

# Trends Analysis: Community & Society



## OVERVIEW

Society and human communities are complex, with a variety of variables at work. While society can be thought of as a broader term describing the direct and indirect social connections between people, community is made up of individuals who are closely connected, often by geography.<sup>1</sup> Community can be defined broadly as "a group of people who live, learn, work, and play in an environment at a given time".<sup>2</sup>

## OVERVIEW CONTINUED

The Tamarack Institute, who's work focusses on deepening our sense of community, describes community as a way of life focused on the common good, where a "valued community member might welcome strangers, join a time bank, host a block party, shop locally, raise responsible children, carpool to work, plant street trees, coach a youth soccer team, vote, advocate for the homeless, be a buddy to a house-bound neighbor, and graciously accept a gift of zucchini from another neighbor's garden".<sup>3</sup> A sense of community relates to one's connection and participation with others and their local environment. The vitality of a community is associated with the overall health and well-being of its residents, as well as the activities and organizations that nurture and support an engaged citizenship.<sup>4</sup>

This trends analysis includes indicators that provide some insight into measures of community and society in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, including:

- Voter Turnout;
- Municipal Spending on Parks, Recreation, & Culture;
- Index of Crime;
- Commute Time;
- Charitable Donations;
- Volunteering;
- Sense of Belonging; and
- Age-Friendly Community Assessments.

These indicators are presented in detail below, including a description of each measure, relevance of each measure to community vitality, and, where available, associated current data and trends. While these provide some insight, this is by no means an exhaustive list and only includes quantitative indicators.

Other indicators related to community and society are also found in the Rural Development Institute's (RDI) [Demographics Trends Analysis](#) which reviews population, language, and migration. The [Infrastructure & Basic Services Trends Analysis](#) includes indicators related to topics such as housing and drinking water, and the [Poverty Trends Analysis](#) helps build an understanding of our more vulnerable community members. Also see the [Education & Learning Trends Analysis](#) for indicators related to early childhood development, public schools, and libraries.



The RDI has also mapped several assets across the region on the Digital Basin such as [recreation facilities](#)<sup>5</sup>, [art galleries and centres](#)<sup>6</sup>, and [social service agencies](#)<sup>7</sup> which all contribute to building healthy communities.

The 2016 annual poll of residents<sup>8</sup> provides a baseline for understanding residents' perceptions of personal and community health and well-being. Results from this subjective well-being research will be useful for tracking indicators related to access, satisfaction, livability, community spirit, and other elements of personal and community well-being.

## VOTER TURNOUT

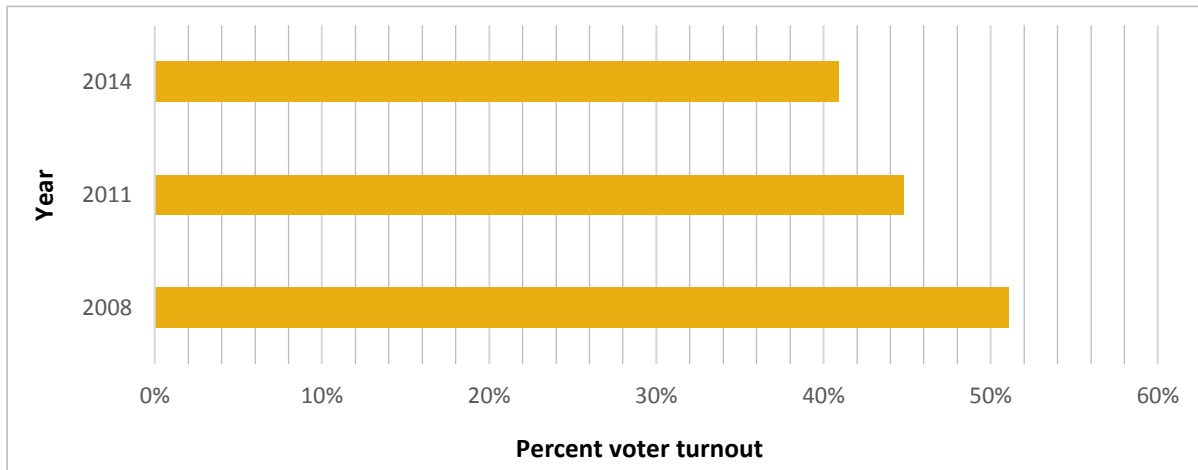
### WHAT DOES THIS MEASURE & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

This indicator measures the percentage of eligible voters in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region who voted in local government elections. Data for this indicator were gathered from CivicInfo BC's compendium of [local election results](#)<sup>9</sup> which includes data for 2008, 2011, and 2014. Data for municipalities was available for all three years, but data for Regional District Electoral Areas was only available for the 2014 election.

Voter turnout is an indicator of the health of a democracy. Low voter turnout is generally considered bad for democracy, and can be seen as a reflection of the level of 'civic mindedness' – the capacity and motivation of individual citizens.<sup>10</sup> Voter turnout is related to cultural and historical factors, as well as the role of institutions and the characteristics and qualities of the electoral system.<sup>11</sup> Regional and community identity and the level of jurisdictional authority wielded by a regional or local government are important determinants of willingness of the electorate to participate in elections.<sup>12</sup>

### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS & CURRENT CONDITIONS?

Voter turnout varies across the municipalities and regional district electoral areas of the region. Average voter turnout for the entire region is shown in **Figure 1** for all three years of available data. The highest voter turnout of those years compared, was in 2008 at 51.1%, followed by 44.8% in 2011, and then another decline to 40.9% in 2014. Average voter turnout in the region is higher than the provincial average, which was 27.8% in 2008. For the 2014 election, the provincial voter turnout was 33.3% for municipal elections and 22.8% for regional district electoral areas.

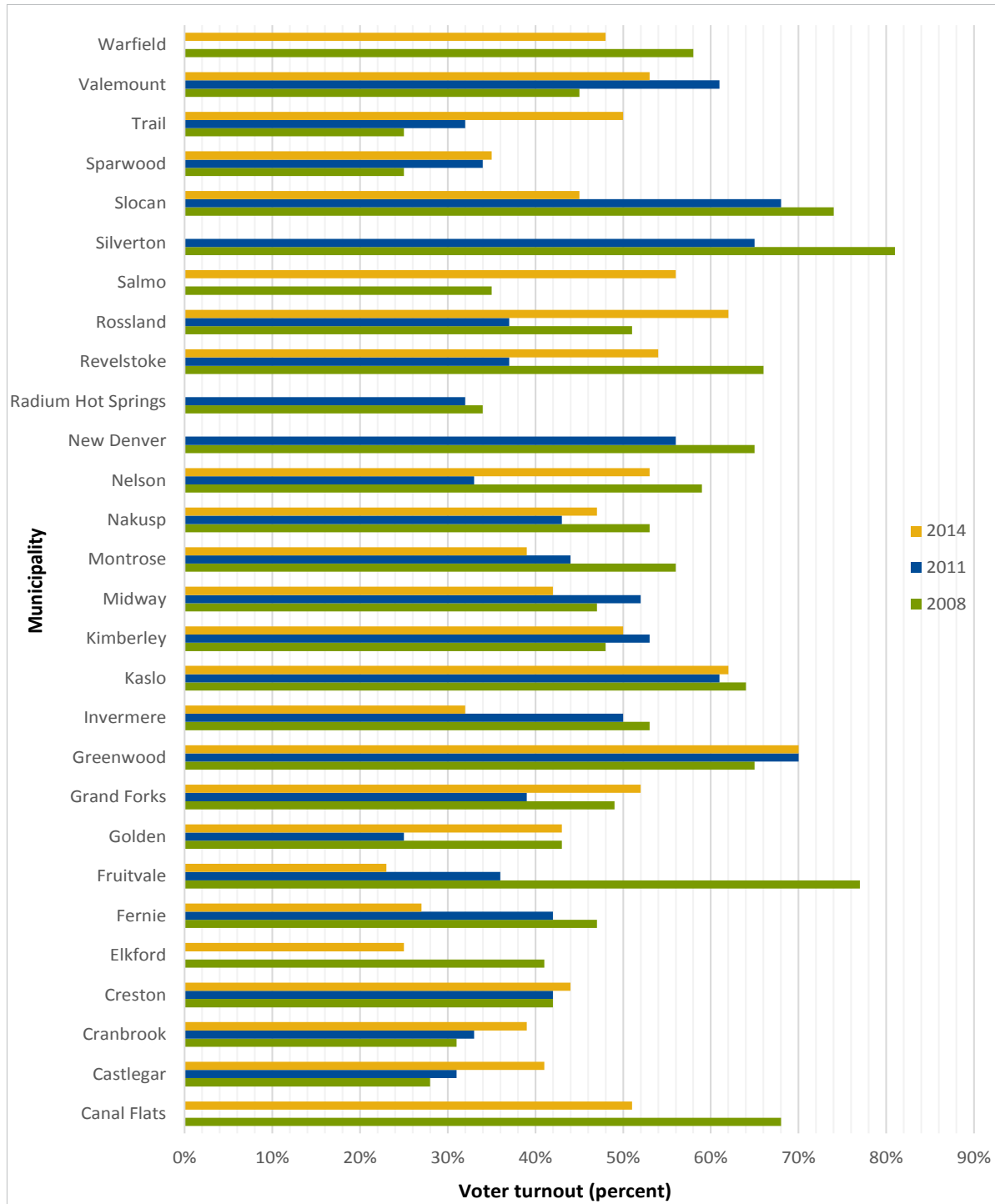


**Figure 1:** Average voter turnout for Columbia Basin-Boundary local government elections between 2008 to 2014<sup>9</sup>

In 2008, Silverton had the highest voter turnout in local elections of the region, and province, at 81%. The lowest turnout for our region, in 2008, was in Trail and Sparwood, both at 25%. Greenwood had the highest turnout at 70% for both 2011 and 2014 municipal elections. Golden had the lowest turnout of Columbia Basin-Boundary communities in 2011, and Elkford in 2014, both at 25%.

**Figure 2** shows the voter turnout for 2008, 2011, and 2014 for all municipalities in the region. Data for regional district electoral areas became available in 2014, and the lowest voter turnout for that election was 17% in East Kootenay Area C. There were no acclamations in 2008, while in 2011 four municipal councils were acclaimed (Canal Flats, Elkford, Salmo, and Warfield), and in 2014 there were three acclaimed (New Denver, Silverton, and Radium Hot Springs). In 2014, 11 of the electoral areas were acclaimed, including areas in all four regional districts within the Columbia Basin-Boundary region.

To see voter turnout for all local governments in our region, visit the [Digital Basin](#).<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 2:** Voter turnout (percent) for Columbia Basin-Boundary municipal elections for 2008, 2011, and 2014<sup>9</sup>

When asked during RDI's [2015 annual poll of residents](#)<sup>14</sup>, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they planned to vote in the 2015 federal election; 85% of respondents said yes, while 11% said no, and 4% said they were not sure. Results from the 2015 federal election show that 73% of the eligible voters in Kootenay-Columbia (Nelson to Fernie, Golden and Revelstoke), voted. This riding was one where “every vote counted” as the Member of Parliament elected won with a margin of roughly 300 votes. South Okanagan-West Kootenay also saw a high voter turnout of almost 74%, another newly drawn riding, which covers Castlegar to Nakusp to Penticton. Valemount forms part of the Prince George-Peace River-Northern Rockies riding, where voter turnout was similar to the national turnout of 68%. National voter turnout for the 2015 federal election was up from 61% in 2011. The same trend rings true for Columbia Basin-Boundary ridings, where turnout was 65% in 2011.

## MUNICIPAL SPENDING ON PARKS, RECREATION, & CULTURE

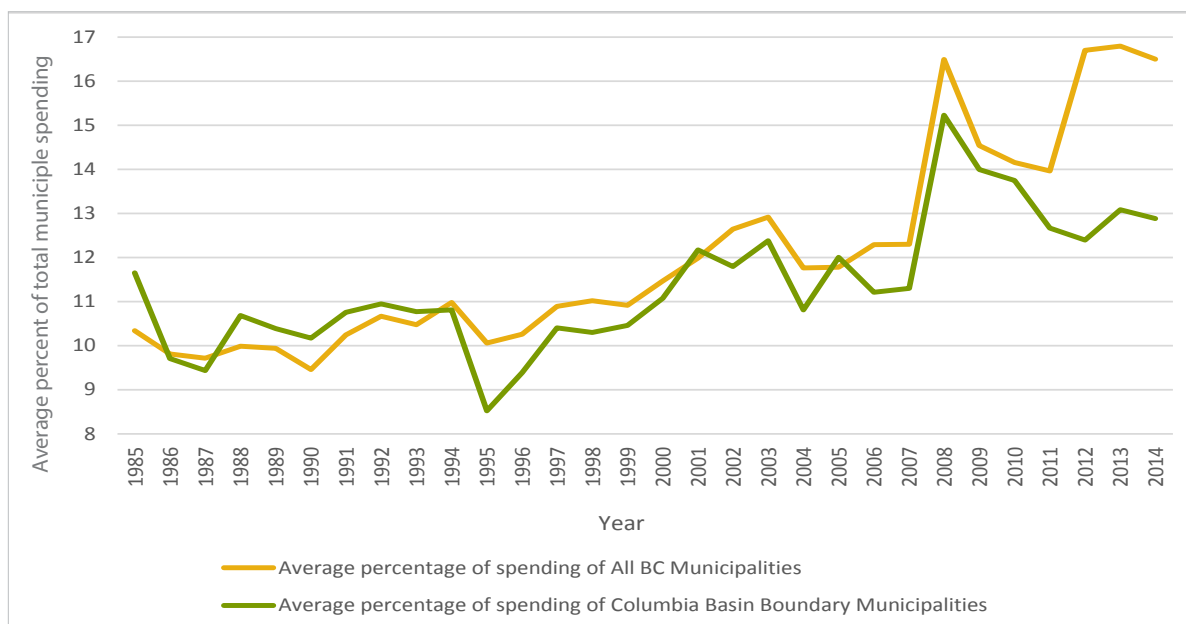
### WHAT DOES THIS MEASURE & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

This indicator measures the percentage of total municipal spending dedicated to parks, recreation, and culture relative to total municipal expenses. Data were acquired from the BC Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development's [Local Government Statistics](#).<sup>15</sup>

Spending is important because it provides an indication of the resources allocated to supporting the amenities and activities in a community. With adequate resourcing, cultural initiatives are more likely to succeed. The cultural sector is identified as a driver of economic prosperity, including the creation of jobs, as well as a means to attract new residents, tourists, and investors.<sup>16</sup> Research also suggests that cultural investments contribute to the development of a healthy 'creative economy', and can increase the success of an economic development strategy.<sup>17</sup> Parks and recreation are integral to individual and community well-being, and play an important role in community health and development.<sup>18,19</sup>

### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS & CURRENT CONDITIONS?

The trend in spending on parks, recreation, and culture over the past 30 years is similar in our region to all municipalities in BC (see **Figure 3**). The average of total spending for Columbia Basin-Boundary municipalities from 1985 to 2014 is 11.4%, while the average for all BC municipalities is 12%. Municipal spending on parks, recreation, and culture has generally increased over time, peaking in 2008 (16.5% for all BC and 15.2% for Columbia Basin-Boundary municipalities).



**Figure 3:** Average percent of spending by Columbia Basin-Boundary municipalities and BC average on parks, recreation and culture from 1985 to 2014<sup>15</sup>

This may be related to a greater interest in spending on these amenities and activities, or possibly increasing costs to maintain assets and infrastructure. Increased spending at the municipal level may also be related to a decrease in federal and/or provincial funding. After 2008, there was a dip in the average spending on parks, recreation, and culture, followed by another increase. As **Figure 3** shows, for the last few years, spending has been about the same in our region, whereas there is more of an increase in the average spending across all BC municipalities.

Several communities in our region show above average spending on parks, recreation, and culture over the last 30 years, including Elkford (19.8%), Fernie (15.6%), Kimberley (19.2%), Midway (18.8%), Nakusp (29.6%), Revelstoke (13.3%), Sparwood (23.3%), Trail (20.0%), Warfield (16.1%), and Valemount (18.5%). Some communities show considerably lower average spending, such as Creston (1.6%), Grand Forks (4.7%), Kaslo (4.9%), Radium Hot Springs (2.3%), and Salmo (2.0%).

The municipalities with the highest expenditures on parks, recreation, and culture in 2014 in our region included Kimberley (25.7%), Elkford (24%), Trail (23.4%), Valemount (22.9%), Fernie (22.4%), and Sparwood (20.9%). The lowest for 2014 was Jumbo Glacier, which was included in the municipal statistics for the first time, showing total expenses of \$66,437, but none of it was spent on parks, recreation, and culture. Other municipalities with the lowest expenditures on parks, recreation, and culture in 2014 include Creston (2.3%), Kaslo (3.4%), Salmo (4.8%), Radium Hot Springs (5.5%), Montrose (5.8%), and Grand Forks (5.9%).

Some communities with consistently higher spending may have more parks, recreation, or cultural facilities, which require more funds to maintain. In some years, communities may spend more because of capital projects or cultural developments, while in other years there may be different needs and priorities. It is important to note that each community is unique, and different variables influence spending on parks, recreation, and culture. It is also important to note that in the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), for example, Recreation Master Plans are developed which are intended to guide decision making regarding recreation facilities and services provided by the RDCK for the various municipalities and areas. These include consideration of “all associated stakeholders, including regional partners, other levels of government, local non-profit volunteer groups, and the private sector”<sup>20</sup>

Visit the [Digital Basin](#)<sup>21</sup> to further explore data on local government spending on parks, recreation, and culture.

## INDEX OF CRIME

### WHAT DOES THIS MEASURE & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The Composite Index of Crime is an index formed by the weighted averages of three indicators: serious violent crime rate (weight of 0.35), serious property crime rate (weight of 0.50), and number of serious crimes per police officer (weight of 0.15). Rates are based on the number of reported offences for every 1,000 people. Serious violent crime rate is based on reporting within the crime categories of homicide, attempted murder, sexual and non-sexual assault, as well as robbery and abduction. Serious property crime includes breaking and entering, but does not include motor vehicle theft and minor crimes such as bicycle theft and pick pocketing. Crime rates are based on resident population and do not take into consideration non-resident or transient populations such as tourists or seasonal workers. Data for 2012 was available from BC Stats' [Socio-Economic Indices](#)<sup>22</sup>, which summarizes social and economic conditions over a wide variety of indicators into a single composite index for each region within the province.

Crime rates are a common objective indicator of public safety. They can help measure the effectiveness of law enforcement and community engagement initiatives, and inform decision-making about law enforcement policies and practices. Crime rates have been associated with areas of higher poverty and thus could inform poverty reduction strategies.<sup>23</sup> Crime rates also contribute to perceptions of safety, which is an important determinant of subjective wellness.<sup>24</sup> Feelings of fear can disrupt a sense of harmony, and can deter people from using certain spaces, or feeling uncomfortable at night, which may drive people away from a community. Research suggests that residents of rural areas report higher levels of trust and perceived safety than those in urban areas.<sup>25</sup>

#### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS & CURRENT CONDITIONS?

The Composite Index of Crime provides a numeric value for each Local Health Area (LHA) in the province. Positive numbers mean that a particular LHA is worse than the median area; negative numbers mean the LHA is better than the median. The index value is used to rank the 78 LHAs as a way to compare crime and public safety across areas.

According to the BC Stats 2012 data, five of the LHAs in our region have crime indices that are among the lowest in the province. Eleven rank among the lowest 20. Most LHAs in our region therefore have comparatively low incidences of crime. Grand Forks and Windermere however have a higher index of crime.

**Table 1** shows the Composite Index of Crime and the three sub-indices, as well as the provincial ranking of LHAs for the Columbia Basin-Boundary region from best to worse.

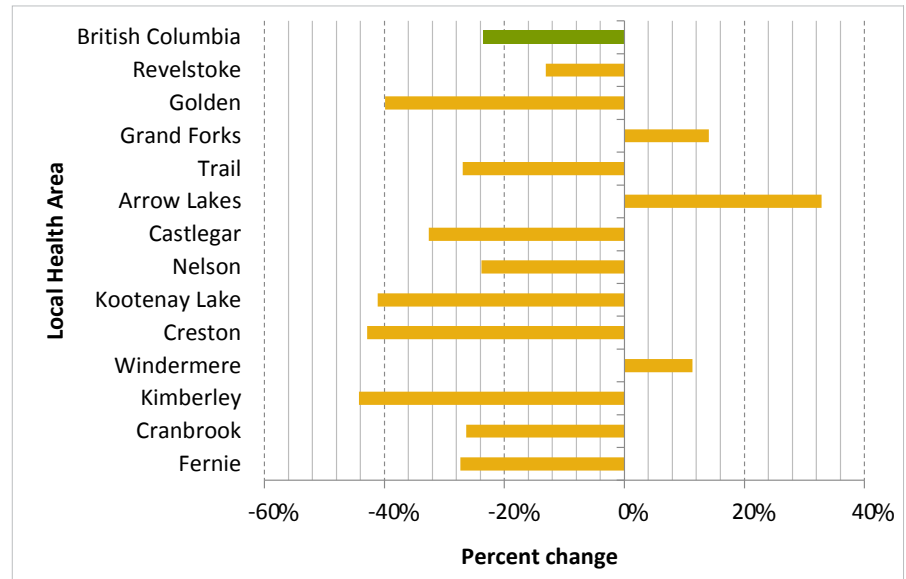
Local Health Area	Composite Index of Crime	Serious violent crime rate	Serious property crime rate	Number of serious crimes per police officer	Provincial ranking (78 LHAs; higher number indicates better ranking)
Kootenay Lake (LHA 6)	-0.88	1.0	3.0	3.7	76
Golden (LHA 18)	-0.83	0.8	3.8	3.1	73
Kimberley (LHA 3)	-0.80	0.9	3.7	3.9	72
Nelson (LHA 7)	-0.78	1.5	3.0	4.1	71
Trail (LHA 11)	-0.74	1.5	3.4	4.3	70
Revelstoke (LHA 19)	-0.61	1.5	4.5	3.5	67
Castlegar (LHA 9)	-0.60	1.4	4.3	4.9	66
Creston (LHA 5)	-0.59	1.2	4.3	5.9	65
Fernie (LHA 1)	-0.54	1.5	5.0	2.7	63
Cranbrook (LHA 2)	-0.45	1.9	4.6	5.6	61
Arrow Lakes (LHA 10)	-0.40	1.3	5.5	5.6	58
Grand Forks (LHA 12)	0.40	1.5	9.4	9.7	25
Windermere (LHA 4)	0.56	1.6	10.6	12.0	19
British Columbia		3.3	7.8	7.7	

**Table 1:** Indicators of crime by Local Health Area and BC and ranking in BC between 2009 to 2011<sup>22</sup>

Serious violent crime rates are well below the BC average for all LHAs in our region, with Golden showing the lowest crime rate at 0.8 offences per 1,000. Serious property crime rates are also well below the BC average for all areas, except Windermere and Grand Forks which have values of 10.6 and 9.4 respectively. The number of serious crimes per police officer is also high and above the BC average for Windermere and Grand Forks, with rates at 12.0 and 9.7. The Kootenay Lake and Nelson LHAs have the lowest serious property crime rates in our region, both at 3.0. The lowest number of serious crimes per police officer is in Fernie at 2.7 offences per 1,000.

While the Composite Index of Crime provides a snapshot of crime across the region, it is also useful to look at how crime rates are changing over time. **Figure 4** shows the percentage change in total serious crime from 2006 to 2008 averages to 2009 to 2011 averages. Total serious crime is the combination of serious violent crime and serious property crime.

Total serious crime decreased in BC and in most areas in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region from 2006 to 2011. Windermere and Grand Forks show an increase in total serious crime over this period, related to the higher crime rates found in those areas. Arrow Lakes LHA also shows an increase in total serious crime; however, it is important to note that Arrow Lakes had low initial crime rates, and the rate of change may not therefore indicate a significant increase in crime. In our small communities one incident can impact the statistics dramatically.



**Figure 4:** Percent change in total serious crime by LHA using averages from 2006 to 2008 and 2009 to 2011<sup>22</sup>

Related to indicators of crime are not only the statistics, but resident perceptions. According to the RDI's [2014 poll of residents](#)<sup>26</sup>, 86% say they love where they live. In 2013, the State of the Basin [Perceptions of Wellbeing](#)<sup>27</sup> report indicated that the majority (89%) of respondents feel safe in their community. These perceptions may be related to the fact that for much of our region's crime rates are well below the provincial average.

## COMMUTE TIME

### WHAT DOES THIS MEASURE & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

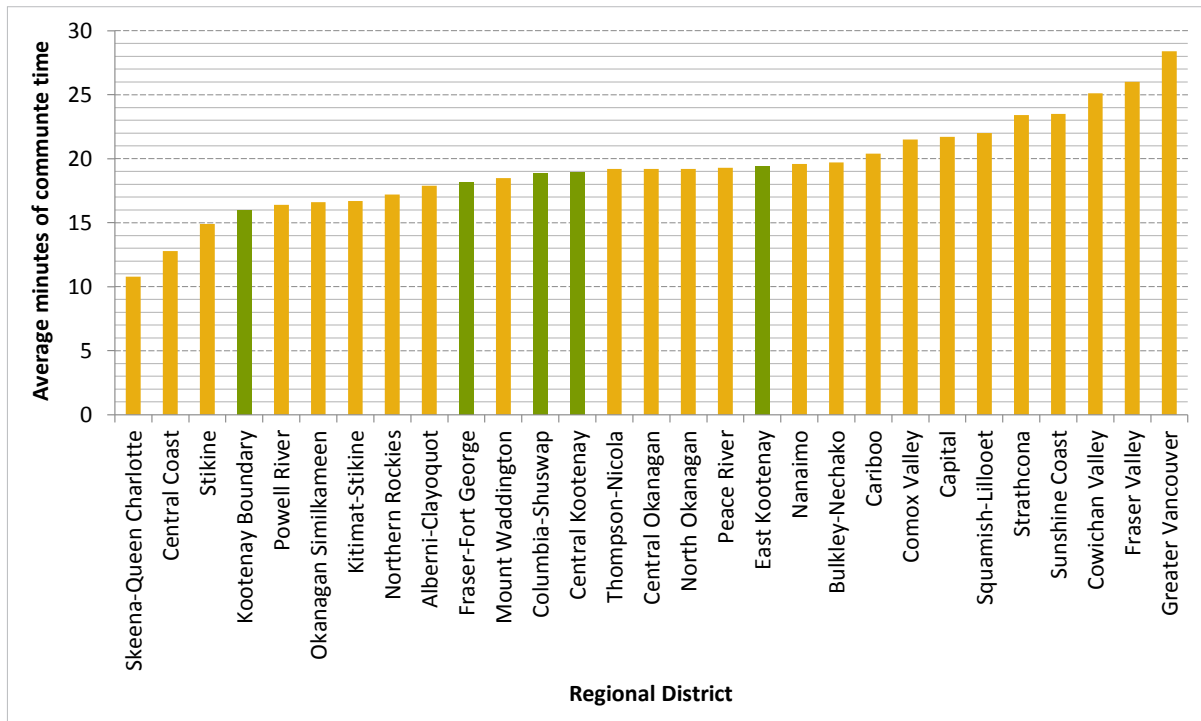
The commute time indicator measures the average duration of Columbia Basin-Boundary residents' commute to work. Data for this indicator were acquired from the 2011 [National Household Survey](#)<sup>28</sup>, and is compared by regional district across the province. Some caution should be exercised when using these figures, as depending on the regional district, non-response rates for the National Household Survey were up to 46%.

Data on commuting patterns provides an indication of people's work location compared to residence. There can be a number of positive or negative affects to well-being related to the time spent commuting. This data can also help economists assess connections between regional job markets, and help us understand the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of residents having to travel farther to work.



### WHAT ARE THE TRENDS & CURRENT CONDITIONS?

Commute times in the region are lower than the BC average of 25 minutes, with the shortest average commute being reported in the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) at 16 minutes, and the longest commute reported in the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) at 19 minutes. See **Figure 5**.



**Figure 5:** Average commute time in minutes by Regional District<sup>29</sup>

Shorter commutes are likely related to the small and relatively isolated nature of our communities. Most Columbia Basin-Boundary residents work close to home. For example, of the 3,655 commuters living in Nelson, only about 8% leave the city for work. Similarly, of the 7,325 commuters in Cranbrook, about 12% leave the city for work. Residents who live and work in the same community will have a very short commute, and those who may work outside the community in which they live, will likely be driving on highways, which have faster speeds and few streetlights compared to urban areas.

### CHARITABLE DONATIONS

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEASURE & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A databank of charitable donations made by Canadians is derived from income tax returns; information Statistics Canada receives from the Canada Revenue Agency each year. This databank provides information on tax filers classified as charitable donors – those who reported donations on line 340 of their tax return, who claimed a tax credit for charitable donations for that particular year. Eligible donations are those made to Canadian registered charities and Canadian amateur athletic associations. Donations are also eligible if made to: prescribed universities outside Canada, certain tax exempt housing organizations in Canada, Canadian municipalities, the United Nations, and certain charities outside Canada to which the Government of Canada has made a gift.<sup>30</sup>

Charitable donations play a role in improving community well-being, assisting with a variety of causes, from food banks to environmental protection, to advancing research and allowing political voices to be heard.<sup>31</sup> Charitable giving can be viewed as a capacity to give, as well as an attitude or belief in sharing and supporting others. Charitable giving is also tied to the economy, where people may give more or less

depending not only on their personal financial situation, but the state of the economy.<sup>32</sup> Charitable giving can also provide a sense of satisfaction and joy for those who are giving, contributing to their own positive sense of well-being.

**WHAT ARE THE TRENDS & CURRENT CONDITIONS?**

In 2014, there were about 23,000 people in our region who made charitable donations, totalling almost 30-million dollars. **Table 2** shows the total number of donors and percentage of tax filers for the Census Divisions of Central Kootenay, East Kootenay, and Kootenay Boundary, as well as for BC and Canada. The total donations, median donation, and median income are also shown.

Location	Total number donors (and percentage tax filers)	Total donations \$'000	Median donation	Median income
Central Kootenay	8,370 (19%)	\$11,085	\$320	\$49,470
East Kootenay	9,550 (21%)	\$12,650	\$270	\$59,840
Kootenay Boundary	5,660 (23%)	\$5,930	\$240	\$55,490
British Columbia	694,870 (20%)	\$1,353,040	\$410	\$56,770
Canada	5,543,740 (21%)	\$8,797,115	\$280	\$57,930

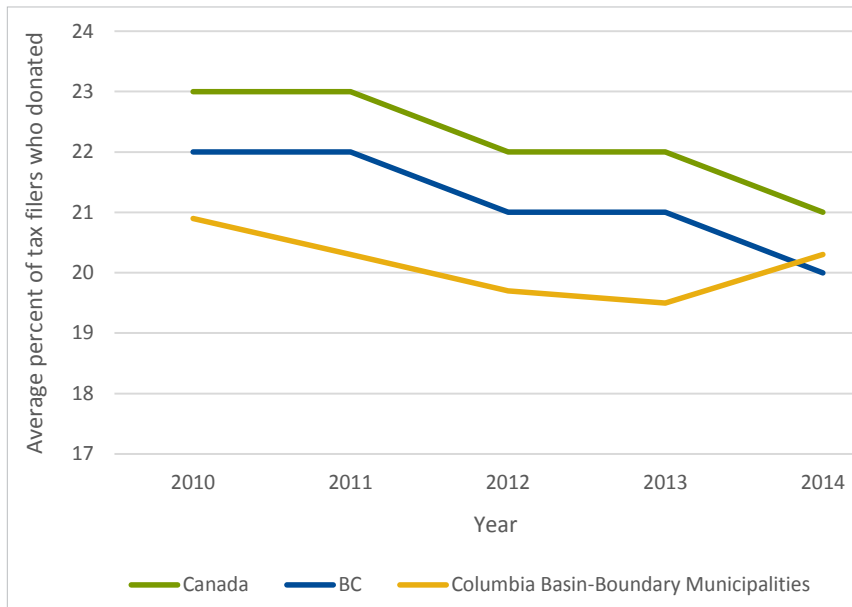
**Table 2:** Total number of donors and donations, and median donation and median income for Columbia Basin-Boundary Census Divisions, BC, and Canada for 2014<sup>33</sup>

While the East Kootenay shows the highest number of donors and amount of donations in the region, the Kootenay Boundary shows the highest percentage of tax filers who donated, at 23% of tax filers. While charitable donations are often associated with levels of income, it is interesting to note that the Central Kootenay had the highest median donation (\$320) with the lowest median income (\$49,470) in our region. This median donation is also higher than the Canadian median of \$280 (with a median income of \$57,930). The East Kootenay shows a median donation of \$270 (the middle value of the three divisions), but the highest median income (\$59,840). Kootenay Boundary had the lowest median donation (\$240) and the middle median income at \$55,490.

**Table 3** outlines the percentage of donors by age group. The majority of donors are over the age of 55 years old for all three divisions, as well as for BC. The smallest percentage of donors are from the 25 to 34-year-old age group. Generally, the older the age group, the higher percentage who donate. The average age of donors in 2014 for BC was 55 years old, and for Canada it was 54 years old. The average ages for our region are slightly older at 56 years for East Kootenay, 58 years for Kootenay Boundary, and 59 years for Central Kootenay.

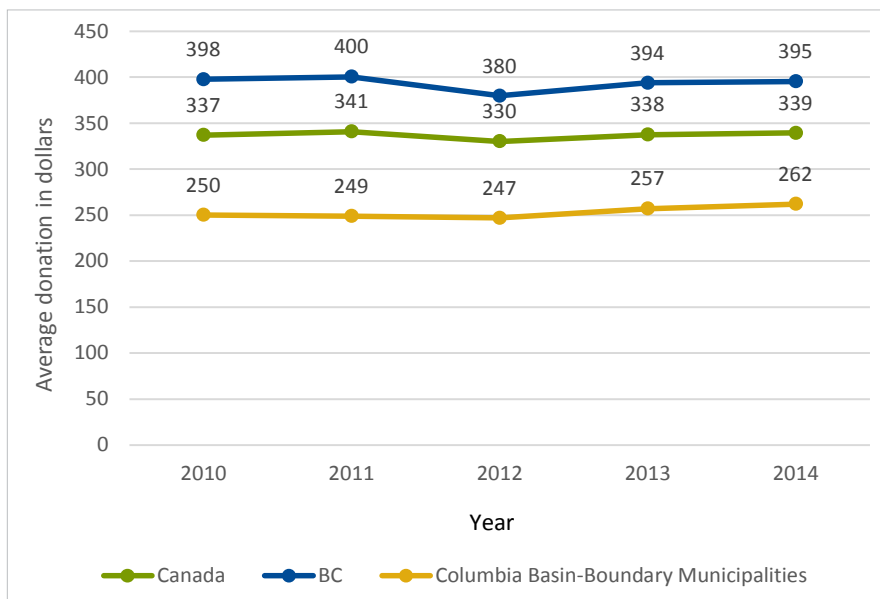
Location	% 25 - 34 years	% 35 - 44 years	% 45 - 54 years	% 55 - 64 years	% 65+ years	Average age of donor
Central Kootenay	6	11	16	26	39	59
East Kootenay	10	14	18	25	31	56
Kootenay Boundary	9	11	17	26	35	58
British Columbia	11	16	20	22	30	55
Canada	12	16	21	21	27	54

**Table 3:** Percent of donors by age group for Columbia Basin-Boundary Census Divisions, BC, and Canada for 2014<sup>33</sup>



**Figure 6:** Percent of tax filers who donated for Columbia Basin-Boundary municipalities, BC, and Canada, from 2010 to 2014 <sup>33-37</sup>

The percentage of tax filers who donated over time is shown in **Figure 6** for Canada, BC, and the average of 27 municipalities within the Columbia Basin-Boundary (Warfield is not included as data was not available). Over the five-year period, the percentage of donors has remained relatively stable, with a slight decrease for Canada and BC, and for most years in the Columbia Basin-Boundary as well, except for a slight increase in 2014.



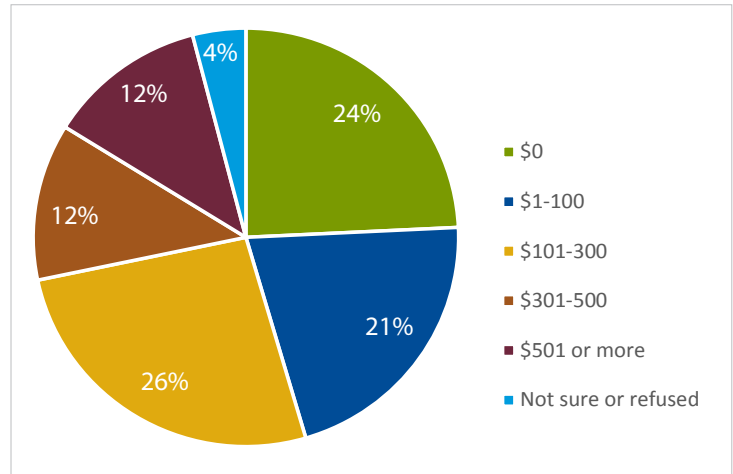
**Figure 7:** Average charitable donation per tax filer for Columbia Basin-Boundary municipalities, BC, and Canada for 2010 to 2014 <sup>33-37</sup>

As shown in **Figure 7**, the average charitable donation has remained relatively stable over the last five years, with a slight increase in the last two years for our region. The highest average donation per tax filer for the Columbia Basin-Boundary region was \$262 in 2014. The averages for our region are considerably lower than the averages for both BC and Canada. BC's highest average donation per tax filer was \$400 in 2011; Canada's highest was \$341 in that same year.

Some of the highest average donations per tax filer made in our region in 2014 include the municipalities of Creston (\$344), Cranbrook (\$336), Nelson (\$328), and Invermere (\$325). Some of the lowest are in Silverton (\$80), Salmo (\$86), Greenwood (\$100), and Slocan (\$115).

In 2015, the RDI conducted a [poll of Columbia Basin-Boundary residents](#)<sup>14</sup> which asked participants how much they had donated to a charity or non-profit organization in the last year. As shown in **Figure 8**, about one quarter of respondents reported that they did not make a donation at all, almost one quarter donated \$1 to \$100, another quarter donated \$101 to \$300, and the last quarter was split between those who donated \$301 to \$500 and \$500 or more.

As part of the 2016 annual poll of residents the RDI asked survey participants about various activities they may have participated in over the last 12 months, including whether they had “donated to a non-profit or charity”; 84% said yes.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 8:** Percent of Basin-Boundary poll respondents and amount donated to a charity or non-profit in last year<sup>14</sup>

### VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is an important aspect of community engagement. Research shows that this coming together of people, working towards a shared goal, contributes to social cohesion, reciprocity, and sense of belonging in communities.<sup>38,49</sup> Many programs and services offered in our communities only exist because people are willing to volunteer their time – for children playing sports, for after school youth activities, or for seniors in need of social interaction. According to a recent study of the [non-profit social sector](#) by the RDI, most social service organizations surveyed rely on volunteers, with one in five having 50 or more program volunteers.<sup>40</sup>

While volunteer data at the community level is not available, the [General Social Survey 2013](#) conducted by Statistics Canada includes data at a national and provincial scale.<sup>41</sup> This survey asked Canadians aged 15 years and over: “In the past 12 months, did you do any unpaid volunteer work for any organization?”. In BC, 49.1% said yes, up from 39.5% in 2010. This was higher than the Canadian average which was 44% of people aged 15 years and older reported doing volunteer work. Canadians devoted about 1.96 billion hours of volunteer time in 2013 – equivalent to the work of about one million full-time jobs.<sup>31</sup> Just like the general population, the population of volunteers is aging, with 28% of all Canadian volunteers being aged 55 and older, compared to 23% in 2004.<sup>31</sup>

RDI’s 2015 annual [poll of residents](#) asked how much time people spent volunteering, on average, in the last year.<sup>14</sup> Results from this question are shown in **Table 4**, and indicate that 58% of respondents said they had volunteered (1% refused the question). Most volunteered at least one hour per month, with 19% volunteering 10 hours or more, and 9% volunteering more than 20 hours per month. Responses from the [2014 poll](#) which asked the same question showed similar results.<sup>26</sup>

Number of hours per month	Percent of respondents
0 hours	41%
1-4 hours	23%
1-4 hours	15%
10-20 hours	10%
More than 20 hours	9%

**Table 4:** Percent of poll respondents who reported number of volunteer hours contributed per month<sup>14</sup>

The RDI’s 2016 annual poll of residents asked survey participants about various activities they may have participated in over the last 12 months, including whether they had “provided unpaid support to a senior, like house or yard work” or “provided unpaid childcare to a child other than your own”. The results showed that 45% of respondents indicated they had provided unpaid support to a senior, and 28% indicated they had provided unpaid childcare to a child other than their own.<sup>8</sup>

## SENSE OF BELONGING

The Statistics Canada 2013 [General Social Survey](#)<sup>42</sup> asked Canadians aged 15 years and older to describe their sense of belonging to Canada, their province of residence, and their local community.<sup>43</sup> About two-thirds (63%) reported having a very strong sense of belonging to Canada, and almost half (45%) said they had a very strong sense of belonging to their province of residence. About one in three (32%) expressed a strong sense of belonging to their local community. The sense of belonging tended to be stronger among women and older people, and the survey revealed some variations between provinces. Unfortunately, data is not available at the community or regional level.

In the 2014 and 2015 poll of residents, the RDI asked residents of the Columbia Basin-Boundary region about their sense of connection to place. The majority of respondents (86%) said they “love where they live”<sup>26</sup>, and most predicted they would stay, with 82% saying they see themselves living in the region in the next five years<sup>14</sup>. A majority of respondents (80%) also agreed that “living in the mountains influences our regional identity”<sup>14</sup>. The poll from 2013 also indicates that 89% of respondents said they feel safe in their community, while 69% reported feeling a strong sense of belonging to their community.<sup>27</sup>

Sense of belonging is recognized as a connection with other people, along with place. The 2013 General Social Survey also asked Canadians about the frequency of in-person contact with relatives and friends.

As shown in **Table 5**, in-person contact with friends is overall more frequent than with family for both British Columbians and Canadians, with 51.4% of British Columbians and 47.3% of Canadians being in contact once a week or more. Almost 7% for both BC and Canada said they had not had in-person contact with friends in the last month. These may be people who are experiencing social isolation, a challenge for many people, including and often, seniors.

Frequency of in-person contact	With relatives		With friends	
	BC	Canada	BC	Canada
Every day	6.2%	7.5%	14.7%	15.7%
Once a week or more	30.6%	36.2%	51.4%	47.3%
1 to 3 times per month	33.6%	35.3%	25.6%	28.5%
Not in the last month	29.5%	20.8%	6.6%	6.8%

**Table 5:** Frequency of contact with relatives and friends for British Columbians and Canadians<sup>42</sup>

Occurrence	Percent of respondents
Less than once a month	7%
Once a month	17%
Once a week	31%
More than once a week	45%

**Table 6:** Percent of poll respondents and how often they meet socially with friends or relatives<sup>26</sup>

In the RDI’s [2014 annual poll of residents](#)<sup>26</sup>, respondents were asked: “About how often do you meet socially with friends or relatives?”. **Table 6** shows the results, where 31% said they meet socially once a week and 45% said more than once a week; 7% said they meet less than once a month. These results are similar to the above noted provincial and Canadian percentages.

## AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS

A number of communities in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region have conducted an age-friendly assessment, and related action planning. This initiative of the Government of BC, identifies a vision of a province “where people of all ages and abilities feel included and valued in their communities”, acknowledging our aging population and allowing “older people [to feel] supported to live active, socially engaged, independent lives”.<sup>44</sup> This process is designed to increase awareness and guide communities to identify barriers, foster dialogue, and promote action that supports the development of an age-friendly community.<sup>45</sup>

As shown in **Table 7**, there are nine communities in the region who have completed age-friendly assessments, and produced action plans or final reports with recommendations. Each community name provides a direct link to the action plan for that community.

Community	Date completed
<a href="#">Christina Lake</a> <sup>46</sup>	December 2015
<a href="#">Creston</a> <sup>47</sup>	March 2013
<a href="#">Golden</a> <sup>48</sup>	July 2014
<a href="#">Kaslo</a> <sup>49</sup>	March 2014
<a href="#">Nelson</a> <sup>50</sup>	April 2011
<a href="#">New Denver</a> <sup>51</sup>	January 2010
<a href="#">Revelstoke</a> <sup>52</sup>	June 2009
<a href="#">Sparwood</a> <sup>53</sup>	February 2016
<a href="#">Valemount</a> <sup>54</sup>	November 2015

**Table 7:** Communities in the Columbia Basin-Boundary who have completed age-friendly assessments

These reports include themes related to several areas of community and society, such as *Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings, Respect and Social Inclusion, Social Participation, Civic Participation (or Civic Engagement), Community Support and Health Services, and Communication and Information*. Assets, needs, and desired outcomes related to these themes are expressed in each of the reports, and are based on the assessment process which typically includes public surveys and community meetings. While RDI has not completed an analysis of all these documents, the reports are noted for specific communities who have completed the process to add further information and insight into the factors that affect community health and well-being.

## SUMMARY

The high voter turnout in our region is an indicator that our citizens care about democracy and are civically motivated, with some communities having the highest voter turnout in the province. Community engagement is also demonstrated in the fact that most residents volunteer, with many volunteering considerable amounts of their time. According to recent polling by the RDI, there is a strong sense of belonging and connection to community in our region.

About one in five residents have made charitable donations according to tax filer statistics over the last five years, and polling indicates that about three quarters made donations to charities or non-profits in the last year. The trend over the last 30 years shows that local government spending on parks, recreation, and culture in our region is similar to all municipalities in BC, with several communities in our region showing above average spending.

The Columbia Basin-Boundary is generally a safe place to live, with five of the Local Health Areas in our region having crime indices that are among the 10 lowest in the province, and 11 ranking among the lowest 20. Through the age-friendly community assessment and action planning process, we know that one-third of our communities have committed to being a place where people of all ages and abilities feel included and valued.

The indicators reviewed in this document provide some insight into community and society in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region. While they begin to paint a picture, there is more information and insight that could be provided by accessing further data sets and qualitative research to help understand changes over time and differences among our unique communities.

## COMMUNITY & SOCIETY TRENDS ANALYSIS DETAILS:

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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](http://www.cbrdi.ca) for more information.*