DISTRICT OF HOUSTON HOUSING STUDY: COMMUNITY PROFILE

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Acknowledgements

Availability

Copies of this report have been provided to District of Houston and to all participants who provided input into this process. The final reports are further posted on the website of the Community Development Institute at UNBC: https://www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute/research-projects.

The information contained in this report is part of a series of reports completed for the District of Houston Housing Study. These include:

District of Houston Housing Study: Final Report.
District of Houston Housing Study: Review of Past Plans and Reports.
District of Houston Housing Study: Community Profile.
District of Houston Housing Study: Required Data.

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Context

This profile is part of a housing study undertaken by the Community Development Institute at UNBC for the District of Houston. The purpose of the profile is to collate information to create a snapshot of the community, as well as some historical developments, to help the community understand its situation and make informed decisions. The housing needs assessment will not only support local government and community initiatives, but will also be important to meet provincial legislative requirements. In April 2019, the Province of British Columbia adopted new legislation that requires all local governments to complete housing needs assessments by April 2022 and re-assessed every five years.[i] Local governments are then required to reflect on housing needs to inform changes to the official community plan.

The Community Profile includes mainly data from Statistics Canada's census profiles. A census of the Canadian population is undertaken every five years to provide a statistical portrait of the country. The census consists of a mandatory short-form questionnaire sent to every household and a mandatory long-form questionnaire sent to a sample of 25% of households. For the 2011 census alone, the mandatory long-form questionnaire was replaced by the optional National Household Survey. While the mandatory short and long-form surveys in 2016 feature response rates of 92% and 83% respectively in Houston, the optional survey in 2011 only had a response rate of 56% in Houston, leading to a less representative data set for 2011. This should be kept in mind when interpreting developments over time that include 2011 census program data.

Introduction

The District Municipality of Houston is located in the Bulkley-Nechako Regional District in northern interior British Columbia (BC). It constitutes 73 square kilometres of land at the confluence of the Bulkley River and Buck Creek. Highway 16 West connects Houston to Prince George, a northern service centre with a 2016 population of over 74,000, a little over 300km to the east, and to Terrace (11,643 people) just under 270km to the west. Houston furthermore lies on the CN rail line from Prince George to Prince Rupert, a community of over 12,000 people and a cargo port around 400km west of Houston. The Town of Smithers (5,400 people) 65km to the west is a larger neighbouring community; smaller communities in the vicinity include the Village of Burns Lake (1,780 people) 80km and Topley (72 people) 30km to the east, and Telkwa (1,327 people) 50km west of Houston.[1]

Situated in the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation, European influence began with the Collins Overland Telegraph line in the 1860s, and permanent non-Aboriginal settlement started in the 1890s with the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.[2] Initially called Pleasant Valley, Houston received its current name in 1910 when the name of John Houston, BC politician and founder of a number of newspapers, was chosen in a contest. Houston was incorporated as a village in 1957 and as a district in 1969.[3]

Heavily dependent on forestry and mining, Houston has experienced economic volatility reflecting developments in those sectors, such as periods of growth and development in the 1970s and the 1990s

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[i] For more information on new provincial requirements concerning housing needs assessments, please visit: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/local-governments-and-housing/policy-and-planning-tools-for-housing/housing-needs-reports.

and downturns due to, among other things, the mountain pine beetle and wider lumber market developments in recent decades and years. Oil and gas sector developments, particularly plans for pipeline construction in the area, hold potential for another period of change in the community.

Figure 0.1 Regional Map of Houston, BC
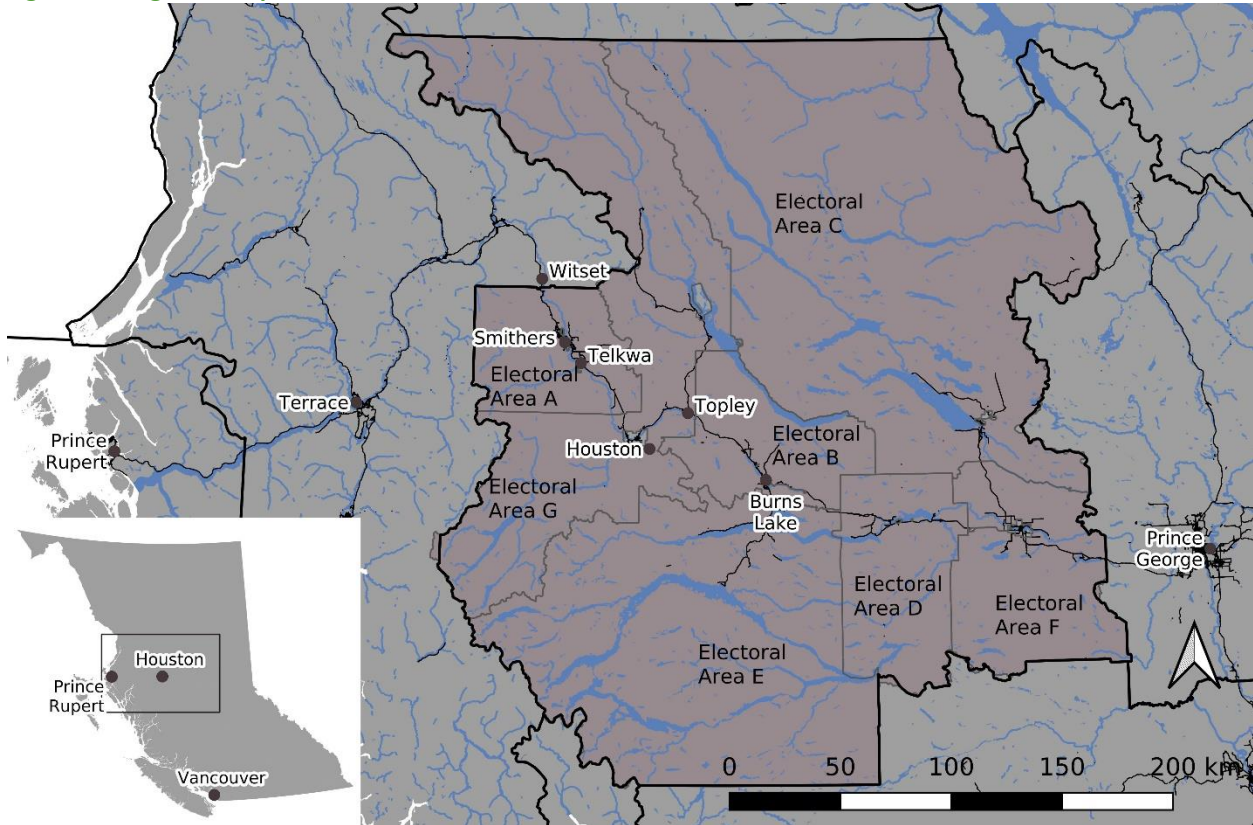
1.0 Population

Population data provides information about the size of the community at a single point in time. In combination with other data, population information shows how events and regional trends influence the community.

Figure 1.1 indicates that 2,993 people lived in the District Municipality of Houston as of 2016. In the last 35 years, the population of Houston was at its largest in the 1980s and 1990s when, at times, it reached more than 3,900. The 2016 population of under 3,000 represents a decrease of around 24% since 1981. During that same time period, BC experienced steady population growth totaling almost 70% (see Figure 1.2).

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Figure 1.1 Total Population: Houston, BC

Year	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
Population	3,921	3,905	3,628	3,934	3,577	3,163	3,147	2,993
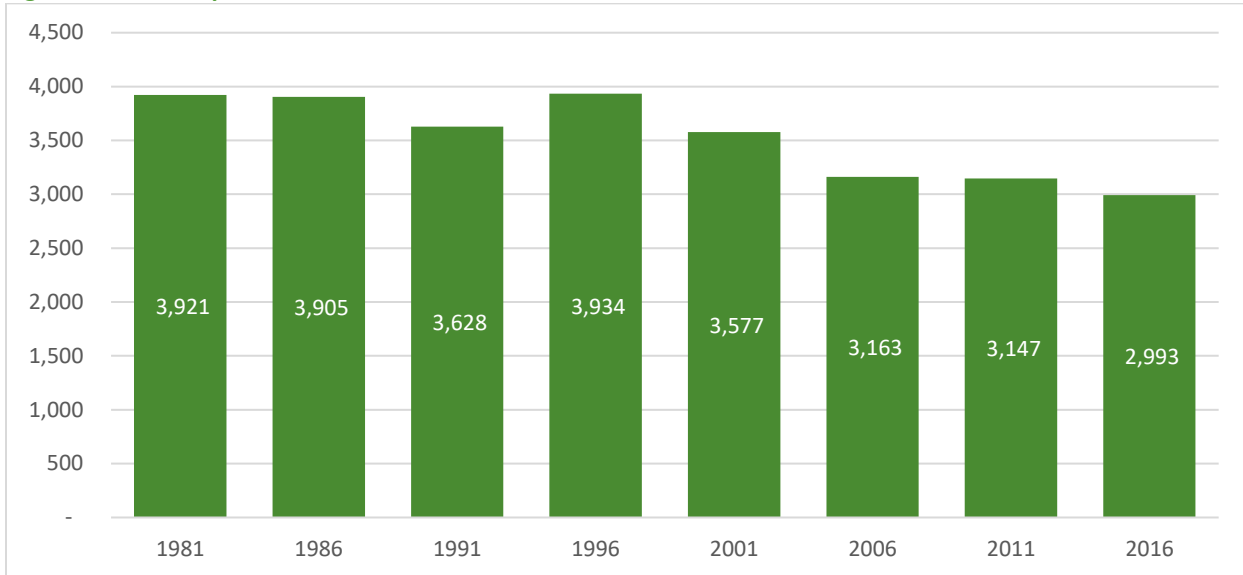
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2016. Census Program.

Figure 1.2 Total Population: British Columbia

Year	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
Population	2,744,467	2,883,367	3,282,060	3,724,500	3,907,738	4,113,487	4,400,057	4,648,055
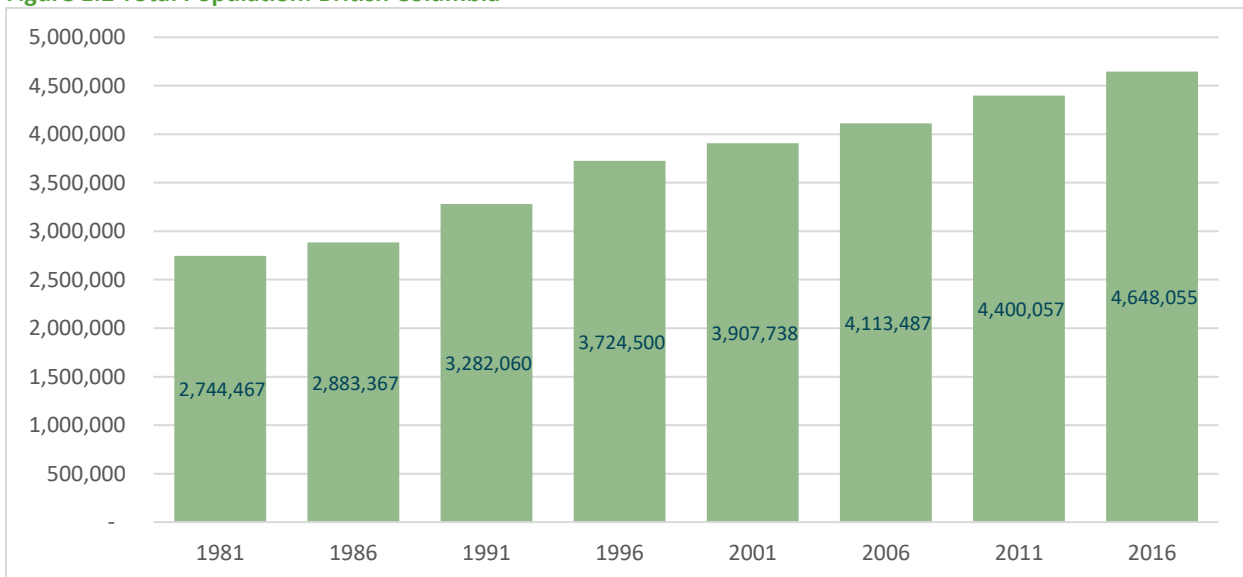
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2016. Census Program.

2.0 Age Profile

The age profile of a community provides information about the age composition of the population and shows how the population age structure has changed over time. This information is useful for the study of community structure and determining service, housing, and related infrastructure needs.

Median age is defined as the exact age where half the population is older and half is younger. In 2016, the median age in Houston was 40.8 years. As depicted in Figure 2.1, this was slightly below the median age at Regional District and provincial levels.

Figure 2.1 Median Age (2016)

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Like many resource communities, Houston was designed and developed to attract young workers and their families to support a workforce for resource extraction industries. The workforce of the 1980s is now aging in place. Population pyramids are a useful way of expressing population age at a given point in time and visualizing community aging over a longer period of time. Each bar represents an age group, starting with the youngest at the bottom of the graph and going up to the oldest age group at the top. The graph is vertically divided in male and female population. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show that, while Houston had a younger population with higher percentages of children and adults in the family formation years than BC in 1981 and still shows a higher percentage of children in 2016, its population has aged significantly. Working age men and women in the younger family-formation years of the ages 20 to 34 were the largest age group in 1981 but have become the smallest group by 2016. While Houston's workforce aged 15 to 64 has remained stable since the 1980s, making up two-thirds of the population, it has shifted from a predominantly young workforce to an older one; close to one-quarter of the working age population will have reached retirement age in the next 10 years, almost one-half will be of retirement age within the next 20 years.

Figure 2.2 Population Pyramids: Houston, BC
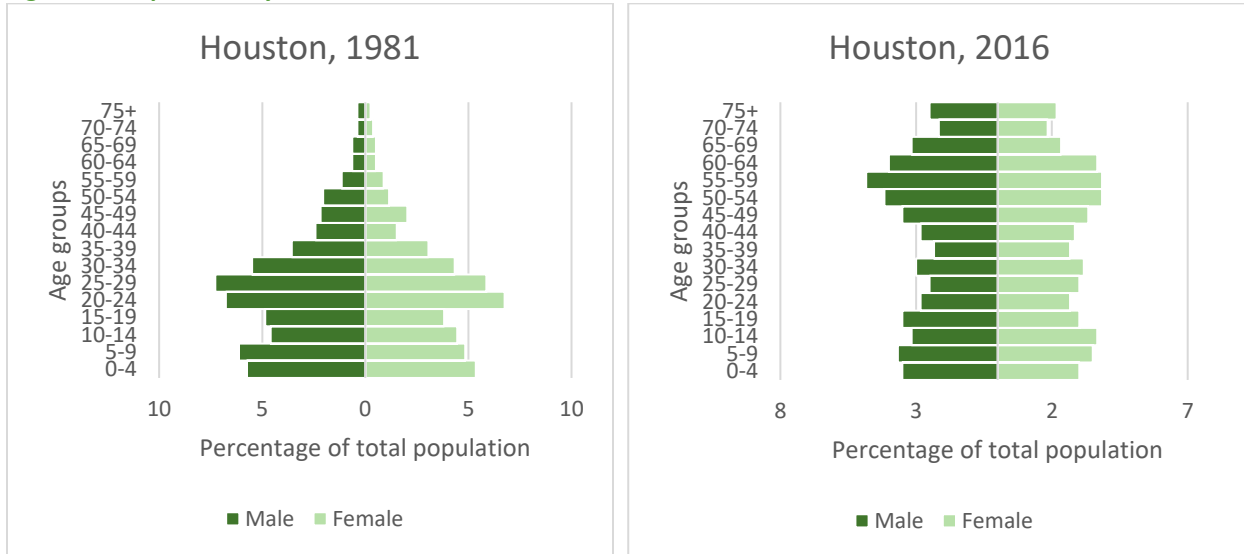
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2016. Census Program.

Figure 2.3 Population Pyramids: British Columbia

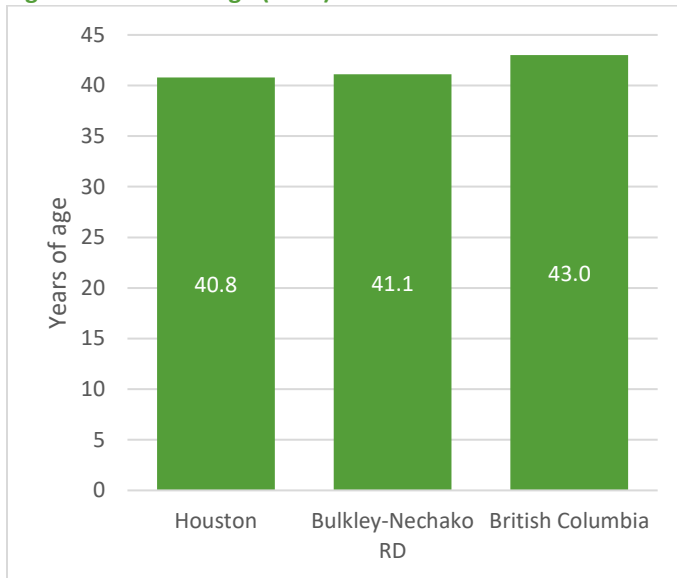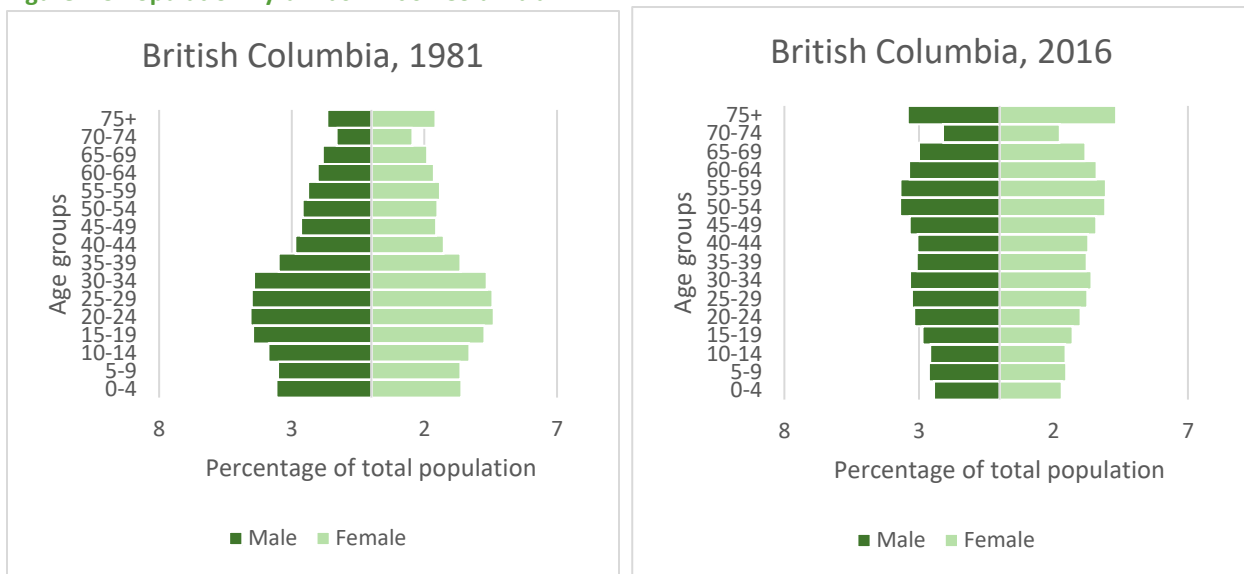Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2016. Census Program.

The government of British Columbia predicts population growth of 7.8% for the next five years and 15.6% for the next 10 years in the Bulkley-Nechako Regional District. Figure 2.4 depicts the projected population growth broken down by age group. Seniors aged 65 and over are expected to increase at the fastest rate of close to 70% in ten years, while the population of workforce entry age of 15 to 24 years and the older, experienced workforce aged 45 to 64 are expected to experience negative growth. When it comes to families, adults in the family formation years aged 25 to 44 are thought to increase by 28%, while the number of children is predicted to remain relatively stable with a growth rate of under 10%. These projections for the Regional District indicate an increased demand for housing and services for young families with and without children as well as an urgent need to accommodate seniors' needs.

Figure 2.4 Projections of Population Growth Rate by Age Group in Bulkley-Nechako Regional District (2019-2029)
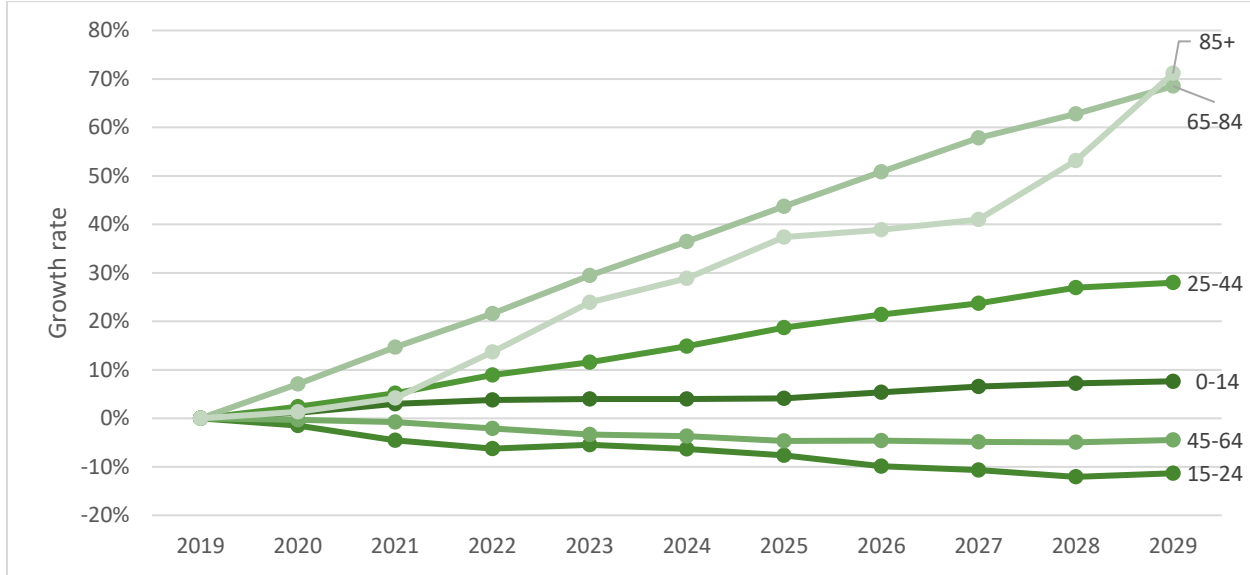
Source: BC Statistics. 2018. Population Projections.

3.0 Family Characteristics

Statistics Canada defines families as couples, married or unmarried, with or without children, as well as lone parents with children; all members of a family live in the same dwelling.[4] As shown in Figure 3.1, family composition in Houston consists of 86% couple families and 14% lone parent families. This constitutes only a change of roughly four percentage points since 1981, when over 90% of families were couple families. Family composition in Houston in 2016 is similar to British Columbia with 85% couple families and 15% lone parent families.

Figure 3.1 Family Composition
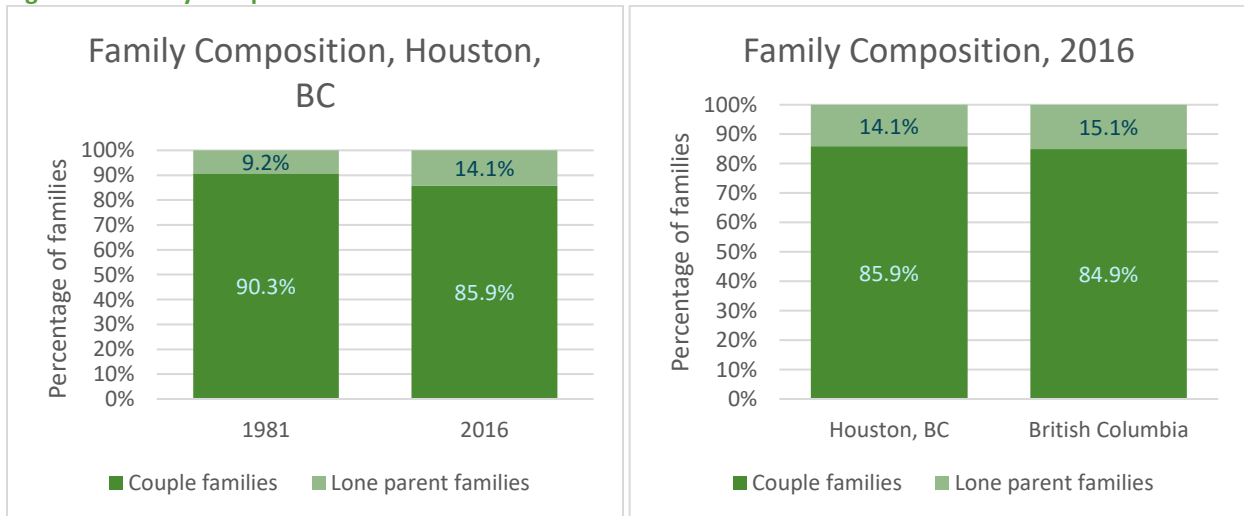
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2016. Census Program.

The likelihood of Houston couples having children currently living in the same dwelling has changed notably over the past decades (Figure 3.2). In 1981, over 72%, close to three-quarters, of couple families had children living with them. By 2016, fewer than one-half of all couple families (43%) have children in their census family. When comparing this to provincial rates in 2016, the likelihood of couples in Houston having children is also lower than the 48% of couples province-wide who have children.

Figure 3.2 Couple Families
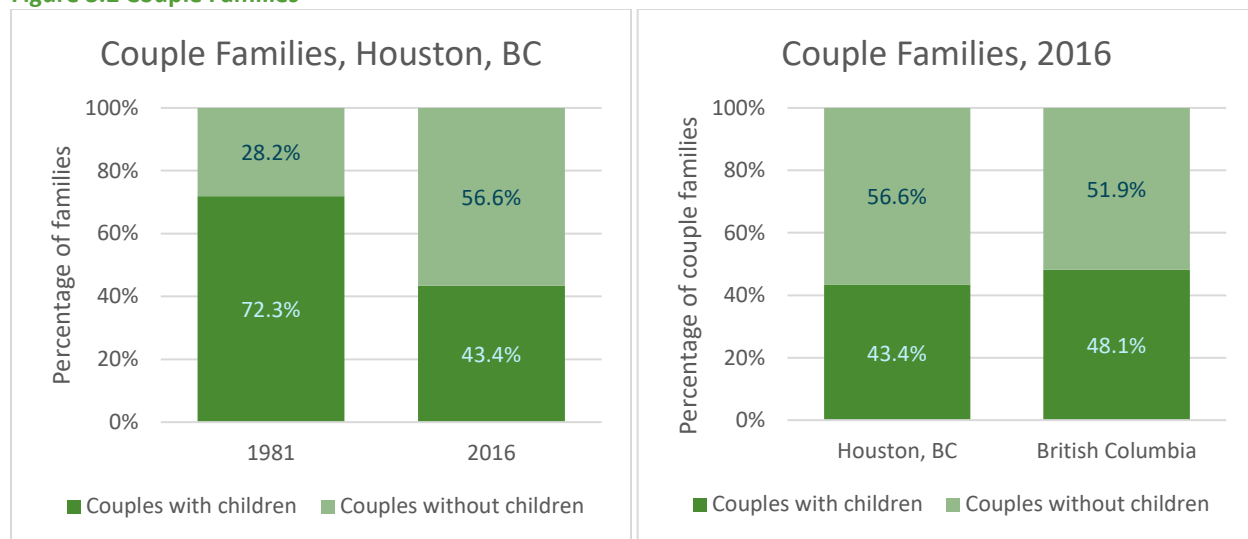
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2016. Census Program.

As Figure 3.3 demonstrates, the trend towards fewer children is confirmed in developments over time in the number of children per family. In 1981, families in the District Municipality of Houston with two children made up the biggest group of families with children (45%), over one-quarter of families with children had three or more children, meaning that over 70% of families with children had more than one child. By 2016, families with one child make up the largest group with over 40%, and only 60% of families with children have more than one child. Compared to British Columbia in 2016, where over 47% of families with children have only one child, families in Houston still have a higher number of children.

According to Figure 3.4, close to one-third of lone parents are men. This compares to only just over one-fifth of male lone parents province-wide in 2016.

Figure 3.3 Number of Children

Number of Children, Houston, BC

	1981	2016
Families with 3+ children	26.0%	22.0%
Families with 2 children	44.5%	37.4%
Families with 1 child	29.5%	40.7%

Number of Children, 2016

	Houston, BC	British Columbia
Families with 3+ children	22.0%	13.8%
Families with 2 children	37.4%	38.9%
Families with 1 child	40.7%	47.3%
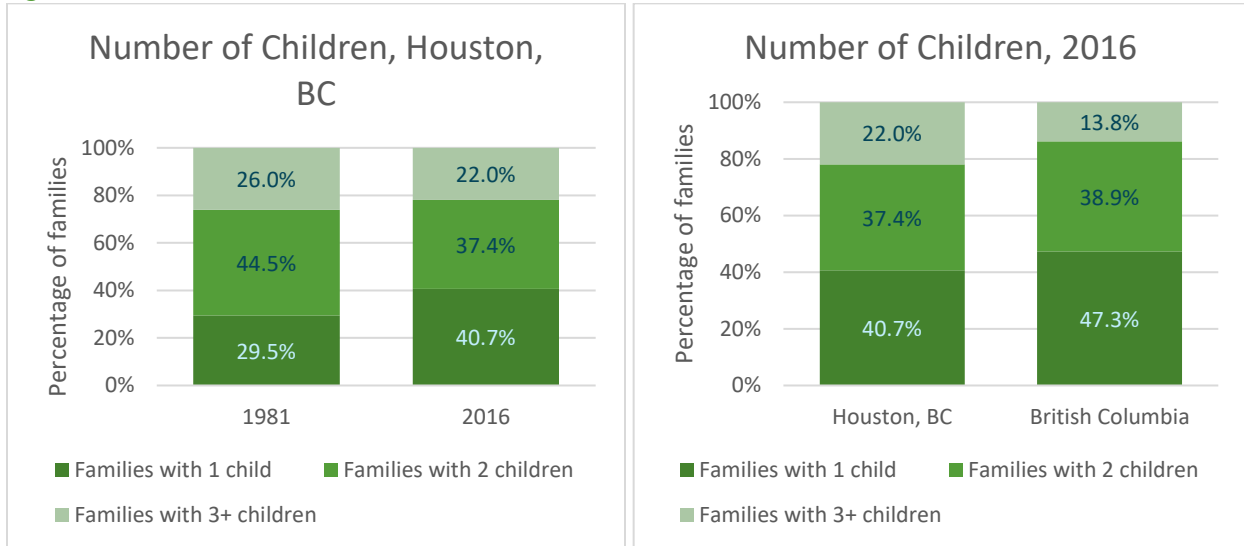
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2016. Census Program.

Figure 3.4 Lone Parent Gender (2016)

	Houston, BC	British Columbia
Female lone parents	68.0%	78.6%
Male lone parents	32.0%	21.4%
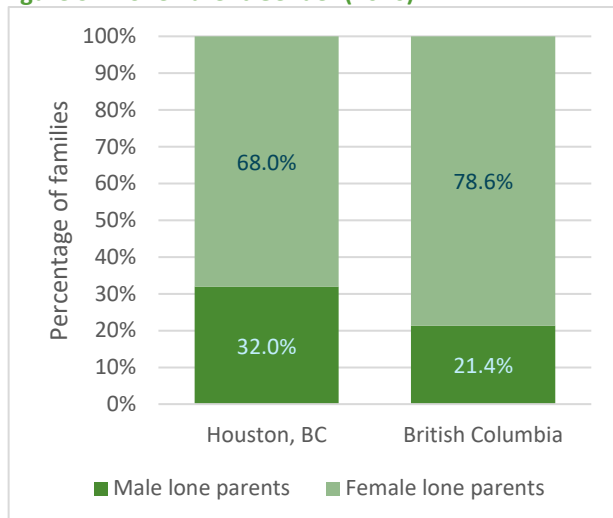
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

4.0 Household Characteristics

Statistics Canada defines private households as a person or group of persons occupying the same dwelling. Private households include family and non-family members.[5] As shown in Figure 3.1, household size in Houston has shifted considerably. In 1981, just over 40% of all households were small households of one and two persons, with one-person households constituting the smallest group at around 15%, or a little over one-eighth. By 2016, those small one- and two-person households make up 67%, or over two-thirds, of all households, and one-person households alone constitute over one-quarter. The comparison with BC households in 2016 shows that the pattern in Houston is similar to the province with small households being slightly more predominant in Houston.

Figure 4.1 Household Size
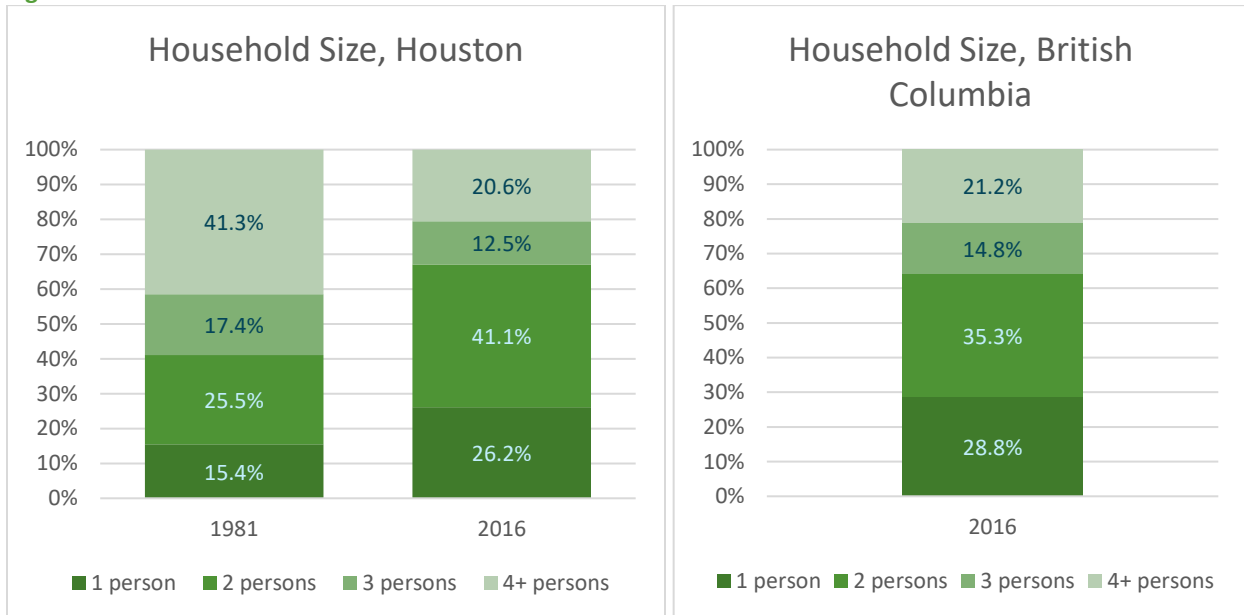
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2016. Census Program.

5.0 Aboriginal Population

Statistics Canada identifies several factors affecting the ability to compare Aboriginal Census data over time, including natural growth, changes in boundaries and measured categories, and changes in how individuals self-identify.[6] Keeping this in mind, the Aboriginal population in Houston has grown by over 360%, from 4% to 17% of the population between 1996 and 2016. In the same time period, the provincial Aboriginal population has grown by around 60%, from 4% to 6% of the total population.

Figure 5.1 Aboriginal Identity Population
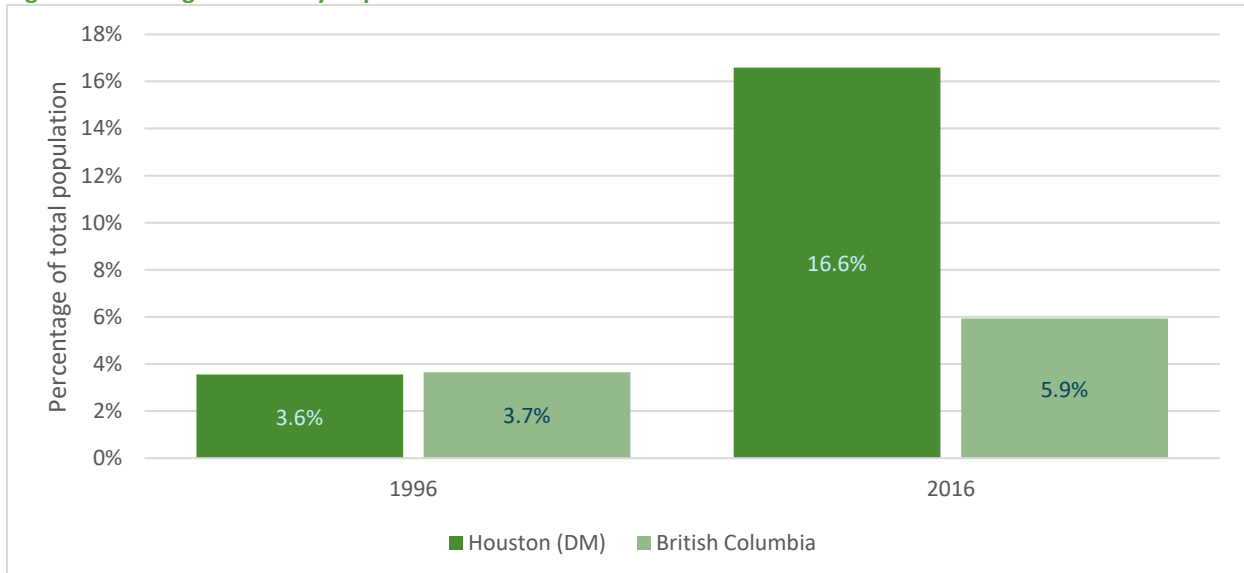
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996 and 2016. Census Program.

6.0 Visible Minority

The term 'visible minority' in the Canadian Census is adopted from the *Employment Equity Act* and refers to persons who are non-Aboriginal, and non-Caucasian or non-white.[7] As Shown in Figure 6.1, the visible minority population in Houston has decreased in proportion from close to 8% in 1996 to just over 5% in 2016. During that same time period, the visible minority population in British Columbia was not only significantly bigger but has also seen growth of almost 70% from making up 18% of the population in 1996 to over 30%, or close to one-third, in 2016.

Figure 6.1 Visible Minority Population
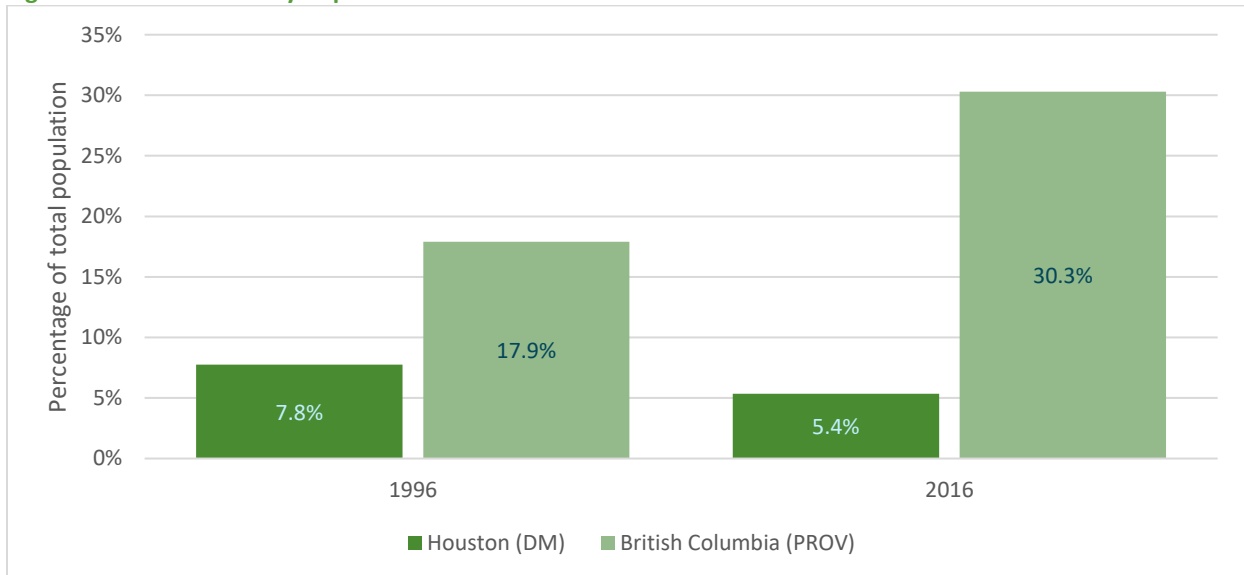
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996 and 2016. Census Program.

The origins of the visible minority population in Houston have shifted during that same time period (Figure 6.2). While the 1996 visible minority population in the District Municipality of Houston was predominantly South Asian (84%), the 2016 visible minority population is more diverse. The largest groups are now South Asian with 38% and Black with 31%, while the Southeast Asian group has grown to make up 16% of the visible minority population, and there are new smaller segments of Korean and Japanese origins.

Figure 6.2 Visible Minority Origins, Houston, BC
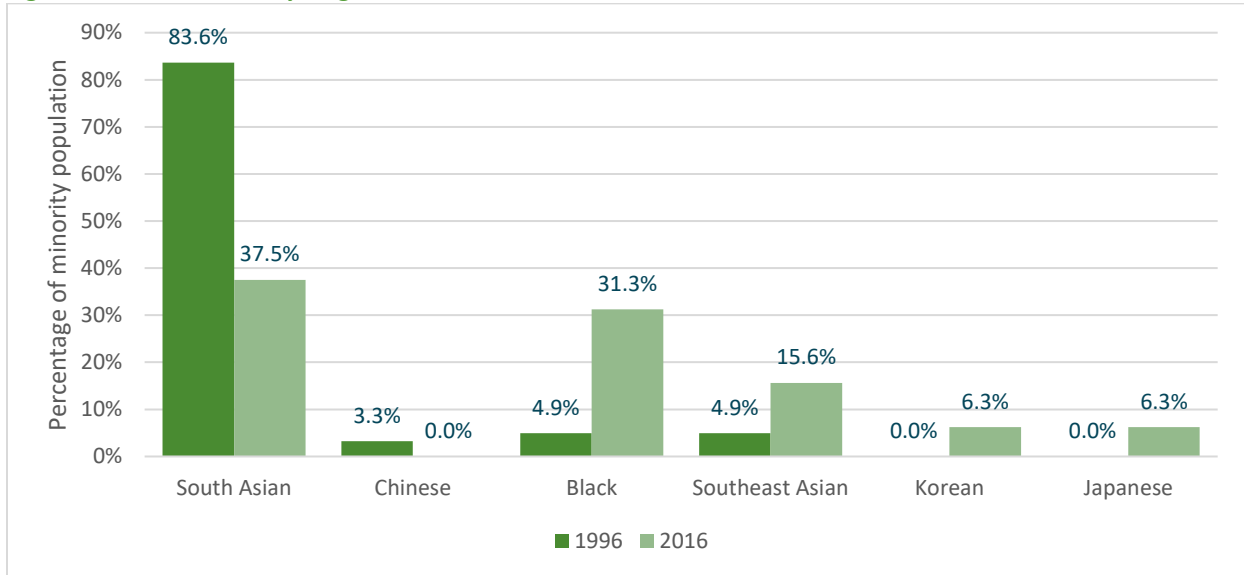
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996 and 2016. Census Program.

7.0 Immigration Characteristics

Immigrants are defined as persons who are or have been permanent residents (formerly called landed immigrants), including those who have obtained Canadian citizenship.[8] Information on immigration has been collected at the Census Subdivision[ii] level since 1986.

Looking at the time period for which data is available, Houston saw its highest proportion of non-citizens (5%) in the 1990s (Figure 7.1). Since then, the trend for Houston, unlike provincial trends, has been towards close to 100% Canadian citizenship with only 1.5% non-citizens in 2016. In British Columbia, the proportion of non-citizens has steadily increased over the last two decades, approaching 10% in 2016.

[ii] According to the Census Dictionary, "Census subdivision (CSD) is the general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial/territorial legislation) […]." (Statistics Canada. 2016. Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016. Available at https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm.)
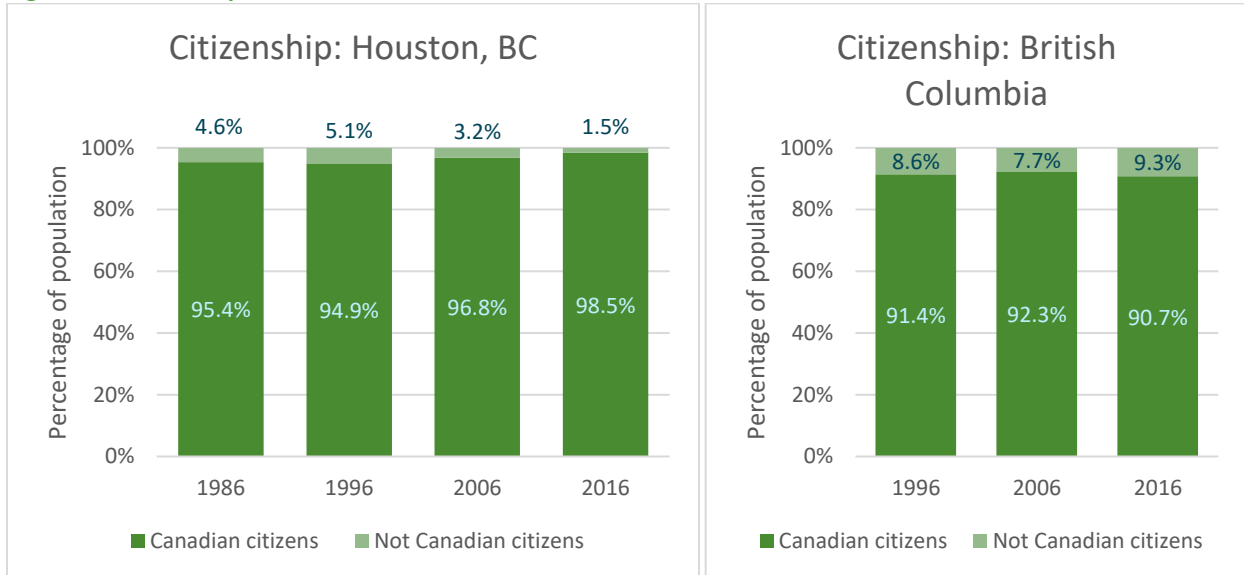
Figure 7.1 Citizenship

Citizenship: Houston, BC

	1986	1996	2006	2016
Not Canadian citizens	4.6%	5.1%	3.2%	1.5%
Canadian citizens	95.4%	94.9%	96.8%	98.5%

Citizenship: British Columbia

	1996	2006	2016
Not Canadian citizens	8.6%	7.7%	9.3%
Canadian citizens	91.4%	92.3%	90.7%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.
Note: This data was not available to us for British Columbia in 1986.

Figure 7.2 confirms that the proportional decrease in persons who are not Canadian citizens in Houston is not merely a result of naturalization[iii] but goes along with a decreasing proportion of immigrants in the District Municipality. While in 1986, over 16% of Houston's population were immigrants, per definition with or without Canadian citizenship, the immigrant population has decreased to below 7% by 2016. Again, the province shows the opposite trend over the past two decades with a moderate increase in its immigrant population from 25%, or one-quarter, of the total population in 1996 to over 28% in 2016.

[iii] Naturalization refers to the process by which a foreigner acquires Canadian citizenship, typically after having lived in Canada for a number of years.

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Figure 7.2 Immigration

Immigration: Houston, BC

Year	1986	1996	2006	2016
Non-permanent residents	0...	0.3%	0.8%	0.3%
Immigrants	16.4%	13.1%	9.5%	6.9%
Non-immigrants	83.6%	86.7%	89.7%	93.0%

Percentage of population

- ■ Non-immigrants
- ■ Immigrants
- ■ Non-permanent residents

Immigration: British Columbia

Year	1996	2006	2016
Non-permanent residents	0.8%	1.3%	2.2%
Immigrants	24.5%	27.5%	28.3%
Non-immigrants	74.7%	71.3%	69.4%

Percentage of population

- ■ Non-permanent residents
- ■ Immigrants
- ■ Non-immigrants

Source: Statistics Canada. 1986, 1996, 2006, and 2016. Census Program.
Note: This data was not available to us for British Columbia in 1986.

Finally, looking at the period of immigration, as depicted in Figure 7.3, over 50% of Houston's immigrant population immigrated before 1981 and another close to 20% arrived in the last five years before the 2016 Census. The time of arrival of BC's immigrant population, on the other hand, is more evenly distributed over time.

Figure 7.3 Period of Immigration (2016)

	Houston (DM)	British Columbia
2011-2016	19.5%	13.6%
2001-2010	14.6%	24.9%
1991-2000	7.3%	22.2%
1981-1990	9.8%	11.8%
Before 1981	51.2%	27.6%

Percentage of immigrant population

- ■ Before 1981 ■ 1981-1990 ■ 1991-2000 ■ 2001-2010 ■ 2011-2016

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

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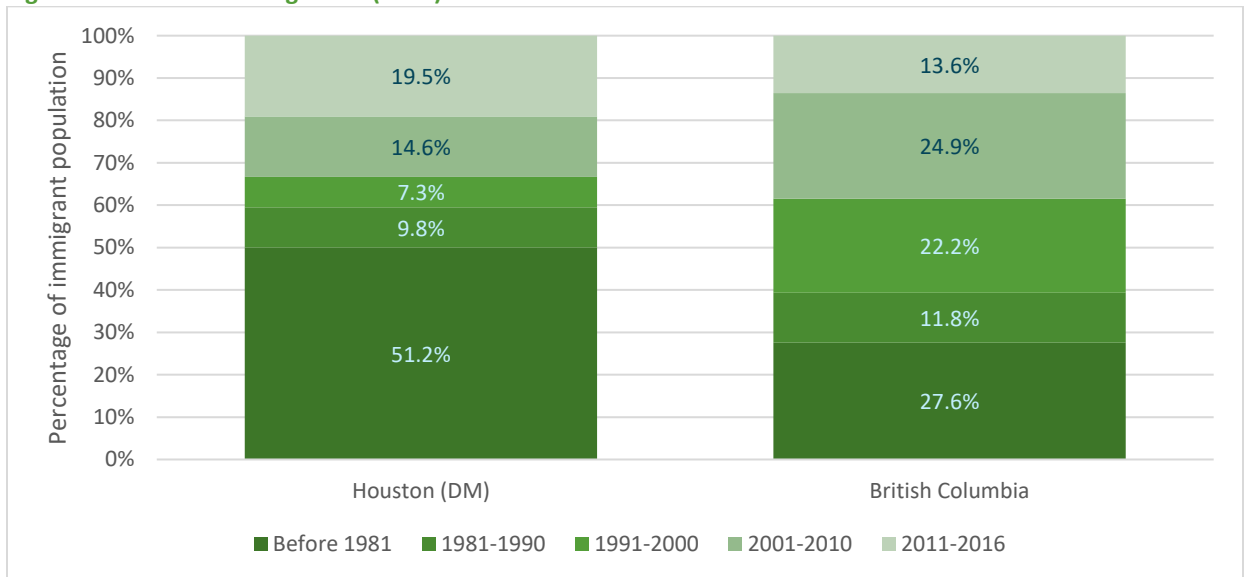
8.0 Mobility and Migration

Mobility and migration provide insight into the movement of the population within the Census Subdivision and movement outside the community. Statistics Canada's Census data indicates whether a person lives in the same residence as one year before. Those who have remained at the same address are classified as "non-movers". Those who were living at a different address one year before are classified as "movers". Movers are further broken down to reflect their movement within or outside the community. "Non-migrants" are movers who have moved to a new residence within the same Census Subdivision; "migrants" are movers who resided in a different Census Subdivision one year before. Migrants are further broken down into "internal migrants", who moved from within Canada, and "external migrants", who moved from outside Canada. Finally, internal migrants are broken down into "intra-provincial" migrants, who resided in the same province one year before, and "inter-provincial", who resided in a different province one year before.

Figure 9.1 shows that 18% of Houston's 2016 residents had lived at a different address one year earlier, a slightly higher rate than the 16% of the provincial population who were movers. Of the movers in Houston, almost exactly one-half had moved to Houston from other communities and the other half had moved residences within Houston (Figure 9.2). in Comparison, provincially, movers are more likely to stay within the same community when they move to another residence (55%).

Figure 8.1 Mobility Status One Year Ago (2016)
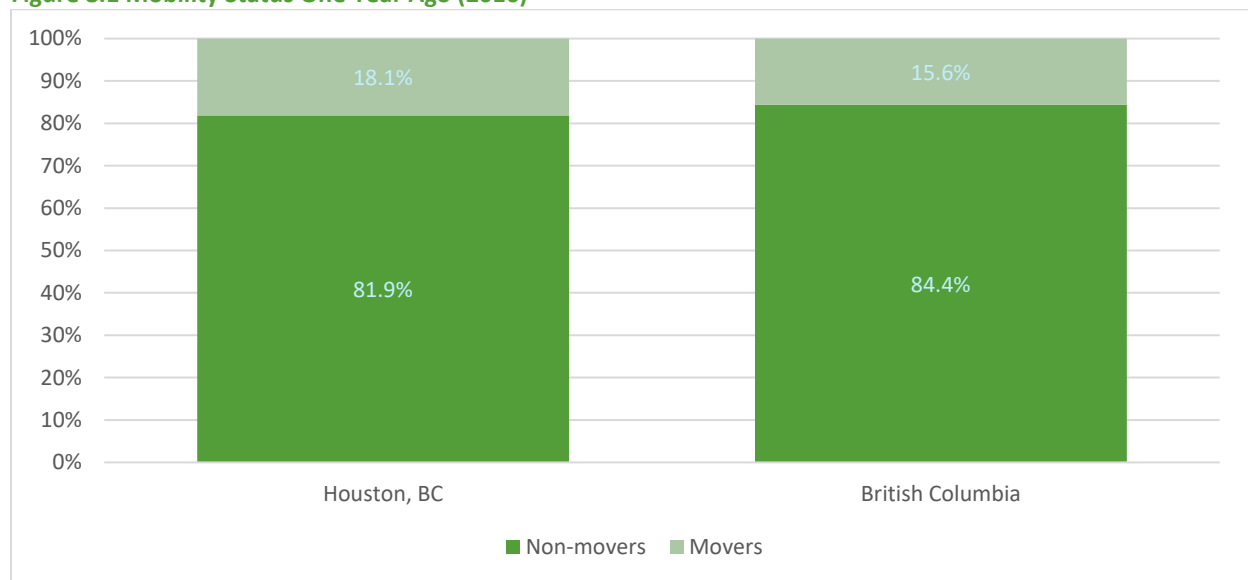
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Figure 8.2 Movers One Years Ago (2016)
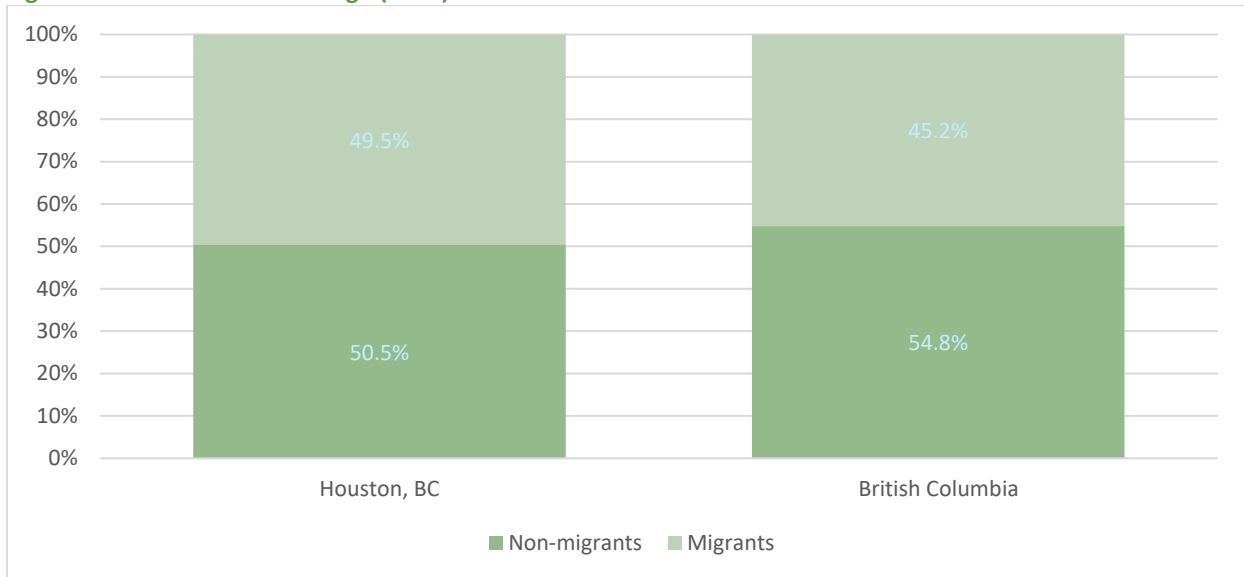
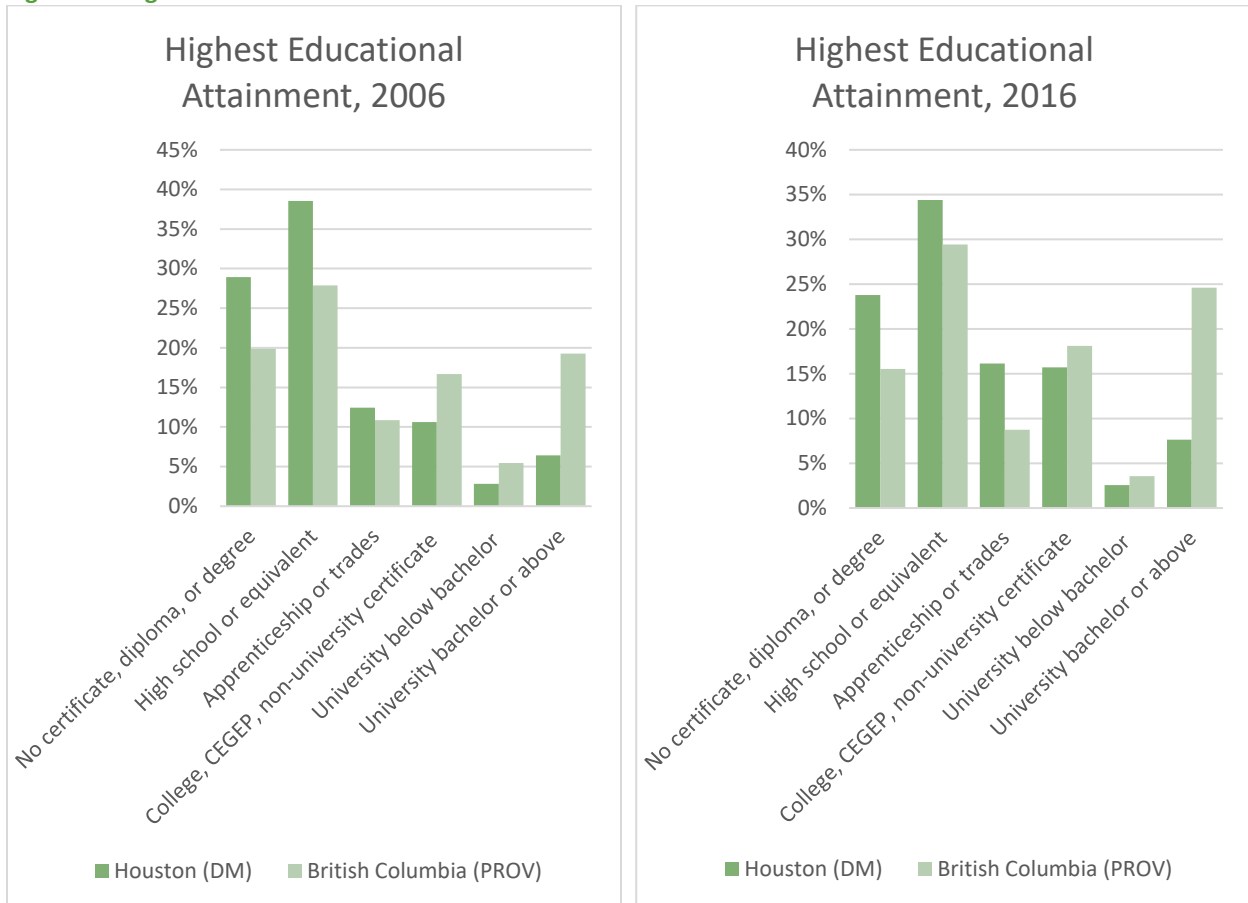*Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.*

9.0 Education

Education is linked to community well-being in many ways, including employment, community capacity, income, and health.[9] Statistics Canada conceptualizes educational attainment according to a hierarchy that progresses, in ascending order, from elementary school to secondary school, college, and university. For instance, if a person has a trade certificate and a bachelor's degree, the latter is considered their highest educational attainment.

Historical comparison is complicated by changing definitions and categories over time; however, a look at educational attainment in 2006 and 2016, as presented in Figure 8.1, shows developments in the most recent decade. The population of the District Municipality of Houston aged 15 years and over is considerably more likely than the provincial population to have no recognized educational attainment (29% in 2006 and 24% in 2016) or no more than high school or equivalent (an additional 39% in 2006 and 34% in 2016). While trades certificates and comparable qualifications are more common in Houston than province-wide (12% vs. 11% in 2006 and 16% vs. 9% in 2016), all other post-secondary educational attainments in Houston continue to lag noticeably behind the province by 2016.

Figure 9.1 Highest Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment, 2006

Highest Educational Attainment, 2016

Source: Statistics Canada. 2006 and 2016. Census Program.

The six-year completion rate is an indicator of the success of the school system. Six-year completion rate refers to "the proportion of students who graduate, with a British Columbia Certificate of Graduation or British Columbia Adult Graduation Diploma, within six years from the first time they enroll in Grade 8, adjusted for migration in and out of British Columbia."[10] This data is available by school district. Houston is part of School District #54, which comprises seven schools in the communities Witset[iv], Smithers, Telkwa, Quick, and Houston. As shown in Figure 8.2, the six-year completion rates for all students in School District #54 as well as the province have improved since the turn of the century. While improvements for BC students in total were steady, completion rates in School District #54, while following the same general trends, underwent strong fluctuations. The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students has decreased over time, but the 2017/18 Aboriginal completion rate of 67% in School District #54 still remains well below the non-Aboriginal completion rate of 87%.

[iv] Formerly Moricetown.

Figure 9.2 Six-Year Completion Rate


Six Year Completion Rate
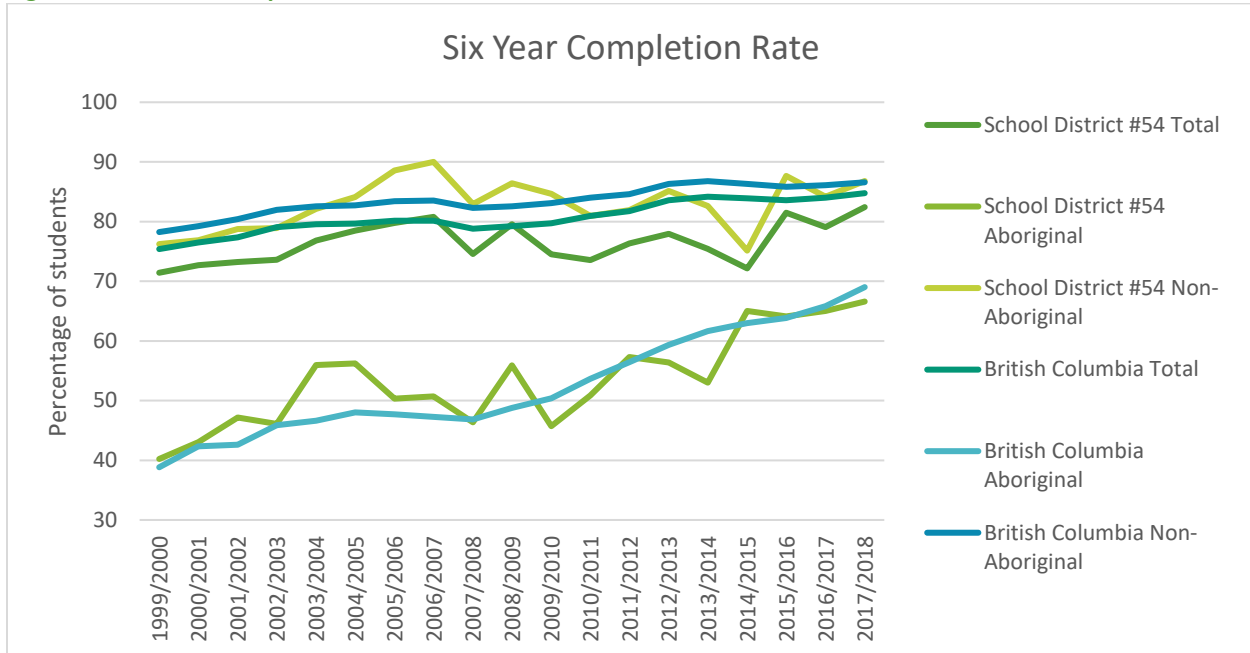
Source: BC Ministry of Education. 2018. Six-Year Completion Rates.

10.0 Labour Force

The strength and diversity of the local economy is reflected in the labour market. Figure 10.1 shows that Houston has consistently had a higher labour force participation rate, in particular the male labour force participation rate, than BC since at least the beginning of the 1990s. However, the gap has been decreasing as the participation rate in Houston, especially among men, has seen a steeper decrease than the province since the early 2000s.

Figure 10.1 Participation Rate
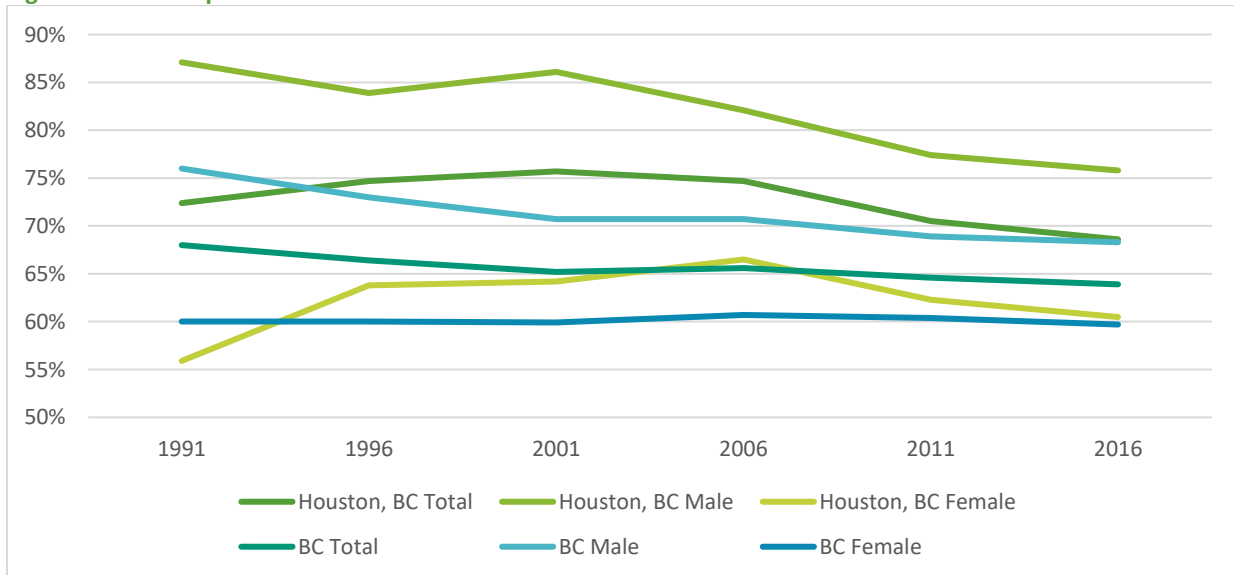
Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2016. Census Program.

The unemployment rate, as depicted in Figure 10.2, has mostly been above BC's unemployment rate. In the early 1990s, both rates were just above 10%; by the mid-1990s, Houston saw a significant increase of almost four percentage points, while unemployment province-wide did not experience that jump and began a continuous decrease that lasted until 2006. Houston's unemployment followed the trend and, at below 7%, went below provincial rates in 2011, only to undergo another sharp increase again, which coincided with West Fraser's closure of one of the main employers in the community, the Houston Forest Products mill, in 2014[11], as well as the closure of the Huckleberry Mine, an open pit copper mine 88km outside of Houston, in 2016.[12] In 2016, Houston's unemployment rate reached 11.5%, while unemployment in BC was at 6.7%.

Figure 10.2 Unemployment Rate
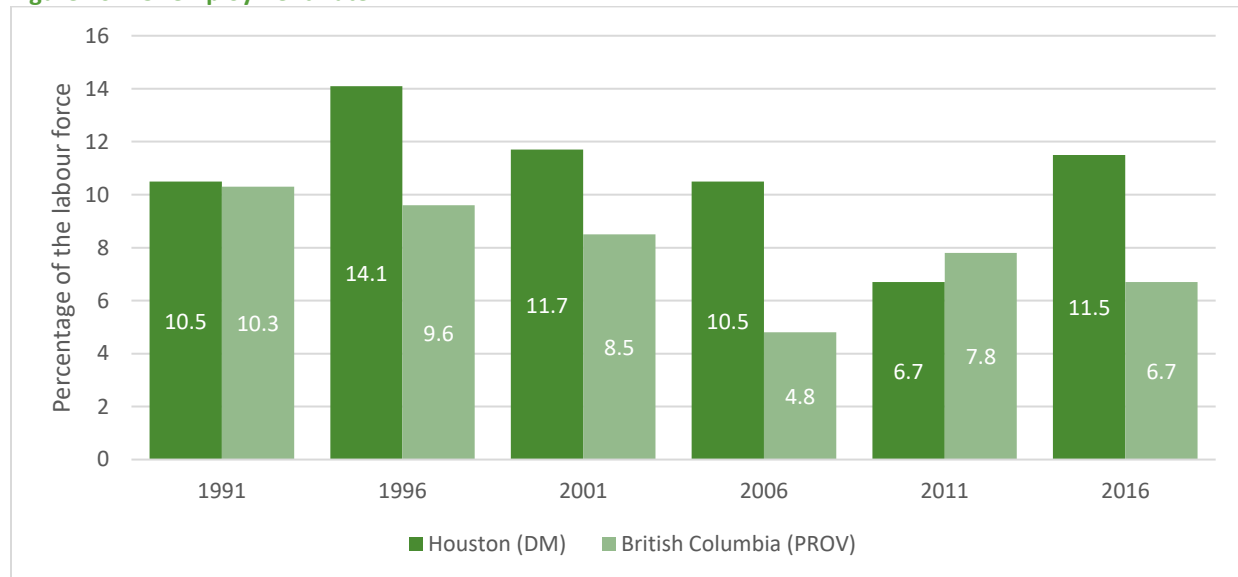
Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2016. Census Program.

A look at the labour force by industry holds information on the diversity of local employment opportunities and allows some conclusions about the state of the local service sector and its developments over time. Figure 10.3 reveals the important role of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting as well as manufacturing in Houston. Over the last decade, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting has increased from employing 13% of the local labour force in 2006 to 19%, or close to one in five, in 2016. Manufacturing lost its leading role of employing almost one in three (29%) in 2006 to providing employment for 14% in 2016. This reflects the above-mentioned closure of one of two large saw mills in Houston in 2014. The next strongest sector is retail trade, which employs 12% and has not undergone any major changes in its significance. In the service sector, education has seen a decrease, while health and social services have increased by about the same amount. A reflection of the decrease in young people and a growing senior population in need of health care, this development expresses the expansion of health care services with the addition of respite and palliative care beds in 2012.[13] A decrease in education as an employment industry may in part be also due to the closure of the local college campus in 2016.[14] The comparison with the province shows that provincial employment is much more evenly distributed across the industries with a higher emphasis on the service sector in general as well as professional, scientific, and technical employment and less employment dependence on the natural resource sector and manufacturing.

Figure 10.3 Labour Force by Industry
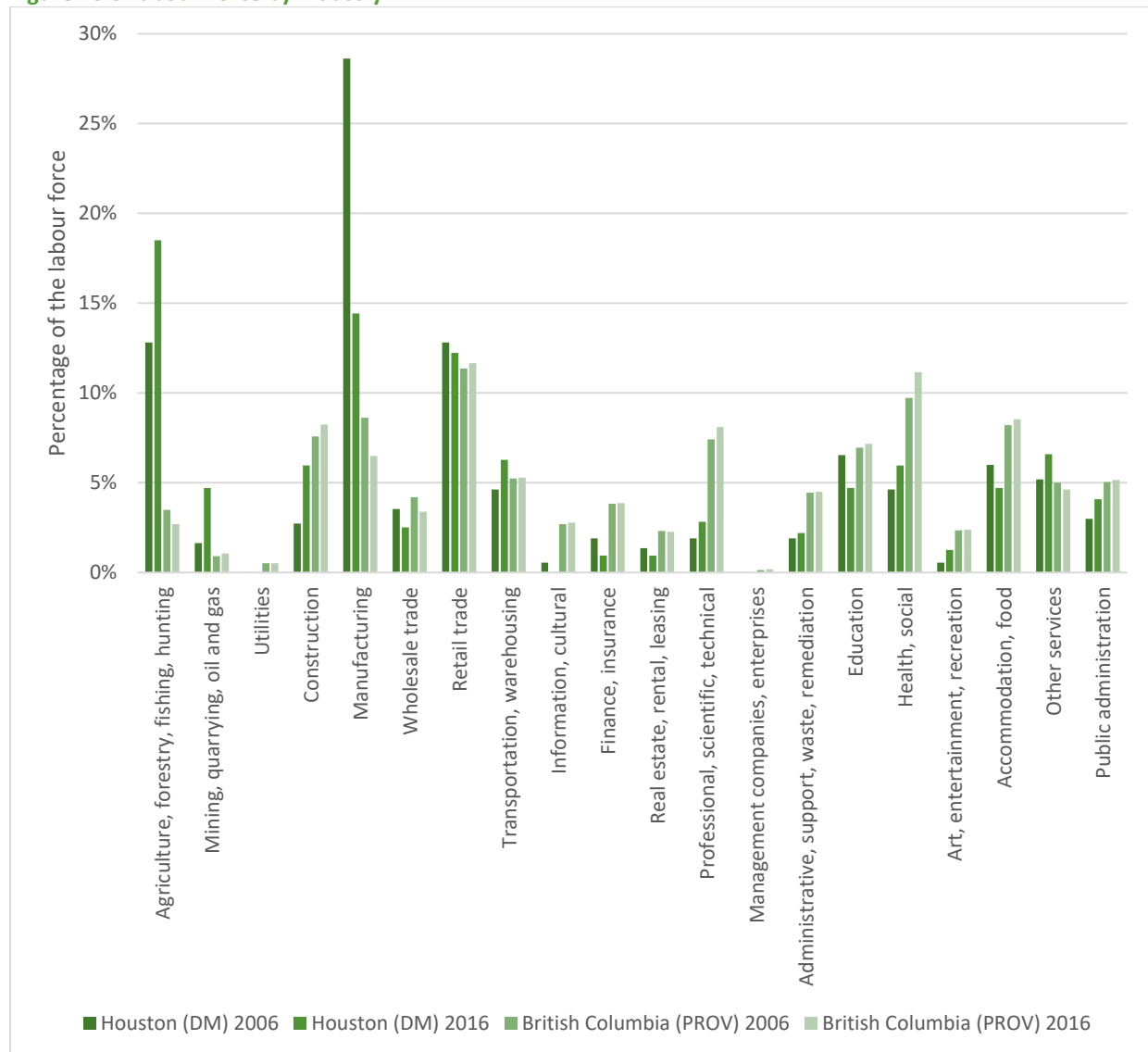
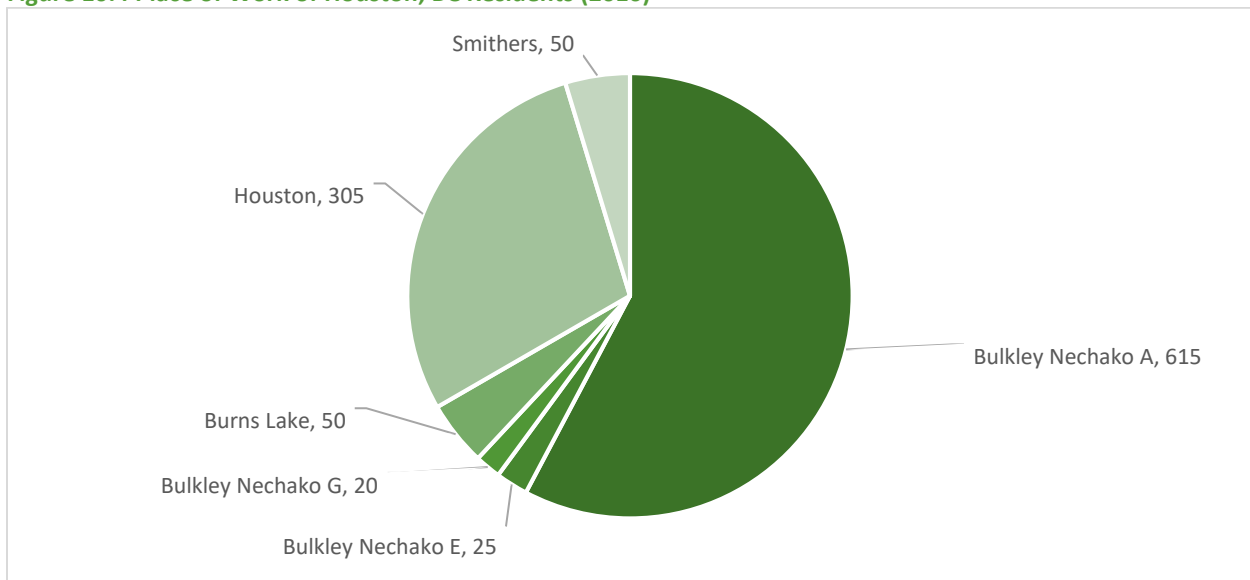*Source: Statistics Canada. 2006 and 2016. Census Program.*

Figure 10.4 shows where Houston's workforce commutes for employment.[v] Only 29% of those who have a usual place of work find employment in Houston. More than one-half of the workforce with a usual place of work (58%) commute from Houston to places within Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area A, and another 5% work in Smithers directly. Burns Lake is the commuting destination for 5%, and a small percentage travel to workplaces in Bulkey-Nechako Electoral Areas E and G. In addition to the workforce

captured in Figure 10.4, another 7% of the employed workforce work at home and 14% have no fixed workplace address.

Figure 10.4 Place of Work of Houston, BC Residents (2016)

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program, Data products.

Of all employees working in Houston, 62% are Houston residents. Another 13% commute to Houston from within the same electoral area, Bulkey-Nechako Electoral Area G. Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area A is home to 8% of Houston employees; in that electoral area, the Town of Smithers and the Village of Telkwa provide another 6% and 4% respectively. The rest commute from Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area B.

**Figure 10.5 Place of Residence of Employees in Houston, BC (2016)**
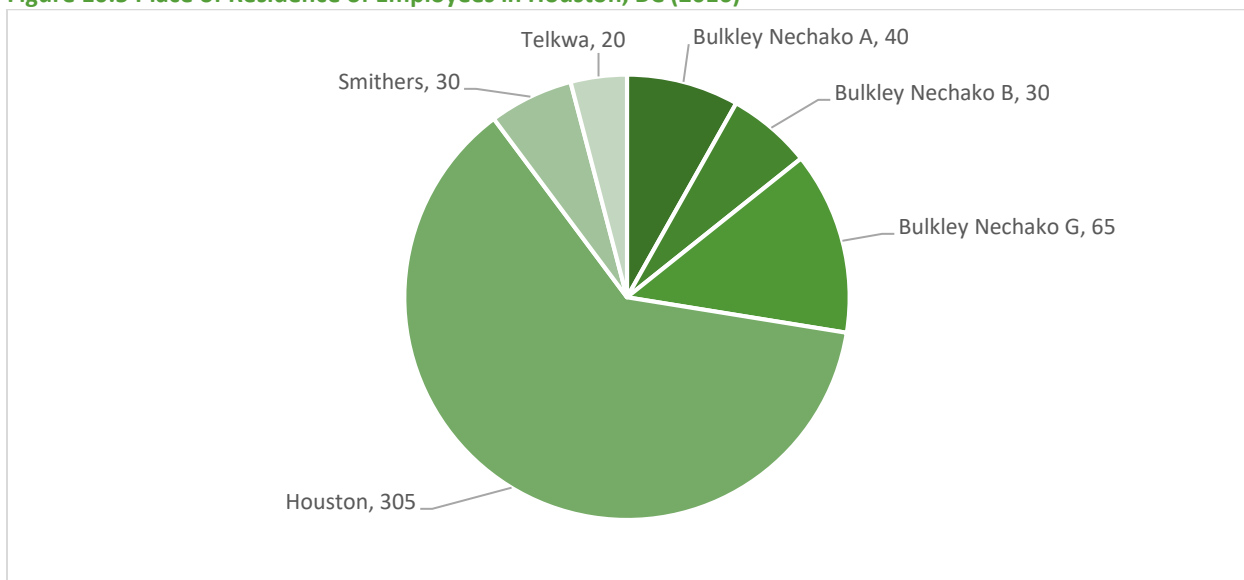
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program, Data Products.

11.0 Income

Income data reveals not only the wealth of a community, but also how that wealth is distributed among the population. Median income is the measure most often used because it is less likely than average income to be skewed by extremes. Median income refers to the midway point in the income distribution of a population. That is, exactly half of the reported incomes are below and the other half are above the median income.

Figures 11.1 and 11.2 show median income for Houston, BC and for British Columbia since 1991. Both have seen a steady increase in median income since the mid-1990s; however, median income, especially male median income, in Houston has consistently been well above incomes province-wide. Male median income and total median income have also increased at a faster rate in Houston. At the same time, female median income in Houston, while increasing over time as well, has been surpassed by provincial female median income, a development which has meant a significantly larger gender income gap in Houston than commonly found in BC overall today. The female median income in Houston in 2016 of $23,168 constitutes less than 40% of the male median income of $58,752. Meanwhile, female median income in BC in 2016 was at over 68% of male median income.
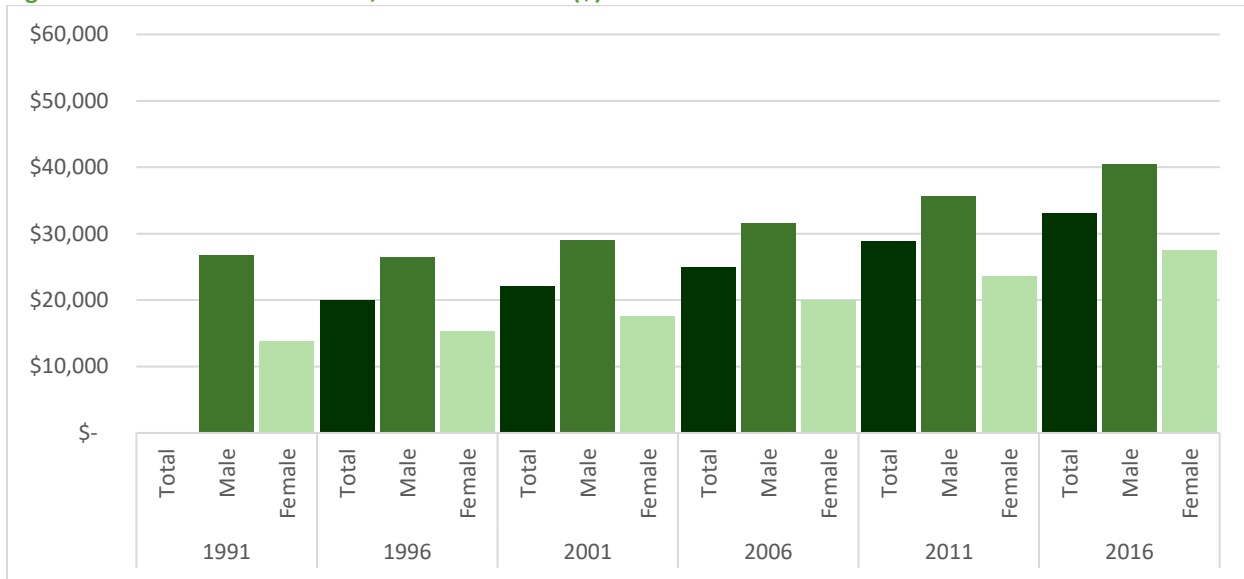
Figure 11.1 Median Total Income, Houston, BC ($)
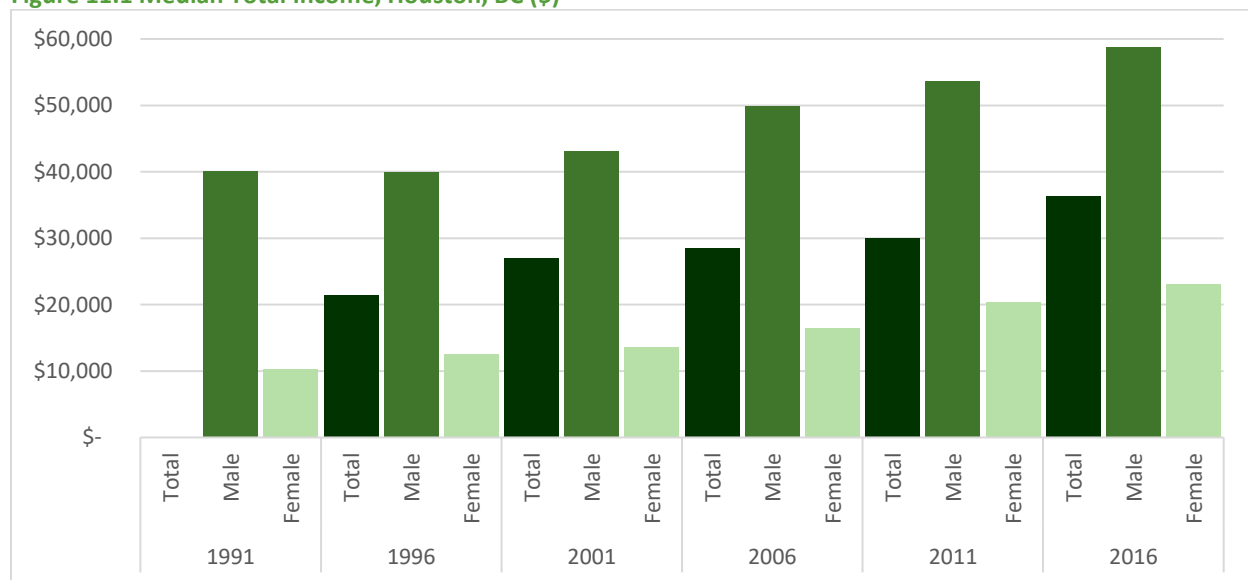
Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2016. Census Program.
Note: The total median income for 1991 was not available.

Figure 11.2 Median Total Income, British Columbia ($)

Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2016. Census Program.
Note: The total median income for 1991 was not available.

Another income related measure of the local economy is the percentage of income that comes from government transfers. Government transfers refer to transfers from all levels of government, including, but not limited to, retirement income, employment insurance, various tax credits, and other benefits. As Figure 11.3 shows, Houston's dependence on government transfers of just under 12% is in line with 11% BC-wide.

Figure 11.3 Income Composition (2016)
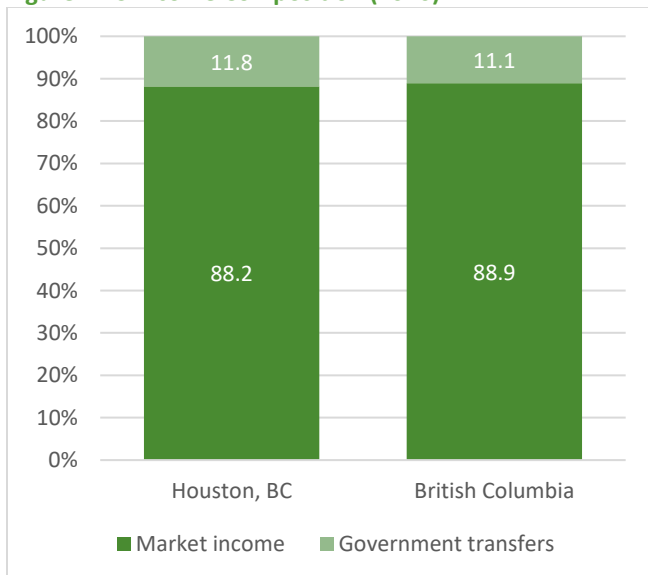
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Finally, the prevalence of low income gives an indication of the economic situation of the population. Low income cut-offs, after-tax (LICO-AT) is defined as the thresholds "below which economic families or

persons not in economic families would likely have devoted a larger share of their after-tax income than average to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing. More specifically, the thresholds represented income levels at which these families or persons were expected to spend 20 percentage points or more of their after-tax income than average on food, shelter and clothing."[15] The prevalence of low income measured by this threshold is much lower in Houston than in British Columbia (Figure 11.4). Particularly seniors, 1.2% of whom live in low income in Houston, are currently less vulnerable than the provincial senior population with 6% living in low income situations. Children and youth are the most vulnerable age group with 7.5% living with low incomes in Houston in 2016.

Another way to express low income is the low income measure, after-tax (LIM-AT). The LIM-AT "refers to a fixed percentage (50%) of median-adjusted after-tax income of private households" adjusted for household size. Figure 11.5 depicts low income in Houston and BC as measured by LIM-AT in 2011 and 2016. While BC saw a slight decrease in vulnerability over the past several years according to LIM-AT, Houston has experienced an increase in vulnerability, especially for youth and seniors. Whereas LICO-AT shows seniors as the least vulnerable group in Houston in 2016, LIM-AT identifies them as the most vulnerable group.

Figure 11.4 Prevalence of Low Income, Low Income Cut-Off, After-Tax (2016)
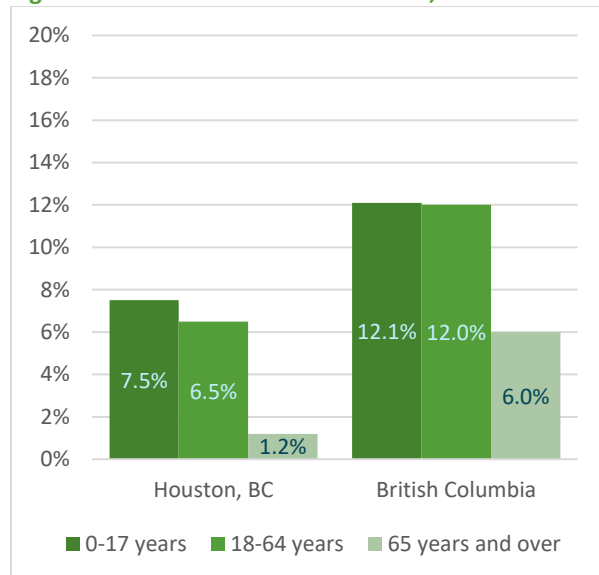
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Figure 11.5 Prevalence of Low Income, Low Income Measure, After-Tax

Grouped bar chart showing prevalence of low income by age group and region:

| Region	0-17 years	18-64 years	65 years and over
Houston, BC (2011)	7.3%	10.6%	8.5%
Houston, BC (2016)	16.4%	11.7%	16.9%
British Columbia (2011)	19.1%	16.2%	13.9%
British Columbia (2016)	18.5%	14.8%	14.9%
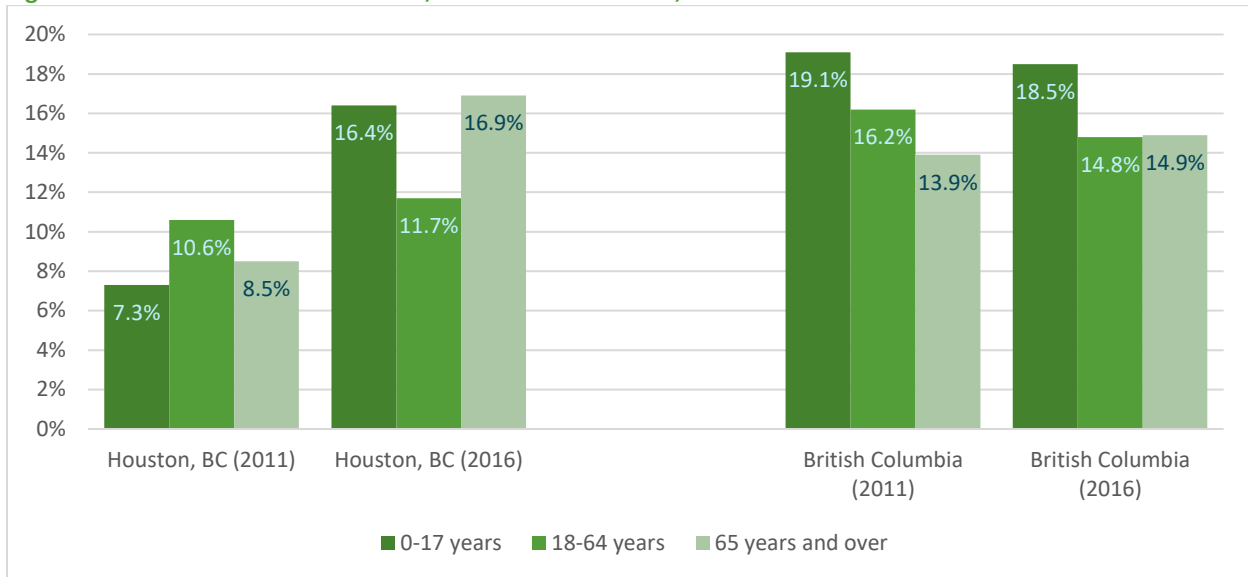
Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 and 2016. Census Program.

12.0 Housing

Housing data describes the tenure, characteristics, and conditions of the housing stock in a community, as well as the dynamics of the local housing market. Figure 12.1 shows what types of dwellings can be found in Houston. As these are self-reported by residents in the Census, some of the fluctuations may be due to inconsistencies in how individual dwellings are defined. However, the data presented allows the conclusion that single-detached dwellings make up around two-thirds of Houston's housing stock. The second most common type of dwelling are movable dwellings making up around 16% of the housing stock in 2016. A comparison with provincial housing stock (Figure 12.2) shows that housing province-wide is more diverse. While single detached dwellings still make up the largest segment, they constitute less than one-half of the provincial housing stock, followed by apartment buildings with fewer than five storeys, making up over 20%. At less than 3%, movable dwellings are the least common type of dwelling in BC overall.

Figure 12.1 Type of Dwelling, Houston, BC
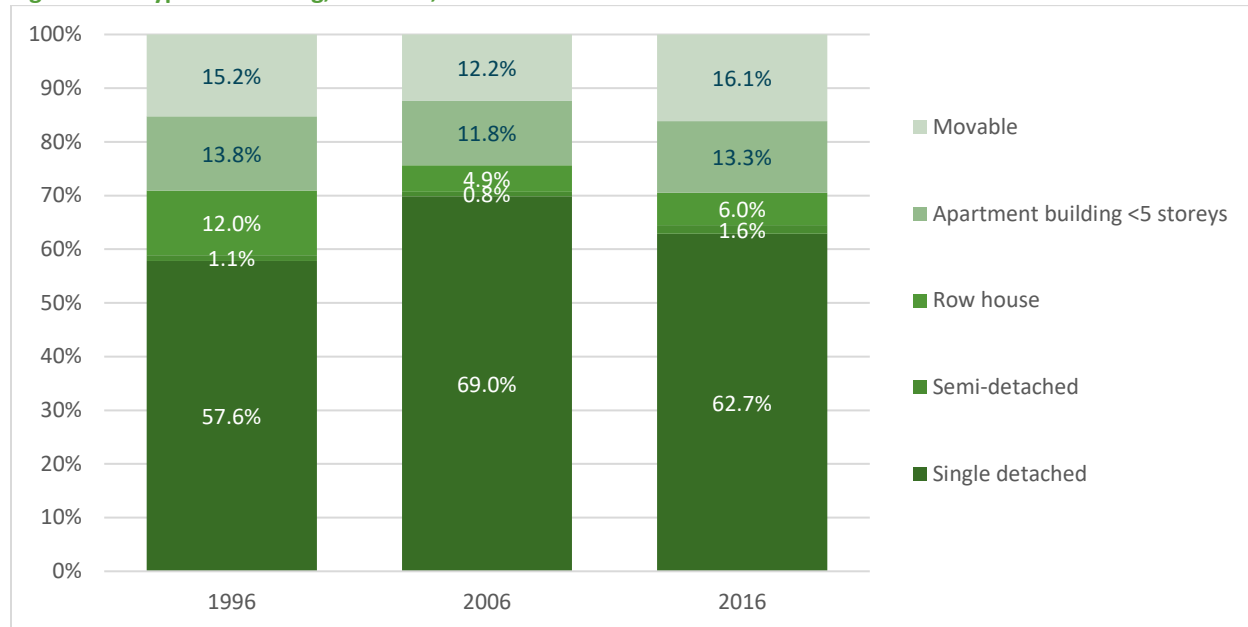
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996, 2006, and 2016. Census Program.

Figure 12.2 Type of Dwelling (2016)
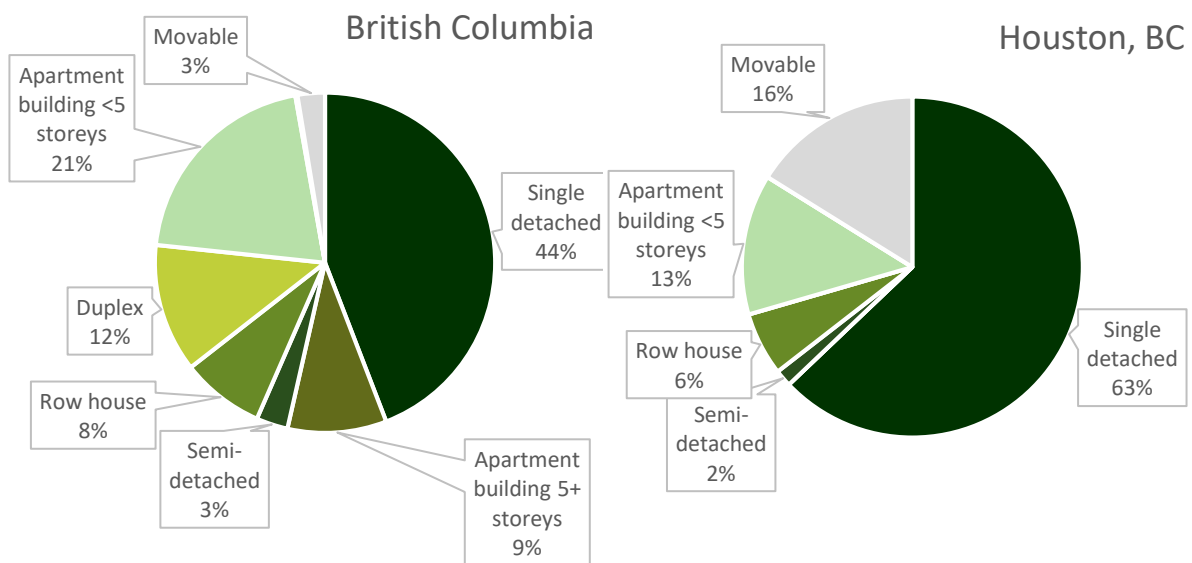
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Figures 12.3 and 12.4 demonstrate that, with 73% of private households owning their dwelling, home ownership is not only more common in Houston compared to British Columbia (68%); it is especially more common for young households in the age groups under 35 years of age and older seniors aged 85 years and older. While the data does not hold information about the underlying reasons, two factors are likely to influence these home ownership patterns: affordability, especially for young people, and a lack of alternatives, likely carrying more weight for the older population.

Figure 12.3 Tenure (2016)
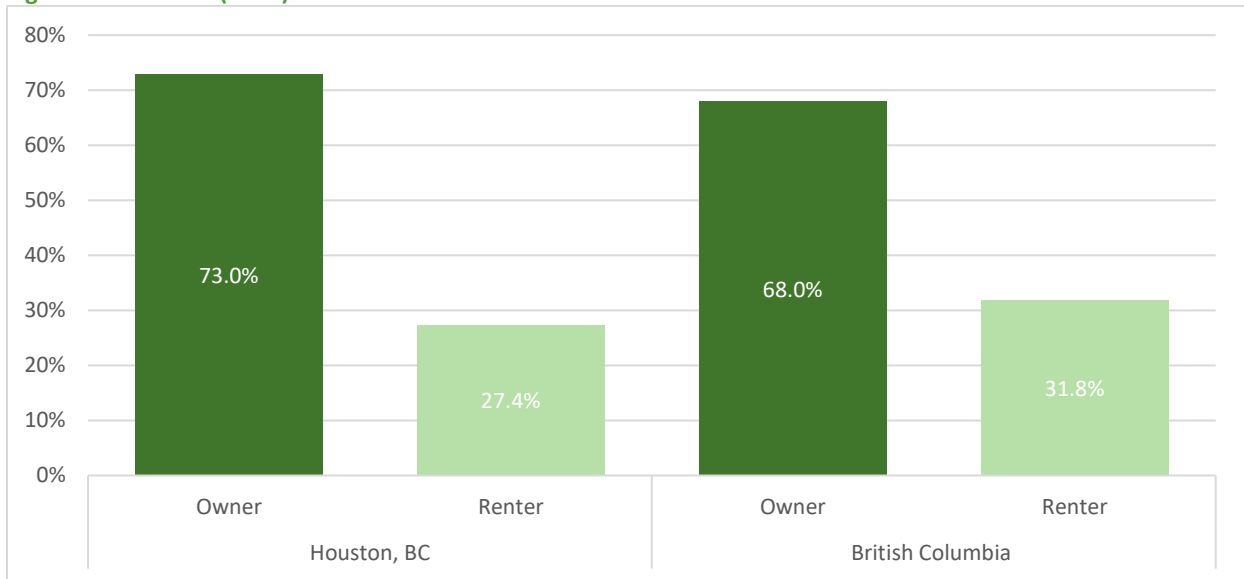
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Figure 12.4 Home Ownership by Age Group (2016)
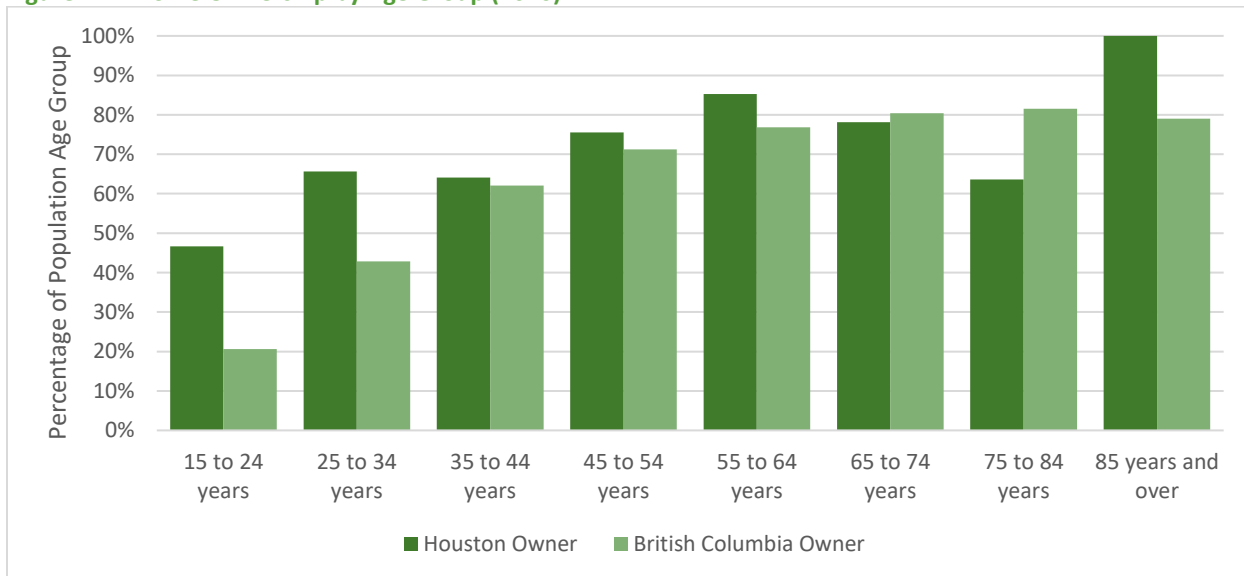
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program, Data Products.

Figures 12.5 and 12.6 explore dwelling size, as measured by number of bedrooms, and provide a direct comparison to household size, thereby aiming to establish a connection between housing supply and demand. Around one-third of dwellings in Houston in 2016 are larger homes with four or more bedrooms and almost another one-third feature three bedrooms. Smaller two-bedroom homes only make up just over one-quarter, and a mere one in ten homes have no or one bedroom. Dwelling size is more evenly distributed across the province, where two-bedroom, three-bedroom, and four or more bedroom homes each make up around 27%, or a little over one-quarter. No bedroom and one-bedroom homes constitute another almost 18% of the housing stock of the entire province. Considering household size, Figure 12.6 shows a mismatch between supply and demand with an oversupply of larger

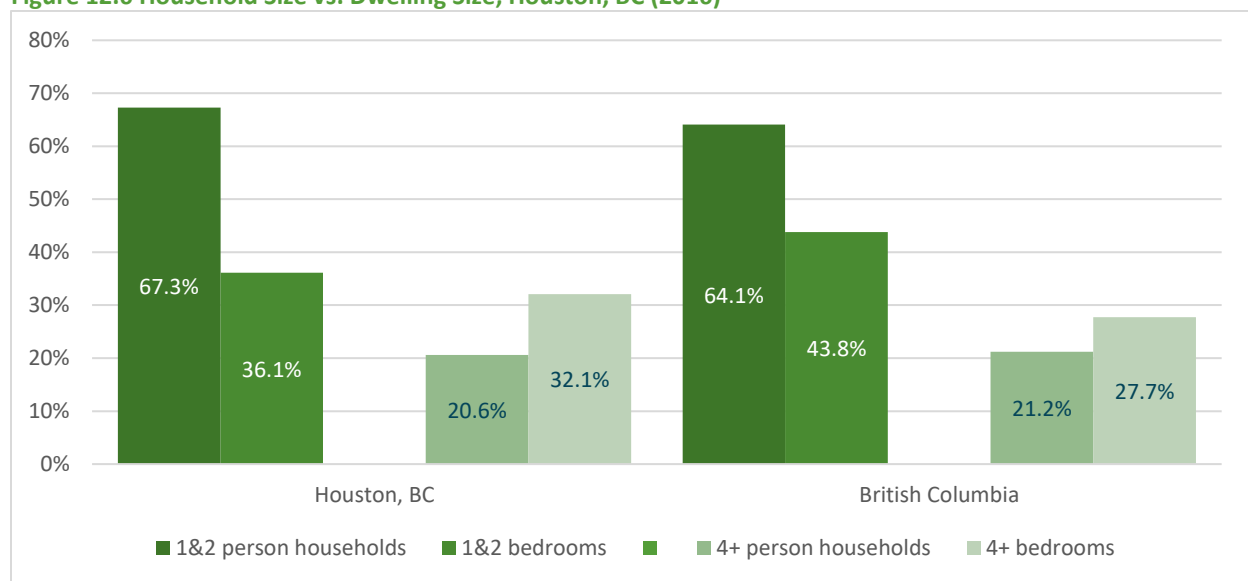homes and a shortage of smaller dwellings for the increasing number of smaller households. This mismatch is more pronounced in Houston than in the province overall.

Figure 12.5 Dwelling Size (2016)

Houston, BC

No bedrooms, 0.8%
1 bedroom, 9.2%
2 bedrooms, 26.9%
3 bedrooms, 30.9%
4 or more bedrooms, 32.1%

British Columbia

No bedrooms, 1.2%
1 bedroom, 16.5%
2 bedrooms, 27.3%
3 bedrooms, 27.3%
4 or more bedrooms, 27.7%
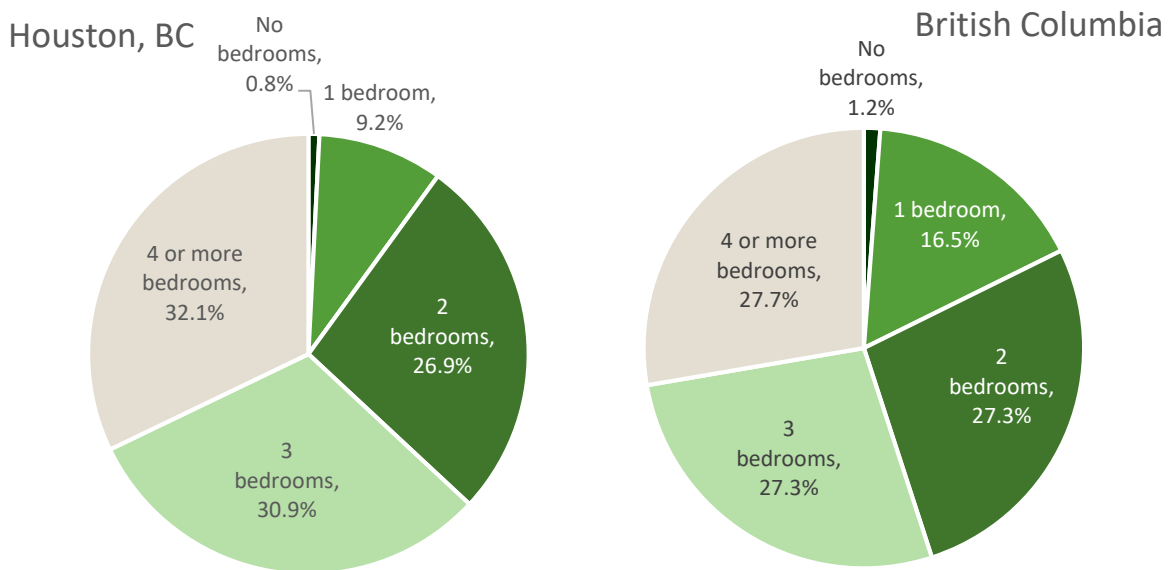
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Figure 12.6 Household Size vs. Dwelling Size, Houston, BC (2016)

Houston, BC: 1&2 person households 67.3%, 1&2 bedrooms 36.1%, 4+ person households 20.6%, 4+ bedrooms 32.1%

British Columbia: 1&2 person households 64.1%, 1&2 bedrooms 43.8%, 4+ person households 21.2%, 4+ bedrooms 27.7%

Legend: ■ 1&2 person households ■ 1&2 bedrooms ■ 4+ person households ■ 4+ bedrooms
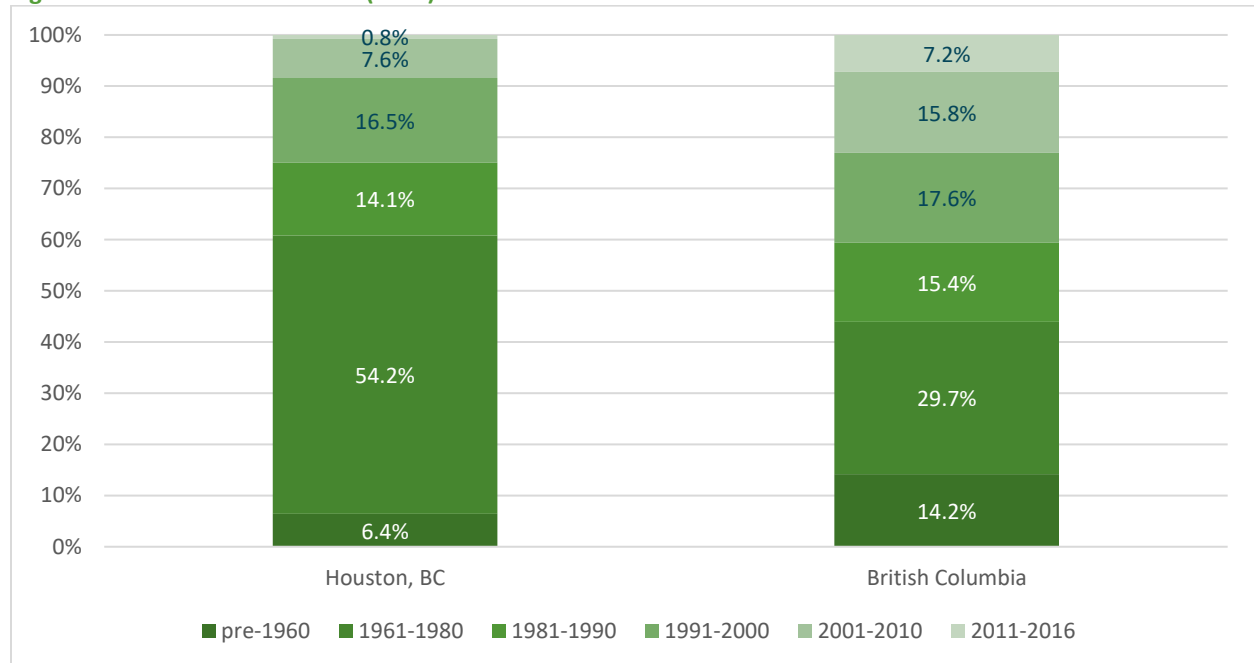
Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

The age of a dwelling correlates directly with its likelihood of needing major repairs or renovations. Figure 12.7 shows that over 60% of the 2016 housing stock in Houston was built during the boom time before the 1980s. Around 17% were built in the 1990s, and hardly any new homes had been added in the last five years before the 2016 Census. In comparison, province-wide 44% of the housing stock were built before 1981, and building activity since then has been relatively evenly distributed over the

decades. The Houston Vision 2025[16] reflects the goal of energy efficiency, and adequate and desirable housing that meets the community's needs. Census data on dwelling condition is self-reported by residents and merely asks whether a dwelling is in need of major repairs; it does not hold information on completed repairs and renovations, nor does it refer to desired remodeling or restructuring to bring housing up to current energy efficiency or accessibility standards, or meet current-day tastes. This means that initiatives such as the woodstove exchange rebate program[17] in 2011, for example, are not reflected in Census data. With this in mind, Figure 12.8 confirms that the older housing stock in Houston does mean a greater need for major repairs.

Figure 12.7 Construction Period (2016)

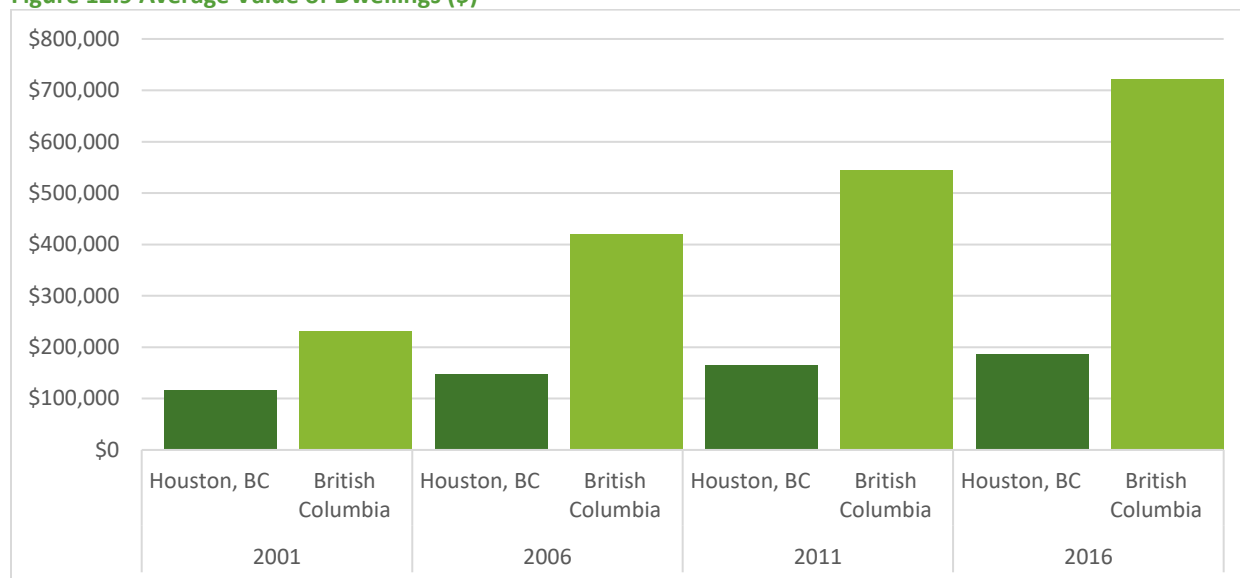Source: Statistics Canada. 2016. Census Program.

Figure 12.8 Dwelling Condition: In Need of Major Repairs
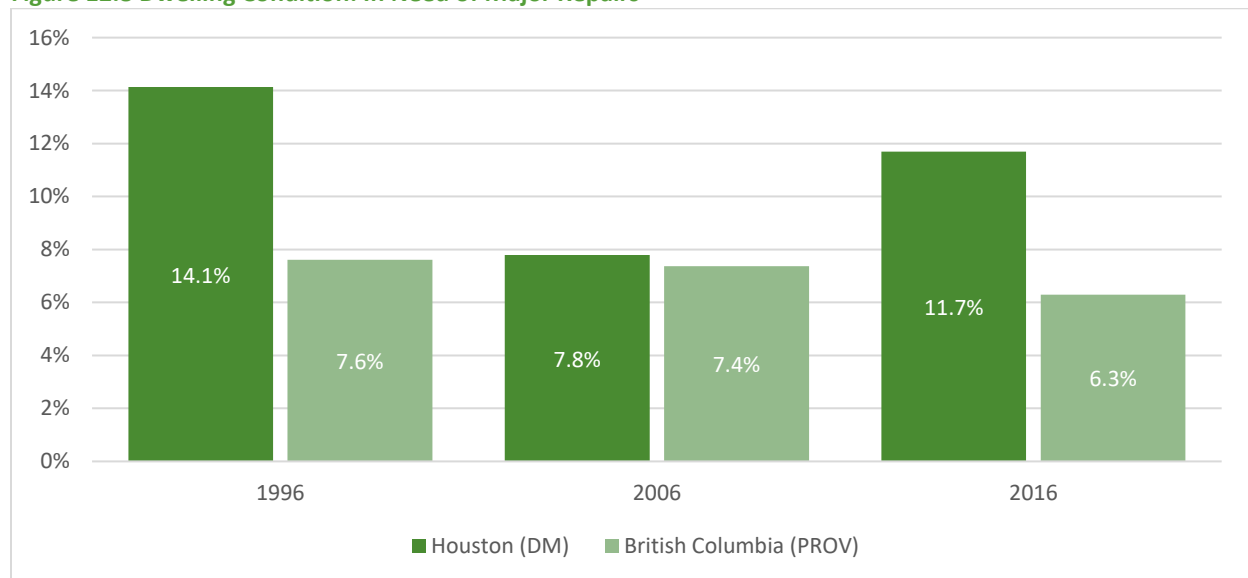
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996, 2006, and 2016. Census Program.

The average value of dwellings in Houston is well below British Columbia, and value of homes in Houston has increased at a much slower rate than the average value of dwellings province-wide (Figure 12.9). In 2016, the average value of a dwelling in Houston was reported to be $186,152, an increase of 61% since 2001. Meanwhile, the average dwelling value for BC in 2016 was $720,689, which constituted an increase of 212% since 2001. While this means that the return on real estate investments in Houston lags behind other places in the province, the affordability of housing also makes the higher rate of home ownership in the community possible.

Figure 12.9 Average Value of Dwellings ($)

Source: Statistics Canada. 2001-2016. Census Program.

Figure 12.10 shows that average monthly shelter costs for owners as well as tenants in Houston are well below monthly shelter costs in British Columbia overall. Costs for tenants are generally below costs for home owners; however, shelter costs for tenants in Houston have been increasing at a faster rate than costs for home owners, which have plateaued since 2011. Monthly costs for owners increased by 19% since 2001, and were at $874 in 2016, whereas rent increased by 53% to $734 in 2016. In comparison, average monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings in BC were at $1,387 in 2016, costs for tenants at $1,149.

Figure 12.10 Average Monthly Shelter Costs ($)
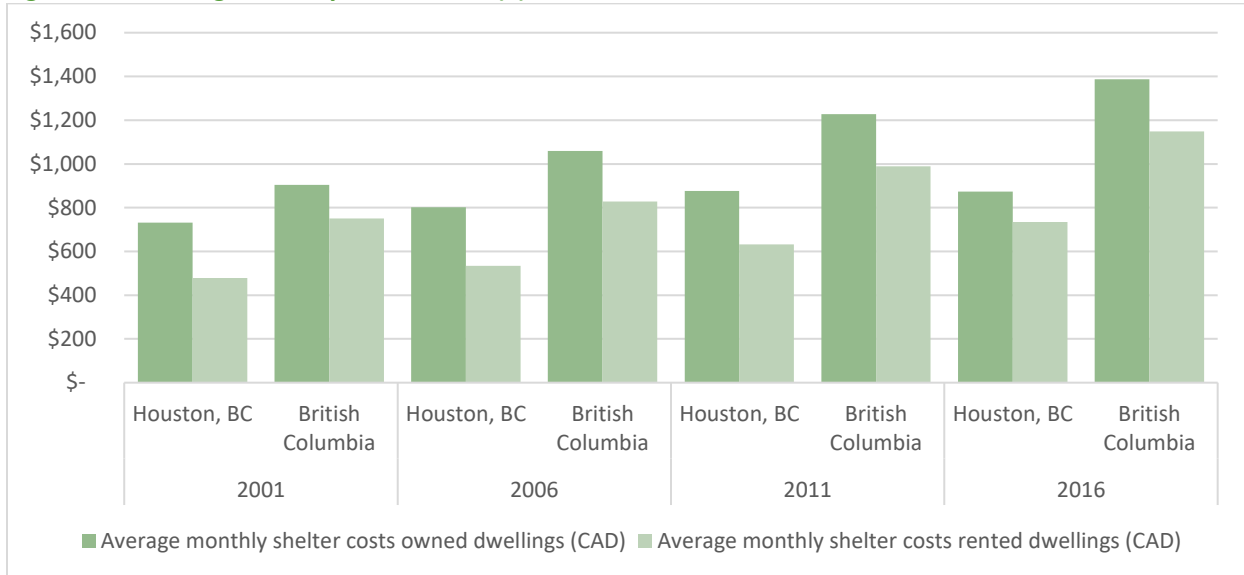
Source: Statistics Canada. 2001-2016. Census Program.

Affordability puts shelter costs in relation to income levels. Home owners in Houston have seen affordability increase over time; while in 2001, 12% of home owners spent 30% or more of their income on shelter costs, that rate has decreased to 8% in 2016. Province-wide, affordability for home owners fluctuated more but always showed home owners were significantly more vulnerable in BC overall; in 2016, 21% of home owners throughout the province, over one in five, spent 30% or more of their income on shelter costs. The situation for tenants in Houston is quite different from home owners when it comes to affordability. The rate of vulnerable tenants spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs has overall increased from 22% in 2001 to 36% in 2011 and then 31% in 2016, meaning almost one in three tenants struggles with shelter affordability in Houston.

Figure 12.11 Affordability
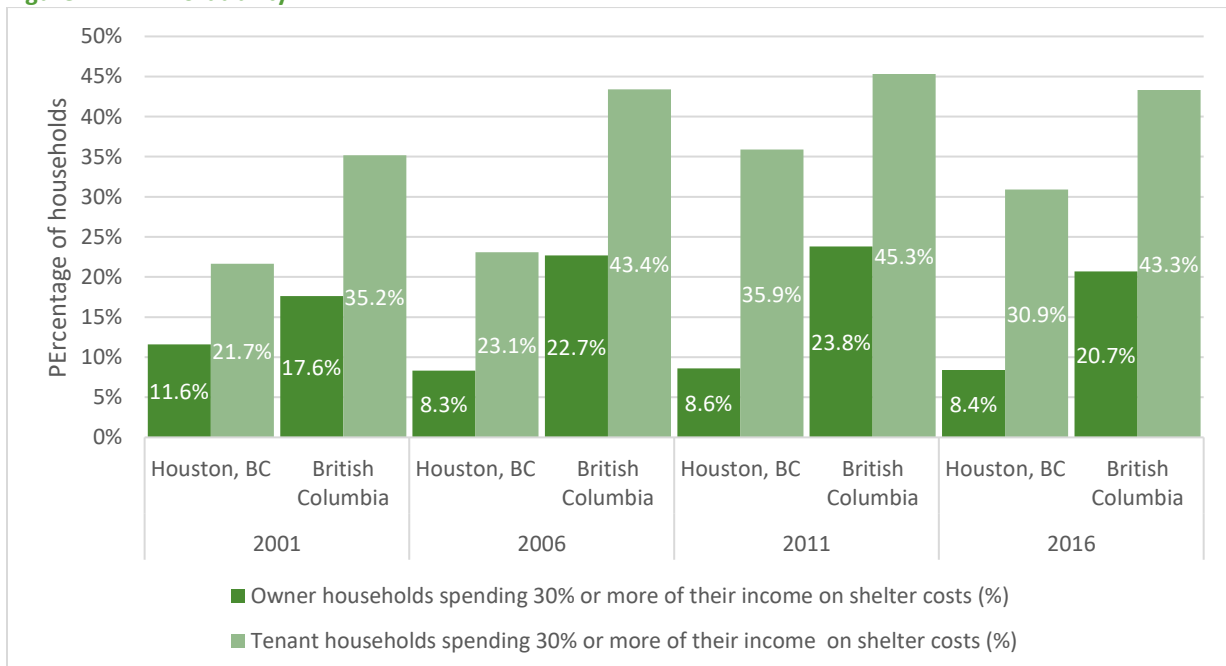
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The Community Development Institute
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The Community Development Institute (CDI) at UNBC was established in 2004 with a broad mandate in the areas of community, regional, and economic development. Since its inception, the CDI has worked with communities across the northern and central regions of British Columbia to develop and implement strategies for economic diversification and community resilience.

Dedicated to understanding and realizing the potential of BC's non-metropolitan communities in a changing global economy, the CDI works to prepare students and practitioners for leadership roles in community and economic development, and to create a body of knowledge, information, and research that will enhance our understanding and our ability to deal with the impacts of ongoing transformation. The Community Development Institute is committed to working with all communities – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – to help them further their aspirations in community and regional development.

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