

TRENDS ANALYSIS: POPULATION BY AGE AND GENDER

WINTER 2016



What does this measure & why is it important?

This indicator measures the total number of people in the region in five-year age groups, or ‘cohorts’, reported by gender. Data for this indicator are typically gathered from the [Census](#), but for this update, data were sourced from BC Stats’ annual population [estimates](#) and [projections](#).

As we age, our needs change. Young people need family care, schooling and recreation services, while working people are concerned about employment opportunities and childcare. In addition, some retirees need community supports to maintain health and live independently at home. By tracking changes in the structure of our population, decision-makers are able to plan for demographic pressures and be prepared for the required adjustments to local service priorities.

What are the trends & current conditions?

Population Estimates

The latest BC Stats population estimates report that in 2011, there were about 164,200 people living in the region and that in 2015, there were 162,900 residents, a difference of less than -1%. The 2011 estimate provided by BC Stats is roughly 3000 higher than the 2011 figure reported by Statistics Canada as a result of the Census. BC Stats accounts for this discrepancy by confirming that their estimates consider the results of a post-Census study of the number of individuals that, for one reason or another, were not counted in the Census (BC Stats, 2015).

Despite the size of the population remaining relatively constant at the regional scale, individual areas have seen greater variability (Figure 1). Over the period 2011-2015, a population increase was reported for eleven of 28 municipalities, with Nelson leading at 4%. A population decrease was reported for 17 municipalities, with Creston showing the biggest decrease at -11%. Notably, Creston’s estimates show a sizeable decrease of -5.4% from 2014-2015.

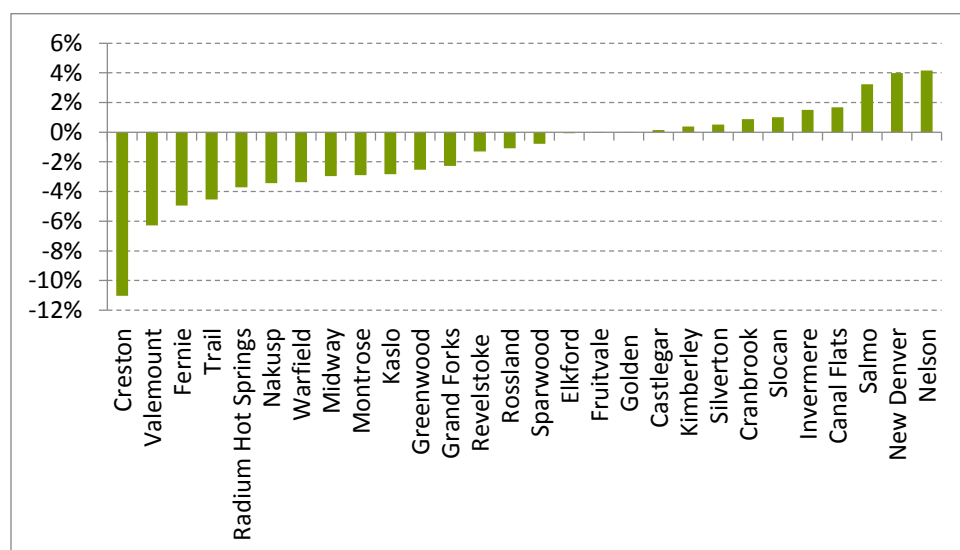


Figure 1: % change in 2011 and 2015 population estimates for Basin-Boundary municipalities

Source: Data: BC Stats, 2016a; Analysis: RDI

The region's latest age-specific population estimates show a bulge in the 'boomer' population (ages 50-70) who have retired, or will be retiring over the next 10-15 years (Figure 2). Demographers commonly compare the youth cohort (0-25 years) to the senior cohort (65+ years) to understand the relative size of the components of the population that are typically considered to be dependent on the working population. Our 2015 population pyramid shows 24% of the population being under 25, and 21% of the population being over 65. Since at least the 1980s, the ratio of seniors to youth in our region has gradually shifted, and the senior component is projected to overtake the youth component by 2019.

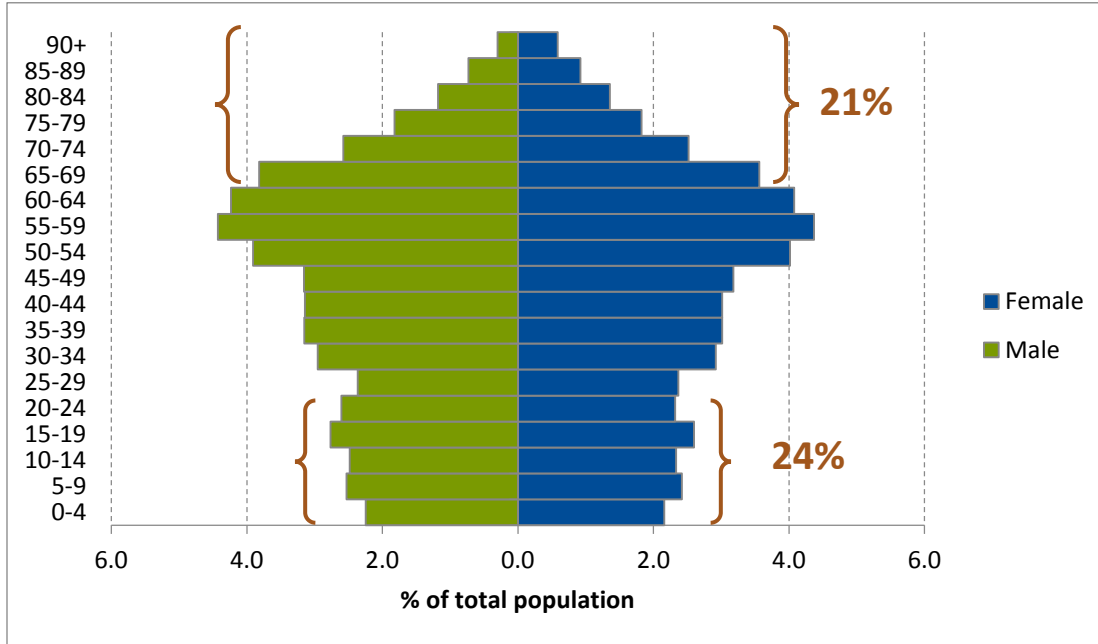


Figure 2: Basin-Boundary population by 5-year age cohort and gender, 2015
 Source: Data: BC Stats, 2016b; Analysis: RDI

Though our region is generally aging, population structure varies by community. At the time of the 2011 Census, there was an over 20 year difference in median age between the population in Golden (38.1) and Midway (58.3). Full, community-specific population data are available on the [Digital Basin](#).

Population Projections

As the boomer cohort ages and birthrates decline, the North American population as a whole is aging. However, the issue is particularly relevant to our region, where the senior population is projected to grow by 42% over the 20 year period between 2016 and 2035. Over the same period, the size of the working population (25-64 years) is projected to decline by 7%, resulting in a projected population structure that suggests only 1.6 workers for every senior by the year 2035 (Figure 3).

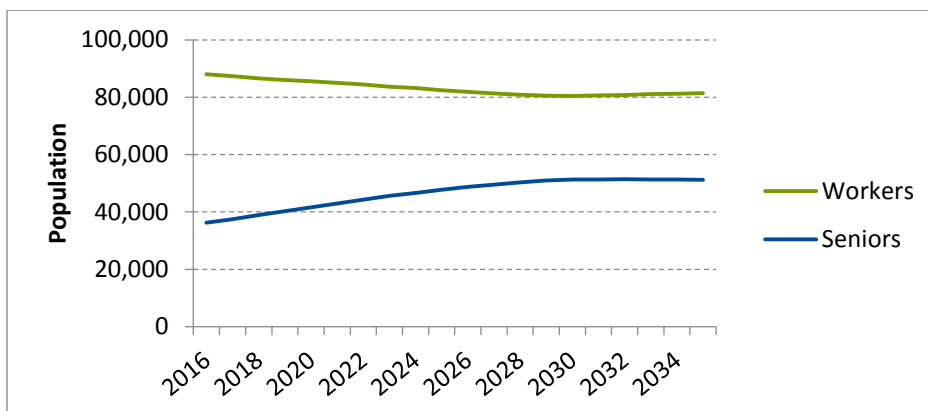


Figure 3: Projected Basin-Boundary population of workers and seniors, 2016-2035
 Source: Data: BC Stats, 2016c; Analysis: RDI

The Basin-Boundary population as a whole¹ is projected to grow by about 7500 residents over the next 20 years, representing an overall increase of 4.5%. As compared to British Columbia, this rate of growth is low. The total provincial population is projected to grow by 23% over the same time period. Again, projections vary by community within our region (Figure 4). The Castlegar Local Health Area is projected to grow at the highest rate (17%), while the Kettle Valley is projected to experience the greatest overall population decline (-14%).

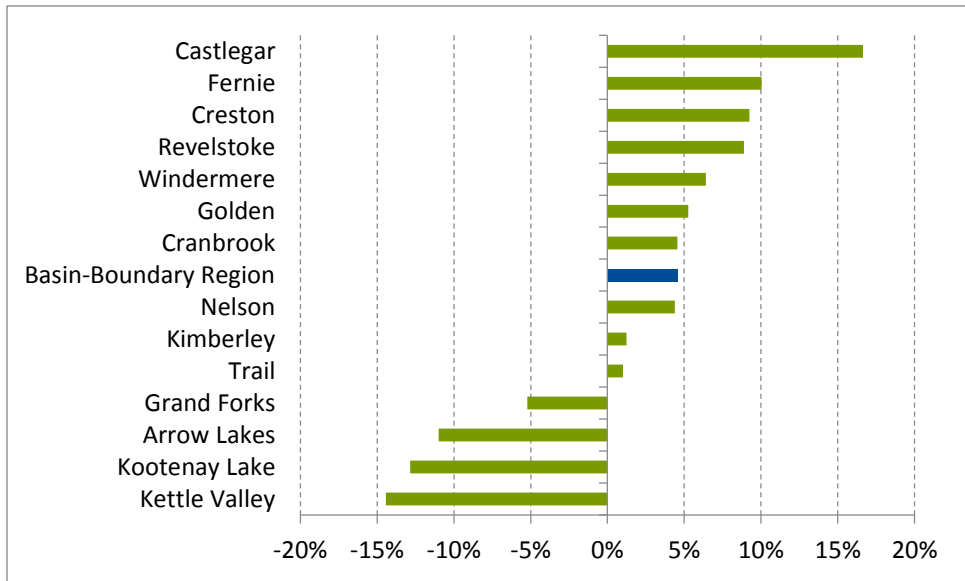


Figure 4: % change in 2016-2035 projected total population by Local Health Area
Source: Data: BC Stats, 2016c; Analysis: RDI

¹ Population projection calculations exclude Valemount as they are based on figures provided to the geographic scale of the Local Health Area. The Prince George LHA, of which Valemount is a part, includes a major population centre that is not included within the boundaries of the Basin-Boundary region.

References

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