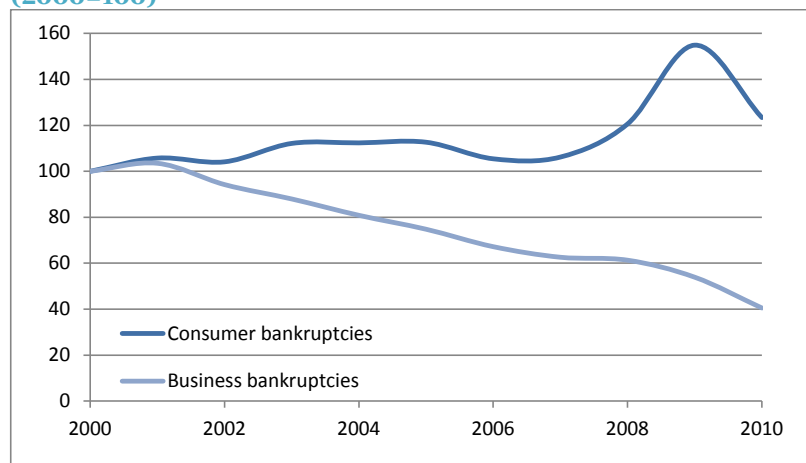
Source: Industry Canada, Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada.

A possible explanation for the divergence is that businesses tend to lay off employees during recessionary times. The number of persons on temporary layoff, for example, went from 77,300 in 2008 to 117,000 in 2009. In so doing, businesses are able to stave off bankruptcy by cutting costs. But, the negative result is that consumers, who now find themselves jobless and unable to cover their loans payments, are driven into personal bankruptcy.

In addition, household debt in Canada reached a record \$1.5 trillion in the first quarter of 2011. According to a recent survey by the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada, close to 60% of indebted respondents report that day-to-day living expenses are the main cause. One in five Canadians would not be able to handle an unforeseen expenditure of \$5,000, even with access to credit cards and lines of credit.¹⁸ While consumer debt levels have increased substantially over time, business debt levels have fallen.

¹⁸ Certified General Accountants Association of Canada (2011). A driving force no more: Have Canadian consumers reached their limits? Available at http://www.cga-canada.org/en-ca/ResearchAndAdvocacy/AreasOfInterest/DebtandConsumption/Pages/ca_debt_default.aspx.

Figure 2 – Business and Consumer Bankruptcies in Canada, 2000-2010 (2000=100)



Source: Industry Canada, Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada

Canadians in every region of the country are filing for bankruptcy. The geographic variations, however, do not necessarily reflect the relative strength of local economies, as regulations determining the value of personal assets exempted from seizure and sale in a bankruptcy vary from province to province.¹⁹

Among Canada’s major CMAs, Montreal had the highest rates of both business and personal bankruptcies in 2009 (4.8 per 1,000 businesses and 5.7 per 1,000 persons respectively). Overall, Winnipeg reported the lowest rates (0.6 bankruptcies per 1,000 businesses, and 2.9 per 1,000 persons). But, the lowest personal bankruptcy rate of all major CMAs was in Vancouver (2.5 per 1,000 persons) (figure 3).

Figure 3 – Business And Consumer Bankruptcies, Major CMAs, 2009

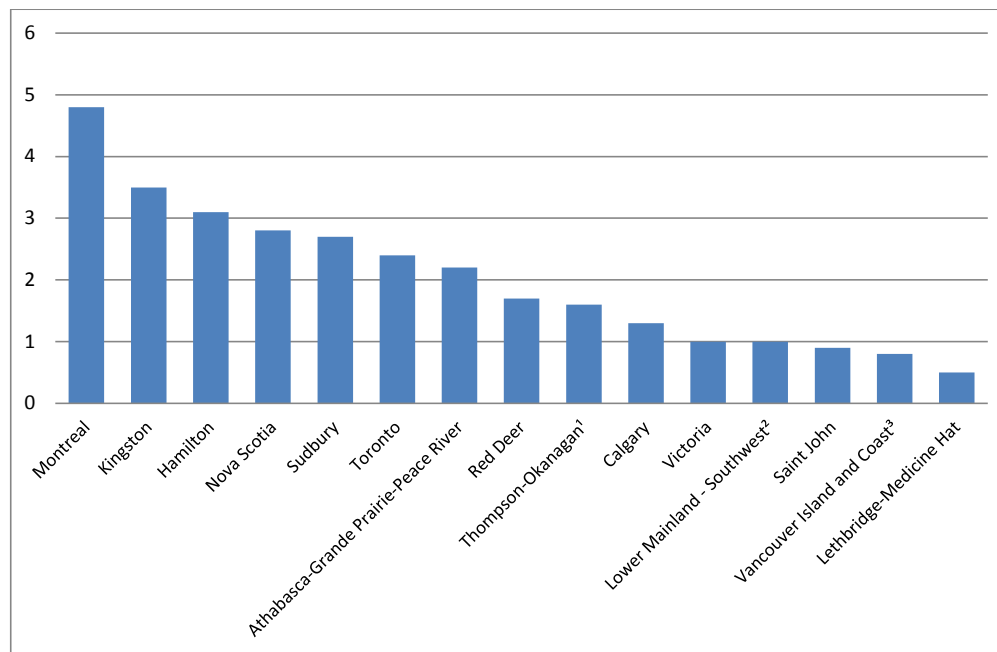
	Consumer Bankruptcies per 1,000 Persons	Business Bankruptcies per 1,000 Businesses
Montreal	5.7	4.8
Halifax	5.5	2.8
St. John's	4.9	1.1
Hamilton	4.8	3.1
Ottawa	4.4	2.6
Quebec City	4.2	3.2
Toronto	3.5	2.4

¹⁹ BC Stats (1998, March). Business bankruptcies ease with low interest rates, but consumer bankruptcies continue to climb. Small Business Quarterly. Retrieved from <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/sbq/sbq97q4.pdf>

Edmonton	3.5	0.9
Calgary	3.4	1.3
Winnipeg	2.9	0.6
Vancouver	2.5	1.0

The Vital Signs communities with the highest *business* bankruptcy rates in 2009 were: Montreal, Kingston and Hamilton (4.8, 3.5, and 3.1 per 1,000 businesses respectively). And the lowest commercial rates were found in the Lethbridge-Medicine Hat economic region (Medicine Hat), Vancouver Island and Coast economic region (Powell River), and St. John (0.9, 0.8 and 0.5 respectively) (figure 4).

Figure 4 - Business Bankruptcies Per 1,000 Businesses, Vital Signs Communities, 2009



¹-Includes Kelowna, Golden, Columbia-Shuswap A, Vernon, and Penticton

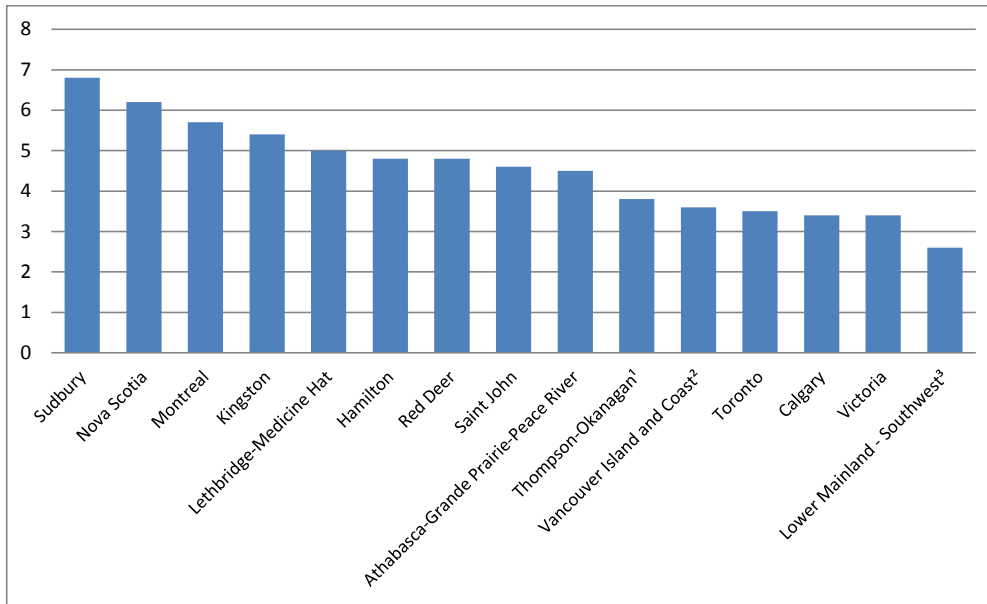
²-Includes Sunshine Coast and Squamish

³-Includes Powell River

Source: Industry Canada, Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada.

The Vital Signs communities with the three highest *consumer* bankruptcy rates in 2009 were Sudbury, Nova Scotia and Montreal (6.8, 6.2, 5.7 per 1,000 persons respectively). The three lowest personal insolvency rates were found in the Lower Mainland-Southwest economic region (Squamish and Sunshine Coast), Victoria and Calgary (2.6, 3.4 and 3.4 respectively) (figure 5).

Figure 5 - Consumer Bankruptcies Per 1,000 Persons, Vital Signs Communities, 2009



¹-Includes Kelowna, Golden, Columbia-Shuswap A, Vernon, and Penticton

²-Includes Powell River

³-Includes Sunshine Coast and Squamish

Source: Industry Canada, Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada.

Although unemployment is a key trigger of personal bankruptcy, there is a wide range of causes, the most important of which is over-extension of credit. Other causes include: relationship breakdown, medical problems, money mismanagement, insufficient income, inadequate pension, seasonal employment, failed business, and failure to pay taxes.

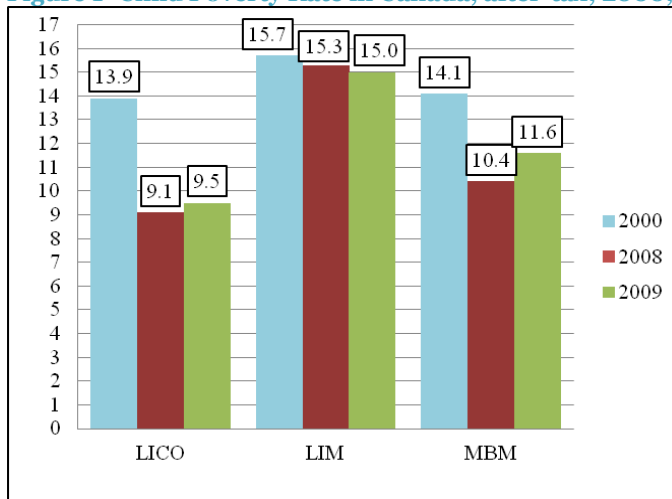
In conclusion, businesses are able to stave off bankruptcy in recessionary times by laying off employees. However, unemployment coupled with high household debt has driven many families into bankruptcy, with many more living on the edge.

Gap Between Rich and Poor: Child (0-17 years of age) Poverty Rate

Many people are concerned about the distribution of income in society, the gap between rich and poor. A large gap implies a society that is not particularly equitable while a small gap implies a more equitable society. The poverty rate is one method of assessing the gap between the rich and poor. The child poverty rate is especially relevant because it concerns the group least able to improve their situation.

Statistics Canada produces three measures of poverty: the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), the Market Basket Measure (MBM) and the Low Income Measure (LIM). The LICO “is an income where, on average, a person (or family) spends at least **20 per cent more** of their total income on food, shelter and clothing than is spent by similar persons or families in similar locations.”ⁱⁱⁱ In contrast, the LIM “is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted family income, where “adjusted” indicates that family needs are taken into account”.ⁱⁱⁱ The MBM “is based on a specific transparent basket of goods and services”.ⁱⁱⁱ This basket includes food, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation and other household needs. It is important to note that the LIM is a relative measure of poverty, whereas the MBM and the LICO are absolute measures of poverty.

Figure 1- Child Poverty Rate in Canada, after-tax, 2000, 2008 and 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 202-0802.

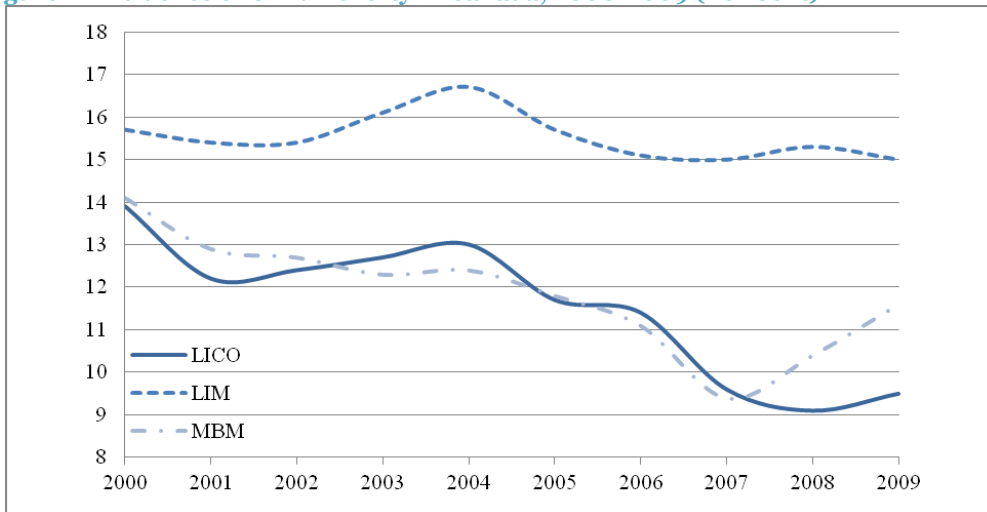
The three poverty measures gave different rates of child poverty in Canada in 2009. The LICO measure was the lowest, at 9.5 per cent, while the MBM was slightly higher at 11.6 per cent (all measures are for after-tax income) (figure 1). The LIM rate was significantly higher at 15.0 per cent. Both the LICO and the MBM child poverty rates experienced an increase in 2009 relative to the level in 2008. The LICO rate rose 0.4 percentage points from 9.1 per cent in 2008, and the MBM 1.2 points from 10.4 per cent. This rise reflected the impact of the recession, which started during the second half of 2008 and carried on throughout 2009, on employment and incomes. The LIM rate decreased slightly in 2009, falling 0.3 percentage points from 15.3 per cent in 2008 to 15.0 per cent. While the fact that this measure of poverty actually decreased during a recession seems counter-intuitive, it becomes less surprising when one considers the mechanics of the LIM. Because the LIM is a relative measure of poverty, it can fall during a recession if the well-off become relatively poorer,

thereby compressing the spread of incomes. In such a situation, the LIM may fall despite the material conditions of the poor worsening.

The two absolute measures of child poverty (LICO and MBM) have seen significant declines throughout the 2000s (figure 2). The LICO fell 31.7 per cent or 4.4 percentage points from 13.9 per cent in 2000 to 9.5 per cent in 2009. The MBM fell 17.7 per cent or 2.5 percentage points from 14.1 per cent in 2000 to 11.6 per cent in 2009. The LIM, a relative measure of poverty, fell as well over this period, albeit at a much slower rate. It fell 4.5 per cent over the 2000-2009 period, decreasing 0.7 percentage points from 15.7 per cent in 2000 to 15.0 per cent in 2009.

The fall in the absolute poverty rates between 2000 and 2009 reflected the strong income growth of the 2000s as well as the falling unemployment rate. However, the increased real income had little effect on the LIM, the relative poverty measure, as there was virtually no narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor in the 2000s. Such a narrowing is required for the LIM to fall.

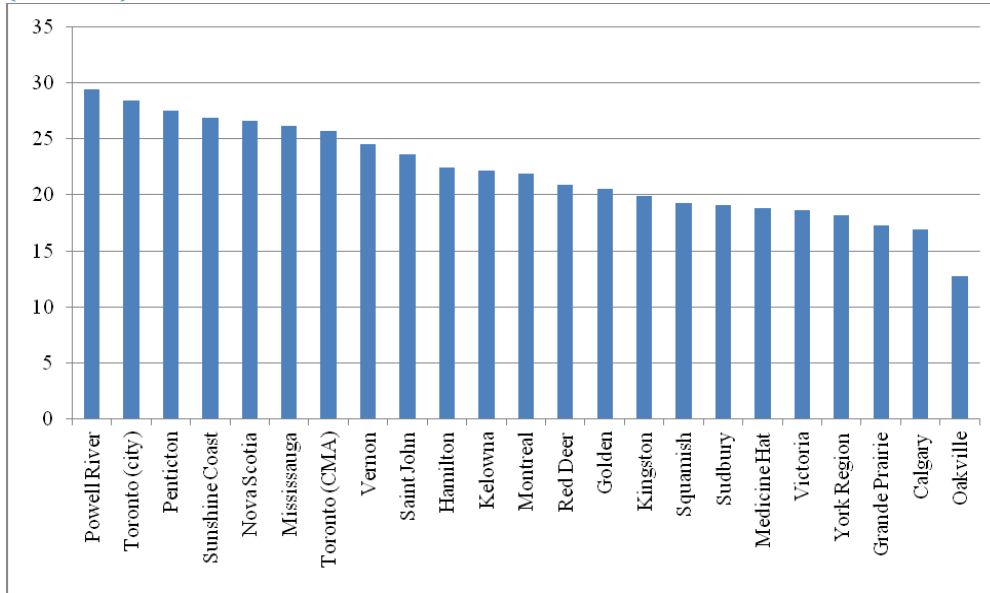
Figure 2- Incidence of Child Poverty in Canada, 2000-2009 (Per Cent)



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 202-0802.

According to the pre-tax child poverty rate based on the LIMⁱⁱⁱ, Powell River had the highest child poverty rate among Vital Signs communities in 2009, at 29.4 per cent. The city of Toronto and Penticton followed, at 28.4 and 27.5 per cent respectively. Oakville had the lowest child poverty rate in 2009 based on this measure, at 12.7 per cent. This was followed by Calgary, at 16.9 per cent, and Grande Prairie, at 17.3 per cent. It should be noted that the pre-tax child poverty rate based on the LIM appears much higher than the after-tax rate. This is because Canada's progressive tax system taxes the wealthy more heavily than it taxes the poor, thereby compressing the income spread and lowering the after-tax poverty rate based on the LIM relative to the pre-tax rate.

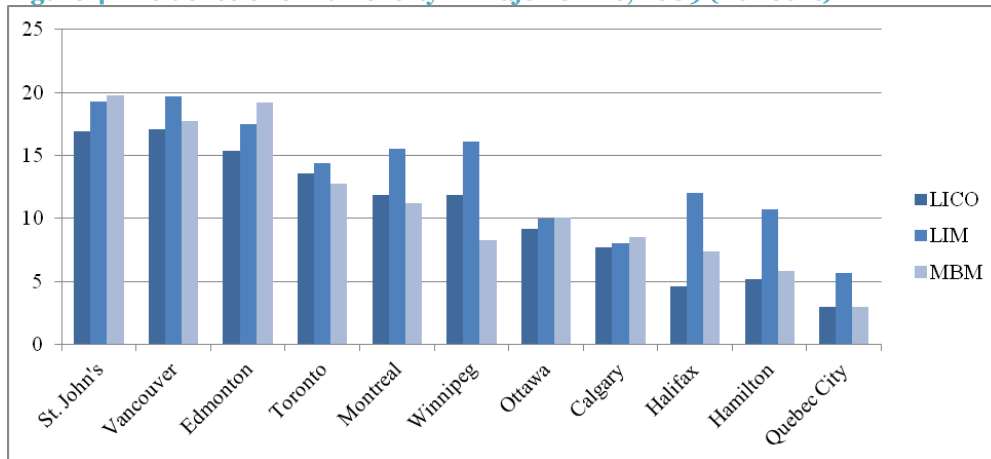
Figure 3- Incidence of Child Poverty in Vital Signs Communities, Pre-Tax, LIM, 2009 (Per Cent)



Source: Statistics Canada, based on tax data.

Among major CMAsⁱⁱⁱ in Canada, Vancouver had the highest incidence of child poverty based on the LICO, at 17.1 per cent, while Quebec City had the lowest at 3.0 per cent (figure 4). Using the MBM, St. John's had the highest child poverty rate at 19.8 per cent, and Quebec City had the lowest with 3.0 per cent. In terms of the LIM, Vancouver had the highest incidence of child poverty at 19.7 per cent, and Quebec City again had the lowest incidence at 5.7 per cent. Quebec City is consistently the largest CMA with the lowest poverty rate, regardless of the type of measurement used.

Figure 4- Incidence of Child Poverty in Major CMAs, 2009 (Per Cent)



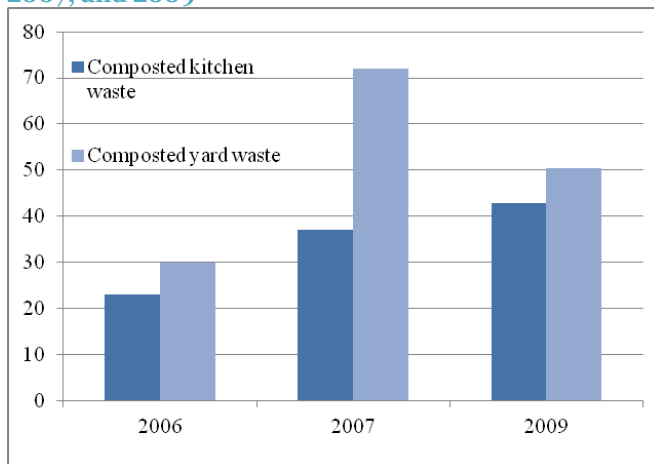
Source: Statistics Canada, based on the Survey of Labour and Income Data (SLID). CANSIM Table 202-0802.

Note: CMAs are organised from highest to lowest based on the average of the three poverty measures.

Environment: Households that Composted Kitchen and Yard Waste

Composting is a recycling process that transforms organic waste into fertilizer that is useful for agricultural and gardening purposes, as well as helping to save landfill space. It is encouraging to see that regular composting is on the rise in Canada. In 2009, 43 per cent of households in Canada composted their kitchen waste, up 15.8 per cent from 37 per cent in 2007, and up 86.3 per cent from 23 per cent in 2006 (figure 1). In the same year, 50 per cent of households that were not apartment dwellers and had a lawn or a garden reported composting their yard waste, down 29.9 per cent from 72 per cent in 2007, and up 68.3 per cent from 30 per cent in 2006.

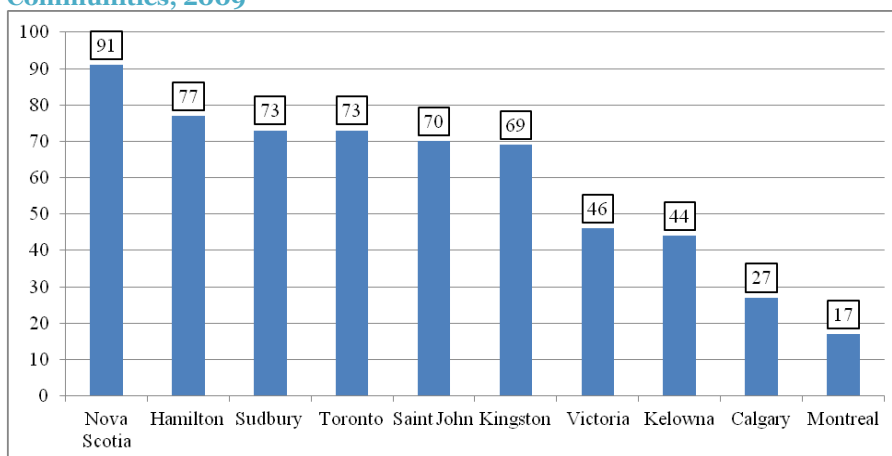
Figure 1- Households that Composted Kitchen or Yard Waste, Canada, Per Cent, 2006, 2007, and 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Households and Environment Survey

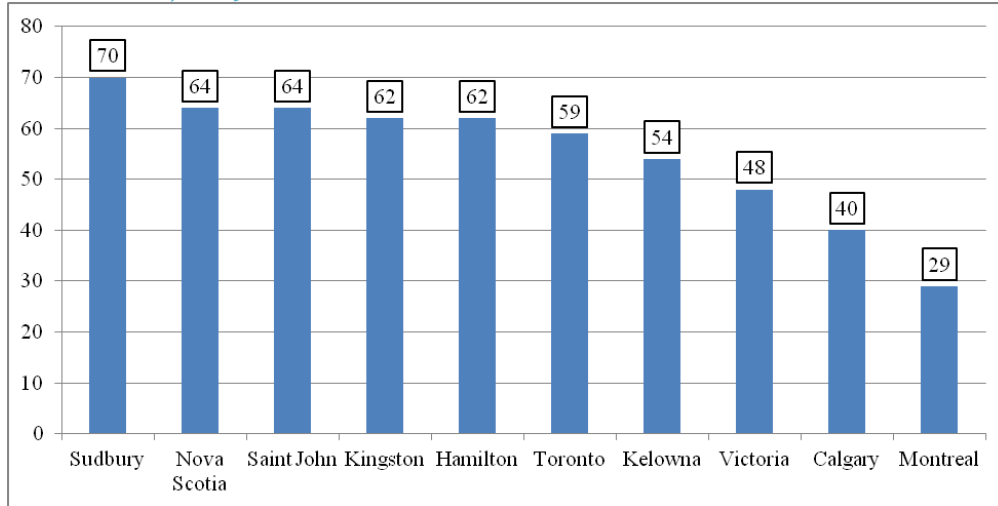
Among the Vital Signs communities for which data are available, Nova Scotia and Hamilton had the highest proportions of households that composted kitchen waste in 2009 at 91 and 77 per cent respectively (figure 2). Montreal and Calgary had the smallest proportion of households composting kitchen waste, at 17 and 27 per cent respectively. The communities with the highest proportions of households that composted yard waste were Sudbury, Saint John, and Nova Scotia, at 70, 64, and 64 per cent respectively. Montreal and Calgary again had the smallest proportions, at 29 and 40 per cent respectively. These figures are likely more reflective of the development of local composting programs, as well as the proportion of households that have access to these services, more so than any particular proclivity for composting among the members of these communities.

Figure 2- Per Cent of Households that Composted Kitchen Waste, Selected Vital Signs Communities, 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Households and Environment Survey

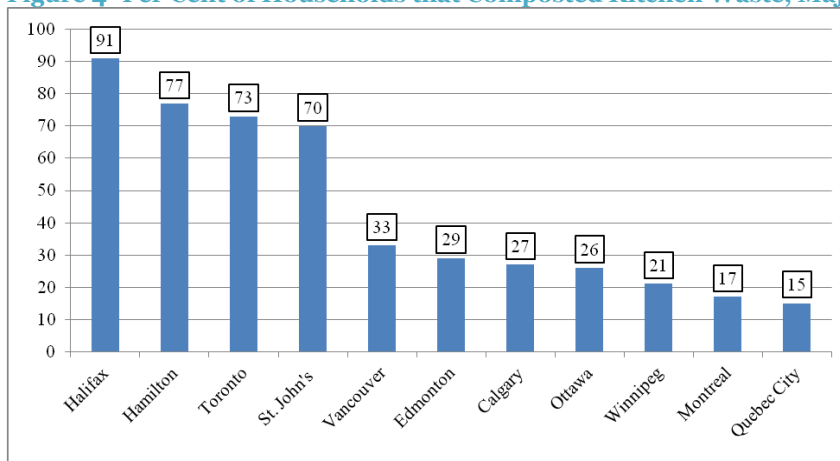
Figure 3- Per Cent of Households that Composted Yard Waste, Vital Signs Communities, 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Households and Environment Survey

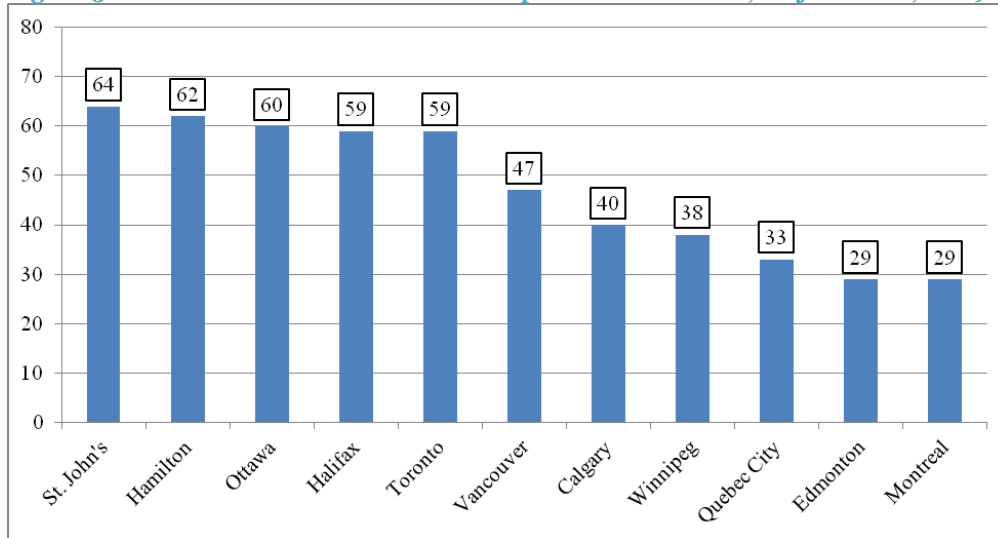
Among major CMAs, Halifax had the highest proportion of households that composted kitchen waste in 2009, at 91 per cent, followed by Hamilton at 77 per cent (figure 4). The CMAs with the smallest proportions of households that composted kitchen waste were Quebec City, at 15 per cent, and Montreal, at 17 per cent. In terms of households that composted yard waste, St. John's and Hamilton had the highest rates, at 64 and 62 per cent respectively (figure 5). The lowest rates were found in Montreal and Edmonton, both at 29 per cent.

Figure 4- Per Cent of Households that Composted Kitchen Waste, Major CMAs, 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Households and Environment Survey

Figure 5- Per Cent of Households that Composted Yard Waste, Major CMAs, 2009



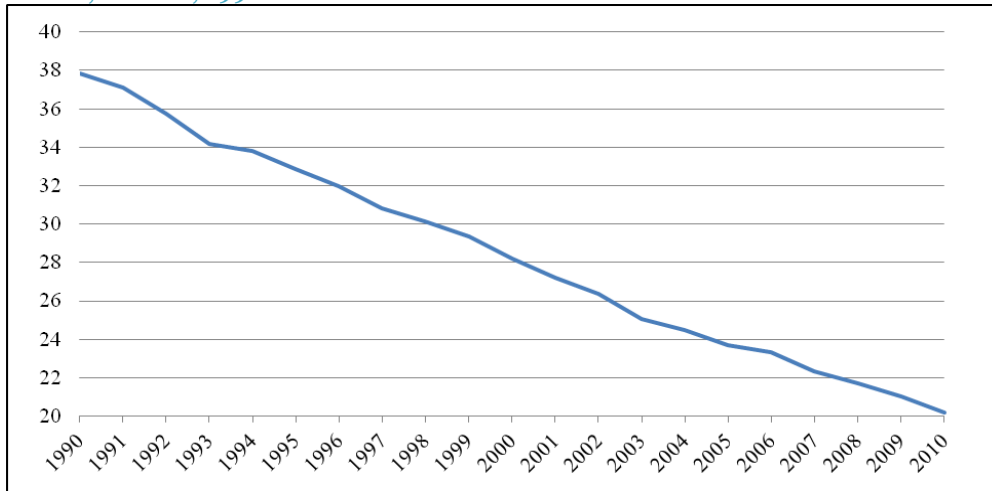
Source: Statistics Canada, Households and Environment Survey

Learning: High School Non-Completion

Educational attainment is very important to living standards as it is strongly linked with future employment status and income level. High school completion is especially important, as it is considered the bare minimum level of education necessary for the vast majority of jobs. Annual data on high-school non-completion rates are readily available from the Labour Force Survey for the 15 and older age group, but only for CMAs, provinces, and economic regions. Census data for the 25-64 age group, available for 2001 and 2006, provides an accurate picture of high-school non-completion at the municipal level.

In 2010, 20.2 per cent of Canadians aged 15 and over had not completed high school, down from 37.8 per cent in 1990, the first year for which comparable data are available (figure 1). This represents a decrease of 46.6 per cent or 17.6 percentage points.

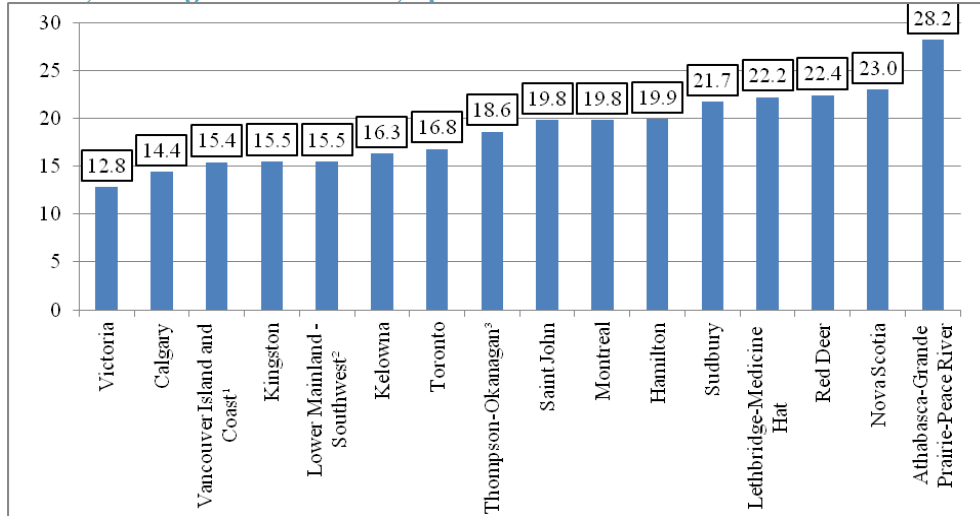
Figure 1- Proportion of Population (15 years and older) that Have Not Completed High School, Canada, 1990-2010



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 282-0004.

The proportion of the population that has not completed high school varies significantly among Vital Signs communities. The lowest proportion in 2010 was in Victoria at 12.8 per cent, followed by Calgary at 14.4 per cent, and the Vancouver Island and Coast economic region, which includes Powell River, at 15.4 per cent (figure 2). The communities with the highest proportion are the Athabasca-Grande Prairie-Peace River economic region, which includes Grande Prairie, at 28.2 per cent, followed by Nova Scotia at 23.0 per cent, and the Red Deer economic region at 22.4 per cent.

Figure 2- Proportion of Population (15 years and older) that has not completed high school, Vital Signs Communities, April 2010



¹-Includes Powell River

²-Includes Squamish and Sunshine Coast

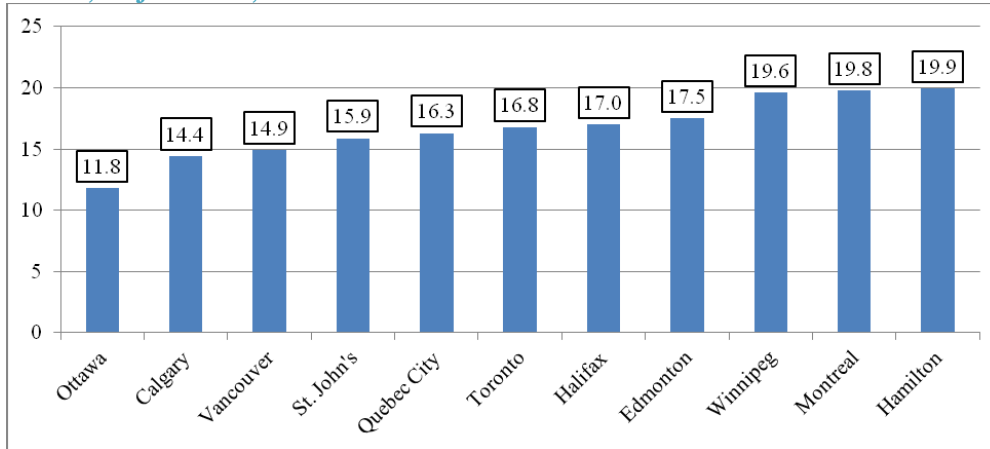
³-Includes Golden, Columbia-Shuswap A, Penticton, and Vernon

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

The high rate of high-school non-completion in Alberta is closely linked to the ready availability of employment opportunities for the poorly educated, especially in the more rural areas. While Calgary ranks among the Vital Signs communities with the lowest high school non-completion rate, the three Albertan economic regions, Lethbridge-Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Athabasca-Grande Prairie-Peace River, account for three of the top four high school non-completion rates in Vital Signs.

Among major CMAs, Hamilton had the highest high school non-completion rate for the population 15 years and older in 2010, at 19.9 per cent (figure 3). Montreal had the second highest high school non-completion rate at 19.8 per cent in 2010, followed by Winnipeg, at 19.6 per cent. In 2010, the CMA with the lowest high school non-completion rate for the population 15 years and older was Ottawa, with 11.8 per cent, followed by Calgary and Vancouver with 14.4 and 14.9 per cent respectively.

Figure 3- Proportion of Population (15 years and older) that Have Not Completed High School, Major CMAs, 2010

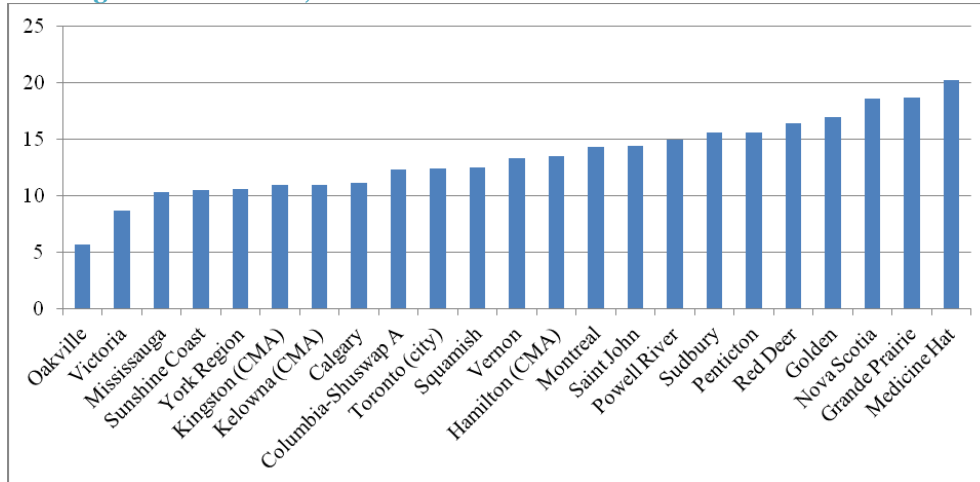


Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

In 2006, the Canadian high school non-completion rate for the 25-64 age group was 15.4 per cent, down 37.3 per cent or 9.2 percentage points from 24.6 per cent in 2001 (figure 4). All Vital Signs communities saw a decrease in the proportion of the population that had not completed high school in the 25-64 age group from 2001 to 2006.

The Vital Signs community with the highest high school non-completion rate for the 25-64 age group in 2006 was Medicine Hat, at 20.3 per cent, followed by Grande Prairie at 18.7 per cent and Nova Scotia at 18.6 per cent. Oakville had the lowest non-completion rate, at 5.7 per cent, followed by Victoria at 8.7 per cent and Mississauga at 10.3 per cent.

Figure 4- Proportion of Population (age 25-64) that Have Not Completed High School, Vital Signs Communities, 2006



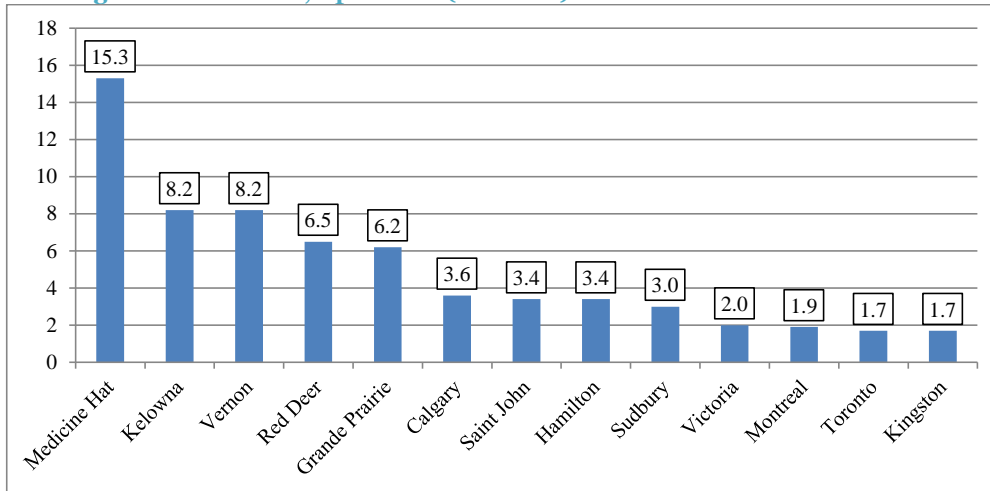
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001 and 2006, Topic-based Tabulations.

Housing: Rental Row and Apartment Vacancy Rates (2 bedroom units)

The rental vacancy rate is an indicator of the state of the rental housing market in an area. On the one hand, a high rental vacancy rate indicates a weak rental property market. It could reflect the outward migration of the population due to limited employment opportunities, or that developers have overestimated the demand for real estate and overbuilt. Renters benefit from high vacancy rates, as it means they have more options available to them, and at better prices. A low vacancy rate indicates the opposite – it could mean the area is experiencing rapid population growth, or that the supply of rentable property is too low. Low vacancy rates pose a challenge for prospective renters, as it limits their options in terms of housing.

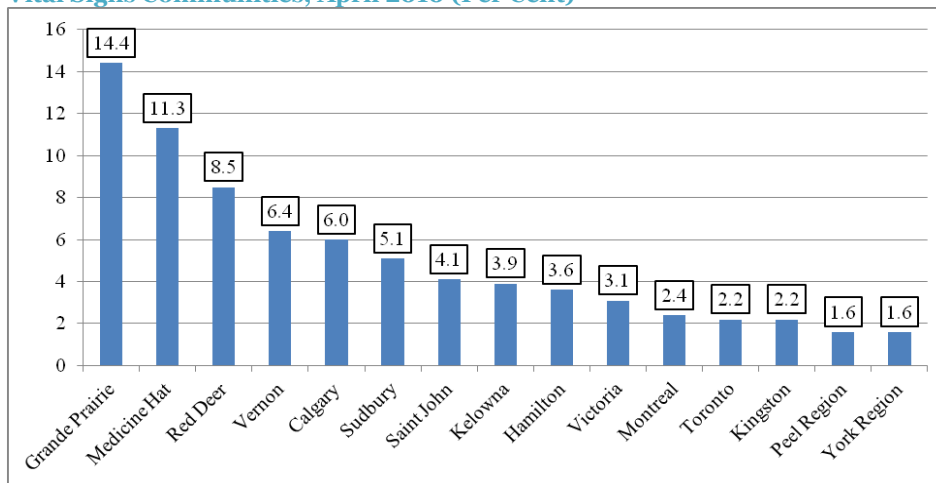
Medicine Hat had the highest rental vacancy rate for two bedroom units of all Vital Signs communities in April 2011, at 15.3 per cent, followed by Kelowna at 8.2 per cent and Vernon, also at 8.2 per cent (figure 1). The communities with the lowest vacancy rates were Kingston and Toronto, both at 1.7 per cent. Montreal followed, at 2.2 per cent. On average, large Census Agglomerations (population of 50,000 or greater) across all of Canada experienced a higher rental vacancy rate than all CMAs (4.3 per cent versus 2.3 per cent).

Figure 1- Rental Vacancy Rates for Rental Row and Apartment 2 Bedroom Units in Vital Signs Communities, April 2011 (Per Cent)



Rental vacancy rates for two bedroom units decreased in most communities in 2011, relative to 2010. Across CMAs, the rate decreased 17.9 per cent from 2.8 to 2.3 per cent, while in large Census Agglomerations it decreased 6.5 per cent from 4.6 to 4.3 per cent. Among Vital Signs communities, Kelowna experienced the highest increase in the vacancy rate in 2011, as its vacancy rate increased 110.3 per cent from 3.9 per cent in 2010 to 8.2 per cent. Grande Prairie experienced the largest decline in its vacancy rate in 2011, as its fell 56.9 per cent from 14.4 to 6.2 per cent.

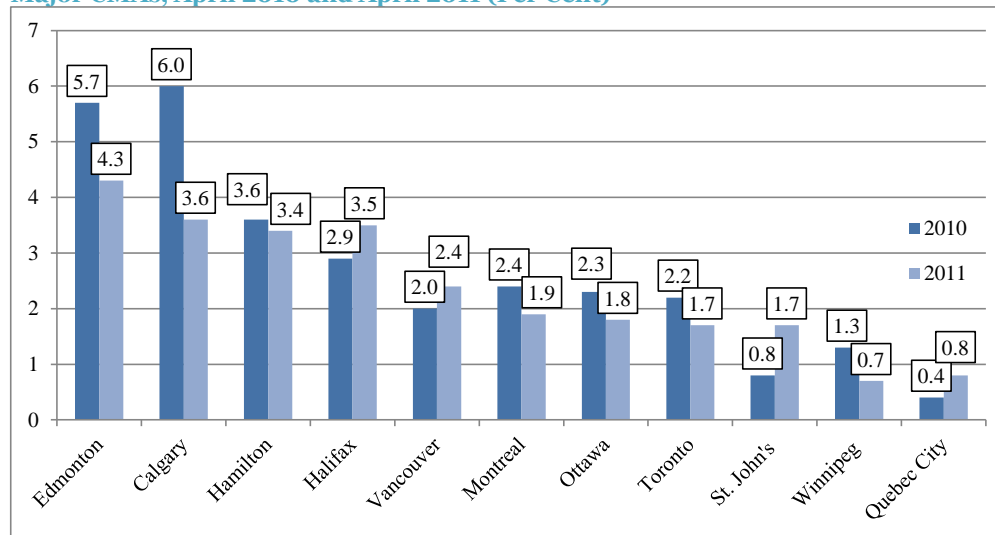
Figure 2- Rental Vacancy Rates for Rental Row and Apartment 2 Bedroom Units in Vital Signs Communities, April 2010 (Per Cent)



Source: CMHC, Housing Market Information: Rental Market Statistics.

For major CMAs, the lowest rental vacancy rate for two bedroom units was found in Winnipeg, which had a 0.7 per cent vacancy rate in 2011 (figure 3). Quebec City followed, with 0.8 per cent. Edmonton had the highest vacancy rate for two bedroom units, at 4.3 per cent, followed by Calgary with 3.6 per cent, and Halifax with 3.5 per cent.

Figure 3- Rental Vacancy Rates for Rental Row and Apartment 2 Bedroom Units in Major CMAs, April 2010 and April 2011 (Per Cent)



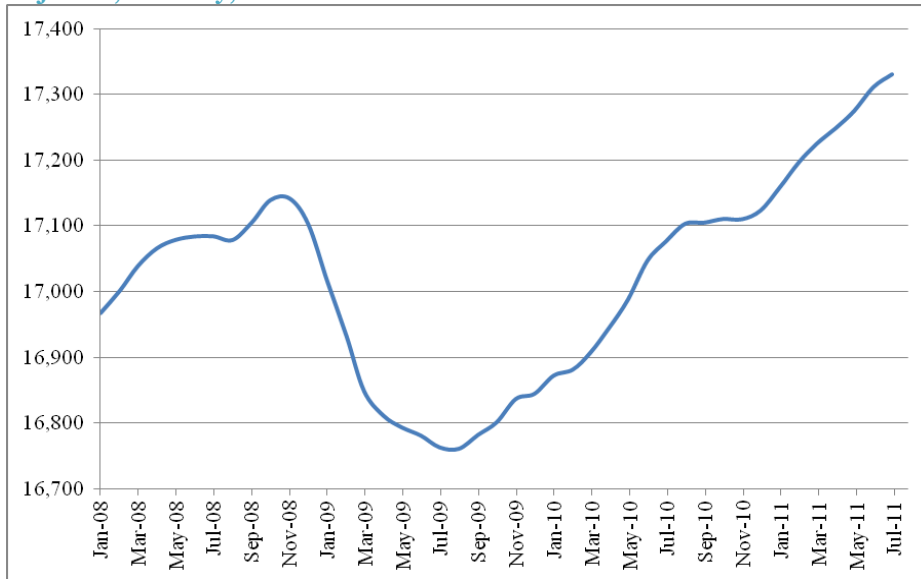
Source: CMHC, Housing Market Information: Rental Market Statistics.

Work: Employment Levels and Growth

The employment level, or the change in employment, is a useful indicator of economic performance, because it may more accurately reflect changes in the state of labour market demand than the unemployment rate. The latter measure is influenced by supply considerations, such as discouraged workers leaving the labour market due to a belief that work is unavailable, in addition to the demand for labour. Employment levels present a picture of the labour market that reflects more than the business cycle alone, as it also captures the effects of migration. Strong employment growth typically reflects strong economic performance and improvements in well-being in general.

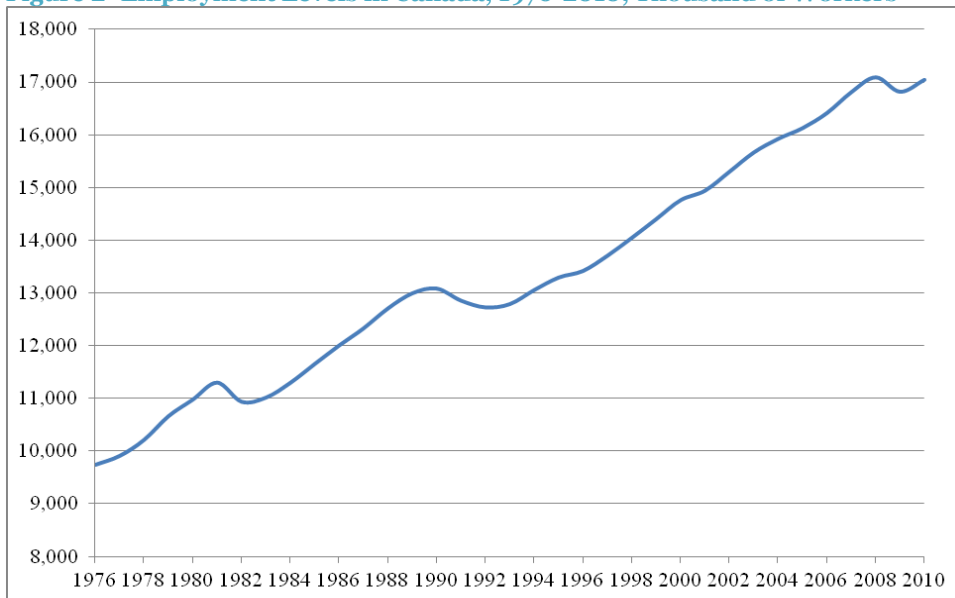
In 2010, the national employment level was 17,041,000 persons employed, up 1.4 per cent from the 2009 level (figure 1). This is equal to the average annual growth rate of 1.4 per cent experienced during the 1987-2010 period, as well as the average annual growth rate of 1.4 per cent experienced during the 2000-2010 period. From June 2010 to June 2011, the employment level increased 1.6 per cent by seasonally adjusted measures. The number of persons employed increased 0.9 per cent by seasonally adjusted measures from January 2011 to July 2011.

Figure 1- Employment Levels in Canada, January 2008 - July 2011, Seasonally Adjusted, Monthly, Thousands of Workers



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

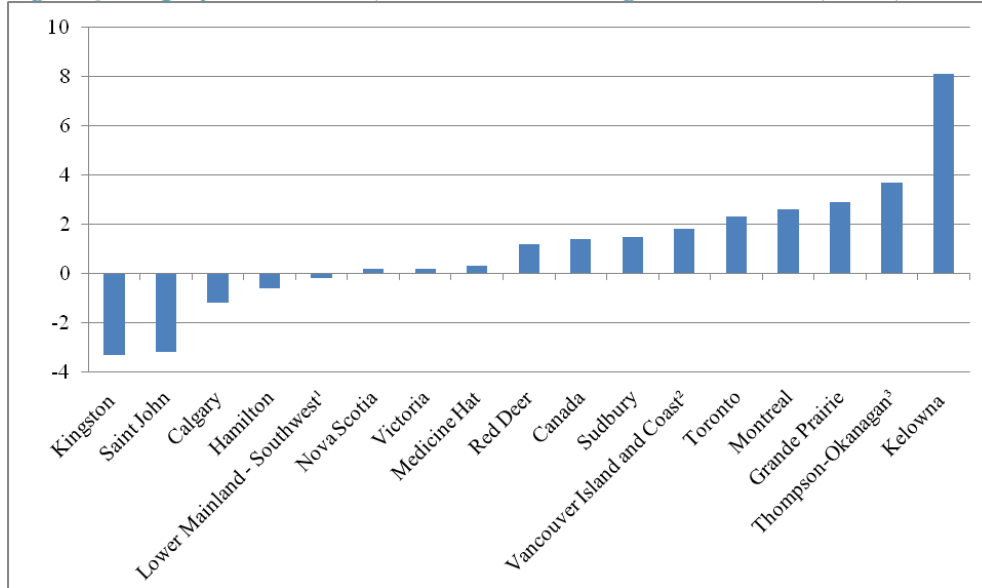
Figure 2- Employment Levels in Canada, 1976-2010, Thousand of Workers



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

In 2010, employment growth varied widely across different regions of the country. Among the Vital Signs communities, Kingston experienced the largest decreases in the employment level in 2010 relative to the 2009 level, falling 3.3 per cent (figure 3). The Kelowna CMA reported employment growth of 8.1 per cent in 2010, the highest rate among Vital Signs communities for that year. The Thompson-Okanagan economic region, which also includes Kelowna, along with Golden, Columbia-Shuswap A, Vernon, and Penticton, experienced employment growth of 3.3 per cent in 2010, the second highest rate for that year.

Figure 3- Employment Growth, Canada and Vital Sign Communities, 2010, Per Cent



¹- Includes Sunshine Coast and Squamish

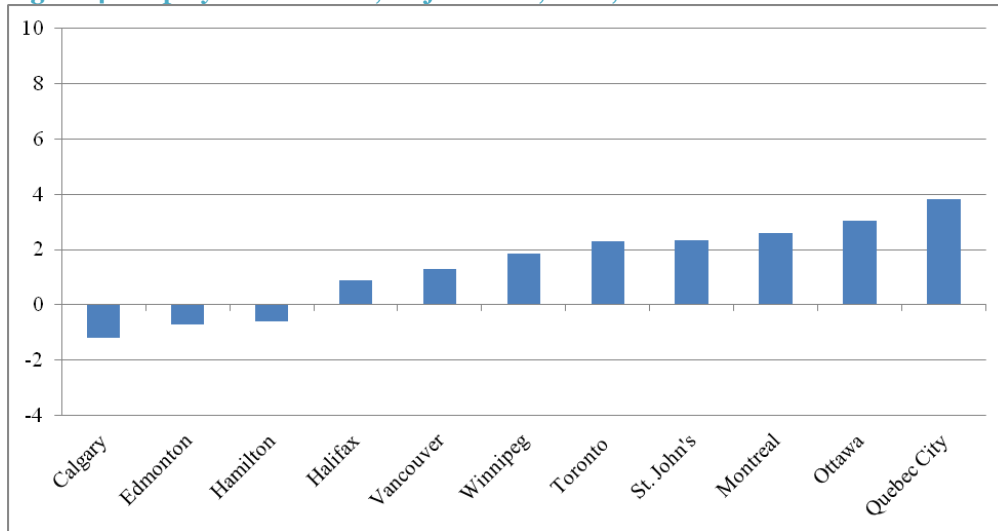
²- Includes Powell River

³- Includes Golden, Columbia-Shuswap A, Penticton, and Vernon

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

Employment growth among major CMAs in 2010 was mixed, although the majority experienced a positive change in the employment level. Among major CMAs, Quebec City experienced the highest level of employment growth in 2010 at 3.8 per cent (figure 4). Ottawa experienced the next highest level of employment growth, as its employment level grew 3.1 per cent. Calgary and Edmonton performed the most poorly in terms of the employment level, as it decreased 3.2 and 1.2 per cent respectively.

Figure 4- Employment Growth, Major CMAs, 2010, Per Cent



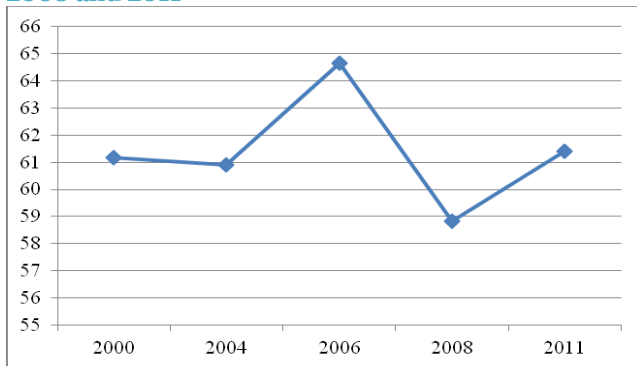
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

Belonging and Leadership: Voter Turnout

A high level of voter turnout is a positive indicator of whether people feel they have a stake in their community, and whether people are engaged by the political process. However, a relatively low level of voter turnout may not necessarily be a bad sign. In Alberta, for example, federal voter turnout is low compared to most of Canada. One possible explanation for this rests on the fact that since one party consistently dominates election results in that area, supporters of that party have somewhat less incentive to vote because they can expect their favoured party to win regardless of their vote. In this context, a low turnout merely indicates contentment with the dominant party, rather than a particularly high sense of political alienation.

In May 2011, voter turnout to the Canadian federal election was 61.4 per cent, up 2.6 percentage points or 4.4 per cent from its 2008 level of 58.8 per cent (figure 1). This was the second-highest level of voter turnout in a federal election since 2000.

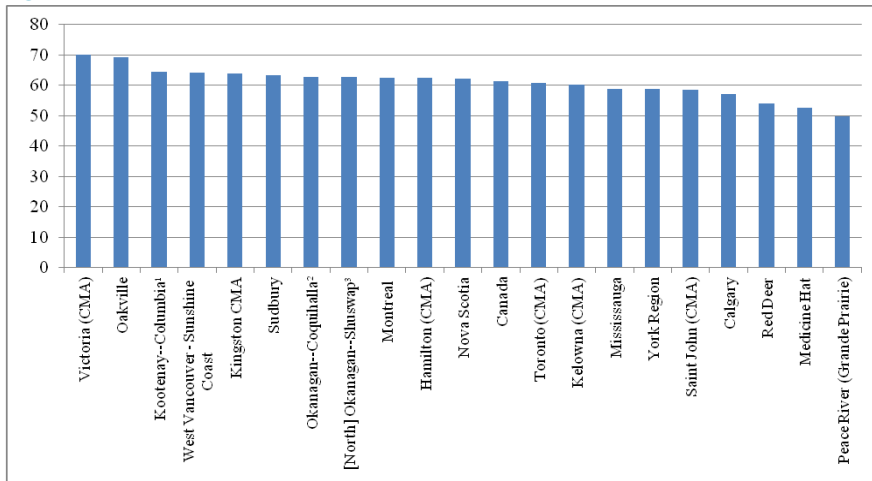
Figure 1- Percentage Voter Turnout for Federal Elections, Canada, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2011



Source: Elections Canada, Official Voting Results

In the 2011 federal election, voter turnout among Vital Signs communities was highest in the Victoria CMA and Oakville, where voter turnout was 70.0 per cent and 69.2 per cent respectively (figure 2). The lowest turnouts occurred in the Peace River election riding, which includes Grande Prairie, at 49.7 per cent, and in Medicine Hat, at 52.6 per cent. The four Albertan communities included in Vital Signs accounted for the four lowest turnouts. In each of these Albertan communities, the winning party earned over 70 per cent of the popular vote.

Figure 2- Percentage Voter Turnout for the Federal Election, Vital Signs Communities, 2011



¹-Includes Golden and Columbia-Shuswap A

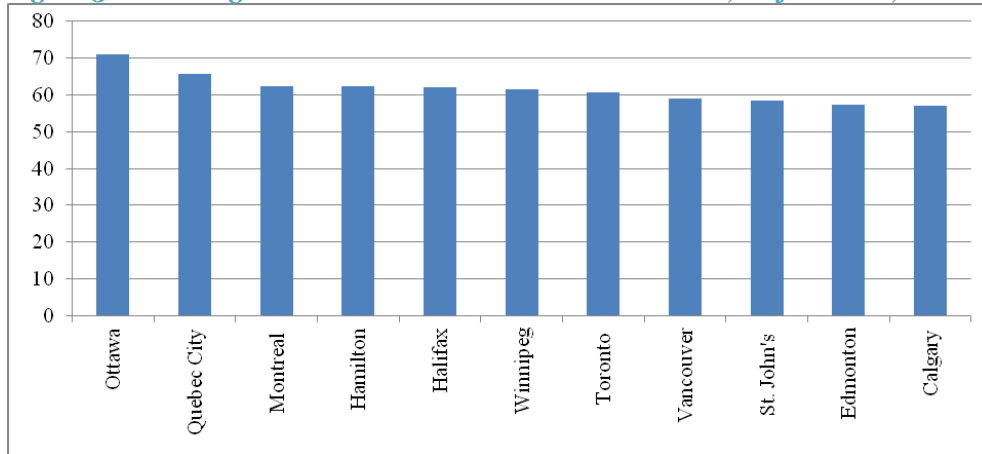
²-Includes Penticton

³-Includes Vernon

Source: Elections Canada, Official Voting Results

The major CMA with the highest voter turnout to the 2011 federal election was Ottawa, with a voter turnout of 71.0 per cent, followed by Quebec City, with a turnout of 65.6 per cent (figure 3). The lowest levels of voter turnout were seen in Calgary, where turnout was 57.0 per cent, and in Edmonton, where turnout was 57.3 per cent.

Figure 3- Percentage Voter Turnout for the Federal Election, Major CMAs, 2011



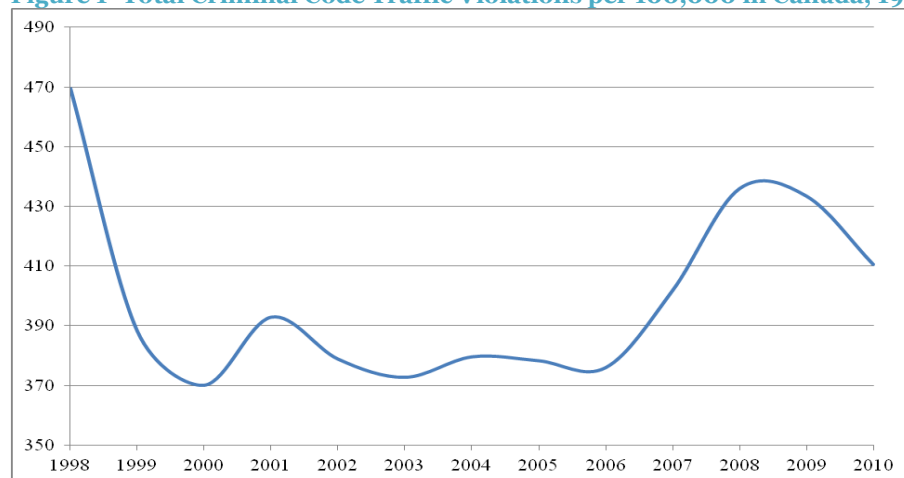
Source: Elections Canada, Official Voting Results

Safety: Criminal Code Traffic Violations Per 100,000

Dangerous driving conditions affect members of a community in their ability simply to get around without concern for their safety. As such, an important measure of well-being is the incidence of criminal code traffic violations. Criminal traffic violations include offences such as impaired driving, dangerous operation of a vehicle, and the evasion of police.

The national figure for criminal code traffic violations per 100,000 persons fell from 469 traffic crimes per 100,000 persons in 1998 to 410 in 2010, a decline of 12.6 per cent (figure 1). There was a large variation in the change of the rate of traffic violations over the period of 1998 to 2010, ranging from a decrease of 60.0 per cent in Toronto (CMA) to a dramatic increase of 205.9 per cent in Vernon.

Figure 1- Total Criminal Code Traffic Violations per 100,000 in Canada, 1998-2010

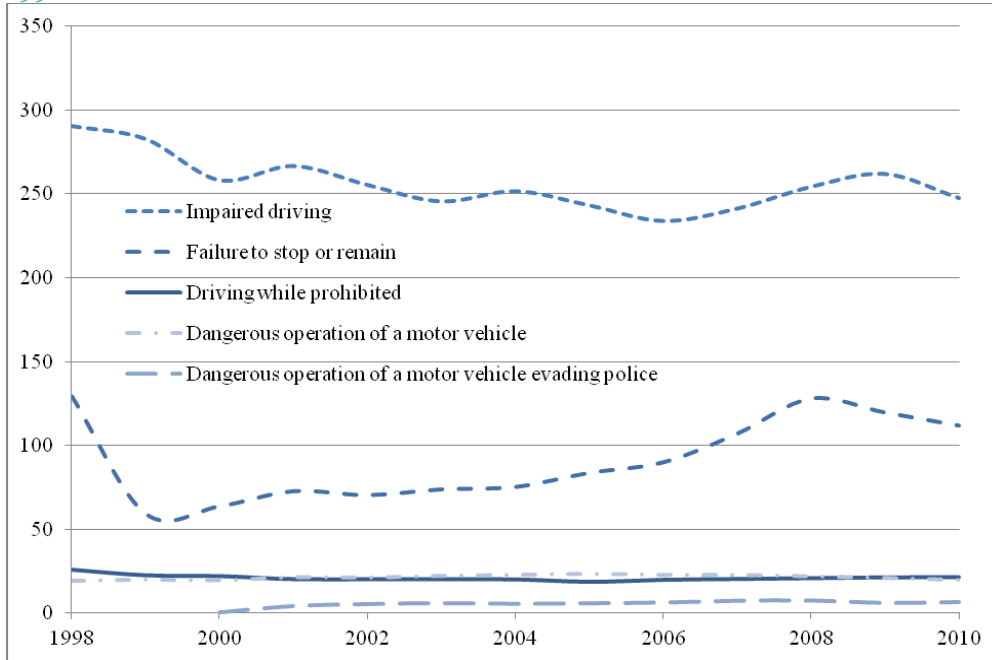


Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 252-0051

The most important component of criminal code traffic violation is by far impaired driving, which accounted for 60.3 per cent of all traffic crimes in Canada in 2010. Failure to remain, the next most common type, accounted for 27.3 per cent of traffic crimes. The next three most common types, by comparison, occurred much less frequently. Driving while prohibited accounted for 5.2 per cent of traffic crimes, dangerous operation of a motor vehicle represented 4.9 per cent, and dangerous operation of a motor vehicle evading police made up 1.6 per cent. These five categories accounted for 99.2 per cent of traffic crimes in 2010.

The national rate for impaired driving in 2010 was 14.9 per cent lower than the rate in 1998, falling from 290.7 to 247.4 incidents per 100,000 persons (figure 2). The rate in 2010 was down 5.5 per cent from 261.9 incidents per 100,000 in 2009. The four other most common types of traffic violations have widely varying growth rates. Since 1998, the number of incidents of driving while prohibited have fallen 18.0 per cent. Incidents of failure to stop or remain per 100,000 persons have fallen 13.6 per cent respectively. Offences involving the dangerous operation of a motor vehicle, vessel, or aircraft have increased 3.0 per cent in terms of the rate per 100,000 persons since 1998, and the rate of dangerous operation of a motor vehicle evading police has increased 54.6 per cent since 2001.

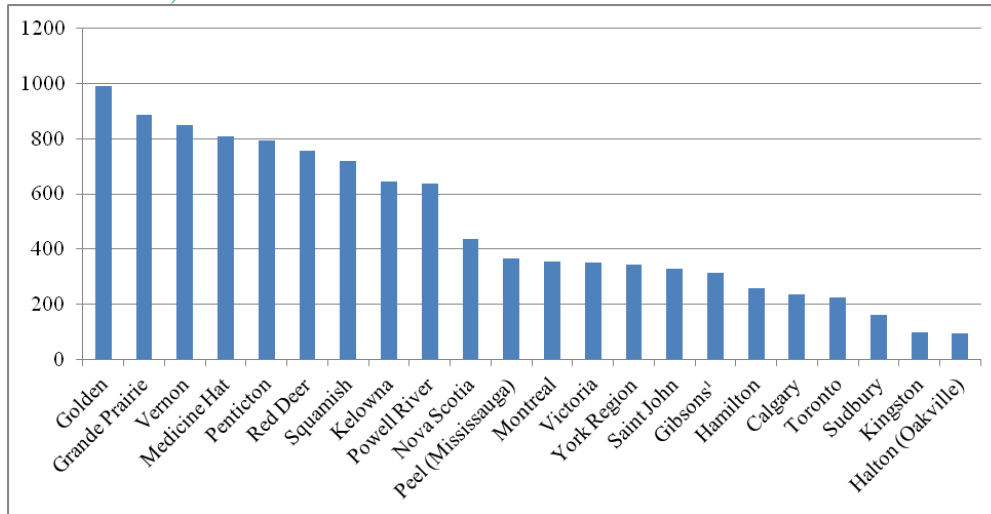
Figure 2- Criminal Code Traffic Violations By Type, Rate Per 100,000 Persons, Canada, 1998-2010



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 252-0051

Among Vital Signs Communities, the Halton region, which includes Oakville, had the lowest rate of criminal code traffic violations in 2010 with 95 offences per 100,000 (figure 3). This was followed by Kingston with 99 and Sudbury with 162 offences per 100,000. With 992 criminal traffic violations per 100,000, the town of Golden had the highest traffic crime rate among the Vital Signs Communities. This was followed by Grande Prairie with 885 criminal traffic violations per 100,000 and Vernon with 849 traffic crimes per 100,000. Of the 22 Vital Signs communities for which data were available, 18 experienced a decrease in traffic crime from 2009 to 2010, while 4 experienced an increase. However, of the 20 Vital Signs communities for which data are available back to 1998, only 9 have experienced a decrease in the rate of traffic crime from 1998 to 2010, while 11 have experienced an increase.

Figure 3- Total Criminal Code Traffic Violations Per 100,000 in Vital Signs Communities, 2010

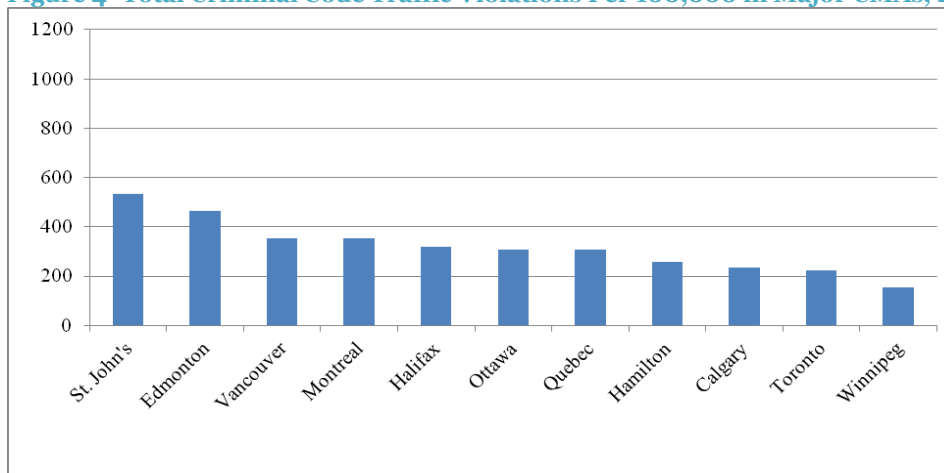


¹-Includes Sunshine Coast

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 252-0051

St. John's had the highest number of criminal code traffic violations per 100,000 persons among major CMAs at 534 in 2010 (figure 4). Edmonton and Vancouver followed, with 466 and 355 violations per 100,000 persons respectively. The lowest rate of traffic crime in 2010 was found in Winnipeg, which had 154 violations per 100,000 persons. Toronto, with 222 violations per 100,000, and Calgary, with 234 violations per 100,000, had the next lowest rates of traffic crime.

Figure 4- Total Criminal Code Traffic Violations Per 100,000 in Major CMAs, 2010



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 252-0051.

Arts and Culture: Attendance at Cultural Events

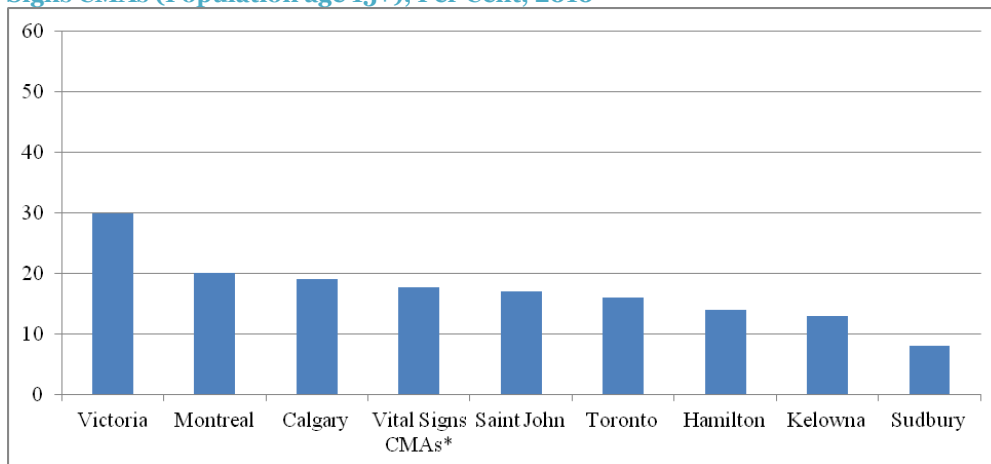
A vibrant and diverse community offers a wide variety of cultural events and entertainment to its population. One way to gauge the availability of different experiences is by the percentage of people who attend various cultural events, such as performing arts, concerts, and festivals.

Data concerning attendance at cultural events are collected in the General Social Survey (GSS) on time use, which was carried out in 1998, 2005, and 2010. However, the removal of a screening question in 2010 has made the most recent data incomparable with the last two surveys. The 2010 GSS collected data on the proportions of the population that attended theatrical performances, popular music performances, classical music performances, cultural or artistic festivals, cultural or heritage performance arts, and other types of cultural events.

Classical or symphonic music performances tended to be the least attended among the various cultural events in Vital Signs communities in 2010. Victoria had the highest level of attendance among the population age 15 and older at such events at 30 per cent, followed by Montreal with an attendance rate of 20 per cent (figure 1). Victoria's high level of attendance relative to the other communities possibly reflects the higher average age of its populace. Sudbury, with an attendance of 8 per cent, had the lowest attendance rate at such events. The average among Vital Signs CMAs was 17.7 per cent.

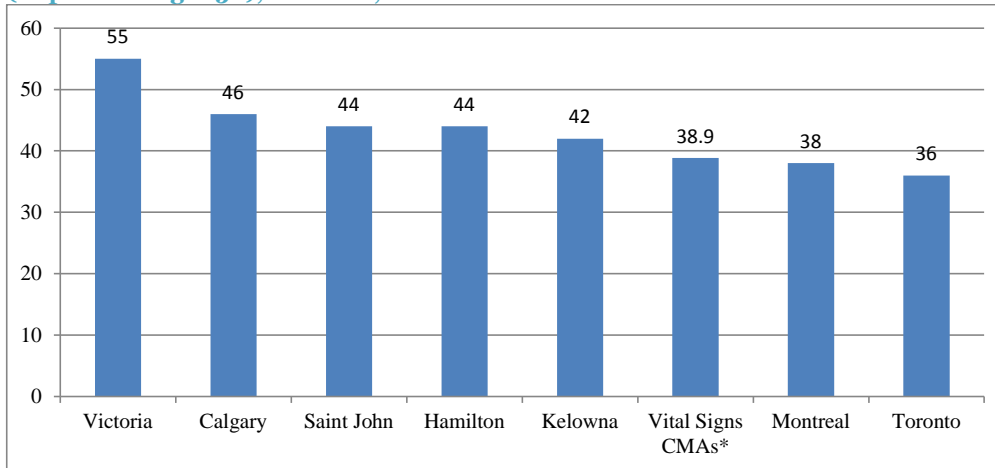
Victoria had the highest level of attendance at popular music concerts in 2010, with 55 per cent of the population aged 15 and older reporting attendance at least one such concert in the past year (figure 2). Calgary had the next highest rate, at 46 per cent. Toronto and Montreal had the lowest rates of attendance at popular music concerts, at 36 and 38 per cent respectively.

Figure 1- Attendance at Classical or Symphonic Music Performances in Selected Vital Signs CMAs (Population age 15+), Per Cent, 2010



*Based on a population-weighted average of Vital Signs CMAs
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Time Use

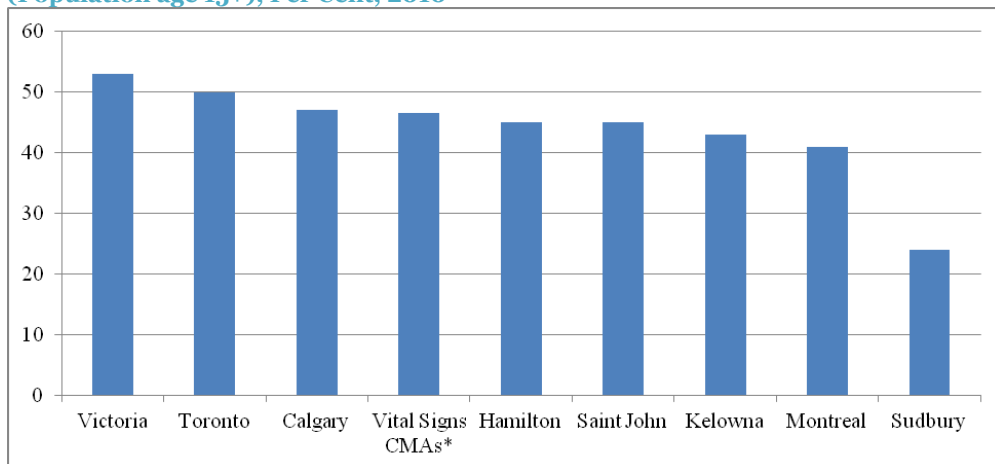
Figure 2- Attendance at Popular Music Concerts in Selected Vital Signs CMAs (Population age 15+), Per Cent, 2010



*Based on a population-weighted average of Vital Signs CMAs
 Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Time Use

In 2010, Victoria and Toronto had the highest levels of attendance at theatrical performances among Vital Signs communities, at 53 and 50 per cent respectively (figure 3). Sudbury had the lowest level, with 24 per cent of the population age 15 and older attending at least one such event. The rate for Vital Signs CMAs, based on a population-weighted average, was 46.5 per cent.

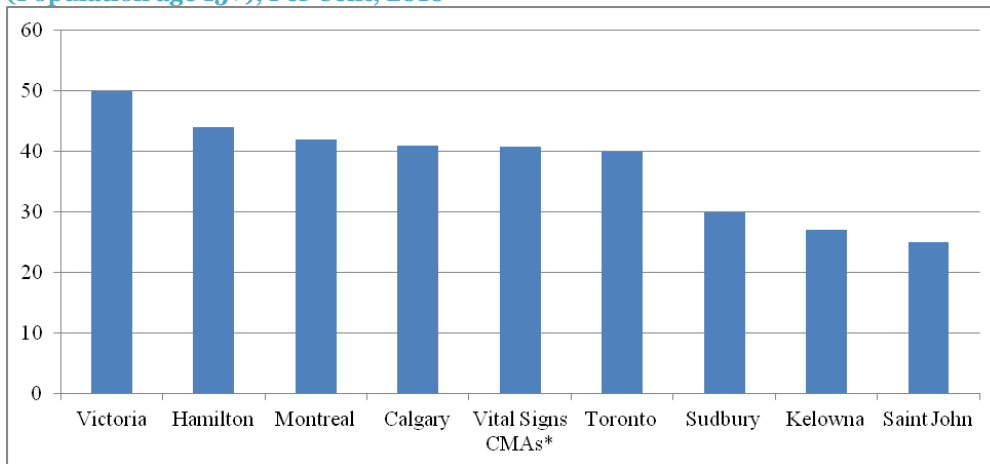
Figure 3- Attendance at Theatrical Performances in Selected Vital Signs CMAs (Population age 15+), Per Cent, 2010



*Based on a population-weighted average of Vital Signs CMAs
 Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Time Use

The average rate of attendance at cultural and artistic festivals among the population age 15 and older in Vital Signs CMAs was 40.8 per cent (figure 4). Victoria again had the highest attendance rate at such events, at 50 per cent, followed by Hamilton at 44 per cent. Saint John had the lowest level of attendance at 25 per cent. Attendance at cultural or artistic festivals tended to be relatively lower in the smaller communities. This is likely explicable by the simple fact that large cities tend to have more of such festivals, increasing the likelihood of a person attending at least one.

Figure 4- Attendance at Cultural or Artistic Festivals in Selected Vital Signs CMAs (Population age 15+), Per Cent, 2010



*Based on a population-weighted average of Vital Signs CMAs
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Time Use