

**EXPLORING YOUTH MIGRATION IN FRANCOPHONE  
MANITOBA**

**PHASE 1 PROJECT REPORT**

**APRIL 2008**

## **Rural Development Institute, Brandon University**

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## Executive Summary

Many factors contribute to youth migration in Manitoba. Youth mobility patterns vary widely and change often. A great deal of debate about whether young people should *stay, leave,* and/or *return* exists. The desire to understand population and demographic change in rural and northern communities inspired a Manitoba focused youth migration study. The purpose of this project is to develop increased clarity and understanding regarding the nature of and reasons for rural and northern youth migration in Manitoba.

A key goal of this project is to speak with Manitoban youth from a selection of regions to develop a nuanced and multi-perspective understanding of their experiences in rural and northern communities, their intentions to leave or stay, and the motivations for leaving, staying, or returning to these smaller communities. A case study approach was employed focusing on three regions of Manitoba: 1) francophone communities within the jurisdiction of le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM), 2) Northern communities, and 3) Parkland communities.

This report outlines findings from Phase 1. Phase 1 findings indicate that youth leave rural communities for a variety of reasons, but typically to pursue educational goals and skill development upon completing high school. There appear to be linkages between perception and migration. Perception and migration patterns often coincide with life changes that transpire along a continuum of age. Rural youth leave to fulfill goals and opportunities that are often not available to them in their rural communities. School, travel and work experience are important aspects of becoming independent. Youth at the older end of the age continuum (youth are defined as 18-34 years of age for the purpose of this project) often express a desire to return to rural places when they begin to think about starting their own families.

A number of ‘rural advantages’ are generally perceived to exist and contribute to the desire to remain in or return to a rural community. Typical responses included comments about an improved quality of life, increased safety, stronger connections to nature and a greater sense of community. Findings from Phase 1 emphasized the role of cultural and community ties. Francophone culture, language and heritage strongly contribute to many youth’s desire to return to a rural community. Francophones are often described as having a bond that transcends geography; many participants stated a desire to return to a rural francophone community, not necessarily the community they grew up in. Community and cultural pride are often described as the ‘glue’ that binds people to place. Cultural ties and pride, in conjunction with employment opportunities, most often dictate where young people will migrate.

The findings of this project emphasize the need for effective means of communication. A mixture of traditional and new forms of communication technologies are needed to reach all residents and potential residents. Access to high speed Internet is not available to all community residents; however, an up-to-date easy to find and use community website is very important. Communities must offer a vast array of amenities and services to satisfy the needs of residents and appeal to newcomers. Effective means of communication will foster awareness about what a particular community has to boast about!

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## Introduction

The desire to understand population and demographic changes in rural and northern communities inspired a Manitoba focused youth migration study undertaken by provincial and federal government representatives, researchers, students, and community representatives. The intent of this project is to provide clarity and understanding regarding the nature of and reasons for rural and northern youth migration in Manitoba. A key goal of this research is to speak with Manitoban rural and northern youth to develop a nuanced and multi-perspective understanding of their experiences in rural and northern communities, their intentions to leave or stay, and the motivations for leaving, staying, or returning to these smaller communities. A case study approach was employed, focusing on three regions of Manitoba: 1) Francophone communities within the jurisdiction of le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba, 2) Northern communities, and 3) Parkland communities.

The research project has three key objectives:

1. Investigate the extent of youth migration from rural and northern communities;
2. Explore reasons for youth migration; and,
3. Provide data to assist communities, regions, government departments and others to identify opportunities to keep youth in Manitoba and to attract youth back to rural and northern communities.

To ensure a collaborative approach, a project steering committee comprised of members of the Youth sub-Committee of Rural Team Manitoba was established to assist research design and implementation. This is a two-phase research project. Phase 1 included a review of the literature, secondary data analysis and qualitative data collection in francophone Manitoba. Examining existing literature and using secondary data from multiple sources fostered an increased understanding about the scope of youth migration as well as informed the development and design of Phase 1. Being a multi-method project using a case-study approach, to gain further insight into instances of rural and northern youth migration, qualitative information was gathered through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. For the purpose of this study youth are defined as those between the ages of 18 and 34 years.

At least one focus group discussion was conducted in each of the three communities selected to represent Francophone Manitoba. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in each community with youth and community representatives. Community based organizations, such as employment centres, community development corporations, schools, and municipal offices assisted in generating participation for both the focus groups and interviews.

This project is coordinated by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Brandon University; a partnership has been established with le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM) to facilitate research in francophone Manitoba. This research project is financially supported by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth; Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; and the Rural Secretariat.

The research team consisted of representatives from CDEM and RDI. An RDI representative coordinated and guided the research process. Two Brandon University Master of Rural Development students were employed by RDI to assist in project design and implementation.

CDEM representatives are bilingual; RDI representatives actively engaged are Anglophones. Interestingly, the team carrying out this research is predominately composed of females between the ages of 24 and 29 years, from rural and northern Manitoba.

## Case Study Approach

The purpose of this project is to develop a deeper understanding about rural and northern youth migration in Manitoba. This is Phase 1 of a one-year project funded by Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth; and the Rural Secretariat. The case study approach was chosen to complement the collaborative nature of this project. A case study approach enables researchers to utilize multiple methods of data collection and analysis. This approach implies that theory and general understanding about an issue is generated through the collection and analysis of evidence. A case study approach validates the process by which information is gathered, understood and disseminated.

There are three basic philosophic underpinnings of the case study approach. First, that the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of people are at least in part determined by their context. This provides the basic foundation for the genesis of qualitative inquiry in the 'field,' emphasizing the importance of conducting interviews and focus groups within the communities one wishes to study and understand. Second, it is important to make a concerted effort to understand data in its truest sense, meaning that efforts should be made to understand data from the perspective of people who experience and live with an issue. And third, an understanding of how people act and feel is only possible if one seeks to understand the context in which they reside and make decisions (Gillham, 2000).

The importance of 'keeping an open mind' throughout the process is essential. Individuals interpret knowledge through their own frame of reference. Gillam (2000) suggests "[a] basic limitation of human cognition is that we feel compelled to understand, to make sense of what we are experiencing. New knowledge is mainly interpreted in terms of what we already know, until that proves so inadequate that our 'knowledge framework' undergoes a radical reorganization. In research this is sometimes known as a *paradigm* shift – a complete change in the way we understand or theorize about what we are studying" (p. 19).

The RDI research team, in keeping with the fundamental design of a case study, began the research process by reviewing the literature and gaining an understanding of what is already known, provincially, nationally and internationally about rural and northern youth migration. Meetings with the project steering committee throughout Phase 1 fostered ongoing dialogue and shaped the research design. Through collaboration with the Steering Committee and research partners, the broad objectives and aims of the research took shape. Interview and focus group question development was a collaborative process; questions were tested and debated very quickly owing to the short timeline of the first phase of this project (December 2007-March 2008). Questions evolved throughout Phase 1. A great deal of reflection about the purpose and intent of the research objectives and specific questions occurred as data was gathered in La Broquerie, St. Laurent and Notre Dame.

A case study approach was utilized as a research method because by its nature, it encompasses multiple methods allowing researchers to utilize many sources of information and data to understand rural and northern youth migration. Existing public data sets were reviewed and analyzed generating a numeric picture of what is happening generally in

Manitoba and specifically in francophone communities. Population pyramids were used to illustrate demographics and population change over time.

The advantage of a case study approach is that researchers are able to utilize ‘everything and the kitchen sink’ to inform their activities and research. As this project progresses over the next 9 months of Phase 2, research tools and questions are anticipated, and expected, to evolve as the research team continues learning. A cursory review of provincial and national policies and programmes informed the literature review and secondary data analysis, shaping interview and focus group questions. Policy and programs do not exist in a vacuum; an ongoing review of the literature, policy documents and secondary data will strengthen this project.

Two opportunities emerged to share the objectives of this research with academics, government, industry and practitioners. The collaborative nature of this project provided a unique opportunity to expand traditional modes of learning, gathering and analyzing data. The unique collaborative nature and design of this project is celebrated and emphasised, along with research objectives and preliminary findings via presentations.

Research challenges confronted and overcome in Phase 1 included bridging language challenges proactively and effectively, thus contributing to the cooperative and collaborative nature of this endeavour. The research team consisted of representatives from CDEM and RDI. CDEM representatives are bilingual; RDI representatives actively engaged are anglophones. Phase 1 interviews and focus groups were conducted in French. A CDEM representative, guided through the process by RDI, gathered Phase 1 data. Interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded. Field notes were compiled in French. CDEM representatives, in a very short time frame, translated key points. Translated documents were subsequently analyzed by RDI. Qualitative inquiry is often described as a great adventure. This adventure was heightened by challenges related to scale, timeframe and language.



## Literature Review

Rural and northern communities are often confronted with the migration, and sometimes exodus, of their youth, as well as the subsequent implications on the community, region and province. In particular, youth from rural and northern areas appear to be migrating to urban areas seeking opportunities and experiences perceived to not exist in rural and northern areas. Glendinning (2003) found that “young people’s experiences of rural life and ambitions for the future are, in part shaped by where he or she is situated within a rural community” (p.153). This position within the rural community will influence the opinions that youth have in ultimately determining where they will live, as they become young adults. Youth migration literature suggests that many young adults see their rural and northern hometowns as safe and supportive, however, the opportunities available to them within their home communities are viewed as lacking. There are many reasons for youth out migration from rural areas; four fundamental themes are suggested to typically influence the decision-making process associated with youth migration from rural and northern communities. Gender differences, community and family ties, educational attainment, and occupational and economic opportunities, seem to be the most prevalent linkages to the choices that youth are making when deciding where to make their homes.

### **Gender**

Traditional gender roles in rural and northern areas have influenced the migration patterns of male and female youth. There is an overwhelming body of literature illustrating the distinction between males and females, and subsequent migration patterns to typically more urban areas. With farms traditionally being taken over by males, opportunities for females within rural areas have been viewed as minimal. Garakxy (2002) found “women are more likely than men to migrate to urban areas from rural communities to escape the traditional rural lifestyle with its sharp adherence to gender roles” (p.411). The literature points to the distinction that more females than males hold negative feelings toward the idea of ‘everyone knowing everyone’s business’ a characteristic more often associated with small communities. Malatest and Associates (2001) found that “young rural women in particular had fewer employment opportunities than males in their rural communities, and consequently, most of them relocated to larger centers” (p.24). Those within the community, including community leaders, “felt that some of these women would have been good candidates for trades/technical training but these avenues were not suggested or promoted as options to young women” (p.24). Malatest and Associates (2001) illustrate gender differences within the communities, as well as the extent to which these differences are acknowledged by community youth, residents and leaders.

Gender differences associated with levels of educational attainment appears to influence patterns of youth migration. Rye (2006) found that “more girls than boys stated preferences for living in cities, with a result that illustrates that rural girls are more likely to chose higher education careers”(p.204). The connection between migration among females and the desire to pursue post-secondary education was also found by Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) who stated that “females tend to have higher educational aspiration than males, and they tend to be more interested in service occupations that can only be pursued in metropolitan areas”(p.291). Kloep, Hendry, Glendinning, Ingerrigtsen, and Espnes (2003) encouraged young males and females to rate possible reasons for moving away from their home

communities and found that “young women rate the importance of going to university higher than young men” (p.99). Although Rye (2006) identified a greater interest by females to move to urban centres, there were only a number of differences between genders, in what he categorized the ‘young adult phase’. This suggests that although cities are appealing at younger stages in life, many of the respondents that participated in Rye’s research stated a desire to move back to rural communities in later stages of their life.

### ***Family & Community Ties***

The relationship that youth have with their parents can influence their decision to migrate, as well as whether they return, migrating back to their home community or another rural community. Garsky (2002) found, “greater parental resources result in youths moving greater distances” (p.427). Generally, moving greater distances is directly related to the particular educational institutions that youth are planning to attend. It was found that families from a higher socio-economic standing, making higher wages and having themselves attended university or college, greatly influenced whether their children chose to pursue post-secondary education, consequently migrating away from rural and northern communities. Large studies broadly examining the propensity of youth migration, suggest that children from large families tend to leave home before their counterparts from smaller families. However, family structure likely only has a minimal effect on migration patterns; the literature suggests that perhaps linkages with family size and structure and migration patterns are noted simply because families tend to be larger in rural and northern areas than in urban areas. Young adults, irrespective of family size and structure, often have to leave home at an early age to fulfill educational goals.

Kloep et al (2003) explored differences between *stayers*, *leavers*, and *returners* in an effort to explain youth’s opinions and their connection to rural areas. The *stayers* responded that the “sense of belonging outweighs the disadvantages of continuing to live in a rural setting. Their perceived quality of life would diminish if they had to leave the area, so they are willing to make sacrifices to remain” (Kloep et al, 2003, p.102). *Leavers* on the other hand stated that they “do not feel included in their community, rather they see themselves as restrained and oppressed by rurality and hope to find a better realization of themselves somewhere else” (Kloep et al, 2003, p.104). Those who stated that they would return to their community felt that there are positive and negative aspects about their community, but wished to come back at a later time in their life despite perceived negative aspects. Glendinning (2002) found that females possess a greater tendency to emphasize social aspects of rural communities. There was much greater feed back from females on the connections that they have to their family and community and whether it would affect their decision to stay or leave their hometown. The perceived relationships between youth and their community reveal significant implications for whether youth have a desire to stay in or return to a rural community. Much of the literature regarding youth migration suggests that the disconnection youth sometimes have from their community is due to a lack of voice and representation within their rural community. Such conclusions were found by Shucksmith who stated that many youth felt that they “lack a voice in their home communities and that they are disengaged from local consultation structures” (Glendinning 2002, p. 131).

## ***Education Opportunities***

Education is a main factor in the migration of young adults. Youth who are achieving relatively high grades and who are attending “academic classes are more likely to state that they want to live in cities while in their twenties... This gap is expected, as those in academic courses are more likely to continue their academic educational careers at universities and colleges which are located in the major cities and regional centers” (Rye 2006, p 204). The location of academic and trade institutions directly correlates to the desire to move to urban centres. However, this is not the only reason; as employment opportunities reflecting their university or college education are more often situated in urban centres. Much of literature around rural out migration suggests that once educational attainment is completed, “highly educated metropolitan residents are increasingly unlikely to migrate to non-metropolitan areas... the result is a non-metropolitan brain drain that is pronounced” (Domina, 2006, P. 396). Brain drain occurs when a community’s human capital is attracted to urban centres, leaving the rural areas with little social or human capital to sustain them.

## ***Occupational and Economic Opportunities***

Economic norms and the pursuit of those norms often drive the decision-making process. This is particularly true for youth who are becoming independent and considering personal life goals. Stockdale (2004) states that many rural areas find “young people obliged to leave permanently due to the absence of employment opportunities and the prevalence of low wage sectors” (p.169). Those who have a desire to work in non-agricultural and non-resource based occupations find it most difficult to find employment to suit their needs in rural areas. Domina (2006) found that “educational attainment has become the single most important predictor of migration between American metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas” (p.385); as youth complete their educations, they begin to seek greater employment opportunities, opportunities that are in large part associated with metropolitan areas.

## ***Concluding Remarks***

There are many themes associated with rural and northern youth migration. Gender, family and community ties, educational opportunities, and occupational and economic opportunities seem to generally influence youth’s decision to leave rural and northern areas. There are several other factors that youth encounter when deciding to stay or leave their rural community, although it appears that these reasons are less significant when it comes to their overall decision.

A more thorough understanding of the issues associated with youth migration will assist future government and community planning efforts. Perhaps some particular needs can be creatively met through the development of services. Community residents and leaders must value the input and views of youth to meaningfully engage youth at a local level and work towards future solutions. Youth need to feel that their presence within a community is important, that they may contribute, and influence their community in a manner that enhances not only their participation, but also reflects youth’s needs and wants.

## Secondary Data

Population data obtained from the six censuses between 1981 and 2006 have been used to analyze trends in population changes over a 25-year period. In addition, population pyramids have been created to provide insight into whether population growth is expansive, stable, stationary or declining. Analysis has been conducted on the Manitoba population as a whole, the combined population in urban areas (Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Thompson and Winnipeg), the combined population of the 14 CDEM rural municipalities (De Salaberry, Ellice, La Broquerie, Tache, Montcalm, Notre Dame, Ritchot, Ste. Anne-Town, Ste. Anne-RM, St. Claude, Alexander-RM, St. Laurent, St. Lazare, Lorne-RM, St. Pierre-Jolys, Somerset) and the population in each community where interviews and focus groups were conducted (La Broquerie, Notre Dame, St. Laurent).

Population pyramids have been used by Statistics Canada to analyze rural youth migration trends between 1971 and 1996 (Tremblay, 2001). Population pyramids are bar graphs representing the population by gender and age cohort turned horizontally where one gender mirrors the other. They are a common method of showing the age and gender structure of a population area and allow for comparisons of population structure across time and space. Population pyramids are easily understood and can be used by communities to conduct a local population analysis. In addition, the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics uses population pyramids as a tool in determining population projections.

There are four types of population pyramid structures noted by Statistics Canada, based on work by Vivian Z. Klaff, that can be derived from long-term analysis of population pyramids (Statistics Canada, 2008). An expansive growth pyramid consists of “a broad base, indicating a high proportion of children, a rapid rate of population growth, and a low proportion of older people” (Statistics Canada, 2008). A stable growth pyramid is “a structure with indentations that even out and reflect slow growth over a period” (Statistics Canada, 2008). A stationary pyramid has “a narrow base and roughly equal numbers in each age group tapering off at the older ages” (Statistics Canada, 2008). Finally, a declining pyramid is depicted by “a high proportion of aged persons and declining numbers” (Statistics Canada, 2008). These four types of population pyramids will be used to describe population trends.

Population analysis has also been undertaken with regard to three different ten-year cohorts. These cohorts are 5-14 years of age, 15-24 years of age and 25-34 years of age. This analysis takes a look how the population in each cohort has changed over 25 years. Ten-year cohorts were chosen because readily available Statistics Canada population data for the 1981 and 1986 censuses did not provide information in five-year cohorts for the 25-34 years of age range at the census subdivision (municipal) level. However, more in-depth analysis of population trends could be conducted using five-year cohorts.

There are some additional problems with census population data. Age cohorts in the 1986 census are inconsistent with cohorts used in the other censuses. The 25-29 years of age and 30-34 years of age cohorts are collapsed into one cohort at the provincial, census division and census subdivision levels. As a result, population pyramids from 1986 cannot be compared with pyramids from the other census years. Also, this cohort collapse at the census subdivision level does not allow for municipal level population pyramid analysis for the 1981 and 1986 census years. Finally, because the upper cohorts also differ from census to census

and this study is focused on youth, the top cohort used in population pyramids for this study is 60-65 years of age.

Population data presented in census documents does not reflect the actual number of people recorded; rather it is rounded to the nearest multiple of 5. This causes problems when creating population pyramids and conducting population trend analysis in communities with small populations. This was an issue particularly with regard to Notre Dame. Also, census data with regard to First Nations is incomplete and, as a result, it is difficult to conduct a long-term trend analysis of this important segment of the population. Finally, information on population mobility broken down by age is not as easily accessible as that of population data.

### ***Manitoba (see Appendix A)***

According to population pyramid analysis, Manitoba's population has been stationary between 1981 and 2006. As can be seen in the pyramids, there are generally equal numbers in each cohort with a tapering off in the older cohorts. Manitoba's population steadily increased between 1981 and 2006. It grew from 1,026,240 people to 1,148,400 people or 12% during this time period. However, size of each of the three cohorts analyzed decreased over the 25-year period. Despite increasing between 1986 and 1996, the 5-14 years of age cohort showed an overall decline by 3%. Overall, the 15-24 years of age cohort declined by 6%, however, it has increased by 6% since 1996. A more drastic decrease was seen in the 25-34 years of age cohort with a 15% decline in population, however, it increased by 5% between 2001 and 2006 (Appendix A).

### ***Urban (see Appendix B)***

Population pyramid analysis of the combined population of Manitoba's urban areas – Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Thompson and Winnipeg – have been stationary over the past 25 years. As is demonstrated in the population pyramids, there are generally equal numbers in each cohort with a tapering off in the older cohorts.

Manitoba's urban population increased by 12% between 1981 and 2006 from 685,485 to 701,140 people. It increased by 9% between 1981 and 1991, was stagnant between 1991 and 2001 and then increased again between 2001 and 2006 by 2%. As with the Manitoba population, the population of the three cohorts demonstrated an overall decline between during the 25-year period. The 5-14 years of age cohort declined by 3%. The 15-24 years of age cohort declined steadily from 1981 to 1996 by 21%, but there was an increase of 5% between 2001 and 2006. The overall decline for this cohort was 17%. The 25-34 years of age cohort showed an overall decline of 14%. There was a population increase of 14% between 1981 and 1991 but a steady decline between 1991 and 2001 by 24%, however, the rate of decline between 2001 and 2006 was very low, only .4% indicating a possible change in the trend (Appendix B).

### ***CDEM (see Appendix C)***

Population pyramid analysis indicates that the combined population of the CDEM rural municipalities is experiencing stable growth. As is illustrated in the pyramids, the indentations that level out on the graph demonstrate a slow growth in population over time.

The combined population of the CDEM municipalities increased from 30,650 to 38,095 people, or by 24%, between 1981 and 2006. In contrast to the Manitoba and urban

populations, the 5-14 years of age cohort increased by 2% during the 25-year period. However, this cohort has been in decline since 1996. The 15-24 years of age cohort declined by 27% between 1981 and 1991 but increased by 19% between 1991 and 2006, however, it showed an overall decline of 12%. Despite an increase between 1981 and 1991, the 25-34 years of age cohort has been on the decline since 1991 and has demonstrated an overall decrease of 18% (Appendix C).

### ***La Broquerie (see Appendix D)***

Population pyramids for La Broquerie demonstrate stable growth verging on expansive growth. Like the CDEM communities overall, stable growth is demonstrated by indentations that even out over time. However, the pyramids show a broad base that indicates a large proportion of children and a small proportion of older people.

La Broquerie's population increased from 1,640 to 3,660 people or by a significant 123% between 1981 and 2006. There was also an increase in each of the three cohorts during this time period. The 5-14 years of age cohort increased by 120%, the 15-24 years of age cohort increased by 55% and the 25-34 years of age cohort increased by 96%. This is in sharp contrast to cohort trends found in the Manitoba, urban and CDEM populations (Appendix D).

### ***St. Laurent (see Appendix E)***

Population pyramids for St. Laurent demonstrate a stationary population structure. As is illustrated in the pyramids, the base is relatively narrow and the sizes of most age groups are even. The pyramid for 2006 indicates a declining population because there is a higher proportion of the older population.

Overall, St. Laurent's population increased from 1,115 to 1,455 people, or 30%. Similar to the results found in other analysis, there was a population decline in all three age cohorts. The 5-14 years of age cohort declined by 12%, the 15-24 years of age cohort declined by 31%, and the 25-34 years of age cohort declined by 22%. Despite a decline of 43% between 1981 and 1991, the 15-24 years of age cohort has been increasing since 1991. The 25-34 years of age cohort also increased between 2001 and 2006 (Appendix E).

### ***Notre Dame (see Appendix F)***

It is difficult to conclude what type of pyramid structure comes out of Notre Dame's population data. This is due to the small population size and the fact that Statistics Canada rounds population data to the nearest multiple of 5. It seems to indicate either a stationary or declining population. Information gleaned through interviews and focus groups support questions raised during secondary data analysis regarding the accuracy of census data.

The population of Notre Dame was relatively stationary between 1981 and 2001; however, there was a decline of 6% between 2001 and 2006. This was a decrease from 625 to 590 people. This is in contrast to the overall population trend in Manitoba, urban areas, CDEM communities and the other two specific communities under study. There were declines in all three cohorts: 5-14 years of age cohort declined -28%, 15-24 years of age cohort declined -36% and 25-34 years of age cohort declined -58% (Appendix F).

## **Youth Migration in Francophone Manitoba:**

Expectations that emerged from a review of the literature contributed to the idea that four general factors often contribute to youth's decisions to migrate: (1) gender, (2) family and community ties, (3) education opportunities and (4) employment/occupational opportunities. It is anticipated that through this research we will discover that many factors contribute to youth mobility in Manitoba, however, due to unique differences in landscape, demographics, and culture across the province, we expect to note some fundamental differences in mobility patterns and the factors that influence the decision and capacity to migrate.

## **La Broquerie Findings**

Connections with La Broquerie existed prior to this project through local engagement with CDEM. CDEM partnered with RDI to design the project under the guidance of the Manitoba Rural Team's Youth Standing Committee. CDEM gathered data and provided English interpretations to RDI. This section reflects the findings from interviews and focus groups with La Broquerie youth and community members.

### ***History & Context***

The first settlers to the region, many of which were French-Canadian, arrived in 1877. For the purpose of this project La Broquerie was selected due to its strong francophone population and culture. The economy of La Broquerie is described as very strong and diversified. Livestock production and processing are important elements of the local economy (Manitoba Community Profiles, 2008). Information gleaned through interviews and focus group underscored the strength of the local economy and the capacity to secure employment either in La Broquerie or Steinbach. Proximity to Winnipeg enables professionals to commute to the city for employment while enjoying life in the countryside.

Residents of La Broquerie enjoy close proximity to Steinbach, just 12 kilometres away, as well as proximity to Winnipeg, 70 kilometres away. Through the latter half of the 1990s Steinbach experienced rapid growth, fuelling the flow of immigrants to the region. Immigration to Steinbach has been largely driven by industry and the need for a bolstered labour force. Immigration to Steinbach has been largely Russian-Germans, Germans and Kanadierre Mennonites returning from Mexico, Central and South America (RDI, 2005).

### ***Community Youth Findings***

Conversations with five La Broquerie youth will be discussed in the following section. The four themes - gender, family and community ties, education opportunities, and employment/occupational opportunities - are used as a baseline for comparison of individual study sites as well as across all regions as we enter Phase 2.

A focus group and interviews were conducted in La Broquerie in February 2008. Focus group participants represented four different graduating classes; participants ranged from 23 to 29 years of age. Four participants were male and one participant was female. Two of the four male participants have more than two children. Four of the five participants work in La Broquerie and one participant is employed in Steinbach. One participant is locally employed, and commutes to Winnipeg and is a full time student. Interestingly, three of the four male participants' partners are Anglophones from Steinbach.

Nothing substantive regarding the impact of gender on mobility can be stated about La Broquerie simply owing to the small sample size with only one female youth participant. It is possible that other study sites will reveal information about the impact of gender on mobility patterns; however, that is largely dependent upon who is interested in participating in the study. Efforts were applied equally to foster interest in participating in this project.

Interesting differences about the intent to remain in La Broquerie and actual motivations associated with behaviour became increasingly evident through conversations with youth and subsequent analysis. To prime the focus group discussion, participants were asked to consider their own personal experience as well as the experience of individuals in their graduating class. Participants were asked about the mobility patterns of themselves and their peers upon graduation. Answers reflected some key differences and possible factors that may contribute to the decision-making process.

Mobility patterns in large part appear to be dependent on popular conceptions a given year. This is not to down play possible patterns, but to highlight that vast differences were noted and anecdotal evidence suggests that different classes have different perceptions of what is “cool at the time” (Focus Group 1). Mobility patterns in La Broquerie link class perception and subsequent behaviour. However, it was also suggested that as youth transition from age to age as it relates to the continuum of age we have established for the purpose of the project (18-34 years of age), different factors influence the decision-making process and mobility.

The following reflects the answers related to graduating class mobility patterns. One participant stated, “In my class there are 5 out of 21 who are NOT in La Broquerie. Most of them have come back, or never left” (Focus Group 1). Agreement to that statement was further illustrated in the following responses: “most of my class is still here too, I think. Only 2 or 3 of them left” and “I think most of the ones from my class have either come back or never left. The ones who didn’t go to school have stayed” (Focus Group 1). In contrast, two participant’s experiences were quite the opposite. One participant stated, “I think a lot of them do not live in the community. Actually it would be interesting to find out how many of them are still here. I still see a lot of them on weekends or during community events because they still have lots of friends and family here in La Broquerie” (Focus Group 1). Further still, another participant said, “I had a class of 30 and I think nine of them are still in the area. The majority of them went to do post-secondary studies in Winnipeg and some went to Moncton and Toronto. Out of the 20 that are gone, there are a couple of them, three or four, who just started their family and I believe are now planning to come back” (Focus Group 1).

Statements made regarding graduating classes have underscored just how complicated it can be to decipher and infer mobility patterns either from intent or actual behaviour. The focus group was roughly divided amongst two perspectives: (a) nearly all of their high school peers have stayed in La Broquerie, or left briefly for post-secondary schooling and subsequently returned or (b) the majority of high school peers and friends out migrated, likely to pursue post-secondary studies, and only a handful are anticipated to return to their community of origin.

Educational goals appear to be closely aligned with the decision to migrate out of rural communities upon graduation. This does not likely come as a surprise to many. What is interesting to note is that the desire to pursue higher education is seemingly associated with what is the norm among that cohort. This notion will be touched upon again when speaking



with La Broquerie community leaders (i.e. apparent group mentality regarding what is perceived as an attractive option – varies year to year and the subsequent influence on mobility and decision-making process).

Discussions about what makes life in a rural community attractive revealed that ‘rural advantages’ link back to the second theme - family and community ties. Quality of life, often perceived to be superior in rural communities, was offered as a main reason for youth to remain in or return to the countryside. Social cohesion among community members was highlighted. One participant suggested, “one of the advantages is that you know everyone. You can go to the store and you can talk to anyone. You go to the golf course and talk to anyone, you can find a golf partner when you get there” (Focus Group 1).

Safety concerns are perceived to be more evident in urban settings. In rural communities there is “a safe feeling...it’s a great place to raise kids. You know everyone. It’s fun because the community is like a family...in big cities you don’t really speak to your neighbours unless you have to. In small communities a new neighbour comes to town and everyone wants to talk to them. We want to greet them and make them feel at home. If you don’t feel at home in a small community it probably won’t work out” (Focus Group 1). These statements illustrate several of the key themes including the importance of welcoming communities, the strength of family and community ties, and the nature of rural life and differences among individuals.

Cultural ties were very evident in La Broquerie and are perceived to be a motivating factor to reside within the community, or a similar community. Francophone’s are perceived to “have a bond between one another. If you look at other French communities like St.Pierre and St.Malo, they have a bond within their community, but also with us [La Broquerie]” (Focus Group 1). Cultural ties and community pride are two distinguishing elements evident in La Broquerie. When considering what makes one community attractive and another less attractive, connections and pride may be strong contributors to those types of perceptions. These notions may not be unique to francophone communities; however, it will be very important in Phase 2 to seek increased understanding through comparison. If community ties and pride foster youth migration into rural communities, one strategy may be to evaluate community assets and weaknesses. Communities could be challenged to promote themselves as a good place to live and work and raise a family. These concepts will be touched upon again when considering the role of communication and linkages within and external to a particular community.

Interestingly, youth participants suggested that Anglophones might be hesitant about moving into strong Francophone communities. It should be noted that Francophone La Broquerie is a community within a community. It can be considered a ‘community of place’ because of its geography, but, in essence, it is much more than that and can very much be considered a ‘community of people’. Thus, herein lays the importance of cultural ties and subsequent pride. French language and culture are perhaps the two most notable community assets in La Broquerie; cultural ties and pride may be the ‘glue’ that binds the community together. It is important to point out that La Broquerie is a bilingual community; currently community council boasts equal representation of Anglophones and Francophones. Historically speaking, this is a new development.

Community youth were quick to point out that there are great benefits associated with a bilingual community. One participant reflected, “English people might be a little scared at

first to move into our French community. They might be unsure as to how they will be accepted in the community. I think that more and more, the community is realizing that English and French people can get along and live in great community together” (Focus Group 1). In a bilingual community Anglophone and Francophone children grow up side by side; “our children play hockey together which encourages the French and English to communicate” (Focus Group 1). It will be important for both language groups to communicate and encourage cross-language communication, fostering understanding and awareness about the unique community setting.

Some disadvantages associated with living in a rural area include the impact of distance, financial barriers, and the nature of small communities. Distance is a barrier because to pursue services, education and sometimes employment rural people have to travel to urban centres. The cost associated with post-secondary education and having to either commute or move to the city is perceived to be a disadvantage of living in La Broquerie. It is expected that this may be even more apparent in other rural and northern communities; La Broquerie is perceived to be somewhat advantaged simply because of its proximity to Steinbach and Winnipeg.

Community welcome, or rather the lack thereof, is considered a real disadvantage to life in a rural community. Based on the group’s collective experiences living in other rural communities and small urban centers, meeting people and breaking free of labels can be challenging. One participant noted that “sometimes in a small city, if you do a little something wrong, everyone knows about it and remembers it. You then get labelled as the kid who did the bad deed. People never forget and it is a little tough to get rid of that reputation” (Focus Group 1). Also small communities may be ‘cliquey’ and sometimes “people from the city find it hard to come to a small community and make friends because people are in cliques, sometimes they think that we are not welcoming. The groups of friends are very tight because they have grown up since kindergarten together. Sometimes they don’t even think about accepting another person into their group of friends” (Focus Group 1).

It is important to note the suggestion that jobs and athletics are not sufficient to encourage community in-migration. Social cohesion and community welcome are important elements. Recreational and social opportunities may in fact have more weight than educational and employment opportunities simply because of new vehicles for working and studying and connecting with the world outside of rural communities. On the other hand, quality of life and associated community attributes are perceived to be key motivators in the decision to make a life in a rural community.

Local economic development and employment opportunities in La Broquerie are deeply valued and considered to be a factor that sets La Broquerie apart from other rural communities, making it an attractive place to live. As the biggest local employer, “Hytek Ltd. was founded in 1994 as a joint venture between two farms near La Broquerie, Manitoba and has quickly grown since then to become Canada's second-largest pork producer” (Hytek, 2008). Hytek remains headquartered in La Broquerie. Participants were quick to point out that because of Hytek there are “more job opportunities. Hytek is a big employer. It’s easier now I think for people to move back” (Focus Group 1). A drive around La Broquerie reveals a housing boom, setting it apart visually from some of its neighbours. According to local residents, developers continue to build and homes are sold before completion.

Participants emphasized the importance of community economic growth, however, family ties are perceived to be part of the recipe that fosters youth migration to La Broquerie. One participant stressed the importance of Hytek jobs, but also that “a lot of people come back here because of family. You have lived your whole life close to family and friends and it always feels good to come back. The community needs to keep growing if we want people to come back. They need a reason to come back” (Focus Group 1).

Effective modes of communication are perceived to be critical to success. Debate among the group underscored the value of effective communication, revealing the complexity of needs at a local level. Demographics will dictate need. A combination of traditional and information and communication technology (ICTs) are needed to effectively balance community needs and reach more residents.

Currently, according to focus group participants, the École Saint-Joachim most widely disseminates community information and news. This scenario works well for families with children, but probably less so for residents without children. The group discussed the importance of ensuring that current and potential community members are aware of community services and attributes. One participant suggested that people “need a reason to come back...not a lot of people realize the all services that are offered in La Broquerie. We have to get the message out” (Focus Group 1).

One participant lamented that perhaps the community should seek input from those that are compelled to move away from La Broquerie. It could be helpful to establish whether “people that are leaving are aware of all the opportunities that are available in their own area. We need to educate our people and let them know what we offer in our community” (Focus Group 1). There is a community website, but it is perceived to be underutilized; the site is viewed as lacking detail and there are problems maintaining the site and ensuring it is current. The possibility of creating an interactive website was raised to foster increased usage and the ability for individuals and groups to post news. There was some debate among the group about what material is and/or should be posted. It should be noted that even among a young, computer literate group some participants had no idea that important information, such as the arena schedule, was posted online!

In the past, community news was distributed door to door or sent through the mail. This is viewed as costly and is no longer done, except through the École Saint-Joachim. The group was unaware of postings and information disseminated through the Arborgate School, the community’s English school. When following up to the discussion regarding a community website it was noted that when searching for La Broquerie the home page does not readily appear. Without flipping through two search engine pages, a La Broquerie community website does not seem to exist. One participant suggested that a community member email list might be a good idea to consider.

When asked why it is important for youth to live in rural communities, the conversation quickly jumped to the benefits of having children and young families around, which is perceived to enhance the local atmosphere. Again the school was emphasized as the heart of the community.

To wrap up the evening’s conversation, the group was encouraged to share their future residency plans. Career goals are perceived to have a strong influence over place of residency. One participant stated that, “if I decide to stay in Manitoba, I would be here in La Broquerie. I

can't promise I wouldn't move to Calgary or something, but for sure if I am in Manitoba this is the place I would pick. If I have a job in the city later on, I would not mind travelling to the city for work from La Broquerie. I would like my kids to go to school here" (Focus Group 1). Another stated that they would not be willing to live in a large city, but that "they could see living in another community in rural Manitoba, but of course I would prefer to be here!" (Focus Group 1).

In summary, it appears that findings from conversations with La Broquerie community youth closely align with the four general themes viewed as key contributors to rural youth mobility. The decision-making process is complex and contributory factors are difficult to separate from one another. Youth often leave to fulfill educational goals; youth that remain in the community after high school graduation are perceived to immediately enter the local workforce. Family and community ties are strong motivators to remain in or return to La Broquerie. It appears that La Broquerie enjoys a number of benefits associated with close proximity to Steinbach and Winnipeg. Close connections are evidently nurtured through regular community visits and participation in community activities even when the place of residence may not be in La Broquerie.

### ***Community Resident Findings***

Conversations with five La Broquerie residents will be discussed in the following section. To ensure comparability, the four factors that are theorized to contribute to youth's decision to migrate include (1) gender, (2) family and community ties, (3) education opportunities, and (4) employment/occupational opportunities are used as a baseline when analyzing community resident data. Many influences are anticipated to contribute to youth mobility in Manitoba, however, due to unique differences in landscape, demographics and culture across the province, we expect to note some fundamental differences in mobility patterns and the factors that influence the decision and capacity to migrate. Even within one community differences are noted with regards to 'perspective' influenced by demographics.

A CDEM representative interviewed five community residents; all five participants are male, therefore, no gender-based analysis could be included in this section. Participants ranged from 35 to 66 years of age. Four of five participants are from La Broquerie. The participant not originally from La Broquerie migrated to the community, as a youth, for employment. He has resided in the community for 14 years. He was raised in Manitoba in a rural francophone community. All five participants have three or more children.

Three of the four participants originally from La Broquerie left the community to pursue post-secondary education. All three attended school at Saint-Boniface College. The fifth participant, not originally from La Broquerie, also attended Saint-Boniface College. All five participant's spouses are francophone. All participants migrating to La Broquerie did so to pursue employment. The importance of securing employment in a rural francophone community was emphasized. Cultural ties, according to all participants interviewed, factored into their decision to move to La Broquerie. Four of the five that were mobile at one point in their lives choose the community because a job opportunity was available in a rural francophone community. All four suggested that they could have easily ended up in another rural francophone community if the job had been available elsewhere. However, it should be noted that their spouses might have had some say in returning to La Broquerie when family ties existed!

All five participants stated that they plan to spend the rest of their lives in La Broquerie. The individual not originally from La Broquerie noted that he does miss his home community, but that La Broquerie is home now and is an excellent place for his children to grow up. The quality of life in La Broquerie is seen as second to none. With each participant gainfully employed in a rural francophone community there is no reason to move elsewhere; all participants feel that their community of choice adequately meets their needs and desires.

Community 'roots' contribute significantly to the decision to migrate. Arguably, a community of interest, the notion that fundamental principles such as culture and language are the glue that ties individuals to communities of place. Geography is important, but as noted by our participants, it is not what ultimately binds people and families to a community. Francophone Manitobans possess a bond that transcends geography. As mentioned previously, all La Broquerie participants are French and identify with 'francophone La Broquerie' that is, in essence, a community within a community. An interesting concept that has not been explored is how anglophones in La Broquerie view youth migration.

All interviewees spoke about their experiences with regards to their graduating class. All five participants graduated from a class of less than 30 students. All four spoke about their friends leaving to pursue education, and it should be noted that depending on resident age, some attended Saint-Boniface College when it was a high school. Participants stated that many of their classmates that do not live in La Broquerie live in other rural francophone communities.

Three out of four participants originally from La Broquerie stated that approximately half of their graduating classmates live in La Broquerie. The bulk of those that do not live in La Broquerie reside in other rural francophone communities or in Winnipeg. One participant noted that there were "12 students in his graduating class. Half of them are still in La Broquerie. Three are in Winnipeg; one is in Ile-des-chenes and one in Steinbach. Three quarters choose rural life. The ones who are in Winnipeg are there because they have good jobs that are not available in rural areas, or at least not at the level that they are at" (Interview 5).

The participant not originally from La Broquerie spoke about the challenges his home community and region face in terms of attracting and retaining youth. He attributes these challenges to a lack of jobs and economic opportunities. He stated, "a lot of the students he graduated with lived on farms, but now most of those farms have disappeared or were sold...if his dad had kept the farm, he would be a farmer now. But for him and a lot of his classmates that is not the case. Farms were sold and now they have no reason to stay in the region" (Interview 1). This participant noted that none of the people he graduated with remained in his home community, but that all of them are in other rural areas or Winnipeg.

When speaking with an older participant, he mentioned that different types of migrants are attracted to La Broquerie. He was also the only participant to note that in "thinking back to the people he graduated with, or the people he grew up with in La Broquerie...certain people have come back, but not a majority," however, "when couples retire they come back and settle in La Broquerie because there are a lot of new houses and townhouses for them to live in...they are planning to build approximately 14 townhouses by the end of next year" (Interview 4).

All participants talked about what is being done or could be done to encourage youth to move to La Broquerie. The participant not originally from the community was quick to point out

that “things ARE being done in La Broquerie in order to try and keep youth in the community. There are a lot of jobs available. Hytek is a big employer in the region. The company was put in place by people from the region, to keep people in the area. There are a lot of lots available to build new houses. There is a daycare here now. It was set up two years ago. This makes a big difference for professional couples” (Interview 1).

Another participant noted, “youth who have left the community are attracted back because the French school has a great reputation. This town is close to Winnipeg. Since recently there is a daycare that is available. This is perfect for young couples who decide to come back and both have a job. People who live in La Broquerie can work in town, but also have the option of working Steinbach or in Winnipeg. The town offers a great sports program. We are receiving more and more services in La Broquerie, such as a doctor coming into town twice a week” (Interview 3).

Participants noted that though efforts are being geared towards attracting young people to the community, more could be done. Youth “need to be included in the different organizations and committees in town” (Interview 5). Youth involvement at a municipal level is “exactly what is needed in order to keep a community alive. The sports club recently celebrated 60 years of existence...the committee consists of youth who have children who play sports in the community. Youth are also a part of the cultural committee and the committee that organized the St.Jean Days (a weekends celebration that takes place during the summer)” (Interview 4).

Local employers actively seek youth out for available positions. One participant stated, “many of the local employers make an effort to speak to the youth and offer them jobs, or encourage them to visit La Broquerie once they are finished their studies in Winnipeg...I know for a fact that Hytek takes time to speak to youth and encourages them to come back once they are done school. Hytek actually goes to schools to speak and do a presentation and does a presentation on the different opportunities in the business. It gives us the chance to get some visibility and youth get to see the opportunities that are there for them” (Interview 2).

Employment opportunities, services, and municipal involvement are important contributors to attracting and retaining youth. A community of interest, community ties and cultural ties often act as the ‘glue’ or elements that bond people together. Social and recreational opportunities are necessary to foster an enjoyable local quality of life. One participant noted, “in order to recruit new youth, the municipality has done some promotion to let other communities know that La Broquerie is a successful town. It is a French community and the population is growing at an incredible speed. We have to let others know that this is an active community” (Interview 5).

La Broquerie is somewhat unique in that it has the capacity to attract youth from other rural communities. One participant highlighted this: “as an example of the young couples that we are attracting” he mentioned, “that they just built three houses. Two young couples from Ste.Anne bought themselves a house here and one young man from St.Pierre Jolys. They have also greeted families from St.Agathe and Richer lately. They are building housing in La Broquerie without knowing if they will be bought, but that has not been a problem. The houses are selling before they can even finish them. It’s a great recruiting method. Building houses attracts new youth to the community – if you build it they will come!” (Interview 4). It is postulated that if this is happening, then the community must be successful, success that may come at the cost of a neighbouring community, but success none-the-less! The message

has been received by many youth; La Broquerie is an attractive place to live, work and raise a family.

La Broquerie's growth has become almost self-propelled. In the mix, employment opportunities and services, such as daycare, ensure residents can make a living in a rural setting. Cultural ties bind the community together through common language, values and traditions. Housing is not an issue; young people and families have options to choose from when seeking a dwelling. All of the above combine to contribute to an active young population that generates social cohesion and a vibrant social fabric. One participant emphasized that the "average age in La Broquerie is 28.9 according to the last census" (Interview 2).

Interviewees welcome diversity, in terms of demographics, while underscoring the notion that youth are crucial to a community's survival. One participant reflected, "youth in the community is VERY important, but we need a mix of people of all ages. We need old people; we need middle-aged people and youth. We need to focus on youth, because they are our future leaders. They will have new ideas and make sure that La Broquerie continues to grow and be an active community" (Interview 2).

The notion of 'pride' is viewed as setting La Broquerie apart from other bilingual communities in Manitoba. While "francophones are the minority in the municipality of La Broquerie, the way it works out is that most of the events are organized by francophones" (Interview 1). The importance of the French language in La Broquerie should be emphasized; "we still take great pride in using our language. People say 'In La Broquerie everyone speaks French'" (Interview 2). The "town really holds French culture to the heart...there is big community pride and it attracts people to the area. People move here to send their kids to a French school" (Interview 1).

In summary, it appears that La Broquerie has been very successful in attracting and retaining youth. The community boasts the ability to attract youth from other rural communities, as well as their own youth that have left to pursue education and employment goals elsewhere. The community has evolved over time, increasing its capacity to attract newcomers for a variety of reasons, setting it apart from many other rural and northern communities. It is changing for a number of reasons. Steinbach's success in attracting immigrants has resulted in an overflow of families and children that may not speak either French or English. Hytek became an industrial champion in 1994, creating employment and associated local economic opportunities. Today, family structure is less traditional. Marriages are often exogamous and parents are likely both employed outside of the home. The impact of new forms of technologies has changed the ways in which families interact, how students pursue educational goals, and how the workplace functions. New forms of communication may assist in ensuring connections beyond La Broquerie's boundaries. One participant made the suggestion that the community should organize in such a way that one central body could disseminate community news and opportunities to local residents as well as to youth and community members that have moved elsewhere.

## **St. Laurent Findings**

Connections with St. Laurent existed prior to this project through local engagement with CDEM. CDEM partnered with RDI to design the project under the guidance of the Manitoba Rural Team's Youth Standing Committee. CDEM gathered data and provided English interpretations to RDI. This section reflects the findings from interviews and focus groups with St. Laurent youth and community members.

### ***History & Context***

The Rural Municipality of St. Laurent was incorporated in 1882. The community is located on the shore of Manitoba's second largest lake, Lake Manitoba, in the Interlake Region of the province. St. Laurent is conveniently located just 80 kilometres north of Winnipeg. The community boasts substantial cottage development owing to its unique geography, wildlife and proximity to a major urban centre.

St. Laurent is one of the largest Métis communities in the province (St. Laurent, 2008). The Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., selected the community to represent diversity and living culture. St. Laurent was one of 24 communities in the Western Hemisphere chosen to present an exhibit of Canadian Métis culture and heritage. The exhibit will be on display for the next 10 years at the Smithsonian; the display is the largest in the *Our Lives* section that depicts tribal identities (<http://mmf.mb.ca/index.php>).

A unique dialect is spoken in St. Laurent and the surrounding area. The Michif is a mixture of Saulteaux, Cree and French. The language is mainly French, but differs from the dialect spoken in other Francophone communities and Quebec (St. Laurent, 2008).

Commercial fishing accounts for a large portion of St. Laurent's economy every year. The fishing season begins in the late fall through the winter months. Fishing is strongly linked with community identity. A special ceremony is held in honour of those fishers who are retiring (Manitoba Métis Federation, 2008).

Athletics are an important component of community life. A number of organized sports such as baseball, hockey, ringette and curling are available in the summer and winter months. Snowmobiling is also popular with a number of trail networks connecting with the community. A nine-hole golf course and clubhouse provide additional recreation opportunities, as do dancing and aerobics classes (Manitoba Community Profiles, 2008).

### ***Community Youth Findings***

Conversations with five St. Laurent youth will be discussed in the following section. A focus group and interviews were conducted in February 2008. Focus group participants each represented a different graduating class; participants ranged from 24 years of age to 34 years of age. Three participants are female and two participants are male. Three participants own their own homes in St. Laurent; one participant lives in a nearby community and owns a home there; one participant lives in St. Laurent with his parents. All five participants are teachers at Ecole Aurele-Lemoine, which currently has about 94 students. Ecole Aurele-Lemoine is a big employer in the community; many young teachers finish the requirements of their degrees in St. Laurent.



Four of the five participants are originally from St. Laurent; one participant is originally from Winnipeg. All participants attended post-secondary institutes in Winnipeg. Only one of the five participants has children.

The group talked about their experiences upon graduation from high school. There was agreement amongst the group that most of their peers from high school left the community after graduation. Only a handful of people from their respective graduating classes stayed in St. Laurent or returned to the community. One participant shared that “of the two people I graduated with, one works in Alberta on the oil rigs and the other is pursuing a Masters degree in Winnipeg” (Focus Group 1). Neither intends to return to St. Laurent. Another participant graduating in a class of seven mentioned that most of her class live, work, and go to school in Winnipeg. Two of her classmates live outside of Winnipeg, with one in Alberta and one in Thompson. The group speculated about what generally occurs when youth graduate from high school in St. Laurent. The group noted that it is difficult to generalize about youth mobility patterns, perhaps especially for St. Laurent. One female participant thought that people not choosing to pursue post-secondary education are more inclined to remain in St. Laurent after graduation. Many people not interested in pursuing higher education are able to pursue commercial fishing endeavours with their fathers. One participant reflected that perhaps “the people who leave for post secondary studies will have a harder time coming back here because there aren’t a lot of professional jobs available” (Focus Group 1).

Employment and the desire to start a family appear to be the largest drivers of youth migration into St. Laurent. One female participant spoke of her desire to reside in rural Manitoba, but not necessarily in St. Laurent. She stated that she “was not going to come back [to St. Laurent] if I hadn’t found a job” (Focus Group 1). This particular participant declared an aversion to residing in an urban centre, but did not allude to a strong desire to return to her home community. In fact she chose to purchase a home in a neighbouring community, closer to Winnipeg than St. Laurent and commute to work.

The group talked a lot about their personal experiences and what motivated them to move to St. Laurent. Again it is important to note that all five participants are schoolteachers. One participant, not originally from the community, spoke of his situation and decision to move to the community. He “is a high school teacher and that there is only one French high school in Winnipeg that did not have any positions available. There was a job available here and in St. Georges. I came for an interview, all went well and then I decided to move here. I like it here, so I decided to stay. I find that the people here are very friendly” (Focus Group 1).

The group shared their desire to leave home as young people; one participant talked about her experience of moving away from home at 17 years of age and being excited to “get out!” (Focus Group 1). Conversations reflected the notion that the desire to migrate and factors thought to contribute to the decision to move shift along a continuum of age (defined for the purpose of this project as 18 to 34 years of age). The desire of many young people to migrate from small rural communities after high school was noted. All four participants originally from St. Laurent attended university in Winnipeg; three participants originally from St. Laurent physically moved to Winnipeg, while the fourth choose to commute back and forth to school.

One participant noted that now as her friends and family are getting a little older there is more mention of returning to St. Laurent to settle down and start a family. She stated that she is “starting to notice, especially with a couple of my cousins who are a little older, that once they start a family, that’s when they start thinking about coming back to St. Laurent. But before that there is not an obvious reason to come back because there is nothing to do” (Focus Group 1).

The above statement underscores the need for recreational and social opportunities in rural communities. Rural communities are perceived to be safe places to raise children. They are often professed to boast a greater quality of life than their urban counterparts. However, it is impossible to boast an improved quality of life within a community without social and recreational opportunities. Athletics certainly provide a series of social and recreational outlets, but may not on their own be enough. Conversation among the group alluded to the idea that without social networks and activities (not necessarily sporting events) there is no good reason to move to a rural place. A job is important, but it is likely that quality of life and personal fulfilment that will eventually supersede location choices based solely on employment or economic opportunities.

Although there was some mention of a lack of ‘things to do’ in St. Laurent, the group did talk about some of the recreational opportunities that do exist locally. Participation in of social and recreational opportunities varies year-to-year depending on local youth. One participant shared that when she was young, there were a lot of community sports. Today most athletic options are offered through the school. She also thought that “there are less youth interested in sports these days, or maybe it is just that there are less youth. From here we have to go far to play sports against other teams and some people just cannot afford some sports; travelling can cost a lot of money” (Focus Group 1).

Cultural events such as the Festival Manipogo are touted as a means to attract interest in the community. Plus, these events are a fun activity for community residents. There are community nights held in St. Laurent, most of which are in French. There are also socials and athletic tournaments. One participant felt that the community does very well considering that there are not a lot of youth in the community. Youth are considered to be an important, and perhaps lacking, component of the community’s social fabric. Youth bring energy to communities; in this case, St. Laurent is thought to be holding up quite well despite the out-migration of many of their youth. Existing sporting, recreational, social and cultural activities are thought to be evidence that the community is managing, however, a belief exists that without some youth in-migration and retention, the prevalence of such activities may decline.

The group shared their thoughts about what advantages are perceived to be linked with life in rural places. The pace of life and quietness were noted. There was consensus amongst the group that life in an urban centre is more stressful. One participant talked about how quiet life is in St. Laurent versus life in Winnipeg; “in Winnipeg there is so much noise with the buses and traffic” making it difficult to relax and sleep (Focus Group 1).

The group discussed the balance of life thought to exist in rural communities. While life is relatively stress free in St. Laurent, “there are not as many opportunities to make a lot of money, but there are not very many places to spend money here either” (Focus Group 1). Less emphasis is perceived to be on monetary possessions and more focussed on the value of spending quality time with friends and family. Social activities focussed on spending time

with family and friends in rural communities are believed to be less linked with “spending money” (Focus Group 1).

The value of family and family ties was strongly emphasized by participants. Time spent with one’s children is perceived to be different than it would or could be in an urban centre. Again, emphasis was aimed at increased quality of life associated with having children and the desire to live in a small community. One participant stated “as a parent I like it a lot here because I can go outside with my kids, we can go in the forest a play. We don’t need to go to a park...nature is all around. I think my kids get to discover more things here than they could discover in Winnipeg. They see deer and rabbits all the time” (Focus Group 1).

Participants talked about the value of having extended family nearby. An added incentive to move back to one’s home community is family ties. One participant noted that “a big majority of my family still lives here. We are close to them and can get together very often” (Focus group 1).

In addition to family ties and opportunities to provide children with experiences they may not get in urban centres removed from their rural roots and extended families, is the feeling of safety. Participants alluded to feeling more uncomfortable and less safe in an urban setting.

Proximity to Winnipeg is perceived to be an attractive feature of St. Laurent. However, commuting patterns and travel to the city varies. Perspective regarding distance is viewed as being dramatically different depending on whether an individual is from St. Laurent or Winnipeg. One participant noted, “the distance for St. Laurent to Winnipeg is not much for someone who is originally from St. Laurent, but for people who are from Winnipeg or anywhere else, St. Laurent seems far away” (Focus Group 1). This statement suggests a perceived lack of “connectivity” between urban dwellers and rural places, but not rural residents and nearby urban centres. The perception of distance appears to be somewhat dependent on place of residency; “for someone from Winnipeg, to drive from one end of the city to the next they can handle, but when they have to travel into the country, they find it far!” (Focus Group 1).

Participants suggested that travel to the city depends on the time of year. This may be somewhat unique to this group simply because all are teacher and therefore have more free time in the summer months. One participant talked about going to the city quite often, but this more or less depended on the time of year. The participant stated that in “summer I am there almost everyday because I don’t work. [During the school year] sometimes I go to Winnipeg for a Friday night and come back Sunday night...I don’t find Winnipeg very far from St. Laurent” (Focus Group 1).

Two of the five participants spouses commute to Winnipeg for work; in those cases the spouse who is employed in St. Laurent makes less trips to Winnipeg. Spouses who work in Winnipeg purchase necessities. Two participants, both single and without children spend significantly more time in the city. One of the two spoke for both herself and friend stating, “we go to the city more often...to visit and party with friends” (Focus Group 1). The city offers amenities and services not available in St. Laurent. One participant also mentioned that because neither she nor her spouse work in Winnipeg, they travel to the city more often to purchase necessities such as diapers.

When the group reflected on the local employment and economic situation, concern was expressed about current and future changes. For example, one participant noted that “in the past 10 years we have lost a lot of fishermen and the farmers are having a hard time. The people, who have stayed for those things, don’t even have that option now, so they will leave as well. Because of this I think the situation might be getting worse. More people leave now than before” (Focus Group 1).

There are three or four industries perceived to be important in St. Laurent. Fishing is seasonal; individuals engaged in commercial fishing often work construction jobs in their off season. However, an out-migration of young men was touched upon owing to a lack of local employment opportunities. One participant suggested that “a lot of men leave St. Laurent to work in Alberta. A lot of my friends have gone there. Most of them come back in between, when they get a two-month break, but then they go back. They leave their families here all year. They will be here for four months and then gone for eight; this is the reality of the situation here in St. Laurent” (Focus Group 1).

During the summer month’s people not from St. Laurent reside at their cottages on the lake. Depending on where year-round community residents live, they will have more or less interaction with ‘cottagers’. It was suggested that community residents who live at the lake obviously see cottagers more often than residents who live in town. One participant, who has a home situated on the lake, said “I live on the lake so I see the cottagers a lot. In the winter there is no one around me, but in the summer it changes a lot. There are boats on the lake, sounds of motors. In the summer, I usually leave on the weekend and go to Winnipeg to see my family. The city empties!” (Focus Group 1). Another participant, who has a home in town, said that she “does not really see the people who come here to their cottages in the summer. You only see them if you work in a restaurant or the gas station. It doesn’t affect St. Laurent residents. We don’t meet them or see them. They stay near the lake most of the time” (Focus Group 1).

The group reflected on what types of things a rural community can do to become a more attractive community, fostering youth retention and attraction. Attracting newcomers to a community is considered to hinge upon job creation and local employment opportunities. The lack or loss of jobs is thought to be the biggest driver of out-migration from a community. Even if individuals and families want to stay, if there are no opportunities to make a decent living they will not be able to stay. To remedy a lack of local jobs, the group felt that creative solutions to generate viable options enabling community residents to work outside of St. Laurent should be explored. For example, starting a local car-pooling system might encourage commuters to remain in or move to St. Laurent and pursue employment elsewhere. For example one participant mentioned that her “cousin travels to Winnipeg for work everyday and has for 20 years now. She would like to be able to travel with someone everyday” (Focus Group 1). Costs and energy could be shared, however, this idea hinges on a strong volunteer community with the ability to tap into existing networks and connect people with similar needs, and it is unlikely that formalization of such a system would be desirable or effective.

This group did not emphasize the importance of youth and civic engagement. The group spoke of their own personal involvement in the community, which ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. One participant stated they are not actively involved in the community, while a couple of others said they are minimally involved, with one participant stating that she is very involved in local cultural and athletic activities.

Four out of five participants professed that they plan to remain indefinitely in St. Laurent. One participant noted, “the longer I am here, the more I think I might stay forever” (Focus Group 1). The amount of space associated with life in a rural place was noted as an important influence on the decision-making process; “I will be here forever; I cannot live in Winnipeg. I can’t imagine living in the city, the houses are stuck one on to the other” (Focus Group 1). However, one participant very candidly spoke about the difficulties associated with life in a rural community and how that may influence her decision to move away. She said: “I would like to stay in a rural area, but it is hard for me because I like to go out. Here in St. Laurent, people who are my age either don’t live here, or have kids. Either you have a family, or you just don’t live here. Some days I think it might be better to travel to St. Laurent during the week and have a place in Winnipeg, but I don’t like the city life. I have also thought of living between St. Laurent and Winnipeg, but then I am about a half hour away from everyone I know” (Focus Group 1). Feelings of loneliness and isolation cannot be left out of discussions about life in the countryside. Unfortunately, achieving a balanced quality of life can be a challenge. Family and community ties hold people in place, as does an aversion to life in large urban centres; however, without adequate social networks and activities youth are confronted with difficult choices.

St. Laurent is considered unique, owing in large part to the Métis culture; however, if you have always lived in the community, it does not stand out. Métis culture is more evident in the school system because a great deal of effort is focussed on ensuring students are aware and understand the Métis culture, history and way of life. It is likely that newcomers to the community may pick up on the Métis influence and how the community may stand apart because they are not as accustomed to it.

The dialect of French spoken in St. Laurent sets the community apart and bonds residents together. One participant talked about how language influenced her decision to return to St. Laurent. She said, “I feel more comfortable here in St. Laurent than in Ste.Anne, for example. My French is different from people in Ste.Anne or other bilingual communities. The language I speak here makes me feel at home here” (Focus Group 1). Language groups are also thought to mix very well in St. Laurent. One participant suggested that the English and French “get along very well. The French make an effort to keep their language. The English community organizes things in the community and the French participate and vice-versa. We have karaoke nights and socials and both participate... There are not enough people in St. Laurent for the French and English to have their own events and their own groups!” (Focus Group 1).

### ***Community Resident Findings***

Conversations with three St. Laurent residents will be discussed in the following section. Many influences are anticipated to contribute to youth mobility in Manitoba; however, due to unique differences in landscape, demographics and culture across the province, we expect to note some fundamental differences in mobility patterns and the factors that influence the decision and capacity to migrate.

A CDEM representative interviewed three community residents; two participants are male and one is female. Participants ranged from 36 to 40 years of age. Two of the three are from St. Laurent; one is from a rural francophone community near Winnipeg. Both participants originally from St. Laurent left the community to pursue post-secondary studies in Winnipeg. One of the two remained in the city upon completion of her studies, working for several years

before returning to St. Laurent. The participant not originally from St. Laurent also went to Winnipeg upon completing high school; however, he did not pursue post-secondary studies, but rather worked in Winnipeg. It is interesting to note that one participant is a teacher; he completed his practicum requirements for his degree in the community, and was subsequently offered a position at the school before his work-placement was over and he has not left since.

The participant not originally from St. Laurent shared his family's motivation to migrate to the community, when both he and his wife were youth. Neither wanted their children to attend school in Winnipeg; both grew up in rural Manitoba and it was important to them that their children have the same experience. It should be noted that his wife is originally from St. Laurent and family ties was a motivating factor in the decision to move to St. Laurent.

All three participants spoke about their personal experiences and those of their classmates upon graduation from high school. All three spoke of their fellow classmates and out-migration from their rural communities. The participant not originally from St. Laurent said that only a couple of his classmates stayed in his hometown after graduation. The two participants originally from St. Laurent touched on similar patterns of out-migration. One participant married a peer from his graduating class; other than himself and his wife he thinks there is only one other person from his class currently residing in St. Laurent. However, he talked about other youth that were not from his class, but also went to the city for school and work, and eventually returned to the community when they started to have children.

One participant noted that most of her classmate also went to Winnipeg, but less to pursue post-secondary education and more for employment opportunities. Many of her classmates went straight to work after completing high school. She has found that a lot of people have begun to migrate back into the community as they have started their own families. The countryside is considered to be a superior place to raise children; "the country is a better atmosphere for children...no gangs, no social problems, and less drugs" (Interview 1).

One participant originally from St. Laurent attended primary school and high school in French, the other attended school locally in English; the individual not originally from St. Laurent attended immersion school until grade 9 and then completed his studies at an English school. The participant not originally from St. Laurent spoke of his difficulty associated with not using the French language for many years while living in Winnipeg, but now has much more opportunity to do so in St. Laurent. All three participant's children attend Ecole Aurele-Lemoine. The individual who attended school in English is now taking classes in French; her children and spouse speak French.

Two of the three participants interviewed spoke of the challenges associated with securing housing in the community; for one participant in particular, the cost of available housing in St. Laurent prompted her to remain in Winnipeg for several years after completing her studies. Though to be fair, the availability of jobs in her field was also limited at the time.

Employment opportunities brought all three to the community from Winnipeg. It is interesting to note that the Ecole Aurele-Lemoine was flagged as a driver of migration, bringing young teachers to the community for work placements and permanent jobs. The French school was also flagged as an influence on youth migration into the community during the youth focus group. One participant stated, "[Ecole Aurele-Lemoine] is definitely the biggest attraction at the moment for young teachers who are originally from the region. In the English school, a lot

of teachers live in Winnipeg and travel to St. Laurent for work. At the French school, most of the teachers live in the community” (Interview 2).

There is the general feeling that because there are not many jobs available, there are not many people moving to the community. These types of statements arose when speculating about where others from their graduating class went and why. One participant noted, “most people do not come back here because there aren’t many job opportunities here. There aren’t many options to raise a family here in St. Laurent unless you have a job in another community. People find jobs either in Winnipeg or on the pipeline in Alberta” (Interview 2). The main employers in the community are: “Interlake Meat Packers, the school, the restaurant, and little businesses such as, the gas station, grocery store, garage, ect” (Interview 3).

One participant suggested that though “there are more opportunities in the community these days and the Community Development Corporation is taking a lot of initiative trying to make this a lively and attractive community. We want young families to come here. I think that the thing that stops people from coming here is a lack of well paying jobs. You can’t raise a family on \$12.00 an hour. Land is getting more expensive in rural areas than it used to. Building or even buying a house here is more expensive now” (Interview 2).

Unfortunately there do not appear to be a lot of businesses actively seeking employees in St. Laurent. One participant, a businessman himself, reflected that the community “doesn’t have very many businesses that are looking for employees. I am one of them. I am starting another business soon too” (Interview 3). One participant guessed that there are currently about 100 commuters going to Winnipeg daily for work.

The healthcare and education sector provide the largest number of employment options in the region. Or if one is interested in starting their own business then there are opportunities. If not, there are only service sector jobs available locally at a low rate of pay. One participant pointed out that both the English and French school provide a lot of jobs, however, the English school is perceived to hire a lot of teachers who live in Winnipeg, while the French school hires people who are from the region. This fact is often raised as an interesting curiosity. Cultural and community pride may be linked with the successful recruitment and attraction of French speaking youth back into the community. Many “of the teachers at Ecole Aurele-Lemoine are from St. Laurent originally and went to school there when they were young. Ecole Aurele-Lemoine plays a big role in community” (Interview 1).

In 1994 there were 64 students at the Ecole Aurele-Lemoine, currently there is between 90 and 99 students yearly. Ecole Aurele-Lemoine is the only French school in the Interlake region. A new ‘green’ school is being built providing more space and options for Ecole Aurele-Lemoine students. The new school is perceived to have the capacity to attract more youth to this community. The idea of environmentally friendly buildings is a concept that local efforts are being geared towards in hopes of fostering widespread local support for such initiatives. One participant noted, “that [green energy and buildings] is something that we are trying to develop in our community. We want to expand the idea of green energy. We are leaning towards having wind mills in the area” (Interview 2).

Each participant was asked about what efforts are being made or could be made locally to foster youth attraction and migration back into the community. The bilingual services centre was flagged by all three as an important means to not only attract youth to St. Laurent, but to also provide services and improve access for all community residents. One person lamented

that, “it is hard to say if something is actually being done precisely to attract youth. It is something we have thought of in the community, but nothing has yet been done strictly with this goal in mind. They are planning to have a new bilingual services centre in St. Laurent, but it is still in the works. This is something that can attract youth back to the community because there would be 12 jobs available. Even if these jobs are taken by people in the community, other jobs will be available” (Interview 3).

This initiative is perceived to have the potential capacity to not only attract youth from the community back, but to attract NEW youth to the region. Attracting new youth and more people to the community is important because “with more people, we can have more services. In St. Laurent we have some services, but not as many as some other communities...we need families here to be able to develop” community services and amenities, “such as a new arena” (Interview 3). Residents have the sense that a competitive edge is required to ensure that St. Laurent is attractive to a variety of individuals and families. A lack of meaningful local employment opportunities is a barrier; however, the community could attract even more commuters if it can offer desirable amenities and services, ensuring an attractive quality of life.

The community “is a beautiful place, but people won’t stay just because of that. If you want to commute, you need a job in Winnipeg that pays well. A lot of people here car pool to get to the city, but it not always the most convenient thing if you don’t work at the same end of the city or if you don’t have the same work hours” (Interview 3). All three participants mentioned ways in which St. Laurent has the potential to become more attractive to newcomers; however, there is a sense of realism that constantly balances barriers with opportunities. Proximity to Winnipeg is a plus, but sacrifice is evident when commuting everyday, even if options to share time and resources exist. St. Laurent has to become attractive enough to ensure that sacrifices and challenges do not outweigh positive attributes of the community, such as a beautiful lakeside location and a Francophone school with a positive reputation.

St. Laurent is a unique community owing in part to its unique geography, near Winnipeg on the shores of Lake Manitoba. The community attracts a large number of ‘cottagers’ and during the summer months, the population of the community doubles from 1300 to nearly 3000. A few cottagers come back periodically through the winter, but not many. This phenomenon is perceived to exert both positive and negative influences on the community. Tourism and cottage developments provide seasonal employment opportunities, as well as development opportunities. Cottagers also provided additional opportunities for increasing the local tax base. On a negative note, property values are perceived to have significantly increased, owed in large part to demand for lakeside property for cottage developments.

One participant suggested that the lack of camping facilities locally is a barrier to a diversified community tourism industry. He noted that “one thing that might be lacking in order to promote our beautiful beach is the fact that we don’t have camping here. We might have a small piece of land where people can camp, but it’s not developed” (Interview 3). This particular participant is of the opinion that a campground could attract a different type of tourist to the community and that St. Laurent offers many cultural and heritage tourism opportunities, as well as a multitude of recreational possibilities. Increased and diversified accommodation options are important avenues to explore because they may open up new markets. Slowly but surely the community is changing. Summer is perceived to be the prime money making season because the population doubles, however, Grand Beach is competing



with St. Laurent to attract urban visitors and buyers. He mentioned, “everyone goes to Grand Beach, but St. Laurent has the same environment. It is as close to the city as Grand Beach and the sand and water is as beautiful, but the town is just not as developed” (Interview 3).

St. Laurent boasts an active cultural community. There are a number of recreational and cultural activities available, both of which enhance the local atmosphere (Interview 2). One participant reflected, “there is a nice cultural atmosphere here. I think this is a big selling point for us. There is more and more emphasis on a healthy lifestyle in the community. More people are doing physical activity. This has a lot to do with leadership from the school and municipality. The municipality hired someone to take charge of the sports activities in St. Laurent. The school is a community school which means that every night the gym is used for activities...the gym could be considered the heart of the community” (Interview 2).

Times are perceived to have changed, impacting a rural community’s ability to widely appeal to youth as a place of residence. Employment opportunities are perceived to pay a lot better in urban places. It is difficult to entice young people to move back to rural communities; a lot of St. Laurent’s population goes west for work part of the year, coming back to St. Laurent for only a few months of every year. One participant guessed “there are about 80 men from St. Laurent who live that lifestyle. They still have a house in St. Laurent, but by working that way they make a lot of money...it’s hard for me to employ people because I cannot offer the money that people get paid when they go to work on the pipelines. It is hard to keep them here. The wages offered in St. Laurent have to compete with wages paid elsewhere, in Winnipeg or other provinces” (Interview 3).

Technology is perceived to have significantly changed the local situation. The ability to afford new technologies is linked to a change in lifestyle and associated wants and needs. All three participants alluded to the idea that better wages elsewhere and increased appetite for material goods, including electronics, contribute to youth’s motivation to leave rural communities. However, communication possibilities linked with technology are viewed with optimism for the community to link internally and externally with residents and ex-pats.

Currently community news and events are advertised in the local newspaper, the *Chatter Box*. Information is also sent home from school with children. One participant actively involved with many community events said “the best way to get messages across is by calling people. We are slowly starting to take advantage of technology. We want to send information by the Internet. We started putting notices about cancelled school days on the net. This is working. We want the Internet to become the regular way of sending messages out to the community. Unfortunately a lot of people do not have access to high speed Internet. The first step is to make high speed Internet accessible in this community. There is a 5-kilometre circumference from the MTS centre where you can get high speed Internet. My neighbours have high speed but I don’t because I am 5.6 kilometres away” (Interview 2). Creative and attractive websites are perceived to be an important tool for reaching out to potential new residents.

The Internet and new forms of communication are perceived to improve access to “urban things,” such as social networks and educational opportunities; “access to the Internet gives you access to the city...you might feel closer to urban life” (Interview 1). Commuting is also perceived to be safer now because of cell phones.

The community is putting more efforts towards staying touch with youth that leave the community for a variety of reasons. One participant pointed out the community needs to keep

track of students that leave St. Laurent to pursue higher education. Youth need to prepare for the challenges they will face in the future. He also lamented, “it is unfortunate that we do not teach entrepreneurship in the school. We put a lot of emphasis on preparing for university, but we need to teach other career opportunities that are out there, such as trades and business. To start a business is a great way to live in a rural area and make a good wage” (Interview 2).

## **Notre Dame de Lourdes Findings**

Connections with Notre Dame existed prior to this project through local engagement with CDEM. CDEM partnered with RDI to design the project under the guidance of the Manitoba Rural Team's Youth Sub-Committee. CDEM gathered data and provided English interpretations to RDI. This section reflects the findings from interviews and focus groups with Notre Dame youth and community members.

### ***History & Context***

Notre Dame represents the smallest community in this study. Notre Dame has a population of 589 people. The village has experienced a -4.8% population decline since 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2006). The community also is within close proximity to Winnipeg, located approximately 100 kilometres southwest of the city. Though the population base is small, the community actively promotes French language, culture, and heritage. Health and community services are offered in both French and English (Community Profiles, 2008).

Notre Dame enjoys a long history; the earliest inhabitants of the region were Objibway Aboriginals. European explorers are thought to have been in the vicinity during the early 1700s. The first Quebecois settlers arrived in Notre Dame around 1880 and in 1881 many more pioneers arrived in the region from France (Community Profiles, 2008).

Notre Dame has long served as an agricultural service centre. The region possesses a diversified agricultural economic base, including cereals, dairy, livestock, and PMU farms. Today the largest employers in the community are the Centre de Sante Notre Dame (health centre) and the Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine (francophone School Division) (Community Profiles, 2008).

### ***Community Youth Findings***

Conversations with seven Notre Dame youth will be discussed in the following section. A focus group and interviews were conducted in February 2008. The gender split of youth participating in either a focus group or interview was very even in Notre Dame: the focus group consisted of three males and three female and one interview was conducted with a male youth. No notable differences in answers owing to gender were distinguished in Notre Dame. Youth participants in this project were between 22 and 33 years of age.

Six of the seven youth who participated in this study left Notre Dame to pursue post-secondary education or employment in Winnipeg or other urban centres after graduating high school. The majority of the six, who left Notre Dame after high school lived, worked, and studied in Winnipeg, with the exception of one who moved out of province. Three of the participants are married and have children. All seven participants are employed in a variety of sectors and jobs. All seven participants are Francophone Manitobans.

Participants discussed their own personal experiences as well as those of their classmates, upon graduation from Le Collège régional Notre-Dame. Six of the seven participants left Notre Dame for longer than six months. A number of reasons were flagged as to why and where youth go, but the most common motivating factor to migrate is to pursue post-secondary education. One participant noted, "a lot of people leave to study, that is the main reason, but some people leave to travel" (Focus Group 1). This comment suggests that youth

need to leave the community to travel and experience the world beyond home, often perceived to be a right of passage, as well as to pursue educational and career goals.

Interestingly, the group discussed the strong desire to leave the community after graduation. One participant reflected that she “personally could not wait to leave Notre Dame and never thought of coming back, but this changes after a couple of years of being away” (Focus Group 1). This particular topic emphasizes just how dramatically age influences perception and how individuals evolve over time, often having very different reasons of mobility patterns while described as ‘youth’.

Participants reflected on their own graduating classes and where their school friends are today. A couple of participants estimated that about half of their graduating classes have returned to Notre Dame; another participant thought that perhaps only a third or less of her class of 21 have since returned to live in the village. The number of individuals who have returned to Notre Dame is likely linked with age and family status. The desire to start a family was noted as a contributing factor to the decision to move back to Notre Dame.

Employment opportunities are viewed as being somewhat limited in Notre Dame; youth leave home to study, but often are unable to return home because of a lack of job opportunities. However, employment opportunities are perceived to exist with commuting distance of Notre Dame. Participants flagged a lack of job opportunities and the ability or desire of families to back migrate to Notre Dame. Individuals originally from Notre Dame are perceived to be more willing to move back to the community and/or commute to work from the village. However, spouses not from the area may be less willing to commute or find the jobs available acceptable. Employment opportunities, while perceived to be somewhat limited, are also thought to come at a lower rate of pay.

While discussing the availability of jobs, or lack thereof, one participant was quick to say that “there are always jobs available, but the problem is we can’t always find people to fill those spots. These jobs might not always be the ideal job opportunity, but it is a great way to start to then be able to move on to a better job in the community later” (Interview 1). This implies a degree of sacrifice on the part of individuals or young families to wishing to move to a rural francophone community, Notre Dame in particular. Patience and long term planning may be required by youth wishing to move back to the area. Towns around Notre Dame, such as Morden and Portage La Prairie are perceived to have more job opportunities.

Participants discussed advantages associated with life in rural communities. First and foremost, a perk of rural life is that the cost of living is perceived to be lower than in urban areas. One participant pointed out that life in Notre Dame “is less expensive, there is more space and it is less busy...there is more of a sense of community” (Focus Group 1). Increased feelings of safety are strongly linked with a rural setting; doors are often left unlocked. A sense of community and knowing “everyone” is important. This is perceived to become even more important when people have children. One participant reflected, “we know everyone and when you have children this is very important. You know their friends and their friend’s parents. You know all the teachers; half of them were your teachers. It feels safer here” (Focus Group 1). Family and community ties are thought to be big advantages associated with life in the countryside. The concepts of security, lifestyle, solitude, and nature are associated with an improved quality of life available in many rural communities.

Local revitalization efforts contribute to community pride. Efforts have been underway in Notre Dame to rebuild old buildings; the main street looks very new. Some old houses have also been removed and replaced with new single-family dwellings (Interview 1). In addition to single-family dwellings, housing developments in Notre Dame have included condos and 55+ buildings (Focus Group 1).

One participant stated, that he thought, “all youth who leave Notre Dame have some sort of attachment to their home town. 95% of the time, kids who leave, come back every Friday night and leave Sunday night. Their heart is always in Notre Dame” (Interview 1). There was some speculation that perhaps strong community ties exist, at least in part, because of the community’s strong French heritage. Currently there is only one local business that does not offer services in English.

In addition to a shortage of meaningful employment opportunities, the local housing situation is thought to be a large barrier to youth wishing to return to Notre Dame. Local housing costs are perceived to be much higher than in neighbouring communities blamed on a lack of availability. Demand for housing is thought to far out weigh what is available. One participant stated, “housing is a problem here in Notre Dame. We don’t have any houses that are available. Houses are expensive here. If you go to the town over, the prices are about half as much as here in Notre Dame” (Focus Group 1).

Some local building efforts were flagged, “they have started building condos and 55+ buildings to encourage the older population who have big houses but don’t really need it, to move to these new locations and leave the houses for younger couples” (Focus Group 1). Statements such as these indicate a degree of competition amongst community residents; houses that go up for sale do not get listed in the local papers, they are snapped up before an advertisement can be run.

When talking about disadvantages that are associated with rural life, a lack of employment and housing opportunities generally are at the top of the list. In addition, strong community ties and “knowing everyone” can come with both positive and negative implications. The idea “that everyone knows you can be good, but also bad” (Focus Group 1). Knowing your neighbours and having everyone know you contribute to a sense of community and safety, but can diminish feelings of privacy. Having to travel to Winnipeg is sometimes viewed as a disadvantage. In some respects Notre Dame is considered to benefit from relative proximity to Winnipeg, some residents do commute daily for work, but depending on individual circumstances the distance to Winnipeg can feel like a real draw back to life in Notre Dame. One participant talked about the challenges associated with having to travel to Winnipeg for evening meetings and having to be away from her young children over night.

All participants noted difficulties associated with Census Statistics and subsequent descriptions of what is occurring locally. Statistics Canada notes a population decline of 4.8%, from 619 residents in 2001 to 589 residents in 2006. This apparent decline in population is disputed. A population “boom” was suggested; “it is impossible that the population has gone down because we have had a boom on constructions... we are not sure what happened, maybe a lot of people decided not to answer the census” (Interview 1). Participants also agreed that the majority of the local population is Francophone. In Notre Dame both the elementary and high school are French. Residents wishing to attend English

school must travel to a neighbouring community. In addition, “a lot of people who speak French from other communities come to Notre Dame for school” (Focus Group1).

The group talked about what things are being done or could be done locally to encourage youth to move to Notre Dame. One participant suggested that “a bursary or tuition grant could be a good idea” to motivate youth to return to their home communities (Focus Group 1). This type of local support may strengthen feelings of attachment to a place. There was agreement that financial support for post-secondary education should be free of restricting requirements and that this should, and could, act as an incentive, allowing individuals to choose and in all likelihood feel that “my community gave me money to go and study [and] I should maybe give back by moving back” (Focus Group 1). The local daycare supports employees wishing to upgrade to a Level Two Certification if they guarantee to work at the daycare for two years.

In closing, mention should be made about the *Make Way for Youth* program through CDEM that was flagged by one participant as an ongoing effort to bring youth back to the region. The program is praised for its capacity to raise awareness across communities about why it is important to invest in bringing youth back to Notre Dame. It is viewed as tool with the potential to illustrate why employers need to work towards raising local salaries and benefits to encourage youth to return to the area to pursue fulfilling and meaningful employment.

Recreational and social opportunities were only briefly touched upon in the focus group and interview. One participant noted that young people “are always together on Saturday nights!” (Interview 1). Close community and family ties bring people back to the community on many weekends even when they work, live and attend school elsewhere.

### ***Community Resident Findings***

Conversations with two Notre Dame residents will be discussed in the following section.

A CDEM representative interviewed two community residents; one participant is male, the other female. Both community leader participants have long histories in Notre Dame. Both left for a brief period of time to pursue post-secondary education and work experience. Both participants have grown children that have for the most part settled in Notre Dame with their own families. Both participants own their own home in the community and spoke of strong community roots that tie them to Notre Dame.

Both participants reflected that they plan to spend the rest of their lives in the community. One participant noted that language is a large influencing factor in his own, and probably others, decision to move to and/or remain in Notre Dame. Heritage, culture and the land develop strong ties to a place. The decision to remain or return to one’s roots is often observed. There is some speculation that perhaps cultural bonds are strengthened through language. One participant spoke of being away, living in a large urban centre with a parent that did not speak French. Even as a child he felt there was something missing from his life and the desire to return to a place where he could speak French and celebrate culture and heritage with like individuals began to grow (Interview 1). Manitoba, in general, was flagged as part of the motivation to return to Notre Dame. Manitoba’s unique geography, landscape and environment contribute to residents’ quality of life.

A close connection with nature is perceived to be an important reason for living in the countryside. One participant, when talking about the advantages of rural life, touched upon the lifestyle in the country, the quality of life enjoyed by many, a strong sense of community

and security, as well as a sense of interdependency. She described a small community, even if close family ties do not exist, to consist of reciprocal interdependent relationships between neighbours and community residents. She said "if you can't have the support from your family, you can count on the community" (Interview 2).

Over time the factors thought to contribute to youth migration are perceived to have remained the same. Youth with a link to agriculture are often the ones that remained in Notre Dame, or left temporarily to pursue their studies. Many young people leave to pursue higher education and begin to think about returning to their home community if job opportunities exist. Many youth really begin to think about moving back to a rural community when they begin to think about starting their own family. There is the sense that most young people probably want to return to Notre Dame, but a variety of factors may hold them back from doing so.

One participant thought "youth do want to come back eventually. I know they WANT to come back. They have said it many times, but it is not always possible. It can depend on the person they decide to spend the rest of their life with; what if that person does not want to live in Notre Dame?" (Interview 2). These challenges have not really changed that much over time. Similar challenges such as limited employment opportunities, are perceived to have existed in the past. However, today with the cost of housing continuing to rise, young people are thought to face real challenges in securing a suitable local dwelling.

Though securing housing is considered a real challenge currently in Notre Dame, it is also perceived to be a commitment to spend your life in the community. Today, housing prices continue to rise in Notre Dame; in fact there is the perception that housing costs are higher in Notre Dame than in neighbouring communities. There is a perceived gap between employment opportunities that pay a decent wage and the cost of living. One participant noted "while it is less expensive to live in Notre Dame than it is Winnipeg, it is awfully tough to raise a family on some of the wages offered locally" (Interview 1). "Many people want to come back, but there is nothing here for them. It is mostly the jobs that are missing, especially if they are looking for a good wage. Some people in Notre Dame think that getting paid \$11.00 an hour is a good wage, but it's not if you are looking to raise a family. Houses are worth \$100,000.00 to \$200, 000.00 and that is an ordinary house" (Interview 1).

Both participants spoke of how houses never make it to the public market when owners wish to sell; most houses are purchased as quickly as they are declared for sale. Efforts have been made of late by the local Community Development Corporation to "liberate houses" through encouraging people 55 years and older to move into newly developed condos and facilities. This point was used by both participants to illustrate how the so-called decline in the local population cannot be correct. There are no empty houses and in fact construction is seemingly ongoing.

One participant has had a long history working with CDEM; he in fact was one of the founders of the organization, but both spoke of efforts being made by CDEM and the community to facilitate the arrival of new and returning youth. Exploratory weekends are hosted to give potential newcomers a sense of the community and what opportunities exist. Exploratory weekends often have a theme; the next weekend planned will focus on the health care sector, and is aimed at youth who are planning to work in that field. Volunteers will tour them around the hospital and community, as well as introduce them to other community residents and have them participate in social activities. These weekends are used to "try and

give people a feel for the community and at the same time let them know that there are jobs available in their field...we have done this sort of themed exploratory weekend before and it can interest youth who are not from the area, but are simply looking to live in rural Manitoba and find a job that matches what they are looking to do” (Interview 2).

Both participants shared their views on what makes life in a rural community attractive. One participant spoke of how sometimes people from Winnipeg or other cities and towns cannot understand the appeal of living in small community that is perceived to be a long way from Winnipeg. He described his life in Notre Dame as ideal – many of his friends own a cottage outside of their home city that they visit on weekends, “but for me my house is also my cottage” (Interview 1). He perceives this to be a real advantage to life in the countryside. Lots of small things add up to make life in a rural community attractive including such reasons as car insurance being lower than in an urban centre, there is an added sense of safety, and you can walk everywhere you need to go.

Local updates to infrastructure are perceived to be contributing to the attractiveness of Notre Dame and life in the community. Residents are thought to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle that offers an increased degree of security. Close connections with nature are also perceived to be a benefit to life in a rural community. Many of Notre Dame’s youth are thought to leave home with close community ties. Many young people return home every weekend to socialize and take part in local activities.

The local youth recently set up a committee to assemble a snowmobile derby in the winter. They have also started an all terrain vehicle (ATV) derby in the spring. Many committees had disappeared because a lack of local interest and today a resurgence is being witnessed. One participant noted “activities and events are being created for youth by youth. It’s great!” (Interview 2). There is also a local cultural committee that organizes francophone activities in the community. Musicians and comedians are often brought to Notre Dame to perform; events are held throughout the winter in the arena.

The local council is continuously making an effort to generate local economic development and create more employment opportunities the community. The town council tries to be quite active in encouraging different companies to establish themselves in Notre Dame. Sometime concessions are made to attract business development, and for example some are given grants to assist with their property taxes for the first five years. There is no great wave of industry and people arriving in town, but a little is thought to go a long way.

Distance is a barrier when seeking to attract businesses to Notre Dame because of shipping and transportation costs; however, distance also has some perceived benefits. One participant noted that because “Notre Dame is too far from the city for people to travel for work is an advantage because it encourages people to live locally. If you want to work in Notre Dame you have to live here or at least in the area. Unlike other towns that are so close to the city that they are getting smaller in population because employees live in Winnipeg and travel to the town only to work” (Interview 1).



## Conclusion

Findings from this project indicate that mobility patterns vary from year to year, from community to community. There appear to be clear linkages between perception and migration. Importantly, it appears that perception and migration patterns evolve across time and along a continuum of age.

Debate exists as to whether young people should remain in or leave rural communities. The literature suggests that in some communities it is the opinion of community leaders that it is beneficial for youth to leave the rural community to gain additional experiences and education. The other side of the argument is that youth should stay in rural areas to assist the survival of communities.

Project findings from La Broquerie, St. Laurent and Notre Dame indicate that there is community support for youth choosing to leave their rural community to pursue post-secondary education and additional training. Experiencing the world is perceived to be an important component of growing and learning. Conversations with community residents and youth support the notion that youth leave for a variety of reasons, generally upon completion of high school, to pursue experiences not available to them within their own rural community. Travel, school, and work experience are important contributors to becoming independent. Maintaining connections with youth when they are away experiencing the world beyond a rural community is perceived to be critical. Findings reveal a need and a desire in all three communities to improve connectivity with youth and others who have left the community for a host of reasons. Creative possibilities for maintaining connections, such as websites, interactive technologies, and distribution lists, illustrative a few suggestions arising from Phase 1; the challenge for communities is to seek ways to communicate with youth beyond their 'borders'.

The findings of this project emphasize the need for effective means of communication, ensuring needs and desires are well understood, as well as ensuring potential community residents have a sense of the amenities and services a particular community boasts. Within a community, effective communication likely entails some combination of traditional and new forms of technology. In all three communities, the Francophone school is perceived to be the greatest driver of local communication. This connotes some challenges when seeking to reach out to individuals that do not have children. The importance of having a good community website was highlighted. All three communities do have a website, but none are quickly or easily found when doing a web search. There is also some debate as to whether the existing websites are current and well utilized; discrepancies between what information can be found were noted. Also, high speed Internet is not available to all community residents.

A common theme, especially noted through interviews with youth, is how perception and mobility patterns evolve as youth age. After leaving home to pursue educational goals and other opportunities, when individuals begin thinking about starting their own families they are more inclined to move back to a rural community. In addition to common advantages associated with life in the countryside, such as an improved quality of life, increased safety, and stronger connections with nature, cultural ties are the strongest influence on migration patterns.

Community and cultural pride are often viewed as the ‘glue’ that binds people to place. Phase 1 specifically explored Francophone Manitoba communities; findings from Phase 1 strongly indicate that common language, culture and heritage bond people to one another and to geographic locations. Many participants indicated that the draw to a rural Francophone community actually outweighs the draw to return home specifically. Cultural ties and pride, in conjunction with employment opportunities, most often dictate where young people and their families settle. Family ties are important, but the capacity to be gainfully and meaningfully employed, will usually rule. Many participants indicated that after leaving home and living in other communities and provinces, the desire to return to a rural Francophone community eventually emerged.

All three communities that participated benefit from relatively close proximity to Winnipeg. It is theorized that in addition to cultural ties, youth remain connected to their home communities because they are able to frequently visit and participate in community life. Many youth living away, for education and employment, are able to participate in regular community events and recreational opportunities, such as playing for the local hockey team. Team members need not necessarily live in the community if they have the capacity to travel home for games and practices. It is unlikely that as distance increases connections such as those will be as easily maintained.

In addition to employment opportunities and community, cultural and family ties, recurring themes thought to contribute to youth migration include the availability of appropriate housing and services. In La Broquerie, the local motto is *build it and they will come*. La Broquerie boasts a great deal of new housing developments; houses are most often sold before they are completed. La Broquerie appears to have the capacity to attract youth from surrounding rural communities, likely due to economic opportunities, housing and a strong cultural base. Findings from both St. Laurent and Notre Dame indicated that they are each confronted with additional challenges when encouraging youth to move to the community. In St. Laurent costs associated with purchasing land and/or housing is substantial, often perceived to be linked to cottage developments in the area. Efforts are being made in Notre Dame, with CDEM, to *liberate* houses from residents 55+ years of age to make way for youth. Housing developments in Notre Dame include condos and facilities for seniors, in addition to single-family dwellings. Generally, houses do not hit the open market and most are sold before that can happen. Housing prices in Notre Dame are also perceived to be higher than in surrounding communities.

Communities must offer a vast array of amenities and services to appeal to potential newcomers. In addition to culture, employment and housing, and community services such as daycare are viewed as critical in today’s society. In most young families both partners work and therefore childcare is essential. The availability of bilingual services in all three communities is seen as a key factor in setting each apart from other rural communities. The importance of civic engagement and encouraging youth to be meaningfully engaged locally was emphasized. It is likely that through local involvement, services will better meet the needs of youth and newcomers. This is very true in the case of Notre Dame where local committees have been formed to create activities for youth by youth.

Phase 1 has provided key learning’s to guide the project into Phase 2. Youth migration in two additional regions, the Parkland and North, will be explored and compared with findings from Phase 1. Interviews and focus groups will be conducted in two communities, rather than three,

in each region. More time will be spent in each community in an effort to increase sample sizes.

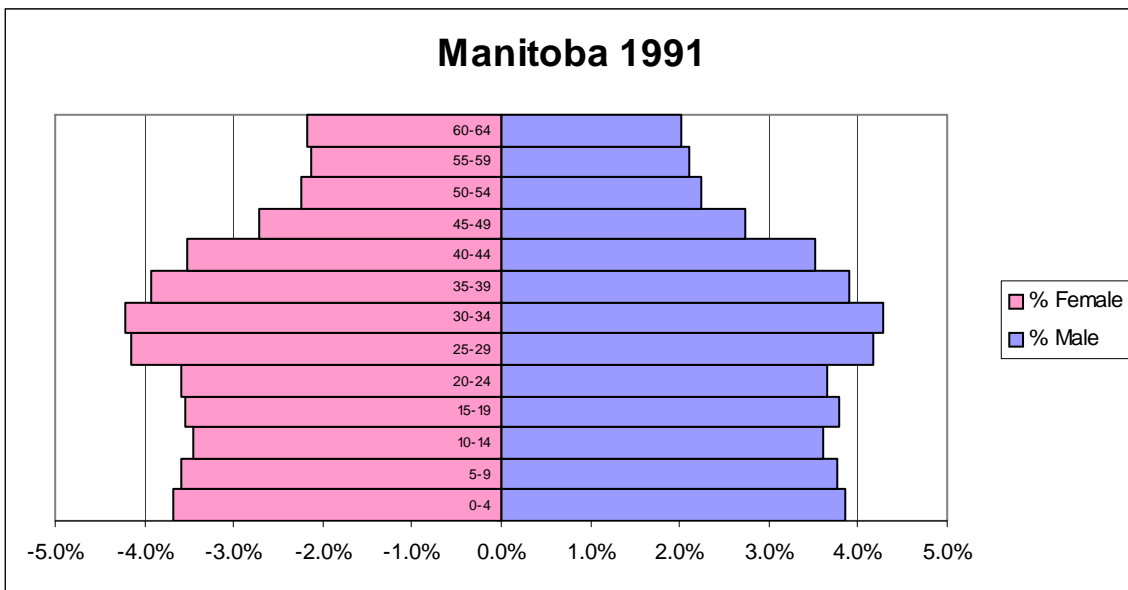
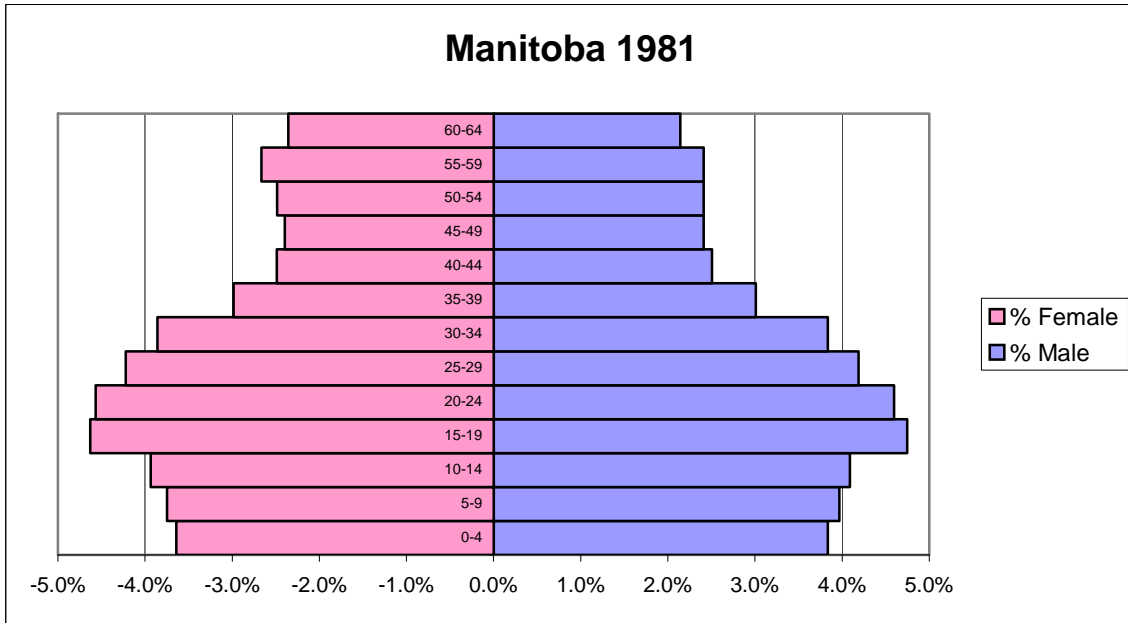
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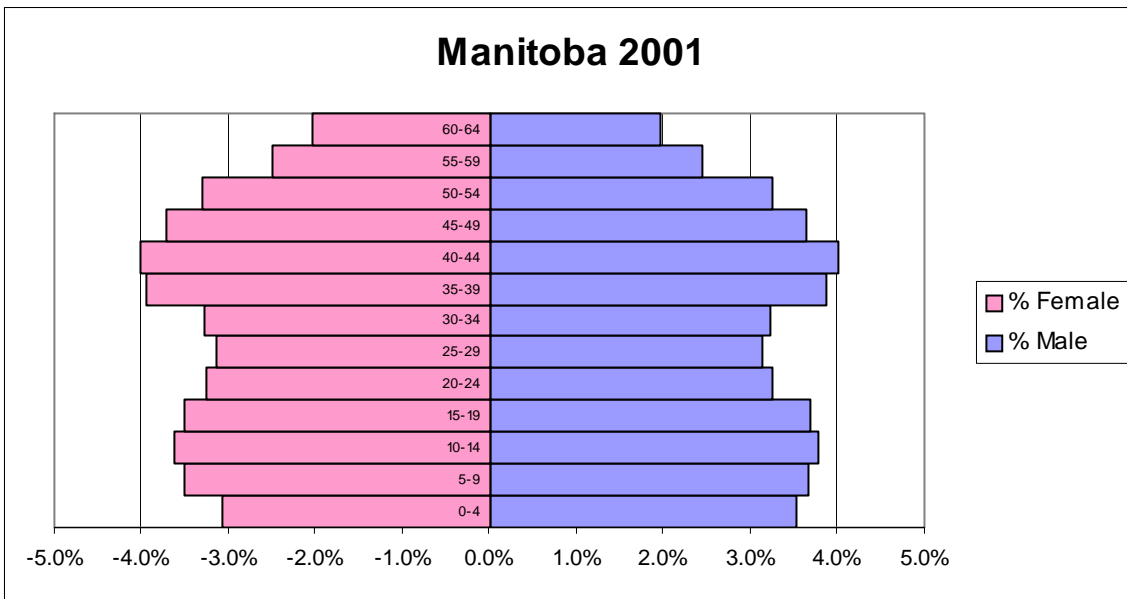
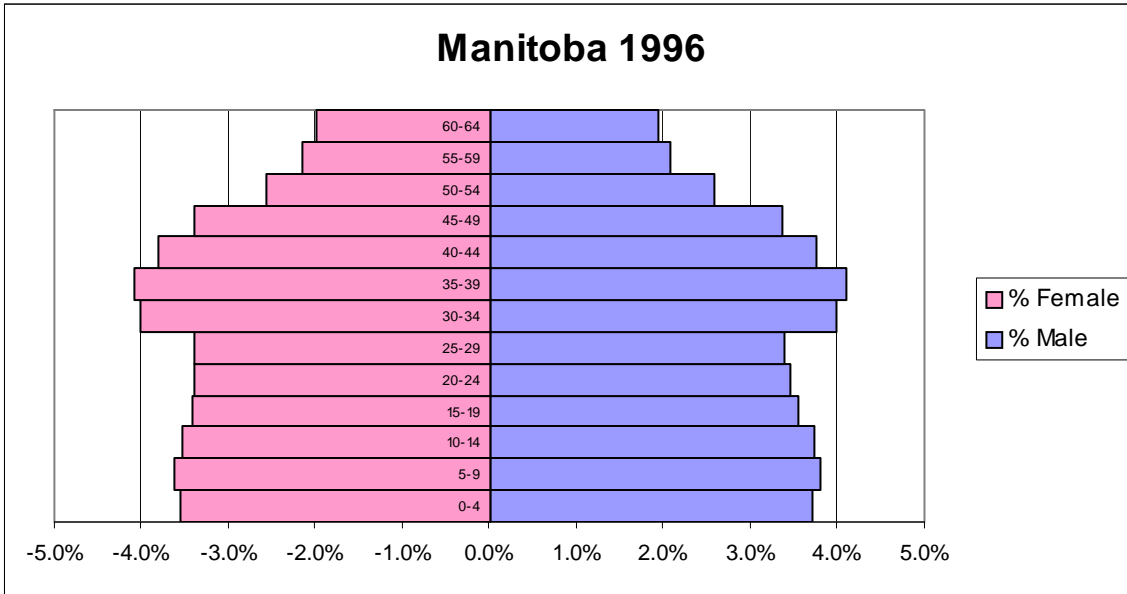
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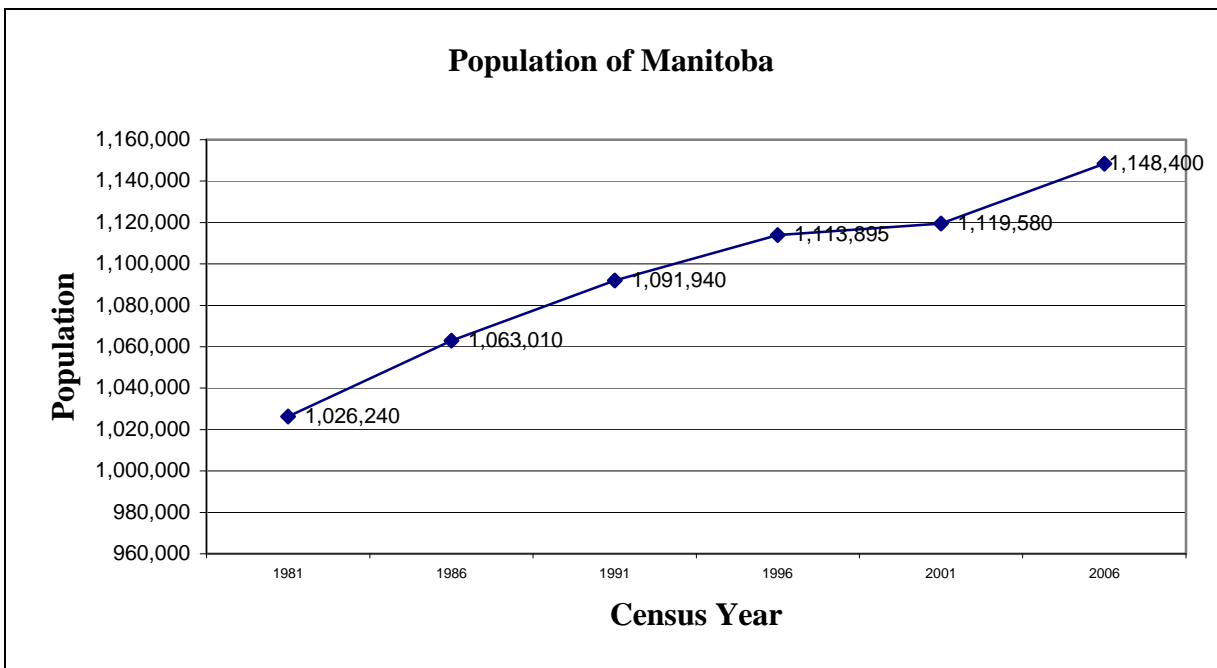
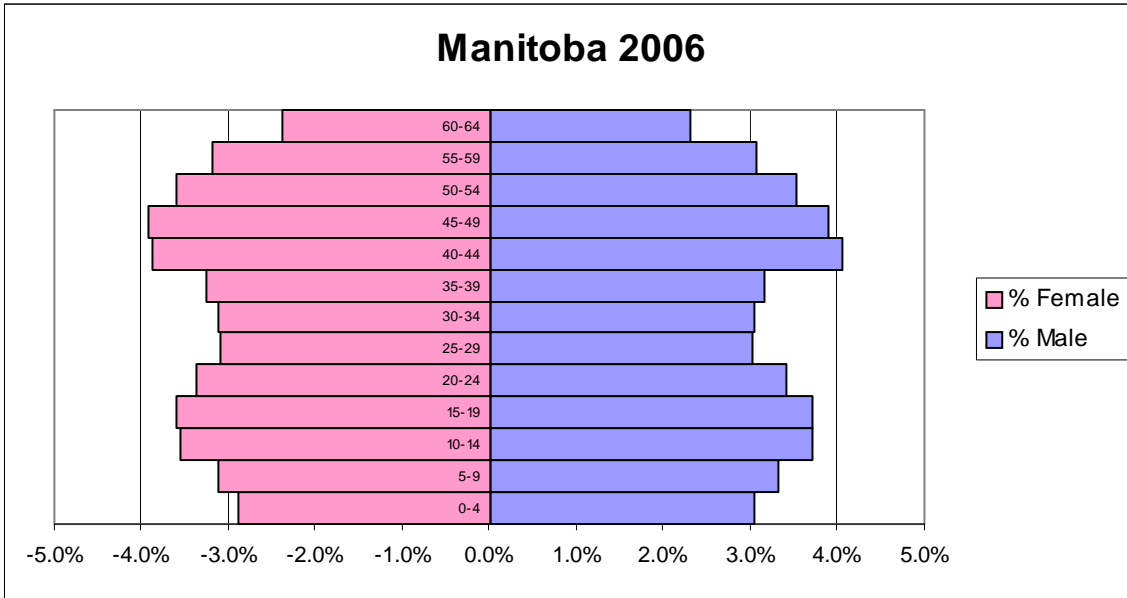
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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Manitoba Population Pyramids

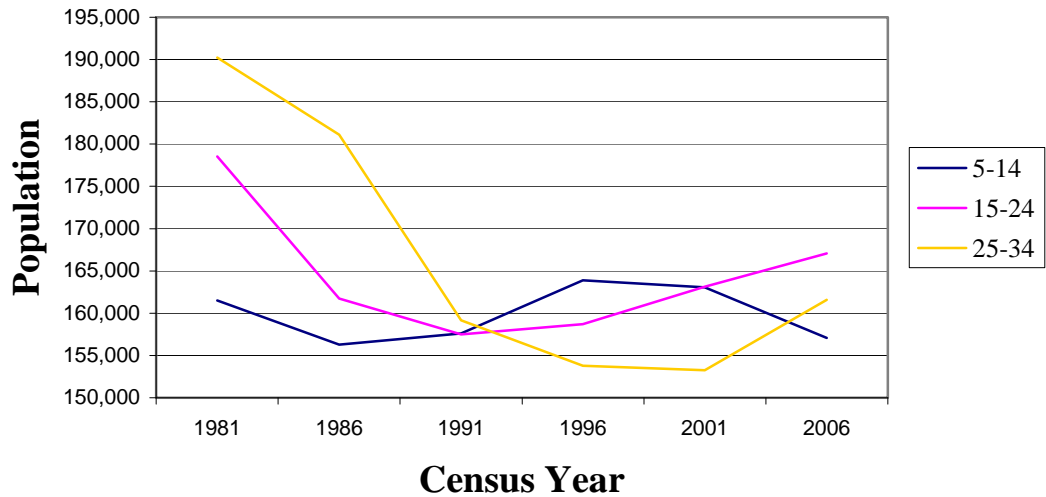




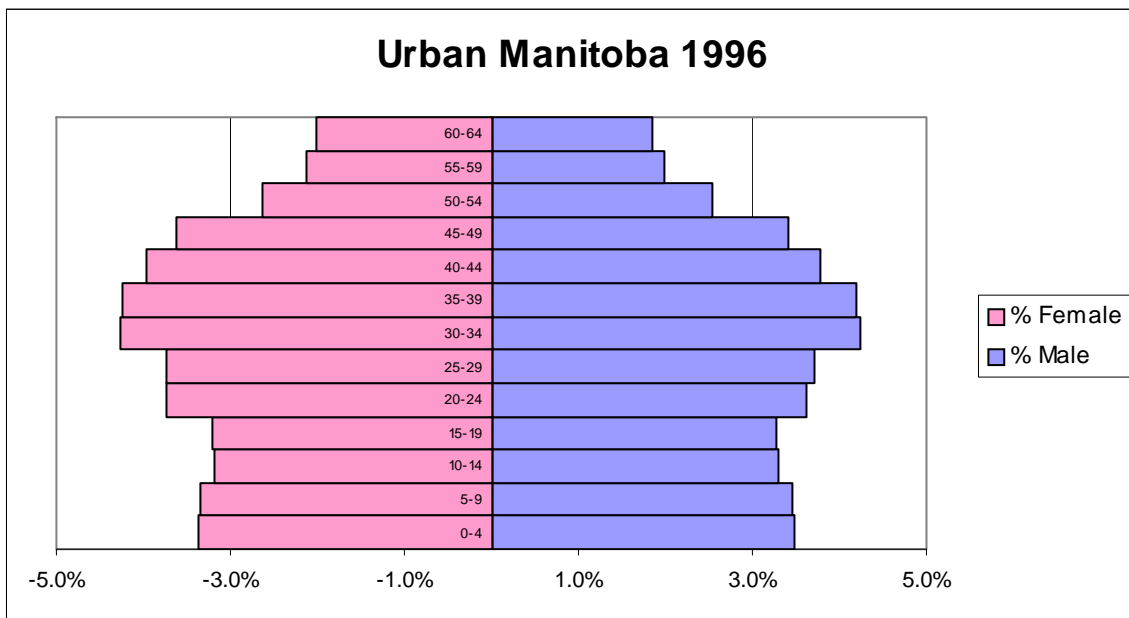
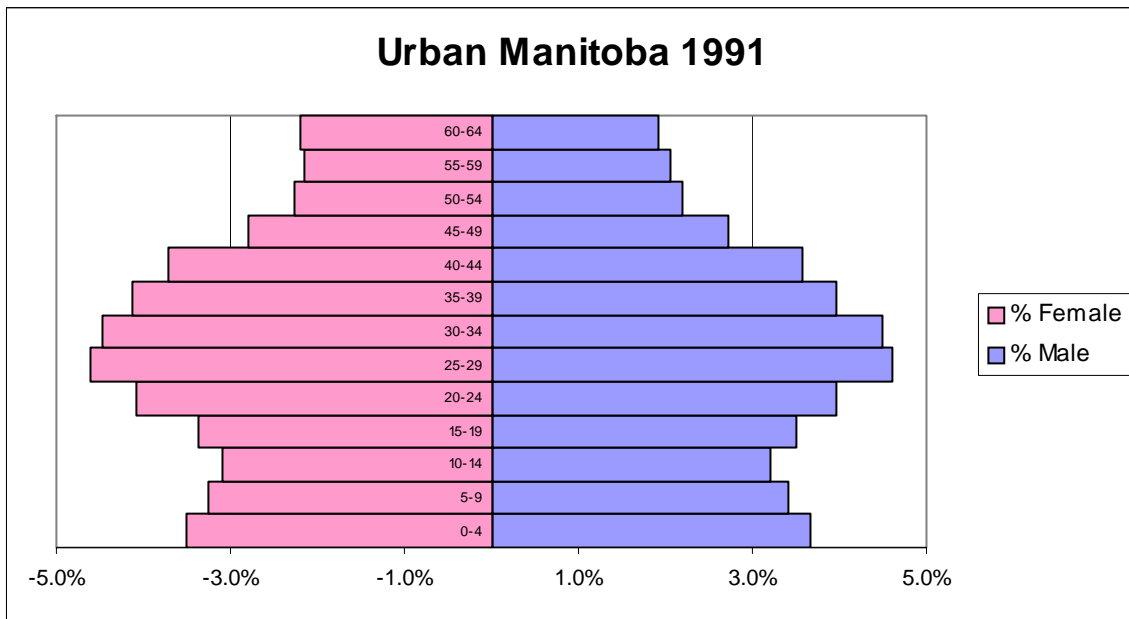


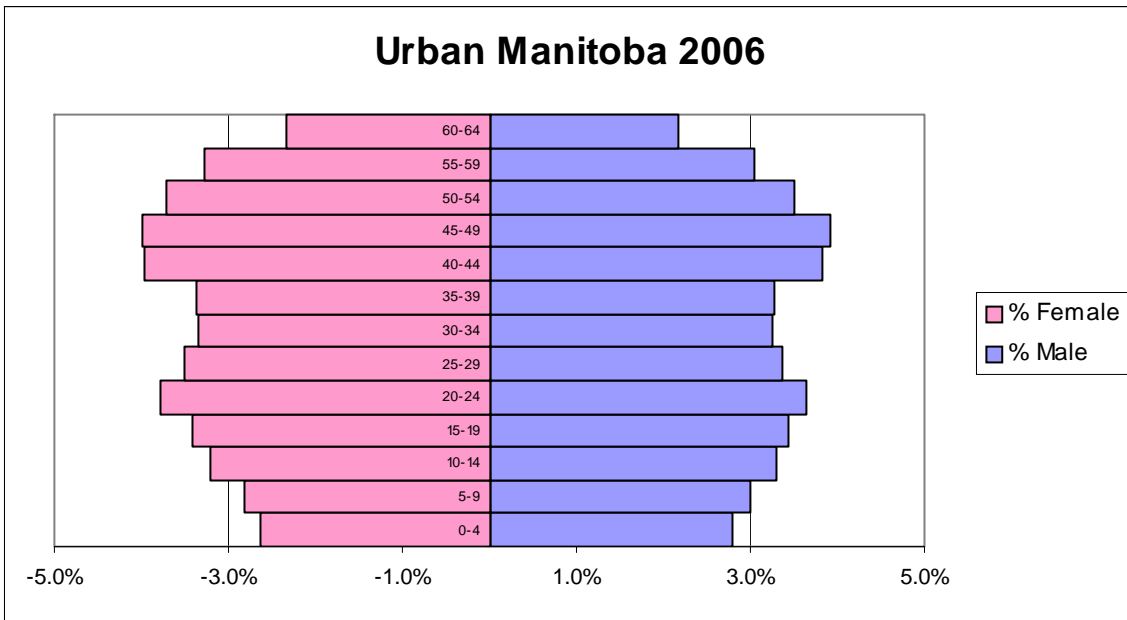
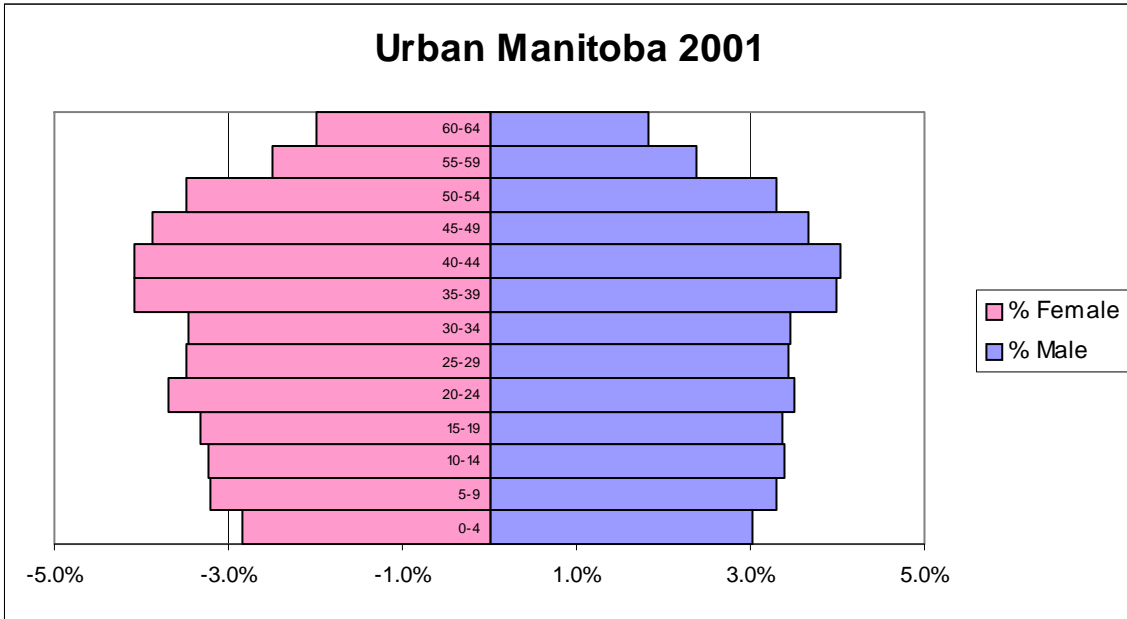


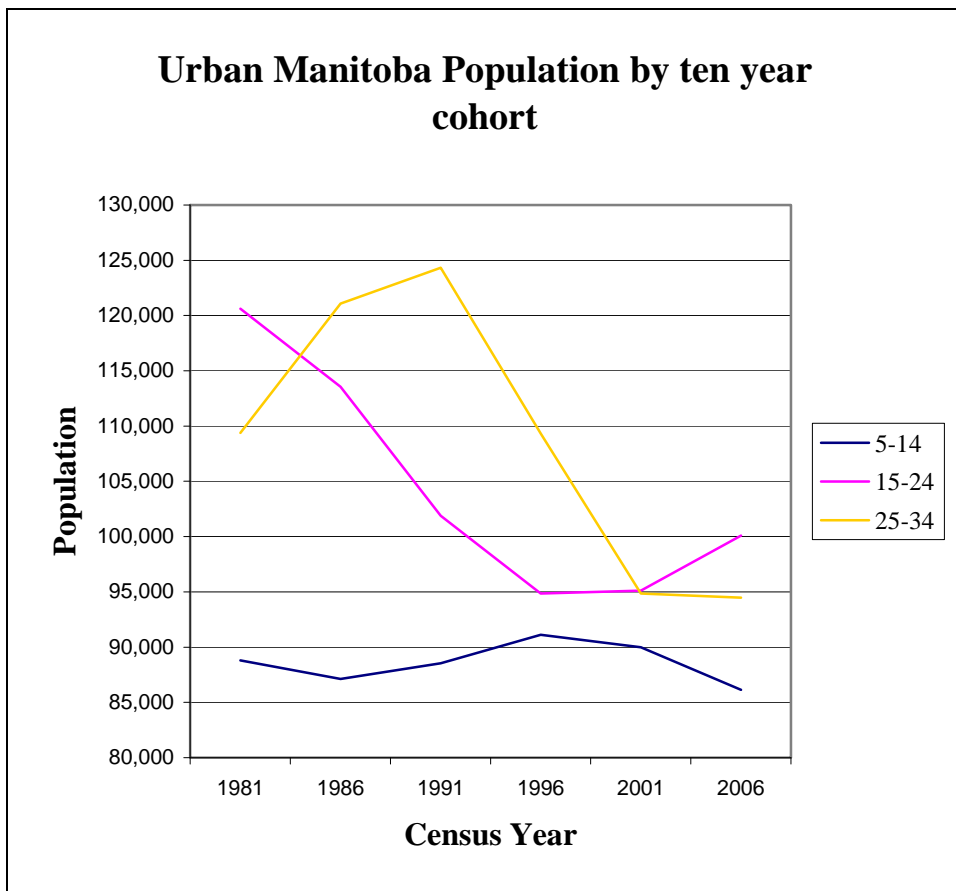
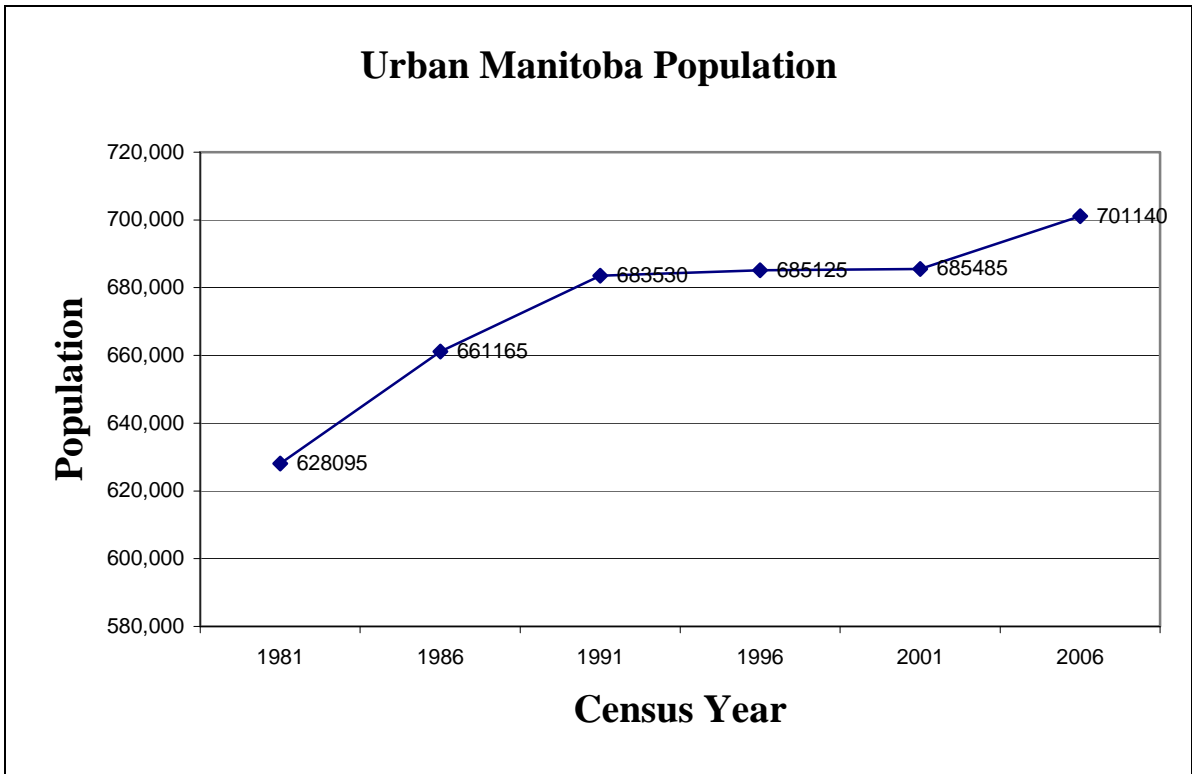
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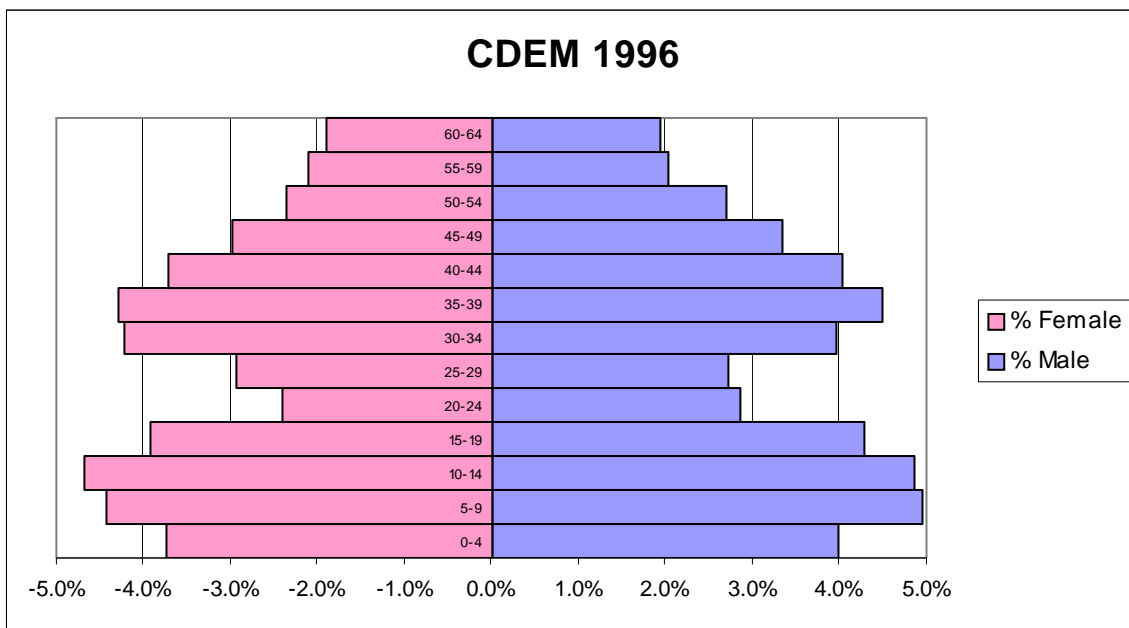
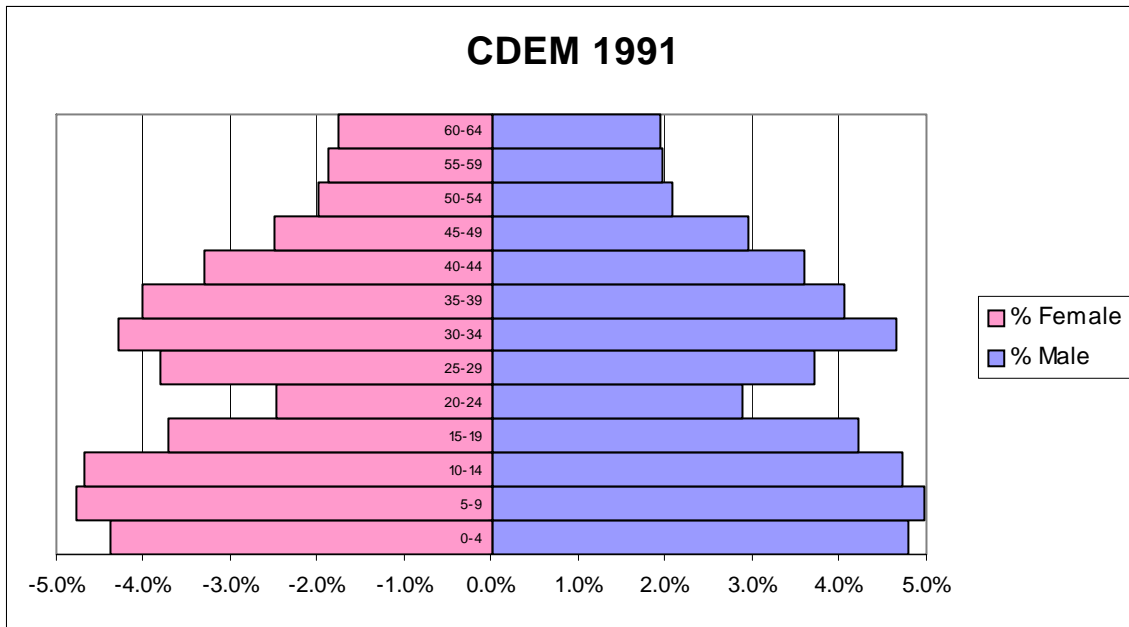
## Appendix B: Manitoba Population Pyramids



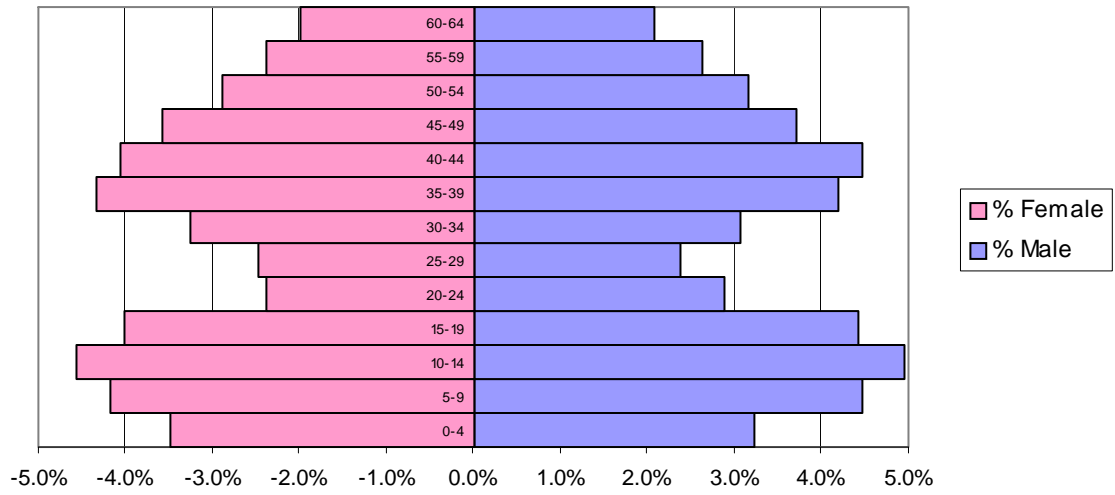




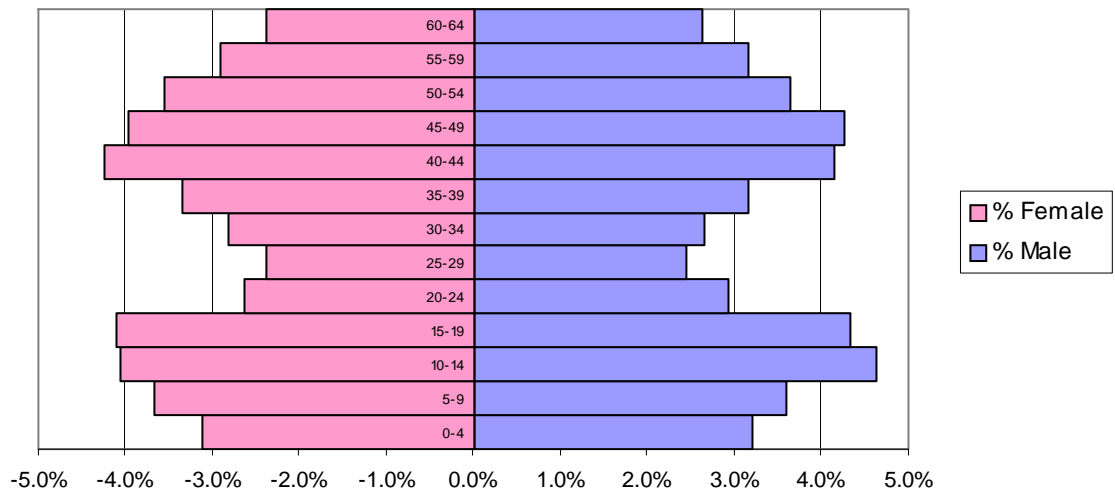
## Appendix C: CDEM Population Pyramids

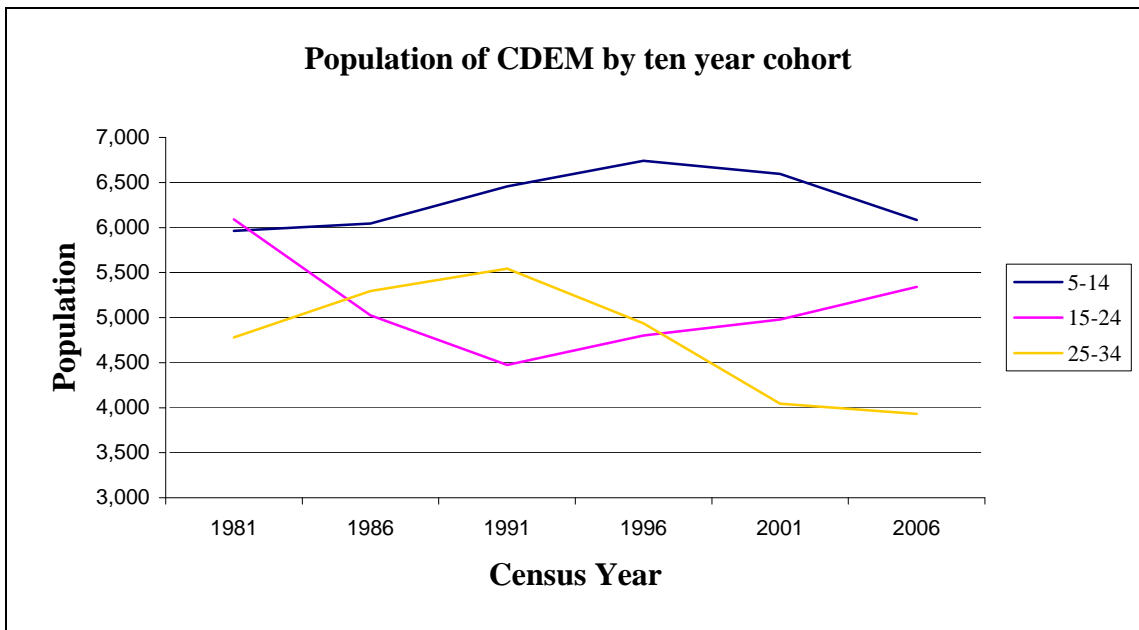
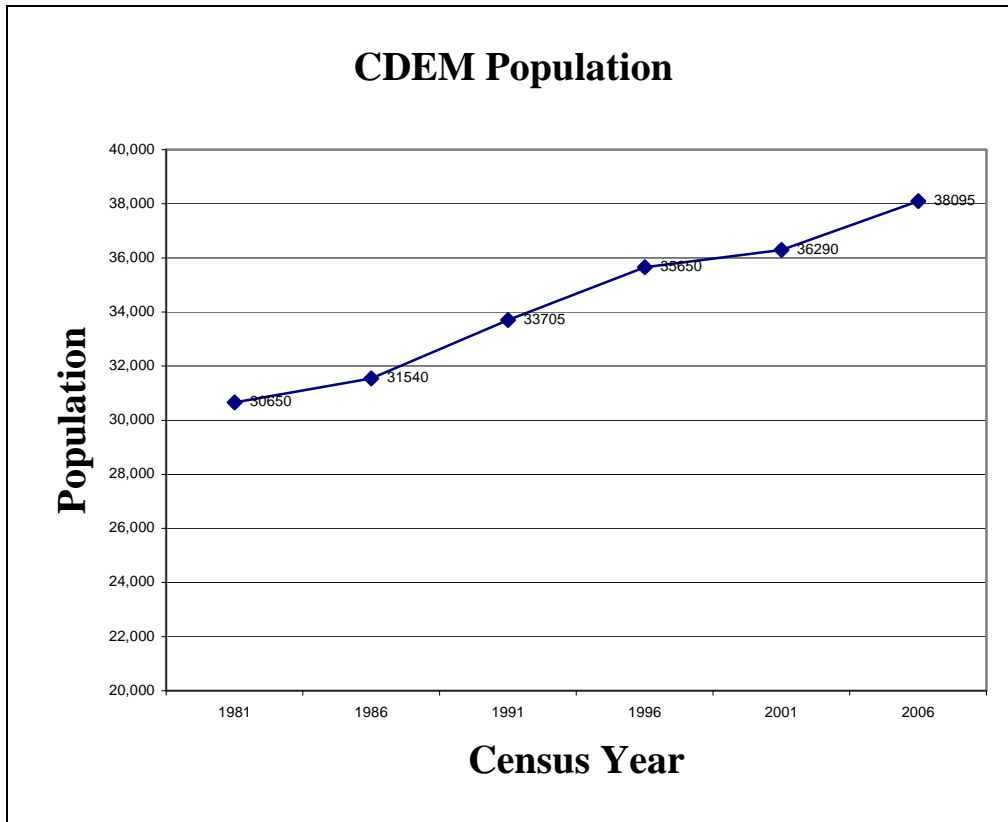


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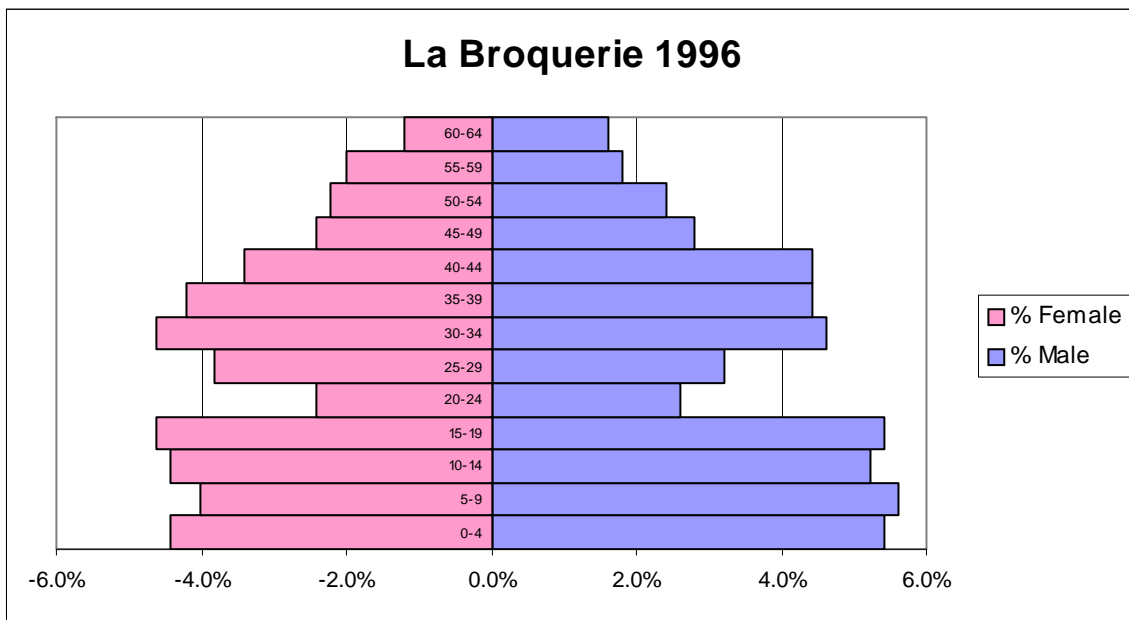
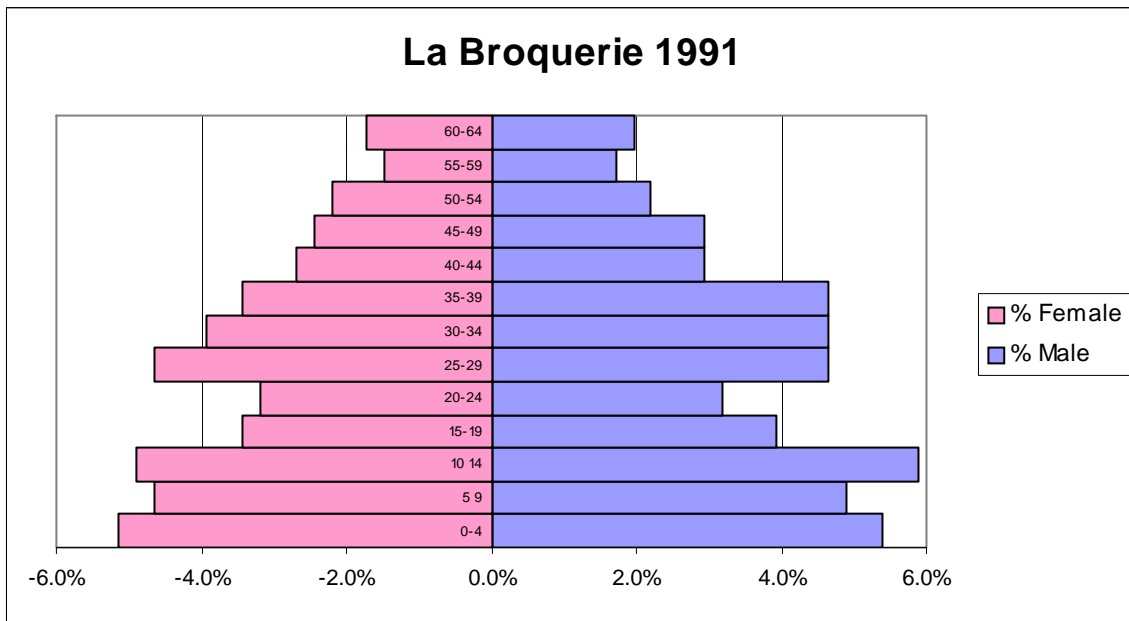


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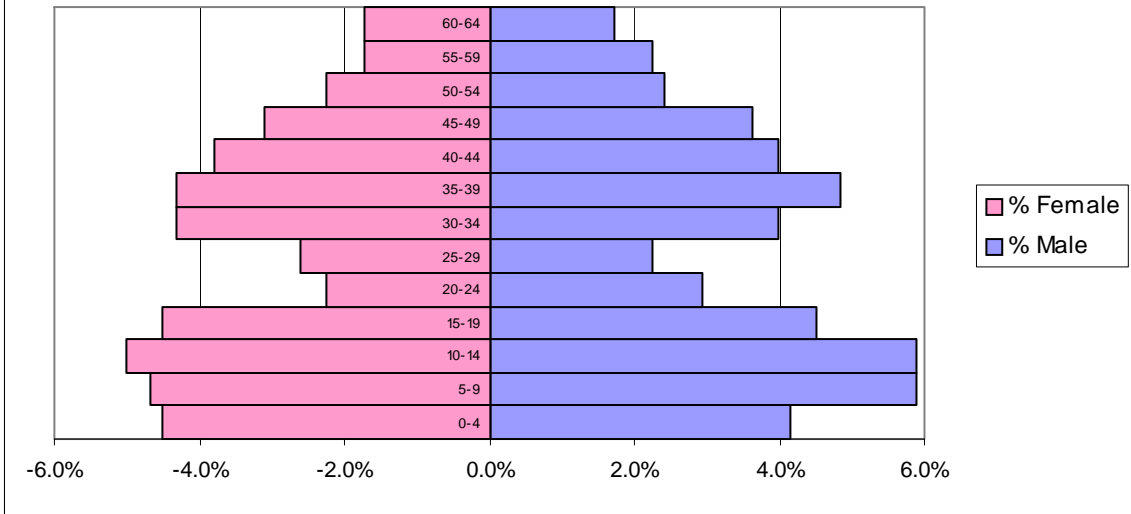


## Appendix D: La Broquerie Population Pyramids

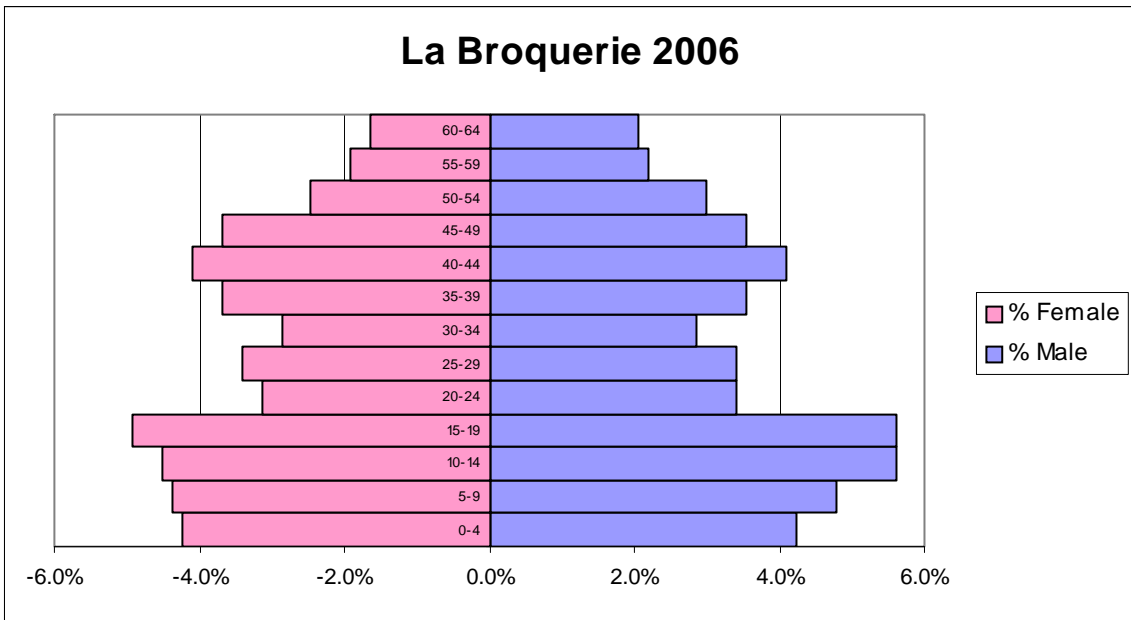


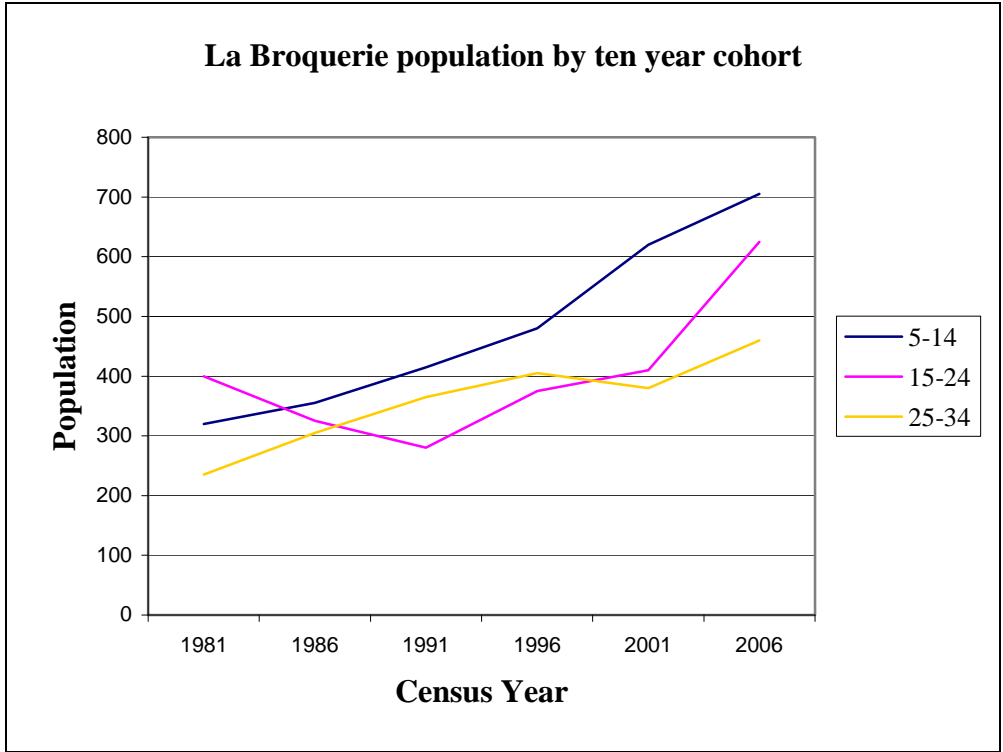
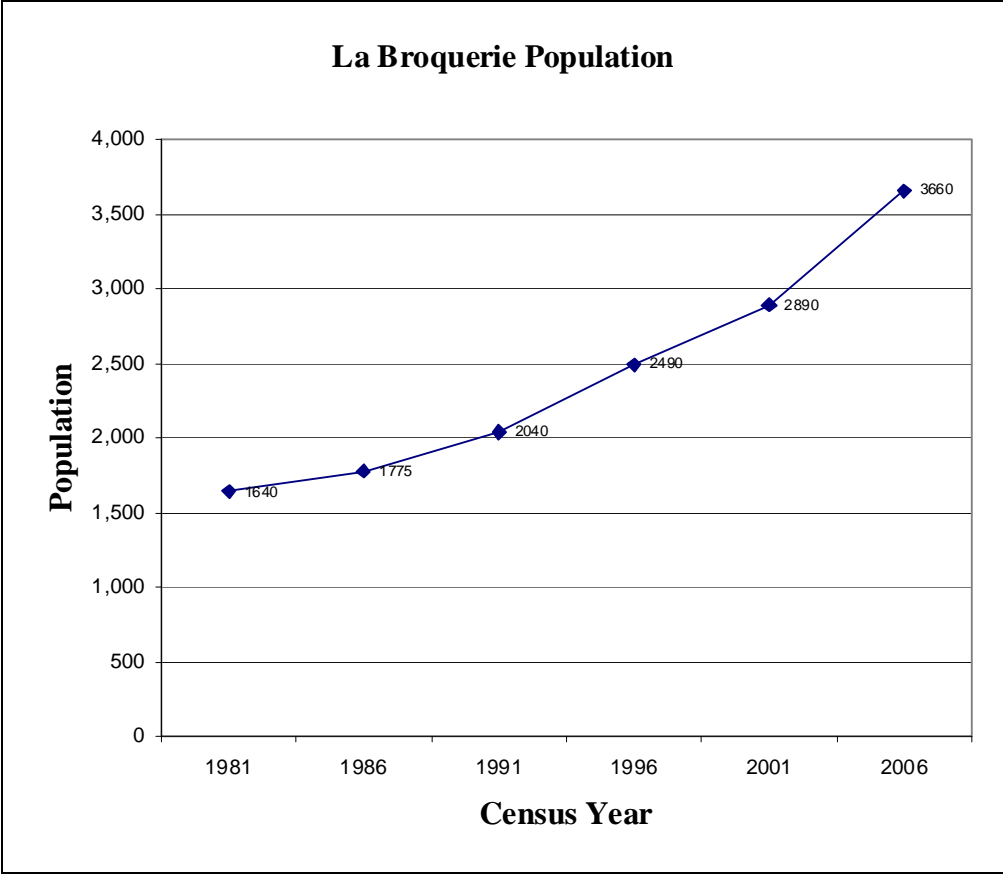


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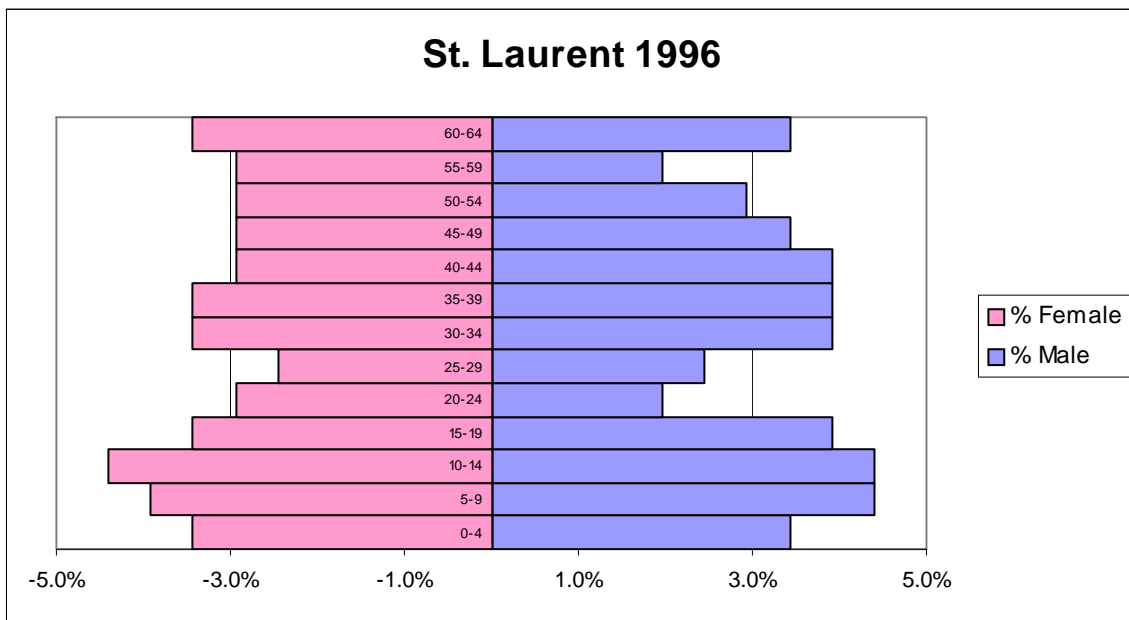
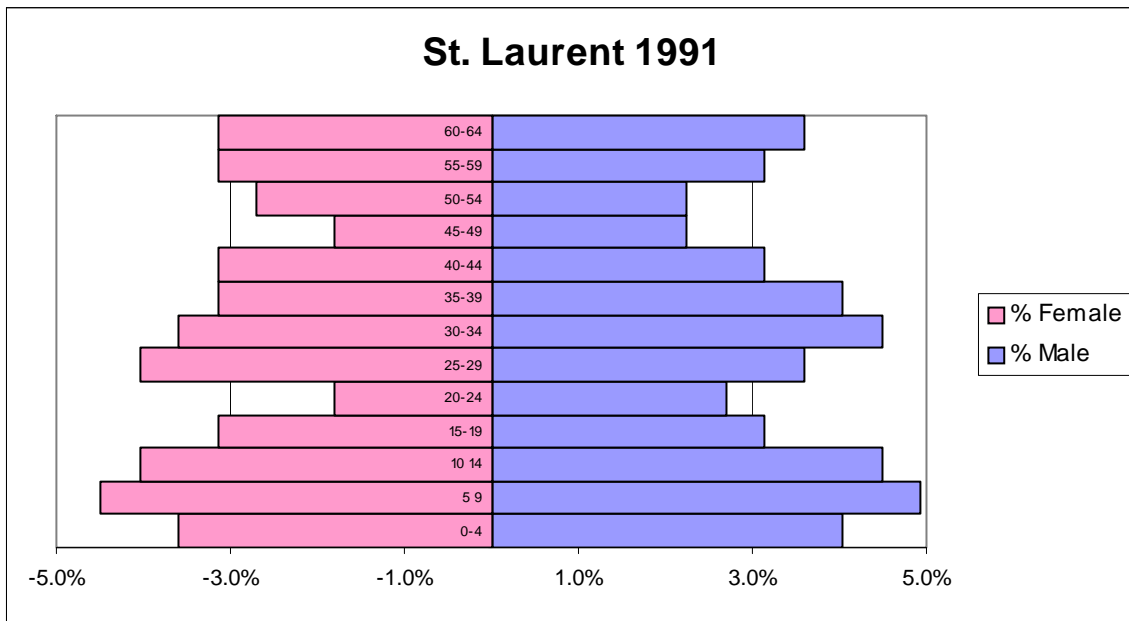


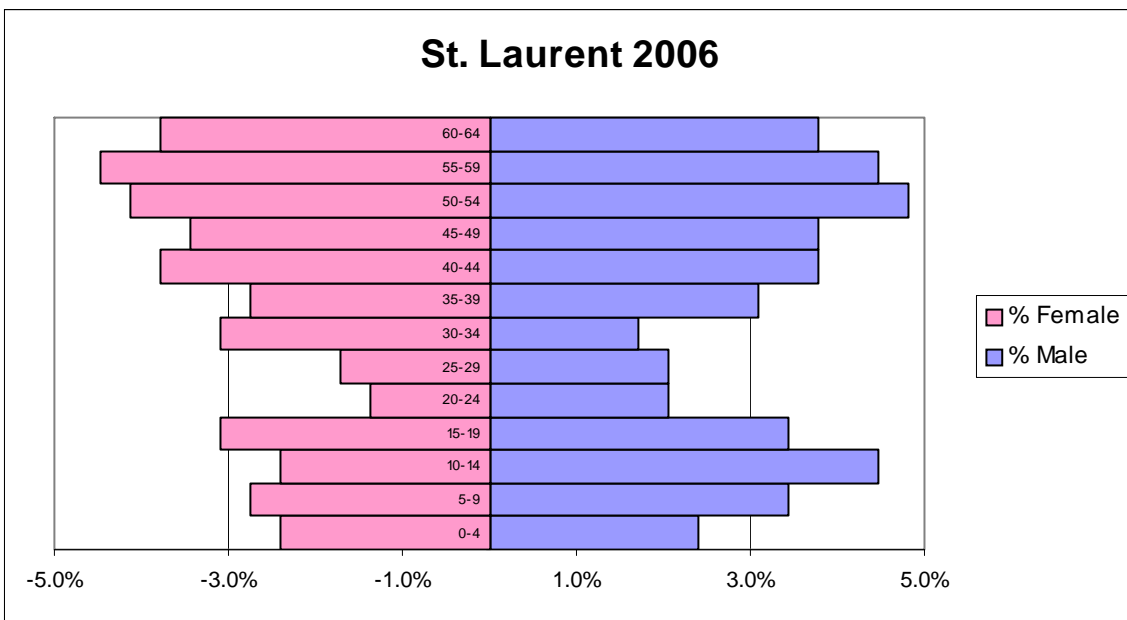
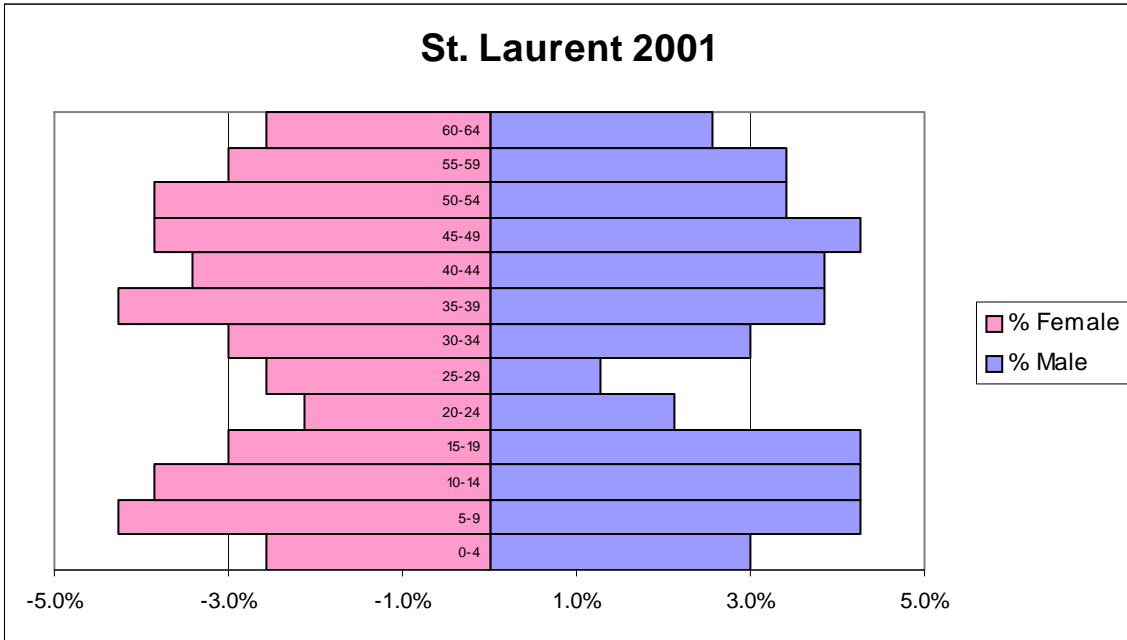
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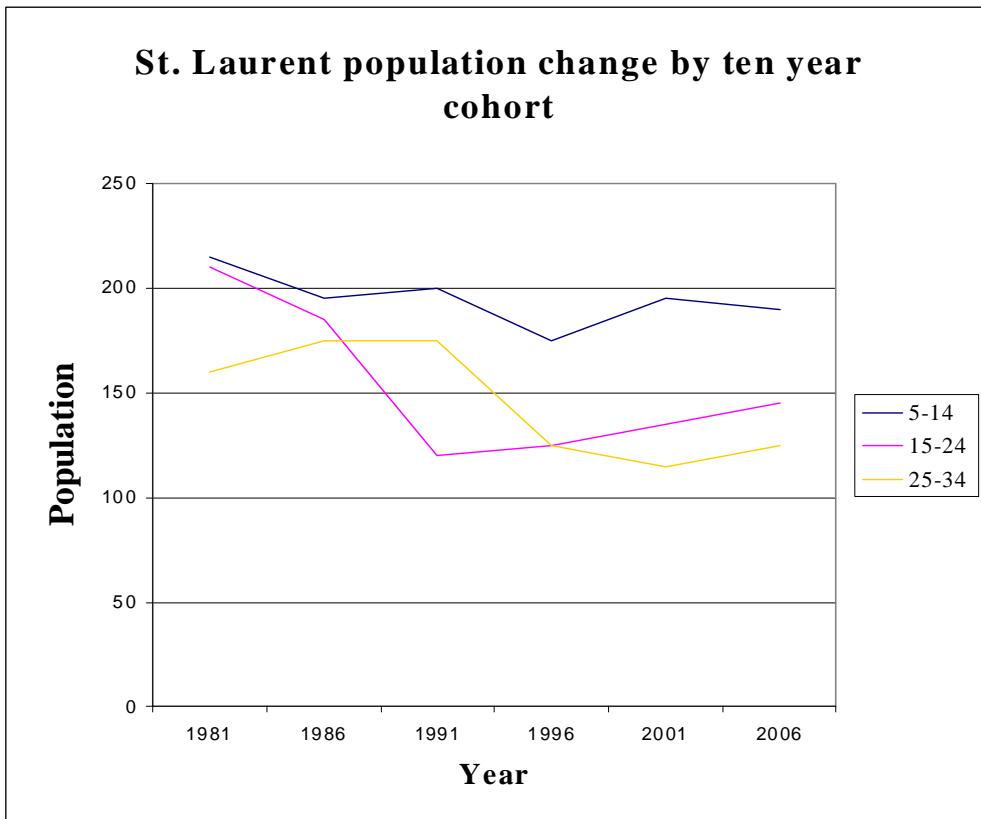
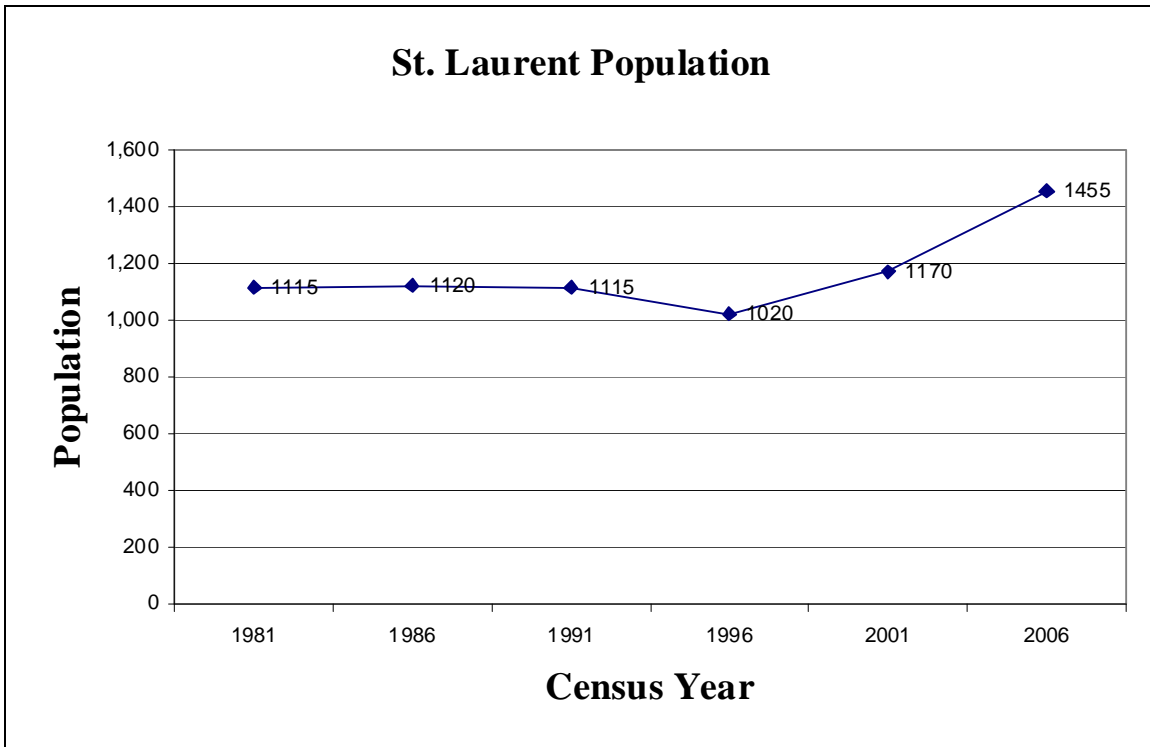




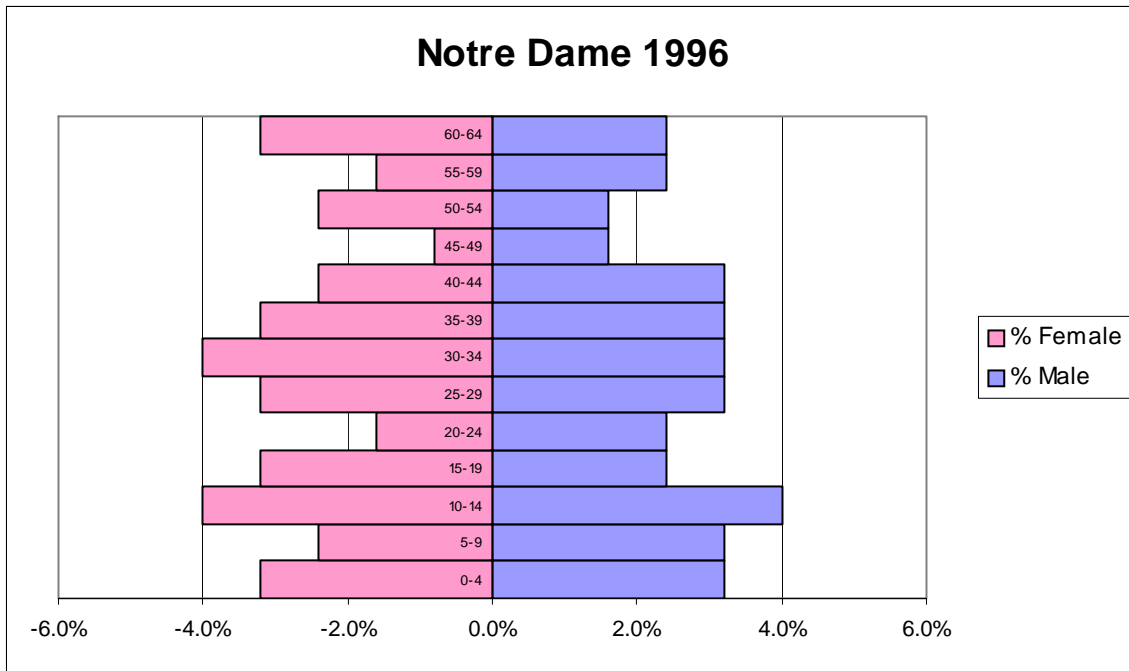
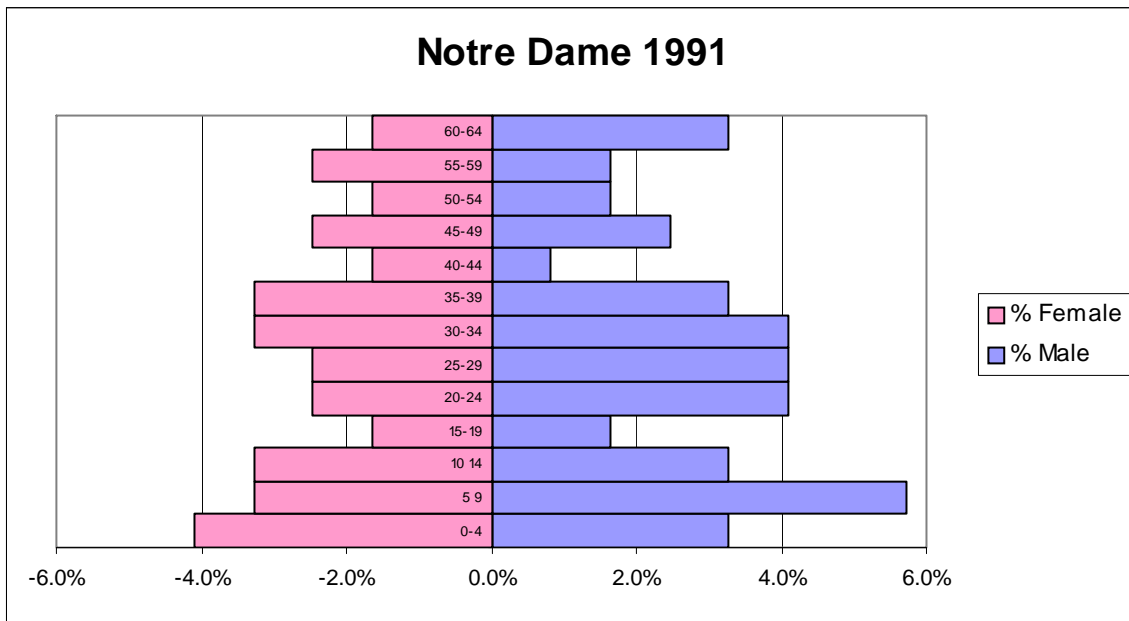
## Appendix E: St. Laurent Population Pyramids

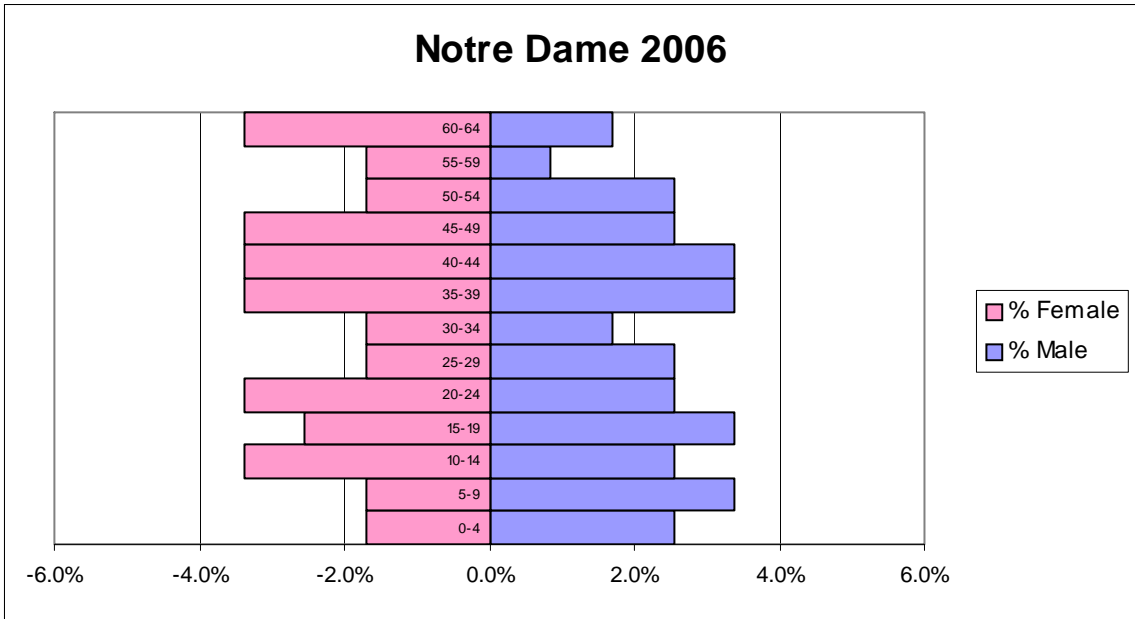
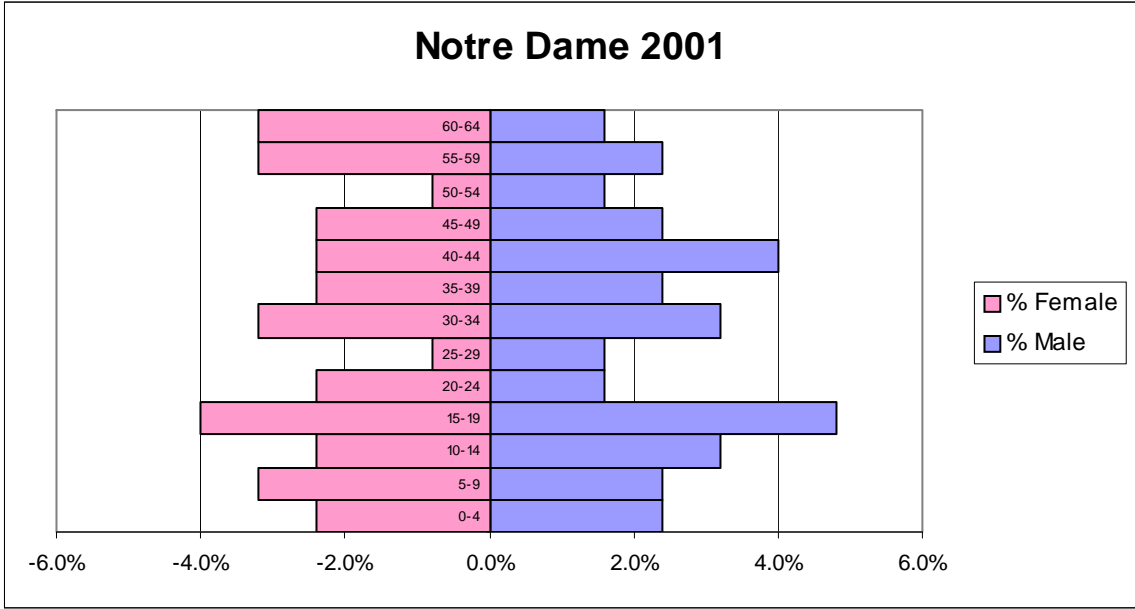


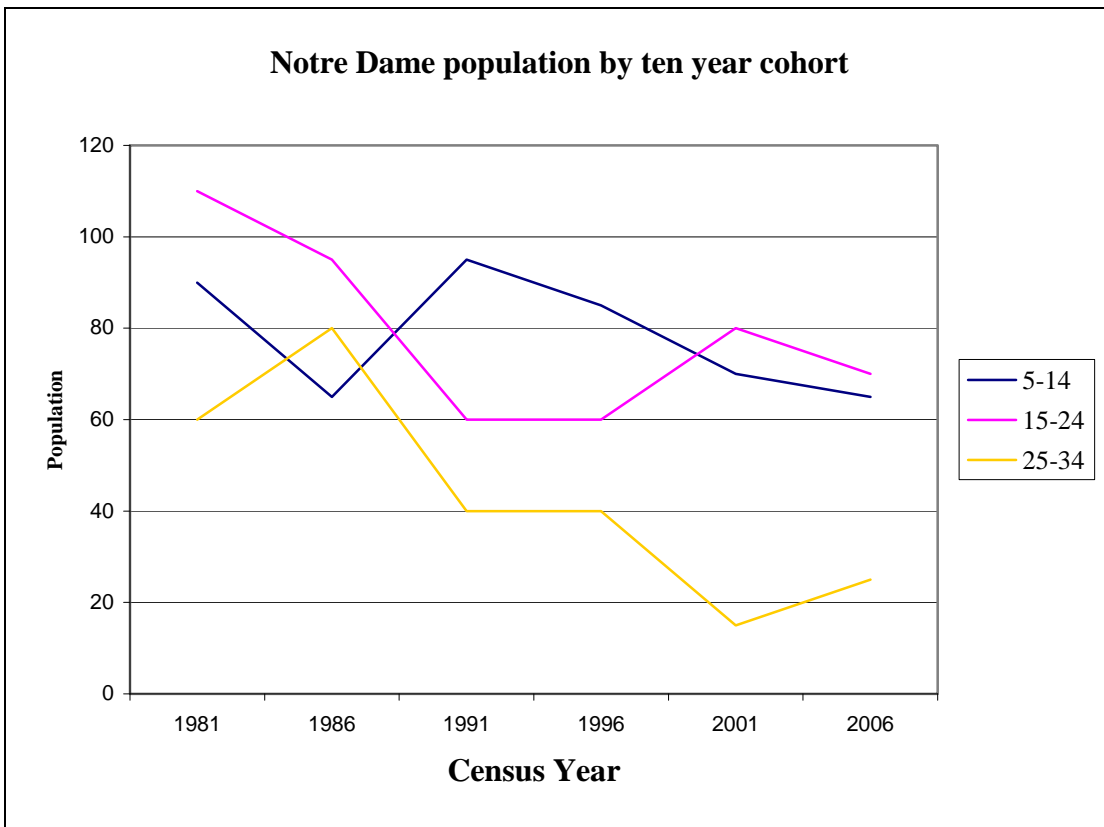
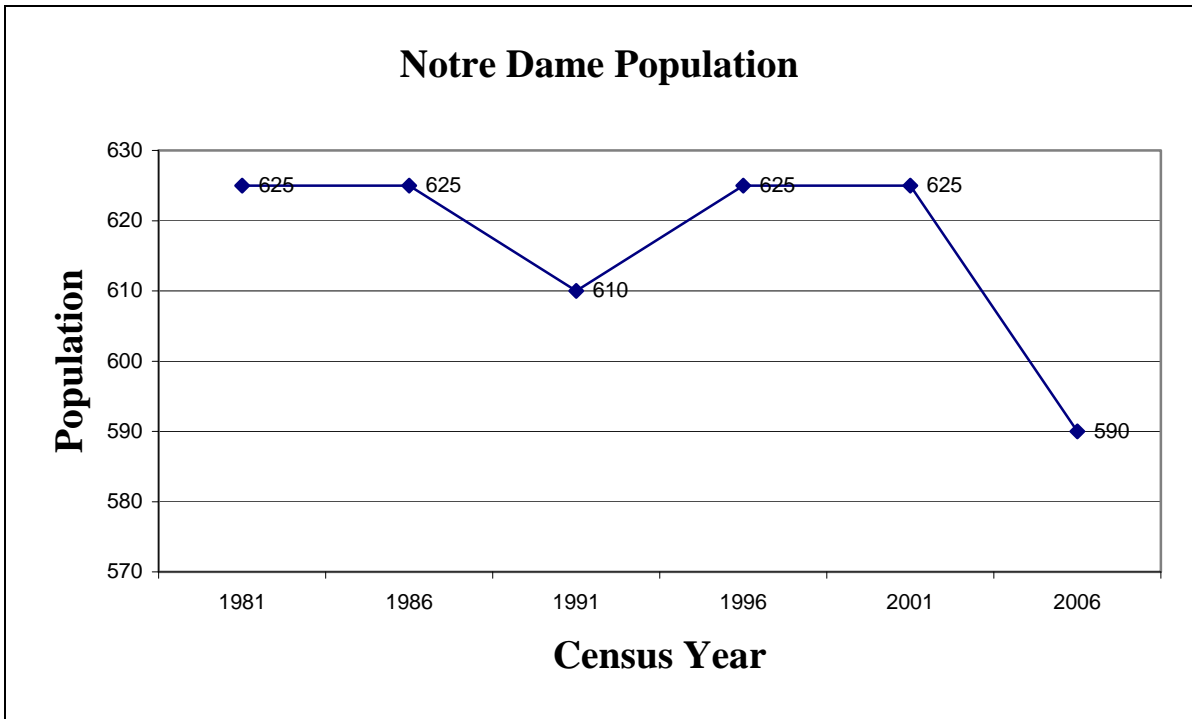




## Appendix F: Notre Dame Population Pyramids









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The role of the RDI Advisory Committee is to provide general advice and direction to the Institute on matters of rural concern. On a semi-annual basis the Committee meets to share information about issues of mutual interest in rural Manitoba and foster linkages with the constituencies they represent.