

Census in Brief

The census: A tool for planning at the local level



Age and sex, 2011 Census

The census: A tool for planning at the local level

Census results are an important tool for a wide array of users and for a variety of reasons. In particular, they are an essential source of information for developing municipal strategies at the local level.

Municipal planners can use census information on the population age structure to create a broad profile of their municipalities. The census also provides the same indicators at the local level within these municipalities.

One of the tools planners have is the 'census tract' (see Box 1 for definitions of the geographic terms in this document).

Box 1 Definitions

Census tracts (CT) are small geographic areas that usually have a population between 2,500 and 8,000. Census data on this smaller level of geography are available for all 33 **census metropolitan areas (CMAs)** and 15 **census agglomerations (CAs)** in Canada with a core population of 50,000 or more.

A **census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA)** is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core. A census agglomeration must have a core population of at least 10,000.

A **census subdivision (CSD)** is an area that is a municipality or an area that is deemed to be equivalent to a municipality for statistical reporting purposes (e.g., as an Indian reserve or an unorganized territory). Municipal status is defined by laws in effect in each province and territory in Canada.

The central municipality (**census subdivisions**) of a CMA or CA is the one that tends to lend its name to the CMA or CA. For example, in the Québec CMA, the central municipality is Québec City. All other municipalities within the boundaries of the CMA or CA are considered peripheral to the central municipality.

Using census data, municipal planners can analyze which local areas within their municipality have the highest proportions of children aged 14 and under, and which ones have the highest proportions of seniors aged 65 and over.

This information allows for service delivery to be adjusted according to differences in the age structure. More specifically, it helps decision-makers meet the various challenges related to managing municipalities, including building infrastructure, such as schools, child care services, senior residences, and health care facilities, as well as improving public transit and services.

For example, maps at the census tract level showing the number of children aged 14 and under as a proportion of the total population can be used to show which local areas within Canada's major CMAs attract the greatest number of young families. Most of these areas are located in peripheral municipalities,

which often tend to provide more affordable housing than central municipalities. Many of these areas experienced high rates of population growth between 2006 and 2011, contributing to the phenomenon of urban spread. See the Census in Brief article *The census: A tool for planning at the local level, Population and dwelling counts, 2011 Census*, Catalogue no. 98-310-X2011003.

In the CMAs of Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa - Gatineau, most census tracts on the outskirts of the central municipality, or immediately adjacent to it, had proportions of children (those aged 14 and under) above the national average (16.7%).

In contrast, most of the census tracts with high proportions of people aged 65 and over were located closer to the centre of these CMAs. Many of these areas had low rates of population growth between 2006 and 2011.

In the CMA of Ottawa - Gatineau, for example, most census tracts with proportions of seniors above the national average (14.8%) were close to the centre of the metropolitan area. Census tracts with lower proportions of seniors tended to be found in adjacent municipalities, such as Russell and Chelsea, or in less central areas of the Ottawa - Gatineau CMA, such as Kanata, Barrhaven and Aylmer.

Toronto CMA

Differences in age structure between central and peripheral areas are particularly striking in Canada's three largest CMAs.

In the Toronto CMA, many census tracts located in adjacent municipalities to the City of Toronto, such as in Ajax, Brampton, Milton, and Vaughan, had proportions of children above the national average and proportions of seniors below the national average. Many of these areas also experienced strong population growth between 2006 and 2011.

In many areas within the central City of Toronto, by contrast, both the proportion of children and the proportion of seniors were below the national average. These areas had higher proportions of the working-age population, likely due to the presence of major financial, governmental, health, and educational institutions.

Montréal CMA

In the Montréal CMA, most municipalities outside the island of Montréal, located on either the North Shore or the South Shore, had younger populations than the City of Montréal.

Many census tracts located in peripheral municipalities, such as Blainville to the north of the island, La Prairie to the south, L'Assomption to the east, and Vaudreuil-Dorion to the west had proportions of children above the national average and proportions of seniors below the national average.

Nevertheless, some pockets of census tracts scattered across the island of Montréal had younger populations than the national average, such as Ville Saint-Laurent, Montréal-Nord and Côte-des-Neiges.

Vancouver CMA

In the Vancouver CMA, municipalities located to the north, south and east had higher proportions of children than the central municipalities of Vancouver and Burnaby.

As well, most census tracts in Maple Ridge, at the eastern end of the Vancouver CMA, and in Surrey, to the south-east, had proportions of children above the national average and proportions of seniors below the national average.

However, several census tracts located in other peripheral municipalities, such as West Vancouver, Delta and White Rock, had proportions of seniors above the Canadian average.

Some census tracts located near the centre of the City of Vancouver, such as the downtown, Mount Pleasant and Fairview areas, had low proportions of both children and seniors, indicating the presence of strong working-age populations. These were the only areas in the City of Vancouver to experience rapid population growth between 2006 and 2011.

For data at a local level, refer to the *Census Profile*, Catalogue no. 98-316-X and *Highlight tables*, Catalogue no. 98-311-X2011002.

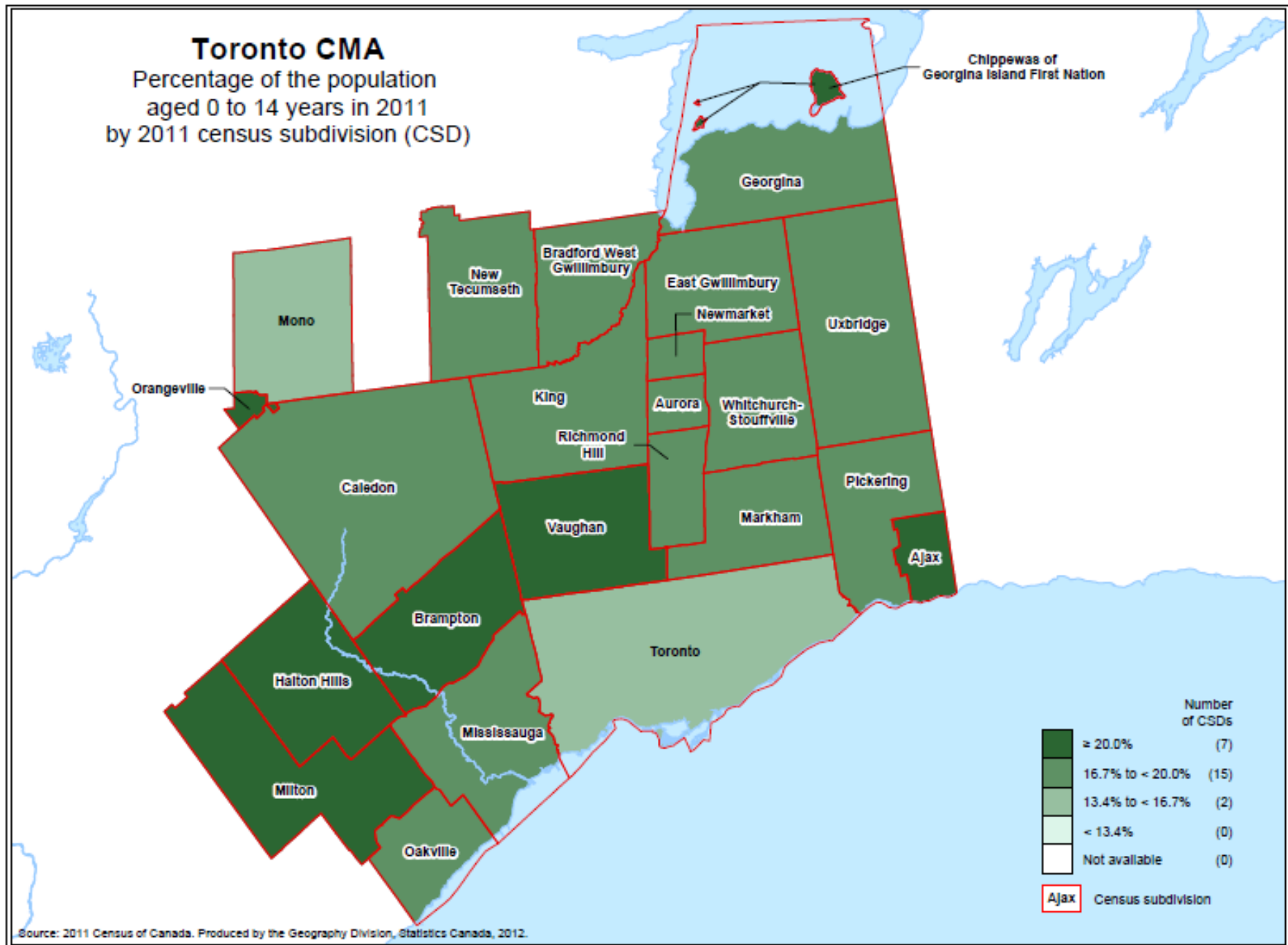
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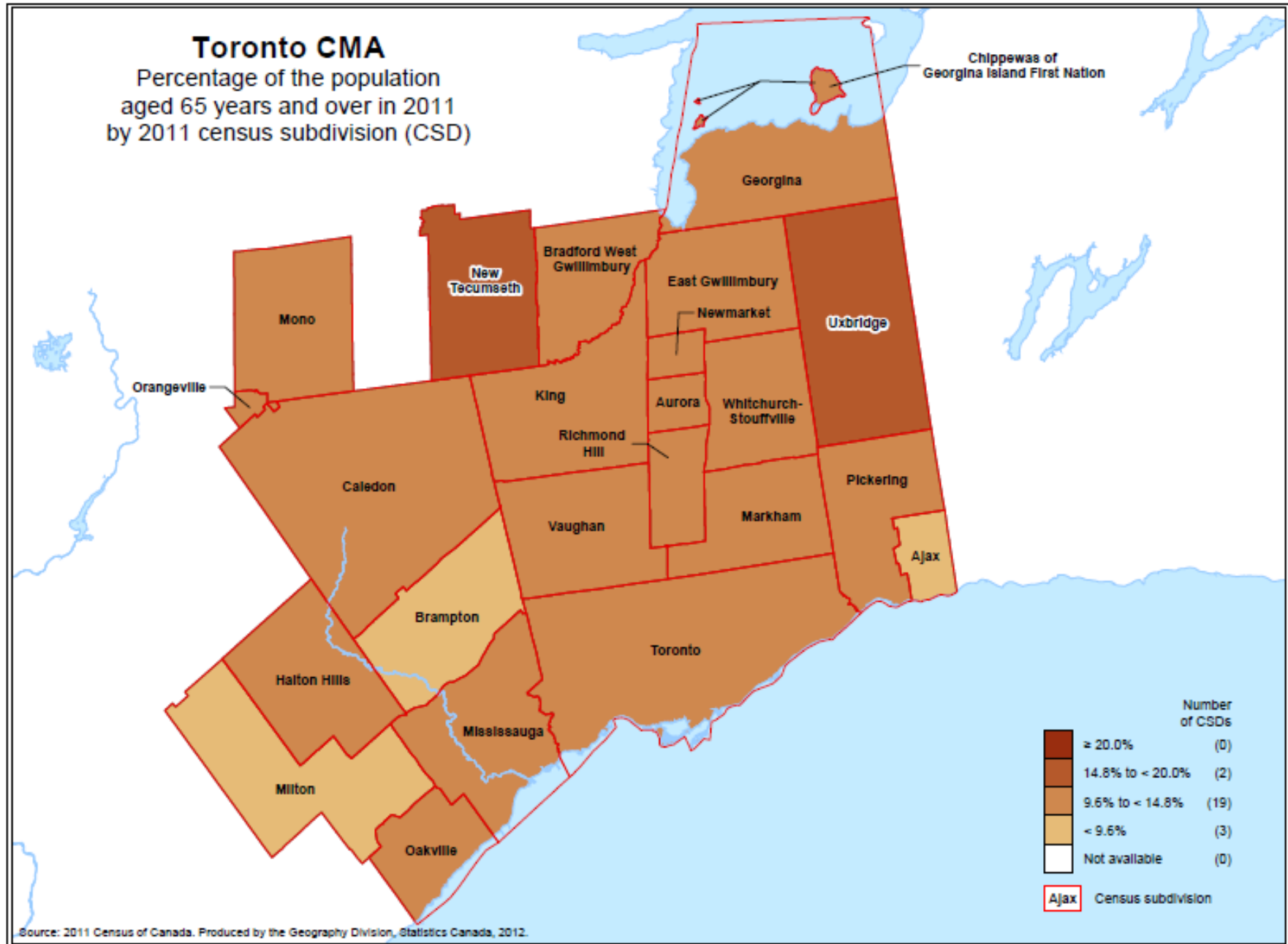
To obtain a copy of all the thematic maps accompanying this document, refer to the following link: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/98-311-x2011001-eng.cfm>.

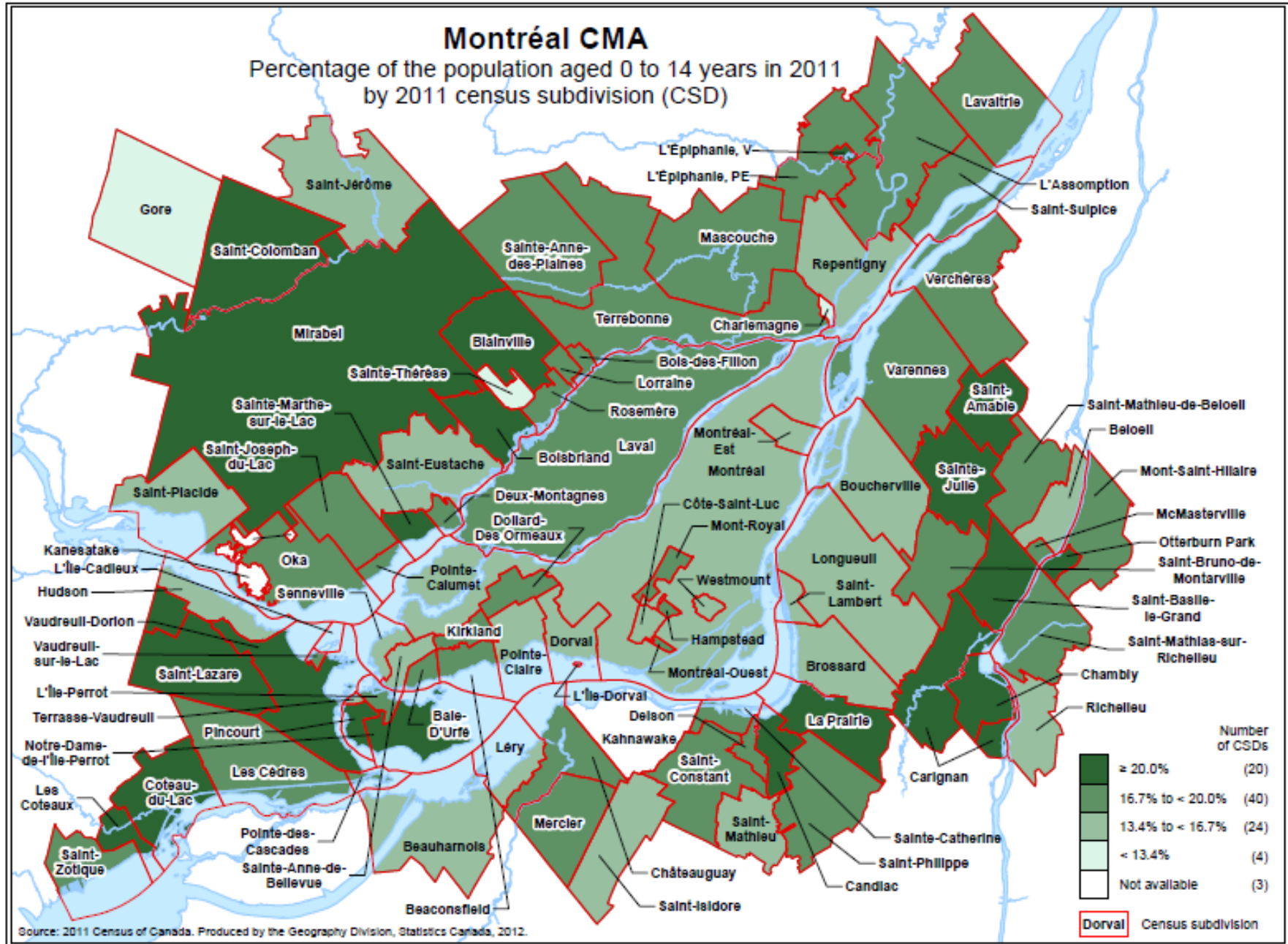
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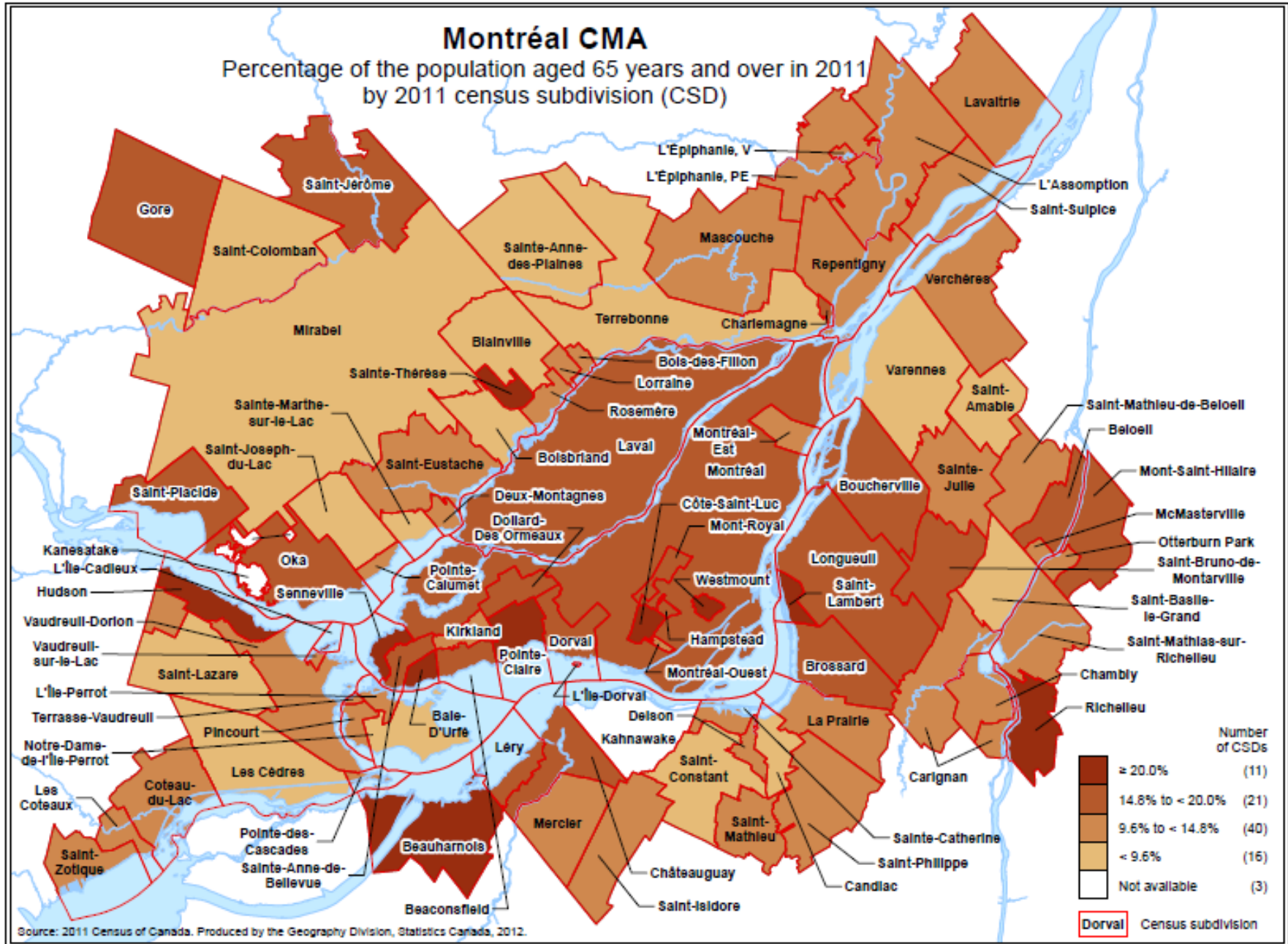
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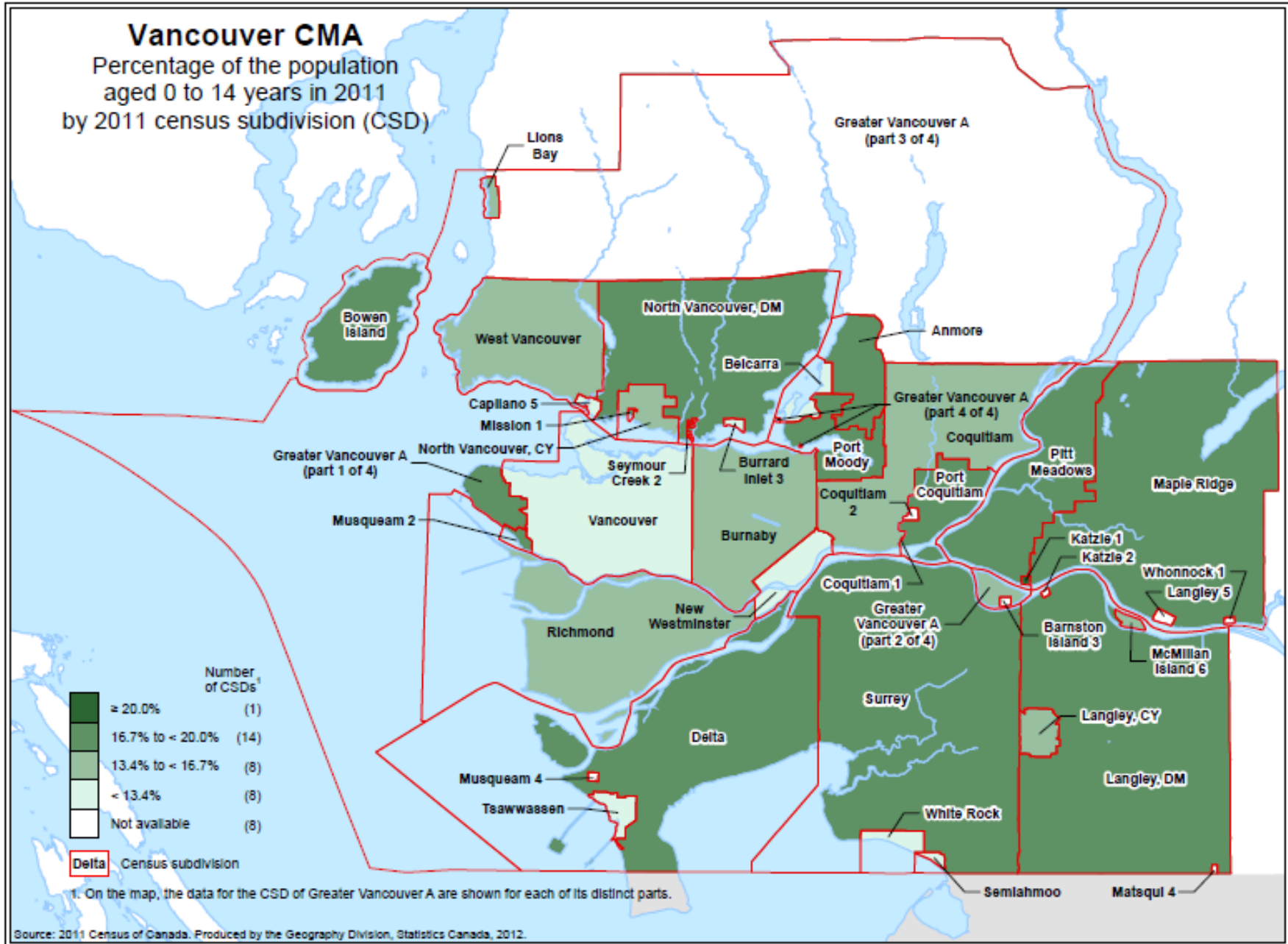
Map 1

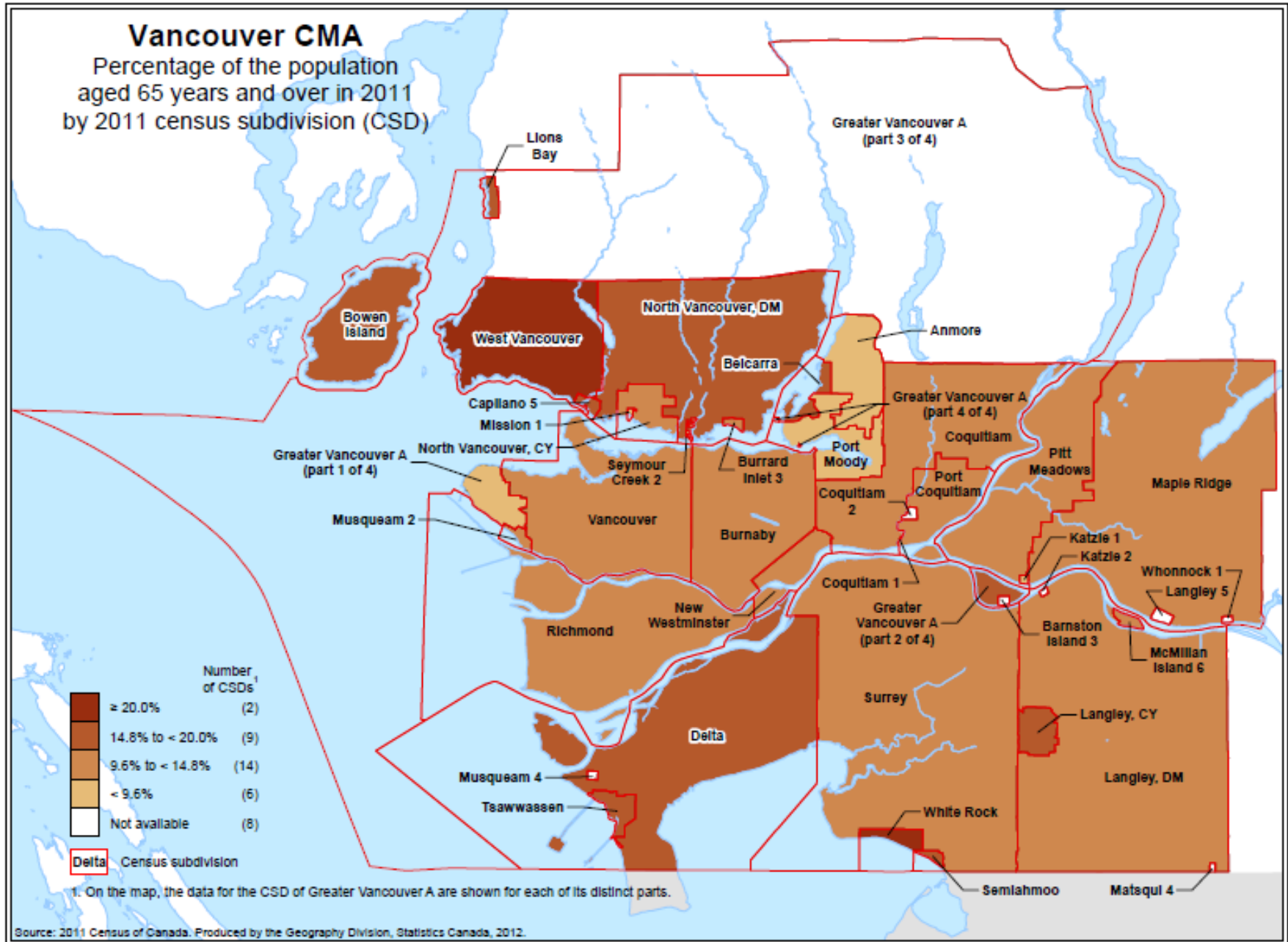












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