

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Barry Edmonston and Eric Fong, eds., *The Changing Canadian Population*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, 384 pp. \$34.95 paper (978-0-7735-3794-1), \$95.00 hardcover (978-0-7735-3793-4)

The *Changing Canadian Population* uses secondary analysis of Canadian census data to explore population change. It begins with "Canada's Population Context," covering patterns of population growth as a function of primary demographic determinants of fertility, mortality and migration, age and sex composition (including patterns in dependency ratios), and trends in the number and size of Canadian households (including housing tenure and affordability). Part 2 examines "Social Stratification" focusing on a range of socioeconomic status measures pertaining to education, employment (encompassing participation rates, labour force status, occupation and industry), and income (specifically, the incidence of low income in the Canadian population). Part 3 explores "Population Distribution and Migration" which encompasses both internal migration and immigration and their effects upon ethnic, racial and visible minority concentrations in Canadian provinces, territories and urban areas. Part 4 focuses on "Families, Children and the Elderly," beginning with a review of changes in family structure over time, followed by separate chapters concentrating on younger (under 25 years) and older (65 years or more) Canadian populations. Part 5 investigates "Ethnicity, Religion and Language" in aggregate terms for the entire Canadian population, with special attention to indigenous peoples and languages.

The editors identify three major themes for understanding population change in Canada: a relatively low fertility rate (below population replacement levels for several decades), a high level of immigration (contributing to population growth and increasing diversity in the ethnic composition of Canadian society over time), and internal migration in the form of increased urbanization and provincial/regional shifts in population in recent decades. These three broad themes are explored in many of the chapters by contributing authors. In general, coverage of each key demographic concept and associated variables is thorough and comprehensive, and the chapters provide many tables and charts presenting census data to illustrate complex relationships and trends over

time. Many also address the policy implications associated with significant population trends observed in census data. As well, some of the chapters provide useful international comparisons, placing Canadian population change and patterns in a broader global context.

All demographic data — whether derived from survey samples or population censuses — have unique problems or limitations, and Canadian census data are no exception. The contributing authors are careful to identify and discuss data limitations with respect to the specific variables or indicators they have analyzed. To illustrate, with respect to coding of occupation and industry, Richard Wanner identifies significant challenges “related to the changing measures used by Statistics Canada.” Eric Fong and Elic Chan point to “potential complication of interpretation” associated with “multiple ethnic responses” captured in census data. For internal migration history, Barry Edmunston notes that “The major limitation of a place-of-birth reference is that the time at which migration took place is not known. Movement could have occurred at any time between birth and the current date.” Regarding same-sex unions, Zheng Wu and Christoph Schimmele observe that the national estimate derived from census data is “probably conservative given non-reporting related to fear of social stigma.” Sharon Lee discusses confusion regarding ethnic origin and visible minority indicators related to census question wording and response categories. These are just a few examples which illustrate authors’ understandings of census data limitations and the importance of placing secondary analyses of such data within the context of these limitations.

The census data presented in this volume cover up to the 2001 Canadian Census — data which are now 10 years old. Data from the more recent 2006 Canadian Census (released in many forms by Statistics Canada by 2008/2009) have not been included as part of the analyses. Rather than systematically incorporate the more recent population data into analyses, the editors refer readers to the Statistics Canada website where they can find highlight tables, topic-based tabulations, community profiles, and census trends. Within the actual data analysis chapters, there are very occasional references to 2006 census data but tables and charts presented only provide data up to 2001. While it is understandable that not all detailed analyses contained in this volume could be readily replicated using available 2006 census data (some would clearly require custom tabulations requested through Statistics Canada), many could certainly have been accomplished using readily available public data from the 2006 Canadian Census. This would be especially important for areas such as employment where there have been significant changes since 2001. Nonetheless, this book provides a valuable, compelling sta-

tistical portrait of Canadian population trends and patterns on a wide range of demographic and related variables. *The Changing Canadian Population* will be of particular interest to sociologists, demographers, and other social scientists studying population dynamics, and will appeal more broadly to those with an interest in the evolving nature of Canadian society.

Much of the data presented in this edited collection were drawn from the “long form” of the Canadian Census collected from a 20 percent sample of the full Canadian population. The true richness of data on a wide range of demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural dimensions captured by the census long form is clearly evident throughout this volume. Recent changes dictated by the Conservative federal government to replace the mandatory long-form census with a purely voluntary “national household survey” will undoubtedly diminish the quality (validity and reliability) of data collected in future censuses, beginning with the current 2011 Canadian Census. Commenting on the abrupt change from mandatory long form census to voluntary survey, Ivan Fellegi, former Chief Statistician of Statistics Canada observed that “we will not only have less knowledge about ourselves, we will have the wrong knowledge about ourselves because we won’t know what’s right and what’s wrong” (quoted in Bruce Campion-Smith, “Short-form census makes debut Monday,” *Toronto Star*, April 28, 2011). The detailed analyses presented in this volume clearly illustrate the fundamental importance of collecting valid and reliable census data for describing and explaining realities of the Canadian population, for informing social policy, and for predicting future trends and patterns in Canadian society.

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