



Out in the Cold?

While many revel in thoughts of a white Christmas and soon-to-be snowy ski slopes, others in our region find this time of year very challenging.

Poverty is a significant concern across our country, province, and region. According to the most recent available tax data (2015), about 15% of people in BC (1 in 7) live in poverty, and numbers are similar in our region. At the regional district scale, 15% of Central Kootenay residents, 13% of Kootenay Boundary residents, and 10% of East Kootenay residents are considered low income. At the community scale, 18 Columbia Basin-Boundary communities are faring better than the provincial average, with Elkford and Montrose having the lowest percentage (6%) of low income residents. The Low Income Measure is a measure of income where household needs are taken into account. A family is considered to be low income when their income is below the threshold for their family type and size.

The difference between couple families and lone-parent families is stark. The percentage of couple families living in poverty ranges from a low of 3.8% in the East Kootenay to a high of 8.4% in the Central Kootenay. But for lone-parent families, the percentages are significantly greater, from 31.8% to 40.2%.

People with disabilities are another susceptible group, and are twice as likely to be living in poverty. Children and youth are especially vulnerable, and [statistics](#) show that half of Indigenous children live in poverty in this country.

Seniors appear to be faring better in our region compared to the provincial average, with a low of 2.4% in the East Kootenay and a high of 5.1% in the Central Kootenay, compared to

provincial percentages which are closer to 8% of seniors living in poverty.

Using the Low Income Measure to gauge poverty has limitations, as it does not capture the whole picture of a person's or family's income, assets, or needs. It is one measure of a very complex issue.

This complex issue has impacts at the household level, where people with low income can have difficulties accessing safe and affordable housing, nutritious food, adequate child care, transportation, and other necessary goods and services. Poverty also has impacts at the community and societal level, with repercussions felt across all sectors – from health and social services, to education, and our economy.

Fortunately, there is momentum building to reduce, and eventually eliminate, poverty. Local organizations have created action plans and continue to support people with on the ground initiatives, and both the [provincial](#) and [federal](#) governments have recently developed new strategies and proposed legislation related to poverty reduction.

We can envision a world where nobody is left out in the cold. Consider how you might assist those in greater need in your community, especially as we enter the season of giving.

State of the Basin – Measures of Poverty

Learn more about the Low Income Measure and other measures of income and poverty through the [State of the Basin](#) initiative.

Community First Tourism Development

Tourism development can provide economic and social benefits to rural communities, however the process is complicated and fraught with challenges. Listen to the [Rural Routes Podcast](#) exploring tourism development in rural places from Alberta and BC, to Newfoundland and Labrador, and all the way to Scotland and Denmark.

SMARTS – Applied Research & Technology Solutions

Do you know a small or medium sized business that could use research support to develop an innovative product or service? The Applied Research & Innovation Centre at Selkirk College can help through the [SMARTS program](#).

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