

Housing affordability among senior residents in St. John's, Newfoundland (1991-2011)

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April 12, 2017

Outline



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Background



- **Housing costs have risen rapidly in St. John's in relation to incomes.**
- **Age is an important predictor for how large share of household income is required to cover housing cost.**

Context for this housing affordability study



Housing affordability entails that housing costs secure an adequate and suitable dwelling, while remaining income also covers non-housing necessities.

Focus has shifted from linkages (Kendig 1984) to decoupling (Winter & Stone 1998) between life course events and transitions in the housing market.

There are policy orientated reports (ASHRA, 2010; Starr et al, 2014), otherwise housing affordability for older persons is an under-researched topic in Newfoundland.

Objective & Research question



Objective:

Explore housing affordability patterns for senior residents in St. John`s, NL 1991-2011.

Research question:

How do housing affordability patterns for seniors differ from those of non-seniors?

Data & Methods



Data:

- Confidential microdata files from the 1991 & 2006 Census and the 2011 NHS data by Statistics Canada.

Methods:

- Descriptive data analysis (Stata).
- Literature, policy document and public media review.
- Archival research.

Sample population St. John's NL (CMA)



Definitions:

Senior is a person (primary household maintainer) aged 65 years or above.

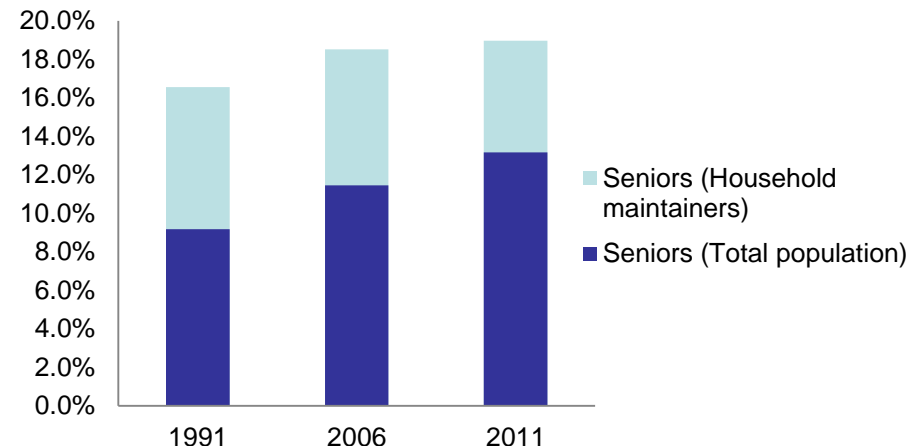
- **Excluded:**

- ❖ Institutionalised persons
- ❖ Farm households
- ❖ Households with no reported income or housing cost, or those with housing costs exceeding income.

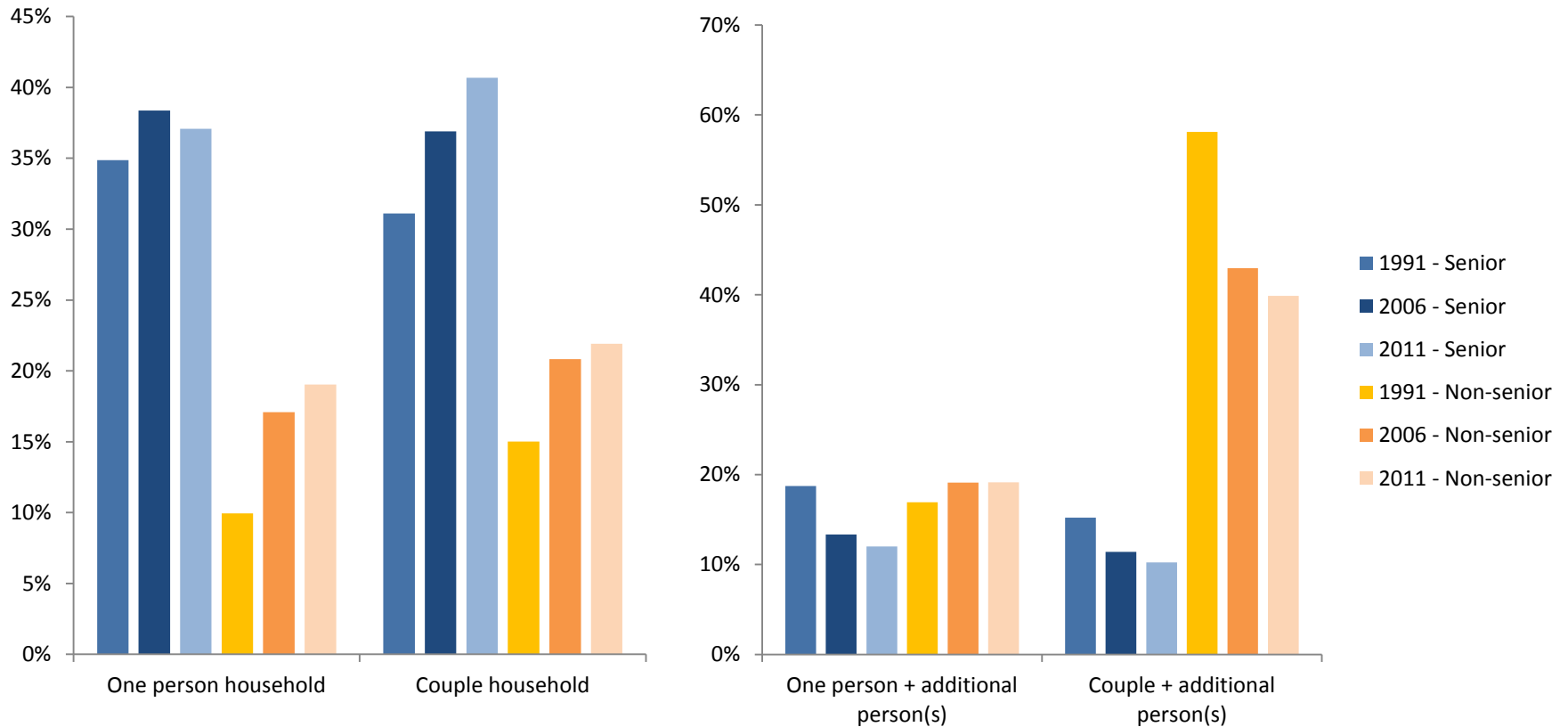
Number of households

	1991	2006	2011
n	52985	67965	75700

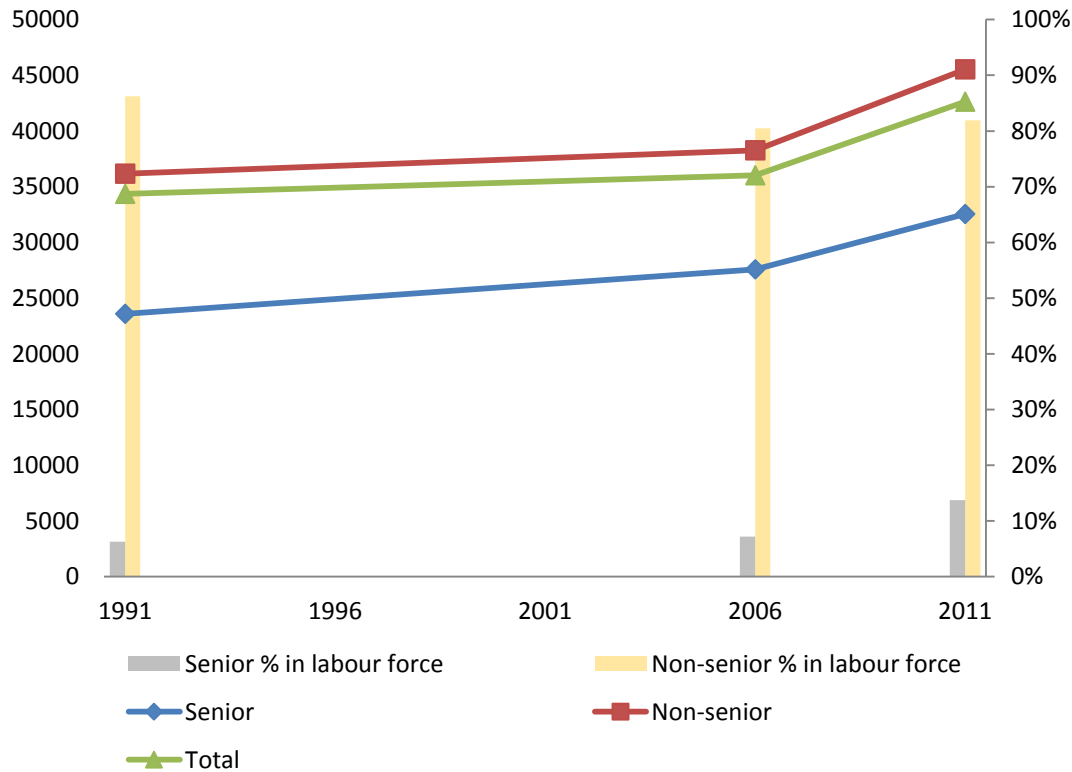
Percentage of seniors



Findings - Household structure



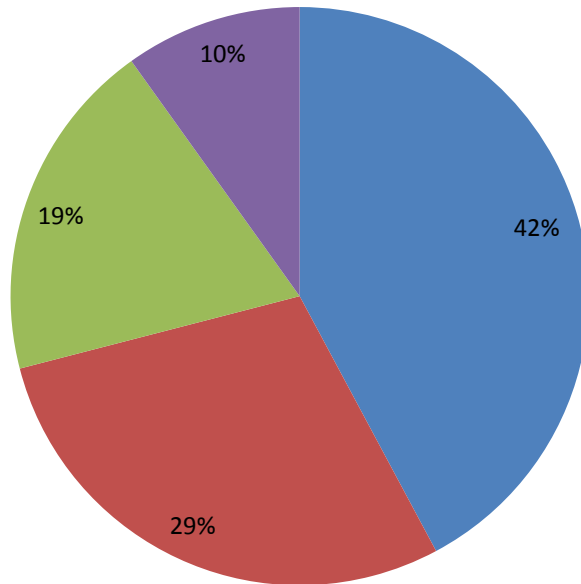
Findings – Household incomes (inflation adjusted)



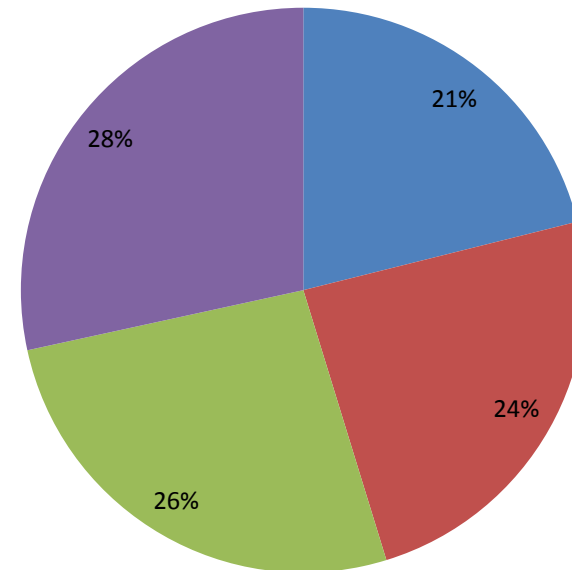
Findings - Income quartiles 2006



Seniors

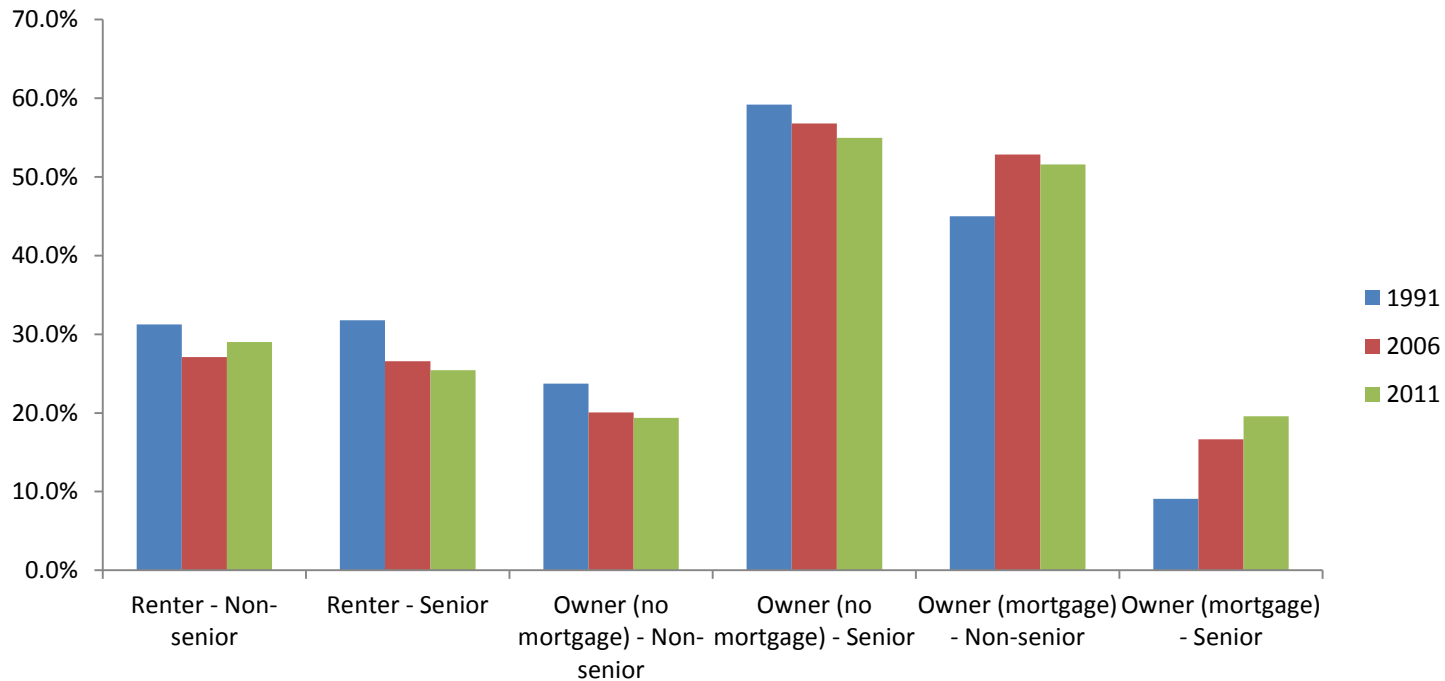


Non-seniors

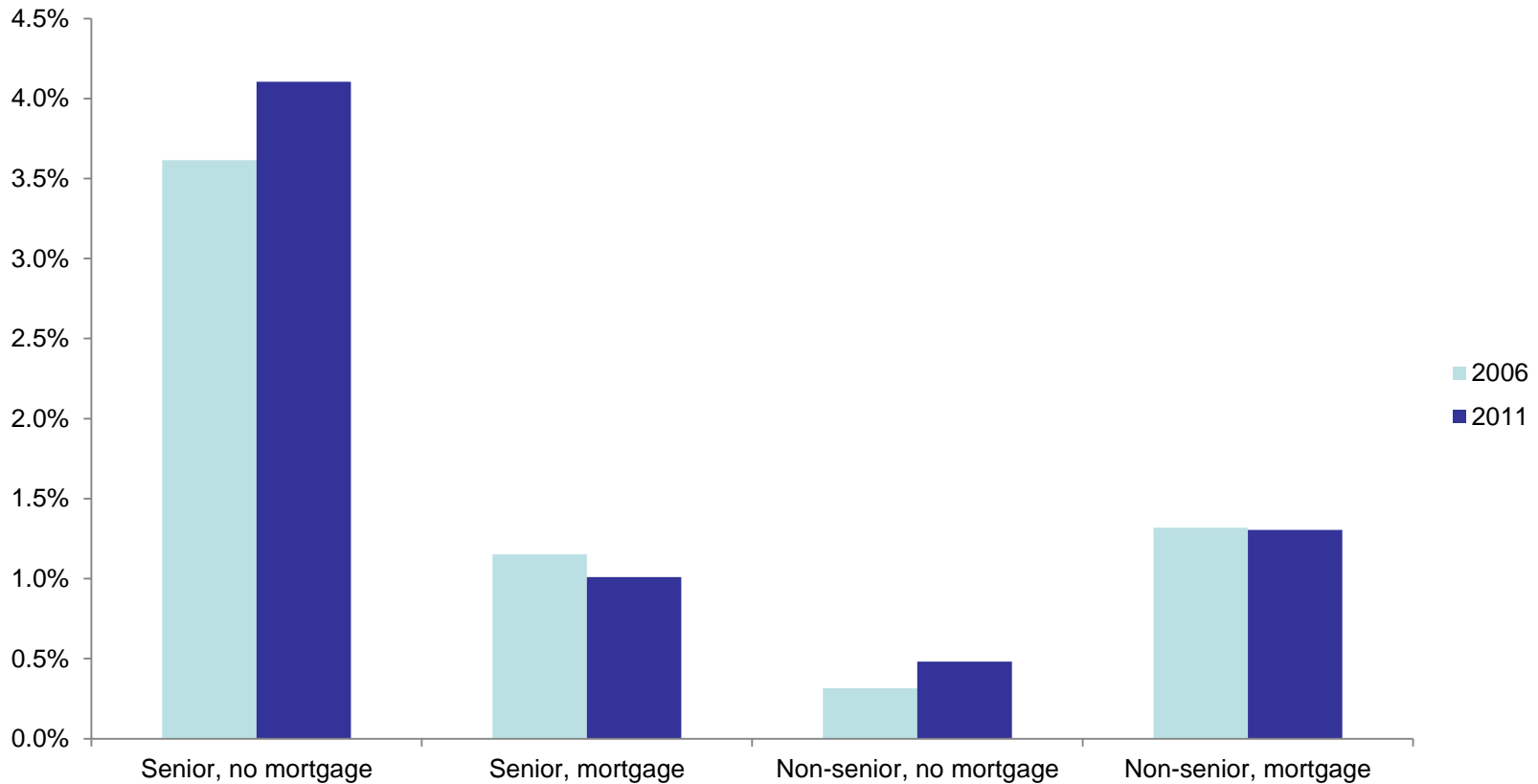


- 1st Income quartile
- 2nd Income quartile
- 3rd Income quartile
- 4th Income quartile

Findings – Housing tenure



Findings - condominiums



Findings – Housing costs by tenure (median non-senior/median senior)



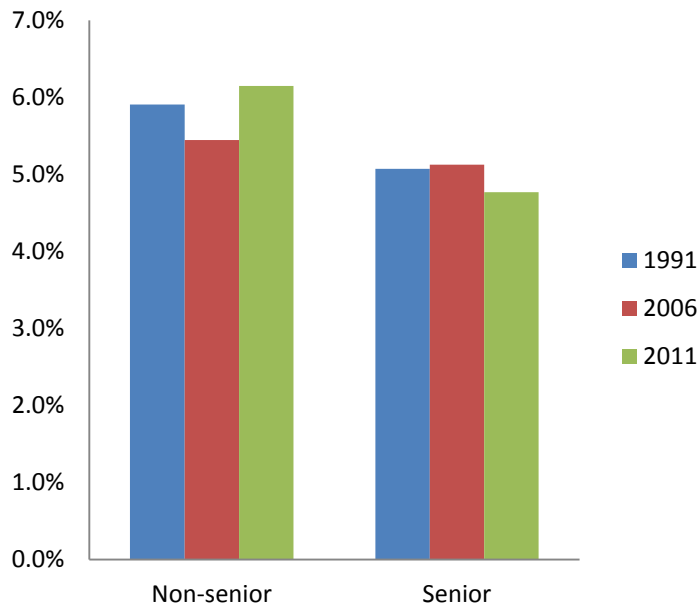
Findings – Housing affordability



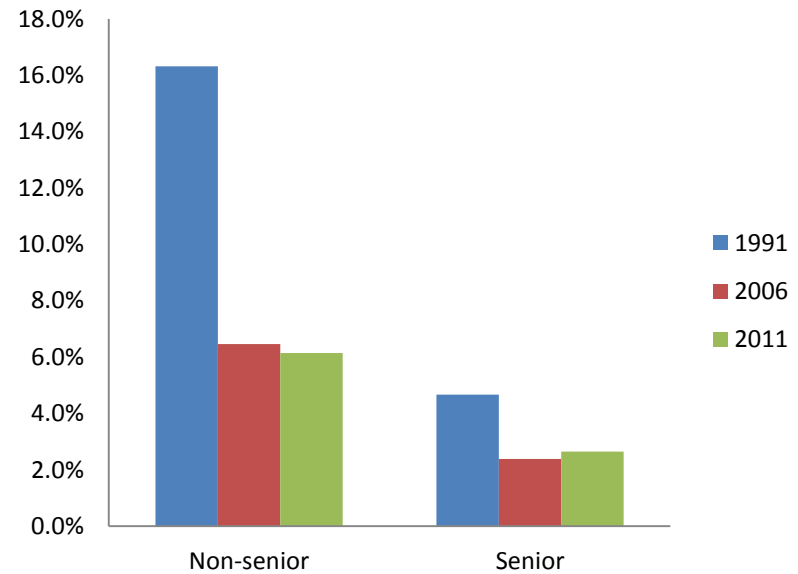
Findings – Housing quality



Home needs major repairs



Shortage of a bedroom



Limitations Census data



- **Self-reported housing quality.**
 - Problems may be understated (O'Dell, Smith & White 2004).**
 - Renters unlikely to complain (ASHRA, 2010).**
 - Some female home owners intimidated by contractors /tradespeople (Ryser & Halseth, 2011; Starr et al., 2014).**
 - 20% senior housing needs major repairs (ASHRA, 2010).**

In addition:

- **Does not provide information on size of debt, or wealth, and social networks.**
- **Does not address housing problems such as lack of accessibility, safety, security, privacy, difficulties with maintenance, need of assistance, and accessible transportation (ASHRA, 2010; Blackwood 2005).**

Analysis

- **Many (but not all) seniors at risk of housing affordability stress.**
- **Health status and income differences generate wide range of housing needs.**
- **Vulnerable when (food, energy, property taxes, interest rates) costs increase (Kirkpatrick, & Tarasuk, 2007; O'Neill, Jinks, & Squire, 2006; Ryser & Halseth, 2011).**
- **Private market does not provide housing for low income earners, or those with fixed incomes (Carver 1948).**

Funding Affordable housing ?



Federal government

- **Federal government terminated social housing program in 1994 (Wolfe, 1998).**
- **Returned with a funding program AHI in 2001 (renamed IAH since 2011).**

Other options

- **Non-profits rising funds (different sources).**
- **Social impact bonds marketed to private investors who are interested in a social and financial return (Starr, et al. 2014).**

Affordable housing provision



- **Strong interest & advocacy support for affordable housing NL (Beaton, 2004; DWNA, 2007; Keogh, 2006).**
- **Collaborations between different levels of government with community / faith groups, and the private sector.**
- **Innovative solutions and new models such as co-housing (Starr et al., 2014), re-development of existing buildings (Johnson 2016).**

Conclusions



- **Seniors with lower incomes are more likely to experience housing affordability stress than non-seniors.**
- **This generates health risks, social risks, and financial risks.**
- **Therefore provision of affordable & accessible housing requires collaborative effort, and it should be combined with neighborhood planning to provide accessible services & amenities.**

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Thank You

Acknowledgements. Statistics Canada Research Data Centre analyst (New Brunswick), and staff (MUN branch).