

SUNSHINE COAST'S

VitalSigns® 2024



SUNSHINE
COAST
FOUNDATION



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, shíshálh Nation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Community Engagements – Over 40 community experts consulted on the issue areas.

The Sunshine Coast Foundation is grateful to work in the traditional and unceded territories of the shíshálh Nation and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw. We extend our deepest gratitude to those who have stewarded these beautiful lands over many generations.

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2024 report here.

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Vital Signs Team: Front Row – Vicki Dobbyn, Sean Eckford, Don Basham, Catharine Esson
Back Row – Erin Storey, Emily Schach, Doug Allan

Background photo: Terra Firma
Photo: Lisa Furfaro

THE SUNSHINE COAST FOUNDATION PRESENTS VITAL SIGNS 2024

DEAR COMMUNITY MEMBERS,

The Sunshine Coast Foundation is a charitable organization that brings together people who care about the Sunshine Coast community. We strive to inspire and strengthen community on the Sunshine Coast by building endowments, making meaningful grants and being a community leader.

As your community foundation, we honour the natural splendor that surrounds us, the Indigenous heritage that enriches our land and the strength that comes from the unique characteristics of our surroundings, neighbourhoods, and people. With a long-term vision, we invest in local prosperity and foster a sense of belonging that will improve lives for generations to come.

To that end, we are pleased to present the 10th edition of Vital Signs, a publication that has been a cornerstone of the Sunshine Coast Foundation's work since 2009. This report reflects our commitment to better understand and support our community. It provides us with valuable data-driven insights into the pressing issues our residents currently face, and its stories will help inform and guide our decisions as a Foundation, as well as the decisions of other individuals and organizations working towards our collective well-being.

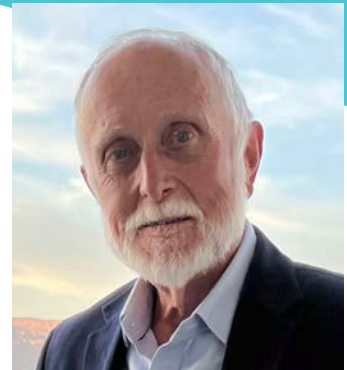
As you reflect on this report, consider how you might personally make a positive impact and effect change. This might include offering your time as a volunteer, donating to a cause that's important to you, or simply sharing this report with your friends, neighbours, and colleagues.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Vital Signs team, our generous sponsors, and the many community partners who all helped in making this report possible. When we stand together to learn, explore, and collaborate, we are stronger. Together, we can make a difference and create a brighter future for our beloved Sunshine Coast community.

Sincerely,

Doug Allan *Board Chair*

Erin Storey *Executive Director*



Edwards Lake, Tetrahedron
Provincial Park.



Photo: Terra Firma

VITAL SIGNS BRINGS COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE TO LIFE IN ONE LOCATION

The Sunshine Coast Foundation's Vital Signs looks at several key areas of life on the Coast through statistical data, input from local experts, and interviews with people working in those areas.

The goal of a Vital Signs report is to highlight important issues and build community capacity by giving the public and decision makers a sense of the Sunshine Coast's strengths and weaknesses and insight into aspects of life on the Coast they might not otherwise be aware of.

Vital Signs 2024 is the Foundation's first full Vital Signs report in a decade. It's also our first report to the community since the COVID-19 pandemic and, in several ways, the first look at how the pandemic impacted the people of the Sunshine Coast.

The report includes a broad look at the demographics and community characteristics of the Coast. It focuses on

Economic Health, Environment, Housing, Low Income, Safety, Health and Wellness, Arts and Culture, and Learning.

Most of the subject areas included in Vital Signs 2014 and the 2019 Vital Brief have been updated in this report to give the community a way to gauge the progress we've made over the years. Vital Signs 2024 also includes some new indicators to complete the picture of the Sunshine Coast.

Limits on space and the availability of current, reliable, locally focused data mean a Vital Signs report cannot give the full story in all the areas we include and cannot include every part of the wider picture of life on the Sunshine Coast. What Vital Signs 2024 does do is build a launch pad for informed discussion and future action, and we hope you'll find it useful.

METHODOLOGY

This report was prepared by the Foundation's Vital Signs team. The team determined the general areas to cover in the report, reviewed indicators that had been included in past reports that might be available to be updated, and considered possible new indicators which would help illustrate life on the Coast.

Team members consulted over 40 community experts in a wide variety of fields to gain insight into local achievements, issues and challenges and to canvas what local data might be available for inclusion in the report. They then researched and collected data

from national, provincial and local sources, finalized the indicators and prepared the report.

Unless otherwise noted, SCRD (Sunshine Coast Regional District) refers to the entire Sunshine Coast including Gibsons, Sechelt and the shíshálh swiya.

Expanded indicators data tables, complete with data sources, are available on the Foundation's website:
<https://sunshinecoastfoundation.org/vital-signs-2024/>

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT



PASS IT ON

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



GET INVOLVED

Learn about the many organizations working to improve our community and how you can get involved, too.



CONTACT US

We know about the issues of our community and the organizations working to improve them. If you would like to make a difference, we can help and guide you.

OUR COMMUNITY

After a brief plateau in the early 2010s, the Sunshine Coast's population is once again seeing growth, especially among people in older age groups, and the number of people moving into the community is at its highest level in years. The lingering effects of the pandemic are also still being felt by many people.

POPULATION

The population of the Sunshine Coast is growing more quickly than it was a decade ago.

The 2021 Census put the number of people calling the area home at 32,170 and BC Statistics estimates that it had grown to 34,039 by July 1, 2023. The estimated rate of change between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses was 7.3%, just below the provincial rate of 7.6%.



Photo: Lisa Furfaro

Seniors pickleball at the Sechelt Seniors Activity Centre.

Population by Age Group in the SCRD (Census, 2021 and 2016)

Age Group	2016	% of Total Pop'n 2016	2021	% of Total Pop'n 2021	% of Total Pop'n BC 2021	% Growth in SCRD	% Growth in BC
0-14	3530	11.8	3810	11.8	14.3	8%	4%
15-24	2340	7.8	2140	6.7	11	-9%	0%
25-34	2225	7.4	2550	7.9	14	15%	13%
35-44	2890	9.6	3495	10.9	13.5	21%	14%
45-54	4065	13.6	3685	11.4	12.8	-9%	-6%
55-64	6035	20.1	5790	18	14.2	-4%	5%
65-74	5465	18.2	6410	20	11.8	17%	21%
75+	3425	11.4	4290	13.3	8.4	25%	18%
TOTAL	29975		32170			7.3%	

The highest rate of population growth continues to be in the older age groups. The population 75 and over grew by 25% between 2016 and 2021.

The median age of people living in the SCRD was 56 years old in 2021, compared to 43 in BC as a whole, and up slightly from 55 in 2016. BC Statistics estimates the median age in the SCRD was steady at 55 in 2023 and will remain steady for at least the next ten years.

DEPENDENCY RATIO

A rapidly growing older demographic has created a dependency ratio, a comparison of the "dependent" population (up to 17 and 65 and over) to the number of working age (18-64) adults, that is far higher than for BC as a whole.

BC Statistics estimates the 2023 overall dependency ratio for the SCRD was 0.94 (0.66 for seniors and 0.28 for children) while it was 0.58 for BC as a whole. The provincial agency is also predicting that the ratio for the SCRD will continue to rise to as high as 1.0 by 2029 before levelling off.

HOUSEHOLDS

Compared to the province as a whole, the SCRD had a higher percentage of households made up of a couple without children in 2021 (35% v. 26%), and a lower percentage of single parent households (6.2% v. 7.6%) and multigenerational households (1.9% v. 3.7%).

INDIGENOUS POPULATION

2,270 people on the Coast reported being of Indigenous identity on the 2021 Census. This was 7.2% of the total population (BC 5.9%).

The 2022 Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages shows 2 fluent and 12 semi-fluent speakers of she shashishalhem, the traditional language of the shíshálh Nation.



BC Statistics estimates the median age in the SCRD was steady at 55 in 2023 and will remain steady for at least the next ten years.

Community Kitchen, traditional Chinese Bak Kut Teh Cooking

Photo: Welcoming Communities, Capilano University



MIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

The SCRD experienced record high net total migration in 2021/22 with 726 people moving to the Coast. This was the highest net total migration in at least 20 years, up from the previous high of 635 in 2007/8.

At the time of the 2021 Census, a higher proportion of Sunshine Coast residents, 58%, were at least third generation Canadians, compared to 44% of British Columbians. 21% were first generation Canadians, compared to 34% of British Columbians.

19% of Sunshine Coast residents were immigrants, unchanged from 2016 and lower than BC's 29% immigrant population.

48% of the Coast's immigrants came to Canada before 1980, far higher than the proportion for BC as whole (20%).

Welcoming Communities on the Sunshine Coast, a program to help orient and settle new Canadians and immigrants to the Sunshine Coast, reports that, as of Nov 2023, they had clients from 37 countries.

POPULATION AND LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

According to the 2021 Census, the Sunshine Coast remains much less diverse than BC as a whole, although it has seen some growth in the number of residents who identify as visible minorities, from 6.9% in 2016 to 9.1% in 2021. Overall, 34% of British Columbians are visible minorities.

The Sunshine Coast has a smaller percentage of people who have a mother tongue other than English or French.

The 2021 Census put the percentage at 9.3%, roughly the same as 2016 and much lower than the 28% for BC as a whole.

Those who do have a mother tongue other than English or French speak a wide variety of languages, with only German being the mother tongue of at least 1% of the population.

96% of residents speak English most often at home, but at least 35 other languages were identified as the most often spoken at home.

Only 120 people, 0.4% of the population, said they do not have sufficient knowledge of English to carry on a conversation (BC 6.7%).

In a survey conducted for School District 46 in 2022/23, 97% of Grade 8 students indicated that they spoke English at home.

BELONGING AND DISCRIMINATION

The BC Centre for Disease Control's 2021 Survey on Population Experiences, Action and Knowledge (SPEAK), which tracks physical and mental health as well as social and economic well-being, found more Sunshine Coast respondents feel a stronger sense of community belonging than the BC average (62% compared to 46% for BC at large).

At the same time, however, 39% reported a weak sense of community belonging.

Other notable results from the SPEAK include:

>> 8.6% of Sunshine Coast respondents almost always feel lonely (BC 12%).

>> 13% reported increased discrimination, being treated unfairly or with less respect since the pandemic (BC 20%).

>> 3% reported increased discrimination, been treated unfairly or with less respect since the pandemic because of their ethnicity, nationality, race or skin colour (BC 10%).

Other changes Sunshine Coast respondents reported experiencing during the pandemic included:

>> 15% reported they had an employment change for the better (BC 17%) and 21% reported an employment change for the worse (BC 21%).

>> 6% reported an education change for the better (BC 8%) and 10% reported an education change for the worse (BC 14%).

>> 13% reported a housing change for the better (BC 13%) and 5% reported a housing change for the worse (BC 6%).



BC Ferries says the number of bicycles departing Horseshoe Bay on Route 3 increased by 16% from 2017 to 2022.

Our Community (continued)

TRANSPORTATION

The Sunshine Coast depends on BC Ferries for everyday life, tourism and business.

The ferry company saw a substantial decline in “automobile equivalents” (AEQs) carried between Langdale and Horseshoe Bay during the pandemic, dropping to a low of 1.08 million in 2021, but by 2023 it was back to 2019 levels with 1.34 million.

As well as an increase in vehicle travel, the number of cyclists using the ferries is up. BC Ferries says the number of bicycles departing Horseshoe Bay on Route 3 increased by 16% from 5,967 in 2017 to 6,951 in 2022.

BC Ferries also reports a drop in on time performance and an increase in the percentage of sailings overloaded since 2020 when 88% of sailings were on time and only 27% were overloaded. In 2023, 74% were on time and 31% were overloaded.

TRANSIT

Ridership on Sunshine Coast Transit dropped dramatically during the pandemic, to a low of 346,024 in 2020 from 545,631 in 2019.

There were 463,113 rides recorded in 2022.

BC Transit Total Rides on the Sunshine Coast by year



BC Ferries Automobile Equivalents (AEQs) Traffic Carried

Year ended March 31	AEQs carried	Change from previous year
2018	1,339,812	4.1%
2019	1,342,572	0.2%
2020	1,301,507	(3.1%)
2021	1,081,426	(17%)
2022	1,294,686	20%
2023	1,341,126	3.5%

BC Ferries Sailing Scheduled Times & Overloaded Sailings

Year ended March 31	% Sailings departing within 10 mins of scheduled time	% Overloaded
2019	81%	28%
2020	88%	27%
2021	84%	27%
2022	75%	31%
2023	74%	31%



Photo: Emily Schach

HOUSING

The Sunshine Coast remains an area dominated by the single family home, while other housing types lag behind and housing advocates are hoping to see future construction correct that imbalance.

As things are, the region is lacking in the types of housing that provide a pathway to ownership for people entering the market and options for single family home owners, in particular seniors, looking to downsize.

HOME OWNERSHIP, HOUSING TYPES AND HOME PRICES

Approximately 80% of the Sunshine Coast's current housing stock is single detached homes. This percentage is unchanged from 2016.

79.9% of Sunshine Coast residents are home owners, compared to 66.8% in BC overall, a slight increase over 2016 when 78% owned their homes compared to 68% BC wide. That also puts the proportion of renters, 19.8%, lower than BC as a whole (32.8%).

53% of Sunshine Coast home owners hold their title mortgage free.

The 2021 Census found the average value of all owned homes on the Sunshine Coast to be \$870,000, a significant increase over \$578,406 in 2016. In February 2024 the MLS benchmark price for a residential property (a composite of single family detached, duplexes, townhomes and apartments) was \$803,400, a 14.5% increase over the previous three years.

According to a 2023 Social and Housing Needs Assessment, the Sunshine Coast's overall stock of housing units included: 217 affordable or below market units, with 267 underway and 117 at the planning stage, and 428 supportive housing units, with 20 net new units underway, and no new units at the planning stage.

Of those totals the number of affordable or below market housing units geared to seniors was 167 with 123 under construction and 33 planned and 158 existing units of supportive housing with 20 net new

units which recently opened as part of the Silverstone Care Centre in Sechelt.

Those totals also include the following housing options for the homeless: 20 permanent emergency housing units, 94 supportive housing units, including some aimed for those needing mental health support and families, and 46 units of affordable or below market housing with a further 130 under construction and 80 planned.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

In 2021 9% of renters on the Sunshine Coast were in subsidized housing, with the government or a non-profit organization providing financial assistance. This was down from 12% in 2016.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS AND NEW HOME REGISTRATIONS

The District of Sechelt issued 67 residential building permits in 2023.

Of the 72 building permits Gibsons issued, 38 were for "dwelling units": 29 apartments, one duplex, 2 single family homes, 3 secondary suites and 2 garden suites.

The SCRDC issued 289 building permits. It also tracks dwelling units created vs. dwelling units lost. For 2023, 107 new units were created and 12 were lost for a net gain of 95.

BC Housing reports that in 2023 there were 205 units of new housing registered on the Sunshine Coast, 76 of them in multi-unit buildings.

Of the 314 units registered with BC Housing in 2022, 182 were single family homes, 19 multi-unit homes, and 113 purpose-built rentals. Those 113 units represented 47% of all purpose-built rentals built on the Sunshine Coast since 2016.

22.7% of Sunshine Coast households (41.7% of tenants and 18% of home owners) spend more than 30% of their income on shelter costs. The overall number is down from 27% in 2016. The proportion of renters paying more than 30% is also down from 52% in 2016.

The Sunshine Coast is trending behind BC overall, where 25.5% (37.8% of tenants and 18% of owners) of households are paying more than 30% of their income on shelter costs.

23.6% of Sunshine Coast renters and 7.2% of owners are considered to be in "core housing need", meaning that the home they rent or own fails to meet their needs for overall adequacy, affordability or suitability.

RENTAL COSTS

According to the Alliance for Affordable Housing's September 2023 rental market report, the vacancy rate on the Sunshine Coast was 2.01%. The average rent was \$1,344 for a studio, \$1,617 for a 1 bedroom and \$2,234 for a two bedroom.

IMPACT OF SHORT TERM RENTALS (STR)

A 2023 report from McGill University's Urban Politics and Governance Research Group found that the Sunshine Coast had the second highest density of STRs in the Vancouver Coast and Mountains tourism region (Whistler was highest by a wide margin) with an estimated loss of housing units to STRs of 110 in 2023, down from 120 in 2022 and an impact on average rents in 2022 of \$50/month.

ENVIRONMENT

The Sunshine Coast faces a number of environmental challenges, but residents, local governments and community organizations are all taking steps to meet those challenges head-on.

WATER CONSERVATION

Average daily water use per property (excluding those with known leaks), across all SCRD rural areas, averaged 609.25 litres/day for 2023 and peaked at around 1,000 litres per day in June and July, a reduction from the 2022 peak of just under 1,200 litres per day.

The Town of Gibsons, which operates a separate water system fed by the Gibsons Aquifer, saw peak water use in the summer of 2023 hit about 875 litres/day per property.

DROUGHT

2022 was the first year since 2014 that the Sunshine Coast had experienced Level 5 drought conditions.

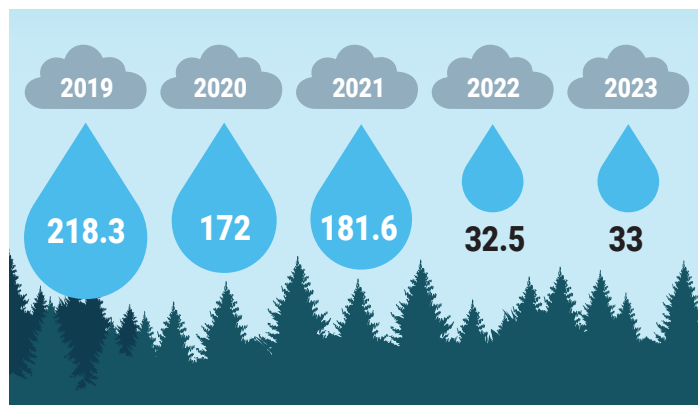
Weeks at Drought Level 3 or Higher

Year	Level 3*	Level 4**	Level 5***
2019	11 weeks	0	0
2020	0 weeks	0	0
2021	4 weeks	8	0
2022	2 weeks	4	4

2023 Data Not Available

*Adverse impacts possible **Adverse impacts likely ***Adverse impacts almost certain

Cumulative Summer Rainfall July-Sept (mm)



Chapman Lake, the drinking water source for the majority of Sunshine Coast residents, dropped to 0% of its usual storage capacity at one point in September 2023 and did not return to full capacity until September 26, 2023.

RECYCLING AND WASTE DIVERSION

As of Sept 30, 2023 a new textile recycling program, run in partnership with Diabetes Canada, had collected 2,298 kilograms of textiles at the Sechelt Landfill and Pender Harbour Transfer Station.

For 2023 the SCRD's curb side food waste program had collected 609 tonnes, up from the 2022 total of 581 tonnes. 1,510 tonnes of material was collected at local recycling depots compared to 1,577 tonnes in 2022.

4,562 tonnes of green waste was dropped off, a decrease from the 2022 total of 4,988 tonnes.

A 2022 Solid Waste Composition Study found that, despite organics collection initiatives and recycling and stewardship programs, waste destined for the landfill was still 23% organics.

The audit also found waste collected contained 22% printed and paper packaging that could either go into a curb side collection bin or be recycled at a depot and 1% other material that could be recycled under a stewardship program.

Overall, 46% more material could still be diverted, potentially extending the lifespan of the Sechelt Landfill which could reach capacity in 2026 according to a February 2024 SCRD report.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

District	2007	2019	% Change
Gibsons	36,656	36,519	-0.4%
Sechelt	79,386	85,039	7.1%
SIGD	6,704	5,279	-21.3%
SCRD Rural	206,054	225,653	9.5%

Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources on the Sunshine Coast have increased 7.2% between 2007 and 2019.

Emissions from natural gas use in residential buildings increased 70.4% between 2007 and 2019.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Major updates by the Provincial Conservation Data Centre have taken the number of Red Listed plant, animal and fish species reported on the Sunshine Coast from 8 in 2014 to 181 in 2023.



Cyclists, Leslie & Stuart MacDonald.

Many Coast residents and visitors are choosing cycling, instead of vehicles, as a way to get around.

"We cycle both for recreation and for errands. We are trying to reduce our carbon footprint. Cycling is also excellent exercise and makes one feel more connected to the environment. A greater sense of safety would make cycling more appealing. This would include more separated bike paths, especially on Highway 101."

— Stuart & Leslie MacDonald

ACTIVE AND GREENER TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Choices Sunshine Coast (TraC) reports both cycling and public transit use among commuters has remained steady since 2016.

According to TraC's 2022 Active Transportation Progress Report, 12% of commuters cycle to and from work, up slightly from 11% in 2016 while 3% use public transit, unchanged from 2016. The 2021 Census found that 46% of public transit commuters have a trip of less than 30 minutes to/from work.

Sunshine Coast drivers have been switching to hybrid and electric vehicles (EV) in increasing numbers, with EV and gas-electric hybrid registrations up significantly since 2018.

ICBC statistics show that in 2018 there were 186 EVs and 321 hybrids registered to Sunshine Coast drivers.



Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources on the Sunshine Coast have increased 7.2% between 2007 and 2019.

By 2022 those numbers had climbed to 617 EVs and 533 hybrids, which is about 8.4% of the passenger vehicles on the Coast, just higher than the provincial mark of 7.6%.

INVASIVE SPECIES

As of February 10, 2022, the Coastal Invasive Species Council had identified 57 invasive plant species on the Sunshine Coast, with Japanese knotweed, Himalayan blackberry, and Scotch Broom being the most numerous. Japanese knotweed has been confirmed at 926 sites.

The Invasive Species Council of BC has also identified several invasive animal species "of interest" on the Sunshine Coast including the European green crab, American bullfrog, spongy moth and Eastern grey squirrel.

In 2023 local anglers and researchers began to spread alarm about the discovery of pumpkinseed sunfish in Trout Lake. The sunfish preys on stickleback, a small Red-Listed fish found in many Sunshine Coast lakes.

CLIMATE CHANGE

A 2022 Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Report prepared for the SCRD found the Sunshine Coast is likely to face impacts from climate change in several areas including:

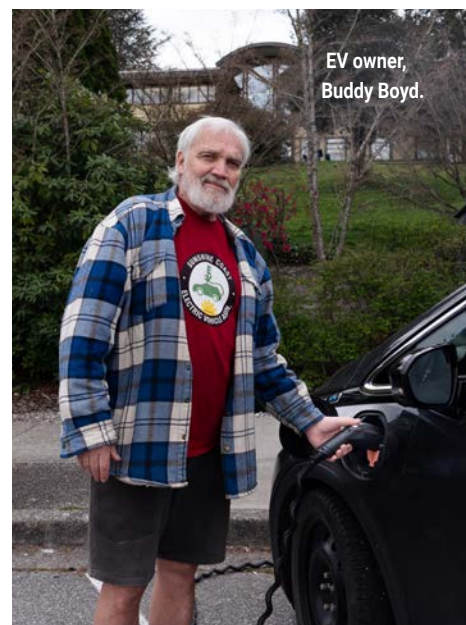
- >> An increase in the frequency of days above 30°C.
- >> More extreme weather events, with heavy storms that last longer, and deliver more rain.
- >> A shift in the growing season with first frost coming later and last frost earlier.
- >> A sea level rise that the British Columbia Ministry of Environment suggests could be as much as 0.5 metre by 2050, and 1.0 metre by 2080.

One of the other risks identified in the Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Report is an increase in the likelihood and frequency of wildfires caused

by higher annual and seasonal temperatures combined with less summer precipitation.

According to the BC Wildfire Service there was a large increase in the number of wildfires from all causes in 2022 and 2023 for the Sunshine Coast and Powell River area, which are part of the same Wildfire Service zone. After four years of wildfire numbers averaging less than 10, the number of fires in 2022 jumped to 30, with 32 fires reported in 2023.

Since 2018, the Town of Gibsons has spent about \$10 million to mitigate the impact of severe rainfall and storm events by repairing damage caused by storms and protecting infrastructure from future damage.



EV owner, Buddy Boyd.

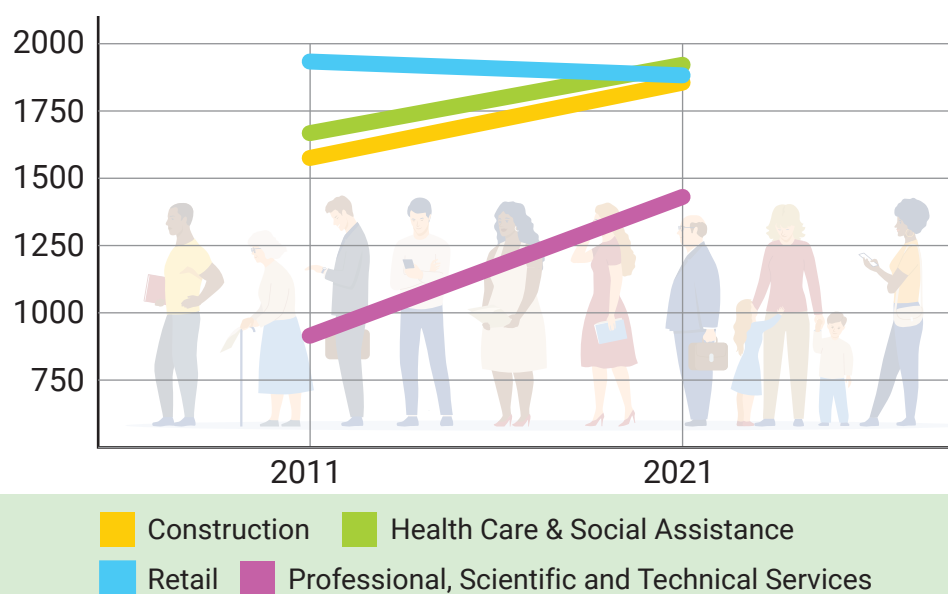
"EVs just make economic sense for the way we drive here on the Sunshine Coast. A lot of people very seldom go on the ferry. If you're driving coastal, putting \$1.99/litre gas in a car just doesn't make any sense. And there's an environmental component too. You've got to do something where you can."

— Buddy Boyd, board member and co-founder SC EV Association

ECONOMIC HEALTH

The economy of the Sunshine Coast, like most other regions in Canada, is still recovering from the pandemic. The unique features of the Coast economy, such as a lower labour force participation rate and a larger number of people whose main income comes from market sources other than employment, remain unchanged. A lack of qualified workers is a challenge in many sectors, including child care.

Top Employment Sectors



TOURISM

According to Sunshine Coast Tourism 1,303 jobs in the SCRD are supported by the tourism sector, making it the fifth highest sector for employment with an estimated economic impact of \$305.1 million in the Powell River-Sunshine Coast region.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is also a key sector in the local economy, but most farming operations are small scale.

The 2021 Census of Agriculture shows 55 farms on the Sunshine Coast, most under 10 hectares in size, with combined annual revenues of \$3.7 million. However, 35 of the 55 farms reported annual revenues of less than \$10,000.

The Sunshine Coast's farm operators are also older than in Canada as a whole. The median age of a Sunshine Coast farmer is 61, compared to 58 for all Canadian farmers. 80% of local farmers reported that they did not have a succession plan in place.

SMALL BUSINESS

The Sunshine Coast remains a community of small businesses. 99% of the Coast's 8,846 business locations have fewer than 20 employees, the same percentage as 2013. And 84%, also the same proportion as 2013, list "no employees" and are run either by the business owner and family members or employ contractors.

COVID-19 SUPPORT

Government COVID-19 supports for Sunshine Coast businesses included \$4.3 million in Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) and Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF) loans.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Median after tax household income on the Sunshine Coast is \$67,000, up from \$58,000 in 2016 but below the BC mark of \$76,000; and the median individual income after tax was \$36,000 according to the 2021 Census (below the \$37,200 for BC).

SOURCES OF INCOME

The Sunshine Coast continues to have a labour force participation rate below the provincial average.

In 2021, with the impacts of the pandemic still being felt, the estimated employment rate for the Sunshine Coast was 7.3% (BC rate 8.4%). Just 54.1% of Sunshine Coast residents 15 yrs+ were actively participating in the labour force.

53.6% of Sunshine Coast residents reported income earned through employment (wages, salaries, commissions, self-employment, business or professional practice), compared to 65.8% for BC as a whole. 25% earned their income through sources such as investments, private retirement income or non-employment market sources, compared to 17.4% for BC.

32% of the total workforce (4,755 people) on the Sunshine Coast were self-employed in



1,303 jobs in the SCRD are supported by the tourism sector... with an economic impact of \$305.1 million.

2021, up from 25% in 2016. BC-wide, about 17% of workers are self-employed.

6,160 people on the Sunshine Coast received some form of COVID-19 emergency or recovery benefit in 2020. The median amount of those benefits was \$8,500.

1,760 eligible workers on the Sunshine Coast collected Employment Insurance benefits in 2020, the highest number in almost ten years. By November 2023 that number had dropped to 470.

OFF COAST TRAVEL FOR WORK

785 Sunshine Coast workers travelled to jobs outside the region in 2021, including 35 whose workplace was in a different province or territory. This is a significant shift from 2016, when 1,025 residents worked off-coast (2019 Vital Brief).

CHILDCARE

Childcare is a key need for working families on the Sunshine Coast, but can be difficult to find and afford. As of March 2024 the province listed just 6 Sunshine Coast child care providers participating in the \$10/day program.

In early 2024, only 7 of 17 Gibsons providers and 7 of 11 Sechelt providers listed on the BC Government Child Care Map had spaces available. Of the 5 listed in Madeira Park, Halfmoon Bay and Roberts Creek only 1 showed a vacancy.

72% of Sunshine Coast respondents to the 2021 BC Speak Survey with children between 1 and 4 reported losing childcare since the pandemic compared to 64% in BC as a whole.

Of the providers who responded to a November 2023 survey, 28% said they are not able to use all their licensed spaces, mainly because of a lack of qualified staff. Some respondents also said they were finding it harder to accommodate the requests for spaces than any time in the past 10 years. Waitlists ran anywhere from 10 to 150 children.

A similar survey for our 2019 Vital Brief showed typical wait lists ran from between 15 to 70 children.

Andrew Bate reviewing reno plans with a client.



Photo: Lisa Furfaro

More than 85% of Sunshine Coast seniors owned their own home in 2021. Designer Andrew Bate works with clients who want renovate their homes to “age in place.”

“There’s more awareness now of the possibilities for people who want to stay in their home longer... If they have space in their home that can be utilized as another suite, it could be a revenue generator which gives them an opportunity to afford any of the supportive services required so they can stay at home or for family members or caregivers. So if a therapist comes in and they’re just there for a few days, because we’re remote here, those people require accommodation.”

– Andrew Bate, owner, Andrew Bate Design

In early 2024, Sechelt Downtown Business Association members were asked to compare their business’ performance to the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

Of the businesses that responded, 50% said their revenues were up, 25% said they were down and 25% reported no change.

92% of the respondents said costs have gone up by as much as 150% with rent and wages cited as the main factors. 50% of the respondents said they now employ more people, other than the owner/operator, than they did pre-pandemic. 25% per cent said they have fewer employees.

“Small business owners have seen a slow start to 2024, and while we watch our rent costs consistently increase, we also see our operating costs go up. Currently, we have a strong group of tenacious business owners planning and executing creative collaborations and events, all in the spirit of building community and increasing revenues.”

– Ashley Kitchen, SDBA President



Cowrie Street in downtown Sechelt...

Photo: Lisa Furfaro

HEALTH & WELLNESS

With a growing and ageing population, access to primary health care is a concern for many on the Sunshine Coast. The number of family physicians practicing in the community has declined and many of those still practicing are nearing retirement.

Like many in BC, Coast residents report their mental health and overall wellbeing was impacted by the pandemic.

On the positive side, use of area recreation facilities is increasing since the pandemic and substance use among high school students continues the downward trend that started in the late 1990s.

FAMILY PRACTITIONERS

The number of family physicians working on the Sunshine Coast has declined from 40 in December 2022 to 31 in October of 2023, while the population has gone up.

This translates to 1,125 people per family physician, up from 827 people per family physician in 2014.

No family physicians or nurse practitioners have been accepting new patients since at least Dec 2022.

As of March 25, 2024, there were 4,068 patients on the Health Connect Registry waitlist, hoping to connect with a family doctor or nurse practitioner. During a Vancouver Coastal Health forum that same month, VCH officials estimated around 7,000 Coast residents are without a family doctor.

Drug & Alcohol Related Deaths

	# of deaths	SC LHA # of deaths per 100,000 pop'n	BC # of deaths per 100,000 pop'n
2016	3	9.6	20.5
2017	7	22.4	30.3
2018	6	19	31.2
2019	3	9.5	19.4
2020	7	21.9	34.4
2021	12	37.1	44.3
2022	9	27.4	44.8
2023	12	35.4	45.7

More than half of Sunshine Coast family practitioners in February of 2023 were international medical school grads, and almost 23% graduated from medical school more than 33 years ago.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

The Sunshine Coast Local Health Area (LHA) has seen a substantial increase in the number of unregulated drug deaths from 2016 to 2023.

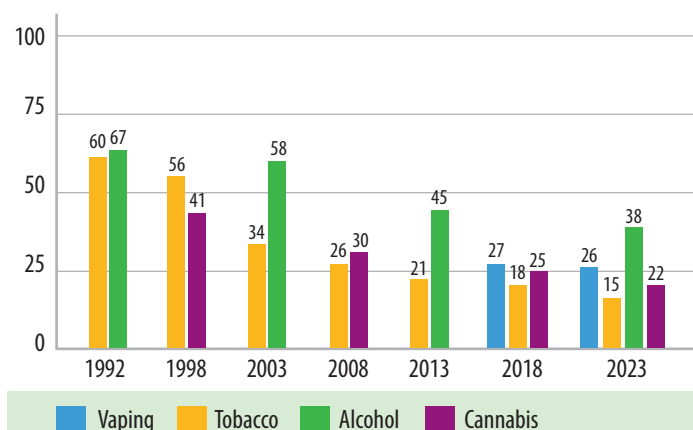
The 2023 death rate of 35 per 100,000 population remains lower than the BC rate of 46 deaths per 100,000. The Sunshine Coast has only one VCH Overdose Prevention/Safe Consumption site

The number of overdose/poisoning calls paramedics responded to in Gibsons and Sechelt has increased from a total of 42 in 2016 to 137 in 2023. There were also about 30 calls logged in the rural areas in 2023.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SUBSTANCE USE

According to the Adolescent Health Survey of high school students, substance use is down, but among those who do use, a higher percentage report first using before age 12 than did in 2018.

Percentage of High School Students who reported having tried various substances:



The substances most commonly used are alcohol, vapes and cannabis. Significantly fewer high schoolers reported using tobacco. Among those who had tried a substance, the percentages who had tried the substance by age 12 were: 27% for vaping, 24% for smoking tobacco, 28% for alcohol and 15% for cannabis.

Those who vaped and smoked were over three times more likely to have vaped first than to have smoked first. And 75% had their first vape within 30 minutes of waking up.



52% of the grade 10-12 respondents reported spending 3 or more hours per day watching TV, movies or videos.

Among those who had tried cannabis most smoked it (73%), while 34% vaped it, and 23% ate it. 59% said their most recent use was cannabis shared among friends and 35% said it was given to them by a family member or friend.

Among those who used alcohol, 31% drank alcohol on the Saturday before the survey.

60% drank in the last month (most commonly on one or two days). 34% had five or more drinks within a couple of hours on at least 1 day in the past month and 1% drank that much on 20 or more days.

They most commonly drank liquor (68%) followed by coolers (53%), beer (33%) and wine (13%).

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The BC Centre for Disease Control's 2021 Survey on Population Experiences, Action and Knowledge (SPEAK) asked British Columbians about several aspects of their physical and mental wellbeing.

>> 63% of Sunshine Coast respondents with children aged 0-17 reported their children's wellbeing (physical, learning, and behaviour) had worsened since the pandemic (BC 65%).

>> 12% of respondents with children between 5-17 reported their children were getting more physical activity than before the pandemic (BC 14%) and 72% reported their children were getting less physical activity (BC 71%).

>> 85% of respondents with children aged 5-17 reported their children have more stress than before the pandemic (BC 83%).

>> 27% of respondents reported that in general their mental health was poor or fair (BC 32%), and 56% of respondents reported that their mental health had worsened since the pandemic (BC 57%).

>> 39% reported increased conflict in their household since the pandemic (BC 44%).



Photo: Lisa Furfaro

On nine random dates and times from December 2023 to March 2024, the estimated wait time at the Sechelt Hospital ER varied from 18 minutes to 2 hours and 50 minutes. It had, on average, the 5th shortest wait times of 17 to 25 open ERs in Vancouver, Richmond, Delta, Fraser Valley, Fraser Canyon, the North Shore, Sea to Sky and the Sunshine Coast.

The ER is currently undergoing a \$3-million renovation, which will add three new treatment spaces, a new waiting area and bathrooms, dedicated spaces for mental health assessment, private triage, a family room, and a new security office.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE

In a 2023 survey of grade 10-12 students in School District 46, 11% of respondents reported being cyberbullied about every month or more, while 74% said they had not been cyberbullied that school year.

6% of kids reported being physically bullied about every month or more. 78% said they had not been physically bullied that school year.

44% screened positive for depression through a number of questions. The average for school districts reported in the survey was 38%.

42% scored positive for generalized anxiety (the average for reporting districts was 39%).

52% screened positive for eco-anxiety (the average for reporting districts was 49%).

52% of the grade 10-12 respondents reported spending three or more hours per day watching TV, movies or videos.

63% reported being on a computer, tablet or smartphone outside of school hours three or more hours per day.

38% reported spending three or more hours per day on social media sites or apps.

RECREATION FACILITY USE

2023 admissions to SCRCD recreation facilities was 205,037, up 11% from 2022's 182,179 and roughly equal to the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

The overall number of registered programs was down in 2023 (346) compared to 2022 (369), but the number of spaces filled in those programs was up (2,913 in 2023 and 2,379 in 2022).

SAFETY

The Sunshine Coast is still a relatively safe community, although some categories of crime are on the rise.

Public safety services on the Sunshine Coast are heavily dependent on volunteers who put in thousands of training and response hours every year.

CRIME

While overall crime rates on the Sunshine Coast have been stable after an increase in 2019, and are similar to the rates for all of BC, there is a marked difference between the two sub divisions that make up the Sunshine Coast RCMP detachment.

The crime rate reported for Sechelt Municipal increased 13.6% from 2021 to 2022, while the rate for Sunshine Coast Rural, which includes Gibsons, rose by just 2.8%.

For the entire Sunshine Coast, RCMP reported spikes in drug offenses, property crime, assaults and traffic violations from 2021 to 2022. Property crime (up 9%), assaults (up 20%), and traffic violations (up 31%) increased again in 2023. A notable contributor to the property crime increase was business break and enters (up 81% over 2022).

Drug offenses as well as auto and bicycle thefts dropped in 2023 after an increase in 2022.

The number of calls for service has averaged 8,900 per year since 2019, but the number of calls involving wellness checks and mental health issues has risen since 2020.

VICTIM SERVICES

Staff from the Sunshine Coast Community Services Society's community and police based Victim Services programs report an increase in the number of people served from 378 in 2020 to 602 in 2023. They put this down to a rise in violent crimes and an increase in dating violence.

There are two volunteer groups responsible for search and rescue on the Sunshine Coast: Sunshine Coast Search and Rescue, which handles ground searches, and Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue which helps on the water from three stations on the Coast.

Summing up their experiences during the pandemic to the *Coast Reporter* newspaper, leaders from both Sunshine Coast SAR and RCMSAR noted changes.



Members of the SC Royal Marine Search and Rescue team train for active duty.

Photo: Coast Reporter

Sunshine Coast Search and Rescue

Year	Callouts	Members	Volunteer Hours	People Helped
2023	35	44	8,344	37
2022	29	46	5,464	26
2021	42	41	6,301	44
2020	31	40	5,875	37
2019	20	44	6,474	22
2018	25	33	6,912	31

Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue – Sunshine Coast Stations Missions/year

Stations	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Station 12 Halfmoon Bay	13	15	20	17	27
Station 14 Gibsons	16	21	18	10	21
Station 61 Pender Harbour	5	6	8	12	9
Total	34	42	46	39	57



Overall crime rates on the Sunshine Coast have been stable after an increase in 2019, and are similar to the rates for all of BC.

Ground SAR teams saw an increase in calls because, with travel limited, more people took to trails and the backcountry looking for recreation close to home. RCMSAR got fewer calls, but saw an increase in inexperienced boaters getting into trouble and an increase in vessels unfit for use which they put down to more people buying used boats as an alternative when other travel was restricted.

FIRE SERVICES

The Sunshine Coast is served by four volunteer fire departments under the SCRD in Egmont, Halfmoon Bay, Roberts Creek and Gibsons and two independent volunteer departments in Sechelt and Pender Harbour.



Photo: Sechelt Fire Department

Recruits Boot Camp, Sechelt Fire Department.

The four SCRD fire departments responded to 707 calls in 2023, and the 100 or so members of those departments dedicated more than 2,000 hours to training in the fourth quarter of 2023 alone.

Like most of the Sunshine Coast fire departments, Sechelt has seen an increase in calls in recent years. There were 549 calls in 2023, a new record high, up 23% over 2022 (427 calls) and a 136% increase over the 10 year average.

TRANSITION HOUSE

The Sunshine Coast Community Services Society saw an increase in calls to its 24/7 crisis line in 2023, after lower numbers in 2021 and 2022. The 1,080 calls to the line was below the 1,575 peak in 2019.



Photo: Lisa Furfaro

SC Community Services Society Staff, Catherine Leach, Steve Oka, Karen Watmough showing off soon-to-be new building.

The Sunshine Coast Community Services Society's new Building Together development, set for completion in 2025, will bring together programs currently running at different locations, and provide 34 units of affordable housing for women and children who've experienced violence in their past.

"The housing will allow those women and families to access programs on site if they choose and it will build community for the women and families that are there. The building will have so much more synergy and it's going to be a community space that other groups can use and hopefully it will become a community hub."

– Denise Woodley, Director of Program and Staff Development, Sunshine Coast Community Services Society

The Society's Yew Transition House was able to provide shelter for 24 women and 36 children in 2023, and its Thyme Second Stage program was able to help 6 women and 12 children. Yew Transition House numbers were consistently between 20 and 30 for both women and children from 2020 to 2022.

The Society's recently established sexual assault program had 30 clients in 2023 including 18 youth.

Managers of the transition program noted that since 2017 women have been more reluctant to leave an abusive relationship because of the housing crisis and have even had to consider moving off Coast. They are talking with BC Housing about extending the usual 30-day stay to help address those challenges.

LEARNING

Education, both formal and self-directed, continues to be important for Sunshine Coast residents.

The Sunshine Coast has a slightly higher percentage of residents with post-secondary degrees than the rest of BC, public library programs are well supported and high school completion rates for local students are increasing.

School District 46 also has a higher percentage of Indigenous students completing grade 12 than the BC average, and one third of the students registered for programs at Capilano University's kálah-ay campus are studying programs related to shísháhl Nation language and culture.

SCHOOL DISTRICT 46

Enrollment in SD 46 schools has increased over the last decade, and recent years have seen increases in the number of Indigenous students as well as those classified as English Language Learners (ELL) and students with diverse abilities.

The 2023/24 total enrollment of 3,448 includes 746 Indigenous students, 135 ELL students and 835 students with diverse abilities.

SD 46 Grade 12 Six-year Completion Rate

SD 46 has seen significant improvement in graduation rates, particularly for Indigenous students and students with diverse abilities, but the overall rate of students who graduate within 6 years of starting grade 8 is still behind the BC average.

Six-year Completion Rate	All	Female	Male	Indigenous	Diverse Abilities
2012/13 SD 46	82%	84%	80%	61%	54%
2022/23 SD 46	86%	89%	82%	83%	72%
2022/23 BC	92%	94%	90%	74%	78%



As enrollment grew, so did the number of classes. There were significantly more classes in 2022/23 (669) than in 2012/13 when there were 333.

Typical class sizes, however, have remained stable. In 2022/23 the average class size was 17 students in kindergarten, 20 in grades 1 to 3, 23 in grades 4 to 7 and 23 in grades 8 to 12.

The number of classes with an EA (Education Assistant) has also increased from 138 in 2012/13 to 383 in 2022/23.

There have been changes in the number of classes that include students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Since 2012/13 the number of classes with 7 or more IEP students has risen from 14% to 40%, much higher than BC as a whole (9%). 3% of SD 46 classes have no IEP students, down from 8% in 2012/13. Across BC 14% of classes have no IEP students.

The percentage of classes with 1 or more ELLs in SD 46 was 40% in 2022/23 (BC 52%). This is fairly similar to the 2013/14 mark of 37%.

VULNERABLE STUDENTS

The Early Development Instrument questionnaire, completed by kindergarten teachers across the province, found the percentage of Sunshine Coast kindergartners considered vulnerable on one or more scales was 35%, slightly above the provincial average of 33%.

The highest percentage of kids were vulnerable on the Emotional Maturity Scale (23%), followed by Physical (17%) and Social Competence (16%).

Chatelech Secondary School, Sechelt.

Photo: Terra Firma



Enrollment in SD 46 schools has increased over the last decade, notably with Indigenous, ELL and diverse abilities students.

FORMAL EDUCATION

The rate of Sunshine Coast residents who've never completed high school was 10% in the 2021 Census, the same as the province-wide rate and unchanged since 2016.

There's been a slight increase in the rate of people with a post-secondary degree from 57% in 2016 to 59% in 2021. The overall BC rate was 57%.

PUBLIC LIBRARY USE

The number of in person visits to the Sechelt and Gibsons libraries has declined since 2012, when it was 255,900, but the libraries are still seeing 150,000 in person visits per year and while this is less than 2012, virtual visits are up — going from 96,292 in 2012 to 154,016 in 2022.

Librarians are also handling more reference transactions, with 44,268 in 2022 compared to 2012 when there were 16,750.

In 2022, the two libraries offered 276 unique programs with 9,672 active program participants.

CAPILANO UNIVERSITY

The kálox-ay campus of Capilano University in Sechelt has 129 domestic students enrolled in 2023/24, down from 255 students in 2014/15.

The students are registered in seven different programs, including Adult Basic Education (47 students), shíshálh Nation Language and Culture Certificate (42 students) and Early Childhood Education (18 students).

There are also 18 students enrolled in a new program offered in partnership with the shíshálh Nation. Ten students are studying wood and silver carving and 8 are studying plant medicine.

**kálox-ay | Sunshine Coast Campus,
Capilano University**

Photo: Capilano University

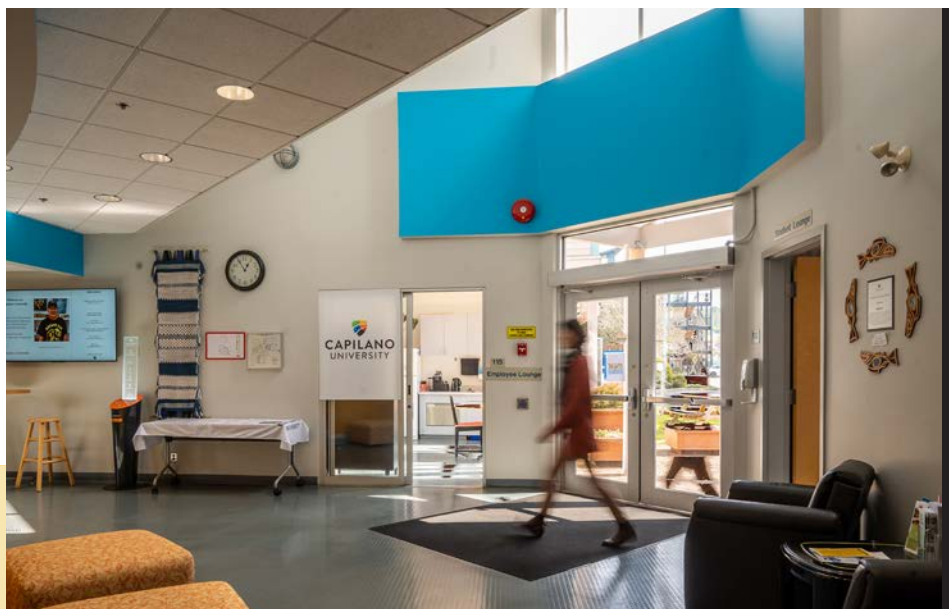


Janet Perry
using podcasting
equipment at the
Gibsons Library.

Photo: Lisa Furfaro

"I call the library the great equalizer in our community. People can come here and get the books, the resources, the printing and the computers they need to further their learning and their personal development. On the Sunshine Coast people really use their libraries. Beyond the books and all the other things that we provide, we're also just a really great safe space."

– Heather Evans-Cullen, Director, Gibsons Public Library



LOW INCOME

The 2021 Census reported significantly less poverty on the Sunshine Coast than the previous 2016 Census, but the numbers may be painting a more positive picture because of the various government benefits introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other indicators suggest many people in the community are still experiencing difficulties.

POVERTY RATE

According to the 2021 Census, 8.2% of Sunshine Coast residents were considered to be in poverty, compared to the overall BC rate of 9.7%.

This was substantially less than in 2016, when the poverty rate was 16%.

Those employed in arts and culture, sports and recreation (11%) and in natural resources and agriculture (17%) had higher rates of poverty than other job classifications.

Poverty status was highest among 18-25 year olds (13%) and lowest among 65 and over (4%). Children and adults between 25 and 64 were about 10%.

Those 65 and older who were in poverty were not as far below the poverty line as younger age groups.

LOW INCOME

12.6% of Coast residents were considered to have low income status after tax (LIM-AT), higher than the provincial rate of 10.8%.

In contrast to the poverty rate measure, the prevalence of low income on this scale is significantly lower for 18-24 year olds (8.7%) than the rest of the population. The prevalence of low income for people 65 and over is 13.3%, slightly higher than for the population as a whole.

The 2021 Census reported 13.8% of children on the Sunshine Coast are living in low income households, while the BC percentage is 11.4%. However, the First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society puts that number higher. First Call used data from 2022 tax filings and calculated a child poverty rate of 17.2% for the SCRD, down from 18.3% in 2020, but above the BC-wide rate of 14.3%.

INCOME ASSISTANCE

The median amount of government transfers per resident on the Sunshine Coast was about \$5,600 more in 2020 than in 2019, an increase that may reflect COVID-19 benefits.

FOOD BANK USE

Food bank use is down from the height of the pandemic, but there was a major increase from 2021 and 2022 to 2023. 1,135 people from 639 households used the Sunshine Coast Community Services Society's food bank in 2023, with 446 of them first time food bank users. The average for 2021/22 was 750 participants a year.

LIVING WAGE

After a 23% increase between 2021 and 2022, the Living Wage for the Sunshine Coast took a much smaller 5% jump in 2023, more in line with the rate of inflation.

The 2023 Living Wage of \$25.61 was almost the same as Vancouver (\$25.68) and slightly more than Powell River (\$25.06).

Living Wage Increase Sunshine Coast 2011-2023



HOMELESSNESS

The 2023 Homeless Count identified 97 people as experiencing homelessness in Sechelt or Gibsons, up from 84 in 2020. 29% of those people said they have always been Sunshine Coast residents and 69% have lived here for five years or longer.

>> 77% had experienced homelessness for a year or more.



The 2023 Homeless Count identified 97 people as experiencing homelessness in Sechelt or Gibsons, up from 84 in 2020.

>> 12% were under 25 and 24% were 55 or older.

>> 22% reported having a full or part time job.

The main reasons people reported losing their housing was too little income (43%), a conflict with their landlord or unfit or unsafe housing (38%), or a substance use issue (26%).

The homeless people contacted during the count also reported a variety of health concerns.

>> 61% had a medical condition.

>> 47% had a physical disability.

>> 53% had a mental health issue.

>> 74% had an addiction.

>> 29% reported a learning disability.

In 2021, 146 people on the Sunshine Coast accessed a homeless shelter or received BC Employment Assistance for three consecutive months with no fixed address. This was 0.45% of the population, the same percentage as Greater Vancouver but higher than Squamish-Lillooet and Powell River.

SCRD LIFE MYPASS PROGRAM USE

The SCRD offers a program to help low income residents access recreation facilities. Participation in the LIFE (Leisure Inclusion for Everyone) program has increased since 2020 but remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels.

In 2019, 725 passes were used for 10,250 visits. In 2023 the SCRD gave out 595 passes which were used for 6,255 recreation facility visits.



Marilyn Heinrich,
food bank volunteer
for 21 years.

Photo: Lisa Furfaro

The Sunshine Coast Community Services Society food bank is one of the many institutions that relies on volunteers to serve the community.

"When COVID came along a lot of people were out of work, they couldn't find jobs anymore, but they've still got to live. And the Sunshine Coast was absolutely incredible with their donations. It's a really good community and they've donated so much for the Food Bank."

— Marilyn Heinrich, 21-year volunteer at the food bank

In 2024, Gibsons received funding through the new BC Builds program for a Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society project on a town owned lot at 571 Shaw Road.

"This is housing for everyone on the Sunshine Coast. We're looking not only at people who work at the local Tim Horton's, but also teachers, nurses and police officers, and tradespeople. What we're trying to create is a place where families can grow on the Sunshine Coast."

— Chris Neumeyer, General Manager, Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society

"We have the opportunity to shape our community's future by creating diverse vibrant neighbourhoods that provide a range of housing types suitable for young families, seniors, people in the workforce, people living with disabilities, and others who may require support."

— Kelly Foley, Sunshine Coast Housing Coordinator, Cover the Coast



Shaw Road Affordable Housing
Project, Kelly Foley, Cover the
Coast & Chris Neumeyer, SC
Affordable Housing Society.

Photo: Lisa Furfaro

ARTS & CULTURE

The Sunshine Coast is home to a vibrant arts and culture sector, with more working artists per capita than much of the province and a host of signature events that draw visitors and participants from across the country.

The community is also getting more involved in initiatives to promote, understand and engage with shíshálh Nation culture.

CULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

A report commissioned from Hill Strategies by the District of Sechelt found the SCRD was home to 440 professional artists

in 2021. They made up 2.7% of the total workforce - nearly double the provincial average of 1.4% and almost triple the national average of 1.0%.

Sunshine Coast Art Crawl

Year	Venues	Studio Visits	Sales	Commissions
2019	185	49,600	\$460,500	\$120,000
2020*	98	11,800	\$180,000	\$25,000
2021*	160	37,000	\$528,000	\$80,000
2022	169	38,800	\$501,000	\$40,000
2023	188	46,000	\$465,000	\$25,000

*The 2020 and 2021 Art Crawls were held under pandemic restrictions.



Visitors on the Purple Banner tour.

With a population of 140 professional artists Sechelt ranks third among all Canadian municipalities in the proportion of people making a living in the arts.

Overall, 1,200 people in the SCRD work in arts, culture and heritage occupations (which includes professional artists as well as people who work in jobs such as graphic design, editing and translation, librarians, curators and archivists) making up 7.1% of the workforce. The BC average is 5.4% and the national average is 4.4%.

Some 80 Sunshine Coast residents work as “arts leaders” in roles such as producers, composers, choreographers and directors.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

The Sunshine Coast hosts several annual arts events. Attendance is beginning to bounce back from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Festival of the Written Arts

The Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts drew 8,251 attendees in 2019. The 2022 Festival, the first full scale event following the pandemic, had an attendance of 5,111 and the 2023 event saw 5,740 visitors.

Heritage Playhouse

The Heritage Playhouse in Gibsons hosted 112 events in 2019 with a total attendance of 10,164. During the worst years of COVID-19 restrictions (2020 and 2021) those numbers dropped to 37 and 19 performances with attendance of 2,697 and 1,281. In 2023 the Playhouse hosted 63 performances with a total attendance of 5,187.

Sunshine Coast Art Crawl

The Coast Cultural Alliance Art Crawl transforms the Coast into one “large interactive art show” over three days every fall. The 2023 Sunshine Coast Art Crawl saw the largest number of participating venues yet.



Overall, 1,200 people in the SCRD work in arts, culture and heritage occupations making up 7.1% of the workforce.

Purple Banner Tour

The Coast Cultural Alliance's Purple Banner Tour, a year round self-guided tour of local studios and galleries, lists 109 locations; 98 on the Lower Sunshine Coast and 11 in the Powell River area.

Coast Recital Society

After a run of sold out seasons the Society was forced to limit ticket sales during the 2021/22 and 2022/23 seasons because of pandemic restrictions.

The Society's 2023/24 season was the first where the number of tickets being offered was the same as the pre-pandemic seasons. 87% of the tickets on offer were sold.

Sechelt Arts Festival

The Sechelt Arts Festival, which takes place over several days each year, featuring dozens of artists and performers, saw 3,800 people participate either in person or online in 2023, a slight increase over 2022 but still below 2019's mark of 4,834.

syiyaya Days

syiyaya Days, a multi-day event starting on National Indigenous Peoples Day, began in 2022, building on the Orange Shirt Walk in 2021 when more than 1,000 residents showed their support for residential school survivors.

Since then, thousands more people have participated in film screenings, dialogue circles, Blanket and Mapping Exercises, Healing Ceremonies, and Reconciliation Walking Tours hosted by the shíshálh Nation, and the syiyaya Reconciliation Movement.

1,000 people took part in a weaving project and 1,500 in a carving project that were also part of syiyaya Days.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Sunshine Coast arts community gets support from all three levels of government.

The SCRD distributed \$43,400 in grants for arts and culture through its Rural Area Grants-in-Aid program in 2023.

The District of Sechelt's 2023 Community Investment Program contributions to arts organizations totaled \$30,000 while the Town of Gibsons, which scaled back its 2023 grants program pending a review, awarded \$1,500 to arts organizations.

The local government total of \$74,900 is similar to amount of support offered in 2014.

The provincial government supported Sunshine Coast arts and culture organizations with \$120,500 in Community Gaming Grants in fiscal 2022/23. This was more than double the amount in 2013/14.

Sunshine Coast individuals and organizations also benefitted from \$1,039,678 in Canada Council for the Arts Funding in fiscal 2022/23.

AUTHORS IN THE SCHOOLS AND STUDENT WRITERS

The Celebration of Authors, Books and Community (CABC) is a joint initiative of the Festival of the Written Arts and School District 46.

Since it began in 2007 CABC has brought more than 90 Canadian authors into Sunshine Coast classrooms for more than 280 visits attended by upwards of 20,000 students.

It also inspired Coastal Voices, an adjudicated anthology of writing by Sunshine Coast students, which has published more than 1,600 original pieces by local students.

2023 saw so many quality submissions that two volumes were produced featuring 168 pieces from writers in the elementary schools edition and 65 in the secondary schools edition.



Plant Medicine program participants.

Photo: Jessica Silvey

The Carving Shed: Supporting Indigenous Arts Mastery program at Capilano University's ká lax-ay campus was established in 2023 as a partnership with the shíshálh Nation and runs under the guidance of Jessica Silvey, an Indigenous faculty advisor at ká lax-ay and Guy Morin, shíshálh Nation Director of Education.

For 2023/24, 18 students signed up for courses on carving and medicinal plants.

"We are committed to our relationship to the shíshálh Nation and its people and listening to what they want. As a result we're placing a lot of emphasis on the Carving Shed and shíshálh language courses. The Carving Shed is unique and carving and medicinal plants are absolutely imperative to the Nation's return to who they are, their culture and their wellbeing."

— Micki McCartney, Regional Director, Capilano University, ká lax-ay, Sunshine Coast campus



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

VitalSigns®

Photo: Nicole Logan

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



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