

## Shifting Housing Needs in the Columbia Basin-Boundary

As the weather turns colder and the snow begins to fall, most of us are happy to have warm, comfortable homes to return to. However, many Columbia Basin-Boundary residents have unmet housing needs. Housing is a hot topic across Canada, and [recently-released data](#) from the 2016 Census of Canada can help us better understand the nature of this crucial component of our region's built environment.



Housing in our region, when compared to BC or Canada as a whole, is generally characterized by:

- higher rates of home ownership,
- higher prevalence of single-family homes,
- lower rates of occupancy by usual residents (e.g., higher prevalence of vacation homes), and
- higher levels of affordability.

That said, conditions vary greatly across the diverse communities that comprise our region, and are changing over time.

While statistics show that the majority of homes are owned as opposed to rented across the region, many communities appear to be following the national trend toward lower rates of home ownership among young people. From 2011 to 2016, about two-thirds of our communities saw an increase in the percentage of young households—those maintained by people under 35—that rent their home. These percentages are especially high in Slokan Valley municipalities, with New Denver, Slokan, and Silverton statistics showing that virtually all young households are renting. The percentage of households that rent their home can be an indication of housing affordability in an area.

Another key measure of housing affordability is the percentage of a household's income that is spent on shelter costs (including rent or mortgage payments, taxes, fees, and utilities). It is commonly agreed that when more than 30% of a household's income is spent on shelter costs, the housing is unaffordable. The good news is that only five of the 57 municipalities and electoral areas in our region have higher rates than the provincial average (28%) of households spending more than 30% of their income on shelter costs. These rates tend to be much higher among renters (38-45% in Kootenay regional districts) than owners (12-17%) and the highest overall rate in our region is in Nelson (32%).

The Nelson Committee on Homelessness brings together various organizations to address housing affordability and homelessness in Nelson. Its annual [Report Card on Homelessness](#) is a good example of how our region is putting research and data to use to help make informed decisions that lead to more effective affordable housing policies and programs.

The RDI's [State of the Basin](#) program tracks housing indicators to help measure regional well-being. For more detail on the figures provided in this story, look for our updated reports coming in March 2018.

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*This article is a product of the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College. We are a regional research centre with a mandate to support informed decision-making by Columbia Basin-Boundary communities through the provision of information, applied research and related outreach and extension support. Visit [www.cbrdi.ca](http://www.cbrdi.ca) for more information.*

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## Online Resources

The latest [Rural Routes](#) podcast features Dr. Sarah Breen from the RDI.

The [Measuring up to Poverty Reduction in Rural BC](#) webinar recording is online and features Nadine Raynolds from the RDI as well as representatives from Trail, Nelson, Cranbrook, and Revelstoke.



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