

TRENDS ANALYSIS: MUNICIPAL SPENDING ON PARKS, RECREATION, AND CULTURE

FALL 2015



What does this measure and 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 and Cultural Development's [Local Government Statistics](#).

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 (Stanborough, 2011). 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 (Singh, 2006). Parks and recreation are integral to individual and community well-being (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010), and play an important role in community development (Jeannotte, 2003).

What are the trends and current conditions?

The trend over the past 29 years is similar in our region compared to all municipalities in BC (See Figure 1). The average of total spending for Basin-Boundary municipalities from 1985 to 2013 is 11.3% while the average for all BC municipalities is 11.9%. Municipal spending on parks, recreation and culture has generally increased over time, peaking in 2008 (16.5% for all BC and 15.2% for Basin-Boundary municipalities). 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.



Figure 1: Municipal spending on parks, recreation and culture, 1985-2013 (average of % total expenses)
Source: BC Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development, 2013

Several communities in our region show above average spending on parks, recreation and culture over the last 29 years, including Elkford, Fernie, Kimberley, Midway, Nakusp, Revelstoke, Sparwood, Trail, Warfield and Valemount. Some communities with consistently higher spending may have more parks, recreational or cultural facilities, which require more funding 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 municipal spending on parks, recreation, and culture.

References

Jeannotte, S. (2003). Singing Alone? The contribution of cultural capital to social cohesion and sustainable communities. *The International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 9(1), 35-49.

Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. (2015) Local Government Statistics. Retrieved from http://www.cscd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/infra/statistics_index.htm.

Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). *Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and management.

Singh, V. (2006). Rural Employment in the Culture Sector. *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, 6(8), 1 – 16.

Stanborough, M. (2011). The link between: Culture and sustainability in municipal planning. *Culture and Local Governance*, 3(1-2), 95-100.



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.