

# Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

## Electoral Area A – Smithers Rural ELECTORAL AREAS HOUSING NEEDS REPORT

DECEMBER 2021



We acknowledge with respect and gratitude the Dakelh, Nedut'en, Tse'khene, and Wet'suwet'en speaking peoples on whose traditional territories on this study is taking place, including Binche Whut'en First Nation, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Lake Babine Nation, Nadleh Whut'en First Nation, Nak'azdli Whut'en Nation, Nee Tahi Buhn Band, Saik'uz First Nation, Skin Tyee Nation, Stelat'en First Nation, Takla Lake First Nation, Tl'azt'en Nation, Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Yekooche First Nation, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en and Carrier Sekani Tribal Council.

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- Northern Health
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### Prepared for:

**Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning**  
**Regional District of Bulkley–Nechako**  
37 3rd Avenue, PO Box 820  
Burns Lake, BC V0J 1E0

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### Prepared by:



**MAKOLA**  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
**SERVICES**

**M’akola Development Services**  
107–731 Station Avenue  
Victoria, BC V9B 5R5

**Sandy Mackay**  
Housing Research and Policy Lead  
[smackay@makoladev.com](mailto:smackay@makoladev.com)



**TURNER DRAKE**  
**& PARTNERS LTD.**

**Turner Drake & Partners Ltd.**  
6182 North Street  
Halifax, NS B3K 1P5

**Neil Lovitt**  
Vice-President, Planning & Economic Intelligence  
[nlovitt@turnerdrake.com](mailto:nlovitt@turnerdrake.com)

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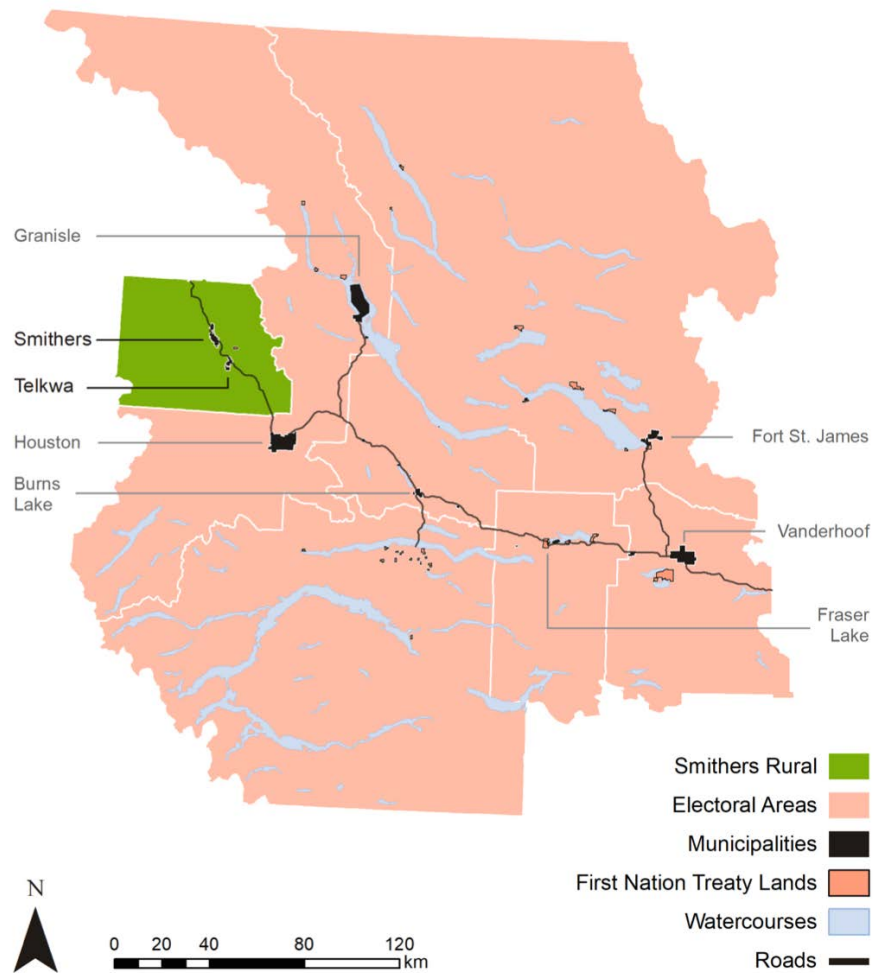
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# 1 Community Findings

## 1.1 STUDY AREA

This report’s scope is centred on Electoral Area A (Smithers Rural). Consequently, all data in this report refers to the rural areas within Smithers Rural except for some sections that directly compare trends to the RDBN Rural or RDBN entirely. A map of the RDBN, inclusive of Smithers Rural, is provided below.

Figure 1.1a: Regional District of Bulkley–Nechako Map



Source: BC Geowarehouse, Statistics Canada

## 1.2 DATA SUMMARY

### Population

From 2006 to 2016, Smithers Rural's population grew about 4%, due largely to growth in total people older than 45. The majority of growth is thanks to a significant expansion of the 65 to 84 age cohort (385 to 595 residents, or 55%). Total youth and young adult populations (0 to 24 years old) shrank over the decade.

Projections suggest that Smithers Rural's population may speed up its expansion over the near future, increasing 11% between 2016 and 2026 (5,485 to 6,115). Growth should mostly occur for senior/retired populations.

### Households & Demand

In 2016, Smithers Rural had 5% more households than it did a decade prior (1,930 to 2,020). The pace of total household growth is faster than that of population (5% versus 4%). Like the total population, household growth mostly occurred in senior age categories (more than 80% change over the decade). Maintainers aged 55 to 64 grew 49% and made up the highest share of all Smithers Rural households.

Projections anticipate that total households could grow by an additional 17% between 2016 and 2026, much faster than historical trends. In other words, 335 more units may be needed to accommodate the change (otherwise, demand may shift to neighbouring communities). Greater magnitude of change for households versus for population often indicates that there will be growth among retired households or smaller households.

### Economy and Income

Smithers Rural had a 71.8% labour participation rate in 2016. Total renting residents in the labour force fell 25% over ten years (375 to 325). Total owner residents in the labour force remained about the same at 2,730. The renter participation rate increased 7.8 points over the decade (more people not in the labour force left than those in the labour force), reaching 85.5% versus 70.4% for owners.

The three largest industries based on employment in Smithers Rural are agriculture, forestry, and fishing; retail trade; and construction.

Overall, Smithers Rural median before-tax household income grew about 14% from 2005 to 2015, or from about \$74,300 to \$84,400 (2015 dollars). Median owner household earned about \$90,200 before tax, while the median renter household earned \$49,200. The former is a 17% increase from a decade prior, while the latter is a 17% decrease.

### Housing Inventory & Construction

Over the last decade, Smithers Rural increased its housing stock by about 16 dwelling units annually. According to the 2016 Census, about 87% of Smithers Rural's dwelling stock (occupied by a usual resident) is made up of single-detached dwellings. Mobile/manufactured homes made up the next greatest share (12%), followed by apartments (< 1%).

The greatest volume of construction occurred in the 1970s, reaching about 595 units (29% of the dwelling stock). Construction activity was highest from the '70s to the '90s, and has considerably declined since (e.g. 150, or 7%, between 2001 and 2016).

### Market Rental Housing Availability & Cost

Rental market data does not exist for any community within the RDBN, limiting the level of possible analysis. Provincial trends and those from other rural communities (outside RDBN) demonstrate notable increases of the last decade. The cost of the median rental unit may have increased around 25% since 2011, after inflation.

### Market Ownership Housing Availability & Cost

Sale volumes across Smithers Rural have been relatively consistent over the last decade, with higher than normal activity occurring in the last three years. Sales hit their peak at 102 transactions in 2018.

Overall, Smithers Rural home prices appreciated 43% since 2011 (about \$259,000 to \$370,500). Price increases seem to be similar across both single-detached and manufactured homes, suggesting that demand for both (relative to availability) has expanded.

### Housing Need

In 2016, 140 Smithers Rural households (8%) lived in a home that put them outside of their financial means (17% of renters and 7% of owner households). Renter households were more likely to live in overcrowded situations (5%, compared to 3% of owner households) and homes needing major repair (17%, compared to 9% of owner households).

With that in mind, as of 2016, about 17% of all renter households in Smithers Rural and 4% of owner households were in Core Housing Need. Housing hardship was most prevalent among lone parent households as they tend to have lower incomes overall and have increased expenses related to children, which compounds the problem of housing costs. Single/ roommate households also experienced elevated rates of financial difficulty revolving around shelter.

## 1.3 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Quotes and themes in this section are from residents of Smithers Rural who participated in the engagement process. Though many provided commentary specific to the rural areas, most respondents identified regional themes that were applicable to neighbouring municipalities and the Regional District as a whole. For a full breakdown of these engagements, see the Engagement Summary Appendix of this report.

### Housing Costs Increasing

Though still less expensive than housing in some municipalities, Smithers Rural is the most expensive housing market in the Rural RDBN. Key informants, survey respondents, and focus group participants emphasized that there is a significant and growing affordability gap, particularly for younger people trying to enter the ownership market. Many key informants indicated that housing affordable to young families was limited and others were concerned that even stably employed, full-time workers were increasingly unable to find affordable housing.

*"Prices prices and prices. That is why went the way of buying a land and a mobile home first. We could not afford to build. If we knew what issue it might be to build an actual house now when we already build some equity in the land we might not do it this way. I am just not sure what other options young couples and families have to own a home in the valley."*

Though younger residents were the most concerned about affordability challenges, older residents were worried about their ability to downsize and remain in their community. Though many will be able to sell a valuable property, they might not be able to buy into an increasingly expensive market, especially as most smaller units are located in Smithers. Most indicated they would be best served by a smaller, more manageable unit in the rural area, and some proposed solutions that would allow seniors to remain on a larger property while also providing housing for young families.

*“Create a service that helps seniors retrofit suites into their homes so they can be matched with young folks looking for affordable housing. Help create a culture where we help each other. Young families can help maintain the home and property while seniors can have support to stay in their home for as long as possible.”*

### Limited Rental Options

Throughout the engagement process, the cost, availability, and condition of rental units was the most common housing challenge. Residents of Smithers Rural indicated that a reduced availability of long-term rentals is impacting the social, economic, and cultural fabric of their communities and many had friends or family or were themselves struggling to find a stable and affordable rental situation. This need was especially prevalent for people who needed more than one bedroom to support their family and households with only one income. When units were available, they were often in poor condition, and many residents of Smithers Rural were concerned about rising rates of visible homelessness in their communities.

*“There is a great need for true low barrier housing in Smithers and a true homeless shelter.”*

*“Adult children having to move back home because of lack of available rentals and entry level homes.”*

*“In desperate need of affordable housing across the spectrum. Apartments (rental not strata), duplexes, houses, trailer parks and year round RV camp grounds.”*

Engagement participants also consistently identified pressure from resource and pipeline development as a contributing factor to housing shortages. Limited housing options make attracting new, vital workers to the Region a challenge.

*“More and more homeless. Cannot attract workers to the area because there is no housing. Pipeline project is eating up all hotels, motels, single rooms, etc. that are needed by permanent residents to the town. Pipeline camp not completed on time.”*



### Challenges Navigating Rural Land Use Restrictions

Many rural respondents indicated they would like to provide additional housing options but are limited by restrictions to second dwellings and by the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Some did not understand why their property was included when it was not able to function as an agricultural property. Others wished it was easier to add a second dwelling or subdivide their property to make more ownership options available to people.

*“We wish there was less bureaucracy involved with ALR. Our land is very small (7 acres) with a solid bedrock everywhere. When we tell someone we are in ALR they do not understand why. If we could change the zoning on Hislop we would. Thank you for an opportunity to express our opinion.”*

*“I believe allowing subdivision will be crucial. We have quite a few neighbors with 80 or 160 acres who would be interested to sell half of their properties. There are limited options to buy rural properties around Smithers and not everyone wants to live in town so this might be one of the options how to allow more housing opportunities.”*

*“I would like rural to stay a quiet and peaceful place to live. I don't want to see people using fertile land ideal for farming being wasted BUT farmers and landowners should be allowed to provide accommodation to others if it doesn't impact the land and placed in a way to not effect neighbours.”*

Despite the desire by many to build and rent a second dwelling, many respondents were aware that the cost of building and servicing a permanent dwelling makes offering affordable rent very difficult.

*“People can't find affordable housing & even if we were to build a 2nd dwelling to rent out, we couldn't build it at a cost that would make it make sense to rent it out at an affordable rate.”*

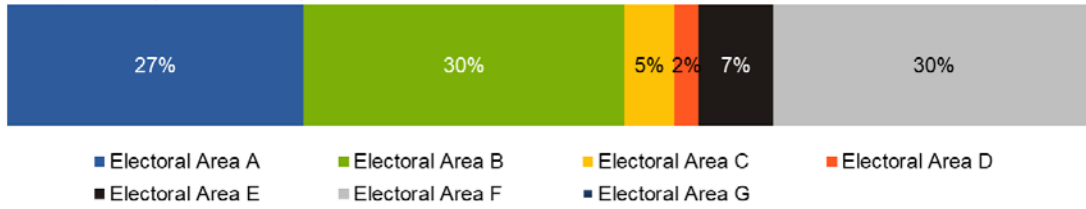
### Community Survey Response Profile

The project team developed and distributed a community housing surveys that were designed to fill quantitative data gaps and capture housing experiences from as many residents as possible throughout the study area.

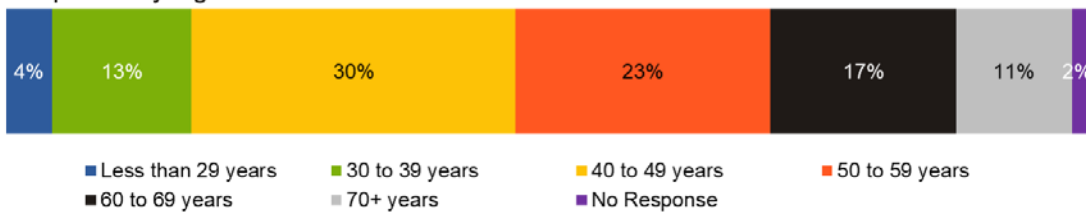
In total, the survey collectively received 306 responses from individual community members throughout the rural RDBN, 55 of whom indicated they lived in Smithers Rural. The following graphs break down responses by key topics collected as part of the survey.

- Slightly over half of respondents (53%) were over the age of 50. Only 4% were under 30.
- The median income of respondent households was around \$75,000 per year.
- The majority of respondents (38%) were couples without children. Twenty-three percent (23%) were single people.
- Most respondents (77%) lived in a single-detached home. Nine percent (9%) lived in a mobile home.
- The median reported housing cost was slightly more than \$1,250 per month.
- The majority of respondents (72%) indicated their housing met their needs. Twenty-three percent (23%) indicated it did not.

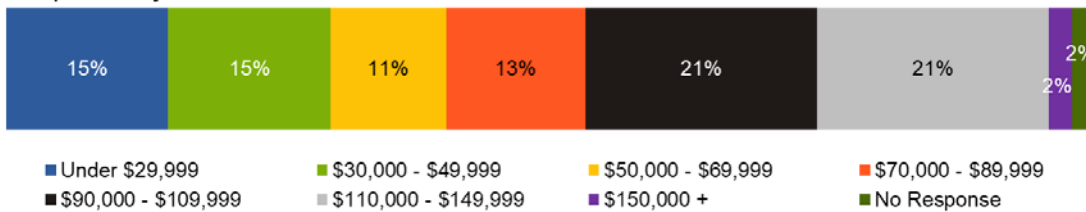
**Response by Community**



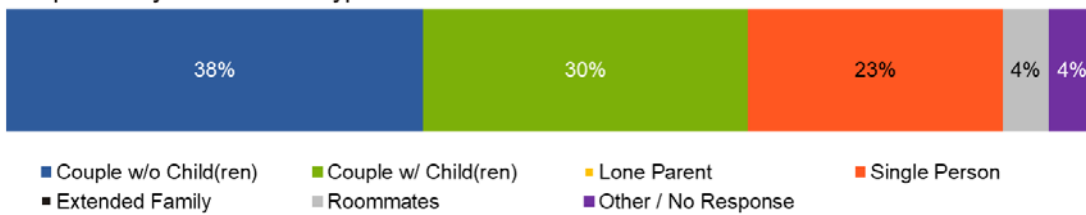
**Response by Age**



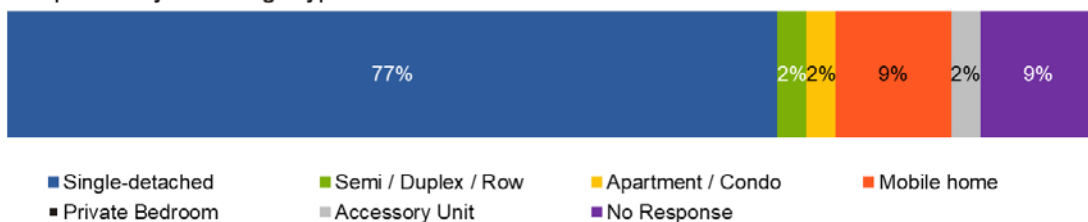
**Response by Income**



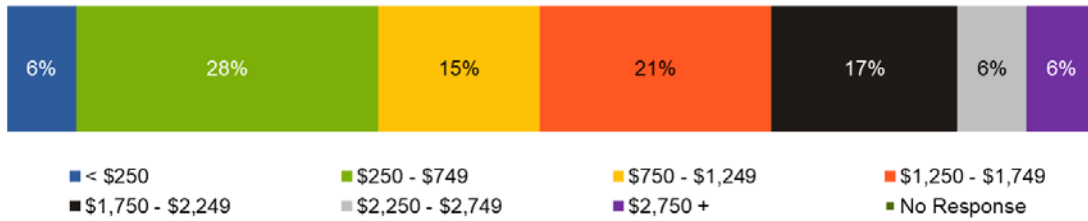
**Response by Household Type**



**Response by Dwelling Type**



Response by Housing Cost



Response by Housing Meets Need



## 1.4 EXISTING POLICY ENVIRONMENT

In 2014, the RDBN adopted Bylaw No. 1704; specifically, the Smithers Telkwa Rural Official Community Plan (OCP). Generally, an OCP is concerned with the use of land and management of resources, and influences that are important to the responsible planning of the community. The Plan, therefore, indicates the community’s concerns and wishes with regards to all lands within Smithers Telkwa Rural area. In particular, the OCP provides for the integration of land use, transportation, the environment, heritage, public services and utilities, and economic development into a broad strategy to direct the growth and development of the community.

Importantly, the OCP lays out objectives and policies related to residential areas / housing overall, which are summarized in the table below. Note that the table does not include all policies, only those most relevant to the scope of the Housing Needs Report.

Section	Objective or Policy
Affordable, Rental, and Special Needs Housing Objectives 4.10.1(1)	To promote and accommodate the provision of affordable, rental, and special needs housing and increased housing choice in a manner appropriate for a low density rural area.
Affordable, Rental, and Special Needs Housing Policies 4.10.2(1)	Regional District regulations that allow secondary suites in single family dwellings in the rural area shall be maintained.
Affordable, Rental, and Special Needs Housing Policies 4.10.2(2)	Regional District regulations that allow two single family dwellings or a two family dwelling on parcels larger than 8 hectares, shall be maintained.
Rural Residential (RR) Designation Objectives 3.4.1(2)	To support opportunities for affordable housing, rental housing, and special needs housing.
Rural Residential (RR) Designation Objectives 3.4.1(5)	To avoid rural sprawl and allow appropriate and limited infill development.

## 2 Demography

### 2.1 POPULATION

#### Historical Population

Canada’s residents are aging. Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 to 1964) are entering their retirement years in large numbers, unmatched by growth in young demographics due to declining birth rates. This is especially true in rural communities, including Bulkley–Nechako Rural and the Smithers Rural community.

Figure 2.1a highlights the total population of each community in 2016 by age cohort, the proportion of each age cohort compared to the total population, and the percent change in population from 2006 to 2016. Readers may notice that the figure’s numbers differ from than those posted on the Statistics Canada website; adjustments have been made to Statistics Canada data to reflect Census undercounting.

Figure 2.1a: Total Population & Age Cohorts '16 and Percent Change '06-'16

		0 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
Bulkley- Nechako	Population	7,160	5,345	10,105	12,005	4,455	515	39,585
	Proportion	18%	14%	26%	30%	11%	1%	100%
	%Δ '06-'16	-14%	0%	1%	13%	24%	63%	4%
Bulkley- Nechako Rural	Population	2,915	2,100	3,795	5,760	2,125	140	16,835
	Proportion	17%	12%	23%	34%	13%	1%	100%
	%Δ '06-'16	-11%	-4%	-3%	8%	33%	47%	3%
Smithers Rural	Population	960	740	1,320	1,830	595	40	5,485
	Proportion	18%	13%	24%	33%	11%	1%	100%
	%Δ '06-'16	-12%	-4%	2%	9%	55%	14%	4%

Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada

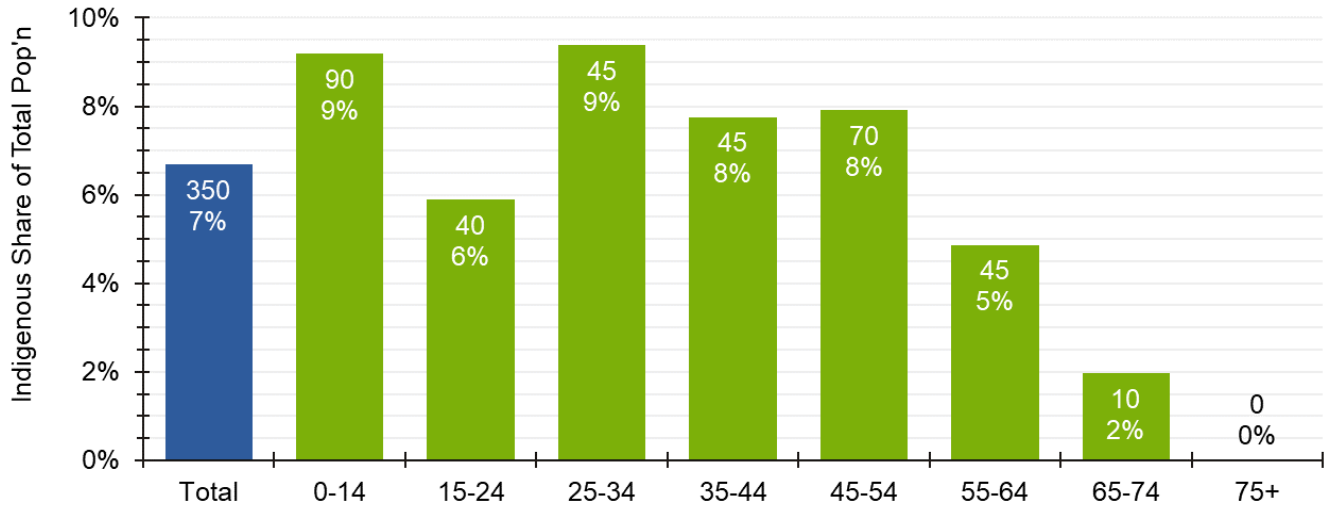
From 2006 to 2016, Smithers Rural’s population grew about 4%, due largely to growth in total people older than 45. The majority of growth is thanks to a significant expansion of the 65 to 84 age cohort (385 to 595 residents, or 55%). Total youth and young adult populations (0 to 24 years old) shrank over the decade.

#### Indigenous Population

In 2016, about 350 people identified as Indigenous in Smithers Rural, or about 7% of the total population.

Off-reserve Indigenous peoples are often younger on average than the total population; there are higher proportions of children or young adults. Figure 2.1b illustrates the share of Indigenous people relative to the total population across each age cohort.

**Figure 2.1b: Smithers Rural, Total Indigenous Population & Share of Total Population, 2016**

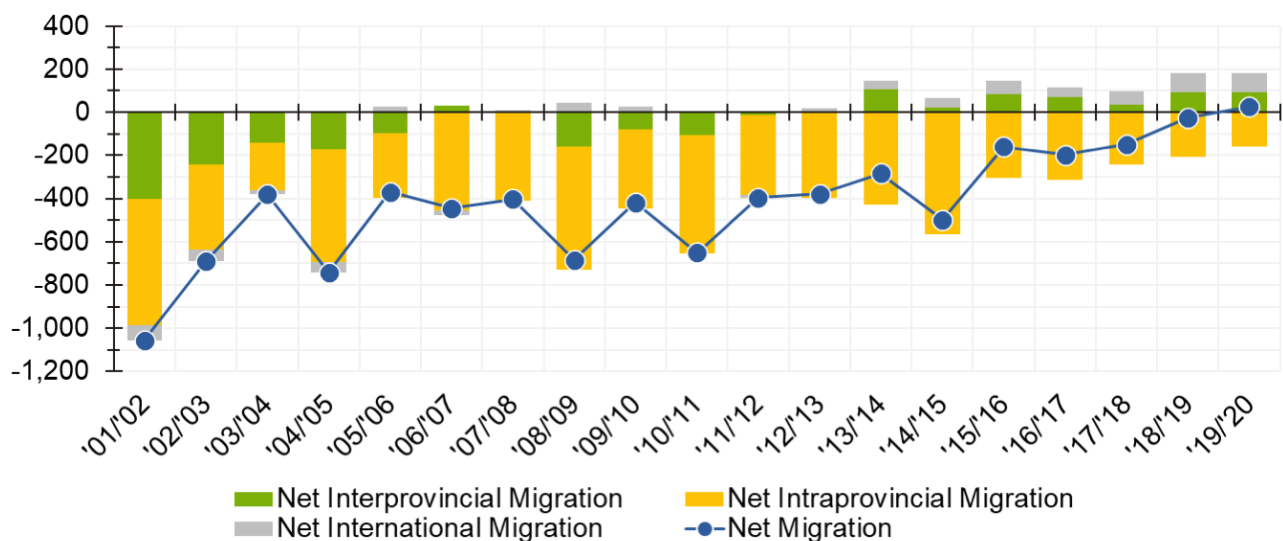


Source: Statistics Canada

### Historical Migration (Regional District)

Statistics Canada reports on historical components of demographic growth, which refers to the in- and out-migration of people, whether within Canada’s or British Columbia’s borders, or between countries. Figure 2.1c summarizes these components. The vertical bars represent the cumulative impact of these in- and out-flows, while the dotted line indicates the net change in population from migration during a given year. Readers can find definitions of each term below in the Glossary section.

**Figure 2.1c: Entire RDBN, Net Migration of People**



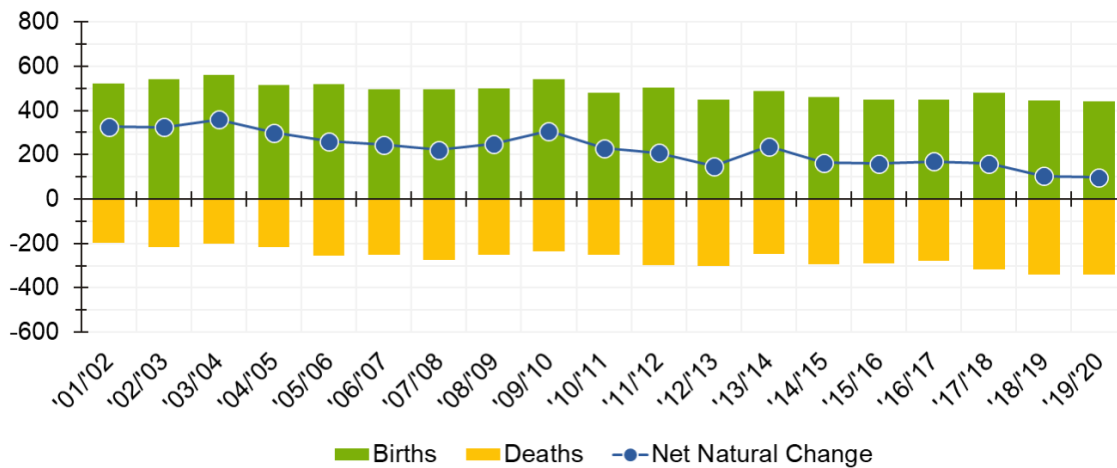
Source: Statistics Canada

Over the last two decades, the Regional District mostly experienced negative annual migration. Overall, Bulkley–Nechako has lost close to 7,900 net people over the two decades (or about 4,700 between 2006 and 2016). This would suggest population decline across the region. However, historical Census data and Statistics Canada annual estimates indicate that, although occurring in some communities, decline is not pervasive across the entire Regional District.

Historical migration trends show a continued improvement in net migration. In 2019/2020, Bulkley–Nechako welcomed more people than it lost, the first time this had happened in the last decade thanks to the lowest loss of out-migration to other provinces.

Over the last two decades, the RDBN reported that there were almost 4,250 more births than deaths. Recent trends indicate that net natural change is trending downwards (shown in Figure 2.1d), a direct result of an aging population. The rate of change of net natural population change appears to demonstrate that births should continue to outpace deaths for at least a few more years. Nevertheless, trending towards negative net natural population change will undoubtedly have implications for future population age distributions regionally and locally, as well as on how we house said population.

**Figure 2.1d: Entire RDBN, Net Natural Population Change (Births minus Deaths)**



Source: Statistics Canada

### Persons with Disabilities (British Columbia)

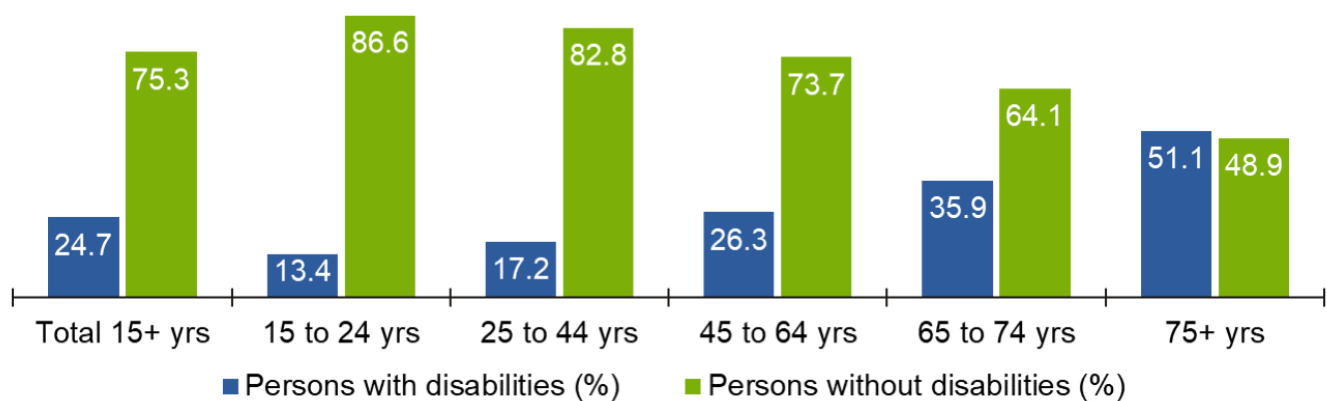
Statistics Canada released its 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability in 2019. This report, and its dataset, offers national and provincial insights into the prevalence of disability across Canada, including the type and severity of a disability, as well as the economic circumstances for persons with one or more disabilities. Unfortunately, data representing more granular geographies like the Smithers Rural are not available, meaning discussions must remain at the provincial level.

The 2017 survey classifies a disability as falling within one of eleven categories: pain, flexibility, mobility, mental health, seeing, hearing, dexterity, learning, memory, developmental, or unknown. Most Canadians with a disability had more than one type. Of the 6.2 million Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over:

- 29% had one type;
- 38% had two or three; and
- 33% had four or more.

In 2017, 926,100 British Columbians aged 15 years old or older reported having at least one disability, or about 25% of all residents in that age cohort. If the same proportion applied to Smithers Rural, that would mean about 1,105 residents could be living with a disability.

**Figure 2.1e: % of Population w/ 1+ Disability by Age Cohort, British Columbia, 2017**



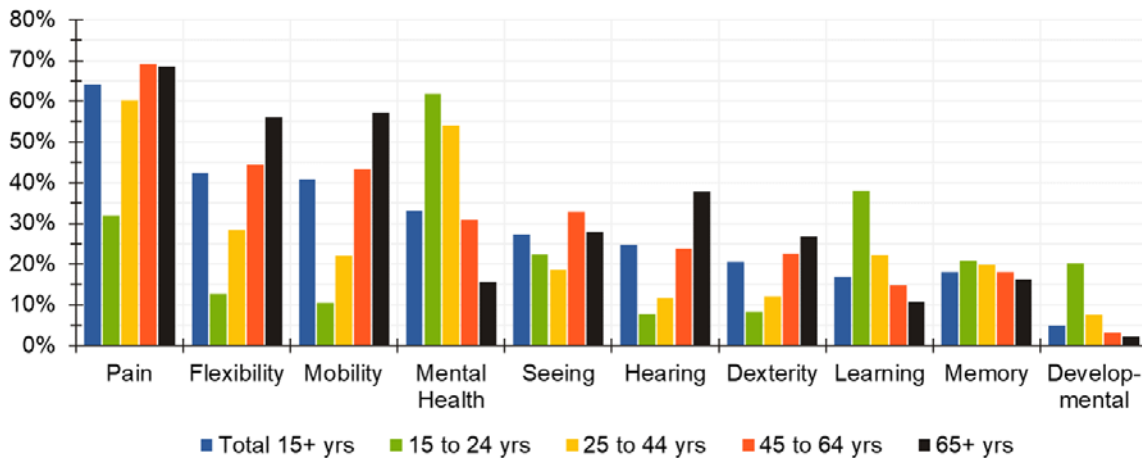
*Source: Canadian Survey on Disability 2017*

As residents age, the prevalence of disability increases. Statistics Canada reported that 42% of persons aged 65 or older had a disability. The rate of disability rises almost 10 percentage points for those 75 or older. This increased prevalence among older cohorts is particularly important to consider as said cohorts have historically and will continue to represent greater proportions of the overall population.

Overall, pain, flexibility, and mobility are the most prevalent types of disabilities (64%, 42%, and 41% of people experience either type, respectively). All three are most prevalent in older age cohorts.

Mental health is next most prevalent (33%), with significantly higher prevalence among young adults. About 62% of people 15 to 24 years of age reported having mental health difficulties. The prevalence decreases across older cohorts.

**Figure 2.1f: % of Disabled Persons w/ Specific Disability Type by Age, British Columbia, 2017**



Source: Canadian Survey on Disability 2017

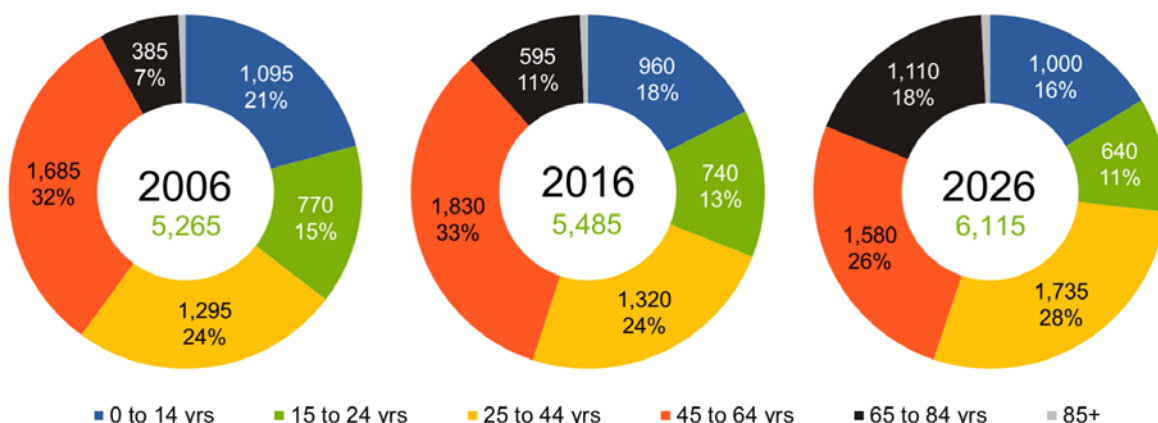
The prevalence of disability highlights the importance of appropriate, accessible housing. In many cases, a dwelling’s condition/layout does not match the needs of moderate to severe disabilities, impacting an individual and/or a household’s quality of life.

### Anticipated Population

Population projections used what is known as the “Shift Share” method to anticipate population growth within each 5-year age cohort. The model considers the historical population change of each community (measured as a proportion of the Regional District’s population), and adjusts these changes using BC Statistics’ RDBN projections. Greater detail about the projection method is available at the end of the Glossary.

Figure 2.1g illustrates the historical and anticipated numerical changes to the Smithers Rural population in 2006, 2016, and 2026. Figure 2.1h indicates what percent change each cohort group could expect to experience from 2016 to 2026. Results are limited to 2026 to reflect both the requirements set by BC Housing Needs legislation and the fact that projection results become increasingly inaccurate over longer periods.

**Figure 2.1g: Smithers Rural, Historical & Anticipated Population Distribution**



Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada



Projections suggest that Smithers Rural’s population may speed up its expansion over the near future, increasing 11% between 2016 and 2026 (5,485 to 6,115).

Growth should mostly occur for senior/retired populations. Based on RDBN projections, the Regional District could also see an increase among younger adult cohorts (those aged 25 to 44), which may trickle down to increases for those living in Smithers Rural (31% growth within this age group locally).

**Figure 2.1h: Total Population & Age Cohorts '26 and Percent Change '16-'26**

		0 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
Bulkley- Nechako	Population	7,060	4,700	12,820	10,680	7,345	825	43,430
	Proportion	16%	11%	30%	25%	17%	2%	100%
	%Δ '16-'26	-1%	-12%	27%	-11%	65%	60%	10%
Bulkley- Nechako Rural	Population	2,980	1,815	4,755	4,865	3,645	210	18,270
	Proportion	16%	10%	26%	27%	20%	1%	100%
	%Δ '16-'26	2%	-14%	25%	-16%	72%	50%	9%
Smithers Rural	Population	1,000	640	1,735	1,580	1,110	50	6,115
	Proportion	16%	10%	28%	26%	18%	1%	100%
	%Δ '16-'26	4%	-14%	31%	-14%	87%	25%	11%

Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada

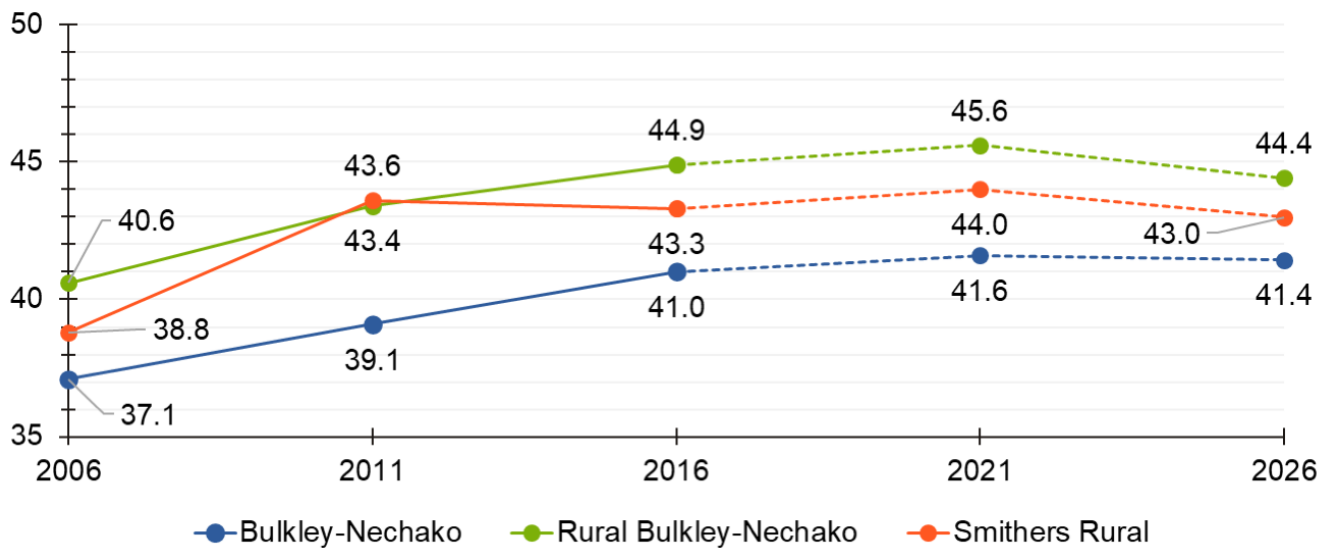
It is important to note that, like any projection method, the Shift Share is imperfect. Using RDBN level projections as a means for calculating local, rural outcomes does result in outputs that are influenced by trends occurring within RDBN municipalities. Nevertheless, including all RDBN communities provides a buffer for local projections as they avoid spiralling trends that could occur without consideration of external influence.

In addition to imperfections within population models, projections are limited by available data. The last, most reliable population data point from the 2016 Census. Many key informants indicated that in recent years, the RDBN has seen an influx in population due to resource development and amenity migration. This may increase as a result of Covid-19 and could be enough to offset or supplement projection population trends.

## Median Age

In 2016, Smithers Rural’s median age was 43.3 years old, up from 38.8 in 2006. Smithers Rural is younger (overall) than other the average Bulkley–Nechako Rural community.

**Figure 2.1i: Historical & Anticipated Median Age by Community**



*Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada*

Due to anticipated rebounds in younger cohorts, both the overall RDBN Rural area and Smithers Rural should see similar median age decreases in the near term. The latter could reduce to 43.0 by 2026.

## 2.2 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Statistics Canada defines a household as a person or group of persons who occupy the same dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada or abroad. One household could be a couple with children, lone parents, a single person, or roommates. A household is the highest-level descriptor of many unique living situations.

This report often categorizes households by their “primary household maintainer” age cohorts. A household maintainer refers to whether or not a person residing in the household is responsible for paying all or the majority of the rent, the mortgage, the taxes, the electricity, or other services and utilities. In the case of a household where two or more people are listed as household maintainers, the first person listed is chosen as the primary household maintainer.

### Historical Households

Total households, and the age distribution of household maintainers, is mostly a function of changes occurring in the population. Many factors come in to play for the makeup of households, like moving across community boundaries, changes in preferences, or new financial circumstances. Like the earlier section, an aging population is at the core of most trends.

Figure 2.2a shows the totals and distributions of these cohorts in each community and includes their decade percent change. Results come from Statistics Canada Census data. Unlike population sections, household data is not adjusted for undercounting.

**Figure 2.2a: Total Households & Maintainer Cohorts '16 and Percent Change '06-'16**

		15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+	Total
Bulkley- Nechako	Households	555	1,975	2,360	3,145	3,485	2,255	1,315	15,100
	Proportion	4%	13%	16%	21%	23%	15%	9%	100%
	%Δ '06-'16	-13%	0%	-21%	-16%	35%	49%	21%	4%
Bulkley- Nechako Rural	Households	125	680	890	1,365	1,685	1,095	600	6,415
	Proportion	2%	11%	14%	21%	26%	17%	9%	100%
	%Δ '06-'16	-32%	4%	-28%	-24%	28%	65%	69%	3%
Smithers Rural	Households	40	230	290	465	550	310	145	2,020
	Proportion	2%	11%	14%	23%	27%	15%	7%	100%
	%Δ '06-'16	-27%	10%	-32%	-24%	49%	82%	81%	5%

Source: derived from Statistics Canada

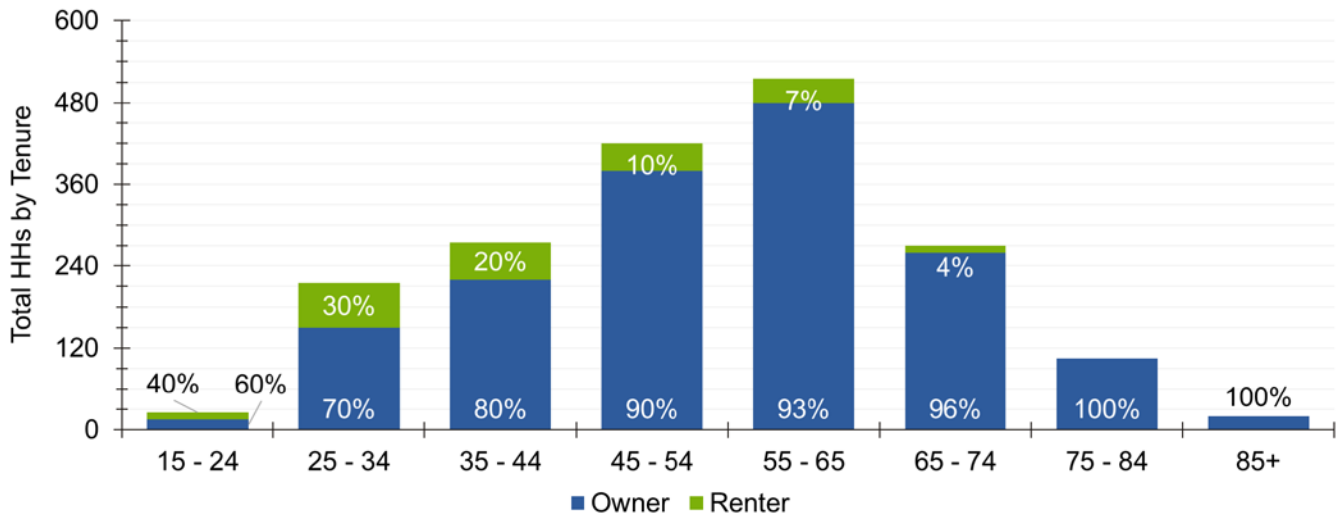
In 2016, Smithers Rural had 5% more households than it did a decade prior (1,930 to 2,020). The pace of total household growth is faster than that of population (5% versus 1%).

Like the total population, household growth mostly occurred in senior age categories (more than 80% change over the decade). Maintainers aged 55 to 64 grew 49% and made up the highest share of all Smithers Rural households.

### Household Tenure

According to Statistics Canada, the number of residents in Smithers Rural renter-occupied dwellings (or renter households) decreased from 755 to 490 between 2006 and 2016, representing a decline of 35%. Collectively, there was a total of 235 renter households in 2016. This represents 12% of all community households, a decrease from 15% in 2006. For owner households, there were about 1,790 in 2016, up 10% from a decade prior.

**Figure 2.2b: Total & Proportion of Tenure by Maintainer Age Cohort, 2016**



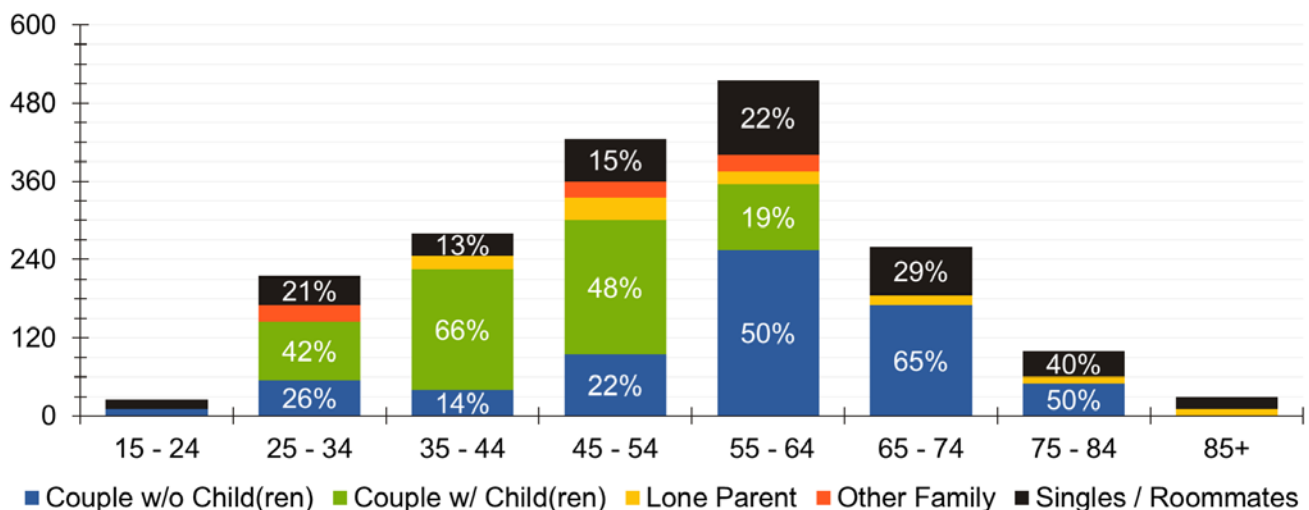
Source: Statistics Canada

The following subsections briefly show the composition of these renter households by the age of their primary maintainer, the household type, and the household size.

### Household Type

Household type refers to the type of “census-family” that occupies a dwelling (see Glossary). Statistics Canada mainly considers the following types: (1) couples without children, (2) couples with children, (3) lone parents, or (4) non-census families (herein known as single people or roommate households) by primary maintainer age.

**Figure 2.2c: Total & Proportion of Household Size by Maintainer Age Cohort, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

As of the 2016 Census, about 36% of Smithers Rural households were couples without children, 32% were couples with children, 6% were lone parent households, and 22% were either single person or roommate households.

Couples with children are the most prevalent household type for households with a primary maintainer between 25 and 54 years old. After that, couples without children capture the greatest share as children move out and create their own households.

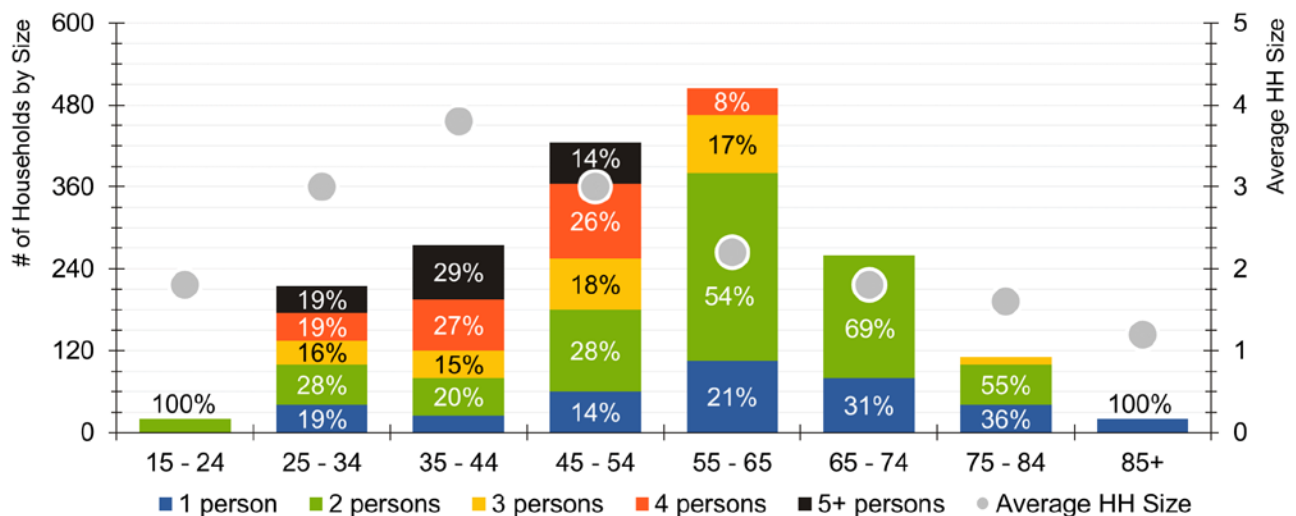
Overall, about 39% of owner households had a child at home (whether a couple or lone parent). About 28% of renter households included a child. The majority of renter households (52%) either people living alone or with a roommate.

### Household Size

Overall, about 62% of households were 2 or fewer persons large. As of 2016, the average household had 2.6 persons, with the highest average occurring for 35 to 44 year old maintainer households at 3.8.

Owner households generally exhibited a higher average household size (2.7) than renter households (2.0), attributed to the increased prevalence of families with children that occupy the former.

**Figure 2.2d: Total & Proportion of Household Size by Maintainer Age Cohort, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

### Anticipated Households

Household growth is an important fundamental component of housing demand. By definition a household requires an available dwelling to occupy. Therefore, household projections are (simplistically) synonymous with the increase in housing stock required to accommodate expected population changes (note that overall housing demand is also influenced by economic and fiscal factors, but these are omitted from the exercise for simplification).

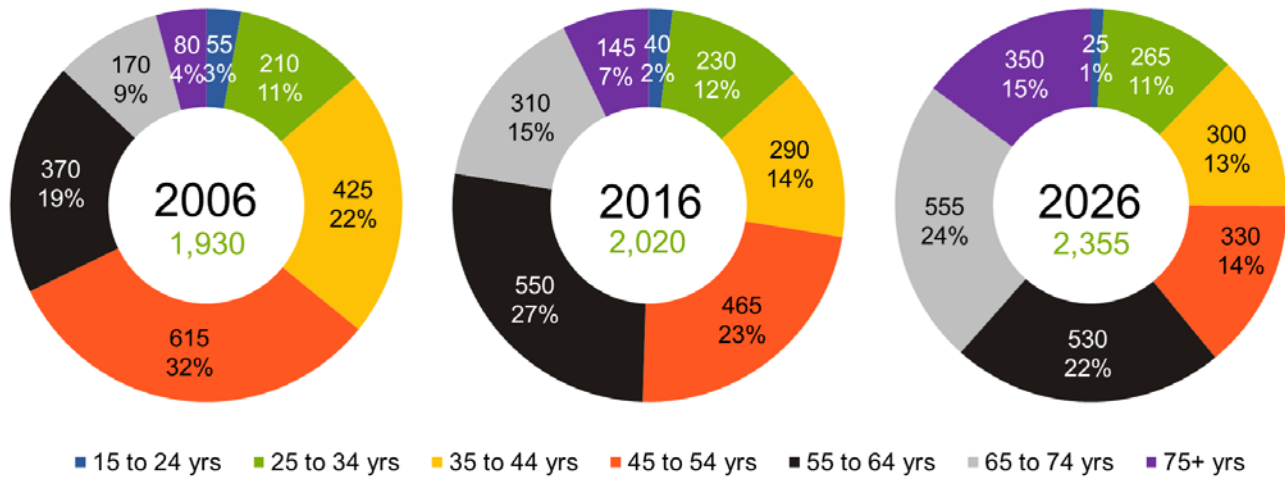
Projecting future growth in the number of households requires two related data inputs:

- (1) population projections, and
- (2) the historical proportion of maintainers by age cohort, divided by the total people in that cohort.

Total demand is calculated by applying the proportions of (2) to the change in how many people there are at a given age determined by (1). Figure 2.2e illustrates the distribution of household maintainer ages in 2006, 2016, and 2026. Figure 2.2f indicates what percent change each maintainer age cohort group could expect to experience from 2016 to 2026.

From 2016 to 2026, total households may grow 17% (2,020 to 2,355), much faster than historical trends. Mirroring anticipated movement in population, growth should mostly be led senior maintainer age cohorts. Specifically, maintainers 65 or older may grow 98% between 2016 and 2026, while maintainers 25 to 34 may grow about 15%.

**Figure 2.2e: Historical & Anticipated Household Age Distribution**



Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada

Higher total household growth than population growth means that projections anticipate a continued reduction in the average household size, mostly impacted by aging populations but also by the decline in birth rates.

**Figure 2.2f: Total HHs & Maintainer Cohorts '26 and % Change '16-'26**

		15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+	Total
Bulkley- Nechako	Households	415	1,970	2,790	2,330	3,130	3,620	2,750	17,005
	Proportion	2%	12%	16%	14%	18%	21%	16%	100%
	%Δ '16-'26	-25%	0%	18%	-26%	-10%	61%	109%	13%
Bulkley- Nechako Rural	Households	80	770	1,000	950	1,455	1,815	1,385	7,455
	Proportion	1%	10%	13%	13%	20%	24%	19%	100%
	%Δ '16-'26	-36%	13%	12%	-30%	-14%	66%	131%	16%
Smithers Rural	Households	25	265	300	330	530	555	350	2,355
	Proportion	1%	11%	13%	14%	23%	24%	15%	100%
	%Δ '16-'26	-38%	15%	3%	-29%	-4%	79%	141%	17%

Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada

### Anticipated Household Characteristics

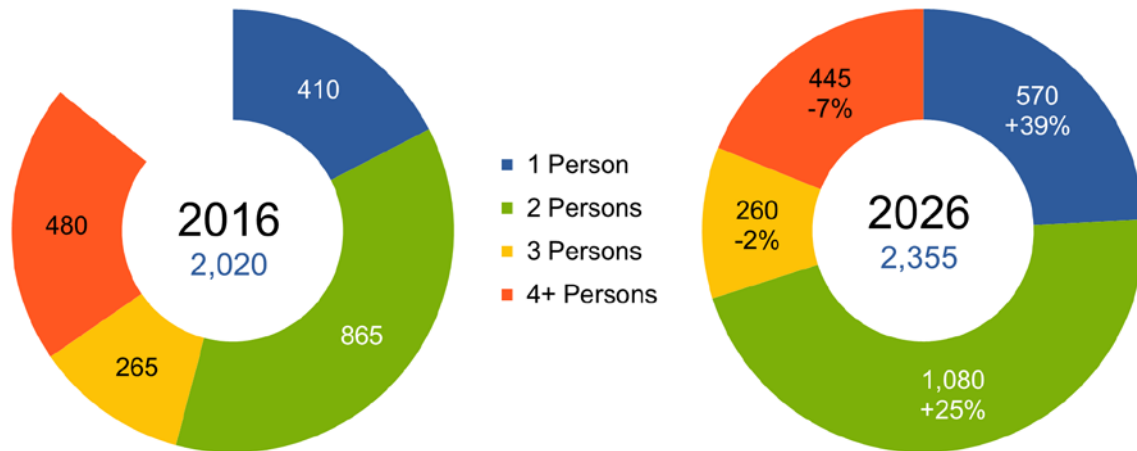
We can estimate additional characteristics about these anticipated households by using previous Census data to determine how other attributes, such as size and tenure, relate to specific age cohorts and apply those relationships to the expected age distributions of the anticipated household growth. This can inform us of the types of housing that may be required in the near future as a result of these growing and changing households.

It must be recognised that this approach is, at best, an educated guess. It considers historical trends that are likely to be less accurate as we peer further into the future, and relies on other estimates (projected population and households) as key inputs. Finally, it only quantifies the change in demand expected from changes in the number and age of people in the study area. Housing demand can be influenced by economic trends, monetary policy, government policy, and conditions in the housing market itself. As a result, these estimates should be understood to be the bare minimum change that might be required as a consequence of expected demographic changes while maintaining all other aspects of the status quo. Therefore, when applying these estimates to housing policy development it should be recognised that additional housing may be required to address other issues, such as existing gaps, supply shortfalls, or changes in demographic trends that deviate from past patterns.

### Anticipated Household Size

One of the simplest ways to describe a household is its size, or how many people permanently live in the shared dwelling at a given time. Figure 2.2g demonstrates how demand generated by different household sizes may change from 2016 to 2026.

**Figure 2.2g: Housing Demand by Household Size (% Change '16-'26)**



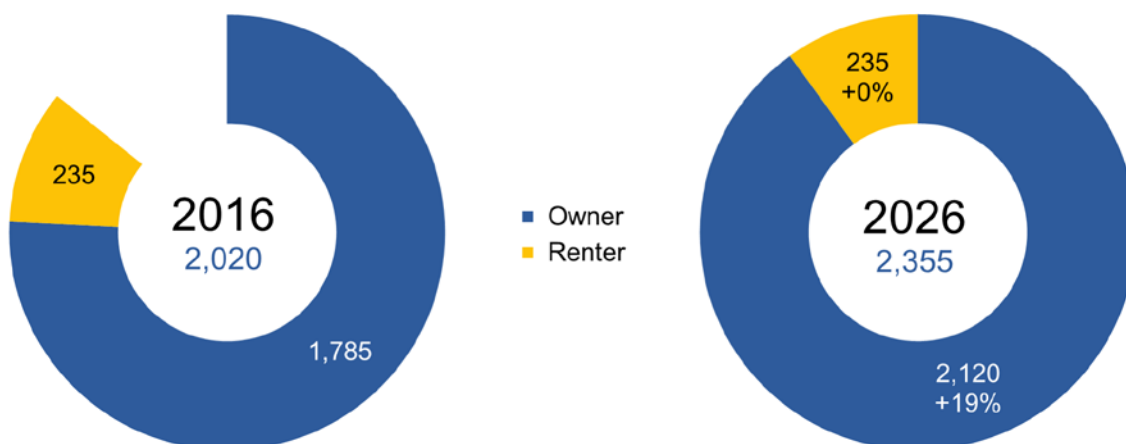
Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada

By 2026, Smithers Rural could experience increases among 2 or fewer person households, and losses of 4 or greater. The likely increase in smaller household sizes reflects the anticipated expansion of senior households and the related shrinking of those maintainer age cohorts that are most likely to have dependent children at home.

**Anticipated Household Tenure**

Important to local governments is the evolution of tenure characteristics; how many households own or rent the dwelling that they permanently reside in. Figure 2.2h anticipates how the demand for tenure may change from 2016 to 2026.

**Figure 2.2h: Housing Demand by Tenure (% Change '16-'26)**



Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada

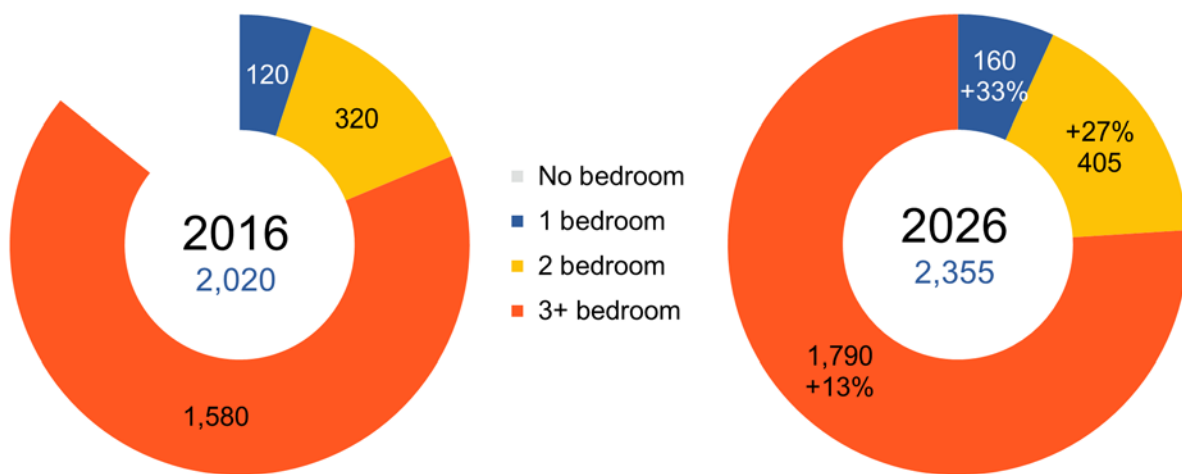


By 2026, the pace of growth in demand for Smithers Rural owner households should outpace that of renters. Total renter households may experience a marginal decrease. In 2006, 15% of households rented, declining to 12% by 2016. Projections anticipate by 2026, rates of renting could continue to decrease to about 11%.

**Anticipated Dwelling Size (Bedrooms)**

Also important to local governments is the evolution of the demand for particular sizes of dwellings; might there be a shift in preference in the square footage of a home based on the size of a household. Figure 2.2i anticipates how the demand by dwelling size (based on bedroom totals) may change from 2016 to 2026.

**Figure 2.2i: Housing Demand by Dwelling Size (% Change '16-'26)**



*Source: derived from BC Statistics and Statistics Canada*

By 2026, the pace of growth in demand for 2-bedroom dwellings could reach 27% (or to 405 units), while demand for 1-bedroom dwellings may expand the greatest percentage (33% to 160). Three-or-more bedroom dwellings should also see an increase as single-detached dwellings remain the most prevalent housing typology.

## 3 Economy

### 3.1 EMPLOYMENT

Economic development, and the resulting employment opportunities, is a key contributor to the overall demand and supply of housing within a community. Consequently, it is important to understand what trends may be occurring across the labour force.

#### Labour Force Statistics

The Glossary section defines participation, employment, and unemployment in regards to summarizing labour force activity. Note that tables in this section include green text that denotes a positive change (i.e. greater participation or less unemployment) while red text denotes a negative change (i.e. fewer people in the labour force or increased unemployment).

In 2016, Statistics Canada reported a total Smithers Rural labour force of 3,055 people (those working or actively seeking work, and who are 15+ years old), equating to a 71.8% participation rate. In other words, many more people were contributing to the local or broader economy via employment than otherwise.

Smithers Rural's labour force shrank close to 4% between 2006 and 2016, demonstrating that less people were working or seeking work. At the same time, the total people in the non-labour force rose 19%. The latter trend highlights the impact of retirement on the labour statistics, including both residents retiring locally and new residents moving to Smithers Rural as part of their retirement.

Figure 3.1a: Smithers Rural, Labour Force Statistics by Sex & Percent Change

	2016			% Change '06-'16		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total Pop (15+ yrs old)	4,260	2,170	2,090	1.8%	0.2%	2.7%
In Labour Force	3,055	1,625	1,430	-3.8%	-8.7%	1.8%
Employed	2,770	1,450	1,320	-7.0%	-12.9%	-0.4%
Unemployed	290	180	110	48.7%	56.5%	37.5%
Not in Labour Force	1,200	545	655	19.4%	41.6%	4.8%
Participation Rate (%)	71.8	74.9	68.4	-4.1	-7.3	-0.6
Employment Rate (%)	64.9	66.8	63.2	-6.3	-10.1	-1.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.5	11.1	7.7	+3.4	+4.6	+2.0

Source: Statistics Canada

Total female residents in the labour force grew almost 2% while males dropped about 9%. Over the same period, the number of women not in the labour force increased by a moderate 5% while men shot up 42% over the decade. Female participation remains lower than male participation (68.4% versus 74.9%) but has moved closer to parity.

In 2006, unemployment was at 6.1%. Since then, it rose 3.4 points. Women historically demonstrated lower unemployment than men.

**Figure 3.1b: Smithers Rural, Labour Force Statistics by Tenure & Percent Change**

	2016			% Change '06-'16		
	Total	Owner	Renter	Total	Owner	Renter
Total Pop (15+ yrs old)	4,260	3,885	375	1.8%	7.2%	-32.4%
In Labour Force	3,055	2,730	325	-3.8%	-0.5%	-25.3%
Employed	2,770	2,470	300	-7.0%	-4.8%	-23.1%
Unemployed	290	265	25	48.7%	76.7%	-50.0%
Not in Labour Force	1,200	1,150	55	19.4%	29.9%	-54.2%
Participation Rate (%)	71.8	70.4	85.5	-4.1	-5.1	+7.8
Employment Rate (%)	64.9	63.7	78.9	-6.3	-7.6	+10.1
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.5	9.7	7.7	+3.4	+4.2	-2.6

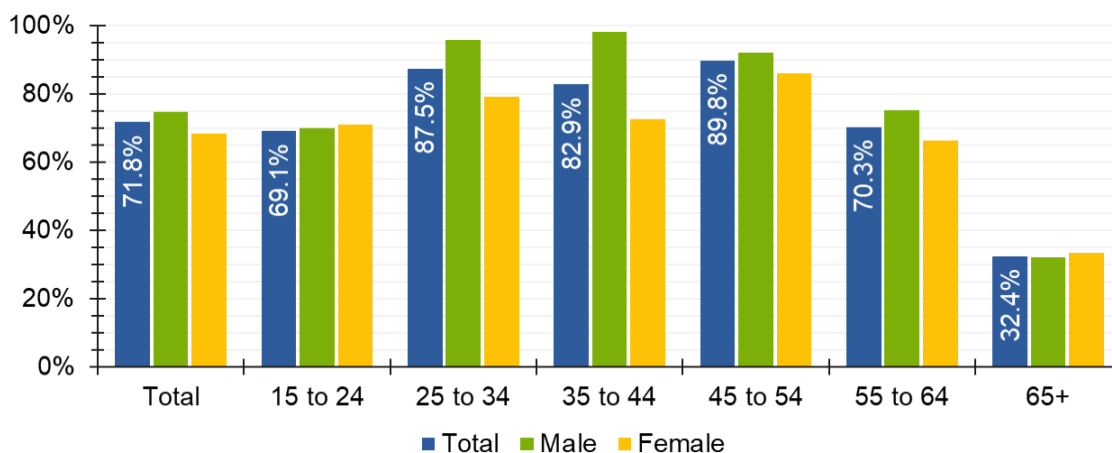
Source: Statistics Canada

Total owner residents in the labour force remained about the same from 2006 to 2016, while the renting labour force fell 25%. The loss of renters is a result of an overall loss in the renting population (which fell 32%). Similarly, renters not in the labour force fell 54%. The greater magnitude of loss for the non-labour force means that the renter participation rate increased (to 85.5%), while owner participation decreased.

### Participation by Age & Sex

Two types of work are fundamental to capitalist societies: paid employment associated with the waged economy, and unpaid domestic labour (like child, elder, and home care). For a variety of reasons, women tend to spend more time on unpaid work than do men. According to 2015’s General Social Survey (GSS) on Time Use, women in Canada spent an average of 3.9 hours per day on unpaid work as a primary activity—1.5 hours more than men (2.4 hours).<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 3.1c: Smithers Rural, Rate of Participation (%) by Age & Sex, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

<sup>1</sup> Moyser, Melissa. 2018. "Time Use: Total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure." Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-503-X.

While women tend to spend more time on unpaid work than men, they are less likely to participate in the labour market and, when they do, they are more likely to be employed on a part-time basis.<sup>2</sup> Based on data from the 2016 Census, 61.0% of Canadian women participated in the labour market, compared with 69.6% of men. This difference exists also in Smithers Rural. About 68.4% of women participated in the labour force, versus 74.9% of men. The sex gap in participation is greatest between 25 to 44 years old, related to the higher likelihood of young children at home.

Based on 2015 GSS results, employed women usually spent an average of 5.6 hours less per week on all jobs than did men (35.5 versus 41.1 hours). Women spent an average of 3.9 hours per day on paid work, while men spent an average of 5.2 hours per day on paid work.

The total work burden of women and men was equivalent in 2015 (7.8 and 7.6 hours, respectively). However, when unpaid work performed as a simultaneous activity was included, women's total work burden was an average of 1.2 hours greater per day than men's in 2010 (9.1 versus 7.9 hours).

These findings highlight increased probability of lower earnings for female workers, as they are more likely to take on the burdens of unpaid labour than male workers, which translates to reduced capacity to reasonably afford shelter. This is particularly noticeable for female lone parents (discussed in the Income section).



2. Meyer, Melissa. 2017. "Women and paid work." *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistics Report*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 90-625-X.

## Industries of Employment

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) was developed by North American federal statistical agencies for the standardized collection, analysis, and publication of economic data. Figure 3.1d summarizes the community’s distribution of employment across NAICS industries, with a focus on an individual’s sex and housing tenure type.

**Figure 3.1d: Smithers Rural, NAICS Industry of Employment by Tenure Type & Sex, 2016**

NAICS Code	Industry Title	Total People	% Share	By Tenure		By Sex	
				Owners	Renters	Female	Male
11	Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing	435	14.5%	84%	16%	38%	62%
21	Resource Extraction	140	4.7%	100%	0%	29%	71%
22	Utilities	10	0.3%	100%	0%	n.a.	n.a.
23	Construction	255	8.5%	84%	16%	21%	79%
31-33	Manufacturing	190	6.3%	89%	11%	21%	79%
41	Wholesale Trade	35	1.2%	100%	0%	38%	63%
44-45	Retail Trade	395	13.1%	87%	13%	51%	49%
48-49	Transportation & Warehousing	190	6.3%	92%	8%	24%	76%
51	Information & Cultural Industries	35	1.2%	71%	29%	60%	40%
52	Finance & Insurance	50	1.7%	100%	0%	67%	33%
53	Real Estate and Rental & Leasing	40	1.3%	100%	0%	38%	63%
54	Professional Services	155	5.1%	81%	19%	43%	57%
55	Management of Companies	0	0.0%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
56	Administrative & Support	70	2.3%	71%	29%	64%	36%
61	Educational Services	185	6.1%	100%	0%	73%	27%
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	245	8.1%	94%	6%	87%	13%
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	55	1.8%	82%	18%	56%	44%
72	Accommodation & Food Services	175	5.8%	94%	6%	63%	38%
81	Other Services (excl. Public Admin)	150	5.0%	87%	13%	57%	43%
91	Public Administration	195	6.5%	95%	5%	51%	49%
	<b>Total Industries</b>	<b>3,010</b>		<b>89%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>52%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada

The three largest Smithers Rural industries based on employment (2016) were:

- (1) Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing – 435 (14.5%);
- (2) Retail Trade – 395 (13.1%); and
- (3) Construction – 255 (8.5%).

The three industries with the greatest proportion of employees in rental housing (2016) were:

- (1) Information & Cultural Industries – 29%;
- (2) Administrative & Support – 29%; and
- (3) Professional Services – 19%.

The three industries with the greatest number of female employees (2016) were:

- (1) Health Care – 87%;
- (2) Educational Services – 73%; and
- (3) Finance & Insurance – 67%.

### 3.2 INCOME

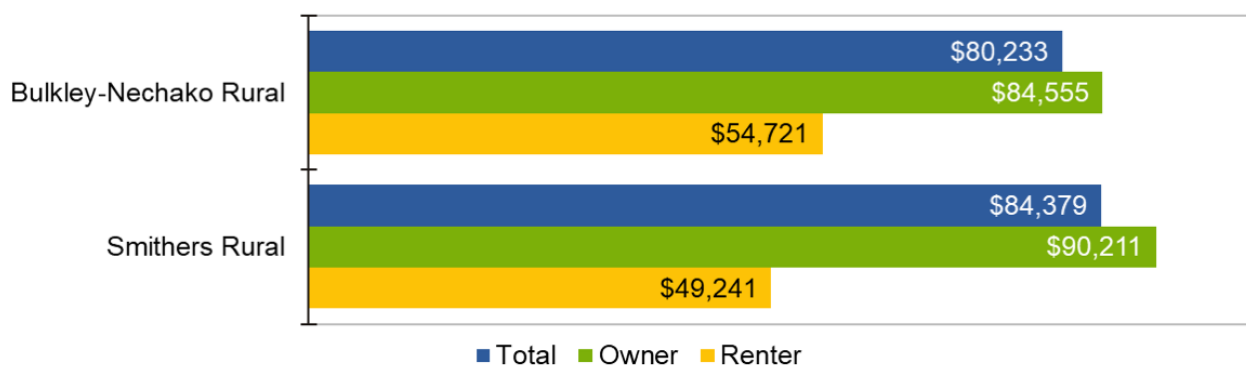
Overall, Smithers Rural median before-tax household income grew about 14% from 2005 to 2015, or from about \$74,300 to \$84,400. The increase is largely due to a substantial rise in households earning more than \$100,000. About 825 households earned above that threshold in 2015, versus 565 in 2005 (an increase from a 29% share of total households to 41%).

Please note that income data refers to one year prior to a Census. For instance, income in the 2006 and 2016 censuses would reflect incomes from the 2005 and 2015 tax years. Incomes are also reported in 2015 dollars (thus, 2005 incomes have been adjusted for inflation).

#### Household Income by Tenure

Figure 3.2a illustrates the household earnings of owner and renter households within Smithers Rural, using the Bulkley–Nechako Rural area as a reference. In 2015, Smithers Rural median owner household earned about \$90,200 before tax, while the median renter household earned \$49,200. The former is a 17% increase from a decade prior, while the latter is a 17% decrease.

**Figure 3.2a: Median Before-Tax Household Income by Community, 2015**

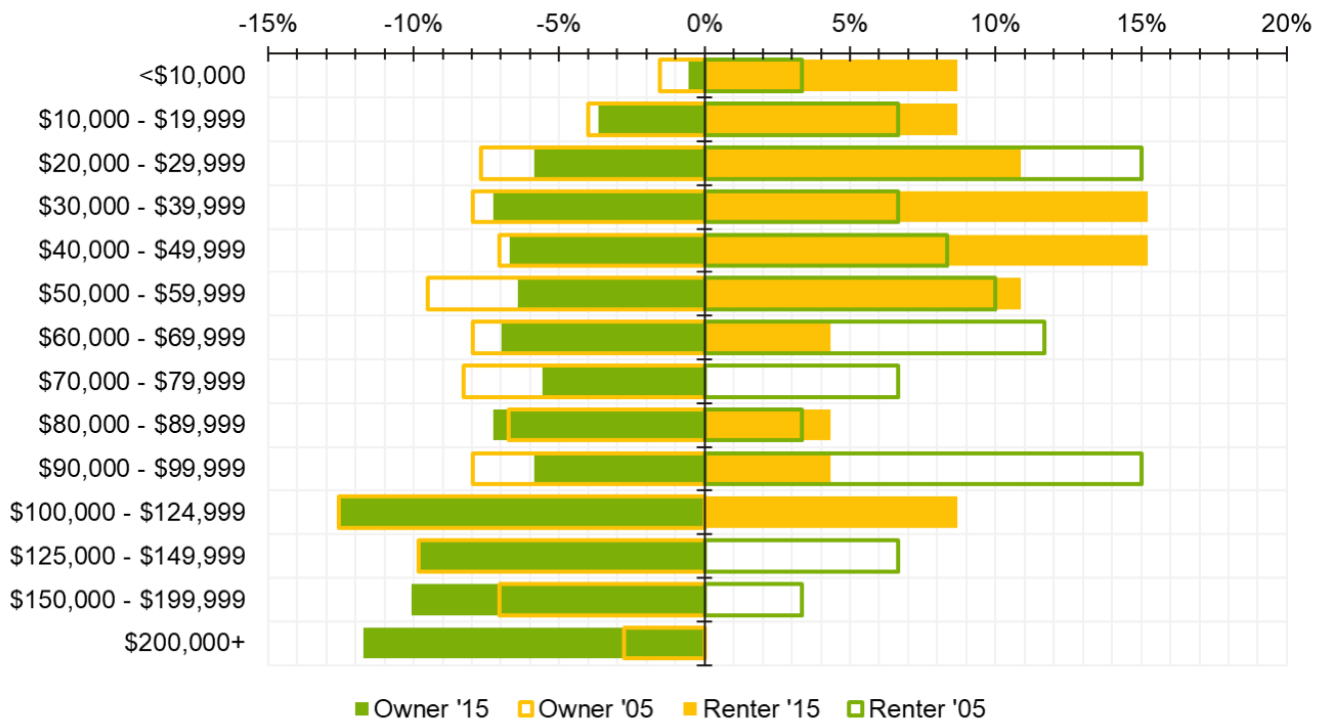


Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 3.2b illustrates the distribution of how many households fall within each income range based on their tenure in a given year. In 2015, 43% of renter households earned less than \$40,000, compared to 13% of owners. These shares were 32% and 21%, respectively, in 2005, suggesting that owner households transitioned to higher income brackets whereas renter households found themselves in lower income brackets.

Alternatively, 44% of owner households earned above \$100,000 (up from 32% in 2005), compared to 17% of renter households (up from 12% in 2005).

**Figure 3.2b: Smithers Rural, Median Before-Tax Household Income Distribution by Tenure**

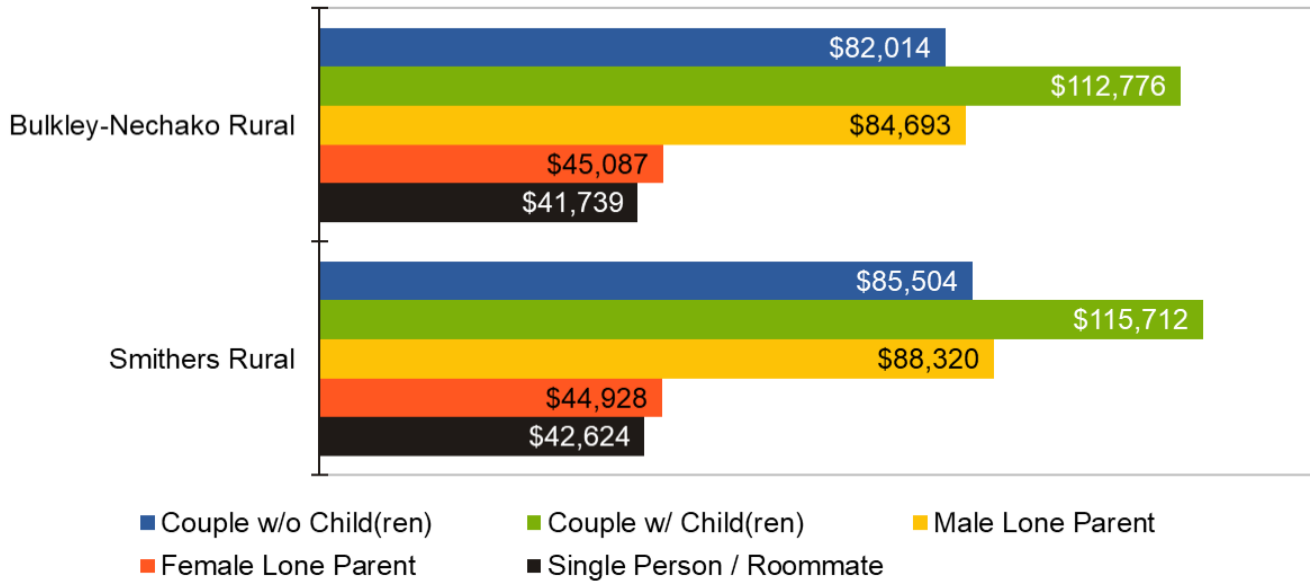


Source: Statistics Canada

### Household Income by Household Type

Statistics Canada provides income statistics for different family structures, categorizing them by their “census family” types (see Glossary). Briefly, the family types are as follows: couples without children, couples with children, lone parents, and non-census families (referred to here as single persons or roommate households).

**Figure 3.2c: Median Before-Tax Household Income by Household Type, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

Statistics Canada data from 2015 reports that the median Smithers Rural couple with children earned the greatest income (about \$115,700), followed by male lone parents (\$88,300), couples without children (\$85,500), and female lone parent households (\$44,900). The median means that half of household in each category earn more than the median amount and half earn below.

Couples with children often earn more than their counterparts because they are more likely to include dual income earners at times in their lives where they are earning reasonably high incomes based on experience in their fields. The median couple without children includes young couples at the onset of their careers and retired couples who live off investments and savings. Both scenarios typically result in lower household incomes.

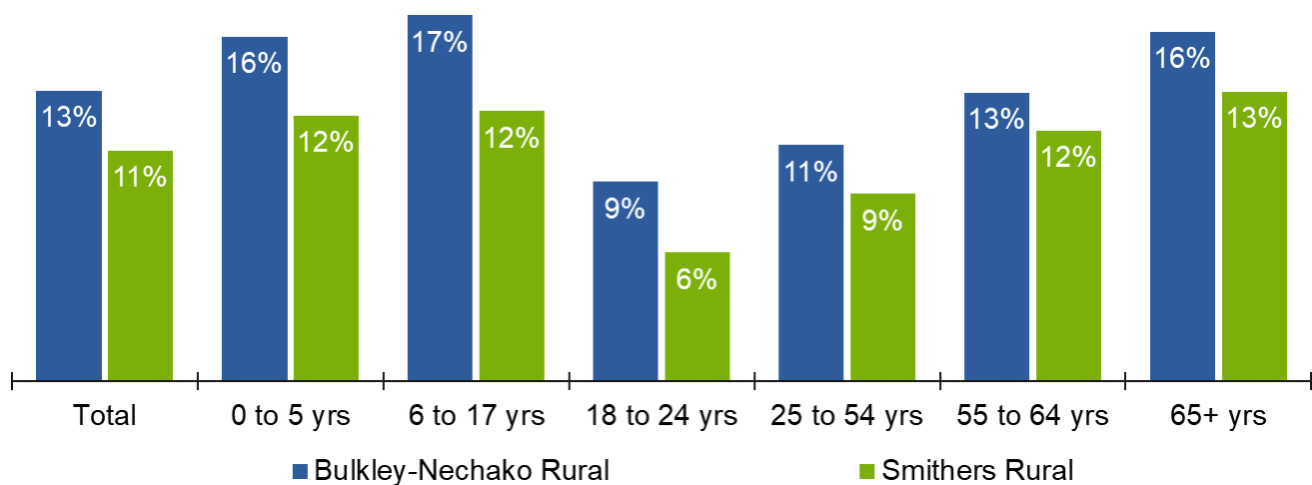
There were about 100 lone parent households in Smithers Rural in 2016 (about 5% of all households). Female lone parents made up about 70% of lone parent households. Female lone parents earned an estimated 49% less than males.



### 3.3 LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

The Low-Income Measure After-Tax (LIM-AT) is a set of thresholds calculated by Statistics Canada that identifies Canadians belonging to a household whose overall incomes are below 50% of median adjusted household income. “Adjusted” refers to the idea that household needs increase as the number of household members increase. Statistics Canada emphasizes that the LIM is not a measure of poverty, but that it identifies those who are substantially worse off than the average.

**Figure 3.3a: LIM-AT Prevalence by Cohort & Geography, 2015**



Source: Statistics Canada

About 11% of Smithers Rural residents (575 people) belong to a household below the LIM-AT threshold.

In 2016, 150 children younger than 18 years old (about 12% of the cohort’s population) belonged to a household below the measure. About 95 seniors (13% of all people over 65 years old) belonged to a low-income household.

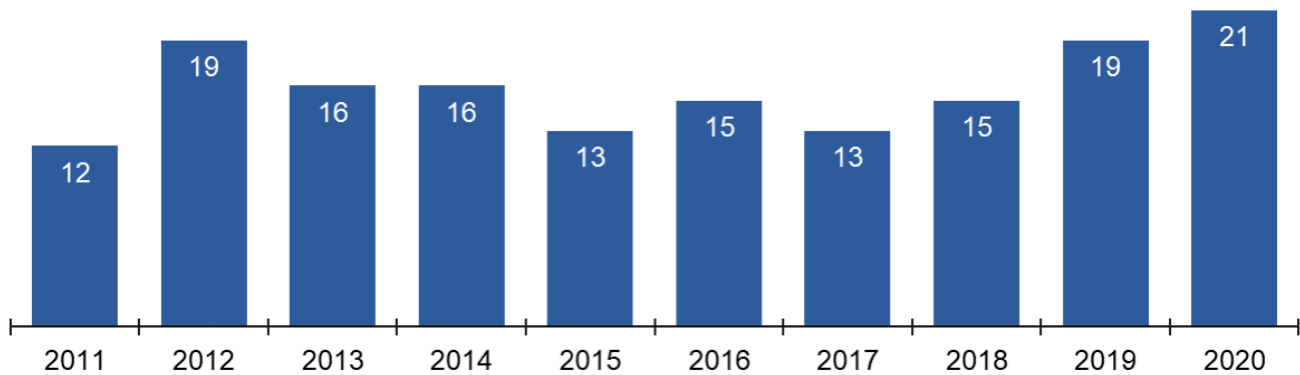
Across each age cohort, Smithers Rural demonstrate lower low income prevalence than those estimated for Bulkley–Nechako Rural.

## 4 Housing

### 4.1 RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

Over the last decade, Smithers Rural increased its housing stock by about 16 dwelling units annually. Figure 4.1a illustrates construction totals by year. Note that totals reflect single family dwellings, inclusive of single-detached homes and double wide/large manufactured homes. It does not include single wide manufactured homes.

Figure 4.1a: Residential Construction Activity (Single-Family Homes), '11-'20



Source: Regional District of Bulkley–Nechako

### 4.2 HOUSING INVENTORY

In 2016, Statistics Canada reported that Smithers Rural had 2,021 total homes occupied by a permanent or usual resident (see Glossary), up 5% from 2006. Information is only available for these usual residents and not the 192 additional dwellings that are either recreational and/or not a primary residence.

Some of the terms used by Statistics Canada to describe the types of dwellings within a community's housing stock may not be familiar to some residents. For instance, local zoning by-laws often refer to three types: single family, two family, or multiple family dwellings. Residents may also be more familiar with property descriptions offered by BC Assessment.

To maintain consistency across this report, we mostly refer to Statistics Canada definitions (unless data sources are not detailed enough to do so). The following table lists these types, the corresponding definition, and how they might be referred to day-to-day.

<b>Dwelling Type</b>	<b>Statistics Canada Definition</b>	<b>Common Understanding in BC</b>
Single-detached	A dwelling not attached to any other dwelling or structure. It has open space on all sides, and has no dwellings either above it or below it.	Typically referred to as a “single-family home.”
Semi-detached	One of two dwellings attached side by side (or back to back) to each other. It has no dwellings either above it or below it, and the two units together have open space on all sides.	Often captured under the umbrella of “duplex,” which refers to any dwelling that has two units (whether side to side or one above the other). Zoning bylaws often refer to these as “two family dwellings.”
Row house	One of three or more dwellings joined side by side (or occasionally side to back), such as a townhouse or garden home, but not having any other dwellings either above or below.	Mostly consistent with Statistics Canada, though zoning bylaws often include them in the definition of “multiple family dwellings.”
Duplex	One of two dwellings, located one above the other, may or may not be attached to other dwellings or buildings.	Refers to any dwelling that has two units, regardless of whether it is divided vertically or horizontally. Zoning bylaws often refer to these as “two family dwellings.”
Apartment	A dwelling unit attached to other dwelling units, commercial units, or other non-residential space.	Consistent with Statistics Canada. Typically known as “multiple family dwellings.”
Movable	A single dwelling, designed and constructed to be transported on its own chassis and capable of being moved to a new location on short notice.	Also known as, and sometimes referred to in this report, as a “manufactured home” or “mobile.”

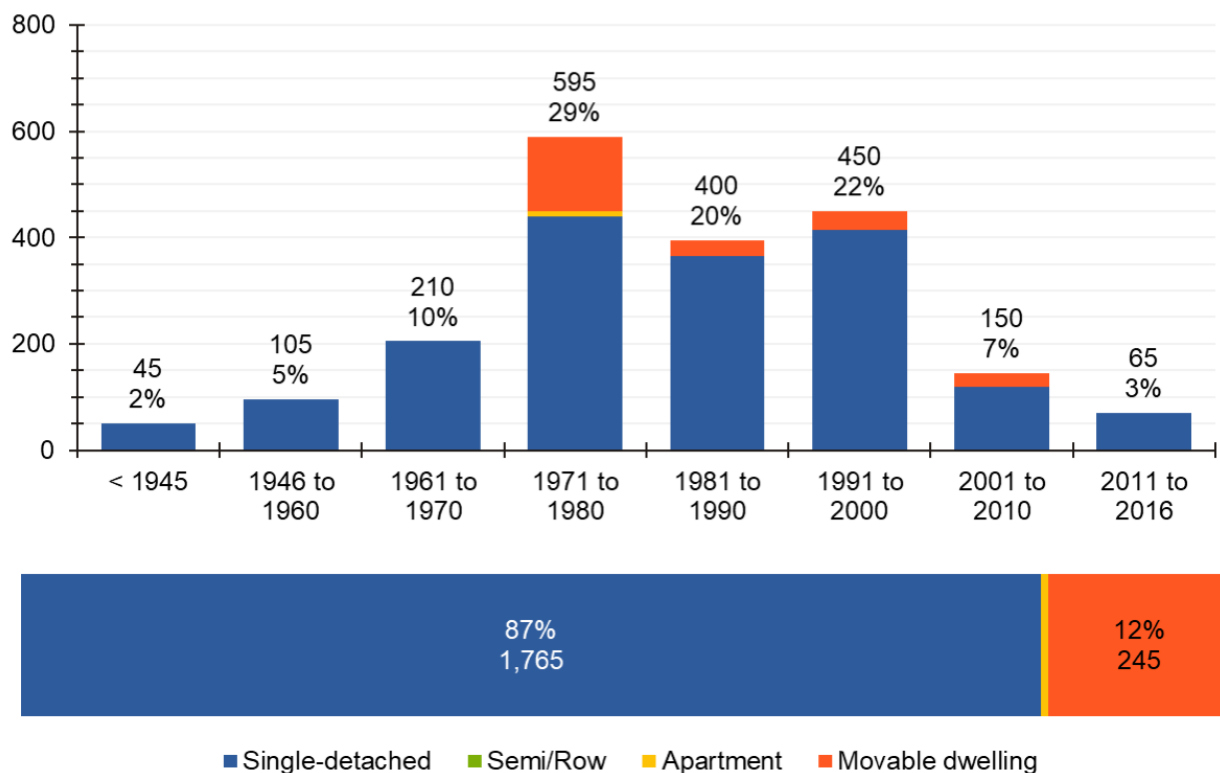
Please also note that this section refers only to data reported by Statistics Canada and has not been adjusted for undercounting.

### Dwelling Age & Dwelling Type

According to the 2016 Census, about 87% of Smithers Rural’s dwelling stock (occupied by a usual resident) is made up of single-detached dwellings. Mobile/manufactured homes made up the next greatest share (12%), followed by apartments (< 1%). Note that apartments in rural areas often refer to dwellings that have an accessory dwelling unit. Figure 4.2a illustrates the distribution of construction activity over the last century, as well as the total dwelling units by type constructed in each period.

The greatest volume of construction occurred in the 1970s, reaching about 595 units (29% of the dwelling stock). Construction activity was highest from the ‘70s to the ‘90s, and has considerably declined since (e.g. 150, or 7%, between 2001 and 2016).

**Figure 4.2a: Dwelling Type by Age of Construction & Total Dwelling Type Distribution, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

### Agricultural Housing

According to BC Assessment, Smithers Rural had 275 agriculturally assessed properties in 2020. Note that this total reflects individual parcels, some of which may belong to collections of properties farmed by the same individual or company.

Since 2015, total agricultural properties dropped 8% from 299 to 275, with decreases across grain & forage, beef, and mixed farms.

**Figure 4.2b: Total Agricultural Properties by Type & Year**

	2005	2010	2015	2020	%Δ '10-'20	%Δ '15-'20
Grain & Forage	49	62	76	65	5%	-14%
Beef	89	105	117	106	1%	-9%
Dairy	28	16	18	21	31%	17%
Mixed	96	94	77	69	-27%	-10%
Other	10	8	11	14	75%	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-8%</b>

Source: BC Assessment

Although the primary purpose of agricultural properties is to produce agricultural products, most properties include a dwelling unit that may be occupied by the owner, a farm worker, or rented out. According to BC Assessment, farms contributed 357 dwellings to the local market (including both primary residences and accessory units), representing about 14% of the total dwellings.

**Figure 4.2c: Number of Dwelling Units by Agricultural Type & Year**

	2005	2010	2015	2020	2020 % of Dwellings
Grain & Forage	71	87	105	82	3%
Beef	118	146	151	136	5%
Dairy	37	18	20	39	2%
Mixed	116	116	92	81	3%
Other	13	10	14	19	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>14%</b>

Source: derived from BC Assessment

In many cases, more than one unit exists on each parcel. Based on BC Assessment data, the average agricultural parcel provided 1.30 units of housing to the local market in 2020. Notably, dairy farms had almost 2 dwellings units per parcel.

**Figure 4.2d: Average Number of Dwelling Units per Agricultural Property by Type & Year**

	2005	2010	2015	2020
Grain & Forage	1.45	1.40	1.38	1.26
Beef	1.33	1.39	1.29	1.28
Dairy	1.32	1.13	1.11	1.86
Mixed	1.21	1.23	1.19	1.17
Other	1.30	1.25	1.27	1.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.31</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>1.30</b>

Source: derived from BC Assessment

Readers will notice that BC Assessment data demonstrates higher unit totals than those reported by Statistics Canada. Given the majority of this document’s data comes from the latter, results in this section are not compatible with the rest of the document and should not be compared.

### 4.3 RENTAL HOUSING

The rental housing market is split into two categories: the primary market and the secondary market. The Canadian Housing & Mortgage Corporation (CMHC) defines the primary market as one that contains rental housing units in apartment structures containing at least 3 rental housing units that were purpose-built as rental housing. Thus, a secondary market contains rental properties that contain 1 or 2 rental units, regardless of whether the property was intended to be a rental. As a rural project area, the RDBN Rural’s rental inventory is almost entirely categorized as being within the secondary market.

CMHC conducts an annual Rental Market Survey to estimate rental market strength (the most readily available rental market data). A brief explanation of this survey can be found in the Glossary. Unfortunately, primary market data is not obtainable for any RDBN community. As such, Figure 4.3a illustrates the aggregate trends of several smaller urban communities that have readily available data, being:

- City of Dawson Creek;
- City of Fort St. John;
- City of Prince Rupert;
- City of Quesnel;
- City of Terrace; and
- City of Williams Lake.

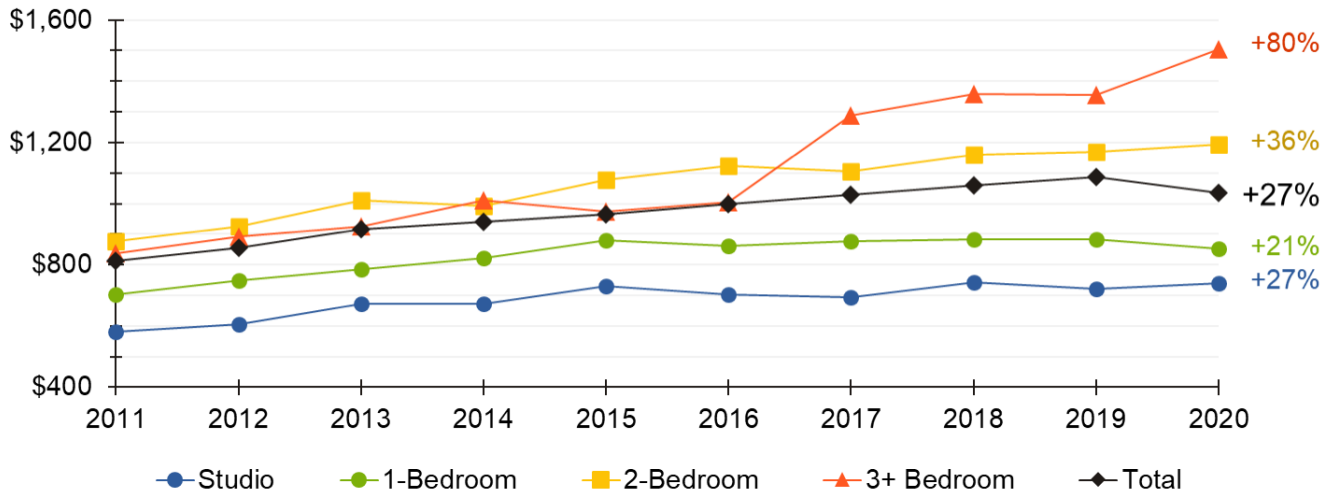
While the aggregate price levels likely do not represent the exact conditions for RDBN renters, the trends can be instructive of how rental affordability might be changing within local municipalities and electoral areas. In other words, the rate of change is more impactful locally than the actual cost of the median aggregate rental.

#### Comparable Primary Market Rents

It is important to note that the CMHC survey covers all rental units, those that are occupied as well as available. In other words, CMHC rents reflect the overall cost of renting rather than just the cost of available units for those seeking new accommodations. The inclusion of existing tenancies, whose rents are often comparatively low and relatively stable, tends to drive down averages and understates the costs experienced by people entering or moving within the market.

Notwithstanding, CMHC publishes annual reports that document the “vacant rent” (asking rents) and “occupied rents” for large urban centres across Canada, including British Columbia’s Abbotsford–Mission, Kelowna, Vancouver, and Victoria CMAs. By applying the average percent increase across these CMAs to aggregate results, we can estimate the change in “vacant rents” over the last decade (see Figure 4.3a for an illustration).

**Figure 4.3a: Aggregate Geography, Historical Median Rents (2020 dollars) & % Change**



Source: CMHC

In 2020, the median vacant unit rented for 27% more than a decade prior (adjusted for inflation). Estimated studio rents grew 27%, 1 bedroom unit rents grew 21%, 2-bedroom units by 36%, and 3+ bedroom by 80%.

## 4.4 HOMEOWNERSHIP / RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE MARKET

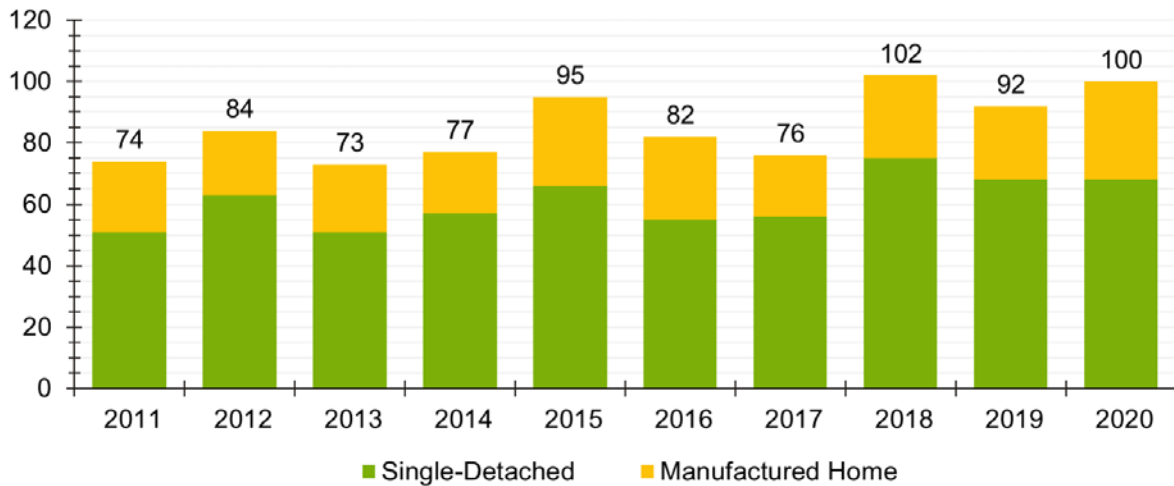
The real estate market refers to the buying and selling of land and buildings, mostly by individuals or companies who seek stable, permanent tenancy or investment opportunities. Many factors play into the health of the market, including dwelling prices and sales volumes. With access to high level BC Assessment data, we are able to report on these two topics at the local level.

### Sales Activity

Sale volumes across Smithers Rural have been relatively consistent over the last decade, with higher than normal activity occurring in the last three years. Sales hit their peak at 102 transactions in 2018.

Since 2011, single-detached homes have made up 71% of residential real estate sales, with only manufactured/mobile homes also showing activity on the market. According to Statistics Canada, other dwelling types do exist in Smithers Rural, but of a volume so minute that it would be rare to see them for sale in any given year.

**Figure 4.4a: Historical Sales Volumes**



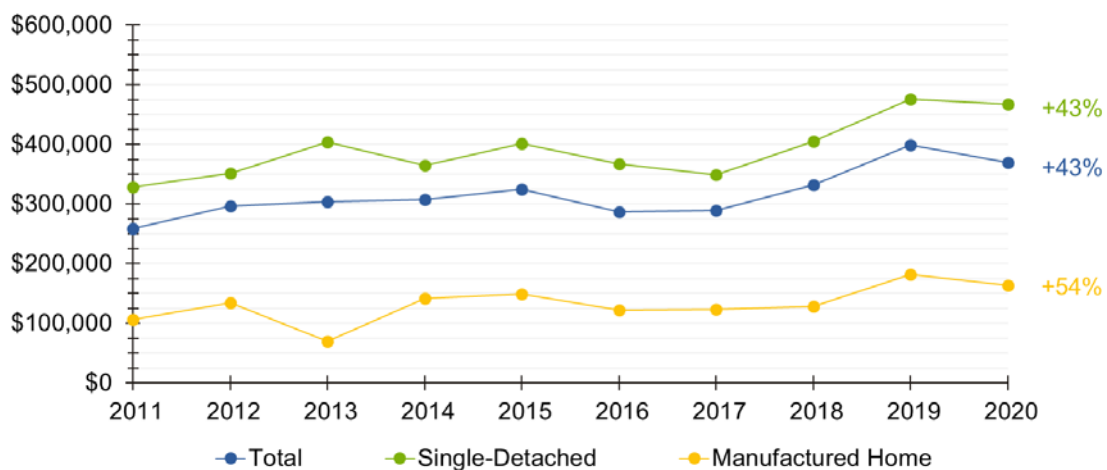
Source: BC Assessment

### Sale Prices

BC Assessment reports sale prices for multiple dwellings types. Figure 4.4b shows what the average price is per dwelling type, and the percent change (in 2020 dollars) from 2011 to 2020.

Overall, Smithers Rural home prices appreciated 43% since 2011 (about \$259,000 to \$370,500). Price increases seem to be similar across both single-detached and manufactured homes, suggesting that demand for both (relative to availability) has expanded.

**Figure 4.4b: Historical Median Dwelling Prices (2020 dollars), Percent Change '11-'20**



Source: BC Assessment



Adjusting prices for inflation (e.g. 2020 dollars) allows the reader to understand the actual overall appreciation or depreciation in housing in real terms (or values that are comparable without the consideration of increases or decreases in the value of money in the larger economy). For instance, prices increased 54% when unadjusted, meaning inflation made up about 20% of the increase in price over the decade.

## 4.5 NON-MARKET HOUSING

BC Housing provides annual counts of non-market housing across communities and regions, including the Regional District of Bulkley–Nechako. The data, collected in March 2021, details the total persons or households using forms of emergency shelters, transitional and assisted living, independent social housing units, or private market rental assistance programs. The following subsections summarize the current stock of these facilities and program offerings and number of waitlists corresponding to population need.

The vast majority of non-market housing programs and facilities are located in municipalities (like the Village of Burns Lake, the Town of Smithers, and the District of Vanderhoof). Given that rural residents may seek out these urban centres, we have elected to include totals from nearby municipalities as a point of comparison.

### Facilities & Programs

As of March 31, 2021, BC Housing supports emergency shelter or homeless housing for 100 people. An additional 196 units exist for those needing transitional housing and assisted living, and 159 units exist as independent social housing. In March, 118 individuals or households received rental assistance for private market dwellings, 75% of whom were seniors.

The Town of Smithers and Village of Telkwa’s non-market housing stock makes up 30% of all units located within the RDBN, including 30% of RDBN services, including 44% of emergency shelter / housing spaces, 27% of transitional supported & assisted living units, and 21% of independent social housing units. According to BC Housing, 3 Smithers Rural individuals or households use non-market services, all of whom receive private rental market assistance.

Figure 4.5a shows how many people/households benefited from non-market housing across the RDBN, the Town of Smithers, the Village of Telkwa, and Smithers Rural. Units for the all service allocation subgroups are marked with an ‘XX’ notation if one of the subgroups has 5 or fewer units.

**Figure 4.5a: Non-Market Housing Facilities & Programs, March 31 2021**

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

Emergency Shelter & Housing for the Homeless				Transitional Supported & Assisted Living				Independent Social Housing			Rent Assistance in Private Market				TOTAL
Homeless Housed	Homeless Rent Support	Homeless Shelters	Subtotal	Supportive Seniors Housing	Special Needs Women & Children Fleeing Violence	Subtotal	Low Income Families	Low Income Seniors	Subtotal	Families	Seniors	Canada Housing Benefit	Subtotal		
72	22	6	100	96	38	62	196	114	36	150	24	88	6	118	564

Town of Smithers

Emergency Shelter & Housing for the Homeless				Transitional Supported & Assisted Living				Independent Social Housing			Rent Assistance in Private Market				TOTAL
Homeless Housed	Homeless Rent Support	Homeless Shelters	Subtotal	Supportive Seniors Housing	Special Needs Women & Children Fleeing Violence	Subtotal	Low Income Families	Low Income Seniors	Subtotal	Families	Seniors	Canada Housing Benefit	Subtotal		
28	10	6	44	14	27	10	51	24	0	24	9	23	0	32	151

Village of Telkwa

Emergency Shelter & Housing for the Homeless				Transitional Supported & Assisted Living				Independent Social Housing			Rent Assistance in Private Market				TOTAL
Homeless Housed	Homeless Rent Support	Homeless Shelters	Subtotal	Supportive Seniors Housing	Special Needs Women & Children Fleeing Violence	Subtotal	Low Income Families	Low Income Seniors	Subtotal	Families	Seniors	Canada Housing Benefit	Subtotal		
0	0	0	0	XX	XX	XX	1	0	8	8	XX	XX	XX	7	16

Smithers Rural

Emergency Shelter & Housing for the Homeless				Transitional Supported & Assisted Living				Independent Social Housing			Rent Assistance in Private Market				TOTAL
Homeless Housed	Homeless Rent Support	Homeless Shelters	Subtotal	Supportive Seniors Housing	Special Needs Women & Children Fleeing Violence	Subtotal	Low Income Families	Low Income Seniors	Subtotal	Families	Seniors	Canada Housing Benefit	Subtotal		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	XX	XX	XX	3	3

Source: BC Housing

### **Non-Market Housing Waitlist**

As of June 2021, the BC Housing wait list had 49 total applications from RDBN residents that had not yet been fulfilled, including: 27 families, 6 residents with disabilities, and 14 seniors. Like for services, the greatest visible demand comes from municipal areas. Based on available information, 4 Town of Smithers applicants remained unserved.

The totals provided only reflect active applications with BC Housing and do not represent the true total of people who can or should be accessing services but are not, either due to stigmatization of accessing services or feeling disheartened by long wait list numbers or times. The unavailability of options in rural communities also serves as a deterrent to applying to urban services, especially when social (family and friends) supports may not be in these urban centres or if residents simply wish to remain in their community (like seniors aging in place).



## 5 Housing Need

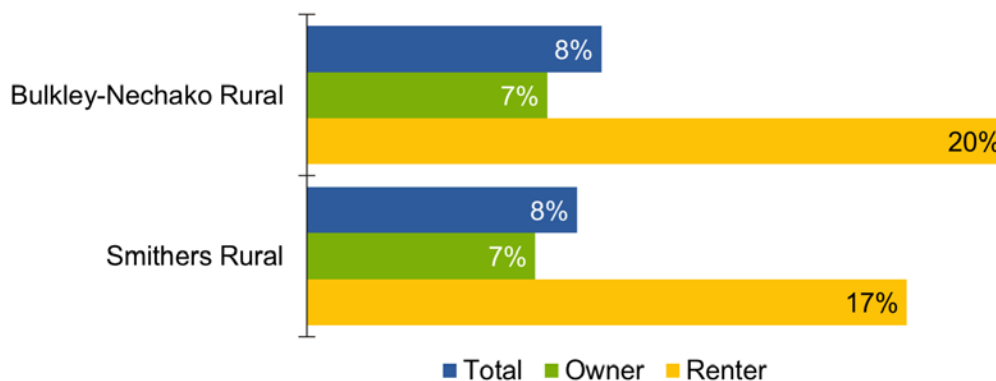
Statistics Canada defines housing need using three set of criteria: suitability, adequacy, and affordability. The Glossary section provides definitions for each of these; however, a quick guide is that unsuitable means overcrowded, inadequate means a home requires major repair, and unaffordable is when shelter costs exceed 30% of before-tax household income. If any household experiences one or more of these criteria, Statistics Canada classifies them as living in “Core Housing Need,” the catch all metric for housing hardship.

### 5.1 HOUSING NEED CRITERIA

#### Affordability

In 2016, Statistics Canada reported that 140 Smithers Rural households lived in a home that put them outside their financial means. In other words, 8% of households allocated more than 30% of their before-tax household income to shelter costs. Both the number and share of households experiencing affordability issues represent a decrease from 2006 (180 and 10%)

Figure 5.1a: Unaffordable Housing by Household Tenure, 2016



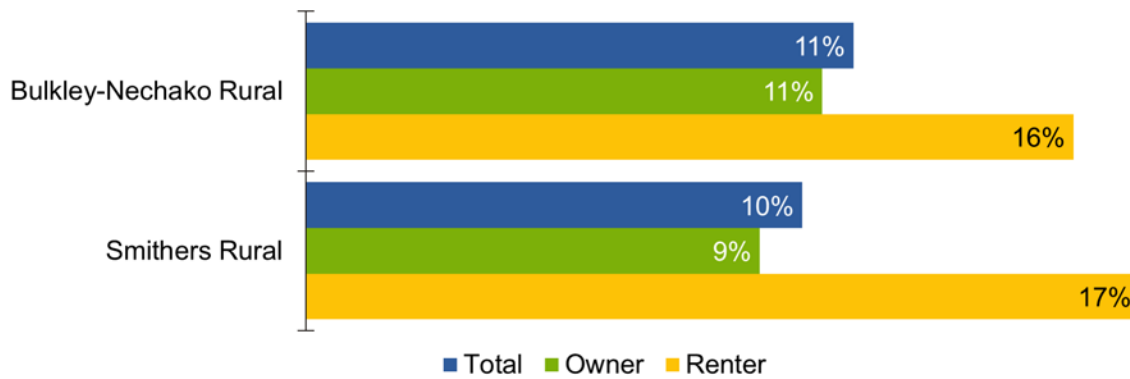
Source: Statistics Canada

Renter households are more likely to deal with the burden of unaffordable housing. About 17% of renter households (35 total) paid more than 30% of their income versus about 7% of owners (105 total). This hardship largely stems from the higher proportion of renting single income households.

#### Adequacy – Prevalence of Major Repairs

In 2016, Statistics Canada reported that 185 Smithers Rural households lived in a home that needed major repairs, or 10% of total households. The number and share of inadequate homes represent a decade increase from 165 and 9% in 2006.

**Figure 5.1b: Inadequate Housing by Household Tenure, 2016**



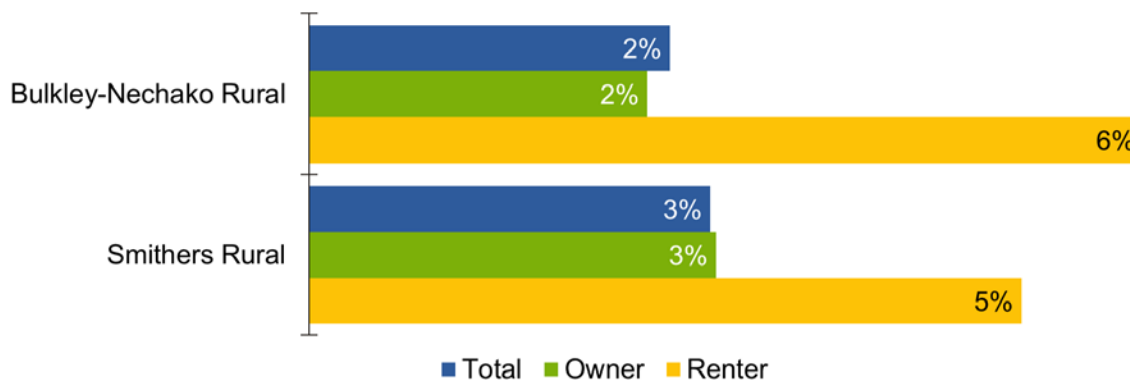
Source: Statistics Canada

Housing inadequacy is predominantly a function of the housing stock’s age (the older the property, the greater likelihood of needing repair). Smithers Rural appears to have a proportional rate of marginally better dwelling quality compared to Bulkley–Nechako Rural overall.

**Suitability – Overcrowding**

In 2016, 50 Smithers Rural households lived in a home that was too small for their needs, or 3% of total households. The number and share of unsuitable homes represent a decade decrease from 80 and 5% in 2006.

**Figure 5.1c: Unsuitable Housing by Household Tenure, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

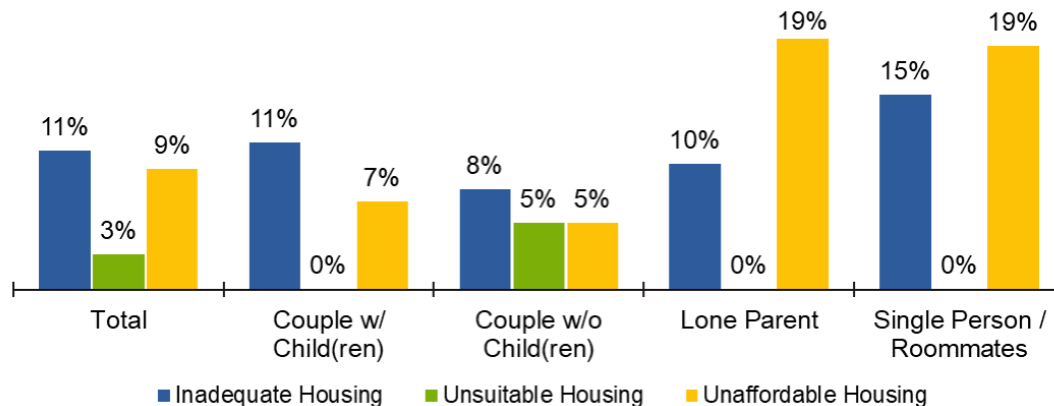
Unsuitable dwellings appear to affect renters to a larger degree than owners both in Smithers Rural and Bulkley–Nechako Rural.

**Housing Criteria by Family Type**

Tied to income, couples (with or without children) are more likely to reasonably afford their accommodation and can access adequate housing as a result. Unsuitability is more common among families with children as their needs quickly change as their household sizes increase.

Single person or roommate households exhibited the highest rate of inadequate and unaffordable housing, suggesting that the homes that they must compromise on are older and in need of major repairs. Lone parents also report the greatest financial burdens regarding housing, while couples with children were next most likely to live in a home needing major repair.

**Figure 5.1d: Housing Criteria by Tenure & Family Type, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

## 5.2 CORE HOUSING NEED

If a household is in Core Housing Need, it means that they experience at least one of the previously mentioned hardships, but with one major difference: affordability is not only whether expenses surpass the 30% threshold. It also takes into account whether an affordable, adequate, and suitable alternative option exists in the market (given a household’s needs). Put simply, Core Housing Need filters out those who voluntarily spend more money on housing because their means (generally) allow them to or those who choose to live in unsuitable and inadequate housing when their incomes facilitate otherwise. For example, a household earning \$300,000 could spend a significant portion of their income on housing, when cheaper options are available, without seriously impacting their ability to afford other necessities.

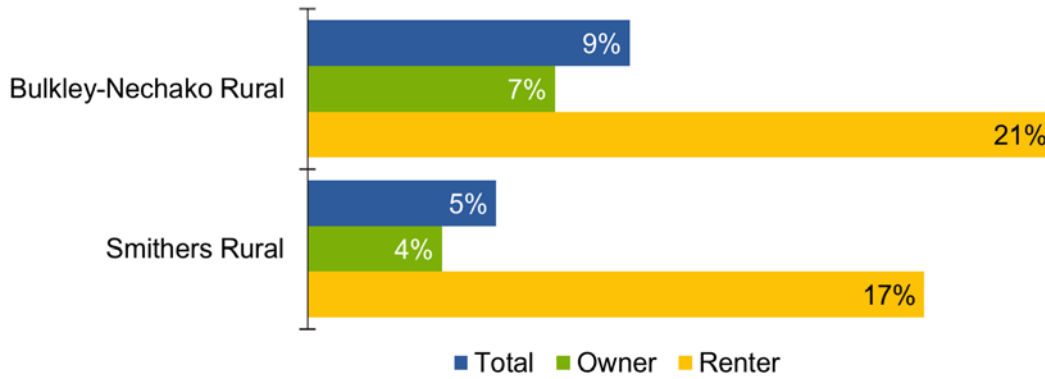
Core Housing Need may overcount total households experiencing financial hardship from housing, particularly for owner households who may pay more than they can afford to get their foot in the market, receive higher quality housing, or simply meet their nuanced family need. That said, most households in Core Housing Need do experience financial hardship.

### Overall Core Housing Need

In 2016, 5% of Smithers Rural households (95) lived in Core Housing Need. Among owner households, the rate was 4% (60 households), while renter households experienced higher proportions of need (17% or 35 households). The number and share of households in Core Housing Need represent a decade decrease from 140 and 8% in 2006.

In 2015, households in core need earned a median before-tax income of \$23,888 (about 32% of Smithers Rural’s overall median income).

**Figure 5.2a: Core Housing Need by Household Tenure, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

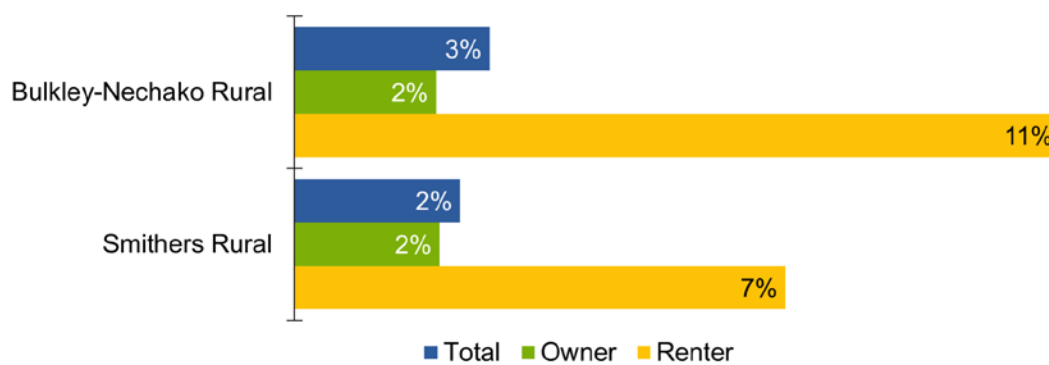
### 5.3 EXTREME CORE HOUSING NEED

Extreme Core Housing Need applies the same methodology as Core Housing Need, with one additional adjustment. The Extreme definition adjusts the original 30% threshold to 50% in an effort to determine how many households are facing substantial financial hardship.

#### Overall Extreme Core Housing Need

In 2016, 2% of Smithers Rural households (45) lived in Extreme Core Housing Need. Among owner households, the rate was 2% (35 households), while 7% of renter households (15) reported extreme core need. The total number and share of households in Extreme Core Housing Need represent the same findings of a decade prior in 2006.

**Figure 5.3a: Extreme Core Housing Need by Household Tenure, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada

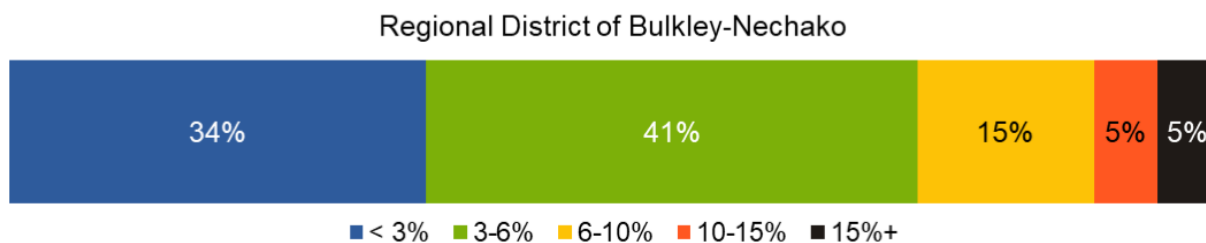
## 5.4 ENERGY POVERTY

According to the Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners (CUSP), energy poverty refers to the experience of households or communities that struggle to heat and cool their homes and power their lights and appliances. Canadian academics consider those households that take on a disproportionate energy cost burden relative to their average after-tax income are said to be experiencing energy poverty. Three thresholds exist for energy poverty: (1) 6% of after-tax income when considering utilities only,<sup>3</sup> (2) 4% of after-tax income for fuel used for transportation, and (3) 10% of after-tax income for the combined of (1) and (2).<sup>4</sup> The Canadian average utility expense as a share of after-tax income is about 3%.

CUSP energy poverty initiative includes an “Energy Poverty and Equity Explorer Tool,”<sup>5</sup> which provides 2016 estimates on how many households spend a particular portion of their income on energy costs (not including vehicle gas). Figure 5.4a summarizes the results for the entire RDBN. Data does not exist at the municipal or electoral area level.

Based on available geographic data, CUSP estimates that about 25% of RDBN households spent more than 6% of their after-tax income on utility expenses in 2016. About 10% spent more than 10% and 5% spent more than 15%.

**Figure 5.4a: Household Utility Expenses as a % of After-Tax Income, 2016**



Source: Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners

Figure 5.4b show internally produced tenure estimates for Smithers Rural using combinations of data from Environics Analytics and Statistics Canada. It shows what the average owner and renter household earns after-tax every month and what percentage of that income is likely allocated to utilities and vehicle gas.

The average homeowner potentially spends around 3% on utilities and 6% on gas (for leisure, work, or errands). Although renters generally pay smaller utility bills (efficiencies from many units in a building, smaller units, or utilities being included in rent), they must often allocate higher shares of their income (which is markedly less) as owners towards energy. Notably, gas for transportation takes up 3 percentage points more of a renter’s budget, even if they often need to drive similar distances as owners.

3 Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners. (2021). The Many Faces of Energy Poverty in Canada. <https://energypoverty.ca/>

4 Fraser Institute. (2016, March 15). Energy Costs and Canadian Households: How Much Are We Spending? <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/energy-costs-and-canadian-households-how-much-are-we-spending#>

5 Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners. (2021). Energy Poverty & Equity Explorer. <https://energypoverty.ca/mappingtool/>



The estimated average energy expense falls above the 10% energy poverty threshold (when including vehicle fuel). When separated by tenure type, the share of the cost of gas results in the greatest discrepancy. Due to greater gas expenses (relative to income) for renter households, the average renter is considered to be above the energy poverty threshold. The average owner and renter spends about the Canadian average share on utilities only.

**Figure 5.4b: Energy Costs as % of Average Monthly After-Tax Income, 2020 Estimates**



*Source: derived from Environics Analytics & Statistics Canada*



## 6 Affordability Gap Analysis

In order to perform an affordability gap analysis, this report compares real estate sales and rental data to family types and defined income categories. The income categories adapt those used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a means of establishing designating thresholds to identify the financial capacity of households.<sup>6</sup> The categories are as follows:

- **Very low income** – making less than 50% of median income
- **Low income** – making between 50 and 80% of median income
- **Moderate income** – making between 80 and 120% of median income
- **Above moderate income** – making between 120 and 150% of median income
- **High income** – those making above 150% of median income

The report applies the following steps to calculate affordable house and rental prices:

- (1) determine the maximum achievable income in a particular income category range;
- (2) calculate an affordable monthly rent or dwelling price for said category using CMHC's maximum Gross Debt Service ratio of 35%, the effective threshold prior to July 1 2020 (now 39%);<sup>7</sup> and
- (3) compare these calculations to median market rents and median house prices.

The tables and figures within the following sections combine multiple data sources (CMHC, Statistics Canada, Environics Analytics, and BC Assessment). Each source uses different ways to collect, organize, or define its data. Although efforts have been taken to make the data as compatible as possible, results should not be taken as absolute fact; rather, they are estimates intended to illustrate a high-level trend. The following rules and assumptions were used for this exercise:

- values are rounded for readability;
- rental rates are based on CMHC reported rents for BC (CMHC data for RDBN is unavailable);
- estimated dwelling values derived from an affordable mortgage payment and assumes a 10% down payment, a 25-year amortization period, and that interest rates equate to the Bank of Canada prime rate of that period (2.85% in 2015 and 2.45% in 2020);
- the ratio of owner to overall income remains the same over time to estimate incomes in 2020 (the same goes for the ratio of renter to overall income); and
- ancillary household shelter costs (e.g. utilities and insurance) will make up about one third of owner shelter costs and one fifth of renter shelter costs.

The analysis is based on different median incomes, which means that results cannot speak to the experience of every household. That said, the analysis should be read with the understanding that median figures may mask the true hardships faced by some segments of the population; this is more effectively shared through the study's engagement process and results.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department for Housing & Urban Development. (FY 2021). Methodology for Determining Section 8 Income Limits. Retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ii//ii21/IncomeLimitsMethodology-FY21.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation. (2018, March 31). Calculating GDS/TDS. Retrieved from <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/mortgage-loan-insurance/calculating-gds-tds>

## 6.1 RENTING

Anecdotally, the cost of shelter has risen over the last decade across most jurisdictions. In markets of unchanging demand and supply dynamics, one would expect prices to increase by about the rate of inflation. Provincial wide data indicates that rents have risen well above inflation; particularly, over the last decade.

The high-level label “Renter” does not adequately reflect the experiences of different household types or income categories. As such, Figures 6.1a and 6.1b estimate whether surpluses or deficits exist among the shelter budgets for these two variables. In either table, the first set of columns describes whether the budget of the household/income category is sufficient to afford the median BC unit type (a check mark means there is budget leftover, while the “x” means costs surpass the budget). The last set of columns estimate whether this affordability has changed in the last half decade (up arrow means more affordable and down arrow means less). Budgets are based on estimated renter incomes.

In 2020, the median couple and male lone parent could afford the median BC rental unit. Median female lone parents and single persons demonstrated the greatest budgetary hardship. Estimates indicate they could not afford the median rent of larger unit types.

While some household types can reasonably afford their shelter more than others, the degree at which they can afford shelter has changed (and will continue to change). In 2020, shelter budgets generally improved across household types, except for female lone parents or single persons . Three or more bedroom units became more expensive (as a share of incomes) for each household type.

**Figure 6.1a: Local Household Budgets vs. BC Median Rents and Changes to Affordability, 2020 Estimates**

	2020 Affordable Budget minus Rent					Changes to Affordability (2015 to 2020)				
	Median Unit	Studio	1-Bed	2-Bed	3+ Bed	Median Unit	Studio	1-Bed	2-Bed	3+ Bed
Median Rental Income	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
Couples w/o child(ren)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
Couples w/ child(ren)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
Lone Parent - Male	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
Lone Parent - Female	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Singles / Roommates	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓

*Source: derived from CMHC, Environics Analytics, & Statistics Canada*

Very low income households experience the greatest financial hardship when accessing housing, often paying more than their reasonable shelter budget would allocate. Overall, median units have become less affordable for lower and median income households. All income levels, including moderate and above moderate, may have had to allocate more of their income to renting 3+ bedroom units in 2020 versus 2015.

**Figure 6.1b: Local Income Category Max Budgets vs. BC Median Rents and Changes to Affordability, 2020 Estimates**

	2020 Affordable Budget minus Rent					Changes to Affordability (2015 to 2020)				
	Median Unit	Studio	1-Bed	2-Bed	3+ Bed	Median Unit	Studio	1-Bed	2-Bed	3+ Bed
Median Rental Income	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Very Low	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Low	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Moderate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓
Above Moderate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
High	<i>Not available because no upper limit to high category</i>					<i>Not available because no upper limit to high category</i>				

Source: derived from CMHC, Environics Analytics, & Statistics Canada

It is important to reiterate that the above analysis is based on estimates produced using a set of assumptions. They are not meant to pinpoint an exact value. Rather, the existence of a surplus or deficit and the direction of change to affordability is most important as a means for identifying general trends and initiating discussion.

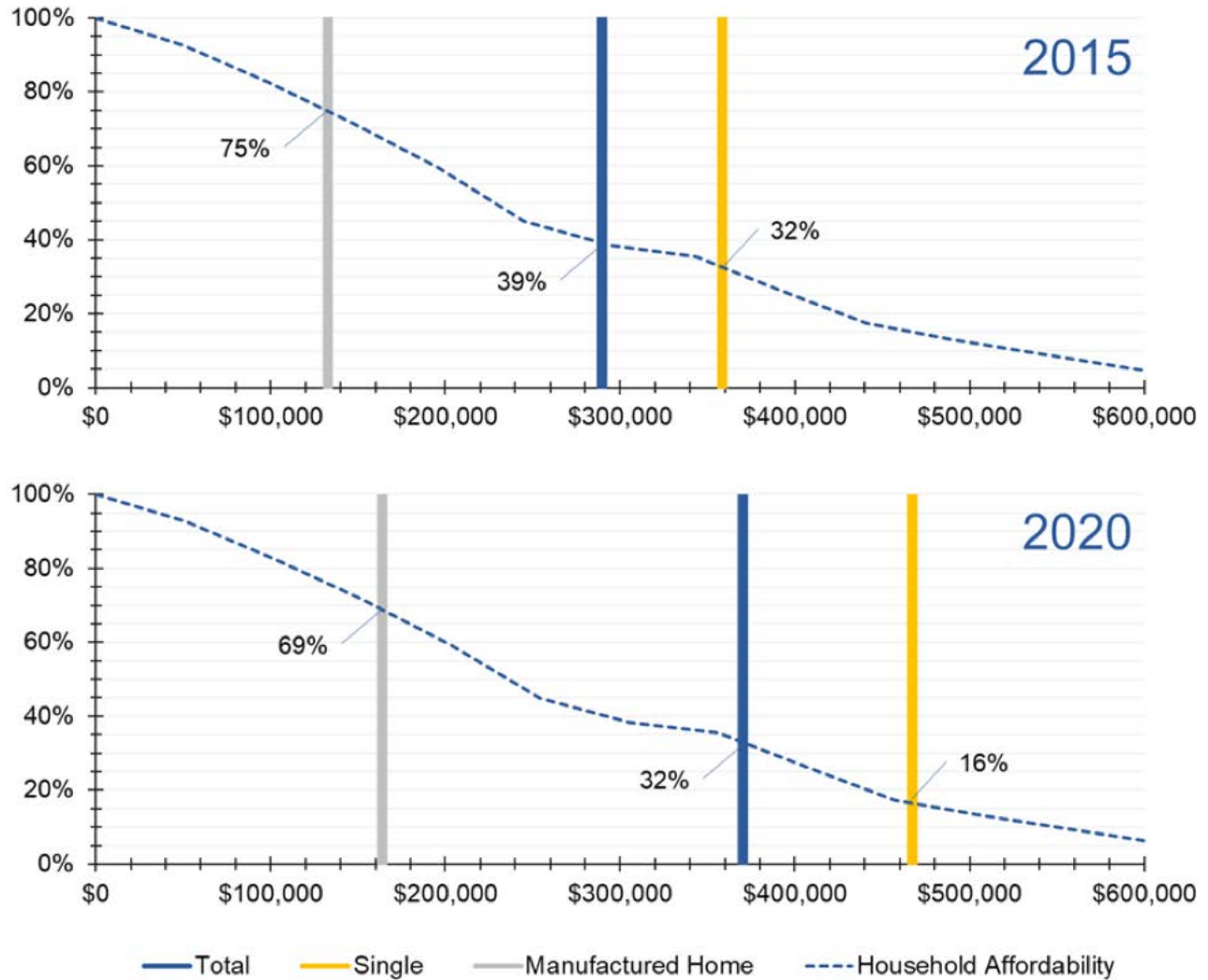
## 6.2 FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS / HOMEOWNERSHIP

Figure 6.2a illustrates what proportion of total renter households (y-axis) can afford to buy a home at any given purchase price (x axis) in 2015 and 2020. The vertical lines represent the median cost of a dwelling type for that given year. For simplicity, this exercise does not consider whether a household has saved or can save for a down payment.

A rough observation of 2015 indicates that about 39% of renter households could afford the mortgage cost of the median home. By 2020, estimates suggest that this share decreased to about 32%. In other words, 68% of renter households (those who could potentially purchase a home for the first time) could not reasonably afford half the 2020 dwellings sold in Smithers Rural.

As for specific dwelling types, the proportion of households that could afford the median single-detached home may have fallen from 32% to 16% and manufactured homes from 75% to 69%.

**Figure 6.2a: % of Renter HHs who could Afford Local Dwelling Prices, '15 vs '20**

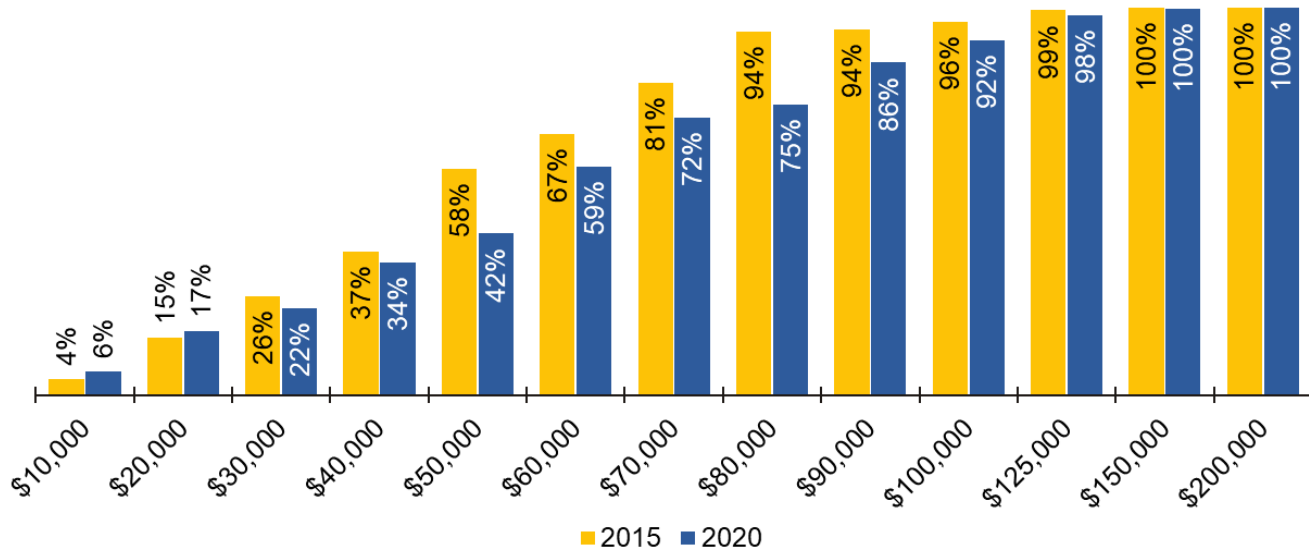


Source: derived from BC Assessment & Statistics Canada

An alternative way to discuss the change in real estate affordability is what percentage of dwellings for sale in 2015 and 2020 were affordable based on income category limits. Figure 6.2b shows this relationship at intervals based on publicly available Statistics Canada income ranges. Note that the exercise required a higher sample of residential sales and thus refers to the aggregate of all RDBN electoral areas.

In 2015, an income of at least \$60,000 could afford the estimated mortgage (based on stated assumptions) of 67% of the dwellings sold across the RDBN’s electoral areas. By 2020, the same income could possibly afford 42% of dwelling units. A household income of \$100,000 could afford 96% of dwellings in 2015, potentially down to 92% in 2020. Please note that this analysis is based on estimates, meaning that results are as good as the inputs available. Percentages are not accurate results; rather, they are educated guesses based on a set of assumptions.

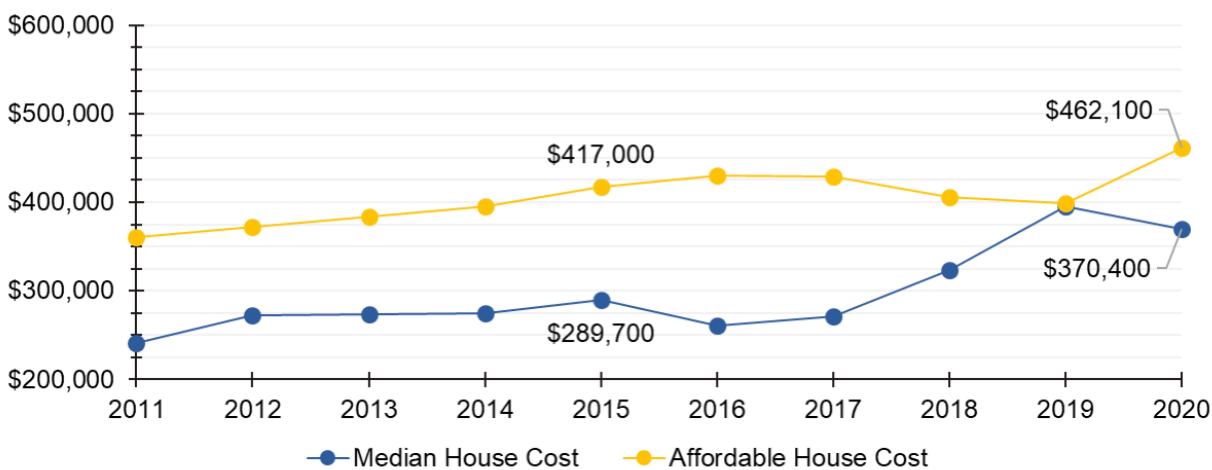
**Figure 6.2b: RDBN Rural, % of Sales that are Affordable per Income Threshold, '15 vs '20**



Source: derived from BC Assessment, & Statistics Canada

Figure 6.2c offers a different perspective on the cost local housing by comparing the cost of the median home across Smithers Rural versus the cost that the estimated median income in a given year could afford (based on the same assumptions discussed at the beginning of this section, with the addition that the affordable cost of one year uses the prime rate of that given year). The purpose is to highlight the impact of changing local incomes on affordability.

**Figure 6.2c: Smithers Rural Median Home Cost vs Estimated Affordable Home Cost**



Source: derived from BC Assessment, & Statistics Canada

Generally, Smithers Rural has been an affordable place to live (specific to housing costs) due to a combination of lower housing prices and higher household incomes (Smithers Rural's 2015 median household income – including owners and renters – was higher than British Columbia's).

Estimates propose that the affordable cost of a home has exceeded that of the actual cost of a home since the beginning of the decade. From 2017 onwards, the gap between the two began to shrink considerably until hitting equilibrium in 2019. In 2020, the difference grew again, likely due to all-time low interest rates.

Even with the improvement in 2020, Figure 6.2c illustrates a half decade worsening of housing affordability (albeit, still relatively affordable). In 2015, the median household could possibly afford \$127,300 more home than what was on the market. In 2020, this shrank to \$91,700. With interest rates anticipated to increase (post COVID-19), budgets may tighten back towards 2019 levels.

It is important to note that the gap between the affordable purchase price and actual price reflects the median. There are individuals or households who may face significantly greater financial challenges related to their shelter. As of 2016, 7% of owner households in Smithers Rural reported not reasonably affording where they live.



## 7 Glossary

**“activity limitation”** refers to difficulties that people have in carrying out daily activities such as hearing, seeing, communicating, or walking. Difficulties could arise from physical or mental conditions or health problems;

**“bedrooms”** refer to rooms in a private dwelling that are designed mainly for sleeping purposes even if they are now used for other purposes, such as guest rooms and television rooms. Also included are rooms used as bedrooms now, even if they were not originally built as bedrooms, such as bedrooms in a finished basement. Bedrooms exclude rooms designed for another use during the day such as dining rooms and living rooms even if they may be used for sleeping purposes at night. By definition, one-room private dwellings such as bachelor or studio apartments have zero bedrooms;

**“census”** means a census of population undertaken under the Statistics Act (Canada);

**“census agglomeration (CA)”** Area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A census agglomeration must have a core population of at least 10,000;

**“census dissemination area (CA)”** is a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more adjacent dissemination blocks. It is the smallest standard geographic area for which all census data are disseminated. DAs cover all the territory of Canada;

**“census dissemination block (DB)”** is an area bounded on all sides by roads and/or boundaries of standard geographic areas. The dissemination block is the smallest geographic area for which population and dwelling counts are disseminated. DBs cover all the territory of Canada;

**“census division (CD)”** means the grouping of neighbouring municipalities, joined together for the purposes of regional planning and managing common services (e.g. Regional District of Bulkley–Nechako);

**“census family”** is defined as a married couple and the children, if any, of either and/or both spouses; a couple living common law and the children, if any, of either and/or both partners; or a lone parent of any marital status with at least one child living in the same dwelling and that child or those children. All members of a particular census family live in the same dwelling;

**“census subdivision (CSD)”** is the general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial/territorial legislation) or areas treated as municipal equivalents for statistical purposes;

**“child”** refers to any unmarried (never married or divorced) individual, regardless of age, who lives with his or her parent(s) and has no children in the same household;

**“commuting destination”** refers to whether or not a person commutes to another municipality (i.e., census subdivision), another census division or another province or territory. Commuting refers to the travel of a person between his or her place of residence and his or her usual place of work;

**“components of demographic growth”** refers to any of the classes of events generating population movement variations. Births, deaths, migration, marriages, divorces, and new widowhoods are the components responsible for the variations since they alter either the total population or the age, sex, and marital status distribution of the population.:



**“emigrant”** refers to a Canadian citizen or immigrant who has left Canada to establish a permanent residence in another country.

**“immigrant”** refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities;

**“interprovincial migration”** refers to movement from one province or territory to another involving a permanent change in residence. A person who takes up residence in another province or territory is an out-migrant with reference to the province or territory of origin and an in-migrant with reference to the province or territory of destination;

**“intraprovincial migration”** refers to movement from one region to another within the same province or territory involving a permanent change of residence. A person who takes up residence in another region is an out-migrant with reference to the region of origin and an in-migrant with reference to the region of destination;

**“non-permanent residents”** refers to persons who are lawfully in Canada on a temporary basis under the authority of a temporary resident permit, along with members of their family living with them. Non-permanent residents include foreign workers, foreign students, the humanitarian population and other temporary residents;

**“core housing need”** is when housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that meets all three housing standards;

**“adequate housing”** means that, according to the residents within the dwelling, no major repairs are required for proper use and enjoyment of said dwelling;

**“affordable housing”** means that household shelter costs equate to less than 30% of total before-tax household income;

**“suitable housing”** means that a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of resident households according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements;

**“dissemination area (DA)”** refers to a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more adjacent dissemination blocks with an average population of 400 to 700 persons based on data from the previous Census of Population Program. It is the smallest standard geographic area for which all census data are disseminated. DAs cover all the territory of Canada;

**“dwelling”** is defined as a set of living quarters;

**“dwelling type”** means the structural characteristics or dwelling configuration of a housing unit, such as, but not limited to, the housing unit being a single-detached house, a semi-detached house, a row house, an apartment in a duplex or in a building that has a certain number of storeys, or a mobile home;

**“single-detached house”** means a single dwelling not attached to any other dwelling or structure (except its own garage or shed). A single-detached house has open space on all sides, and has no dwellings either above it or below it. A mobile home fixed permanently to a foundation is also classified as a single-detached house;

**“semi-detached house”** means one of two dwellings attached side by side (or back to back) to each other, but not attached to any other dwelling or structure (except its own garage or shed). A semi-detached dwelling has no dwellings either above it or below it, and the two units together have open space on all sides;

**“row house”** means one of three or more dwellings joined side by side (or occasionally side to back), such as a townhouse or garden home, but not having any

other dwellings either above or below. Townhouses attached to a high-rise building are also classified as row houses;

**“duplex”** (also known as apartment or flat in a duplex) means one of two dwellings, located one above the other, may or may not be attached to other dwellings or buildings;

**“apartment in a building that has five or more storeys”** means a dwelling unit in a high-rise apartment building which has five or more storeys;

**“apartment in a building that has fewer than five storeys”** means a dwelling unit attached to other dwelling units, commercial units, or other non-residential space in a building that has fewer than five storeys;

**“manufactured home”** means a single dwelling, designed and constructed to be transported on its own chassis and capable of being moved to a new location on short notice. It may be placed temporarily on a foundation pad and may be covered by a skirt. Also referred to as a mobile home;

**“economic family”** refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law union, adoption or a foster relationship. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. By definition, all persons who are members of a census family are also members of an economic family;

**“employment rate”** means, for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, geographic area, etc.), the number of employed persons in that group, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that group;

**“equity seeking groups”** are communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups

are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation;

**“extreme core housing need”** has the same meaning as core housing need except that the household has shelter costs for housing that are more than 50% of total before-tax household income;

**“family size”** refers to the number of persons in the family;

**“full-time equivalent (FTE) student”** represents all full-time and part-time enrolments, converted to represent the number of students carrying a full-time course load. One student whose course load is equal to the normal full-time number of credits or hours required in an academic year would generate 1.0 Student FTE. A student taking one-half of a normal course load in one year would be a 0.5 Student FTE;

**“household”** refers to a person or group of persons who occupy the same dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada or abroad;

**“owner household”** refers to a private household where some member of the household owns the dwelling, even if it is still being paid for;

**“renter household”** refers to private households where no member of the household owns their dwelling. The dwelling is considered to be rented even if no cash rent is paid;

**“household maintainer”** refers to whether or not a person residing in the household is responsible for paying the rent, or the mortgage, or the taxes, or the electricity or other services or utilities. Where a number of people may contribute to the payments, more than one person in the household may be identified as a household maintainer. In the case of a household where two or more people are listed as household maintainers, the first person listed is chosen as the primary household maintainer;

**“household size”** refers to the number of persons in a private household;

**“household type”** refers to the differentiation of households on the basis of whether they are census family households or non-census-family households. Census family households are those that contain at least one census family;

**“Indigenous identity”** refers to whether the person identified with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. This includes those who are First Nations, Métis or Inuit (Inuit) and/or those who are Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band;

**“labour force”** refers to persons who, during the week of Sunday, May 1 to Saturday, May 7, 2016, were either employed or unemployed;

**“living wage”** means the hourly amount that each of two working parents with two young children must earn to meet their basic expenses (including rent, childcare, food, and transportation) once government taxes, credits, deductions, and subsidies have been taken into account;

**“low-income measure, after tax,”** refers to a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted after-tax income of private households. The household after-tax income is adjusted by an equivalence scale to take economies of scale into account. This adjustment for different household sizes reflects the fact that a household’s needs increase, but at a decreasing rate, as the number of members increases;

**“migrant”** refers to a person who has moved from their place of residence, of which the origin is different than the destination community they reported in. Conversely, a non-migrant is a person who has moved within the same community;

**“mobility status, one year”** refers to the status of a person with regard to the place of residence on the reference day in relation to the place of residence on the same date one year earlier;

**“NAICS”** means the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Canada 2012, published by Statistics Canada;

**“NAICS industry”** means an industry established by the NAICS;

**“participation rate”** means the total labour force in a geographic area, expressed as a percentage of the total population of the geographic area;

**“primary rental market”** means a market for rental housing units in apartment structures containing at least 3 rental housing units that were purpose-built as rental housing;

**“precarious housing”** means housing that is not affordable, is overcrowded, is unfit for habitation, or is occupied through unstable tenancy;

**“Rental Market Survey”** refers the collection of data samples from all urban areas with populations greater than 10,000 and targets only private apartments with at least three rental units. Among the information provided are median rental prices for units within the primary rental market;

**“secondary rental market”** means a market for rental housing units that were not purpose-built as rental housing;

**“shelter cost”** refers to the average or median monthly total of all shelter expenses paid by households that own or rent their dwelling. Shelter costs for owner households include, where applicable, mortgage payments, property taxes and condominium fees, along with the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services. For renter households, shelter costs include, where applicable, the rent and the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services;

**“short-term rental (STR)”** means the rental of a housing unit, or any part of it, for a period of less than 30 days;

**“STR – commercial market”** refers to all short-term rental units that were active within a given time period, but are available and/or reserved more than 50% of the days that they have been active. The 50% cut off is meant to separate residents using the service to generate supplemental income from non-resident STR operators operating income/investment properties. The commercial market only considers entire homes or apartments, not listings that are hotels, private rooms, or other;

**“STR – total market”** refers to all short-term rental units that were active (meaning, reserved or available at least one day in a month) within a given time period. The total market only considers entire homes or apartments, not listings that are hotels, private rooms, or other;

**“subsidized housing”** refers to whether a renter household lives in a dwelling that is subsidized. Subsidized housing includes rent geared to income, social housing, public housing, government-assisted housing, non-profit housing, rent supplements and housing allowances;

**“tenure”** refers to whether the household owns or rents their private dwelling. The private dwelling may be situated on rented or leased land or be part of a condominium. A household is considered to own their dwelling if some member of the household owns the dwelling even if it is not fully paid for, for example if there is a mortgage or some other claim on it. A household is considered to rent their dwelling if no member of the household owns the dwelling;

**“unemployment rate”** means, for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, geographic area, etc.), the unemployed in that group, expressed as a percentage of the labour force in that group;

**“vacancy”** means a unit that, at the time of the CMHC Rental Market Survey, it is physically unoccupied and available for immediate rental.

## 7.2 POPULATION ADJUSTMENTS<sup>1 2</sup>

The census defines the population to be counted and the rules by which the population is to be counted. Coverage errors occur when errors are made relative to these definitions and rules. The main sources of coverage errors include the failure to include a dwelling (and, in turn, failing to include its residents), and respondent error by not including all persons who should be included or by including persons who should not be included.

The Canadian population's 2016 under-coverage rate was estimated at 4.32% (1,557,061 persons), while the population over-coverage rate was estimated at 1.96% (707,335 persons). Thus, the Census population net under-coverage rate for Canada was estimated at 2.36%.

Under-coverage generally referred to persons who were not included as usual residents in the questionnaire that was completed for their usual residence, or persons for whom no questionnaire was completed for their usual residence. Population over-coverage is the number of excess enumerations in the census counts for persons enumerated more than once (usually twice). This error produces bias because these persons should have been enumerated only once.

Two post-census studies were carried out to estimate the 2016 Census population coverage error. The Reverse Record Check (RRC) provided estimates for population under-coverage, while the Census Over-coverage Study (COS) estimated population over-coverage.

In the RRC, a random sample of individuals representing the 2016 Census target population was selected. The 2016 RRC sample consisted of 67,872 persons in the provinces and 2,595 persons in the territories. The 2016 Census database was then searched to determine whether these persons had indeed been enumerated. The estimate of population under-coverage is based on the number of persons in the RRC sample who were classified as "missed." These persons were part of the target population for the 2016 Census, but no evidence of enumeration could be found in the 2016 Census Response Database.

In the COS, over-coverage was measured by matching the final 2016 Census database to itself, and then matching the final 2016 Census database and a list of persons who should have been enumerated according to administrative data sources. Probabilistic linkage was used for matching. Probabilistic linkage identifies matches that are close but not exact. A sample of potential duplicates was selected for each linkage, and demographic characteristics and names were examined to identify true cases of over-coverage.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada (2019, July). Coverage Technical Report, Census of Population, 2016: 1. Estimates of population coverage errors. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-303/chap1-eng.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. (2019, October). Coverage Technical Report, Census of Population, 2016: 3. Population coverage error. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/98-303/chap3-eng.cfm>

### 7.3 SHIFT SHARE METHOD

The Shift Share projection method is an approach that considers that both local and regional population trends have an impact on future resident totals for the local community. For instance, although a small town may have historically experienced population decline, it can benefit from anticipated growth at the regional level.

To perform the shift share, two main data points are required:

- Regional population projections, detailed to 5 year age cohorts, and
- Historical population totals (adjusted Census data), detailed to 5 year age cohorts.

Luckily, British Columbia produces their own in house population projections for several geographies, which includes the RDBN. We used this geography as the regional comparison. Note that BC projection geographies do not include Census Subdivisions.

We then calculate the percent share of the local community relative to the region in each Census year and establish how these shares have changed between each period. For instance, the difference between the shares of 2016 and 2011 are added to the 2016 share to anticipate what it may be in 2021. We then multiply the 2021 share into the total projected population of the RDBN to determine the local total. To better visualize the math, an example process is as follows:

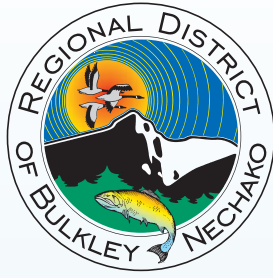
$$1. \frac{Local_{(pop,2011)}}{Region_{(pop,2011)}} = \frac{1,200}{100,000} = 1.20\% \qquad \frac{Local_{(pop,2016)}}{Region_{(pop,2016)}} = \frac{1,225}{105,000} = 1.17\%$$

$$2. \% \text{ share } 2021 = (\% \text{ share } 2016) + [(\% \text{ share } 2016) - (\% \text{ share } 2011)] = 1.14\%$$

$$3. \text{ If } Region_{(pop,2021)} = 110,000; \text{ Then } Local_{pop,2021} = 110,000 \times 1.14\% = 1,254 \text{ people}$$

4. Between 2016 and 2021, Region grew ~4.8% while Local grew ~2.4%.

The above calculations apply the work to only the total population for simplification. The actual method produces the above for each 5 year age cohort, which is then summed to produce a total in a given period. Changes between 2006 and 2011 are also taken into account for greater historical coverage.



Consulting support from:



Funding support from:





# **Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural): Interim Housing Needs Report - 2024**

APPENDIX B to the “Electoral Area A - Smithers Rural:  
Electoral Areas Housing Needs Report”  
produced in 2021



## INTRODUCTION

This is the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako's Interim Housing Needs Report (Interim HNR) for Electoral Area A (Smithers / Telkwa Rural). The Provincial Government requires Regional Districts to complete Interim HNRs by January 1, 2025. These reports must contain the following:

1. the number of housing units needed over five and 20 years;
2. the actions taken by local government since their last Housing Needs Report (HNR) to reduce housing needs; and
3. a statement about the need for housing close to transportation infrastructure that supports walking, bicycling, public transit, or other alternative forms of transportation.

This Interim HNR is attached as Appendix B as an update to "Electoral Area A - Smithers Rural: Electoral Areas Housing Needs Report" produced in 2021. The results of each Interim HNR for the RDBN's Electoral Areas have been compiled in the document titled "Regional Summary: Interim Housing Needs Report – 2024".



## SECTION 1: FIVE-YEAR AND 20-YEAR HOUSING NEED – HNR METHOD

The Province requires local governments to use the provincially established HNR Method to calculate the total number of housing units their communities will need for the next five and 20 year periods for six components: extreme core housing need, persons experiencing homelessness, suppressed household formation, anticipated growth, rental vacancy rate adjustment, and additional local demand. For Regional Districts, the data must be gathered for each Electoral Area.

The HNR Calculator has been made available to assist local governments in calculating the six components of housing need based on publicly available data, that is totalled to calculate the housing units needed in each Electoral Area. The HNR Calculator, developed by the University of British Columbia's Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) program in collaboration with Licker Geospatial Consulting was utilized in this Interim HNR (data sourced on November 6, 2024).

The HNR calculator has determined that a total of **91** new dwelling units are needed in the next five years and a total of **227** new dwelling units are needed in the next 20 years to address anticipated housing needs in the Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural). The table below presents this information by the six required components.

<b>Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural)</b>		
<b>Component</b>	<b>5-Year Need</b>	<b>20-Year Need</b>
Extreme Core Housing Need	3.30	13.21
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	9.32	18.65
Suppressed Household Formation	35.47	141.89
Anticipated Growth*	41.69	48.22
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment*	1.25	5.02
Additional Local Demand*	0.00	0.00
<b>Total New Units - 5 years</b>	<b>91</b>	N/A
<b>Total New Units - 20 years</b>		<b>227</b>

\* The Anticipated Growth figure for Electoral Areas is based on the regional growth rate rather than an Electoral Area specific growth rate as more specific quantitative data is not available.

\*\*The Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment figure for Electoral Areas is set at the Provincial vacancy rate as more specific quantitative data is not available.

\*\*\*Additional Local Demand is set at zero for Regional Districts as the Province has not made Regional Districts subject to demand functions.

### New Housing Supply Trends

To meet the five year new housing demand established by the HNR Method, the RDBN requires an additional **91** dwellings or **18.2** additional dwellings per year. Since 2022, the Regional District has issued an average of **10.4** new building permits for dwellings annually in Electoral Area A (see Table 1 below). A small portion of these new dwellings are replacement dwellings and not additional dwellings. Also, it is noted that new dwellings are being built without building permits that are not accounted for in Table 1.

<b>Table 1 - Issued Occupancy Building Permits in Electoral Area A<sup>+</sup></b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Single Family Dwelling</b>	<b>2 Family Dwellings</b>	<b>Secondary Suites</b>	<b>Multi-Family Dwelling</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2024</b> (Jan - Oct only)	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

*<sup>+</sup>Note: Electoral Area A has lands that lie outside of the building inspection service area.*



**SECTION 2: HOUSING ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE 2021 HOUSING NEEDS REPORT**

The Regional Summary: Interim HNR - 2024 document outlines the full list of actions taken by the RDBN to reduce housing needs since the last HNR was released in 2022. This section outlines the actions taken specific to Electoral Area A.

**RDBN Action to Reduce Housing Needs**

- Parkland Dedication Policies were added to “Smithers and Telkwa Rural OCP Bylaw No. 1704, 2014”. Clarity around parkland dedication requirements will assist developers in moving through the subdivision process in a more efficient manner.
- “Smithers and Telkwa Rural OCP Bylaw No. 1704, 2014” was amended to allow considerations of a second single family dwellings on residentially zoned parcels.

The Regional District processed **five** OCP and/or zoning bylaw amendments and **two** land use permits that may contribute to reducing housing needs in Electoral Area A. The numbers are shown in Table 2.

<b>Table 2 – Processed Electoral Area A Bylaw and Land Use Permit Applications (Housing-Related)</b>	
<b>Adoption Year</b>	<b>General Description</b>
<b>2022</b>	None
<b>2023</b>	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	Rezoned to streamline the R9 Zone regulations.
<b>2024</b> (Jan – Oct only)	TUP to reduce the structural setback from a Side Parcel Line for a SFD addition.
	TUP to reduce the structural setback from a Front Parcel Line and Highway for a SFD addition

### SECTION 3: NEED FOR HOUSING IN PROXIMITY TO ALTERNATIVE AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The Interim HNR must contain a statement regarding the need for housing in close proximity to transportation infrastructure that supports walking, bicycling, public transit or other alternative forms of transportation. The Regional District recognizes the need for housing in close proximity to transportation infrastructure that supports walking, bicycling, public transit or other alternative forms of transportation. However, the densification of housing in the rural area in association with transportation infrastructure is not appropriate from a sustainability perspective and is an issue to be addressed within the Regional District's member municipalities.

Given the RDBN's low rural population density, and significant distances between population centres the RDBN focus has been on the following:

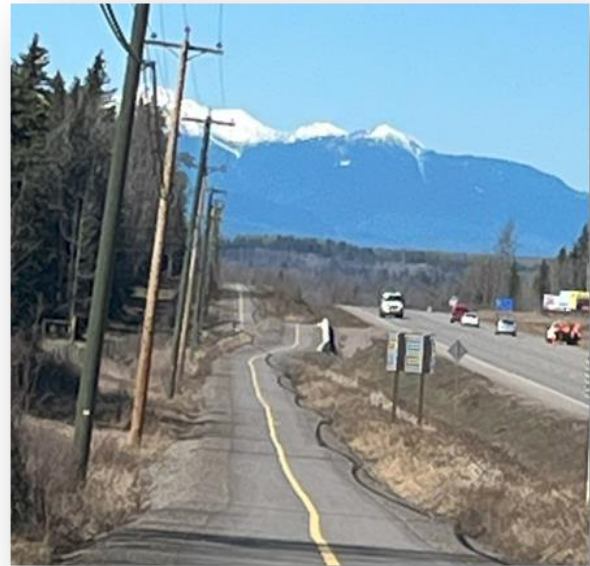
- Facilitating multi-use trail development within existing highway corridors where conditions may support active transportation infrastructure for rural area-to-municipality and municipality-to-municipality connections.
- Operating a public transit system providing service between RDBN member municipalities, with connections to adjacent regions.



## Active Transportation Initiatives

The RDBN continues to encourage the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to play a greater role in funding, building, and operating active transportation infrastructure within their road right of ways.

The Cycle 16 Trail Society and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako have worked together on the development of a multi-use non-motorized trail linking the Town of Smithers and the Village of Telkwa. Construction of phase one of the three phase trail was completed in 2024.



## Public (Alternative) Transportation Initiatives

The Regional District is serviced by the Bulkley-Nechako Transit System, BC Bus North, and Via Rail Canada, with additional community-based and First Nations operated local services throughout the region. The Bulkley-Nechako Transit System provides public bus transportation between most Regional District member municipalities, with connections to adjacent regions along the Highway 16 corridor. It is provided through a partnership between the Province of British Columbia, BC Transit, and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako with the assistance of funding partners (City of Prince George, Stellat'en First Nation, and Nadleh Whut'en).

The Regional District has been challenged to secure adequate long-term funding for this service. Part of this challenge is the limited certainty regarding the Province's long-term commitment to the current funding formula and future capital costs. The Regional District also has concerns regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing public transportation services in the RDBN.

The RDBN has asked the Province to work with local governments, First Nations, and stakeholders to rationalize public transportation services in the north and develop a regional transportation service model which better meets the needs of northern BC.