

SQUAMISH'S

VitalSigns[®]

2023 Report



**SQUAMISH
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

VitalSigns[®]
Community foundations taking the pulse of
Canadian communities.



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WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE Squamish Vital Signs Team

Welcome to the Squamish Community Foundation's 2023 Vital Signs Report. This report comes at a time when the community is emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, undergoing rapid growth and changes in composition and diversity, facing climate change, and working on truth and reconciliation with local Indigenous peoples. As the Vital Signs Steering Committee worked through production of this report, these factors were front of mind and played a large part in the development of the core themes and data presented.

The Foundation published its first Vital Signs report in 2011, with subsequent reports released in 2014 and 2017. The Vital Signs report shows a snapshot in time of community well-being. Yet the Vital Signs initiative, just like the community, is far from static. Vital Signs reflects the strengths, concerns, and priorities of the community.

It's at-a-glance format is meant to inform conversation and focus action by residents of Squamish. As you read the report, we hope you reflect upon what makes Squamish strong and how you, as a member of the community, can contribute to its vitality and sustainability.

Thank you to the Vital Signs Steering Committee:

- Adrian Blachut
- Andrea Dunne
- Carol Coffey
- Christine Baker, TlatlaKwot
- Christina Musselwhite
- Heather Hall
- Karen Clarke
- Kyle Horvath
- Michelle LeBlanc
- Mona Sidhu
- Suzie Soman

Ha7lh en skwalwn Kwis tl'iknumut tl'a Skwxwú7mesh Uxwumixw

Welcome to the Squamish Nation Traditional Territory

Squamish Community Foundation humbly, respectfully, and whole-heartedly acknowledges that this report was produced on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw.

Since time immemorial, the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw have been stewards for this land on which we are fortunate to live, work and play.



Thank You to
our Sponsors:



ABOUT Vital Signs

Vital Signs is a national program led by community foundations and coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada. Vital Signs leverages local knowledge, identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life in order to measure the vitality of our communities and support action towards improving our quality of life.

The Squamish Vital Signs report was produced by the Squamish Community Foundation in collaboration with our community.





Methodology

Our methodology for the 2023 Squamish Vital Signs report used a mixed-methods approach. The Steering Committee was formed in September 2022. It included members from the community who could provide a unique, diverse lens, and insights which would help guide the core elements of the report. Through thoughtful conversations, the Steering Committee selected eight core themes to highlight in this report.

Data for the selected core themes was collected through multiple phases and sources. In November 2022, we hosted a public Community Conversation, encouraging facilitated discussions related to each core theme. These discussions were transcribed and emergent themes were coded.

In January 2023, a Community Survey was sent out to a diverse range of groups, organizations and individuals at large. A total of 447 individuals responded to the survey.



“Our hope is that the information communicated through this Vital Signs Report will further encourage action and collaborative effort towards issues affecting our community.”

-SQUAMISH VITAL SIGNS STEERING COMMITTEE



Information gathered from the survey is located in the box at the side of each theme page.

A second public Conversation was held in February 2023; efforts were made to build upon the emergent themes from the first Community Conversation.



At the bottom of each core theme, we have included quotes from these conversations, identified by this symbol.

The data presented includes Statistics Canada Census data (Squamish census agglomeration), community-specific data provided by the Community Foundations of Canada and information from local sources.

References

1. Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population. Squamish Agglomeration
2. City Spaces Consulting. March 2023. Housing Needs Report. District of Squamish.
3. Statistics Canada. Canadian Community Health Survey
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19. World Air Quality Project
20. BC Vital Statistics Agency
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24. BC Transit. Squamish Transit Future Action Plan 2022
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26. The Squamish Chief
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28. District of Squamish. Economic Development Team: www.investsquamish.ca
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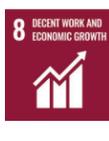
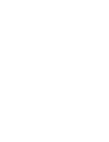
More detailed references available on the Squamish Community Foundation website.
www.squamishfoundation.ca

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.

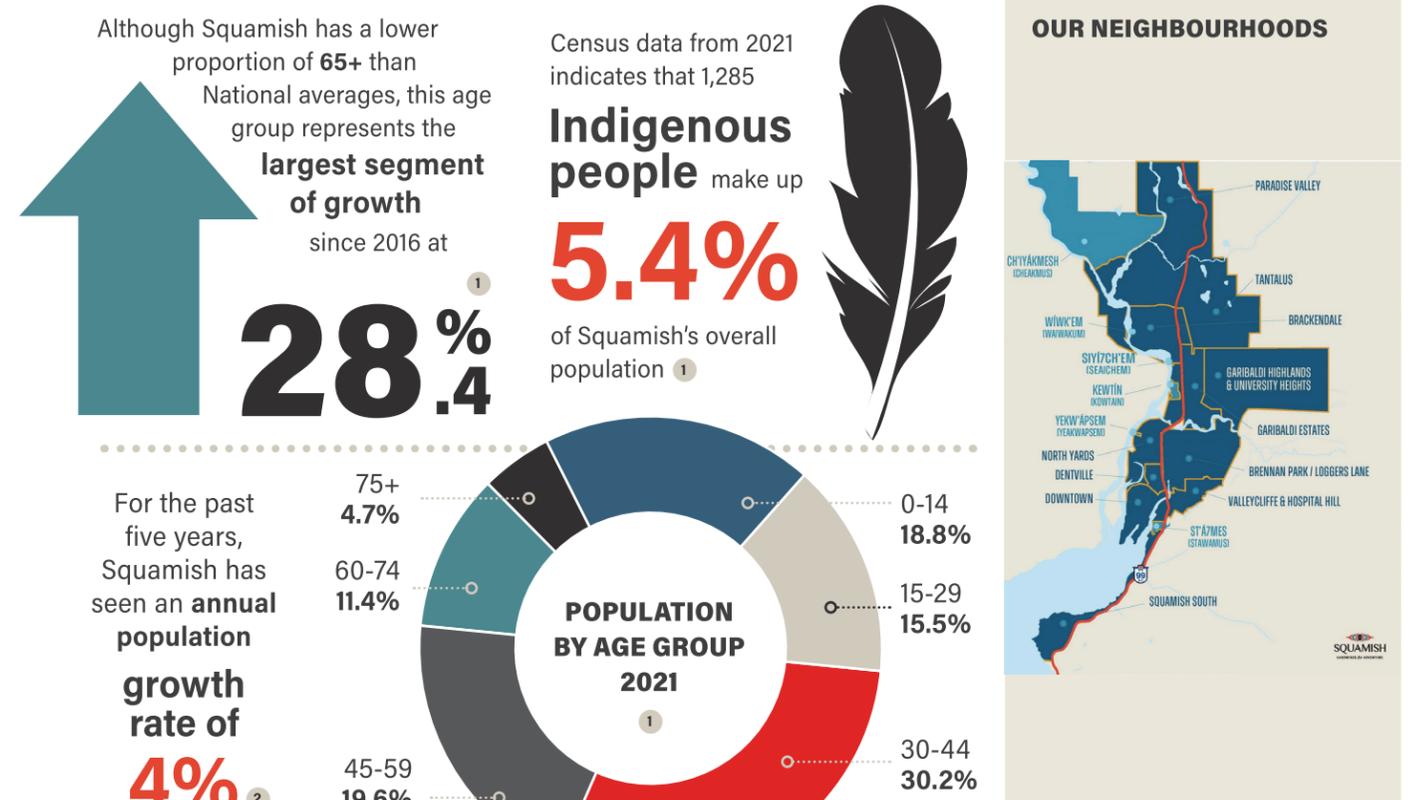
The Squamish Community Foundation, alongside many other Community Foundations across Canada, has committed to aligning our mission with the United Nations SDGs. Throughout this Vital Signs Report, you will notice matched SDGs icons with our core themes to communicate the ways in which our community can work towards addressing them.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

 <p>1 NO POVERTY End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p>	 <p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</p>	 <p>13 CLIMATE ACTION Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact</p>
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p>	 <p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full productive employment and decent work</p>	 <p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER Conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development</p>
 <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p>	 <p>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p>	 <p>15 LIFE ON LAND Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p>
 <p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities</p>	 <p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES Reduce inequality within and among countries</p>	 <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions.</p>
 <p>5 GENDER EQUALITY Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p>	 <p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p>	 <p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for Sustainable Development</p>
 <p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p>	 <p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p>	

Community Snapshot

Nestled at the base of the impressive Siy'ám' Smánit (Sta'wamus Chief), at the end of the Átl'ka7tsem (Howe Sound) fjord, surrounded by mountain valleys and rainforests, you will find the rapidly changing town of Squamish. Our community is among the top 10 fastest growing municipalities in Canada. From 2016 to 2021, Squamish has seen a **21.8% growth in total population**.¹ The 2021 population of Squamish is 24,232 based on the latest Canadian Census data.¹ This growth has allowed many new, small businesses to emerge and flourish and our local economy to thrive. The **annual growth rate is three times the provincial average** of 7.6%,¹ making **Squamish one of the fastest growing communities in B.C.** as well.



Squamish's rapid growth and popularity have impacted all of the core themes discussed in this report. Squamish's population is projected to reach in excess of **35,570 residents by 2031**²

How do we ensure that everyone has a space in this community to thrive?





LOCAL DATA:
Diversity, Equity & Belonging

5 GENDER EQUALITY

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Diversity, Equity & Belonging

Equity at a community level occurs when its members feel a sense of belonging and value regardless of their race, gender, ability, age or class. These attributes strengthen the vital nature of a community by supporting a variety of lived experiences. Those who have migrated to Squamish in recent years have come for a range of reasons: employment opportunities, access to the natural environment, abundant options for outdoor recreation, living in a small community with close proximity to a large urban centre and much more.

With this influx of population and growth, newcomers are bringing transformation to this community. In this section, we will highlight some of the ways in which Squamish is supporting diversity and equity and ask bigger questions about how, as a community, we can help promote and support a strong sense of belonging for everyone.

SQUAMISH IN FOCUS

INCLUSION

Pride Squamish hosted 30+ events in 2022:

Outreach and collaboration with local businesses

Social media growth, Book Club, Movie Night, Social Meet-ups, Climbing events, Drag brunch/ bingo/storytime

pridesquamish.com

OUTREACH

Attendees in 2022 at the Howe Sound Women's Centre & Hot Spot Welcome Centre:

Multicultural Outreach Program Attendance = 500

Gender Diverse Inclusion Program Attendance = 65

Individual Gender Diverse Inclusion support provided = 88

seatoskycommunity.org / hswc.ca

ACCESSIBILITY ENGAGEMENT

DOS Accessibility report highlighted the following gaps:



- accessible public washrooms
- accessible parking
- suitable accessible/universal housing
- lack of tactile and visible markers
- side walk slopes and grades
- lack of regional transit (handyDART service)
- programs for children with disabilities

In 2021, immigrants represented almost **20% of Squamish's population**



15% of the population in private households are **racialized groups**

SENSE OF BELONGING IN WOMEN

In 2015/2016 83% of women reported a **strong** or somewhat strong **sense of belonging** in the health region.



In 2019/2020 this decreased to **75.2%**

YOUTH SENSE OF BELONGING

Female youth in Squamish expressed a **9% decrease**

in sense of belonging, while male youth's sense of belonging **increased** slightly at **4%**, compared to 2016

MUNICIPAL VOTER RATE

39.7% in the 2022 Municipal election.

A **decrease** from the previous election in 2018 with a **47.8% vote rate**

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

This is an approach that recognizes the importance of including the voices of those with lived experience in planning and policy decisions, whether its those experiencing disability, mental illness, substance use, seniors etc.



"If I feel safe everywhere I go ...wouldn't I want others?"

"Responsibility to each other (lifting each other up)"

"To teach how we can redistribute perceived power"

"The opportunity to gather together and learn from one another"

2023 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

52% Felt a **neutral sense of belonging**

11.4% strongly agreed that Squamish is **rich in diversity**

20% agreed that they felt **safe to express who they were** in the community

32% disagreed that there were **enough opportunities to contribute** to the community

How do we ensure that we are addressing sustainable development goals to reduce existing inequalities and promote gender equality in Squamish? If we want to be an inclusive and justly equitable community, what type of programs, initiatives and policies are needed to increase a sense of belonging?



LOCAL DATA: Environment and Sustainability



Environment & Sustainability

The natural environment is intimately linked to our community's health. Safe drinking water, clean air to breathe, preserving land, ocean, waterways, and lakes for spiritual, cultural and recreational use. With Squamish's rapid population growth and development, caring for our environment is a top priority.

In 2019 Squamish declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to transition off fossil fuels. Today, less than 50% of the original Skwxwú7mesh/Squamish River Estuary remains. ⁶ The 673 ha Skwelwil'em Squamish Estuary Wildlife Management Area, a designated conservation area, provides important habitat for waterfowl, raptors, fish and many species at risk. Undisturbed estuaries are vital carbon capture ecosystems that naturally help mitigate climate change.

Our community lies amidst the UNESCO Át'ka7sem / Howe Sound Biosphere Reserve. The 2021 designation is awarded to regions as models for implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The people of Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw have been long-time environmental stewards for this community. The Great Flood Story, ⁷ handed down through generations, illustrates the Skwxwú7mesh connection to Nch'kaý (Mt. Garibaldi), the raw power of nature and the fragility of society.

SQUAMISH IN FOCUS

SQUAMISH CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

Attendees in 2022

- 175 Community gardeners
 - 1,500+ school aged children learn to grow food
 - 400+ annual re-use it fair
 - 500+ Electric vehicle education event
 - 500+ Go by Bike week
- squamishcan.net

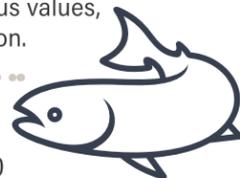


BIODIVERSITY IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR FUTURE ¹⁰

3,511 species

documented as of July 2023, in iNaturalist by the citizen scientist of the Biodiversity Squamish project.

\$12.6 Million/year is the estimated **value of the ecosystem services provided by the Squamish Estuary**, including fisheries, nutrient cycling, waste treatment, clear water, habitat, Indigenous values, recreation, tourism, and climate regulation. ⁹



Chinook Salmon

in the estuary once numbered 15,000 a year. In the 1980s this plummeted to about **500 a year**. With restoration work, this has **increased to about 5000 a year**. ¹¹

Every year, an average of **1300 bald eagles** gather in Squamish to feast on salmon ⁸

THE AVERAGE DAILY WATER DEMAND PER CAPITA ⁴

Community growth and development, as well as exceptionally hot and dry summers are driving increases in water consumption



WASTE PRODUCED PER PERSON ⁴

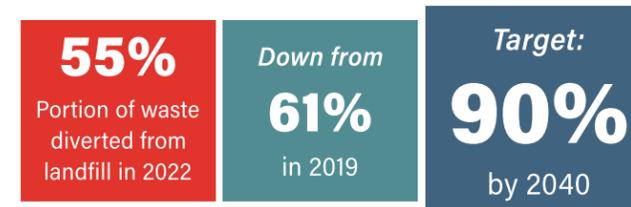


The **Squamish Landfill** is expected to **reach capacity in 2029/30** ¹²



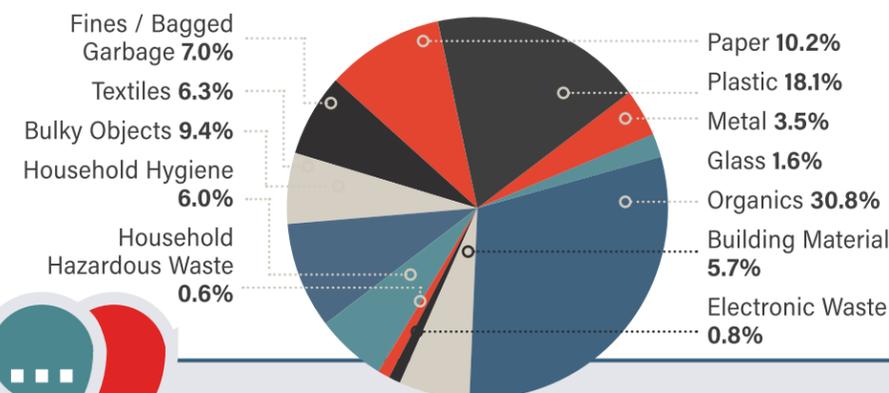
In 2022 almost **57% of the material found in the landfill could have been diverted**.

Among this, about 30% was organic material, 21% could have been recycled at the Drop off Depot, 20% could have been composted, 6.4% could have been recycled. ¹³



It is estimated that nearly **2.5 million PLASTIC TAKEOUT CUPS** were disposed of in the landfill in 2022. 1.8 million paper cups and 1.8 million plastic utensils. ¹³

2022 WASTE COMPOSITION ACROSS SECTORS ¹³



"Teach respectful land use to tourists and locals who participate in outdoor recreation"

"Maintaining a balance - matching sustainability with growth"

"Education: how do we teach people to care? Bring forward the Indigenous voices. Understand the history. Tourism operators can educate clients"

"Promotion of protected areas and green spaces"



2023 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

3.9%

feel as though Squamish is doing an **excellent job** addressing environment and sustainability issues

Top industries that respondents felt most negatively impacted **our local environment:**

- Tourism & Hospitality
- Housing Development
- Resource-Based Industry
- Outdoor Recreation

52.9%

had engaged in local stewardship initiatives in the past year

The health of our natural environment depends on how our community can come together to address the Sustainable Development Goals.

How can local organizations collaborate and share ideas? How can we each make sure that we take steps to become involved in the protection of our community and our planet?



LOCAL DATA:
Food Security

SQUAMISH IN FOCUS

SQUAMISH FOOD BANK | HELPING HANDS

Under One Roof food events 2022:

- 36,002 Hot meals served (2021: 40,150)
- 23,400 School lunches (2021: 18,000)
- 23,400 School breakfasts (2021: 18,000)
- 9,125 Bagged meals (2021: 5,475)
- 1,492 Meals on Wheels (2021: 400)

squamishhelpinghands.ca



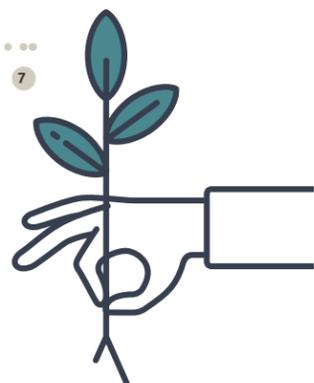
80

NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD ASSETS:

Where people can grow, prepare, share, buy, receive, or learn about food. ⁴

Squamish Nation has built **50 community gardens**

and will include more in their new housing developments



Food Security

According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, "Food security means that everyone has equitable access to food that is affordable, culturally preferable, nutritious and safe; everyone has the agency to participate in, and influence food systems; and that food systems are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just and honour Indigenous food sovereignty."

¹⁴ The ability to access adequate, nutritious food contributes to personal and overall health in a community.

Our Community Conversations and Community Survey responses around Food Security in Squamish primarily revolved around two significant factors affecting us locally: accessibility & affordability.

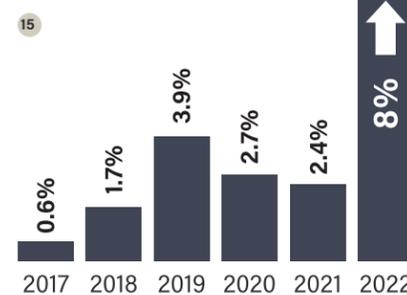
The rising costs of housing combined with the increasing cost of food, speak to some affordability issues affecting local food security, especially for the most vulnerable.

Household food insecurity is a key public health issue in BC. "Addressing household food insecurity requires policy action to increase incomes so that everyone can afford to eat a nutritious diet that supports health and overall wellbeing." ¹⁴ Local organizations increasingly aim to provide equitable access to Food.

11.3% increase in grocery costs from February 2022 to February 2023. ¹⁵



ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE IN GROCERY COST IN BC



AMOUNT OF FOOD 'RESCUED' BY UNDER ONE ROOF ¹⁶

2021: 347,194 lbs

2022: 275,950 lbs

FOOD BANK VISITS ¹⁶

2022: 12,813

2021: 11,005

4,066 ha ¹⁷ Total land in the Agricultural Land Reserve in the Squamish Valley.

The ALR is land where agriculture is the primary use and other uses are restricted.

551 ha of ALR land have potential for agricultural activities

47 ha: Area farmed within the Agricultural Land Reserve

\$1,441

Average monthly cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four ¹⁴

(Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Howe Sound Health Area).

↑ This is **\$130 more** than the average for all of the Vancouver Coastal Health region.



2023

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

42.7%

do not grow their own food

38%

answered that they are not always able to purchase adequate food to meet their nutritional needs



Food Security contributes to our community's vitality by ensuring that all residents of Squamish have access to an available and nutritious food supply.

How are our local organizations contributing to the community's level of food security? How can individuals help support these organizations, and are there opportunities for more collaboration?



"How much total income is being spent on food alone?"

"We need more community programs that focus on food education and production"

"More community gardens and large scale production of local food"

"A large portion of our community is unable to afford food purchasing"

LOCAL DATA:
Health and Wellness



Health and Wellness

The rapid growth of Squamish has brought along many concerns about the accessibility of health services. The COVID-19 pandemic had a large impact on the overall health system and all communities are still learning how to recover and build a more resilient and responsive health care system.

Many residents of Squamish are having a hard time finding a family physician. The community is experiencing staff recruitment challenges and service gaps. The need for mental health services has increased. Use of the Squamish Overdose Prevention Site since it opened in 2021 has dramatically increased due to the toxic drug crisis. Healthcare workers are facing unaffordable expenses like many others living in Squamish.

While Squamish's outdoor playground certainly can have a positive effect on overall health, our facilitated Community Conversations revealed that there exists barriers in accessing some of these activities, whether these are financial, social, physical, emotional, etc.

SQUAMISH IN FOCUS

SEA TO SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES

2022-23 Individuals Served:

- 4124 Children's Services Programs
- 373 Child Care Programs
- 175 Youth Services Programs
- 3786 Outreach Programs
- 90 Adult & Family Programs
- 62 Community Living Program

sscs.ca

SQUAMISH HELPING HANDS

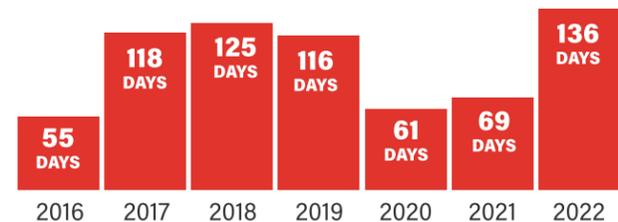
Open Door Health provided **150 vulnerable people** with a primary care doctor in 2022
squamishhelpinghands.ca

AIR QUALITY

Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 includes all microscopic particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres in diameter. Fine particulate matter is an air pollutant that can be harmful to human health from both short-term (i.e. within first 24-hours) and longer-term exposure.

The Provincial Air Quality objective for PM 2.5 within a 24 hour period is 25 mg/m3. ¹⁸

Number of days/year that **PM 2.5 air quality objectives were exceeded:** ¹⁹



22.6% residents reported perceiving ³ in 2019/20 that **most days** were **quite a bit** or **extremely**

stressful

98% of Squamish residents are within a **3km driving distance** to a **health care facility** ³

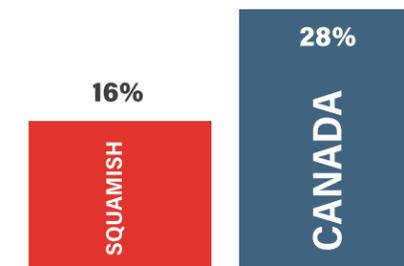


Between 2016 and 2020, there was a **decrease in Squamish residents** who had **access to a regular medical practitioner** ³

6%

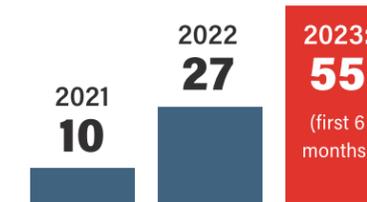


OBESITY RATE IN 2019/20 ³



SQUAMISH OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE ¹⁶

Average Daily Site Visits



21.2% Heavy Drinkers

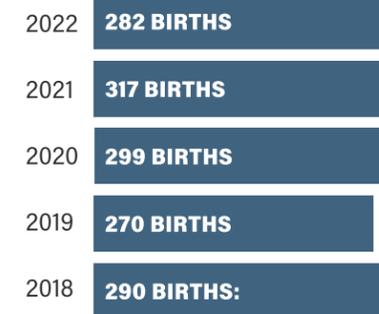
of the population in 2019/20. This is higher than the provincial rate of **17.6%**. ³

5.5% Daily or Occasional Smokers

of residents in 2019/20. ³ This is lower than **10.6%** of the BC population

BIRTHS IN SQUAMISH

The number of births has remained relatively steady over the past few years. ²⁰



"Access to public healthcare: navigating systems is a lot, many different systems; advocates needed, does everyone have an advocate?"

"Desire to create a hub: mental health, integrated care, health support, social support; reduce stress factors, be healthier, can't treat in isolation"

"'Hardwired for adventure' not welcoming/inclusive to those who seek different activities; social determinants of health, sense of belonging."



2023

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

29.5%

do not have access to a **family physician** if needed

24.4%

do not have access to **mental health services** if needed

40.9%

reported **'less than good'** self-perceived **physical health**

28.3%

reported **'less than good'** self-perceived **mental health**

How can we make health, wellness and recreation services in our community more inclusive and accessible for all ranges of abilities and interests?

How can we reduce barriers to health services locally? What challenges will we be facing in the upcoming years?



LOCAL DATA:
Housing



Housing

One of Squamish's most discussed topics, housing in our community, continues to contribute to personal and family financial hardships. Rising costs of home purchasing and rent, limited supply, and increasing demand are all affecting the migration patterns of Squamish, and trickles down to the social fabric of our community.

Once again, there are opportunities within the community for collaborative efforts to address housing inequalities in Squamish. As the allure to live in a town like Squamish continues at a steady incline, what local solutions will we seek to ensure housing stability for all?

PHOTO CAPTION:

"My name is Tanaya and I'm a single mom to Bryce. We are truly grateful for our beautiful, affordable, little community at Spirit Creek, our suite retreat."

SQUAMISH IN FOCUS

HOWE SOUND WOMEN'S CENTRE

2016/2017: **79 people** housed for **1,013 bed nights** (shelter stays)

2022/2023: **128 people** housed for **2,488 bed nights** (shelter stays)
hswc.ca

SEA TO SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES

Offers **308 units** of **affordable housing** for low to moderate income earners including **8 accessible units** throughout 3 of the housing sites.
sscs.ca

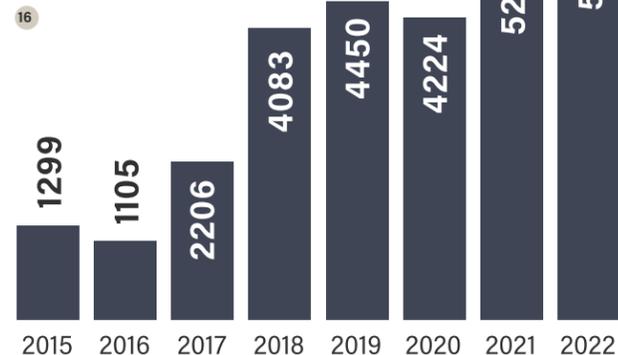
SQUAMISH HELPING HANDS

38 units of **supported housing**
squamishhelpinghands.ca

SQUAMISH SENIOR LIVING SOCIETY

232 units of affordable rental housing for **seniors**
westwindsseniorliving.ca

SQUAMISH EMERGENCY SHELTER OCCUPANCY (BED NIGHTS)



Between 2011 and 2021, there has been an **increase of 405%** Housing Starts (new builds) in Squamish ²¹

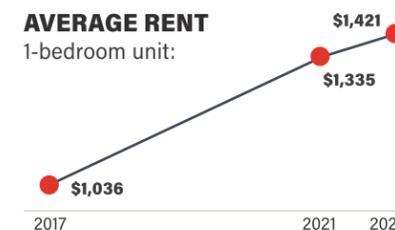


6,840 new homes ² projected to be needed by 2031

that's **685 units per year** between 2021 and 2031.



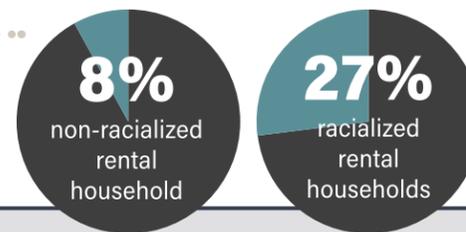
Between 2016-2021 an average of **386 dwellings** units/year were built.



Average rent for all size units in 2022 **\$1,770**. This is **higher than** the average rent for **Vancouver** of **\$1,675** ²³

7.4% increase in **average rent** from 2021-2022

RENTER HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS DEMOGRAPHICS



"Need for alternative solutions for diverse groups and diverse needs"

"There is a desire for more community- focused housing options ex: co-housing, mixed age, family supports "

"Need housing for everyone to support all functions of a community e.g. base work force, but also professionals"

"Not being able to afford increased rent"

Home-owner and tenant households **spending 30%+** of their **income on housing costs**



2021 RENTER HOUSEHOLDS 30% of households in 2021 were renters ²²

10% were **living in overcrowded conditions**

38% spent **over 30% of income on rent and utilities** (36% in 2016)

17% spent **over 50% on rent and utilities** (18% in 2016)

Rental vacancy rate 2021 **0.4%** ⁴
Rental vacancy rate 2022 **0.6%**
Source: CMHC



2023

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

16%

say that their **housing situation is not currently** meeting their **personal needs**

ALMOST

3%

have alternative housing situations (e.g. living in vehicles, campground, etc.)

22%

stated that they are **not able to** consistently **make monthly mortgage payments**

Ensuring that all community residents have access to affordable and sustainable housing in Squamish has become one of our biggest challenges yet. Consistent migration, growth, and attraction to our community all contribute to a reduction in affordability and availability.

In upcoming years, what are some ways that local organizations, community groups and policy-makers can work towards the sustainable development goals related to housing in Squamish?



Tourism Squamish

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Indigenous Rights & Steps Towards Reconciliation

All information is from the Squamish Nation, squamish.net and a Squamish Nation Elder.

The Squamish People's traditional territory embraces all of Howe Sound, Burrard Inlet, and English Bay as well as the rivers and creeks that flow into these bodies of water. This includes the area from the headwaters of the Elaho River, the entire Squamish Valley, the Mamquam River and Indian Arm Drainages, and all of the District of Squamish. This is a total area of 6,732 Km².

The Squamish are Coast Salish people and they have never ceded or surrendered title to their lands, rights to their resources, or the inherent right to self-determination.

"In our language, we are called Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw".

Over the past 150 years, the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw have sustained tremendous economic, political and social damage by the Federal and Provincial governments. Yet, the Squamish are a thriving people who define themselves in relationship to their land.

The Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw are the Indigenous Peoples who speak the Skwxwú7mesh sníchim (language.) The Skwxwú7mesh sníchim, although critically endangered, is still a vital part of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw culture and belongs to the Salish language family.

The Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw, as a government, has existed since 1923. Prior to 1923, the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw People were socially, economically, and politically organized into several physical communities called an úxwumíxw ("village; people") in the territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw People.

550

Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Nation members living both on and off reserve in the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Valley including **60+ Senior Elders** (65+) and **62 Junior Elders** (55-65)

1285 people in the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Valley **are Indigenous** including Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Nation members, 310 Metis and other nation members.

SQUAMISH COMMUNITY FOREST

The Squamish Community Forest spans **11,303 hectares** on the hillsides east and south of Squamish. The lands are entirely within the Traditional Territory of Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw. Announced in 2022, the community forest is a partnership between the District of Squamish and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw.

The forest will be co-managed using Indigenous knowledge for the benefit of the community.

LOCAL DATA:

Indigenous Rights & Steps Towards Reconciliation

SKWXWÚ7MESH IN FOCUS

SKWXWÚ7MESH NATION

Ta na wa Ch'áwat ta Sxwéxwel (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Valley Operations) is responsible for the day-to-day needs and services of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Members, programs, and facilities. The department provides an array of programs and services to members living in the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Valley including Community Operations, Education, Elders Program, Yúustway Health Services, Ayás Mén'men Child and Family Services, Prevention and Community Awareness (Ayas Lam Family Program) Recreation and Member Support Services. squamish.net / nchkay.ca

Hiyám'ta Skwxwú7mesh Housing Society develops and manages non-profit **affordable housing** for the people of Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw.

In August 2022 ground was broken on Eskéxwi7ch t'l'a Sp'ákw'us Place (Gathering place of eagles) on Government Road on Siyich'em IR 16 in the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw Valley. It will provide **27 rental units for women and children.**

"Every Person Housed in a generation"

ACTIVE RESERVE LAND BASE IN THE SKWXWÚ7MESH ÚXWUMÍXW VALLEY:

Cheakamus (Cheekeye,) Waiwaikum (Brackendale,) Siechum (Eagle Run,) Kowtain (Mamquam,) Yekwupsum (North Yards,) Stawmus (Stawamus)

The **oldest archeological site** in the territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw People is **8,600 years old** at Porteau Cove in Howe Sound.



"Communication of community recreation groups with Squamish Nation to give the groups a better understanding of their impact - signage highlighting the important areas and legends of the Squamish Nation"

"Get educated, learn the issues, learn the truths of others. Support traditional learning for young Squamish Nation members"

"What history is to be shared and what is better taken care of by Squamish Nation?"



2023

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

IDEAS + INITIATIVES FOR RECONCILIATION:

75% agreed

Public education programs on local history and culture, Indian act, and traditions

68.6% agreed

Visitor and tourist education

60% agreed

Support and promotion of Indigenous businesses

56.8% agreed

Elder conversation program

43% agreed

Education for local small businesses



Tourism Squamish



LOCAL DATA:
Transportation

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Transportation

Transportation in a small community like Squamish takes on many forms and most people require transportation for a range of reasons: work, leisure, appointments, errands, and more. While relatively small in population, Squamish encompasses a large geographic area and includes several different neighbourhoods. For any services or amenities that may require transportation out of Squamish, it can be an expensive and time-consuming endeavor to find convenient regional transit.

Although a major regional bus service stopped operations here, there has been a growing number of alternative options for transportation in and around Squamish since the last Vital Signs Report was published. There are digital applications, carshare options, connection/commuting transportation to Whistler, Vancouver and the airport, online carpool groups and a growing number of cycling and walking trails, some with improved accessibility features and lighting.

SQUAMISH IN FOCUS

BC TRANSIT

2022 annual Transit Ridership: **247,900** ⁴

Brackendale has the most users in the Squamish BC Transit system

2% of community members use public transit in Squamish as their main mode of commuting for employment

bctransit.com/squamish/home

SQUAMISH PUBLIC TRANSIT RIDERSHIP



As of the **fall 2021**, ridership had **rebounded to between 70% and 80%** of pre-pandemic levels which was a **more rapid rebound than most other BC communities** ²⁴

There are **41 electric Vehicle charging stations** in Squamish as of 2022  ⁴

Transportation accounts for **52%** of our **community carbon emissions**. ²⁵

In 2021, there was **\$425,000** in Annual **Active Transportation Capital Investments** by the District of Squamish. ⁴

Cycling, walking, roller-skating/in-line skating and skateboarding are **examples of active transportation**, or non-motorized human powered transportation.



MAIN MODE OF COMMUTING IN 2021 ¹



4,775 commute **less than 15 minutes** to work.

Of the 7,700 commuters in Squamish **36%** of them commute **outside of Squamish for employment**. ²⁶

OF PEOPLE LIVING IN SQUAMISH:

8% commute to **Whistler** | **5%** commute to **Vancouver** ²⁶

1335 people travel 45 to 59 minutes to work



1340 people travel over 60 minutes to work ²⁶



"Accessible trails that are safe for everyone"

"We need more buses; casual hitch hiking; we need better transportation to Vancouver; consider all ages and their needs. Transportation is dangerous in winter! We need collaboration and conversation."

"Lack of sidewalks unsafe for pedestrian, especially people with mobility assists and strollers"

"Prioritize safety for active transportation"



2023 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

89% never use **local transit**

15.7%

find **local transit** useful or very useful

TYPE OF REGIONAL TRANSIT USE:

Squamish Connector or Bus (58.4%)
Taxi (25.6%)
Poparide or Digital App (22.4%)

TYPE OF REGIONAL TRANSIT THAT PEOPLE WOULD USE:

Train (84.1%)
Boat (44.9%) | Plane (20%)
more bus options (62.8%)

Although local transit ridership numbers remain low in Squamish, it currently exists as a financially accessible, climate-friendly option that is worthy of further improvement. The District of Squamish is developing a new Transportation Master Plan.

How can community groups and local organizations engage with policy-makers to ensure their needs are being met? How will we address transportation to suit our growing community?



LOCAL DATA: Work & Labour Market



Work and Labour Market

Squamish's work and labour market have undergone significant changes in recent years, much like the other core themes discussed in this Vital Signs Report. Many community members have found successful and lucrative business or entrepreneurial opportunities as a result of Squamish's growth. Many newer industries are attracting educated professionals and our local unemployment rate remains low. Squamish was ranked BC's most economically resilient city in 2021 and ranked BC's best city for work in 2019 and 2020. ²⁷

However, despite these great successes associated with Squamish's growth, there are inequalities that exist. For example, the employment rate for women in 2021 was 3 percentage points lower than for men. Also, 41.3% of men worked full time versus 35% of women worked full time in 2020. Many community members are negotiating precarious employment, lack of stability, lower income positions, lack of childcare and finding themselves having to work multiple jobs due to the soaring cost of living.

Covid-19 had a significant impact on the labour market and influences some of the data available in 2020 and 2021. For example, in 2020, over 29% of income earners in Squamish received COVID-19 emergency and recovery benefits.

SQUAMISH IN FOCUS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT OF SQUAMISH

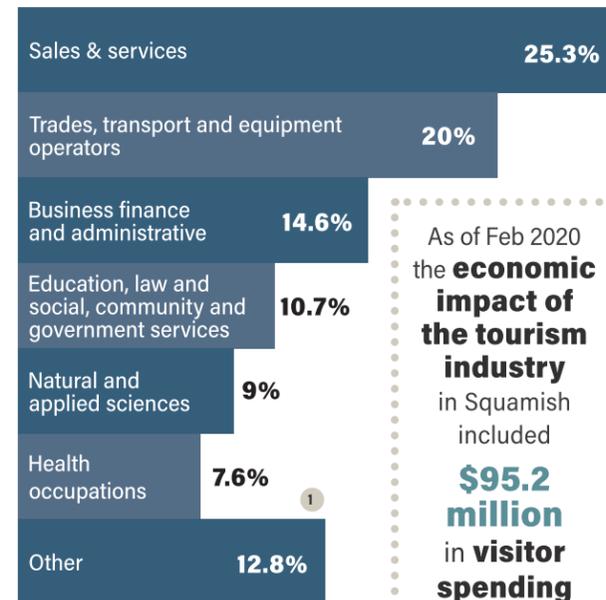
Squamish's workforce grew 25% between 2016 and 2021. ¹

From 2015 to 2019, the average employment income for Squamish residents has had an **annual average growth rate of four percent**, which is two points higher than the rest of B.C.

\$25.99: The **median hourly wage** based on job postings in 2021

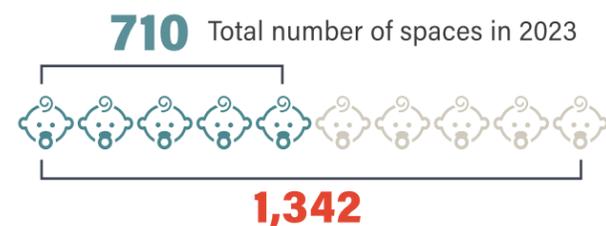
investsquamish.ca

LOCAL SQUAMISH LABOUR CHARACTERISTICS



As of Feb 2020 the **economic impact of the tourism industry** in Squamish included **\$95.2 million** in **visitor spending** & **788 jobs** ²⁹

CHILDCARE SPACES IN SQUAMISH ³⁰



Total number of spaces needed in 2023
(30 spaces per 100 children)

SQUAMISH KEY GROWTH SECTORS ²⁸



In 2020 the median annual **employment income** for **men** was **greater than that of women** by **\$18,000** ¹

Between 2016-2021 in Squamish, there was a **decrease of 18%** in **management** occupations **held by females** ¹

The chamber surveyed its members at the start of 2022 and found that **nearly 70%** of respondents stated that over the last year, they had **experienced challenges recruiting or retaining staff** ²⁶

"Migrant workers skilled labour are not able to transfer qualifications here (tech, med., etc.) - many are overqualified and not finding employment."

"Daycare for young mothers with family priorities, issues with childcare - disproportionately affects and creates loss in our labour market"

"There is guilt around earning and moving into the town and still not being able to afford housing"

2021 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Squamish: 7% ¹
Canada: 5%

68% ²⁸

Squamish's 2021 **locally employed workforce**

2021 PERCENT OF THE LABOUR FORCE

worked at home **27%**
worked outside of home **73%**

PORTION WHO WORK IN SQUAMISH IN 2021

Female workers 71.8%
Male workers 54.5%

The proportion of households **earning more than \$150,000** per year **doubled** in 5 years **10%** in 2016 **21%** in 2021 ²

The biggest challenges stated:

- lack of applicants in general
- lack of affordable housing to rent
- the cost of living



2023

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

14%

do not have **stable employment** in field of choice

74%

of respondents feel as though there are **not enough adequate job opportunities to meet their career goals** in Squamish



Thriving economic opportunities and a low unemployment rate are helping some community members to flourish. Passionate entrepreneurs develop diverse and required amenities. However, there are simultaneously many residents of Squamish who remain precariously employed, especially women.

How can we ensure that we're able to maintain a strong, equal and consistent labour force that can afford to remain here?

SQUAMISH VITAL SIGNS

Summary

The Squamish Community Foundation would like to thank the 2023 Squamish Vital Signs team including the Volunteer Steering Committee, contributing funders and organizations, Howe Sound Women's Centre and District of Squamish for donating meeting space, survey and conversation participants, all engaged citizens and everyone who helped produce this report.

Without your help and commitment to strengthening the vitality of our beautiful community, we would not have been able to have the opportunity to highlight Squamish's growing successes and challenges.

We hope that the 2023 Vital Signs Report will serve as a catalyst to promote diverse collaboration and engagement amongst all members of this community in an effort to reduce inequalities.

We are *stronger* when we work together and we are wiser when we learn from one another.



Nicole Gurey

ABOUT

Squamish Community Foundation

Established in 2003, the Squamish Community Foundation is an independent, charitable organization dedicated to enriching the quality of life for community members in Squamish. We facilitate philanthropy by partnering with donors and connecting them with community causes they value. As a community foundation, our focus is on building permanent endowments that address long-term community challenges as well as immediate needs. From the income earned on over \$1 million in endowment funds, we invest grants in people, groups and community impact. With projects like Vital Signs, we are working to build community knowledge, engagement and leadership.



604-848-8683 | info@squamishfoundation.com
PO Box 555, Squamish, BC V8B 0A5

[SquamishCommunityFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/SquamishCommunityFoundation)
 [SquamishFoundation](https://www.instagram.com/SquamishFoundation)

[squamishfoundation.com](https://www.squamishfoundation.com)

