

CENTRAL OKANAGAN'S

VitalSigns®

2023

Tracking trends and changes in the Central Okanagan.



Our Thoughts



Welcome to the Central Okanagan's 2023 Vital Signs report.

The last few years have presented challenges to our community both in the Central Okanagan and globally. The rising cost of living, challenges of climate change, housing affordability, and the widening income gap are just some of the issues affecting the Central Okanagan. These were not only highlighted, but exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

If anything is to be learned from recent events in our region, it is that we can come together and help one another. It is evident in the efforts of each and every person in the Central Okanagan, proving that we care about each other and are willing to give—of our time, talent and treasure. Even when adversity hits our own backyard.

The Central Okanagan Foundation is proud to present the 2023 Vital Signs Report. This document contains information on different issues that impact community quality of life—from arts and culture, sense

of belonging, to the environment. Community members were given the opportunity to share thoughts on the various indicators, and some of these are captured in the report. After reading this you might ask, “Now what?” At the end of the report, you will find ideas on how to use the information in Vital Signs as a launchpad for action.

A healthy and vital community is created through supporting the health and vitality of the people in it. The Central Okanagan Foundation continues to be an integral part of our community- creating the change we want to see now, and for generations to come.

Kristine Bugayong
Executive Director

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The Central Okanagan Foundation acknowledges our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tmx^wúla?x^w (land) of the syilx / Okanagan people who have resided here since time immemorial.

We recognize, honour, and respect the syilx / Okanagan lands upon which we live, work, and play.



What is Vital Signs?



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

VitalSigns.

Vital Signs is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life.

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Okanagan Fruit Tree Project

Vital Signs in the Central Okanagan

Central Okanagan Foundation (COF) published its first Vital Signs report in 2015 and then again in 2017 and 2018. After a hiatus, we are once again taking the pulse of the Central Okanagan. Vital Signs helps us amplify our region's assets and identify – and mitigate – our region's challenges. Other stakeholders that rely on Vital Signs include local government, charities and non-profits, other community groups, and residents.

Geography

As in the COF's granting and community work, the Central Okanagan is defined as the District of Lake Country, City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, and District of Peachland.

All efforts have been made to focus on data from this geographic area, but occasionally narrower or broader geographies are measured. The Okanagan Health Service Delivery Area, for example, includes but is not limited to the Central Okanagan.

The Central Okanagan Foundation acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded, traditional territory of the syilx/Okanagan people.

Sources of Information

Indicators

This Vital Signs report is comprised of 11 issue areas, ranging from Arts & Culture to Work & Economy. Each issue area contains 4 or more indicators, some of which appear in our previous reports. Sources for the indicator data are available on page 23.

Community Stories

Local charities and non-profits are working every day to make positive change in our region. One organization is highlighted in each issue area. We regret that we could not highlight more of the incredible work happening in the Central Okanagan.

Community Survey (Survey Says)

From March-May 2023, we ran a survey that queried topics including community belonging and participation, housing, safety, and quality of life in the Central Okanagan. The survey was open to all Central Okanagan residents and was promoted by email, on social media, and on our website. In total, it garnered 462 responses. Given a population size of 222,162, the number of responses gives a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. **Survey responses are reported under the heading of "Survey Says" and are not used as indicator data as they are not representative of the region's population.**

Report Highlights

“Work/life balance, environment and recreational activities are all important to me! The Okanagan is a great place to live.”

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent



Arts & Culture

The Central Okanagan is an arts and culture hub, with the largest arts, culture, recreation, and sport workforce in the Okanagan. Creative sector establishments, library use, and grant funding also point to the importance of the sector in the Central Okanagan.

Belonging & Participation

The charitable sector continues to grow, as evidenced by the creation of nearly fifty new non-profits over the last five years. Charitable donations by residents continue to grow as well.

Environment

Water usage, air quality, and species at risk indicators offer opportunities for improvement.

Getting Around

Kelowna and West Kelowna residents generally report shorter commute times than Lake Country and Peachland residents. Hybrid and electric vehicles have increased in number over the last five years.

Health & Wellness

Rates of smoking, heavy drinking, and per capita alcohol sales are higher in the Central Okanagan than in Interior Health or British Columbia. The region’s senior population is growing and the current number of assisted living and long-term care beds may not be sufficient.

Housing

The cost of housing continues to climb – median sale prices and assessed values provide evidence of this, as do the proportion of households spending 30% or more of their income on housing. Renters are hit hardest, with nearly half of renter households spending 30% or more on their rent.

Income Gap

Compared to the larger Okanagan and the province, the Central Okanagan has a smaller proportion of households earning \$39,999 or less per year, and a higher proportion of households earning \$100,000 or more per year.

Getting Started

Nearly 1 in 6 Central Okanagan residents are immigrants, with the majority of the region’s immigrants settling in Kelowna. Immigrants who arrived within the last five years represent at least 39 different countries.

Learning

The Central Okanagan bests the province in the early years vulnerability rate and the high school completion rate, but falls behind the provincial average in Indigenous high school completion and rate of transition to post-secondary.

Safety

Looking at the overall crime rate and the violent crime rate, rates are generally rising in Kelowna and West Kelowna while they remained static or even decreased in Lake Country and Peachland.

Work & Economy

In less than a decade, the proportion of people who are self-employed has increased by almost 25%, and the proportion working from home has almost doubled. An insufficient number of childcare spaces hampers parent’s participation in the workforce.

“The Okanagan is a highly desirable retirement destination and as a result it is incredibly difficult for young people and young families to succeed.”

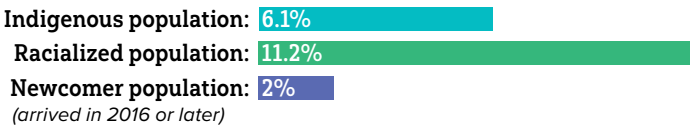
~Anonymous comment by survey respondent

Central Okanagan at a Glance

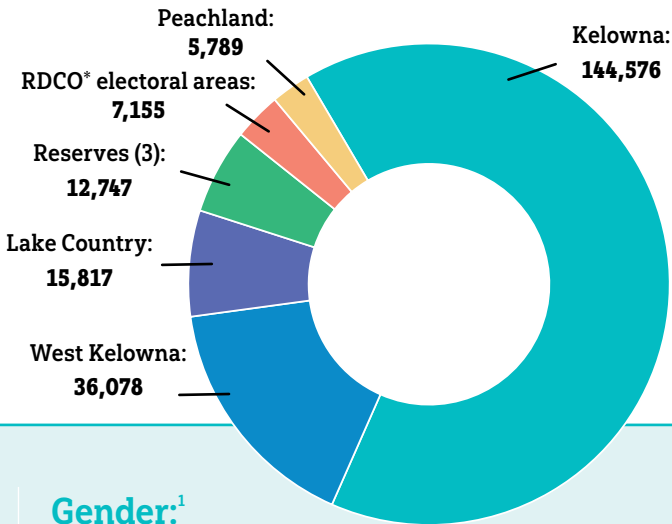
222,162¹

Population

Our region's population grew by **14.9%** between 2016 and 2021, outpacing neighbouring North Okanagan and South Okanagan, which each grew by **8.6%** in the same timeframe.^{2,3}



Population by municipality:¹



Population by age:¹

Children and youth (0-19)	18.8%
Adults (20-44)	31.8%
Older adults (45-64)	26.8%
Seniors (65 and greater)	22.6%

Median age: 44.4 years

Languages spoken most often at home:¹

English	204,845
Punjabi	2,595
Mandarin	840
German	775
Spanish	770
Tagalog	740
French	700

Gender:¹

Women+:
51%

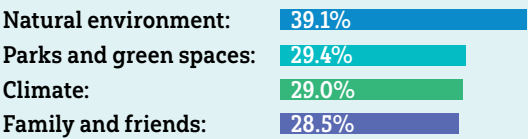
Men+:
49%

The Census now reports gender as Men+ and Women+, recognizing the spectrum of gender. Non-binary and gender non-conforming people are equally distributed amongst these categories and are denoted by the "+" symbol.



Survey Says:⁸

We asked survey respondents the best things about living in the Central Okanagan:



"I love how there are so many opportunities for recreation, leisure, and sports as well as the healthcare services we have here. **Additionally, I love the sense of community in the sense that you can go to any major event in the area and you are likely to see someone that you know!**"

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent

\$85,000¹

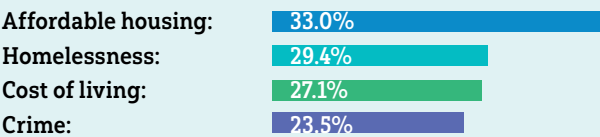
Median total household income
(all households)

*Regional District of Central Okanagan

58.5%¹

Central Okanagan Employment Rate

Then, we asked respondents to identify the most important issues facing the region. Most frequently chosen responses focused on housing and the cost of living:



"The homeless situation in the Central Okanagan has been worsening over the past few years as house prices have skyrocketed. This is making our region (downtown Kelowna especially) less safe as many of the people dealing with being unhoused are also dealing with mental health challenges and so they are very unpredictable. I don't like walking alone downtown for this reason. I want to feel safe in my city. **If housing is made more affordable, this would potentially help to slowly fix the homeless crisis.**"

Arts & Culture



Abigail Wiens / Artists of Ballet Kelowna in Alysa Pires' MAMBO

Survey Says:⁸

We asked Central Okanagan residents how they had participated in arts and culture activities in the last year. What they said:

- **5 in 10** visited a local library and/or community centre
- **3 in 10** visited a local museum and/or participated in an event about the Central Okanagan's heritage
- **3 in 10** attended an event put on by an Indigenous group

Percentage of survey respondents who reported that the following would be very easy to do, considering available resources (money and time):

- Engage in informal leisure activities: **39.6%**
- Learn about the Central Okanagan's heritage: **25.8%**
- Engage in arts and culture activities: **26.5%**
- Learn about the Indigenous history of the area: **22.6%**
- Engage in formal recreation activities: **20.6%**

Community Story:

[Ballet Kelowna's](#) artistic excellence captivates audiences across Canada with performances that seamlessly blend tradition and innovation. The company nurtures local talent while collaborating with renowned choreographers, resulting in a diverse repertoire that encompasses both traditional and modern pieces.

Ballet Kelowna's current works showcase a fusion of classical ballet and innovative choreography, engaging audiences with a range of narratives that span from timeless classics to thought-provoking contemporary creations.

Beyond their artistic endeavors, Ballet Kelowna is deeply involved in community engagement and educational outreach, enriching Kelowna's cultural landscape and promoting the arts.



1,372,804

Number of items borrowed⁴

In 2022, **1,372,804** items were borrowed from the Central Okanagan branches of the Okanagan Regional Library. Of these, **843,472** were physical items (books, magazines, etc.) and **529,332** were digital (e-books, e-magazines, e-audiobooks).

3.3%

Employment in cultural occupations¹

In the Central Okanagan in 2021, **3.3%** of the workforce reported occupations in art, culture, recreation, and sport, for a total of **3,830** jobs. This is an increase of **740** jobs in this sector since 2016. Across the Okanagan, **3.0%** of the workforce reported work in this sector.

\$696,240

Canada Council for the Arts grant funding⁵

In 2021-22, 20 Canada Council for the Arts grants were awarded in the Central Okanagan, **10** to individual artists and **10** to organizations, including the Okanagan Symphony and the Okanagan Artists Alternative Association. In total in 2021-22, the Okanagan received **\$1,117,229**.

626

Number of creative sector establishments⁶

The Kelowna Creative Sector Economic Impact study, completed in 2019, suggests the area has a total of **626** creative sector establishments, including art galleries, cultural facilities, performing arts spaces, and commercial arts offerings.

38,416

Number of Museum visits⁷

Kelowna Museums is a collective of museums including the Okanagan Heritage Museum, Okanagan Military Museum, and the Laurel Packinghouse. Kelowna Museums reported **38,416** visitors in 2022, more than double the **16,570** that came through the doors in 2021. Social distancing measures were in place in 2021.

Belonging & Participation

56%

Voter turnout 2020 provincial election¹³

There are four provincial electoral districts in the Central Okanagan. In the 2020 provincial election, roughly half of eligible voters cast a ballot: Kelowna-Lake Country had a voter turnout rate of **49.0%**, Kelowna-Mission saw **52.9%**, Kelowna West reported **43.9%**, and Penticton (which includes Peachland) reported **56.0%**. Across the province, **53.9%** of registered voters participated in the election.

Voter turnout 2021 federal election¹⁴

Canada's most recent federal election, in 2021, saw a national voter turnout rate of **62.6%**. The Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola federal electoral district saw a voter turnout rate of **64.5%**, and Kelowna-Lake Country similarly saw **63.3%**. Both electoral districts reported voter turnout rates of **68%** in the 2019 federal election.

Voter turnout, municipal election¹²

■ 2018 ■ 2022

Kelowna

30.3%

30.4%

Lake Country

15.8%

26.5%

Peachland

48.1%

51.6%

West Kelowna

19.7%

30.9%

Community Story:

The [Kelowna & District S.H.A.R.E. Society](#) offers the skills training program, Details of Retail Introductory Program (D.R.I.P.) for those who would benefit from a structured approach to learning. The program provides employment preparation and individualized support to those experiencing ongoing challenges. Participants gain practical retail experience, an understanding of workplace expectations, and increased confidence in securing and maintaining long-term employment. S.H.A.R.E. Society collaborates with employment specialists, behavior interventionists, and educators to provide participants with the support they need. The program aims to help participants develop social connections, a sense of belonging, and the skills necessary to succeed in the retail industry. As a non-profit community-based organization, S.H.A.R.E. Society has been dedicated to serving the community of Kelowna and surrounding areas since 1977. The organization also offers other programs to help the community such as the Community Assistance Program which provides clothing & household goods to new immigrants and low income families.

Survey Says:⁸

Survey respondents reported that in the last 12 months, they have:

- Attended a faith-based service/activity: **22.9%**
- Attended a neighbourhood or community meeting: **33.2%**
- Participated in an informal neighbourhood activity, like a little free library or food shed: **27.3%**
- Participated in neighbourhood or community projects (i.e. neighbourhood cleanup): **24.1%**
- Provided unpaid help to a non-family member (informal service): **33.8%**



426

Registered charities⁹

There are **426** registered charities across the Central Okanagan. Of these, **46** were registered within the last **5** years.

	Total charities	Charities formed within last 5 years
Lake Country	17	2
Kelowna and West Kelowna	398	44
Peachland	11	0

\$86,485,000

Total charitable donations¹⁰

In 2021, Kelowna residents made receipted charitable donations to the tune of **\$86,485,000**. In total, **29,620** residents contributed to this total, or **17.6%** of all Kelowna tax filers. The median donation was **\$520**. This is the largest total charitable donations reported in the last decade. This data is not available for any other communities in the Central Okanagan.



68%

Sense of community belonging¹¹

In the Okanagan Health Services Delivery Area, which includes the Central Okanagan, **68.0%** of residents 12 years and older reported a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to their local community in 2019-2020. This is on par with the provincial rate of **69.5%**.

Environment



Mountain Sheep in Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park



675 liters

Average daily residential water usage¹⁶

Across the Okanagan Basin, residential water use averages **675** liters/day – **150** liters for indoor residential use, and **525** for outdoor residential landscaping, which spikes in the summer. In British Columbia, average daily residential water usage is **490** liters.

56

Species at risk¹⁸

There are **56** unique animal species at risk in the Central Okanagan. Animal species at risk include fish, a variety of birds including **owls** and **falcons**, and **lizards**. All of these species are rated “Red” on the BC List, meaning they are extirpated, endangered, or threatened.

158,114

Tonnes of waste to landfill¹⁹

In 2022, the Glenmore Landfill received **158,114** tonnes of waste. Given a total service population of **234,885** (as the Glenmore Landfill services the entire Central Okanagan), this equates to **0.67** tonnes per capita, or roughly **1,483** lbs per capita.

6.3¹⁷

Air quality: Average PM2.5

Throughout 2022, the average particulate matter micrograms (PM2.5) reading at the Kelowna KLO Road weather station was 6.3 PM2.5. **For public health, the optimal reading is 6 PM2.5 or lower.**

224,688_{ha}

ALR Lands²⁰

Within the entire Okanagan, there are **224,688** hectares in the Agricultural Land Reserve. This represents **5%** of the total lands in the Okanagan. Overall, the Okanagan’s total ALR decreased by **16.4** hectares between 2021 and 2022.

Community Story:

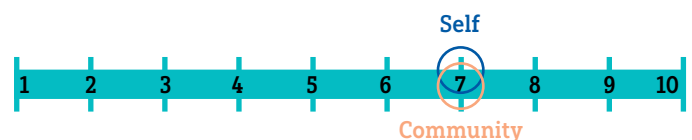
The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) is a partnership of conservation organizations, local governments, provincial agencies, and universities that work together to share information, conduct research to fill knowledge gaps, and work with Indigenous communities in identifying and setting conservation priorities in the Okanagan region.

Projects focus on maintaining habitat connectivity for biodiversity (all living things) throughout the Okanagan Basin, protecting species at risk, and balancing regional growth with conservation. One of the major projects underway is the [Okanagan Mountain -K’nmalka Wildlife corridor](#), which is designed to protect and restore the habitat between two provincial parks to help ensure the long-term survival of wildlife in our region.

Survey Says:⁸

Our survey sought to understand the degree to which Central Okanagan residents think climate change threatens health and safety – both their own, and that of their community.

On a scale of 1 - 10 survey respondents ranked climate change threats to their own health and safety and the health and safety of their community:



“I am more concerned for my grandchildren than myself, because **they will have to endure much worse than I unless we move quickly to improve things.**”

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent

Getting Around

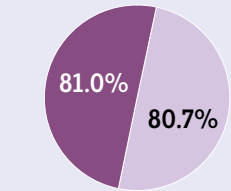
38.4%

Commuting time of 15 minutes or less¹

Slightly more than one-third of the workforce in the Central Okanagan have a commute time of 15 minutes or less, while **41.4%** of workers commute **15 to 29** minutes. Kelowna and West Kelowna residents are more likely to have commute times of 30 minutes or less, while Peachland and Lake Country residents are more likely to have longer commutes, with **25.3%** and **27.5%** respectively reporting commute times of **30 to 44** minutes.

Mode of transit to work¹

Driver - Car, truck, or van

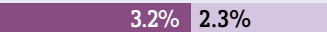


Central Okanagan
Okanagan

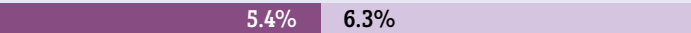
Passenger - Car, truck, or van



Public transit



Walked



Bicycle



Other



Okanagan Rail Trail & CRIS Adaptive Adventures

Community Story:

The [Okanagan Rail Trail](#) is a transformative recreational pathway weaving its way through the heart of the Central Okanagan, encompassing Kelowna, Lake Country, and beyond. Spanning 50 kilometers, this multi-use trail offers an unparalleled opportunity to connect with the beauty of the Okanagan Valley.

Winding alongside Kalamalka Lake, Wood Lake, and Ellison Lake, the trail provides an accessible and scenic route for hikers, cyclists, runners, and nature enthusiasts. As it meanders through orchards, wetlands, and forests, it not only promotes outdoor wellness but also showcases the region's rich biodiversity.

What makes the Okanagan Rail Trail truly remarkable is the collaborative effort of local communities, governments, and passionate volunteers. Their dedication to conservation, accessibility, and sustainability has transformed a historic rail corridor into a cherished recreational asset that fosters a sense of community and pride in the Central Okanagan.



30

Number of public transit routes²¹

BC Transit operates **30** bus routes on the Kelowna Regional Transit System, which spans the entire Central Okanagan.

4,585,810

Public transit ridership²²

In the 2021-22 reporting year, the Kelowna Regional Transit System recorded **4,585,810** riders.

300+ km

Kilometres of on-street bike lanes²⁴

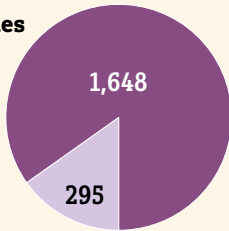
There are **300+** kilometers of on-street bike lanes in the Central Okanagan, with most found in Kelowna.

Number of electric vehicles, Central Okanagan^{25, 26}

Electric Vehicles

2022

2018

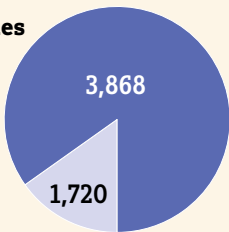


459% ↑ increase

Hybrid Vehicles

2022

2018



125% ↑ increase

Health & Wellness

82 years

Life Expectancy²⁷

- Central Okanagan Local Health Area: 82
- Okanagan (all): 82
- British Columbia: 83

87

Toxic drug poisoning deaths²⁹

In 2022, there were **87** deaths attributed to toxic drug poisoning in Kelowna. This is an increase over **76** toxic drug poisoning deaths in 2021 and **61** in 2020. Across the Okanagan, the rate of toxic drug poisoning death was **46.9** per **100,000** in 2022, compared to **44.0** across British Columbia.

Community Story:³⁰

The Okanagan achieved the unfortunate position of topping B.C.'s toxic drug death record with **192** toxic drug deaths in 2022 in the Okanagan, up from **176** in 2021, and **149** in 2020.

At least **2,272** British Columbians lost their lives in 2022 to toxic drugs, which is the second-highest number of drug deaths in B.C. history.

"Our province continues to lose an average of six lives every day, and many more people experience serious health consequences as a result of the unpredictable, unregulated drug supply," said Lisa Lapointe, chief coroner, in a press release.

Drug toxicity remains the leading cause of unnatural death in British Columbia, and is second only to cancers in terms of years of life lost.

79% of those who died were male and **70%** were aged **30 – 59**.

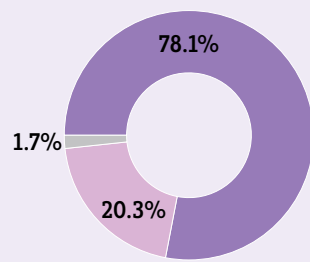
In 2022;

- **84%** of illicit drug toxicity deaths occurred inside,
- **55%** in private residences,
- **29%** in other inside residences including social and supportive housing, SROs, shelters, and hotels and other indoor locations,
- **15%** occurred outside in vehicles, sidewalks, streets, parks, etc.
- Only **one** death occurred at an OD prevention site.

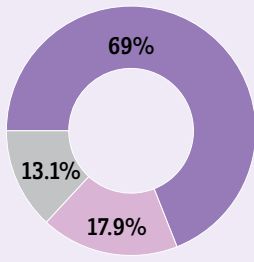
You can read the original story from [Global News](#), "Okanagan surpasses grim milestone with record number of overdose deaths," January 2023

Survey Says:⁸

"In general, I am physically healthy."



"In general, I am mentally healthy."



- Strongly agree and agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree and strongly disagree

"Apparently I'm on a waiting list of 20,000 people for a family doctor. Since this is our reality, walk-in clinics need to change how they operate to help keep records and test results for all of these people."

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent

Do you have a family doctor?

84% of survey respondents have a family doctor

14% of survey respondents do not have a family doctor, but would like to find one

2% of survey respondents do not have a family doctor and don't want one





Turning Points Collaborative Society, Clean Up day

Community Story:

Turning Points Collaborative Society supports vulnerable individuals through its comprehensive programs which address the complex challenges of homelessness, mental health issues, and substance use disorders.

At the core of Turning Points Collaborative Society are innovative initiatives designed to provide a holistic approach to healing and empowerment. From safe and supportive housing options to mental health counseling and addiction recovery programs, they offer a lifeline to those struggling with adversity. Moreover, their employment training and community integration efforts empower individuals to regain their independence and rebuild their lives.

Growth to senior population²⁷

Between 2021-2026, the senior population in Central Okanagan is expected to grow by:

Central Okanagan	
All Ages	7%
65+	16%
75+	23%
85+	18%

Assisted living, Long-term Care, and Short Stay beds²⁷

Assisted living, long-term care, and short stay beds have decreased in the Central Okanagan, from

- 2019-2020 - **86** beds/1,000 people ages 75+
- 2020-2021 - **82** beds/1,000 people ages 75+
- 2021-2022 - **79** beds/1,000 people ages 75+

In 2021, there were **21,995** people ages **75** and greater in the Central Okanagan.

14%

Smoking rate²⁷

In the Central Okanagan, **14.0%** of people ages **12** years and older report daily or occasional smoking. This is on par with Interior Health, but above the provincial rate of **11.0%**.

23%

Heavy drinking²⁷

The rate of heavy drinking in the Okanagan is **23.0%**, which is five percentage points higher than the **18.0%** reported across British Columbia.

Note: Heavy drinking refers to males who reported having 5 or more drinks, or women who have reported having 4 or more drinks, on one occasion, at least once a month in the past year.

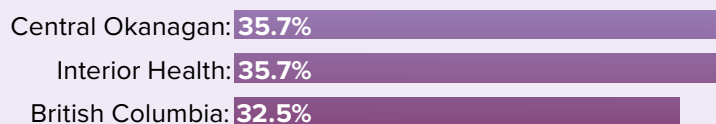
Alcohol sales²⁸

In 2021-22, per capita alcohol sales were equivalent to:

- **Central Okanagan:** 739 standard drinks
- **Interior Health:** 786 standard drinks
- **British Columbia:** 534 standard drinks

Note: 1 standard drink = 12 oz serving of a 5% beer, cider, or cooler, 5 oz serving of 12% wine, 1.5 oz serving of 40% spirits.

Prevalence of mood or anxiety disorder²⁷



“I think that seeing mental health professionals should be normalized. I have not seen one yet in my life because of the stigma around it. I am not experiencing anything that I really need to talk to a therapist about, but I think it would improve my mental health to talk to an unbiased professional.”

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent

Housing



Canadian Mental Health Association Kelowna

\$950,000

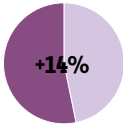
Median home price³¹

In July 2023, the median sale price of a single-family home in the Central Okanagan was **\$950,000**.

2022-2023 Typical Assessed Value³²

Kelowna

2022: \$869,000
2023: \$988,000



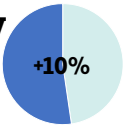
Peachland

2022: \$820,000
2023: \$964,000



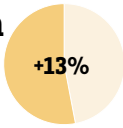
Lake Country

2022: \$886,000
2023: \$972,000



West Kelowna

2022: \$855,000
2023: \$964,000



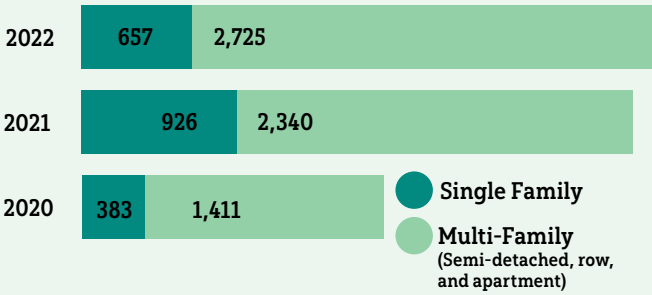
70.7% homes owned; 29.2% rented

Proportion of homes owned vs. rented¹

Across the Central Okanagan, **70.7%** of homes are owner occupied and **29.2%** are rented. In Kelowna, **65%** of homes are owner-occupied while **35%** are rented, while in the other Central Okanagan communities, owner occupied homes account for **80%** of all housing while rented homes account for **20%**. The Central Okanagan reports similar rates as the larger Okanagan region, where **72.5%** of homes are owner occupied and **27.2%** are rented.

New housing starts, Central Okanagan³³

Private developers have built the following new units:



17.7% owners; 43.7% renters

Percent spending 30%+ on housing¹

While the price of housing impacts both owners and renters, renters are hit harder. Households spending **30%** or more of their income on shelter are considered insecurely housed. In the Central Okanagan, **17.7%** of owner-occupied households spend **30%** or more, while **43.7%** of renter households spend **30%** or more.

\$1,618 owners; \$1,546 renters

Average monthly shelter costs¹

In the Central Okanagan, homeowners are paying slightly more for monthly shelter costs than renters, at **\$1,618** for homeowners and **\$1,546** for renters. Lake Country homeowners have the highest average shelter costs in the region, at **\$1,830/month**, while West Kelowna renters pay the highest average rental rates at **\$1,738/month**.

Community Story:

[Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#)

[Kelowna](#) offers housing supports to various populations, including youth. Their Housing First for Youth program is for young people who experience homelessness and is designed to provide immediate access to housing, and the necessary supports that focus on health, well-being, life skills, engagement in education and employment, and social inclusion.

Bright Mindz is a youth housing initiative comprised of 18 independent micro suites for youth (ages 17-24). These suites provide a safe, supportive environment where youth can continue to increase their education and develop life skills and natural supports that will transition them into adulthood and self-sufficiency. With a focus on advancing a young person's education or career, these suites provide homes to young people to experience independence while still having access to support.



2,205

Multigenerational housing¹

In the Central Okanagan, there are **2,205** multigenerational households, or “households where there is at least one person who is both the grandparent of a person in the household and the parent of another person in the same household.” Multigenerational households account for **2.3%** of households in the region, and are most prominent in Kelowna, which reports **1,325** multigenerational households.

1.2%

Rental vacancy rate³³

The rental vacancy rate is measured in Kelowna but not in any other Central Okanagan communities. The Kelowna rental vacancy rate remained somewhat stable at **1.2%** in 2022, compared to **1.1%** in 2021. Across the Okanagan, the rental vacancy rate has been similarly stable: **1.5%** in 2020 and **1.2%** in 2021.

*A balanced rental vacancy rate is widely accepted as **3%**, meaning that of every **100** rental units, three are unoccupied and available for immediate rental.*

Homeless count, Kelowna³⁴

2020: 297 people

2018: 286 people

2016: 233 people

\$500

Shelter allowance³⁵

Residents receiving Income Assistance have seen an increase in the shelter rate, or the maximum amount that can be spent on rent. The rate was **\$375/month** (for single people) and had not been increased since 2007, but was increased to **\$500/month** (for single people) in 2023.

7,762

Absentee ownership¹

Of the **102,097** private residences in the Central Okanagan, **7,762**, or **7.6%**, are not occupied by usual residents. This rate is similar across all Central Okanagan communities, and compares to **9.0%** across the larger Okanagan.

Survey Says:⁸

Whether you rent or own, when you consider your income and your financial obligations, is your housing:

- Very expensive: **26.7%**
- Somewhat expensive: **37.9%**
- Somewhat affordable: **30.5%**
- Very affordable: **4.2%**

In the last four years, has anyone you cared about had to leave the Central Okanagan because of the cost and/or availability of housing?

- Yes – Cost: **30.6%**
- Yes – Availability: **21.4%**
- Yes – Cost and availability: **34.2%**
- No – **10.0%**

Survey respondents wrote thoughtful comments about the impact that the cost of housing has on individuals, families, and the community at large. A couple of examples:

“Kelowna faces affordability challenges despite the availability of housing units. **Factors such as high demand, limited land availability, development costs, vacation rentals, economic growth, speculation, and investment contribute to the high cost of living in the city.** To address these issues, increasing the supply of affordable housing, addressing regulatory barriers, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders are necessary.”

“Blue collar workers are particularly affected by the cost of housing. My hairdresser is a fairly new Canadian who works two jobs. Her husband has a job as well as being a caregiver – and they still cannot afford the down payment for a house. **Rents continue to go up, which in turn cuts into the family’s ability to save for a down payment.** Housing is not just an issue for the homeless, but also for workers, too. I am sure this family’s example is only one of many hardworking young families in Kelowna who are trying to break into the housing market.”

Income Gap

\$1,264

Monthly cost of healthy food³⁶

Recent data (2022) from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control estimates the monthly cost of healthy food for a family of four at **\$1,264** in the Okanagan, an increase over the **\$1,020** in 2017.

5,500

Food bank usage³⁷

In 2022, the Central Okanagan Food Bank served an average of **5,500** individuals each month, an increase of **29%** over 2021. Of these 5,500 food bank beneficiaries, **34%** are children and youth, while **22%** are seniors.

Survey Says:⁸

Can your household afford an adequate amount of healthy food?

- Yes, all of the time: **37.9%**
- Yes, most of the time: **35.2%**
- Yes, some of the time: **26.1%**
- Rarely/never: **0.8%**

“Increasing food prices have made us reevaluate food shopping. We are now purchasing less fresh produce and opting for less expensive frozen options. We would love it if we could afford to shop locally for more items, but just can’t justify the price.”

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent



Okanagan Fruit Tree Project



Okanagan Fruit Tree Project

Income groups after-tax

Households in 2020¹

	Central Okanagan	Okanagan	British Columbia
\$0-\$19,999	4.6%	4.6%	5.5%
\$20,000-\$39,999	15.6%	17.6%	15.7%
\$40,000-\$59,999	17.2%	18.1%	16.6%
\$60,000-\$79,999	16.1%	16.4%	15.1%
\$80,000-\$99,999	12.9%	13.0%	12.7%
\$100,000+	33.5%	30.3%	34.4%

Median after-tax income¹

Economic families in 2020

Central Okanagan

Okanagan

\$63,600
\$65,000

One-parent

\$117,000

\$120,000

Couple-with-children

Community Story:

The Okanagan Fruit Tree Project Society (OFTP) is a community-driven initiative making a tangible impact on both the environment and well-being of residents throughout the Okanagan Valley.

OFTP started in 2012 as a gleaning organization connecting local fruit tree owners with volunteers eager to harvest excess fruit that would otherwise go to waste. With the donation of a 36-acre farm in 2021, OFTP has expanded their services to grow fresh, organic produce on a larger scale. The farm also provides a platform for educational programs and community engagement, serving as a model for sustainable agriculture practices.

Their commitment to community resilience and sustainability remains unwavering, and the addition of the farm underscores OFTP’s dedication to addressing food-related challenges comprehensively.

Poverty rates¹

	Overall poverty rate	Child poverty rate	Senior poverty rate
Central Okanagan, 2021*	9.5%	9.9%	11.9%
Okanagan, 2021*	11.6%	10.3%	16.7%
British Columbia, 2021*	10.8%	11.4%	13.7%

Central Okanagan in 2016:

- Overall poverty rate **12.5%**
- Child poverty rate **15.3%**
- Senior poverty rate **12.2%**

*Note that COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits were still available, artificially inflating income and depressing poverty rates. In the Central Okanagan, 26.1% of residents ages 15 years and older received these benefits.

Getting Started

14.4%

Proportion of immigrants¹

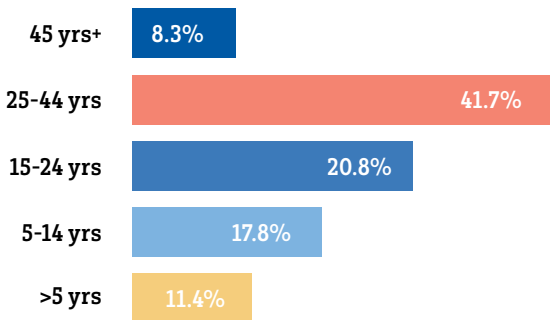
The Central Okanagan is home to **31,575** immigrants, who have come to Canada from another country. Immigrants comprise **14.4%** of the population in the Central Okanagan, compared to **13.6%** across the Okanagan. Kelowna is home to **68.5%** of the Central Okanagan's immigrant population.

39 countries

Place of birth¹

Recent immigrants (those who have arrived in the Central Okanagan in the last 5 years) represent at least **39** countries, with the largest recent immigrant populations moving from the Philippines, India, the United States, United Kingdom, and China.

Age at immigration¹



Community Story:

[KCR Community Resources](#) provides vital support to newcomers through essential programs like settlement services, cultural orientation and employment assistance, crucial for fostering a smooth integration into Canadian society. Central to their efforts is the Family Hub, a vibrant community resource that serves as a nucleus of support for families with young children. Here, families find a welcoming, culturally diverse space where they can access a multitude of services, from educational workshops to social gatherings, all aimed at building connections and easing the challenges faced by families.

The Family Hub not only provides practical assistance for all families but also nurtures a sense of belonging, which allows both children and their caretakers to thrive. KCR is a vital bridge for newcomers, ensuring they not only survive but thrive in their new Canadian home.



KCR Community Resources
Photo credit: Emily Draper

Survey Says:⁸

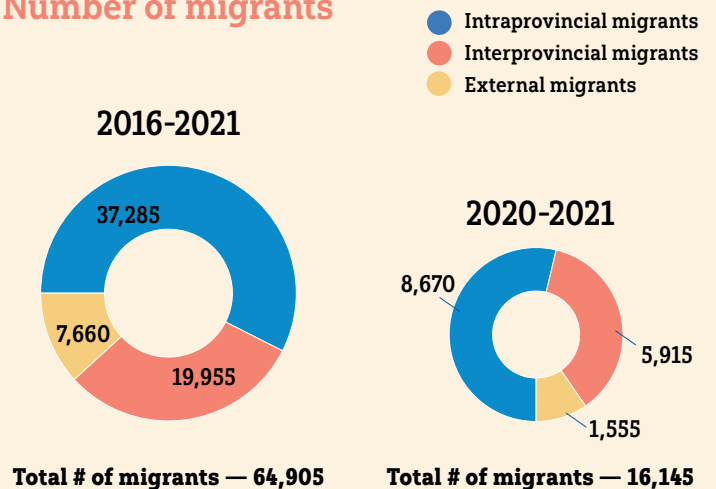
37.9% of survey respondents reported attending an event put on by a cultural group different than their own within the last 12 months.

86

Languages spoken¹

Central Okanagan residents report speaking **86** different languages at home. While English is the most frequently spoken, other languages spoken most often at home include Punjabi (**2,595** speakers), Mandarin (**840**), German (**775**), Tagalog (**740**), and French (**700**).

Number of migrants¹



Note: A migrant is defined as anyone with a change of address except for those whose move was in the same census subdivision.



Photo Courtesy of: Okanagan College

28.6%

Early Development Instrument (EDI) Vulnerability Rate³⁸

The EDI vulnerability rate measures vulnerability in five domains (physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge) in Kindergarten. In most neighbourhoods in the Central Okanagan, the vulnerability rate is lower than the provincial average. Notable exceptions are Central Kelowna, with a **36.1%** vulnerability rate, and Rutland, at **43.2%**.

- **28.6%** - School District #23 (Central Okanagan)
- **33.4%** - British Columbia

Academic self-concept³⁹

Through the Middle Years Development Instrument, Grade 7 students are asked to rate their academic self-concept, including their academic ability, their perceptions of themselves as students, and how interested and confident they feel in school. In School District #23 (Central Okanagan), **72.0%** of students gave themselves a high rating in this category.

57%

Population 15+ with post-secondary¹

More than half of Central Okanagan residents ages 15 years and older have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. This compares to **54.5%** across the Okanagan, and **57.1%** in British Columbia.

Transition to post-secondary⁴⁰

In School District #23 (Central Okanagan), **50.9%** of students who had started Grade 8 in 2011-2012 and had graduated by 2017-2018 had continued on to a B.C. post-secondary institution by 2021. During the same timeframe, the provincial rate was **56.1%**.

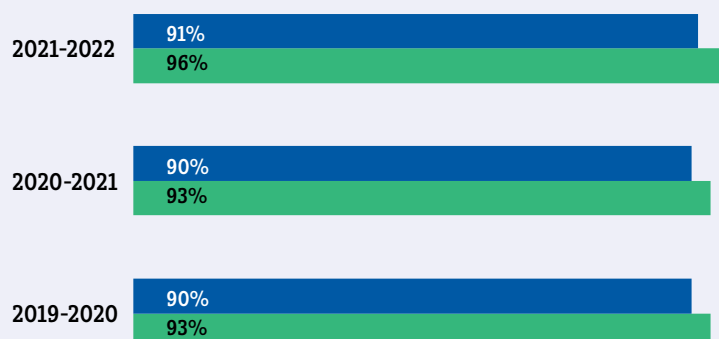
Community Story:

Project Literacy offers programs tailored to a diverse range of learners, including adults, children, and immigrants. They empower adult learners by enhancing literacy, numeracy, digital, and life skills, facilitating improved employability and digital literacy. For children, Project Literacy nurtures essential skills from an early age, securing a brighter future. Additionally, the organization supports immigrants through specialized programs, fostering language proficiency and aiding integration into the community.

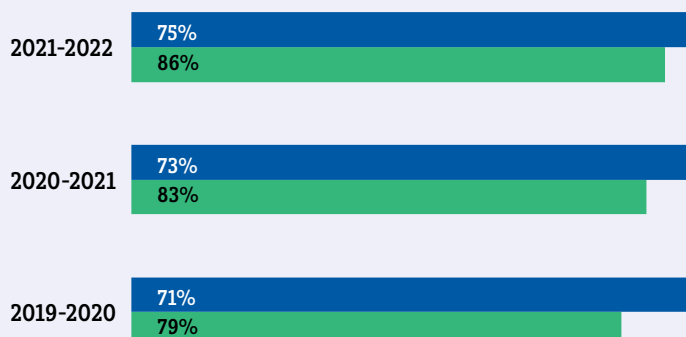
In an increasingly knowledge-driven world, **Project Literacy offers a lifeline to those seeking to overcome literacy challenges and embrace a brighter future.** Their commitment to education and empowerment is a testament to the transformative power of lifelong learning.

High School Completion⁴⁰

(Excludes international students)

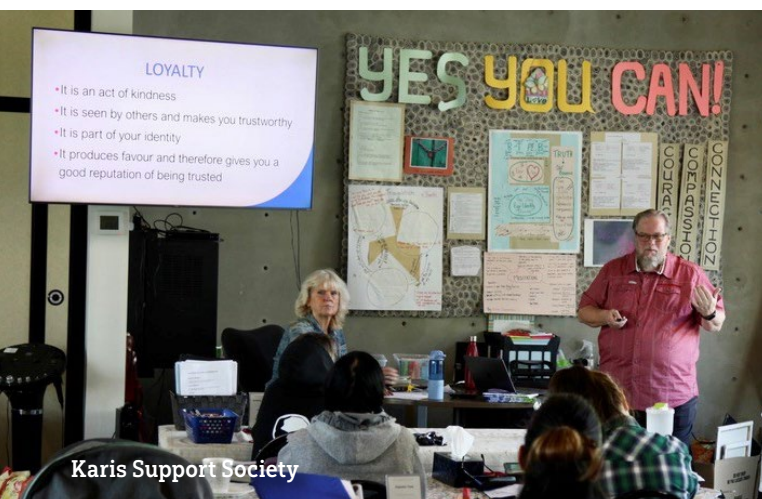


High School Completion, Indigenous Students⁴⁰



● British Columbia ● SD23

Safety



Karis Support Society

Community Story:

Karis Support Society is dedicated to empowering women dealing with addiction, mental health challenges, and homelessness. Through a holistic approach, Karis offers safe housing, counseling, and skill development programs, nurturing independence and self-worth among the women they serve. By providing a comprehensive support system, Karis enables women to regain control over their lives, fostering resilience and empowering them to embrace a more hopeful future.

18

Number of women's transitional beds operated by Kelowna Women's Shelter⁴³

The Kelowna Women's Shelter operates emergency/transitional housing for women and children escaping violence. The Kelowna shelter has **8** bedrooms, and a newly opened transition house in West Kelowna offers **10**.

Survey Says:⁸

"I feel safe in my neighbourhood."

- Strongly agree and agree: **61.3%**
- Neither agree nor disagree: **20.5%**
- Disagree and strongly disagree: **18.2%**

"I feel safe in downtown Kelowna."

- Strongly agree and agree: **47.7%**
- Neither agree nor disagree: **23.2%**
- Disagree and strongly disagree: **28.9%**

"For me, there is a big difference between feeling unsafe and feeling uncomfortable. As a women who lives downtown, I often feel uncomfortable but not unsafe."

Sexual assault rate⁴¹

Rate per 100,000 population

	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
Kelowna	90.6	89.7	68.2	34.4	103.1
Lake Country	82.5	38.7	8.2	21.7	51.8
Peachland	0	0	19.3	17.4	16.2
West Kelowna	-	-	53.5	34.5	51.6

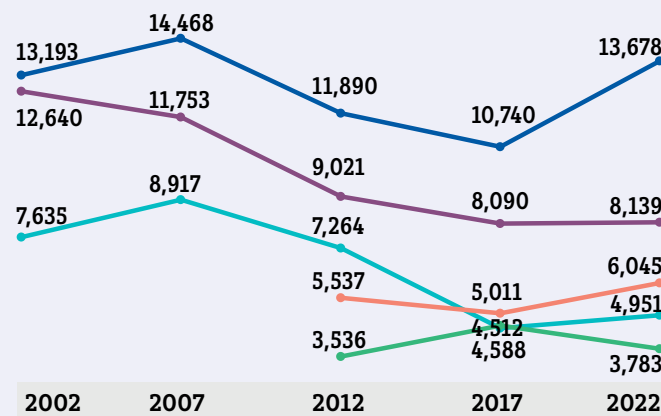
RCMP calls for service, Kelowna⁴²

2022	60,030	2,897
2021	63,888	3,104
2020	58,740	2,344

● Total calls for service
● Calls for service with mental health component

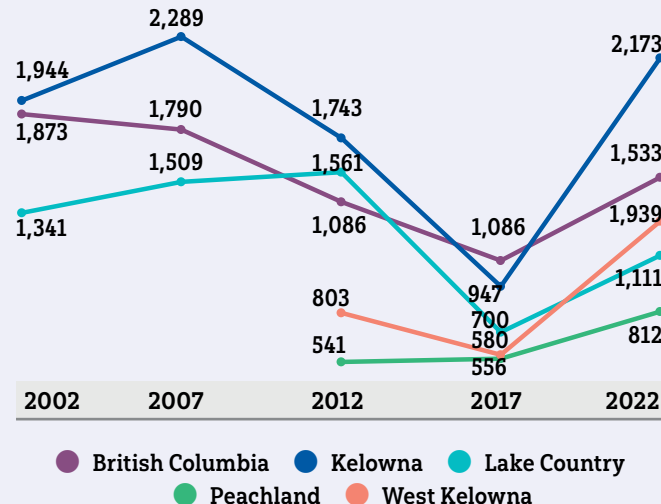
Overall crime rate⁴¹

Rate per 100,000 population

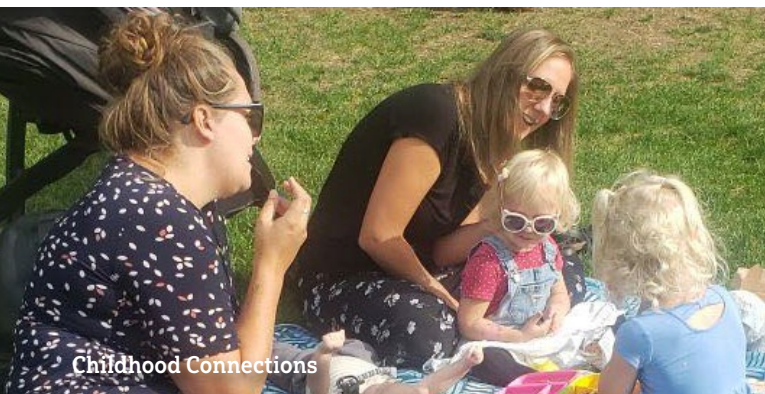


Violent crime rate⁴¹

Rate per 100,000 population



Work & Economy



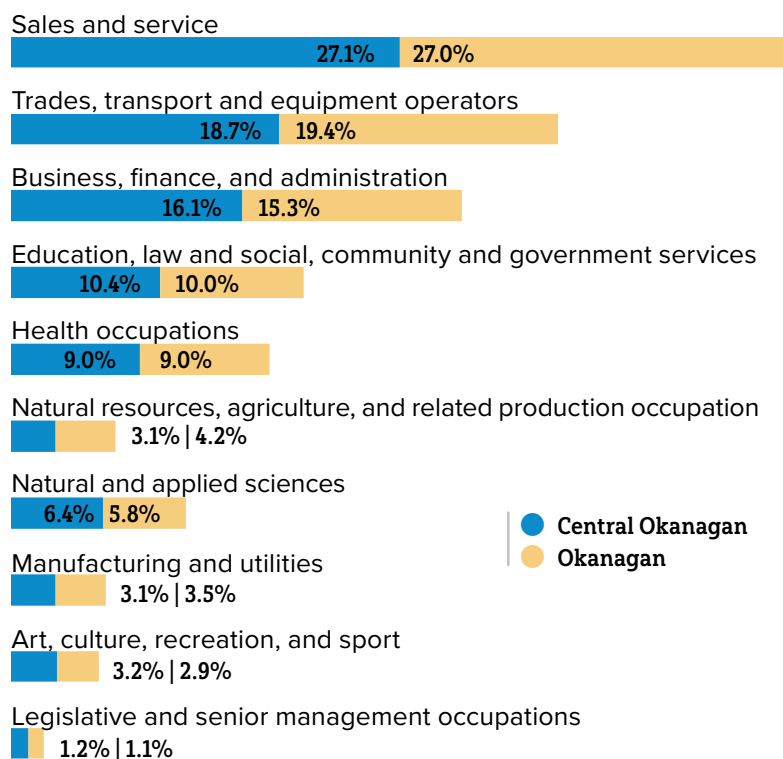
\$61,600

Median earnings for full-year, full-time worker¹

The median income reported for Central Okanagan labour force members who worked full-year, full-time in 2020 was **\$61,600**. This is slightly above the Okanagan median of **\$60,000**, and below the provincial median of **\$66,000**.

Between 2016 and 2021, median earnings for full-year, full-time workers in the Central Okanagan increased from **\$50,885** to **\$61,600**, or **21.1%**.

Employment by industry¹



Central Okanagan Labour Force Participation

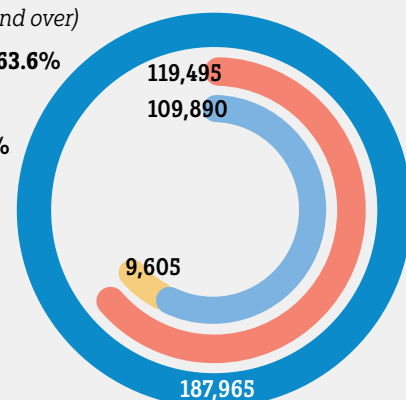
● Eligible for labour force - **187,965**

(Population 15 years and over)

● In the labour force - **63.6%**

● Employed - **92%**

● Unemployed - **8%**



\$22.88

Living Wage⁴⁴

In a Kelowna-based family comprised of two adults working full-time and two children, each adult must earn **\$22.88/hr** to cover rent, food, childcare, and other basic expenses. Per year, a living wage family must earn **\$83,232.20**.

6.2%

Living here, working elsewhere¹

Of the Central Okanagan residents who commute to work, **93.8%** commute within the Central Okanagan. Another **4.9%** commute outside of the Central Okanagan but within the province, and a final **1.3%** commute outside of the province or territory.

19.1%

Proportion self-employed¹

Nearly one in five members of the Central Okanagan labour force is self-employed, an increase from the **15.5%** reported in 2016. Similarly, **19.4%** of all Okanagan labour force participants are self-employed.

19.6%

Working from home¹

In 2021, **19.6%** of the Central Okanagan's labour force worked from home, an increase of **10.3** percentage points since 2016, when **9.3%** of the region's labour force worked from home. Across the Okanagan, the same increase has been observed: **9.8%** of the Okanagan labour force worked from home in 2016, and **18.2%** did in 2021.

Business bankruptcies⁴⁶

In the Thompson-Okanagan economic region, which includes the Central Okanagan, **48** businesses filed an insolvency claim (bankruptcy or proposal) in 2021, an increase of **269.2%** over 2020's **13**.

Business licenses issued, 2022⁴⁵

	New licenses issued	Total licenses issued
Kelowna*	2,323	11,458
Lake Country	n/a	1,014
Peachland	48	n/a
West Kelowna	611	1,912

*Data from 2021

Childcare spaces⁴⁷

Across the region, there are 17.4 licensed childcare spaces per 100 children ages 0-5, and 18.1 licensed childcare spaces per 100 children ages 6-12.

	Number of locations	Number of Spaces
Kelowna	120	4,036
Lake Country	13	351
Peachland	4	77
West Kelowna	58	1,288
TOTAL	195	5,752

Community Story:

Childhood Connections plays a crucial role in supporting childcare providers throughout the Central Okanagan. Their diverse services are designed to empower and assist childcare professionals in delivering the best possible care for young children.

Childhood Connections provides access to invaluable training and workshops, empowering childcare providers with the latest knowledge and skills to enrich children's learning experiences.

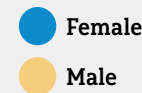
The organization also helps providers navigate the complexities of government grants and provincial regulations, ensuring they have the information and support needed to comply with all relevant guidelines.



709

Farms in the Central Okanagan⁴⁸

Farm operators:



Median age: 59.0

Survey Says⁸

We asked survey respondents about local training and educational opportunities to support residents in reaching their career goals.

- **46.7%** strongly agree or agree that opportunities are sufficient in quantity and quality, as opposed to the **27.7%** who disagree or strongly disagree
- **37.9%** of respondents believe that local training and education opportunities are affordable, versus **33.2%** who disagree or strongly disagree
- **41.9%** strongly agree or agree that these opportunities are accessible, compared to **28.4%** who disagree or strongly disagree



“One cannot house and feed themselves and their family while trying to upgrade to a better position. Many of the courses are full-time and that makes it nearly impossible to do without support.”

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent



“Online learning has made career changes much easier. Years ago, I needed to upgrade my education to provide better for myself and my children. However, anything I was interested in studying was not available in the Okanagan. Thus, I... took a diploma, a degree, and then a Master's degree all online.”

~Anonymous comment by survey respondent

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?⁴⁹

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the world's collective vision for a thriving and sustainable planet. Canada is one of **193 countries** participating in this United Nations initiative. The **SDGs are universal and apply to all people and communities everywhere**. Within the 17 SDGs, there are 169 targets. Canada has signed on to achieving these goals at home and abroad. At the community level, the SDGs are an opportunity to focus and coordinate collective efforts to address problems beyond the community scale, such as climate change, which can only be addressed if communities and cities unite in common action.

Find these icons on pages 6-19 to learn which SDGs relate to the Vital Signs key issues in the Central Okanagan.

SDG	PAGE	SUMMARY	SDG	PAGE	SUMMARY
	12, 13, 14, 18, 19	GOAL 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere.		10, 11, 16	GOAL 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries.
	14	GOAL 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.		6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19	GOAL 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	GOAL 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.		8	GOAL 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
	6, 16	GOAL 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.		8	GOAL 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
	17, 18, 19	GOAL 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.		8	GOAL 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
	8	GOAL 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.		8	GOAL 15 Protect, restore and promote terrestrial ecosystems, forests, land, and biodiversity.
	N/A	GOAL 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.		7, 17	GOAL 16 Promote peaceful societies, accountable institutions, and access to justice for all.
	6, 18, 19	GOAL 8 Promote sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.		N/A	GOAL 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.
	9	GOAL 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.			

Where Do We Go From Here?

START CONVERSATIONS. TAKE ACTION.

We hope that after reading this report, you have a deeper understanding of the Central Okanagan. Like any other community, ours has strengths and challenges.



PASS IT ON. Share the report with your friends, colleagues, employees, students, neighbours, library, community center or an elected/public official at any level.

TALK ABOUT ISSUES. Is there a particular issue or indicator that you could tackle with someone you shared the report with? Are there synergies between the work you do and other issue areas or needs? Do you see an opportunity to leverage a local strength to mitigate a challenge?

TAKE ACTION. While significant changes must be made at the provincial, federal, and international levels, there is still much that can be done at the individual level to strengthen our region.

The Sustainable Development Goals website has some great ideas on how to take local action to create global change. www.globalgoals.org/take-action/

LEARN MORE. If you are interested in learning more about the charities and non-profits working in a specific area, we can help. Reach out to our office for key organizations and contacts.

GET INVOLVED. Get involved with Central Okanagan Foundation. There are many ways to work with us, including:

- **Apply for funding.** We offer a variety of grants to non-profit organizations, including project grants and multi-year operating grants. We also offer scholarships to high school and post-secondary students. To find out if you are eligible, www.centralokanaganfoundation.org/grants.
- **Volunteer with us.** We periodically post applications for volunteer Board and committee members. If you are interested in an ongoing commitment to Central Okanagan Foundation, postings can be found here, www.centralokanaganfoundation.org/careers-volunteer-opportunities.
- **Follow us.** Subscribe to our newsletter and follow us on social media. We use these tools to share information about available grant funding, updates about funded projects, and relevant community news.

DONATE. If you wish to see Central Okanagan Foundation's funding increase, consider donating. Any donation is gratefully accepted. You can:

- Contribute to the annual community granting program
- Make a small annual donation and create a reliable grant to a charity
- Give a large gift that makes an immediate impact to a local cause
- Set up a fund to start a legacy and support future generations

**If we can assist you in taking action,
please contact us at info@centralokanaganfoundation.org or 250-861-6160.**

The Central Okanagan Foundation was formed in 1977 on the suggestion of the Central Okanagan Social Planning Society. Recognizing that community members needed support and that government could not be relied on to fill every gap, a group of visionary leaders came together and started the COF with an endowment of \$40,000.

Today, we are one of Canada's over two hundred community foundations, which are charitable organizations dedicated to improving communities in specific geographic areas. We do this by pooling the charitable gifts of donors to create endowment funds and using the investment income to make grants. Community foundations also provide leadership – monitoring our area's quality of life and convening people, ideas, and resources to help build stronger and more resilient communities.

Our total assets have grown to \$42.5 million dollars. In 2022 the Central Okanagan Foundation provided over \$3.6 million in grants and distributions, supporting organizations throughout the Central Okanagan.

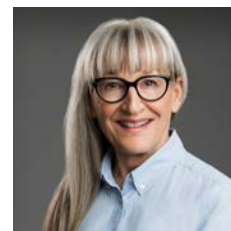
We work towards a bold vision and mission:

Our vision: We believe that everyone can leave a legacy. We are the catalyst, building excellence in philanthropy to ensure our communities flourish.

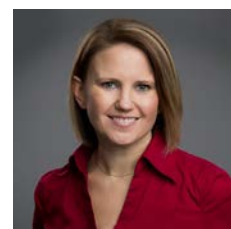
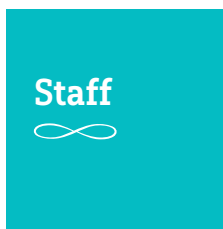
Our mission: To contribute to the quality of life in the Central Okanagan through the raising and stewardship of entrusted funds, innovative and diverse granting, and active community leadership.



Kristine Bugayong,
Executive Director



Cheryl Miller,
Director, Grants &
Community Initiatives



Abbie Norrish,
Manager, Grants &
Community Initiatives



Anna-Lyn Albers,
Community Entity
Coordinator



Bonnie Clarke,
Accounting Technician



Lisa Watson,
Office Administrator



Julie Belgrove,
Finance Administrator

Board of Directors

- Dustyn Baulkham
- Graham Moir
- Karen Hill
- Kim Inglis
- Marni Adams

Sources

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