A Statistical View of The Right to Vancouverism: Social Reproduction Placemaking in the Revanchist City

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June 2021

1   Introduction

Statistics Canada just published the results of the 2018 Canadian Household Survey Statistics Canada [2021a]. von Bergmann and Lauster [2021] used the publicly-available data to analyze mobility in Canada, with an emphasis on forced moves and tenure precarity.

A new research project aims at expanding the analysis von Bergmann and Lauster [2021] to account for low-income women as well as different neighborhoods within Vancouver. Once the 2021 CHS data become available, the project also aims to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income women tenure precarity. The project poses three statistical questions:

1. whether the publicly-available data from the 2018 CHS is appropriate for statistical inference;

2. whether the statistical analyses in von Bergmann and Lauster [2021] can also be applied to study the impact of gender and income in forced moves in Vancouver;

3. whether the analyses of von Bergmann and Lauster [2021], which are done at the city level, can be expanded to include more geographic granularity within Vancouver.

In Section 2, we discuss the limitations of using the publicly-available data of the 2018 CHS and how these apply to each of the three statistical questions. In Section 3, we showcase potential visualizations that can be used to address the statistical questions. Section 4 concludes the report.

2   Statistical Considerations of the 2018 CHS PUMF

In order to protect the privacy of survey respondents (i.e. preventing any respondent or household from being identified), data obtained in the CHS is modified in various ways. [Statistics Canada, 2021b, Section 6] goes into detail about the safeguards used by Statistics Canada. These include decreasing the level of geographic detail; grouping answers into categories in questions that contain many answers; adding random noise to some quantitative variables; and rounding very small or

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large quantitative values, which normally correspond to extreme (i.e. rare) households.

The modified data, called the *public use microdata file* (PUMF), is then made public. Naturally, analyses based on the PUMF will differ from those carried out using the full master file of Statistics Canada due to the data modification process used to decrease disclosure risk. [Statistics Canada, 2021b, Section 7] explains in detail all the limitations of analyses based on the PUMF. Succinctly, however, the PUMF should not be used to carry out statistical analyses. Rather, it should be used to conduct exploratory data analyses that might indicate which models are appropriate and possibly to obtain preliminary estimates of variables of interest.

Related to the first statistical question, the PUMF cannot be reliably used to measure variability, and it also does not include bootstrap weights. Hence, practically any statistical test would produce invalid results. This is because, even if point estimates are not necessarily way off when compared with the values obtained from Statistics Canada's master file, there is no way to reliably measure the quality of each estimate. Furthermore, the accuracy of point estimates is inversely proportional to the number of variables that are being cross-tabulated. Again, however, there is no objective and reliable way to measure this accuracy.

Once preliminary results have been obtained and an appropriate model (or family of models) selected, the PUMF user guide Statistics Canada [2021b] recommends requesting access to the CHS master files. Statistical analyses based on the full data files will be valid and, furthermore, can be fit with a greater level of detail (e.g. geographically).

As for the second statistical question, the PUMF contains the gender of the reference person, i.e. the person answering the survey. This means that accounting for gender using the PUMF would be difficult as there is no indication of the relationship between the reference person and the main provider of each household. It is possible that the master file does contain information about each member of the household, including gender, although the PUMF guide is not very clear about this.

In terms of the third statistical question, the PUMF only contains geographic information at the census metropolitan area (CMA), which for British Columbia (B.C.) corresponds to three categories: Vancouver, other large cities, and the rest of B.C. The confidential master file of Statistics Canada, however, does contain more detailed information that would allow a more granular analysis. Specifically, analyses that include neighborhoods within Vancouver can only be done based on the full master file.

Another point of interest is that of low-income families. The PUMF contains multiple variables related to the economical situation of each household, such as the annual income of each household. This information can be directly used to analyze (with the caveats mentioned in the previous paragraphs) the situation of low-income households. However, it should be mentioned that using poverty or low-income indices that depend on multiple variables might be unfeasible for multiple reasons. First, it is possible that not all the variables are available in the PUMF. Second, if they

are, cross-tabulating multiple variables can decrease the accuracy of point estimates based on the PUMF, as was mentioned before.

Finally, it is not possile to use the 2018 CHS to analyze the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Canadian households due to the pandemic occurring three years after the census was carried out. However, it would be possible to use the 2021 census to study the impact of the pandemic once it is made public, with the same considerations as mentioned above.

3   Exploratory Data Analysis

In this section, we will address the second and third statistical questions, i.e. the landscape of forced moves for low-income women in Vancouver.

As we discussed in the previous section, the PUMF contains the gender of the reference person. We will proceed assuming that the reference person corresponds to the primary provider of each household. Note, however, that this assumption might very well not hold, but it allows us to propose visualizations to understand the relationship between gender and forced moves. We suggest repeating these figures with the full master file of the 2018 CHS.

Figure 1 shows that slightly more men were forced to move out of their house, although it is not possible to assess whether the difference is significant in light of the previous section. Figure 2 shows that women that were *not* forced to move tend to have a higher income than those who were. Indeed, all the outlier points with really high incomes correspond to women who were not forced to move. On the other hand, the median income of women who were forced to move is smaller, although again it is not possible to test whether this difference is statistically significant (e.g. via a t-test or a permutation test; see [Agresti and Franklin, 2013, Ch. 9.3] for a more detailed explanation).

Finally, Figure 3 shows the distribution of income for all women in B.C. who were forced to move. All three distributions seem similar, although the non-CMA zone has a slightly smaller range of incomes. This is likely due to cities being more expensive (which translates to generally higher-paying jobs). This is the finest level of detail included in the PUMF, so it is not possible to drill down into Vancouver. As mentioned before, the master file of Statistics Canada contains more granular information that would allow for such an analysis to be carried out—including whether differences between e.g. neighborhoods are statistically significant, which can be tested via an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or a non-parametric version thereof. (See [Agresti and Franklin, 2013, Ch. 14] for a more detailed explanation of ANOVA.)
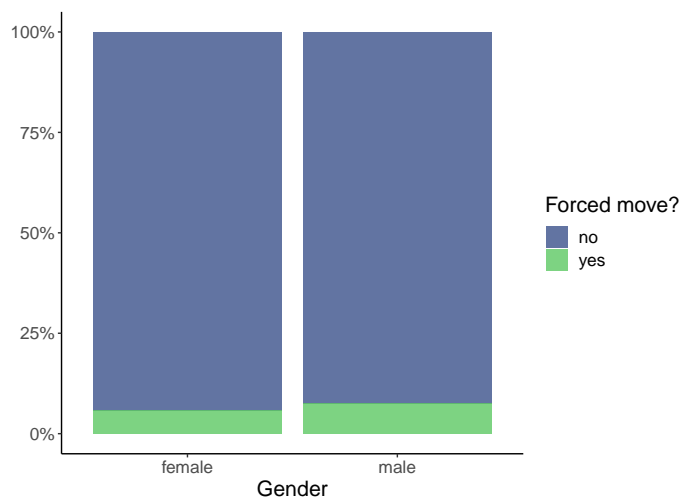
Figure 1: Percentage of people in B.C. that were forcefully moved from their house by gender.
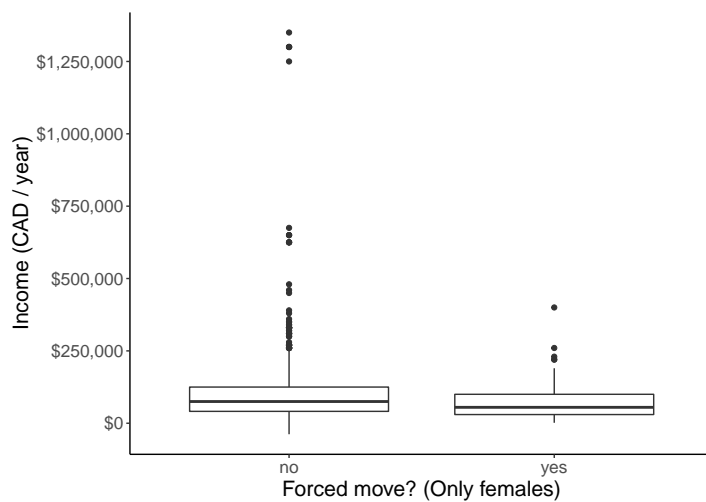

Figure 2: Distribution of income of women in B.C., divided by whether they were forced to move from their house.
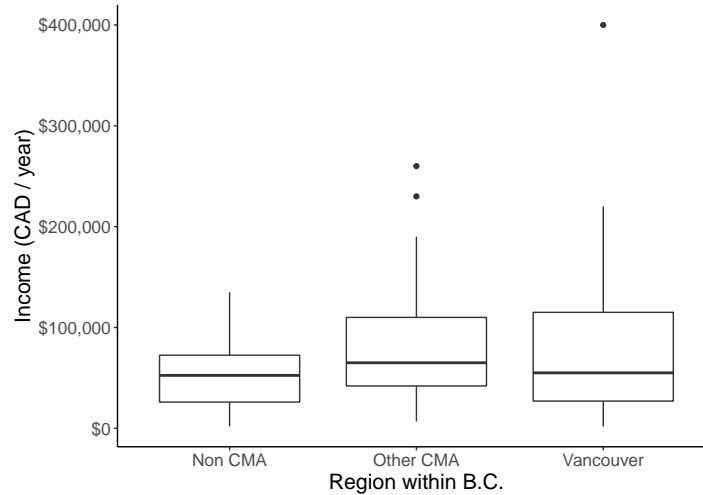
Figure 3: Distribution of income of women in B.C. who were forced to move, divided by regions within B.C.

4   Conclusion

In this report, we discussed using the 2018 Canadian Household Survey to study precarious tenure conditions in Canada. Specific emphasis was given to adapting the analysis of von Bergmann and Lauster [2021] to low-income women in Vancouver.

First, we discussed the limitations of using the 2018 CHS PUMF. Before being made public, the master file with the full data is modified by Statistics Canada to prevent specificic households from being identified. This, combined with the fact that bootstrap weights are not made available, prevents using the PUMF for inferential statistics. Indeed, the PUMF user guide recommends only using the public data for exploratory analyses and preliminary results, cross-tabulating as little as possible.

We also showcased some specific visual analyses that address the main statistical questions, and that adapt von Bergmann and Lauster [2021] to low-income women in B.C. Some limitations regarding the gender variable contained in the PUMF were discussed, as were the geographic granularity limitations—namely that there is no data available at the neighborhood level within Vancouver in the PUMF.

Once the 2021 CHS is made available, it can be used to also account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, given that the 2018 CHS was published in 2021, it could very well be that the 2021 CHS is published in 2024. Until then, it is not possible to incorporate information related to the pandemic into analyses of tenure precarity in Canada.

References

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