

Columbia Basin-Boundary Population Update

RESEARCH BRIEF



INTRODUCTION

According to the recently released results of the 2016 Census, 4,648,055 people live in British Columbia (BC), of which 3.6% or 167,425 people live in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region.¹ Demographic data, such as population estimates, can not only provide information about the people in a place, but can help inform planning and decision-making.

There are many sources of demographic information. The Census is one example of a consistent, replicable, and reliable source of demographic information. BC Stats is another. It is not abnormal for the results to differ. Additionally, results can sometimes look different from what individuals see in their communities. While a difference of dozens or hundreds of people may not mean much to large urban centres, for rural communities this difference can drastically affect local planning and budgeting.

This research brief provides updated population data for the Columbia Basin-Boundary region based on the 2016 [Census](#) and the most recent BC Stats population [estimate](#) and [projection](#) data for comparison. Various geographies are included, including incorporated municipalities, unincorporated areas, local health areas, and regional districts. Comparisons to the overall British Columbia numbers are also included. The discussion focuses on the sources, methods, and results, including why they may differ. Also included is a discussion of these results versus other estimates.

WHAT ARE THE TRENDS & CURRENT CONDITIONS

CURRENT & CHANGE OVER TIME

According to Statistics Canada, in 2011 there were 161,741 people living in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region.² The BC Stats estimate for 2011 differs (164,184).³ The 2016 regional population was 167,425 according to Statistics Canada (+3.5%) and 162,900 (-0.8%) according to BC Stats.^{1,3} The total regional population has stayed relatively constant overall, although these numbers vary within the region.

Looking back over the last three Census years, the population has increased in all of the Regional Districts and 20 of the 28 municipalities, while the remaining 8 municipalities experienced population decreases (see **Table 1**).¹

| Municipality / Regional District | 2006 | 2011 | 2016 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| Regional District of East Kootenay | 55,485 | 56,685 | 60,439 |
| Regional District of Central Kootenay | 55,883 | 58,441 | 59,517 |
| Regional District of Kootenay Boundary | 30,742 | 31,138 | 31,447 |
| Cranbrook | 18,267 | 19,319 | 20,047 |
| Nelson | 9,258 | 10,230 | 10,572 |
| Castlegar | 7,259 | 7,816 | 8,039 |
| Trail | 7,237 | 7,681 | 7,709 |
| Revelstoke | 7,230 | 7,139 | 7,547 |
| Kimberley | 6,139 | 6,652 | 7,425 |
| Creston | 4,826 | 5,306 | 5,351 |
| Fernie | 4,217 | 4,448 | 5,249 |
| Grand Forks | 4,036 | 3,985 | 4,049 |
| Sparwood | 3,618 | 3,667 | 3,784 |
| Rosland | 3,278 | 3,556 | 3,729 |
| Golden | 3,811 | 3,701 | 3,708 |
| Invermere | 3,002 | 2,955 | 3,391 |
| Elkford | 2,463 | 2,523 | 2,499 |
| Fruitvale | 1,952 | 2,011 | 1,920 |
| Warfield | 1,729 | 1,700 | 1,680 |
| Nakusp | 1,524 | 1,569 | 1,605 |
| Salmo | 1,007 | 1,139 | 1,141 |
| Valemount | 1,018 | 1,020 | 1,021 |
| Montrose | 1,012 | 1,030 | 996 |
| Kaslo | 1,072 | 1,031 | 968 |
| Radium Hot Springs | 735 | 777 | 776 |
| Canal Flats | 700 | 715 | 668 |
| Greenwood | 625 | 708 | 665 |
| Midway | 621 | 674 | 649 |
| New Denver | 512 | 504 | 473 |
| Slocan | 314 | 296 | 272 |
| Silverton | 185 | 195 | 195 |

Table 1: Statistics Canada – population by area¹

The overall 2011-2016 change, according to Statistics Canada is shown by Regional District Electoral Areas in **Figure 1**.

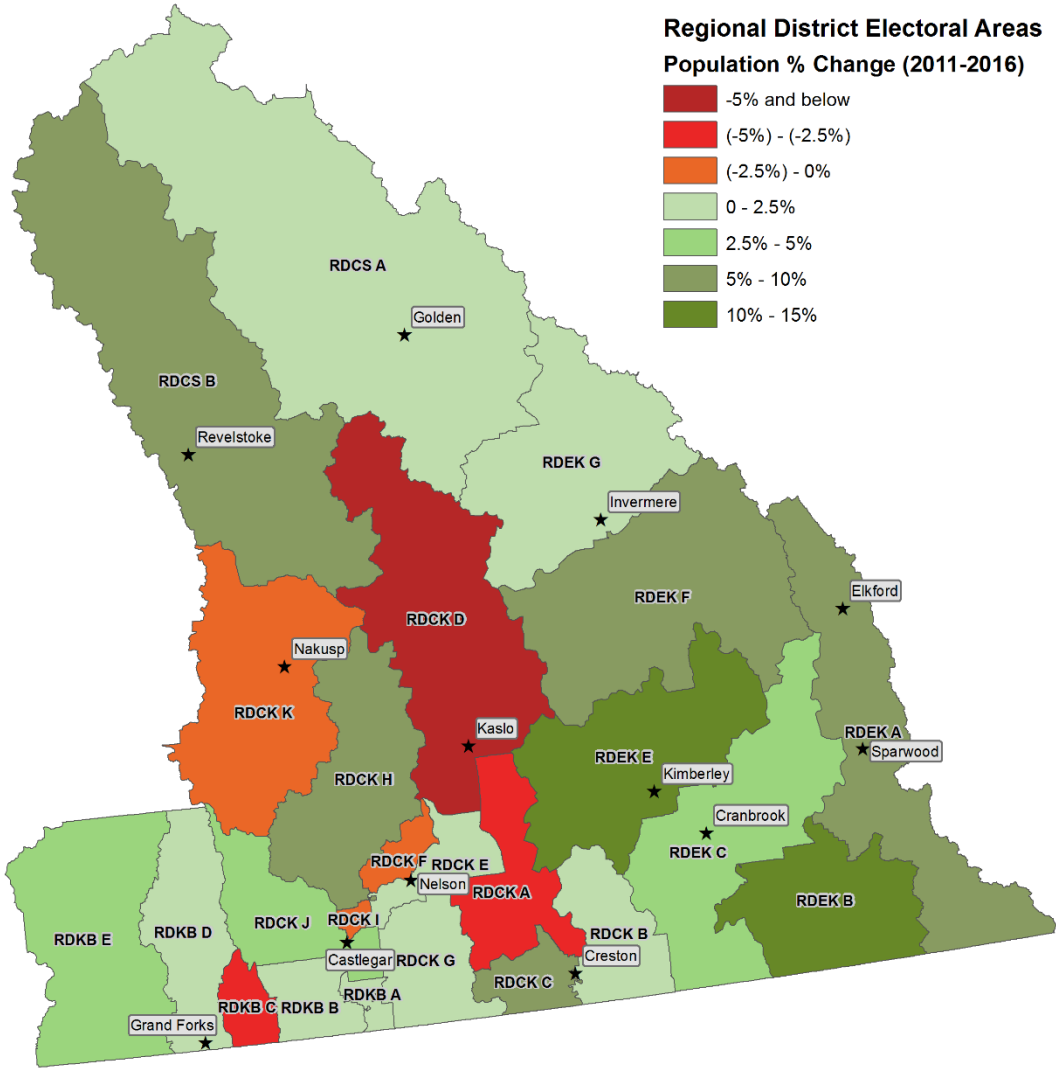


Figure 1: Map: population percent change (2011-2016)¹

As noted above, population changes vary across the region. The data is also different between data sources, including both presentation and range. Census data (Statistics Canada) includes municipalities and Regional District Electoral Areas and ranges from a loss of -8.11% in Slokan to + 18.01% in Fernie (see **Figure 2**) .¹ BC Stats estimates amalgamate the unincorporated areas and range from -12.58% (Creston) to +8.47% (Nelson) (see **Figure 3**).³

Figure 2: Statistics Canada – municipal and rural population percent change (2011 – 2016)¹

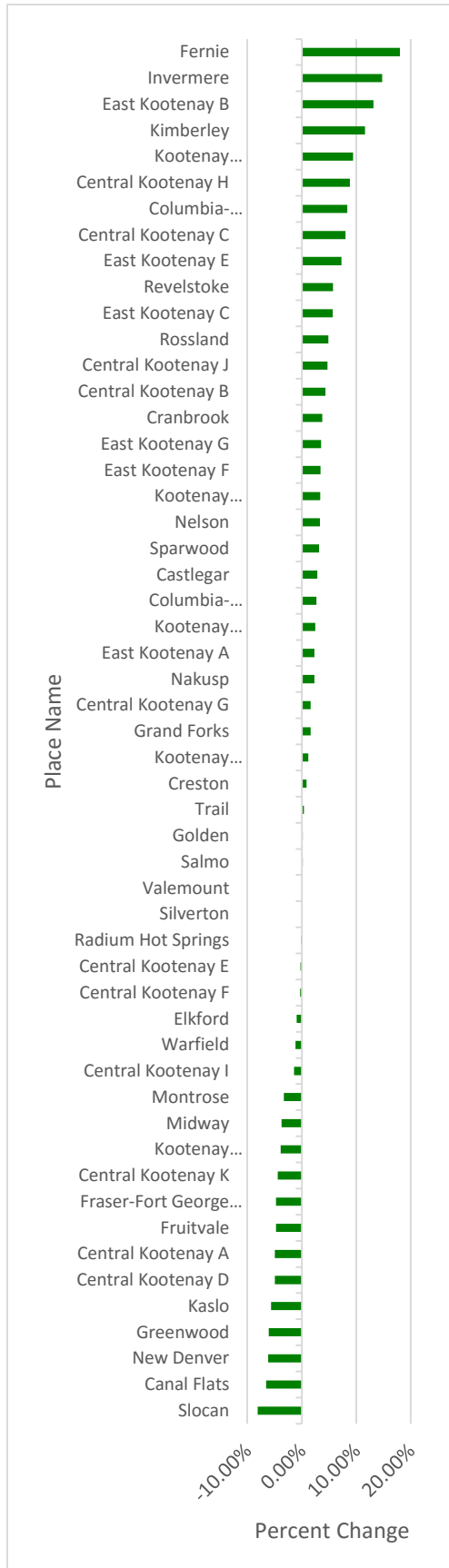
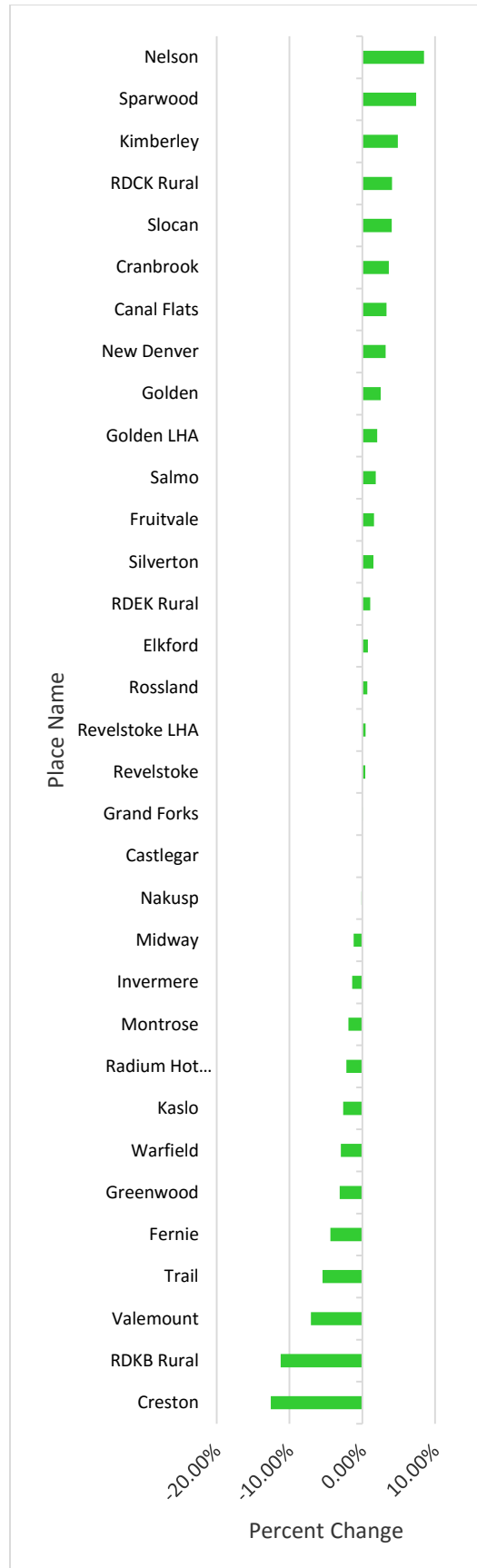


Figure 3: BC Stats – municipal and rural population percent change (2011 – 2016)³



The differences between Statistics Canada and BC Stats varies between places. When the two sources are compared we see differences between -13.6% (Slocan) and +17.45% (Fernie), with municipalities like Castlegar, Warfield, and Grand Forks being the closest (see **Figure 4**).



Figure 4: Statistics Canada - BC Stats comparison^{1,3}

Beyond municipalities and unincorporated areas, there are also Indian Reserves, with a total of 816 people on all reserves within the Columbia Basin-Boundary region (see **Table 2**).

| Indian Reserve | 2011 | 2016 | Percent Change |
|-------------------------|------|------|----------------|
| Cassimayooks (Mayook) 5 | 5 | 0 | -100.00% |
| Columbia Lake 3 | 131 | 140 | 6.87% |
| Creston 1 | 113 | 112 | -0.88% |
| Isidore's Ranch 4 | 0 | 0 | NA |
| Kootenay 1 | 104 | 170 | 63.46% |
| Shuswap | 293 | 319 | 8.87% |
| Tobacco Plains 2 | 57 | 75 | 31.58% |

Table 2: Population and percent change by Indian Reserve¹

However, the numbers presented in Table 2 should not be used as indications of the First Nations or Aboriginal populations within the region because Table 2 is specific to reserves and there are First Nations and Aboriginals living across the region, not just on reserves. For example, the Rural Development Institute’s (RDI) 2016 *Demographics Trends Analysis* used the 2011 National Household Survey to identify people, both on and off reserve, within the region that identify as Aboriginal, including those who identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuk (Inuit), those with Registered or Treaty Indian Status, and those who report membership in a First Nation or Indian Band (see **Figure 5**).⁴

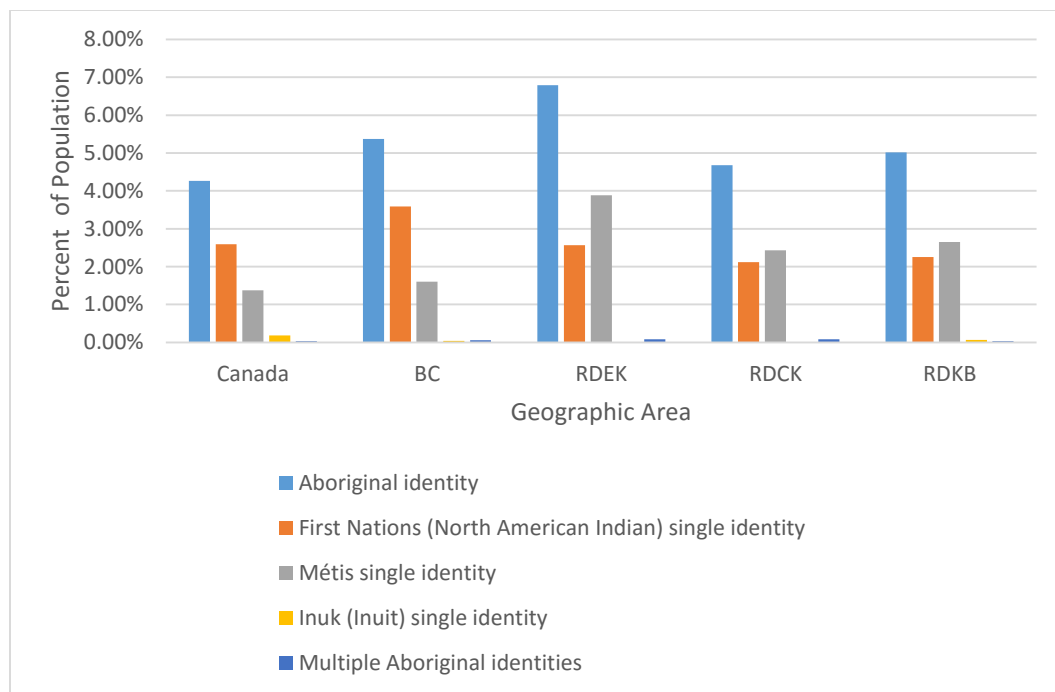


Figure 5: Percent of 2011 population who identify as Aboriginal⁶

The differences between the two data sources is also seen at the Regional District, Columbia Basin-Boundary, and Provincial scales. For example, according to the census, there has been positive growth in all three Regional Districts, as well as the Columbia Basin-Boundary region as a whole, although the only area that experienced growth above the provincial average (5.64%) is the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) (see **Figure 6**).¹

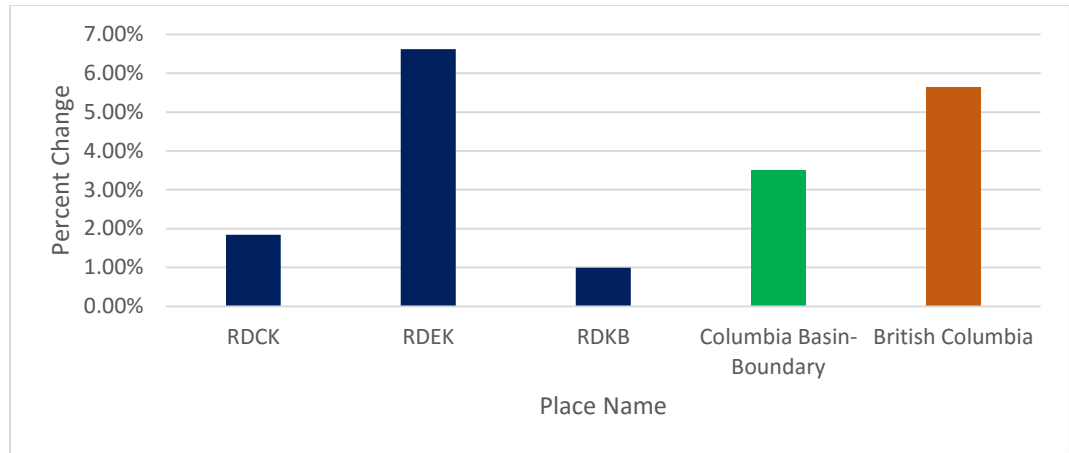


Figure 6: Statistics Canada – regional population percent change (2011 – 2016)¹

The BC Stats estimates tell a different story. The BC average is similar (5.64% above versus 5.61% below) (see **Figure 7**).^{1,3} However the Columbia Basin-Boundary overall is quite different (3.51% above versus 0.8% below), owing in large part to the estimate of a -4.98% percent change in the Kootenay Boundary (RDKB).^{1,3}

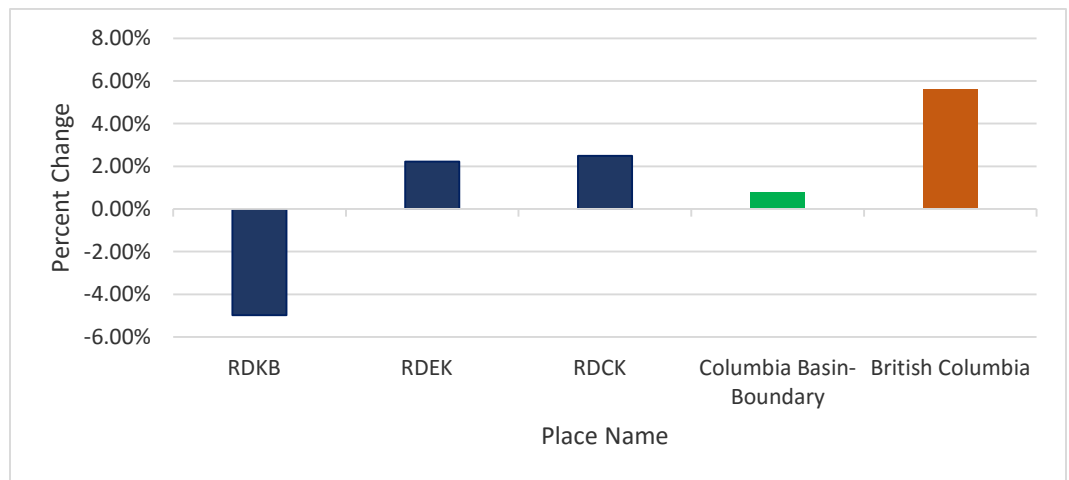


Figure 7: BC Stats – regional and provincial percent change (2011 – 2016)³

PROJECTIONS

Statistics Canada does not provide population projections, however BC Stats does. According to BC Stats, the Columbia Basin-Boundary region populationⁱ is projected to grow by about 4,732 residents by 2037, representing an overall increase of 2.9%. As compared to the projected change for the province of BC (21.83%), this rate of growth is low. Projections vary across our region (see **Figure 8**).

ⁱ Population projection calculations exclude Valemount as they are based on figures provided to the geographic scale of the Local Health Area (LHA). The Prince George LHA, of which Valemount is a part, includes a major population centre that is not included within the boundaries of the Columbia Basin-Boundary region.

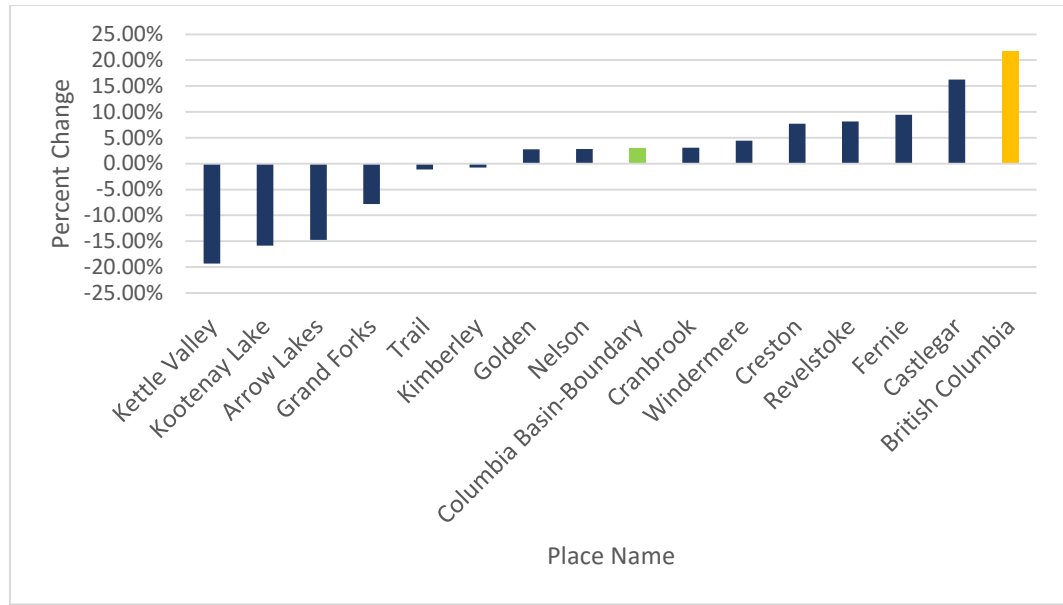


Figure 8: Projected percent change by Local Health Area (2017-2037)^{i 5}

Using BC Stats projections by five year age cohorts we are also able to plot the projected portions of the population that are youth (19 and under), workers (20-64), and seniors (+65). **Figure 9** shows a continued increase in the number of seniors within the region, a continued concern as the demographics of this region display an increasingly aging population. This has implications for services (e.g., health care), as well as workforce needs.

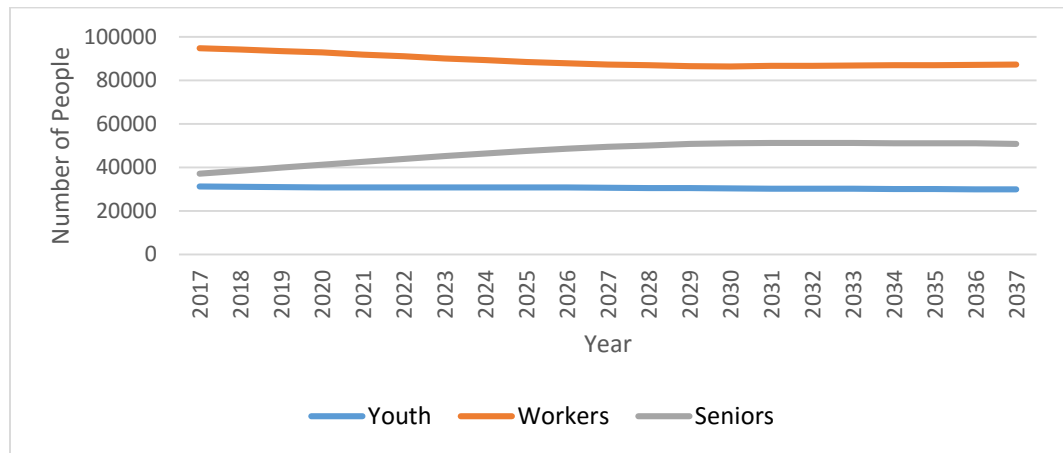


Figure 9: Projected Columbia Basin-Boundary population of workers and seniors, 2017-2037^{i 5}

DISCUSSION

Statistics Canada and BC Stats use different methods to generate the data presented above. Statistics Canada gathers data from the census, collected at the same time (May) every 5 years. The methodological approach used by Statistics Canada is detailed a rigorous (see the [Guide to the Census of Population](#)). As no data source is perfect or without error, there are potential errors within Census data, including non-response errors (failure to provide information) and response errors (when misleading or incorrect information is provided), as well as processing errors (made at the data input stage). However, **the Census remains the best source of demographic data, given its lengthy record, rigorous approach, and consistent approach.**

The major difference between Statistics Canada and BC Stats, and the reason that Statistics Canada data is more reliable, is that Statistics Canada reports actual numbers from the census, while BC Stats generates estimates using a variety of proxy data sources as input into a [Generalized Estimation System](#). A population estimate is a measure of the current or historical population. On an annual basis, BC Stats releases total population estimates for 190 municipalities and unincorporated areas, 29 regional districts and eight development regions located in B.C. These estimates are consistent in aggregate with the Statistics Canada produced annual (July 1) provincial level totals. While the estimates can be useful in non-census years, the Census data is a more accurate reflection of the population.

Capturing data around population is difficult. People are not fixed in a single location for home or work, and actual population changes daily. For example, for the Village of Slocan, BC Stats estimates placed population at 309, while the Census reports 272 people, and a local count based on municipal tax records reports 350. No method will be infallible and without error, whether that is errors attributed to the data going in, errors in processing, or errors in reporting. There are occasionally disputes and questions around the census data and whether or not it is an accurate reflection. This can be particularly contentious when the end figure results in higher costs (e.g., policing) or lower funding (e.g., per capita funding dollars). This is particularly important in rural places where the addition (or loss) of dozens of people can make up a substantial portion of the population.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

1. Statistics Canada. 2016 Census. *Census Profile* (2017). Available at: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>. (Accessed: 3rd April 2017)
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The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College, is a regional research centre with a mandate to support informed decision-making by Columbia Basin-Boundary communities through the provision of information, applied research, and related outreach and extension support. Visit www.cbrdi.ca for more information.