

*Social Trends in Greater Vancouver: A Study of a North American Metropolis*, by Michele Lioy. Gordon Soules Economic & Marketing Research, Vancouver, B.C. & Ilkeston, England, 1975. Pp. 170.

A common complaint in the field of social planning has been the lack of current and accurate information about the changing state of our communities. In the absence of meaningful data about such issues as inflation, unemployment, population trends, social problems, health and illness, policy makers and program planners are hampered in their attempts to plan effectively for the future.

Michele Lioy's report is an excellent illustration of what research can accomplish to remedy this state of affairs. The aim of the report is to foster an understanding of the main trends and factors that influence the livableness of a region, in this case the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD).

The book consists of ten chapters organized in two parts. The first three chapters deal with general information which describes the geographical and physical aspects of the region, its history, political structure and processes, as well as the voting patterns of electoral districts in federal, provincial and municipal elections. Chapter three examines trends in the regional population, population growth and components.

The second part of the report is a study of a broad range of issues relevant to the livableness of the region: pollution, transportation, labour force participation, unemployment, income, housing, household and family characteristics, social problems (crime, drug use and alcoholism), education, health and delivery of health care.

*Social Trends* is based on material derived from previous studies, annual reports, census data and statistics compiled mostly between the '50s and the '70s. Of special interest to health and social service planners are chapters 5 to 10 that deal with socio-economic factors affecting the quality of life within the GVRD.

In chapter 5, family characteristics of residents of Vancouver and surrounding municipalities are extensively reviewed and analysed along such dimensions as size and type of households, marital status, status of children, adoption, foster-care, day and after-school care.

Some of the findings — the decrease, for instance, in family size between 1961 and 1971 and the increase in divorce rates since 1967 — are fairly well known, but others, such as the decrease in the number of illegitimate births in the whole population or the increase in the number of one-person households, may come as a surprise.

The chapter on housing confirms what previous studies have uncovered in the past few years in relation to the GVRD housing situation. There appears to be enough land available upon which to build the housing required for the next 20 years but there is a shortage of serviced land, of land zoned for residential development. This shortage is aggravated by municipal planning and growth policies which discourage new development.

Compared to the rest of the report, the chapter on housing is perhaps a little slight but it would be difficult to disagree with Liou's comments about the complexity and numerous ramifications of the housing situation. Extraneous factors, such as labour contracts, influence the speed with which units are built as well as their costs, and a comprehensive analysis of all these factors would have been impossible, given the scope of the report.

Chapter 7, employment and income, is a helpful and concise overview of economic realities in the GVRD. The reader is made aware that in 1971 the region included 47% of the population of B.C., that it offered the largest market and that Vancouver is Canada's largest port in terms of tonnage handled.

In 1971 the labour force in the GVRD included 293,660 males (77% of the population) and 171,035 females (43% of the population). The percentages of labour force employed in each industry were as follows:

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Primary industry	3.1%	1.4%
Secondary industry	30.5%	10.5%
Tertiary industry	59.7%	79.3%
Not stated	6.7%	8.8%

The average family income of workers has been rising between 1961 and 1971, and women, particularly married women, have been increasingly participating in the labour force. But by 1970 the income women derived from employment was still, on the average, less than one-half of the average income males derived from employment. In addition, salary increases for all workers were offset by inflation and by increasing lay-offs in some industries.

Statistical analysis is used extensively and quite fruitfully in this chapter to compare various aspects of income and employment at different points in time and in different areas of the GVRD.

The next chapter focuses on education and provides a good deal of

important data about the public school system, elementary, secondary, post-secondary and adult education, current and projected enrolment of pupils, the education of immigrant children, the manpower issues in the educational system, vocational training and education of the labour force.

Chapter 9 addresses the issue of social problems and abnormal kinds of behaviour, defined socially and considered in the larger social context. The chapter is divided into three parts: crime or illegal activities according to the norms set by federal, provincial and municipal statutes; drug use; and alcoholism.

Lioy cautions against making unwarranted or futile assumptions about crime trends on the basis of police and court statistics which, for a variety of reasons well known to researchers, can give only a partial picture of criminal activity. Keeping this warning in mind, many of the statistics provided in this chapter are nevertheless helpful. In 1971, for instance, in metropolitan Vancouver, 99,064 offences involving crimes against the person and against property were reported to the police. Of these offences, 40% were cleared — about half of them by death of the offender, informal disposition or commitment to a mental institution. This indicates a much larger number of “other” dispositions than is generally assumed. Among the persons charged, 78.3% were adults; less than 20% were female.

The overall increase rate has been decreasing since 1969 and is lower in the metropolitan area (Police) than in B.C. as a whole. Between 1966 and 1971 there has been an increase in offences reported to the police but a sharp drop in the total number of offences cleared and in the number of charges laid.

The final chapter deals with health and the delivery of health care. Lioy is well aware that appropriate and rational intervention in the field of health care is hampered by inappropriate conceptual approaches. The tendency to conceptualize health as the absence of illness and as being synonymous with cure emphasizes the importance of acute illnesses, practitioners and drugs but does not provide an appropriate framework to deal with chronic conditions and with the active maintenance of a state of health.

This general attitude toward the health field influences the type of data available, the procedure toward analysis of the health status of the population and the organization of the delivery of health care.

Research findings indicate changes in the cause of death. In the GVRD in 1971, the only causes of death which were infectious were influenza,

pneumonia and some diseases of early childhood. Chronic diseases and accidents were heading the list, particularly in the case of males, who are more prone than females to suffer death by accident (84.4% versus 47.6%). Neo-natal and infant death was one in every 58 live births for non-Indians but one in every 18 live births for Indians, a chilling statistic.

The chapter provides extensive data on morbidity, chronic illnesses, tuberculosis, cardio-vascular conditions, cancer, VD, mental retardation, dental problems and family planning services. There are strong indications that health services have been expanding rapidly and considerably within the region during the past decade, but the cost of health care is soaring at such a rate that it will account for most if not all of the GNP by the end of the century unless a major shift in emphasis from cure to prevention is accomplished and bolstered by drastic, if controversial, measures such as population control, selective access to health care and even euthanasia.

The strength of the book lies in the clear and precise way in which trends and forecasts are derived from existing statistics and analysed systematically in terms of their implications for the future development of the region.

The material is well organized and free from any obscure technical jargon. Tables, charts and maps are numerous, well set up and can be easily read and understood by people who do not have any special training in statistics. The bibliography includes references to many valuable publications for each of the topics covered in the report.

*Social Trends* wisely refrains from urging planners to take certain courses of action but the wealth of information presented in every one of its 170 pages provides a solid base upon which informed decision making can take place.

The book should be of considerable interest to anyone wishing to gain a sound and meaningful understanding of the socio-economic climate of the Greater Vancouver Regional District.