

EARLY CHILDHOOD VULNERABILITY



What does this measure and why is it important?

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is administered by kindergarten teachers, and assesses the developmental readiness of a group of children. Children are considered vulnerable when some aspect of their development (physical, social/emotional or intellectual) is delayed at kindergarten entry. Examining EDI results over time allows us to assess trends in the percentage of kindergarten children in the region's school districts who are vulnerable (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2013). Data for this indicator were acquired from the [University of British Columbia Human Early Learning Partnership](#).

The early years are crucial in influencing a range of health and social outcomes throughout one's life. Research shows that many challenges in adult society – mental health problems, obesity, heart disease, criminality, competence in literacy and numeracy – have their roots in early childhood. Understanding where young children live who are most vulnerable allows us to allocate our resources and adjust policies to most effectively support all children in their early years.

What are the trends and current conditions?

Between 2006 and 2011 the number of kindergarten students who were vulnerable on at least one aspect of their development decreased in three of the seven school districts in the region (Revelstoke, Southeast Kootenay, and Kootenay-Columbia) (Figure 1). This trend countered the provincial upward trend in vulnerability. Currently, all seven school districts¹ in the region have a lower percentage of vulnerable kindergarten students than the provincial average (31%), including Revelstoke (10%), Arrow Lakes (23%), Kootenay Lake (24%), Rocky Mountain (27%), Southeast Kootenay (28%), and Boundary (29%).

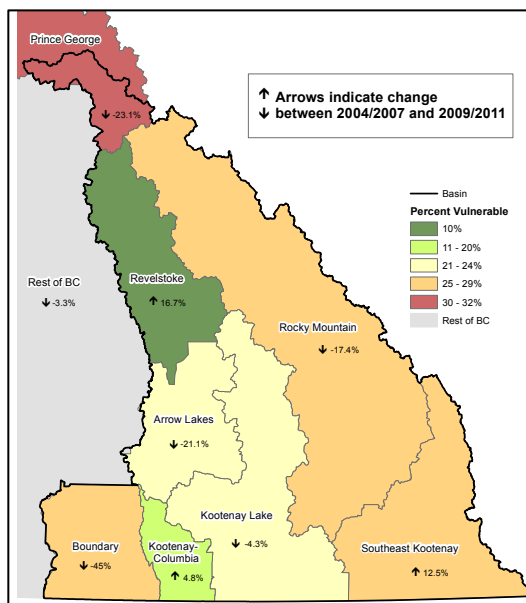


Figure 1: 2004 - 2011 change in early childhood vulnerability, by School District

Source: Human Early Learning Partnership, 2011.



The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College, is a regional centre of excellence in applied research and information provision focused on strengthening rural communities in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region. Visit www.cbrdi.ca for more information.

¹ The Prince George School District 'Neighbourhood' of Upper Fraser was used to represent Valemount. This neighbourhood experienced an increase (23.1%) in vulnerable kindergarten students and is currently 1% above the provincial average.