

# State of the Basin Snapshot Report A check-up on life in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region

# 2024



# Welcome

The State of the Basin initiative monitors and reports on indicators of environmental, economic, cultural, and social well-being in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region. Selkirk Innovates compiles the Snapshot Report to provide a summary of current State of the Basin research. More information on the indicators of well-being and related reports and resources are available on the State of the Basin website: [stateofthebasin.ca](http://stateofthebasin.ca).

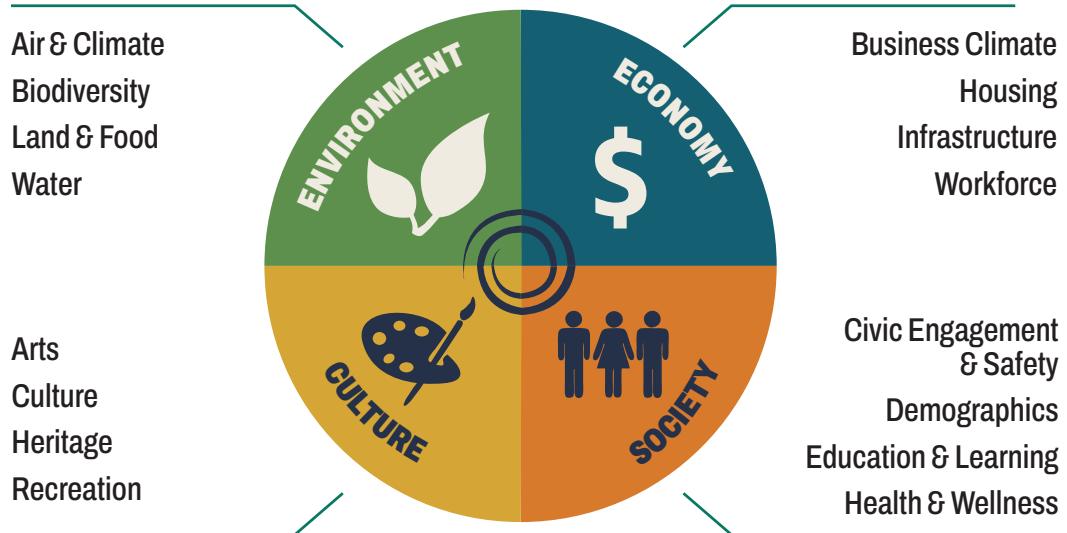
## USING RESEARCH TO IMPROVE REGIONAL WELL-BEING

Every day, Columbia Basin-Boundary residents and organizations make decisions that influence the future of our region. The primary goal of the State of the Basin initiative is to provide access to data to support evidence-based decision-making, leading to improved well-being in the region. Four objectives support this goal:

- **Inform** citizens and organizations about the people, natural environment, communities, and economy of the region by providing access to accurate, credible, and timely information;
- **Encourage** understanding of complex issues and trends over time, including future projections when possible;
- **Signal** whether conditions are similar or different within the region, and in comparison to other areas to highlight and celebrate areas of achievement, and to identify significant issues, ideally before they become critical; and
- **Motivate** discussion, information sharing, strategic evidence-based decisions, and collective action.

## INDICATORS & DATA SOURCES

State of the Basin research utilizes data from federal, provincial, and local governments, as well as crown corporations and non-profit initiatives. These data include both open-access sources and custom requests. While quantitative indicators are a foundation for understanding regional well-being, they only tell part of the story. Qualitative insights—such as Selkirk Innovates' bi-annual subjective well-being research—add depth. In 2023, a statistically significant random sample of 301 residents from the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region participated in the subjective well-being survey.<sup>1</sup> Participants responded to over 100 closed-ended questions, and a selection of these results are included in this Snapshot.



## THE COLUMBIA BASIN-BOUNDARY REGION

Selkirk Innovates acknowledges that the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region encompasses the traditional territories of the Sinixt, the Ktunaxa, the Syilx, the Secwépemc, and the Lheidli T'enneh peoples. Covering over 8.6 million hectares in southeastern British Columbia, the region includes the Regional Districts of Kootenay Boundary, Central Kootenay, and East Kootenay, which together form the Kootenay Development Region. It also includes portions of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District and the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George. Approximately 178,000 people live in the region.<sup>2</sup>



## What are the **demographics** of our region? How are they projected to change?

All demographic statistics presented are for the Kootenay Development Region.

### OUR POPULATION IS GROWING<sup>3</sup>

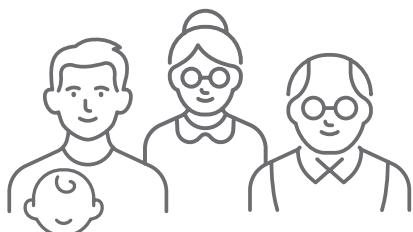


**176,617**  
2024 Population Estimate

**197,045**  
2044 Population Projection

**+20,428 (12%)**  
Projected 20-Year Change

### OUR POPULATION IS AGING<sup>3</sup>



**45** 2024 Estimate      **48** 2044 Projection  
+3 years  
Average Age

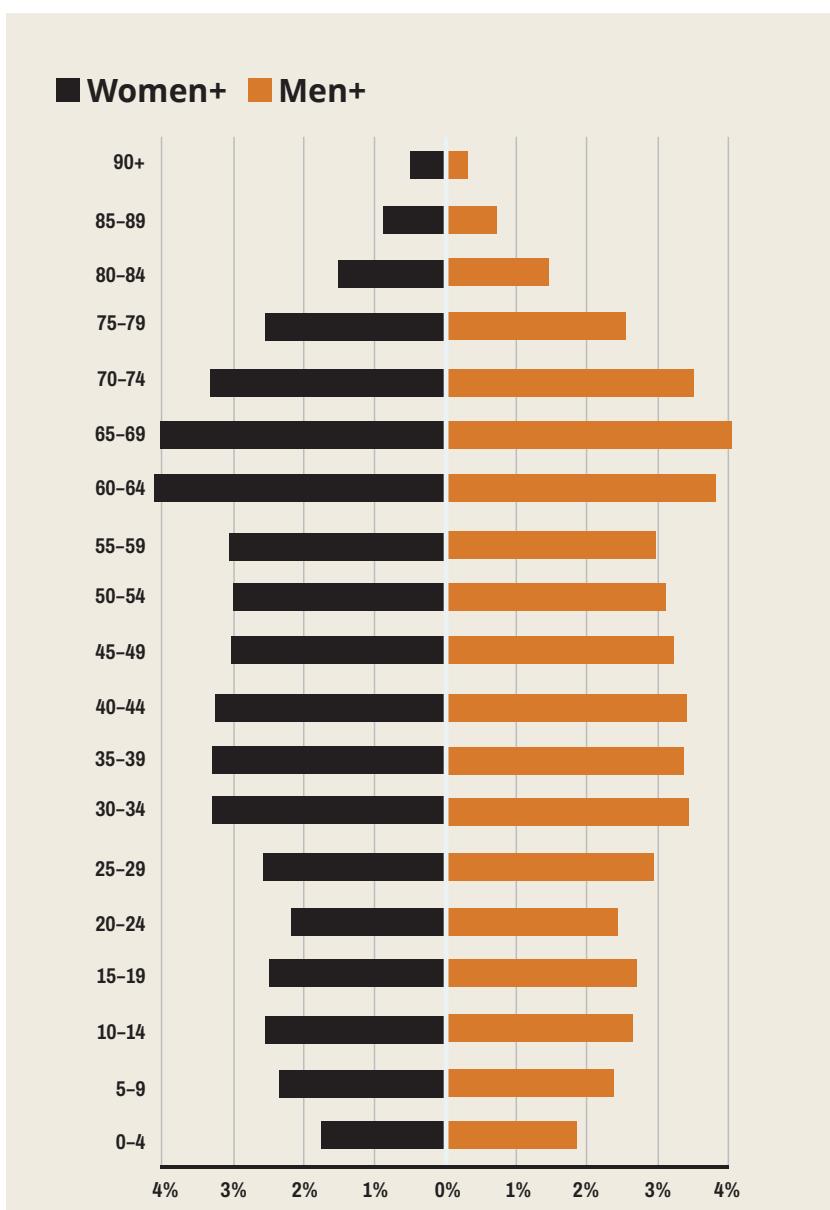
In 2024, for every 100 workers, there were 78 dependents:<sup>3</sup>

**33** Youth (age 0-19)      **45** Seniors (age 65+)

Residents surveyed rated access to aged care services with an average score of 4.3 out of 7.<sup>1</sup>



### POPULATION BY AGE AND GENDER, 2024<sup>3</sup>



## How is the **health and wellness** of our residents?

Of the **1,210 live births** in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region in the 2023/24 fiscal year, **4% were low birth weight newborns.**<sup>4</sup>

Babies born with low birth weight face higher risks of illness, disability, and death in infancy and childhood. It can also affect their health later in life.



In 2022 (most recent year with available data), there were an estimated **945 people experiencing homelessness** in the Kootenay Development Region.<sup>5</sup>



**21% from 2019  
(+164 people)**

These estimates are based on the number of people receiving Income Assistance with no fixed address for three consecutive months and the number of people staying in shelters.

### LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH BY AGE GROUP IN INTERIOR HEALTH REGION, 2024<sup>6</sup>

	Under 19	19–39	40–59	60–79	80+
1	Accidents	Illicit drug toxicity	Cancer	Cancer	Heart disease
2	Perinatal conditions	Accidents	Illicit drug toxicity	Heart disease	Cancer
3	Illicit drug toxicity	Suicide	Accidents	Lower respiratory disease	Alzheimer's disease and dementia

In 2024, there were

**68 deaths from unregulated drugs** in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region.<sup>7</sup>

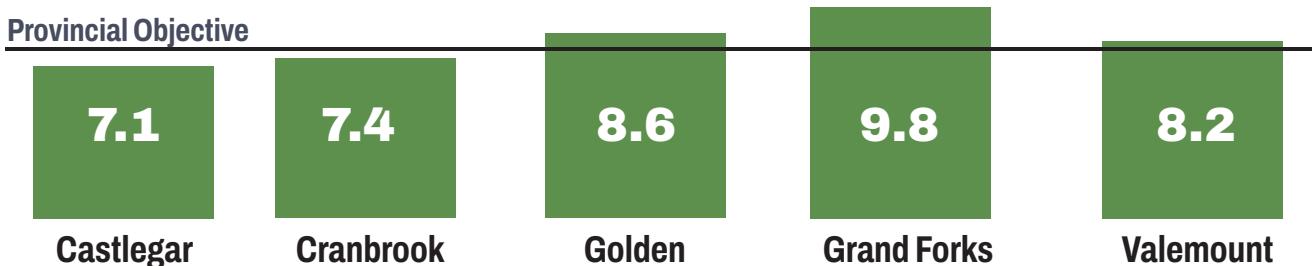


**from 24 in 2016 (+44 deaths)**      **from 70 in 2023 (-2 deaths)**



## How is our air and biodiversity?

### Annual Average Hourly Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) Readings (µg/m<sup>3</sup>) at Local Air Monitoring Stations, 2024 <sup>8</sup>



As of 2024, in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region, there were: <sup>9</sup>

**103 red listed species at risk**

**31 distinct red listed ecosystems**

### ANNUAL NUMBER OF DAYS WITH SMOKY SKIES BULLETINS, 2024 <sup>31</sup>

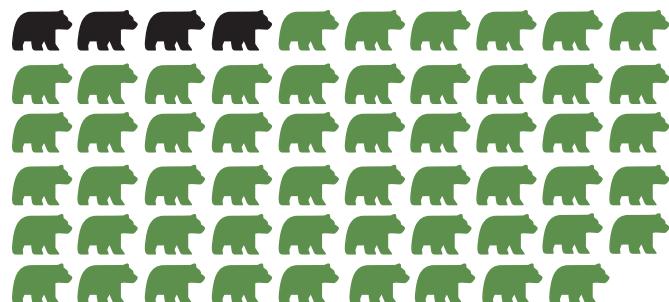
Airshed	Number of Days
North Columbia	4
Boundary	6
Elk Valley	9
East Kootenay-South	11
East Kootenay-North	15
West Columbia	18
West Kootenay	18
East Columbia	22
Arrow Lakes-Slocan Lake	30

**In response to human-wildlife conflict**

in 2024, the Conservation Officer Service destroyed: <sup>10</sup>

**59 bears**

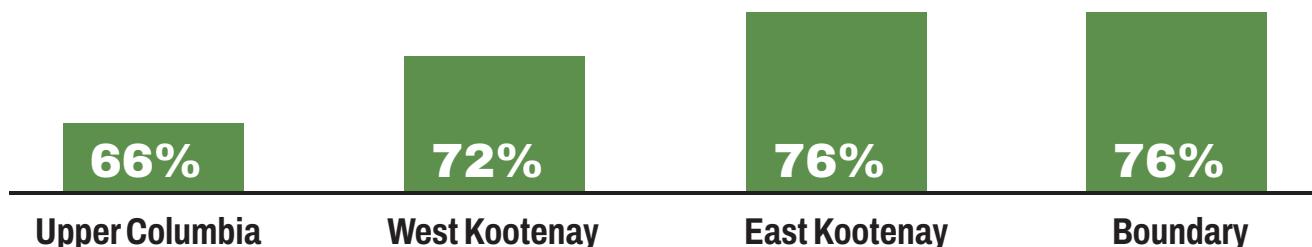
 Grizzly Bears: 4  Black Bears: 55



The most **common attractant** was human food and waste.

## How is our land and water?

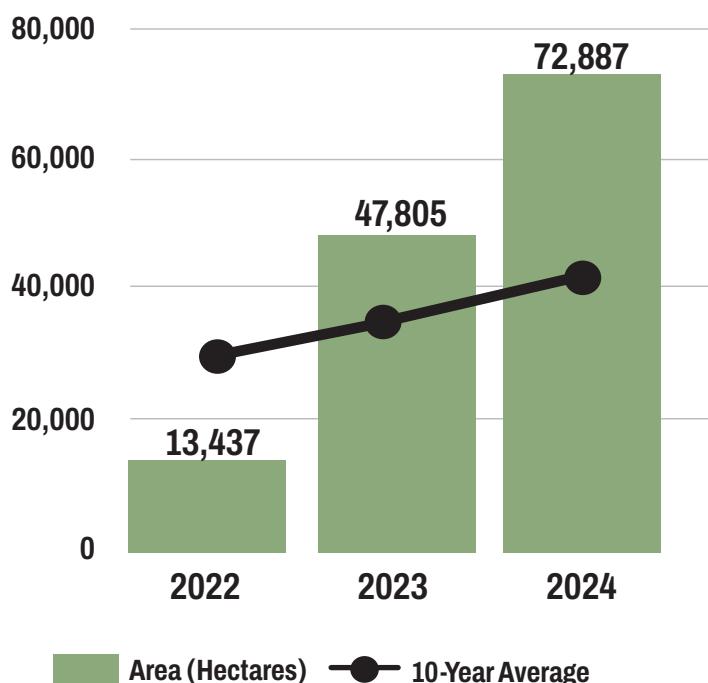
### Snow Water Indices by Snow Basin, April 1, 2024 <sup>11</sup>



The April 1 snow water index provides an indication of the amount of water that will be available to serve human and environmental needs over the spring and summer seasons. The index reflects the percent of normal expected snowpack.



### AREA BURNED BY WILDFIRES IN THE COLUMBIA BASIN-BOUNDARY REGION, 2024 <sup>12</sup>



In 2024, there were

**5,464**  
**hectares logged**   
on crown land in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region. <sup>12 13 14</sup>   
**29% from 2023**



Of residents surveyed,  
**51%** think that **invasive**  
**weeds are somewhat**  
**of a big problem** <sup>1</sup>

## How is our regional workforce?

### OUR WORKFORCE IS GROWING

Workforce Population, Ages 15 to 64, Kootenay Development Region <sup>3</sup>



**108,421**  
2024 Workforce  
Estimate

**119,908**  
2044 Workforce  
Projection

**+11,487 (11%)**  
Projected  
20-Year Change

In 2024, the Kootenay Development Region's **labour force replacement rate was 0.67.** <sup>3</sup>

A rate below 1.0 means more people are retiring than entering the workforce, so the area cannot sustain its current labour force with local workers.



### WORKFORCE EDUCATION, KOOTENAY DEVELOPMENT REGION, 2024 <sup>15</sup>



### MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES FOR KOOTENAY DEVELOPMENT REGION WORKFORCE AGED 15+, 2024 <sup>16</sup>

**\$31.25**  
All Employees\*

\*Same as Median Hourly Wage  
Across BC Workforce

↓ from \$32.00  
in 2023

**\$35**  
Full-Time  
Employees

**\$20**  
Part-Time  
Employees

Of residents surveyed,  
**69%** are satisfied with  
their financial security.<sup>1</sup>

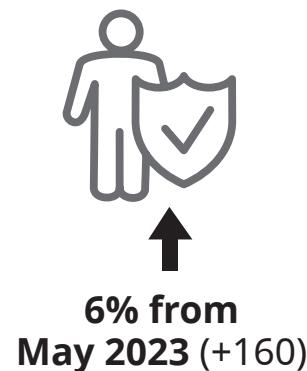
Of residents surveyed  
who are employed, **77%**  
are satisfied with  
their job.<sup>1</sup>

AVERAGE BEFORE TAX INCOME, COLUMBIA BASIN-BOUNDARY REGION, 2023<sup>17</sup>

In 2024, the Kootenay Development Region's **unemployment rate was 5.6%.**<sup>18</sup>



**2,950**  
Employment  
Insurance  
Recipients,  
Kootenay  
Development  
Region, May 2024<sup>19</sup>



Regional District	Persons with Low Income, 2023 <sup>21</sup>
Central Kootenay	17%
Kootenay Boundary	14%
East Kootenay	11%

In 2023 (most recent year with available data), **17% of BC residents were living with low income.**<sup>21</sup>

## How is our education system?

### ESTIMATED CHILD POPULATION, COLUMBIA BASIN-BOUNDARY REGION, 2024<sup>3</sup>



As of December 2024, there were **4,595** **total child care spaces\*** in Columbia Basin-Boundary facilities that opted to participate in provincial government programs.<sup>22</sup>

 **13% from December 2023**  
(+542 total spaces)

**440**  
Family-run  
Spaces

**4,155**  
Group-run  
Spaces



With these spaces, only 21% of the child population has access to government-supported child care (↑1% from 2023).

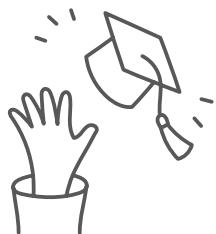
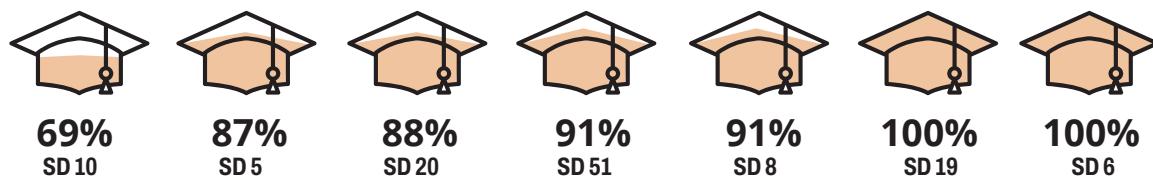
*\*These numbers only include child care facilities that have opted in to the provincial programs, therefore this is not a total count of all child care facilities in the region.*

### AVERAGE CLASS SIZE PER GRADE COHORT BY SCHOOL DISTRICT, 2024/25<sup>23</sup>

School District	Kindergarten	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-7	Grades 8-12
Arrow Lakes (SD 10)	12	14	18	12
Boundary (SD 51)	17	18	21	18
Kootenay Lake (SD 8)	18	20	22	21
Kootenay-Columbia (SD 20)	18	20	25	25
Revelstoke (SD 19)	15	19	22	15
Rocky Mountain (SD 6)	19	20	26	22
Southeast Kootenay (SD 5)	17	19	21	20

The BC Public School Employers' Association and BC Teachers' Federation collective agreement states that class size limits are:<sup>24</sup>

20	22	22	22
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HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES BY SCHOOL DISTRICT, 2023/24<sup>25</sup>

In 2023/24, enrolment at colleges with campuses in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region was **38,400 students.**<sup>26</sup>

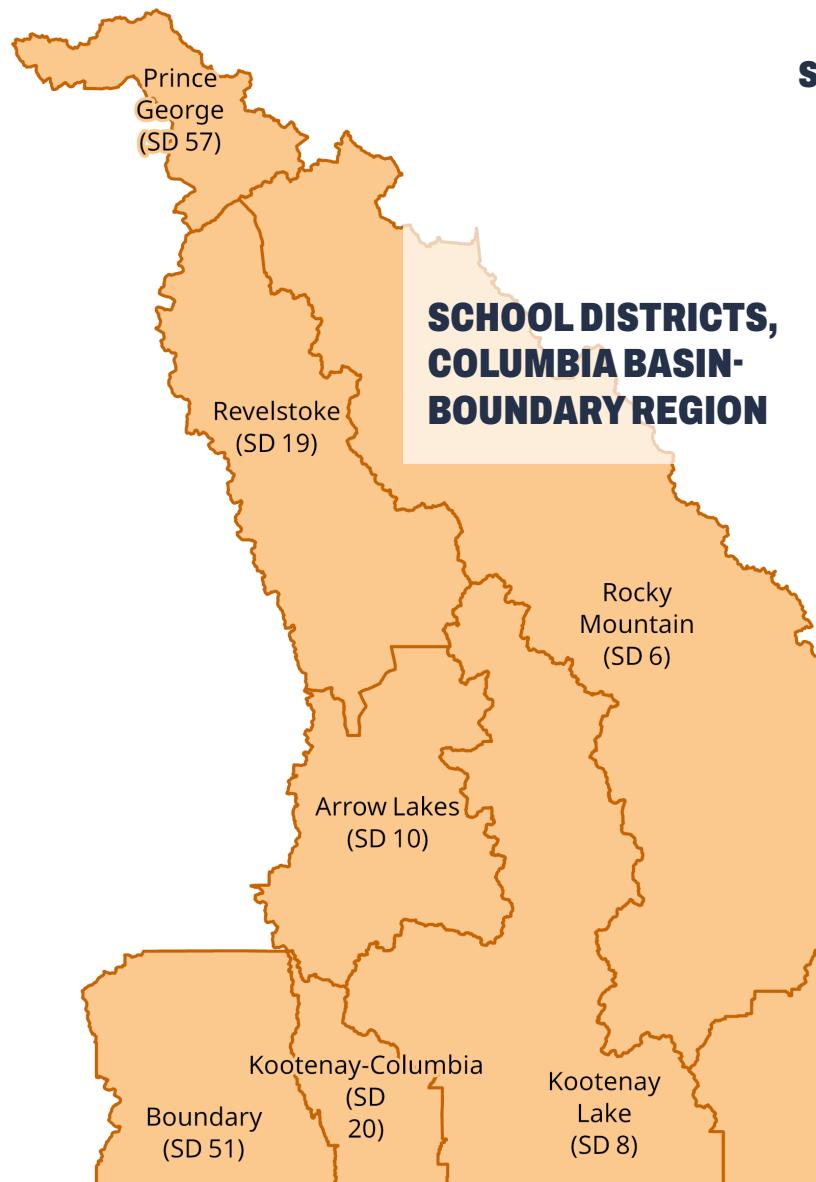
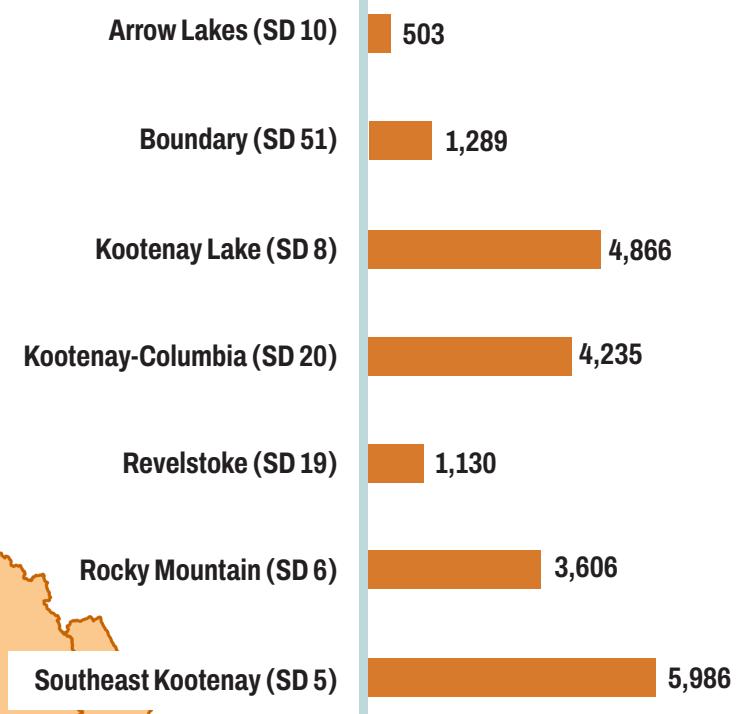
6%  
from 2022/23



89% Domestic Students



11% International Students

STUDENT ENROLMENT BY SCHOOL DISTRICT<sup>27</sup>

In 2024/25, there were **21,615 students** enrolled in Columbia Basin-Boundary schools.<sup>27</sup>

## How is our business climate?

### TOTAL NUMBER OF BUSINESSES



**36,576**

businesses in the  
Kootenay  
Development  
Region, 2024<sup>28</sup>



↑ 5% from 2023  
(+1,606)

Between 2023 and 2024, the largest growth occurred in the following industries:

### TOP THREE INDUSTRIES BY TOTAL GROWTH<sup>28</sup>

↑ +710 businesses

Real Estate, Rental  
and Leasing  
(+7%)

↑ +173 businesses

Professional, Scientific  
and Technical Services  
(+6%)

↑ +138 businesses

Health Care and  
Social Assistance  
(+6%)

### TOP THREE INDUSTRIES BY PERCENT INCREASE<sup>28</sup>

↑ 10%

Management of  
Companies and Enterprises  
(+8 businesses)

↑ 10%

Accommodation  
and Food Services  
(+118 businesses)

↑ 10%

Educational  
Services  
(+68 businesses)

In 2024, the Kootenay Development Region had:



**860**

Business Incorporations<sup>29</sup>

↑ +51 businesses  
from 2023



**3**

Business Bankruptcies<sup>30</sup>

↓ -3 businesses  
from 2023

*(This means  
fewer closures!)*

In 2024, the Kootenay Development Region's **employment rate was 58%.**<sup>18</sup>

**83,900**  
Persons  
Employed<sup>18</sup>

3% from 2023  
(+2,700 people)



**66**

**Consumer Bankruptcies**  
in the Kootenay Development  
Region, 2024<sup>30</sup>  
+13 bankruptcies  
from 2023



Between October-December 2024, there were **32 major projects** in the Kootenay Development Region valued at an estimated **\$5 billion.**<sup>32</sup>



Average Total Building Permit Value for Columbia Basin-Boundary Municipalities in 2023 =  
**\$21.5 million**<sup>33 34 35</sup>

**\$604 million**  
**Total Building Permit Value,**  
**Columbia Basin-Boundary**  
**Municipalities, 2023**<sup>33 34 35</sup>

17% from 2022  
(+\$87 million)



How is **civic engagement** and **safety**?

**24,110** Charitable Donors in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region, 2023<sup>36</sup>



Total Donations

**\$43.4 million**

Average  
Donation:  
**\$1,802**

**74%**  
of Columbia Basin-Boundary police services reported a **decrease** in the **Crime Severity Index** between 2023 and 2024.<sup>37</sup>



## How is our regional recreation?

### Visitors to National Parks, 2024/25 <sup>38</sup>

544,770	837,761	682,659
Kootenay National Park	Mount Revelstoke & Glacier National Parks	Yoho National Park
↓ 3% from 2023/24	↑ 9% from 2023/24	↓ 2% from 2023/24

Average spending on parks, recreation, and culture = **14%** of Columbia

Basin-Boundary municipal budgets, 2023 <sup>39</sup>

↑ 1 percentage point from 2022

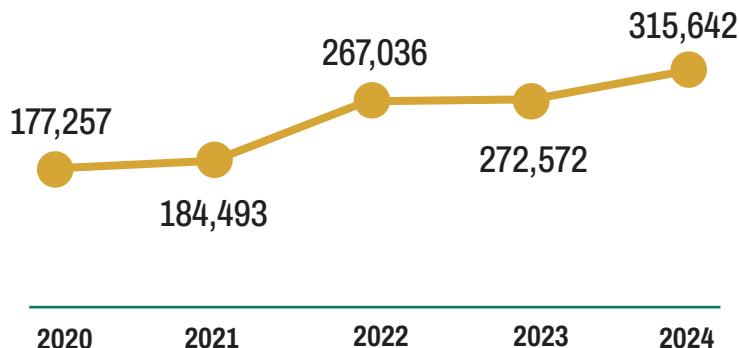


There were **6,172,634 visitors** to provincial parks in the Kootenay Okanagan region in 2023/24. <sup>40</sup>

↑ 8% from 2018/19 (five-year change)

## How is the regional arts and culture sector?

### VISITORS TO KOOTENAY ROCKIES' VISITOR CENTRES <sup>41</sup>



Of the public libraries in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region with 2024 data: <sup>42 43</sup>

**87%** report an increase in government funding per capita  
Average increase in funding between 2023 and 2024 = 2.5%

**47%** report an increase in circulation of print materials  
35% report a decrease, 18% report no change

## How is the housing market?

### VACANCY RATES ROW AND APARTMENT HOUSING<sup>44</sup>

Community	2014	2024
Cranbrook	1.7%	1.4%
Nelson	0.6%	0.8%
British Columbia	1.6%	1.9%

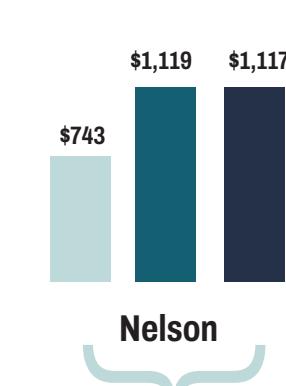


### ROW AND APARTMENT HOUSING AVERAGE RENTS<sup>44</sup>

2014    2023    2024



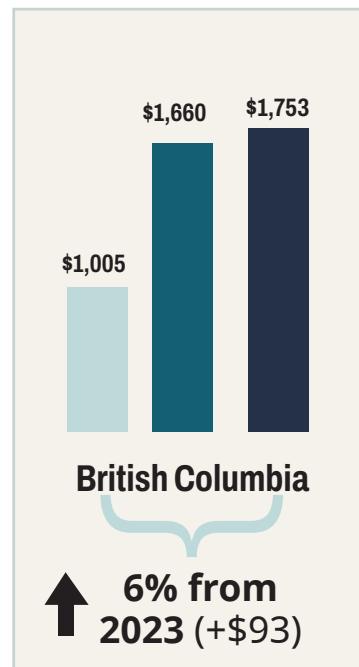
↑ 6% from 2023 (+\$81)



↓ 0.2% from 2023 (-\$2)



↑ 18% from 2023 (+\$123)



↑ 6% from 2023 (+\$93)

### TOTAL SUBSIDIZED HOUSING UNITS IN THE COLUMBIA BASIN-BOUNDARY REGION, 2024<sup>45</sup>

**318**

Emergency Shelter and Housing for the Homeless

↑ 12% from 2023 (+33 units)

**600**

Transitional, Supported and Assisted Living

↑ 5% from 2023 (+30 units)

**1,726**

Independent Social Housing

↑ 9% from 2023 (+136 units)

**884**

Rent Assistance

↑ 2% from 2023 (+14 units)

# Learn More

To get more information on indicators of well-being within the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region, go to [stateofthebasin.ca](https://stateofthebasin.ca).

This website offers additional resources, including:

- [Snapshot Reports](#) from previous years
- [Subjective Well-being Reports](#) (survey on residents' perceptions and behaviours)
- [Community Profiles](#) (community-specific data summary)
- [Featured articles](#) highlighting specific indicators

Selkirk Innovates provides one-on-one data support to help organizations use State of the Basin research. To access this service, contact [Jayme Jones](#).

# References & Resources

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*State of the Basin findings have been developed by a team of qualified researchers. A variety of data sets were used to develop indicator findings, and as such, community groupings may vary from indicator to indicator. In some cases, community-specific data are not available. State of the Basin research should not be considered a complete analysis, and we make no warranty as to the quality, accuracy or completeness of the data. Selkirk Innovates, Selkirk College and Columbia Basin Trust will not be liable for any direct or indirect loss resulting from the use of or reliance on this data.*

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