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[See table of contents](#)

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REGINA AND SASKATOON AS RETIREMENT CENTRES¹

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Among major Canadian cities few exhibit more basic similarities of situation, size, function and historical development than Regina and Saskatoon. Both are essentially service centres for extensive agricultural hinterlands in the heart of the Canadian Prairies. For a wide range of higher order services the province effectively is split into two tributary areas focused on Regina and Saskatoon. Rivals of long standing, they have jealously guarded their territories throughout the years and have paralleled each other in urban growth (Table 1).

TABLE 1
POPULATION OF REGINA AND SASKATOON 1921-1971

<u>Year</u>	<u>Regina</u>	<u>Saskatoon</u>
1921	34,432	25,739
1931	53,209	43,291
1941	58,245	43,027
1951	71,319	53,268
1956	89,755	72,858
1961	112,141	95,526
1966*	131,127	115,892
1971*	140,675	126,560

*Figures for 1966 and 1971 refer to census metropolitan areas.

Sources: Census of Canada reports.

Although Regina acquired the additional function of seat of the provincial government at an early date, Saskatoon at least managed to secure the

¹The research grant support of the University of Victoria and the assistance of Diana Hocking who collected statistical information are grateful acknowledged.

provincial university function to aid its development. In view of the similarity of these two cities, it is surprising that Saskatoon seems to be far more attractive to elderly people than does Regina. Over the years Saskatoon has reported a far higher proportion of population 65 years of age and over than has Regina. Is there an obvious historic, economic or demographic explanation for this anomaly or must the explanation be sought among the subtle differences of urban character as perceived by the elderly people and expressed in definite locational preferences?

Statistics on age structure of urban populations in the major cities of Canada are available for each decennial census since 1881, except for 1911, but Regina and Saskatoon do not appear in the age-specific tables until 1921. The difference between the two cities in proportion of the population 65 and over was minimal in 1921, but increased steadily to a maximum in 1956, after which the gap became less pronounced (Figure 1).

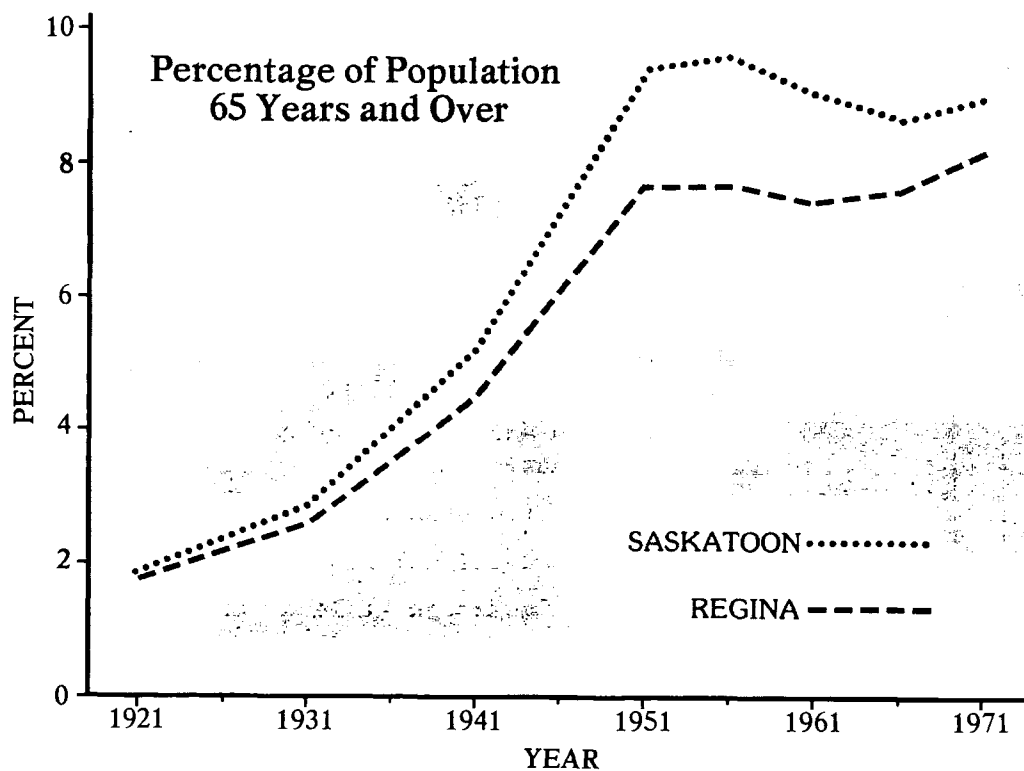


Figure 1. Elderly Population in Regina and Saskatoon, 1921-1971.

Despite the fact that the population of Saskatoon consistently has been lower than that of Regina, the number of people 65 and over in Saskatoon actually exceeded the Regina total in 1956, 1961 and 1966, and was close behind in other censuses. In order to place this anomaly in perspective and to emphasize its significance, a comparison can be made with other metropolitan areas in Canada. In the 1971 census there were twenty-two cities classed as metropolitan areas, including Saskatoon and Regina. Taking the average population 65 and over in the twenty-two cities for each of the five censuses, 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966 and 1971, and then averaging the five resultant means produces a mean for the twenty year period of 7.73 percent. Regina was just below average at 7.70 percent, while Saskatoon was well above average at 9.13 percent. Only two metropolitan areas in Canada were significantly higher in percentage of elderly than Saskatoon: Victoria, at 15.75 percent, and Vancouver, at 11.15 percent. Both Victoria and Vancouver are well-recognized retirement centres, having mild winters and the scenic west coast environment as distinct attractions. While it is extremely unlikely that Saskatoon has attracted elderly migrants from distant points, as have the west coast cities, it seems definite that Saskatoon is a favoured destination over Regina for retirement from rural Saskatchewan and that it probably retains more of its urban elderly than does Regina.

In searching for explanations there are a number of possibilities that might be explored. Birth rates, death rates and migration patterns over a period of time determine the age structure of a city. A higher than average birth rate, as prevailed in Quebec for many years, usually results in an above average proportion of children in the urban population and a correspondingly lower proportion of elderly. A city that experiences a low rate of growth tends to develop an age structure in which the working age group, 15-64 becomes smaller relative to the dependent age groups on either end of the structure, 0-14 and 65 and over. This results from working age people leaving the city for opportunities elsewhere and from relatively low in-migration of people of working age. Other population characteristics that might have a bearing on retirement preference if significant

differences exist are the proportion of immigrants, places of birth, and ethnic origins. Economic factors worth investigating are the urban economic base and employment structure, transportation and mobility, standards of living, and housing characteristics. Physical and cultural environmental differences and differences in historic development may help to explain the anomaly.

The age structure of the population reflects the effects of natural increase and migration (Table 2). Birth rates have been similar in both cities and the proportion of children in their populations have accorded remarkably since the 1940s. Hence, the explanation of Saskatoon's surplus of elderly is not to be found in differences at the bottom of the age structure. It is within the working age groups that Saskatoon appears in deficit relative to Regina. If Saskatoon were a slow growth city compared to its rival and losing population of working age by out-migration this deficit in the 15-64 range would help to explain the surplus of elderly population. However, a more detailed breakdown of the age group figures reveals that percentages of population have been similar in both cities in the younger age groups, 15-24 and 25-34, while Saskatoon has had significantly lower percentages in the 35-44 and, particularly, in the 45-64 age group. This does not suggest the existence of a strong, work-seeking, out-migration because

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION IN SELECTED
AGE GROUPS, 1921-1971

Age Group		1921	1931	1941	1951	1956	1961	1966	1971
0-14	Regina	30.9	28.5	23.3	25.0	28.6	31.5	32.2	29.5
	Saskatoon	32.2	27.9	22.3	25.1	28.5	31.9	32.0	29.2
15-64	Regina	67.3	68.9	72.2	67.3	63.7	61.1	60.2	62.3
	Saskatoon	65.9	69.2	72.5	65.6	61.9	59.0	59.3	61.8
65 and over	Regina	1.8	2.6	4.5	7.7	7.7	7.4	7.6	8.2
	Saskatoon	1.9	2.9	5.2	9.3	9.6	9.1	8.7	9.0

Sources: Census of Canada reports.

it is the younger people who generally fuel such movements. The presence of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon could be a factor in bolstering the 15-24 age group, but as the census traditionally is taken on June 1 most of the students would not be counted as Saskatoon residents.

Far from being a city with a lagging economy and persistent out-migration of young adults, Saskatoon has registered a higher rate of population growth than Regina since the 1930s (Table 3). Slow growth can be dismissed as a possible explanation of the apparently lower proportion of working age population in Saskatoon. These data on age groups and growth rates clearly imply that the high proportion of elderly in Saskatoon resulted from a significant immigration for retirement to a centre that was favoured over Regina.²

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN TOTAL POPULATION

<u>Period</u>	<u>Regina</u>	<u>Saskatoon</u>
1921-41	69	67
1941-51	22	24
1951-56	26	37
1956-61	25	31
1961-66	17	21
1966-71	7	9

Sources: Census of Canada Reports.

A consideration of various population characteristics indicates no significant differences between the cities in demographic character. The proportion of the population classed as immigrants was similar in both cities in 1961 and 1971, and at both census dates about two-thirds

²Age-specific migration data for cities were not published in the Census of Canada until 1971 and these data are of limited usefulness in this study because the highest age group reported was 45 years and over, hence, not permitting the isolation of elderly migrant numbers.

of the immigrants had arrived before 1946. In both Regina and Saskatoon about three-quarters of the population was born in Saskatchewan. Regina had slightly higher percentages of English and German mother tongue in the population than did Saskatoon in 1971, while Saskatoon had higher percentages of French and Ukrainian. The differences were insignificant in view of the 81.6 and 79.2 percent, respectively, of English mother tongue in Regina and Saskatoon. The indexes of ethnic diversity in 1961 and 1971 were high by Canadian standards, but similar in both cities, indicating that their populations were amalgams of many ethnic groups.³

The urban functions of Regina and Saskatoon are similar in many ways, despite the differentiating factor of the provincial capital function of Regina. In his functional classification of Canadian cities Maxwell classed Regina and Saskatoon as regional capitals, manufacturing relatively unimportant.⁴ Both cities were characterized by very high percentages of basic employment in wholesale trade, the highest of all Canadian cities over 10,000 population in 1951.⁵ These high proportions of labour force in wholesale trade are indicative of their importance as central places or service centres for large hinterland areas. Of course, both cities have enjoyed well developed transportation systems since completion of the trans-continental and branch railway lines before World War I. The major differences in economic base reflect, respectively, the provincial government and higher education roles of Regina and Saskatoon (Table 4). While Regina had a substantially higher proportion

³D.M. Ray, ed., Canadian Urban Trends, Vol. 1 (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1976), p. 277.

⁴J.W. Maxwell, "The Functional Structure of Canadian Cities: A Classification of Cities," Geographical Bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1965), pp. 79-104 (based on the 1951 census); and J.W. Maxwell, J.A. Grieg, and H.G. Meyer, "The Functional Structure of Canadian Cities: A Classification of Cities," in R.M. Irving, ed., Readings in Canadian Geography (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), pp. 146-167 (based on the 1961 census).

⁵Maxwell, "Functional Structure of Cities," p. facing 92. Maxwell determined the basic and service components of the urban economies by the use of the minimum requirements method whereby all Canadian cities were compared by selected size groups.

TABLE 4
LABOUR FORCE BY INDUSTRY GROUP IN PERCENTAGE, 1961 AND 1971

Industry Group	Regina 1961	Saskatoon	Regina 1971	Saskatoon
Primary	1.8	2.0	1.9	3.7
Manufacturing	10.0	10.6	9.5	9.8
Construction	7.9	8.1	5.5	6.3
Transportation, communication and utilities	12.4	12.1	10.7	9.2
Wholesale trade	8.8	9.3	5.0	5.9
Retail trade	14.3	13.0	14.3	13.2
Finance, insurance and real state	5.4	4.1	5.7	4.2
Community, business and personal services	23.6	29.5	27.1	35.0
Public administration and defence	13.4	8.3	13.9	6.9
Unspecified	2.4	3.0	6.4	5.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: G.A. Nader, Cities of Canada: Profiles of Fifteen Metropolitan Centres (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 300 and 320.

of labour force in public administration, Saskatoon exceeded Regina in community service labour force. The significance of these differences vis-a-vis the retirement function is debatable, but being specialized in public administration and defence activities certainly did not harm Victoria's attraction for elderly migrants.

Standards of living and housing cost and availability have been comparable in both cities. Naturally, they are part of the same provincial economic structure and price advantages in one or the other could prevail only for short periods of time. Employment stability has been greater in Regina, owing to the large block of civil service jobs there. Average total family income was slightly higher in Regina than in Saskatoon in both 1961 and 1971.⁶ Dwelling units in both

⁶Ray, Canadian Urban Trends, p. 171.

cities are divided between owner-occupied, sixty percent, and tenant-occupied, forty percent. Rental accommodation generally has been a little less expensive in Saskatoon than in Regina. For example, in 1951 a total of thirty-nine percent of monthly rentals were priced under \$30 in Saskatoon, while the comparable figure for Regina was thirty-five percent.⁷ The median value of owner-occupied dwellings has varied a little between them, but not consistently in the same direction. Houses were valued higher in Regina by 3.7 percent in 1961, but were lower by 4.6 percent in 1971.⁸ Neither city seems to have offered a clear advantage in terms of living costs or housing to potential elderly residents.

Differences in environmental factors are relatively minor, as both cities lie in the mixed-grass prairie of dark brown soils and sub-humid, continental climate. Initially, Regina's site had little to recommend it, except that it was on the projected route of the Canadian Pacific Railway and had the sluggish Wascana Creek snaking across its flat plain. Subsequently, the creek was dammed, producing a man-made lake which provided a focus for public buildings and attractively landscaped parks. Saskatoon was situated on a respectably-sized river, the South Saskatchewan, and the river banks were preserved for parkland to enhance the cityscape. Neither city has a climatic advantage; both have very cold winters, though Regina's long term January mean temperature is higher by two degrees Fahrenheit than Saskatoon's. It is hard to imagine that the environmental differences that do exist would be of great significance in explaining the apparent favouring of Saskatoon for retirement.

Probably there is no single factor that can be cited as largely responsible for the retirement centre role of Saskatoon. The complex urban personalities of Regina and Saskatoon that developed when the cities matured after the frontier period early in the century likely

⁷Census of Canada, 1951.

⁸Ray, Canadian Urban Trends, p. 302.

provided the degree of differentiation required in the eyes of Saskatchewan residents to produce the retirement anomaly. One may speculate that Saskatoon is perceived as a good place to spend retirement years, while Regina is not. People may or may not be able to suggest specific reasons why, because the city images of long standing may have imbued the Saskatchewan mind so thoroughly that preferences are almost automatic. Attitudinal surveys are called for to plumb the minds of Saskatchewan people who have retired or are contemplating retirement.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that Saskatoon is perceived as a more attractive location for retirement than Regina and a number of possible explanations have been investigated. Demographic statistics on the two cities confirmed that the surplus of elderly population in Saskatoon was not the result of unusual deficits in other age groups, but rather, resulted from a genuine influx of elderly migrants and retention of indigenous retired people. Some differences between the cities in urban economic base were noted, but were not considered of sufficient importance to account for the anomaly. The economic differences probably contributed to the creation of distinct urban images. Differences of site and situation do not seem to be substantial, relative to other pairs of Canadian cities that might be chosen, which generally would exhibit greater differences. As part of the "city personality," however, features such as the South Saskatchewan River in Saskatoon might have helped to create a distinctive and favourable image for that city. The main conclusion must be that the anomaly identified has not been explained and that further investigation by others is warranted. At least several avenues have been tentatively explored and some directions for future research have been indicated.