



Social Needs Assessment – Town and M.D. of Pincher Creek

Submitted to:

Pincher Creek and District
Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)

Submitted by:

Nichols Applied Management Inc.

Management and Economic Consultants
Suite 302, 11523 – 100 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0H8

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Executive Summary

The following report is an assessment of the social landscape in the Greater Pincher Creek region. Its purpose is to support Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), community organizations, and governing bodies to respond to social needs in the region and build on the community's strengths and assets. It is a first step towards building a strategic social plan to guide funding and priorities over the coming years.

Research for this report was undertaken over the fall and winter of 2019-2020. It included reviews of provincial, municipal, and industrial contexts, analysis of statistical data, and engagement with community members through interviews, a survey, and focus groups. The community engagement process sought perspectives from diverse groups of residents, governing bodies, community agencies, and experts on specific social issues.

Key findings from this research are organized by strengths and assets and challenges and issues.

Strengths and Assets

- Various local councils working together to understand social needs and address them in a unified manner and with the understanding that residents of the region access services and maintain social connections relatively seamlessly through the various communities.
- Companies, large and small, investing in the community through employment opportunities, supports to social programs, volunteering and donating money, goods, and services.
- Available, high-quality daycare spaces – including at the Early Childhood Learning Centre – that foster positive early childhood development and enable parents to use their time for other activities.
- Innovative Maker Space offering S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs for youth in the region.
- A strong volunteer base that helps support formal program delivery and informally support others in the community.
- High quality healthcare facilities and staff.
- High speed internet which may help encourage companies to relocate operations to the community.
- Potential for continued industrial/economic growth, particularly via the Grassy Mountain Mine.
- The Alberta Governments Castle region tourism strategy which aims to support the development of a more sustainable tourism industry
- Proximity of the Piikani First Nation with their cultural traditions, heritage, and contributions to the socio-economic fabric of the region.
- Good and diverse educational opportunities in the K-12 school system.
- Large and stable agricultural industry.
- Relatively low unemployment rate.
- Relatively low cost-of-living.
- Availability of seniors housing in the region.
- Variety of social, service, cultural and recreational organizations.

- The natural surroundings which provide ample outdoor recreational opportunities as well as opportunities for economic diversification.

Challenges and Issues

- Changes in physician compensation which may adversely impact physician attraction and retention in the region thereby impacting the availability of health services, including at the Pincher Creek hospital.
- Elimination of tax credits and grants for tech companies which may adversely impact the region's ability to entice tech companies to relocate.
- The potential for industrial and/or tourism development to put a strain on current housing stock.
- Generally speaking, the population from newborn to 44 years of age has been slowly decreasing in the region, while the population aged 45 and over has been increasing. This has implications for overall sustainability of the region as well as changes to supports and services over time.
- Lack of ethnic and cultural diversity which may impact both innovation and community growth.
- Limited connections with the nearby Piikani First Nation which limits cultural richness of the region and may contribute to racism.
- Lower average incomes than the province as a whole.
- Higher percentage of the population living in subsidized housing.
- Potential closure or limited capacity of the foodbank in the Town.
- Higher rate of emergency room visits and mental health and behavioural disorders due to substance abuse than the province overall.
- Higher rates of crime than the province.
- Isolation and loneliness as a cross-cutting theme that impacts different groups of people due to various factors including, difficulty making friends with 'long-term residents', lack of activities outside of traditional sports, and lack of specialized transportation.
- Physical health concerns; particularly, obesity, lack of exercise, chronic diseases, and cancer.
- High number of adults in minimum wage jobs coupled with a lack of professional jobs in the region.
- Demand for social services outweighs current funding.
- Some residents are unaware of available social programs and supports.
- Because of the region's distance from a major centre, residents often need to leave to attend university and/or access specialized services (e.g. health). In addition, the region's distance to a major centre makes it a less desirable tourism destination.

The Greater Pincher Creek Region is not alone in facing social challenges related to isolation, poverty, affordable housing, mental health and addictions, etc. Unfortunately, these issues are common across Alberta and elsewhere in Canada. The Region however has many social strengths upon which to build a solid framework for improving social wellbeing of residents in all its communities.

Providing recommendations for actions to respond to the needs identified through this research was beyond the scope of this project. However, the following are suggested next steps:

- Share the findings from this research broadly within the community to raise awareness of social issues, support informed discussion of the issues, and build consensus around priorities
- Continue to collaborate within the region to develop a cohesive social plan that builds on each other's strengths and ensure a good quality of life regardless of which community one lives in.
- Continue to focus on existing strategic plans, placing emphasis on community priorities and willingness to adapt to new priorities as they arise.
- Work to create opportunities for residents to get to know one another and build stronger informal support networks.
- Continue to examine the complexity and interconnectedness of social issues and the regions strengths and assets. In particular looking at the interconnectedness between the economic and social challenges and opportunities.

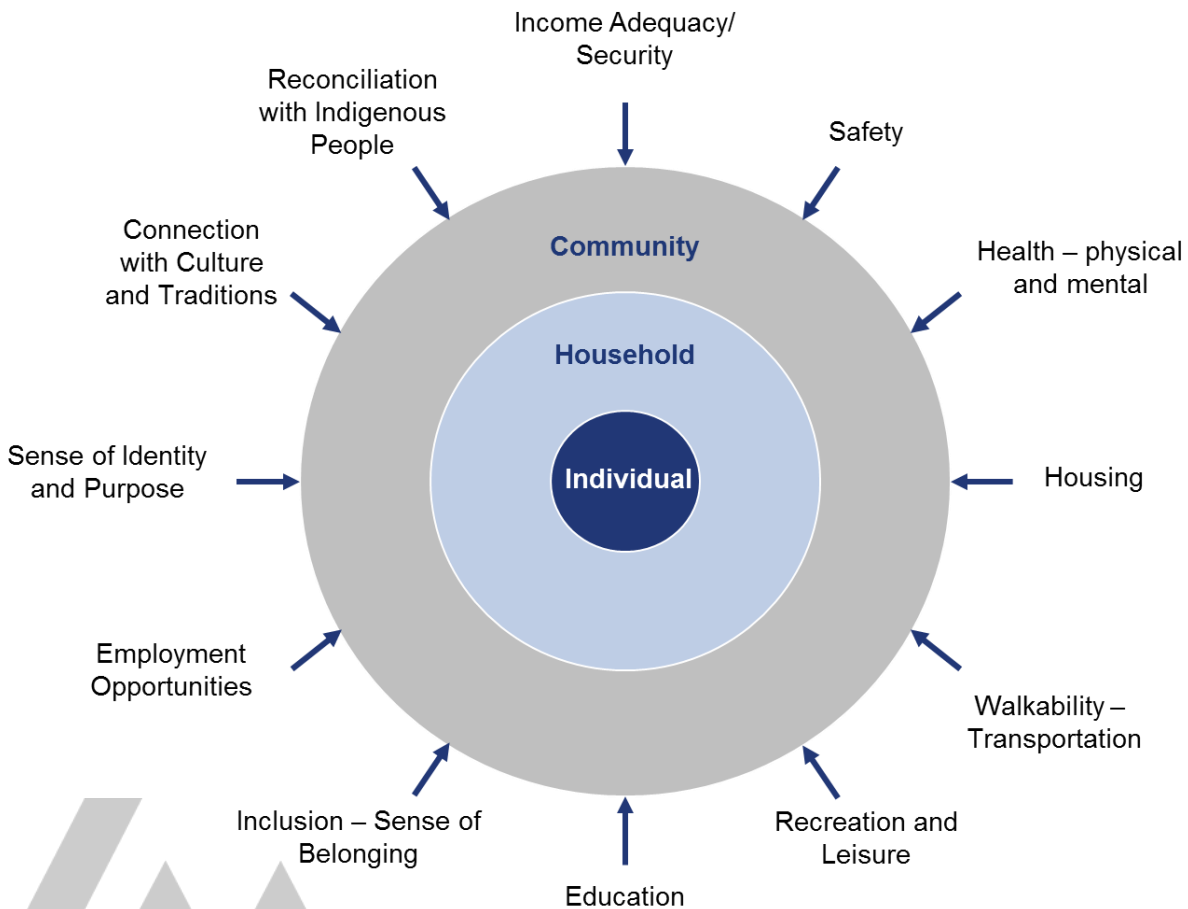
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Pincher Creek and District Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is seeking to strengthen its response to social issues in the greater Pincher Creek Region. An important first step is gaining a deeper understanding of the social needs and priorities of residents in the Greater Pincher Creek Region (the Town of Pincher Creek, the Municipal District of Pincher Creek, and the Village of Cowley). To this end, Nichols Applied Management (Nichols) was engaged to conduct a social needs assessment encompassing the three communities. This report presents the findings of the social needs assessment.

There are a number of factors that contribute to creating a good quality of life in a community. These factors can impact the well-being of individuals, households and the community as a whole. Key influences on social well-being in Pincher Creek were identified through initial interviews that guided the overall analysis (Figure 1-1). As the research progressed, additional insights were gained into how these factors are influencing individual, household and community well-being (both positively and negatively) and to differences in perspectives about the priority that should be given to various factors in future planning.

Figure 1-1: Pincher Creek Quality of Life Framework



After gaining an understanding of the profile of a community, the next step in conducting a social needs assessment and in social planning is to deepen understanding of the social issues and the residents in the community that might be most affected by them. This understanding helps to guide where effort should be focused in future planning efforts and identifying options for addressing social needs in the community.

In addition to identifying social needs and priorities in the community, information and input was also obtained on strengths and assets that can be drawn upon to improve quality of life in the region.

1.2 Approach

This social needs assessment involved targeted research in areas identified as social wellbeing framework for different groups of area residents. This included:

- reviewing relevant municipal and provincial strategic documents;
- reviewing Statistics Canada data;
- conducting interviews;
- administering a survey of key stakeholders and community members; and,
- having focus group discussions to gain a deeper understanding of issues highlighted in the survey.

Conceptually, the phases of the project are identified in the following schematic:

Community Engagement



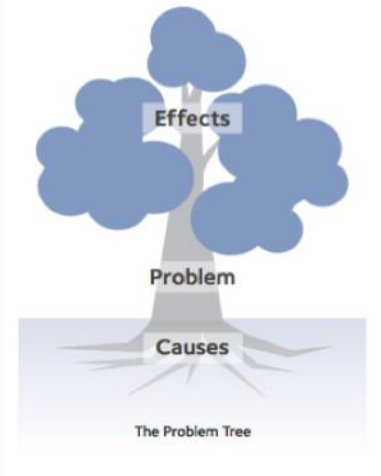
A participatory approach to social research was taken for this social needs assessment. The strategy for community engagement was designed to provide opportunities for a variety of residents, community groups, local agencies, municipal leaders and other stakeholders to contribute their perspectives on the social strengths and needs in the Greater Pincher Creek Region. Participants were invited by FCSS and the various organizations that they support. The number of individuals providing input through the various engagement opportunities are summarized below.

Engagement Tool	Participants/Responses
Initial Interviews	5 participants (3 women, 2 men)
Community Survey	130 completed responses (97 women, 32 men, 1 other)
Focus Group Discussions (6)	90 participants (67 women, 23 men)

Focus Groups

Various methods were used to engage stakeholders in the focus groups discussions. These included:

- problem tree analysis (see image to the right)
- analysis of social strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (i.e., SWOT); and,
- preliminary asset mapping and analysis;



Source: URBACT

The social needs assessment also built upon research recently undertaken by Nichols in support of a socio-economic impact assessment related to the Shell Waterton Complex, located 30 km southwest of the Town of Pincher Creek.¹

¹ The socio-economic impact assessment was done on behalf of the Southwest Alberta Sustainable Community Initiative. The report *Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of the Shell Waterton Complex* is available online at: <https://aref.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SASCIWatertonSEIANovember2018.pdf>

2. Strategic Context

The provincial and municipal contexts in which this social needs assessment was conducted is important for understanding directions, priorities and goals of key stakeholders. The following highlights key strategies, plans, and frameworks that relate to this needs assessment as well as recent relevant shifts that may impact, positively or negatively, the social wellbeing of area residents.

2.1 Municipal Context

There are three municipalities in the greater Greater Pincher Creek Region: the Town of Pincher Creek, the M.D. of Pincher Creek and the Village of Cowley. The economic, social and cultural contexts of the three municipalities are interconnected. The municipalities are currently developing an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework which is due to be released in April of 2020.

Town of Pincher Creek 2018 Four Year Strategic Plan

The Town of Pincher Creek has a strategic plan for 2018 – 2022. This plan seeks to address many of the perceived needs in the community and, to date, several priorities have been addressed or are in the process of being addressed. The plan provides the following vision and mission for the Town, as well as key objectives.

Strategic Plan	Strategic Plan Contents
Vision	Pincher Creek: A progressive, dynamic community; the heart of Southwest Alberta
Mission	Working in the best interest of the Community through thoughtful, responsive and accountable public service.
Key Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable affordable housing • Municipal and inter-municipal transportation • Comprehensive world class daycare • Inter Regional Collaboration • Facility Planning

Municipal District of Pincher Creek Vision and Code of the West

The M.D. has a document entitled the *Code of the West* on their website. The document provides information and advice about living in an area where farming and ranching is a central part of the area’s economy and way of life. It refers to individuals choosing to live in the country as “rugged individualists” and identifies integrity and self-reliance as two of the values underpinning the Code. It explains that the M.D. has rules and regulations around development that take the natural environment into consideration and that challenges can be encountered with accessing lands and utility services in the area.

The following table outlines the vision and mission for the M.D. of Pincher Creek:

	Contents
Vision	M.D. of Pincher Creek: a community that manages growth and supports our western heritage while preserving our natural environment
Mission	To preserve and enhance our Western Canadian lifestyles and the natural capital of the M.D. of Pincher Creek through sound decision-making and good governance for the community.

Village of Cowley

The Village of Cowley is a small village located between the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and the prairie land of Southwestern Alberta. It is located on Highway #3 approximately 10 minutes from the Town of Pincher Creek and 30 minutes from Crowsnest Pass. Cowley was featured in the 2005 motion picture Brokeback Mountain.

2.2 Provincial Context

The Government of Alberta has introduced several program and policy changes in an effort to constrain spending in response to the fiscal challenges facing the province due to low world energy prices. At the same time, spending has been increased in some priority areas and to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged as a global public health crisis at the time this report was being prepared. The following were identified by participating community residents and stakeholders as potentially impacting social wellbeing of area residents:

Health

- Changes in physician compensation which may impact availability of doctors in the Greater Pincher Creek Region and strain nurses and other hospital staff.
- Increased funding for mental health and addictions.
- Decreased funding for recipients of Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) due to the hold on cost of living indexing. Suspension of cost of living indexing for AISH may make it more difficult for AISH recipients to keep healthy.

Childcare

- The Kin Childcare Subsidy has been cancelled. The program allowed parents to pay family members to look after their children instead of having their children in formal childcare settings.
- The stay-at-home childcare subsidy has been cancelled. This subsidy supported parents who needed part-time childcare so they could attend school or work part-time.
- Increased funding in childcare subsidies for low-income families in formal childcare programs.

Education

- Reorganization of grants available to K-12 schools in order to reduce administrative burden.
- Reduction in budget for Advanced Education raising concern in the community about increased post secondary fees.

Industry

- Elimination of tax credits and grants used to incentivize film, video games and tech companies to move to or stay in the province. These credits and grants aligned with some of the region's economic development initiatives.
- Creation of a 22% or 30% tax credit for qualifying film productions.
- Decrease in corporate tax from 12% to 8% by 2022-2023 to lure investment to the province.
- Elimination of Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP), which helped youth find summer employment.
- Development of a strategy for tourism in the Castle Region which identifies actions the Government of Alberta will undertake to support the regions development of becoming a more successful and sustainable tourism destination and diversification of the economy.

2.3 Industrial Context

Pieridae Energy Waterton Complex

Located approximately 30 km southwest of Pincher Creek, the Pieridae Energy Waterton Complex is a major employer in the Greater Pincher Creek Region. Although the complex has been in operation for over 60 years, it was only recently sold by Royal Dutch Shell – the original operator – to Pieridae, a Canadian-based LNG company. For the region, the sale of the facility was preferable to possible closure, but there remains uncertainty regarding future operational plans for the complex.

Prior to the sale of the facility, Shell Canada played an important role in supporting local community programs, services, and infrastructure, both through direct social investment and its support of volunteerism among Shell employees. In addition, under Shell's Corporate Social Responsibility programs, a number of local initiatives were supported either through funding or the provision of volunteers. As of early 2020, it is unclear the extent to which Pieridae's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program will support social needs in the Greater Pincher Creek Region.

According to their website, Pieridae's Community Commitments include:

- supporting youth to thrive and improve prospect for the future through the support of youth-oriented projects;
- giving employees \$400 per year to donate to a good cause of their choice; and,
- partnering with First Nations by supporting community-led projects that promote and support indigenous culture, provide employment opportunities and create tools for future long-term economic development of their traditional land.

Grassy Mountain Mine

The Grassy Mountain Mine is a proposed coal mining development located approximately 54 km from Pincher Creek. There is concern in the community that the mine, if it is approved, has the potential to impact social needs, particularly future housing stock, and it is therefore important for the community to be aware of potential impacts, both positive and negative, for social planning.

It is estimated that the mine would operate for 23 years providing in the range of 350 long-term operations positions, in addition to the engineering and on and off-site employment created during the Project's construction phase. It is expected that some existing and future residents of Pincher Creek will take advantage of employment opportunities created by the project.

Some community members believe that Pincher Creek may experience spin-off employment creation and population growth related to the Grassy Mountain Project. This potential growth could impact local infrastructure and services, including schools, healthcare, and the local housing market. It could also influence social conditions and associated needs within the community.

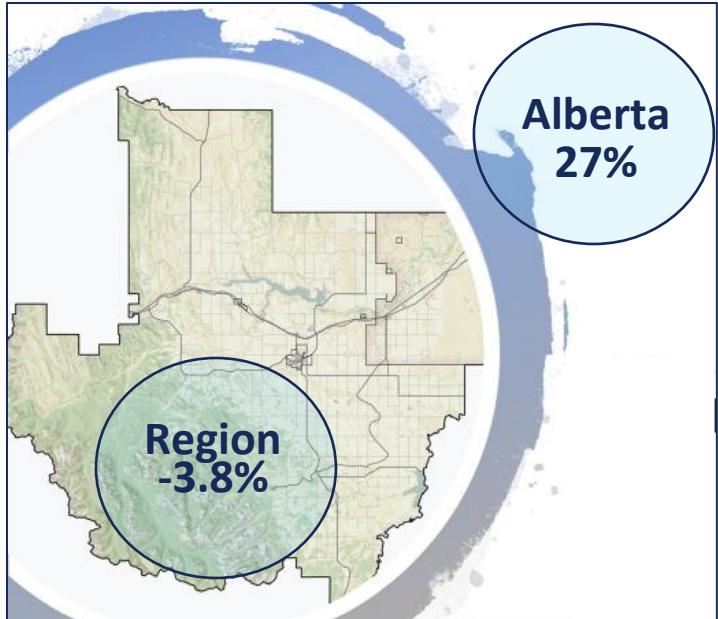
3. Data Analysis: Strengths, Challenges and Trends

3.1 Population Size and Age Distribution

In 2016 the combined population of the Town of Pincher Creek, the M.D. of Pincher Creek and the Village of Cowley totaled approximately 6,810, with the Town accounting for about 53% of area residents (3,640), the M.D. accounting for about 44% of area residents (2,965) and the Village of Cowley accounting for approximately 3% of area residents (205).

The Greater Pincher Creek Region experienced a modest 3.8% decline in population over the period 2001 to 2016. Over the same period, the province’s population increased by 27%. The relative stability of the region’s population reflects a more widespread trend observed in Alberta and in other provinces.

Figure 3-1: Population Change 2001 - 2016

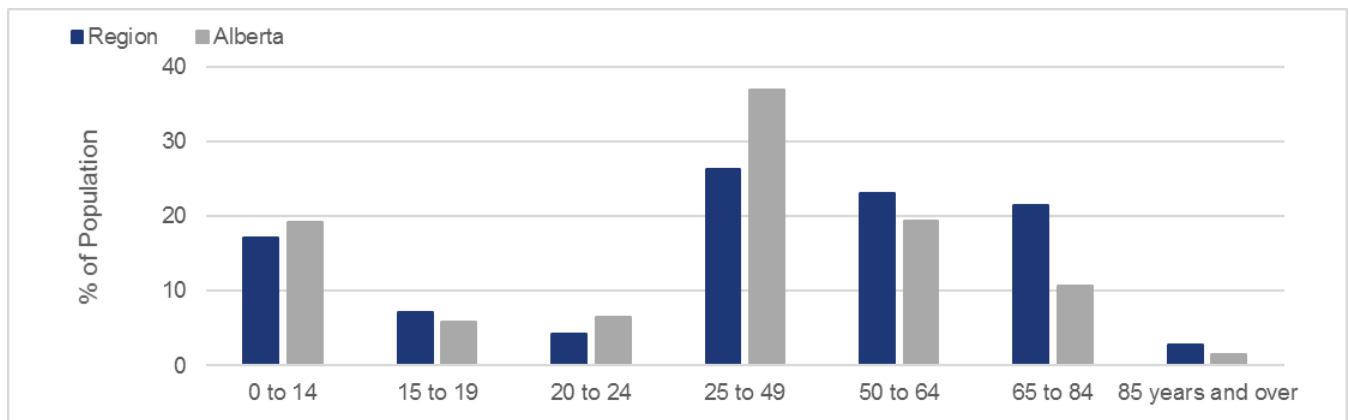


Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2016

Figure 3-2 shows the age distribution of the region compared to the province. Notable differences between the region and the province are a lower proportion of residents between ages 25 and 49 in the region and a higher proportion of residents aged 50 and over.

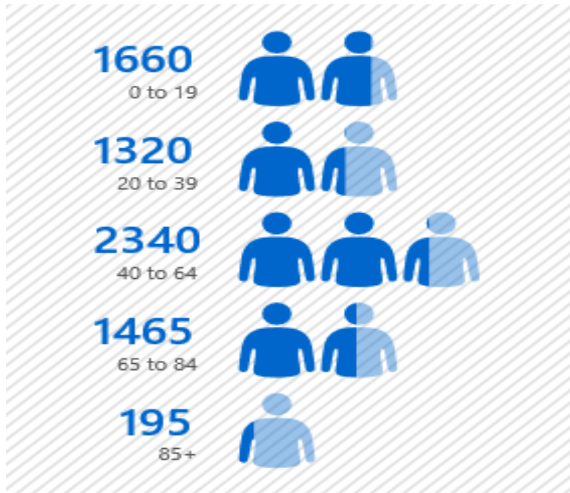
In 2016, the median age of area residents was 46 – roughly ten years higher than the provincial median of approximately 37.

Figure 3-2: Study Area Population Age Distribution (2016)



Within the Greater Pincher Creek Region, the largest age group is between 40 and 64 with approximately 2,340 individuals. This is followed by those between the ages of 0 to 19 with 1660 individuals.

Figure 3-3: Population by Age in Pincher Creek Region in 2016

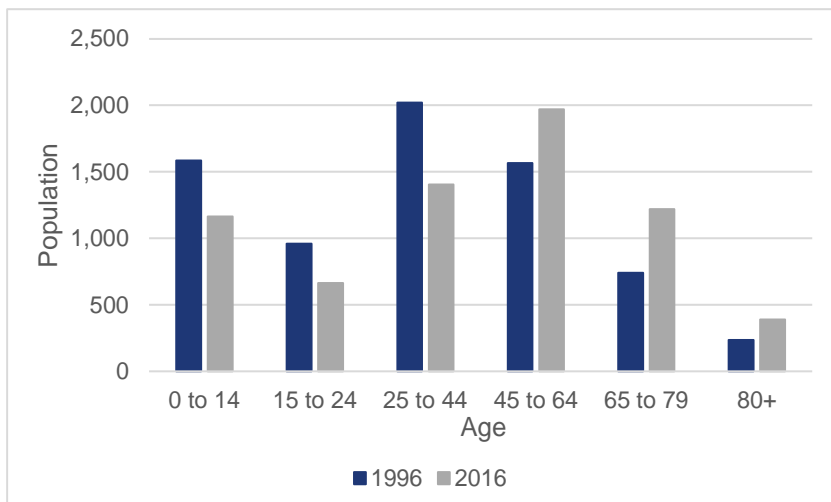


This data is important for calculating the economic dependency ratio or the number of working individuals (typically between 15 and 65 years of age) compared to those who are not working (typically those between 0 and 14 years of age and those over the age of 65).

A lower dependency ratio means there are more people working and contributing to pensions, healthcare, education etc. than those who are not. In the Greater Pincher Creek Region, the dependency ratio is 68, compared with Alberta at 56 and Canada at 47². This implies that the percentage of people in the Greater Pincher Creek Region, contributing financially to universal benefits is less than both the province and Canada.

Figure 3-4 shows the population change from 1996 to 2016. It is interesting to note the decrease in population aged 44 and younger and the increase in the population aged 45 and over.

Figure 3-4: Population Change in Region 1996 - 2016



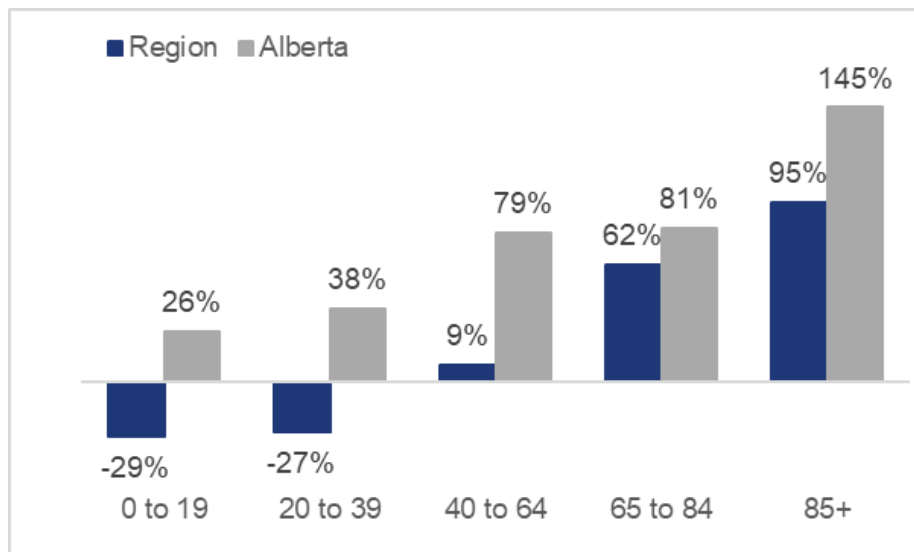
Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

² Dependency ratio formula is (((number of people age 0 to 14) + (number of people age 65 and over)) / (number of people age 15 to 64)) * 100, United National Population Division

Figure 3-5 shows how the shifting in the age profile in the Greater Pincher Creek Region differs from the trends provincially. Further analysis of population trend data for the area found a 12% increase in the population of women between ages 35 and 39 between 2011 and 2016 (compared to a 3% increase in men), which has potential implications for services such as employment and family supports.

Although the general trend is towards an older and aging population in the area, the Town of Pincher Creek experienced a 6% increase (12% women and 3% men) in 35 to 39-year olds between 2011 and 2016. This has potential implications for services in the region including employment and family supports.

Figure 3-5: Comparison of Change in Population by Age (Region and Alberta)



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

3.2 Family Composition

Family composition is an important consideration in assessing social needs in a community. It is linked to household income and poverty rates, isolation, educational achievement and housing needs. According to the OECD, family and household structures have important social consequences for social planning, including childcare, education, housing, elderly care and even urban planning.

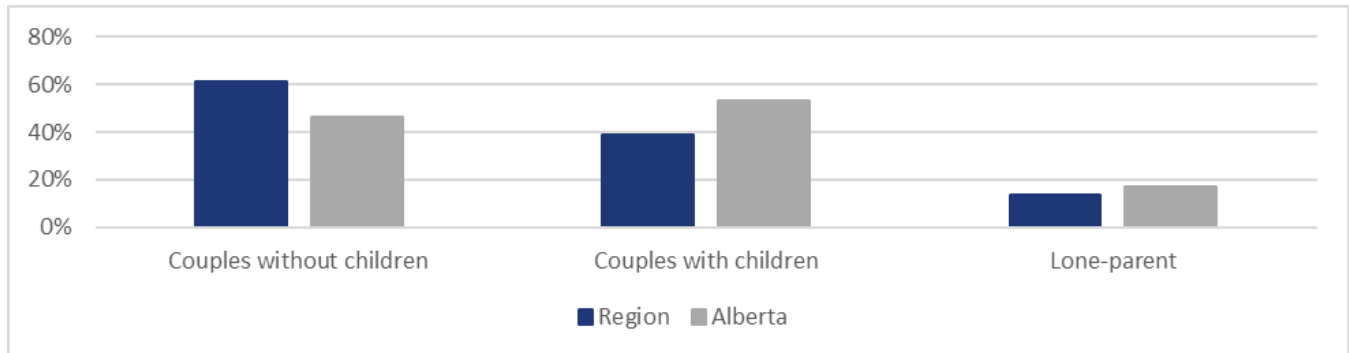
The Pincher Creek area has a slightly higher proportion of households who are either married or common law (65%) than the province (60%). There are approximately 695 one person households in the Pincher Creek area which is 27% of total households compared to the provincial average of 24%.



Approximately 54% of families in the Pincher Creek area have no children in the household compared to 40% provincially. This reflects the overall higher average age of residents in the community who may have adult-aged children who no longer live with their parents.

In the Pincher Creek Region approximately 13% of households are lone parent families compared to 17% in the province. In both Pincher Creek and Alberta, 77% of lone parent families are female-headed.

Figure 3-6: Family Composition



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

3.3 Ethnic Diversity

Ethnic diversity can have a positive effect on the vibrancy of a community, allowing residents to learn about and experience different traditions, languages and ways of life. According to the Centre for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas, diversity is important because it contributes to increased innovation and collaboration, more just and equitable communities and a deeper understanding of our own histories and traditions³.

Ethnic origin data from the most recent federal census show that the region’s settler Canadian⁴ population is less diverse than the overall provincial population. Only 2% of region residents report ethnic origins other than American or European, as compared to over one-quarter (26%) of Alberta residents. At the same time, the settler culture in the region continues to be celebrated and plays a strong role in the identity and values of the communities.

Approximately 9% of area residents (525 people) identify as Aboriginal⁵, which is above the proportion provincially (approximately 7%). Of residents identifying as Indigenous, just over half identify as First Nations with the balance identifying as Métis.

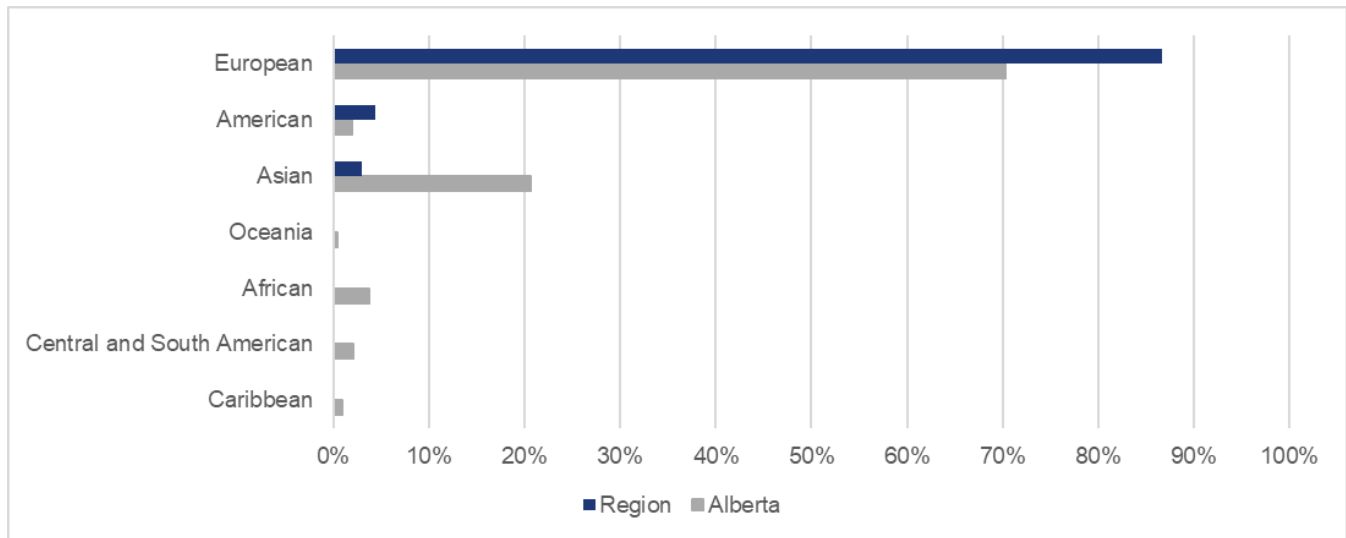
While not within the study area, the Piikani Nation has a relatively large reserve (Piikani Nation 147) that borders the M.D. of Pincher Creek to the northeast. Just over 2,500 people live on this land and many residents shop and access services in the Town, Village and/or M.D. of Pincher Creek.

³ Understanding Cultural Diversity in Building Communities, <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culture-and-diversity/main>

⁴ Being a settler means being non-indigenous and that a persons ancestors came and settled in a place already inhabited by indigenous people. It is also a way to celebrate diversity by acknowledging the cultural diversity of Canadians.

⁵ Category used by Census Canada

Figure 3-7: Settler Canadian Population in Pincher Creek Region

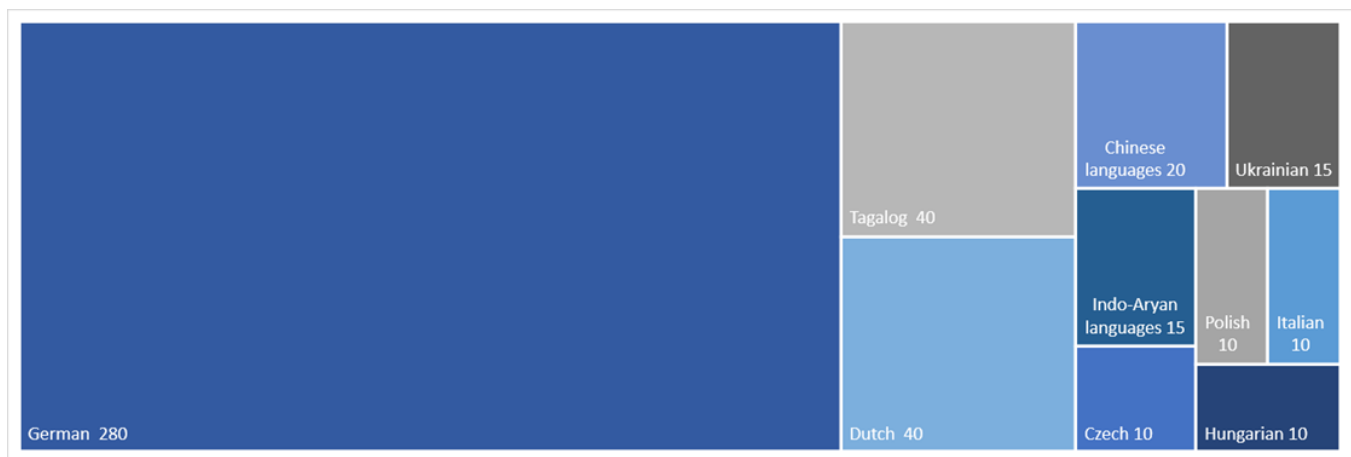


Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

3.4 Language

The majority of Pincher Creek area residents (95%) know either English or French with 99% of residents having English as their first language or the language use in their daily lives. Approximately 500 residents report having a mother tongue, the language from the country of their ancestors or heritage, other than English or French (see Figure 3-8).

Figure 3-8: Mother Tongues of Pincher Creek Residents (Excluding English and French)



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

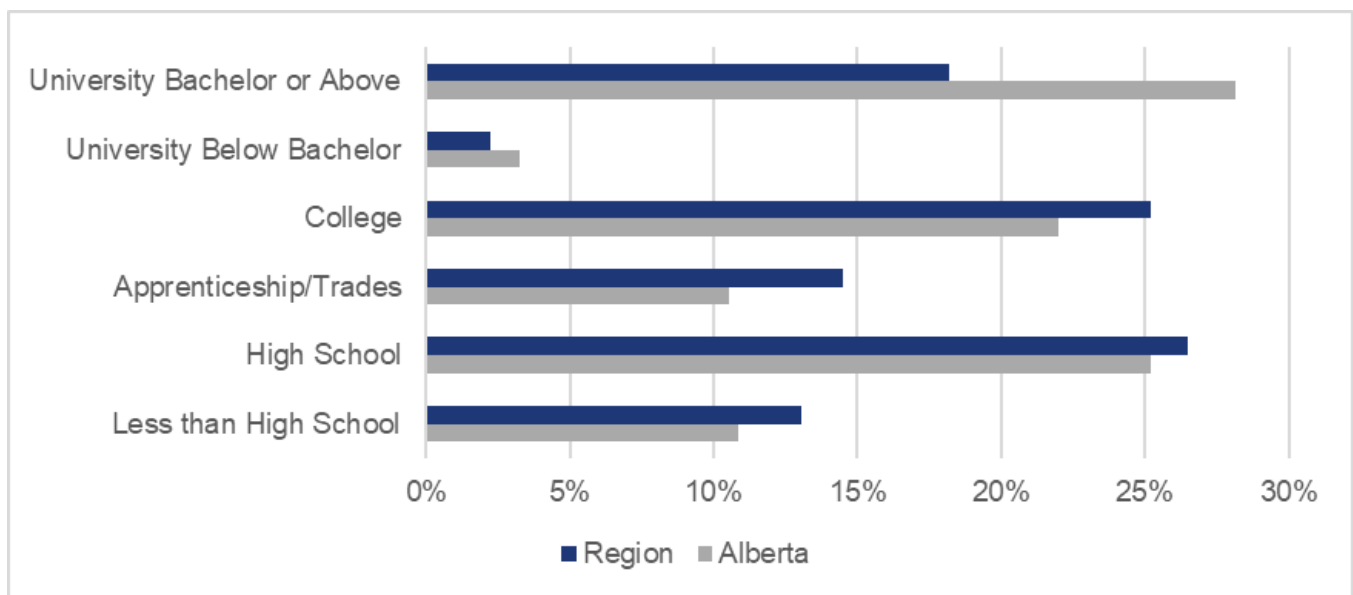
3.5 Education

According to the OECD, education levels influence a number of social indicators. These include life expectancy, political participation, employability, and happiness as well as improved social networks⁶. All of these contribute to overall wellbeing and quality of life in a community.

With respect to educational attainment:


- The Pincher Creek Region has a higher proportion of residents whose highest level of education is an apprenticeship/trades or college certificate or diploma than Alberta as a whole. However, the proportion of residents with a university degree is lower (See Figure 3-9).

Figure 3-9: Highest Levels of Educational Achievement



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

- A higher percentage of women (56%) than men (36%) in Pincher Creek have completed college or university, whereas a higher percentage of men (25%) than women (5%) have an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma.



61% of both men and women have education beyond high school.

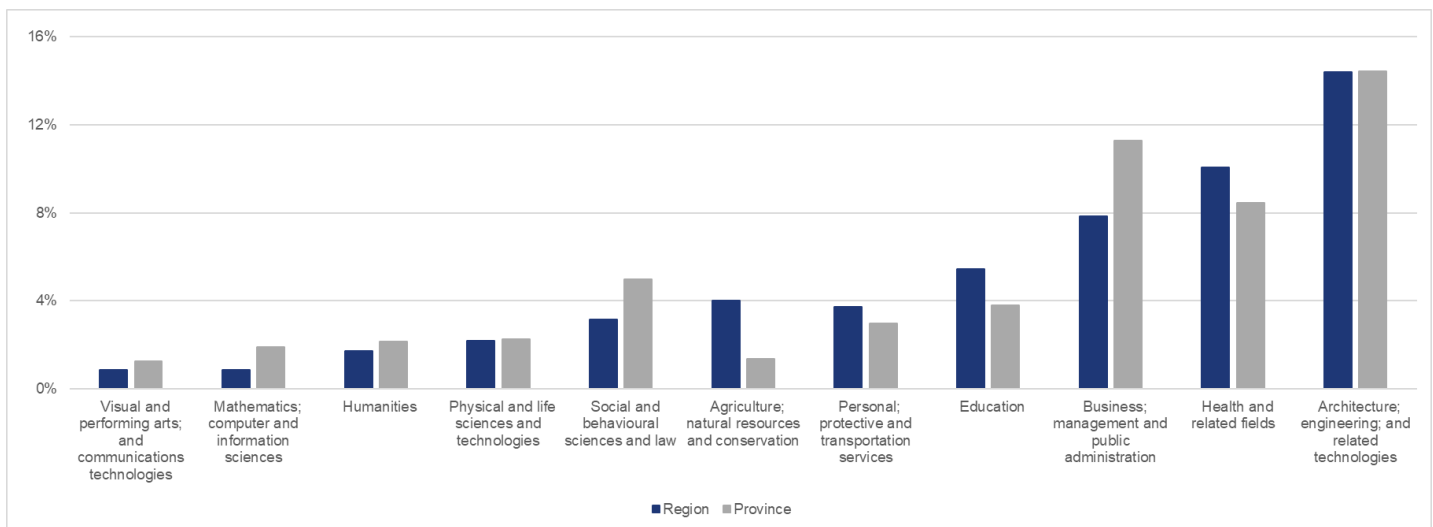
56% of women have college or university education compared to 36% of men

25% of men have apprenticeship or trades certificates compared to 5% of women

⁶ OECD, 2013 "Education Indicators in Focus"

- In 2015 there were 130 total apprentices in the region, 28 were new apprentices and 18 were certified⁷.
- Approximately 237 individuals from the region were enrolled in post-secondary schools in 2018⁸.
- There were 989 students in kindergarten to grade nine and 279 students enrolled in high school in the region in 2017⁹.
- A larger proportion of the region’s residents studied in the areas of agriculture, natural resources and conservation, whereas smaller proportions have studied in the fields in business, management and public administration and social and behavioural sciences (Figure 3-8).

Figure 3-10: Fields of Study



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

3.6 Income and Employment

Income

Household incomes are lower in the Greater Pincher Creek Region compared to Alberta. Statistics Canada reported the median total income for private households in 2015 to be \$78,251 in the M.D. of Pincher Creek and \$68,864 in the Town. Respectively, these are approximately 20% and 36% lower than the provincial median which was \$93,835.

Individual incomes in both the Town of Pincher Creek and the M.D. are also lower than the provincial average. In 2015, the median income for full-time workers in the province was \$64,000. In comparison, the median income for full-time workers was \$57,000 in the Town of Pincher Creek and \$43,000 in the M.D.

D Grade given to Alberta for the gender wage gap which is second highest of all provinces in Canada.

Conference Board of Canada

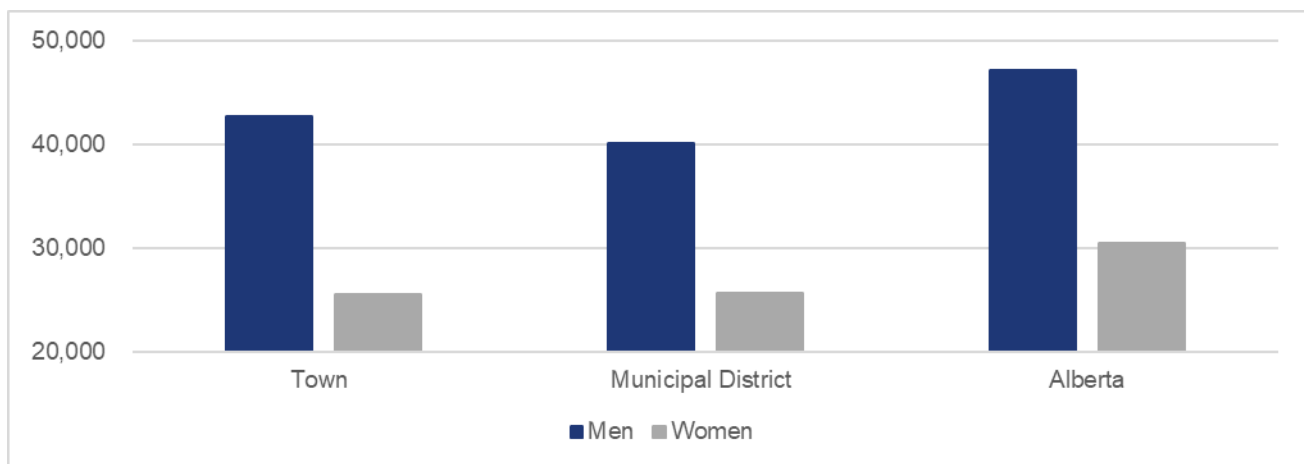
⁷ Alberta Advanced Education, Apprenticeship and Industry Training

⁸ Alberta Advanced Education

⁹ Alberta Education

Income inequality is a social issue faced throughout Alberta. The conference board of Canada has given Alberta a 'D' rating for the gender wage gap, which is second highest of all provinces in Canada. Income inequality is a social issue as is linked with lower life expectancy, educational achievement, crime, mental health issues etc. The chart below compares median incomes of men and women in the greater Greater Pincher Creek Region and the province. On average, women's income is approximately 70% of men's income in the region.

Figure 3-11: Median After Tax Income for Men and Women (2015)



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

Cost of Living

Despite incomes that are lower than the provincial average, in general, incomes have been rising in the region. Figure 3-12 and Figure 3-13 show the change in income, adjusted to 2015 dollars, from 2005 to 2015. With the exception of women in the M.D. median after-tax incomes have gone up consistently. The largest increase was for men in the M.D. who, as a group, saw their income rise by approximately 23%.

Figure 3-12: Median After-tax Income - Town

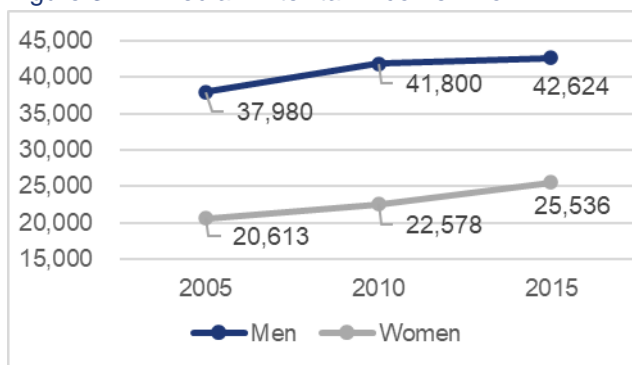
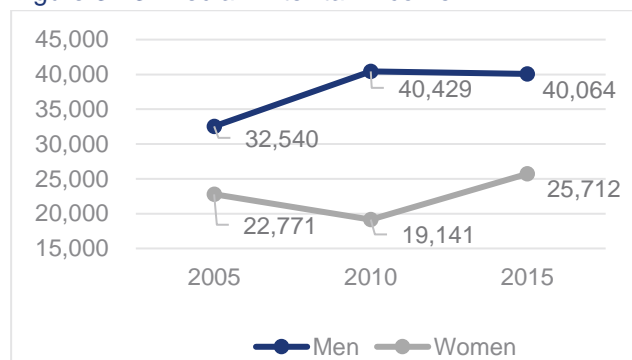


Figure 3-13: Median After-tax Income - M.D.



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census; National Household Survey 2011, Statistics Canada 2006 Census.

Although incomes are lower in the Pincher Creek Region than the province, so is the cost of living. One measure of cost of living used in Alberta is the Place-to-Place Comparison Survey. The survey measures and compares relative price levels of basic goods. The survey uses Edmonton as its benchmark, then compares the costs of

specific goods in communities throughout Alberta with how much they cost in Edmonton. Thirty-five communities were surveyed in 2018 including Pincher Creek.

- Pincher Creek scores 92.4 on the survey. This means that the cost of goods in Pincher Creek are 92.4% of the cost for the same goods in Edmonton.
- Of the 35 communities surveyed Pincher Creek is the third least expensive, after Wainwright and Brooks.
- Pincher Creek is the least expensive of the participating communities with a population under 5,000 people.

While incomes in Pincher Creek are 94% of incomes in Edmonton, the cost of living, according to the Place-to-Place Comparison Survey, is 92% that of Edmonton.

Low income

One of the measures of poverty the government of Canada uses is low income cut-offs after tax (LICO-AT). The LICO-AT to determine “income thresholds below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its after-tax income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family¹⁰”. The table below provides the LICO-AT for Canada in 2015.

Table 3-1: 2015 Low income cut-off Canada

Household size	After-tax income	Before-tax income
1 person	22,133	25,516
2 persons	31,301	36,084
3 persons	38,335	44,194
4 persons	44,266	51,031
5 persons	49,491	57,054
6 persons	54,215	62,500
7 persons	58,558	67,508

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

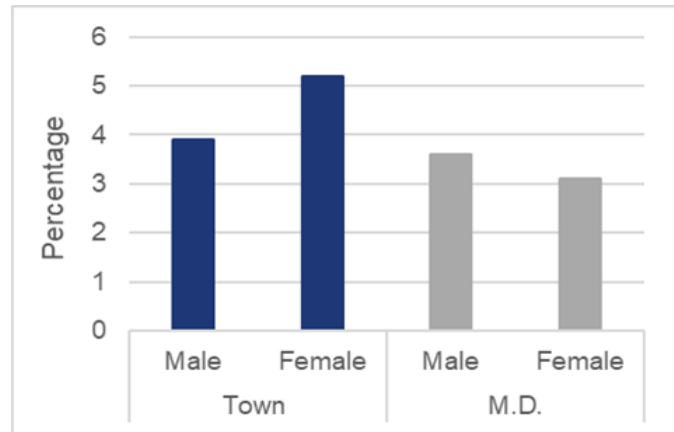
¹⁰ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110024101>

Overall, the percentage of the population in the Pincher Creek region (4.5% in the Town and 3.2% in the M.D.) living below the low-income cut-off is lower than in the province (7%).

Low-income by sex

However, further analysis shows that there was a higher proportion of women experiencing poverty in the Town of Pincher Creek in 2015, whereas there were slightly more men experiencing poverty in the M.D. (Figure 3-14).

Figure 3-14: % of Men and Women living below the after-tax LICO

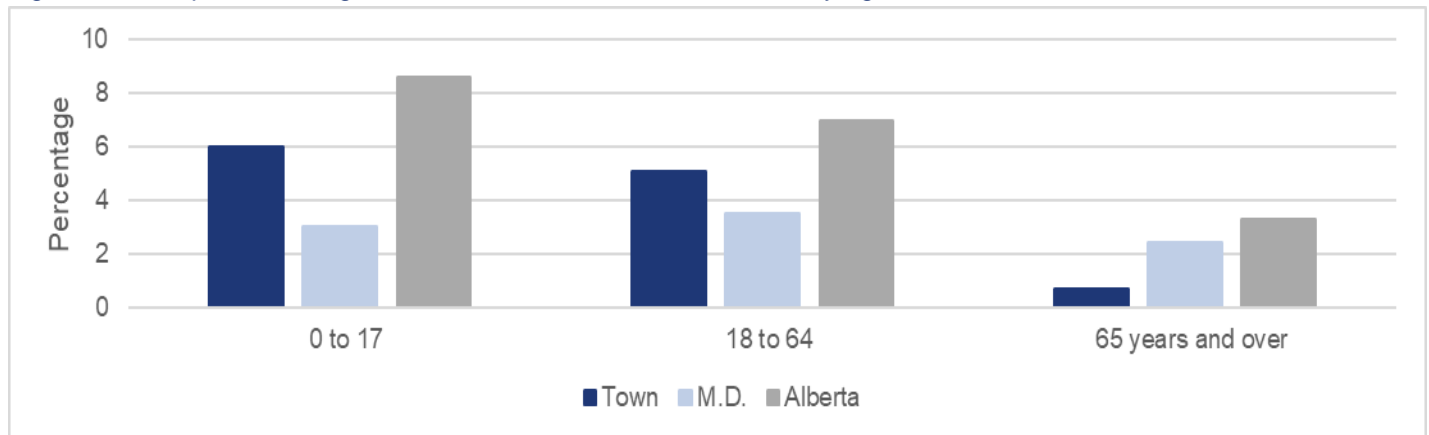


Source: Statistics Canada 2016

Low income by age

Another observation is that in the Town of Pincher Creek there is a higher proportion of children and adults between the ages of 18 to 64 but a lower proportion of seniors living in poverty than in the M.D. (See Figure 3-15).

Figure 3-15: Population living below the after-tax low income cut-off by age

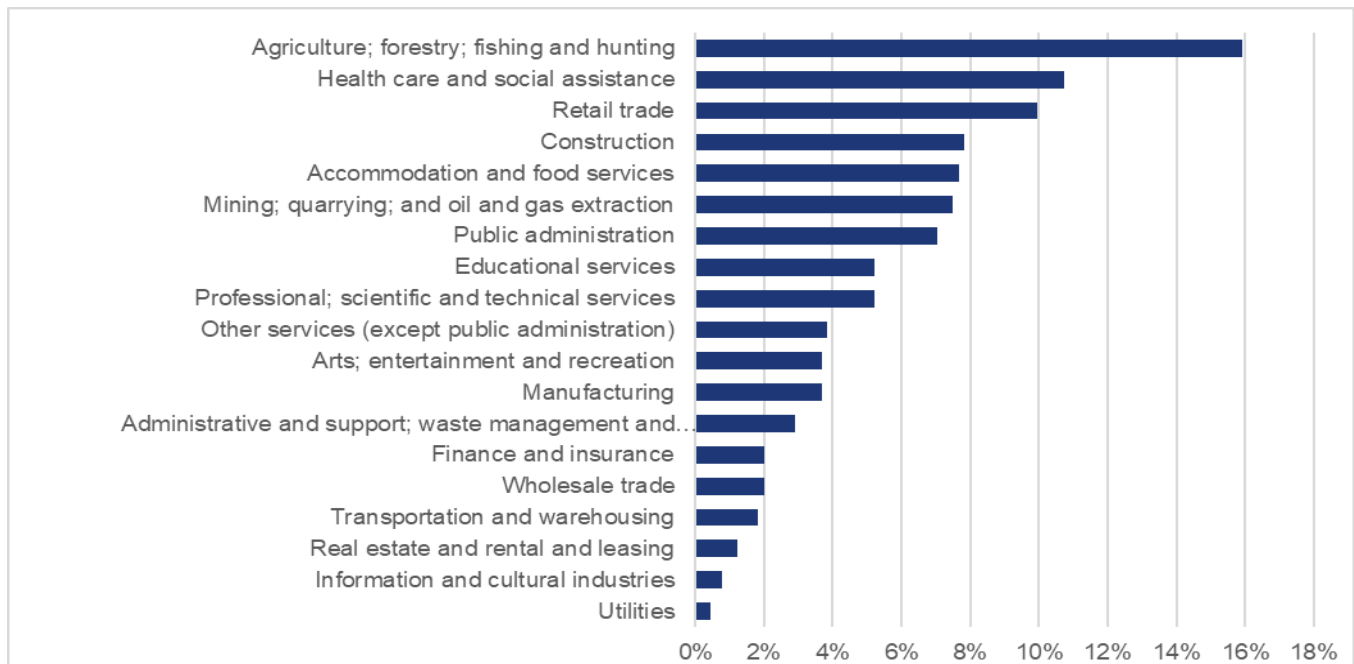


Source: Statistics Canada 2016

Employment

Figure 3-16 shows the distribution of employment by industry in the Greater Pincher Creek Region. Industries accounting for the largest proportions of employment in the region are agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (16%), health care and social assistance (11%) and retail trade (10%). As a comparison, in Alberta the largest proportions of employment are in Retail (11%), Health care and social assistance (11%) and construction (10%).

Figure 3-16: Employment by Industry (%)



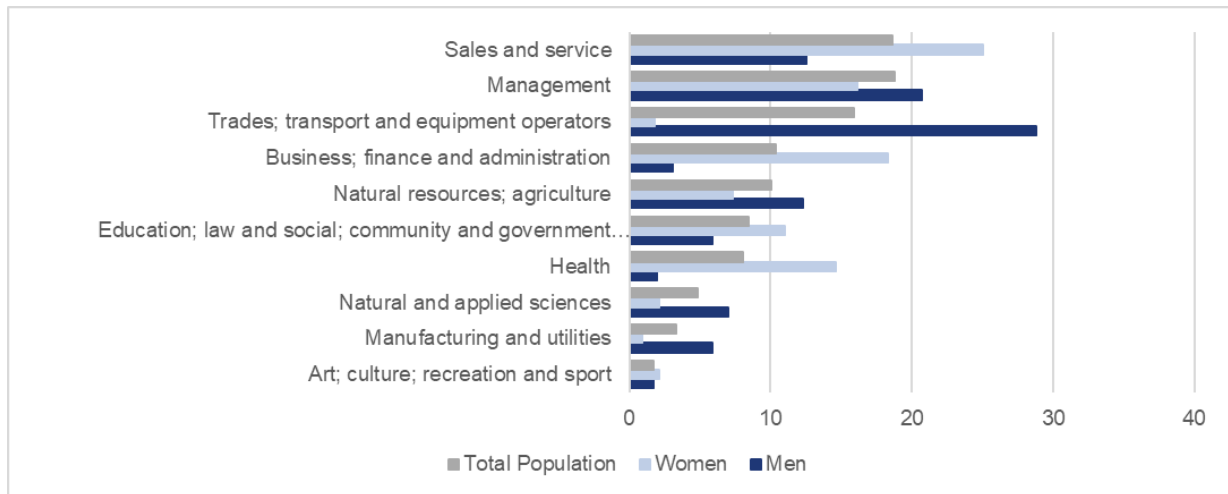
Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

Sales and services, manufacturing and transport and equipment operator trades are the largest occupation groups in the Pincher Creek Region. However, the distribution of men and women within these occupations varies considerably.

- 50% of men in the Pincher Creek Area are employed in either the trades (29%) or management positions (21%).
- For women the largest occupations are in sales and services (25%) followed by business related jobs (18%) and management (17%).

53 Percentage of Pincher Creek area residents work in Sales and Services, Management, and the Trades

Figure 3-17: Employment by Occupations (%)



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

Compared to the province overall, the Pincher Creek area has a higher proportion of residents employed in management, natural resources (including agriculture), and health. However, the proportion of area residents employed in sales and services, trades, business, education, law and social services, and natural and applied sciences is slightly lower than the provincial average.

Figure 3-18: Comparison of Pincher Creek Residents to the Province by Occupation (%)



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

Labour Force Participation

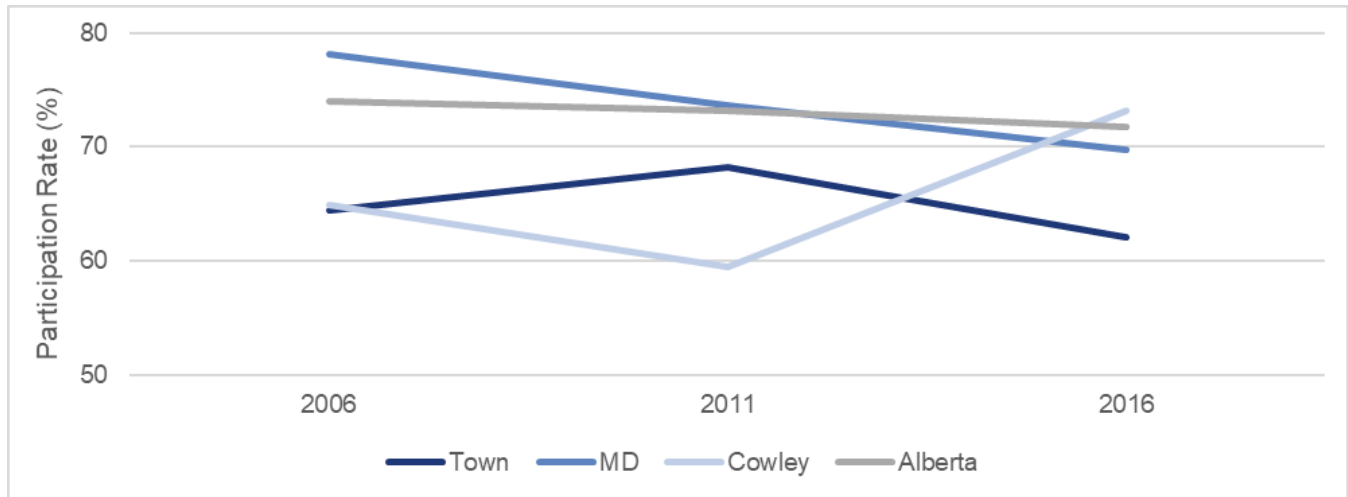
The labour force participation rate refers to residents age 15 and older who are either employed or actively looking for work (i.e., in the labour force) relative to the working-age population. In 2016, the participation rates in regional communities, and for the province as a whole, were as follows:

- 62% - Town of Pincher Creek
- 69% - M.D. of Pincher Creek

- 73% - Village of Cowley
- 72% - Alberta

Figure 3-19 shows participation rates in the Greater Pincher Creek Region and province from 2006 to 2016. While the provincial participation rate remained relatively stable, the Town of Pincher Creek’s rate increased slightly between 2006 and 2011 and then began to decrease. The M.D.’s rate, on the other hand, declined by almost 10% over this 10-year period and in Cowley the participation rate increased by almost 10%.

Figure 3-19: Participation Rates



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census; National Household Survey 2011, Statistics Canada 2006 Census.

Unemployment

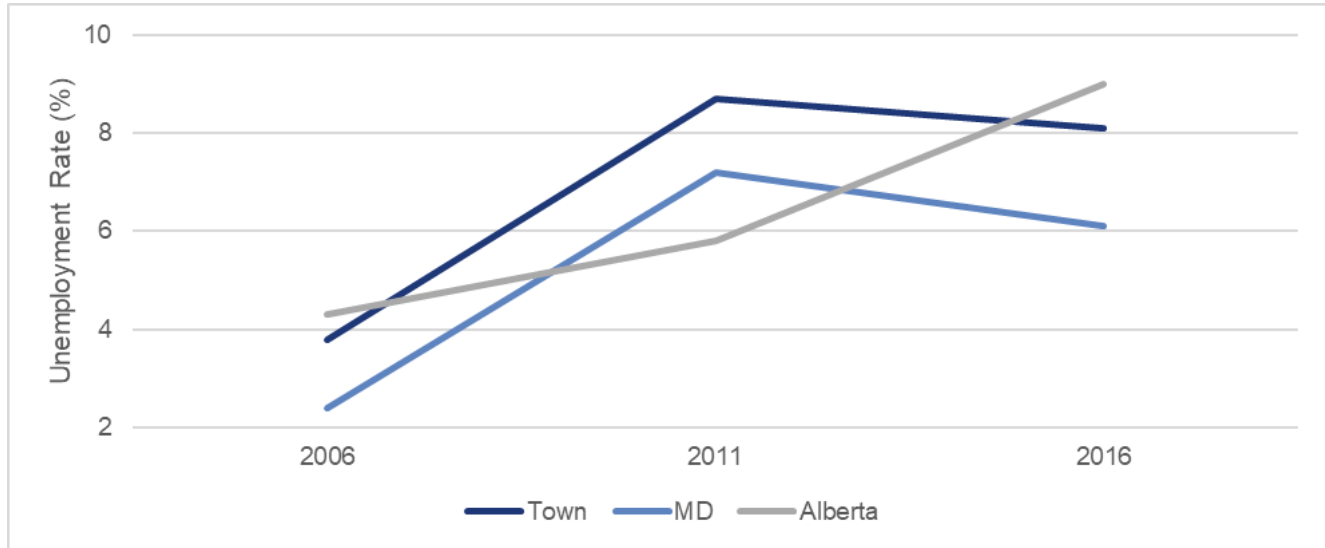
The unemployment rate refers to the number of residents age 15 and older who are unemployed relative to the total labour force (i.e. residents actively looking for work). In 2016, the unemployment rates in regional communities, and for the province as a whole, were as follows:

- 8% - Town of Pincher Creek
- 6% - M.D. of Pincher Creek
- 7% - Cowley
- 9% - Alberta

The unemployment rates for the Town and the M.D. tracked similarly between 2006 and 2016, with the Town’s rate being slightly higher than the M.D.’s. Unlike the provincial unemployment rate, which rose between 2006 and 2016, the unemployment rates in the Greater Pincher Creek Region rose between 2006 and 2011 and then declined between 2011 and 2016.. As is the case in the province generally, youth in the region experience a higher level of unemployment.¹¹

¹¹ The youth unemployment rate in the region tends to be double that of the province overall.

Figure 3-20: Unemployment Rate¹²



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census; National Household Survey 2011, Statistics Canada 2006 Census.

3.7 Housing

Housing is considered one of the basic human rights and is a requirement for overall health and wellbeing. Housing is one of the biggest costs for households in Alberta and plays a significant role in determining a household’s financial wellbeing. The cost of housing is directly connected to the ability of a household to access healthy food, participate in cultural and recreational activities and meet other basic needs.

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

A commonly-used indicator of the general affordability of housing in a community is the proportion of households spending 30% or more of their gross household income on housing-related costs.

- According to Statistics Canada 2016 census, 15% of residents in the Town of Pincher Creek are spending more than 30% of their income on shelter costs compared to 21% in both the M.D. and the province.

¹² Unemployment Rates for Cowley in 2011 and 2006 are unavailable



15% of Town and 20% of M.D. residents pay more than 30% of their income on shelter costs

- 20% of tenant households in the Town of Pincher Creek are living in subsidized housing compared to 10% of the province and 36% of tenants in both Pincher Creek and the Province spend more than 30% of their income on shelter costs.
- Average monthly shelter costs in the Town is \$958 compared to \$912 in the M.D. and \$1,280 in the province.
- According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation the vacancy rate in the Town of Pincher Creek was 1.5% in 2018, down from 4% in 2016 and 6% in 2013. In Alberta, the vacancy rate was approximately 5.5%.
- The Pincher Creek Foundation is managing 12 two and three bedroom family social housing units including 2 four-plex units on Main Street and one duplex on Foothills Avenue and one on Charlotte Street. There is also a proposal to build more units in the Town.

Affordable Housing

The input received through the survey and discussions carried out in support of this research makes it clear that residents in the region are concerned about both increasing cost and decreasing availability of housing. This concern is heightened when talking about the potential for increased mining activity nearby and a desire to see the community grow through increased tourism or other business opportunities.

In 2016, the percentage of owners paying more than 30% of their gross household income on shelter costs increased from 11% in 2011 to 14% in 2016. The change was more drastic for tenants: the proportion increased from 20% in 2011 to 32%. In Alberta, 15% of owner and 36% of tenant households were paying more than 30% of their income on shelter costs.

Table 3-2: Percentage of Residents Paying more than 30% of their Income on Housing

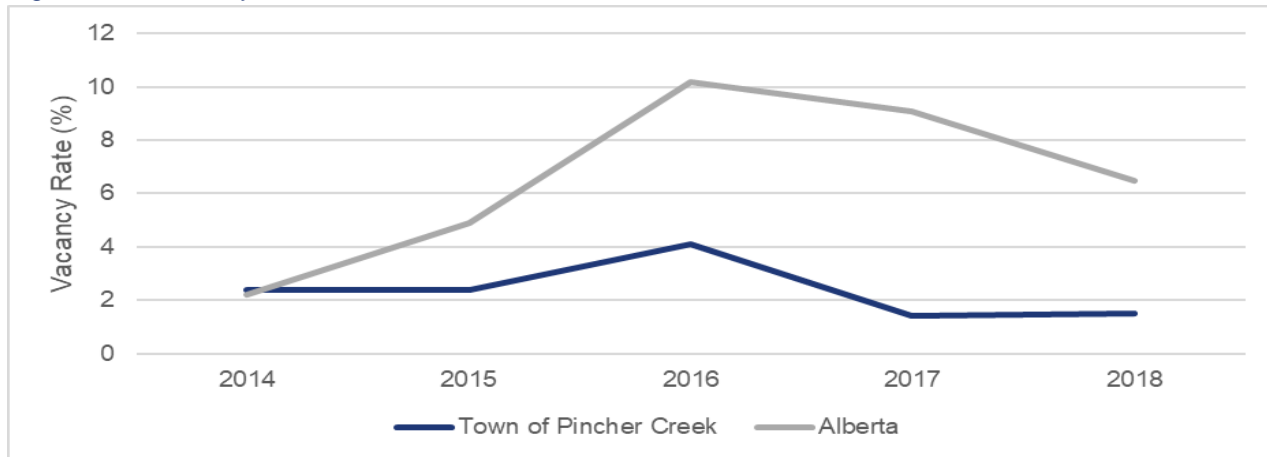
Year	2011	2016
Owner	11%	14%
Tenant	20%	32%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016, NHS 2011

Along with examining shelter costs, it's also useful to consider the proportion of residents living in subsidized housing. According to Statistics Canada 2016 Census, in the Town of Pincher Creek the percentage of residents in subsidized housing increased from 15% in 2011 to 21% in 2016.

Figure 3-21 shows vacancy rates in the town for the years 2014 to 2018. As shown, vacancy rates in Pincher Creek have been lower than provincial rates in recent years. Low vacancy rates have the potential to increase rents, potentially placing a financial strain on renters.

Figure 3-21 Vacancy Rates in the Town of Pincher Creek



Source: CMHC Rental Market Survey

Senior’s Housing

The Pincher Creek Region has five residences dedicated to seniors. The table below highlights the size and description of the residences.

Table 3-3: Seniors Housing Units

Name	Size	Description
Canyon Manor	12 units	Not-for-profit 1-bedroom apartments for low-income individuals 65 years of age or older
Canyon Manor Cottages	6 units	Not-for-profit 1-bedroom attached cottages for low-income individuals 65 years of age or older
Crestview Lodge	50 rooms	Not-for-profit supportive studio and 1-bedroom units for individuals 65 years of age or older
Whispering Winds Village	77 units	Studio, 1 and 2-bedroom apartments
Willow Court	6 units	Not-for-profit 1-bedroom attached cottages for low-income individuals 65 years of age or older

3.8 Health

The Canadian Deprivation Index is used to help understand how environmental and economic factors may be affecting health in a community. The index is derived from information related to income, education, family structure and geography etc. The index for Pincher Creek indicates that approximately 6.4% of the population in the region are at risk of having poor health because of non-health related factors compared to 7.3% in the province.¹³

Alberta Health has developed a series of reports to support primary health care planning. These reports provide demographic, socio-economic and population health statistics for communities across the province. The following table looks at key health indicators, identified in the Pincher Creek Health Data and Summary report, for the Greater Pincher Creek Region compared to the province.

Table 3-4: Health Indicators - Pincher Creek and Alberta Comparisons¹⁴

Indicator ¹⁵	Greater Pincher Creek Region	Alberta	Region as Compared to the Provincial Average (%)
Hypertension	20	20	-
Birth rate (per 1000 women)	21	26	-19%
Top 5 Sexually transmitted infections (per 100,000)	602	497	21%
Emergency room visits (per 1,000)	436	243	79%
Emergency room visits for respiratory infections (per 100,000)	7216	4111	76%
Mental Health and Behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance abuse (per 100,000)	2222	676	229%

Mental Health

According to the Alberta Health Primary, Community and Indigenous Health Community Profile for Pincher Creek, “perceived mental health is a general indication of the number of people in the population suffering from some form of mental disorder, mental or emotional problems or distress”. Those participating in this social needs assessment raised the issue of a perceived increase in the prevalence of mental health issues.

- As seen in Table 3-4 above, the Greater Pincher Creek Region has a significantly higher proportion of mental health and behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance abuse than the province (2,222 per 100,000 compared to 676 per 100,000).

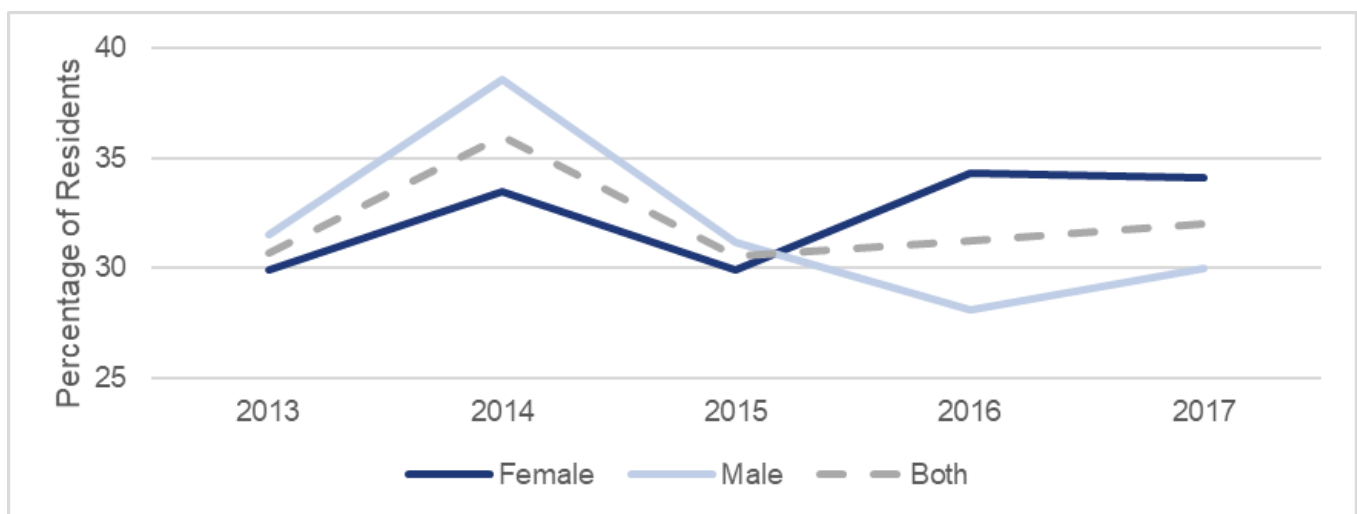
¹³ Alberta Health Primary, Community and Indigenous Health – Community Profile: Pincher Creek, Health Data and Summary, 3rd edition, March 2017

¹⁴ Alberta Health Primary, Community and Indigenous Health – Community Profile: Pincher Creek, Health Data and Summary, 3rd edition, March 2017

¹⁵ Age-standardized emergency visit rates (per 100,000) for selected conditions, 2014

- The Canadian Community Health Survey asks Canadians to rate their own mental health. To maintain confidentiality, the answers to the survey question on mental health are grouped into two broad categories: “poor, fair and good” and “very good and excellent”. Figure 3-22 shows results from the survey question regarding perceived mental health for residents of the Alberta Health South Zone¹⁶, which includes the Greater Pincher Creek Region, whose perceived mental health is rated as ‘poor, fair or good’¹⁷. In 2013 and 2014 more men in the Alberta Health South Zone reported their mental health as “poor, fair or good” than women (31.5% and 38.6% vs 29.9% and 33.5%). In 2016 and 2017 however, more women rated their mental health as “poor, fair or good” than men (34.3% and 34% vs 28.1% and 29.9%). The answers to the survey question on mental health are grouped into two categories: “poor, fair and good” and “very good and excellent”.
- Further analysis shows that overall in the Alberta Health Zone approximately 60% of respondents rate their mental health as either ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’, 30% rate their mental health as good and approximately 10% rate their mental health as either “fair” or “poor”.

Figure 3-22: Alberta Health South Zone - Self-perceived Mental Health (Poor, Fair or Good)



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey

¹⁶ This data comes from the Canadian Health Survey (CCHS) which is a national cross-sectional survey carried out by Statistics Canada. Data is provided at the provincial health region level.

¹⁷ Note that survey respondents can identify their self-perceived mental health as poor, fair, good, very good, or excellent. However, due to the low number of survey respondents, results for men and women in the South Zone over time were aggregated by Statistics Canada into two categories: ‘poor, fair, or good’ and ‘very good’ or excellent’.

3.9 Crime

The sense of safety in a community has a significant bearing on overall social well-being. Trends in crime statistics for the Greater Pincher Creek Region between 2014 and 2018 are charted below.¹⁸ These statistics relate to reported incidents. The following trends are observed:

- Pincher Creek has higher proportion of criminal code traffic violations pe 100,000 population than the province. Since 2014, the rate has increased by approximately 25%.
- Drug Violations saw a spike in 2016 when the proportion per 100,000 of violations was more than double the province. Since 2016, the rate has been decreasing and in 2018 it was lower than the province.
- Total violent criminal code violations in Pincher Creek have been decreasing since 2014 while they have been slowly increasing in the province. However, the total violent criminal code violations in Pincher Creek are higher than the province.
- The Pincher Creek Region saw a spike in property crime violations in 2017. With the exception of 2017, the number of incidents per 100,000 are lower than the province.
- The Pincher Creek Region’s incidences of weapons violation per 100,000 population is lower than the province and has been steadily decreasing since 2015.
- Pincher Creek’s total violations per 100,000 population were higher than the province every year from 2014 to 2018.

Figure 3-23: Criminal Code Traffic Violations

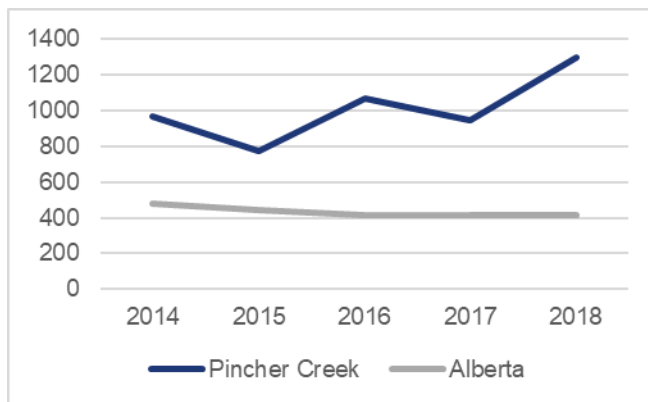
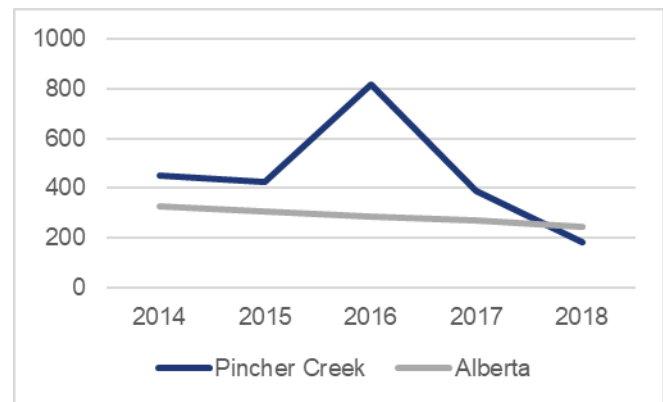


Figure 3-24: Drug Violations



¹⁸ Statistics Canada. Table 252-0080. Incident-based crime statistics, Alberta.

Figure 3-25: Violent Criminal Code Violations

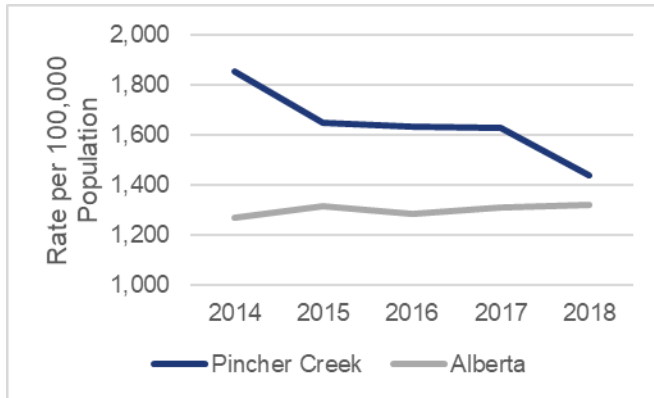


Figure 3-26: Property Crime Violations

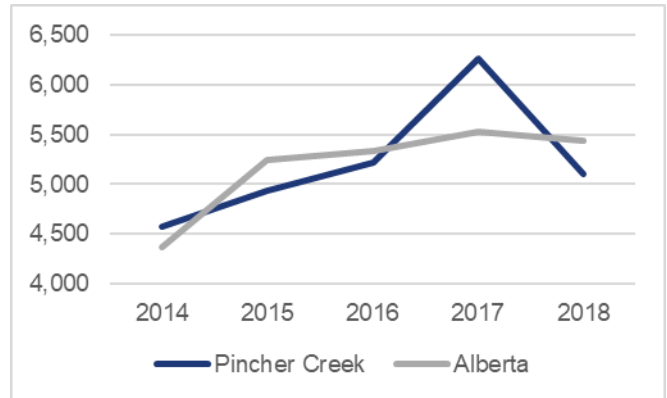


Figure 3-27: Weapons Violations

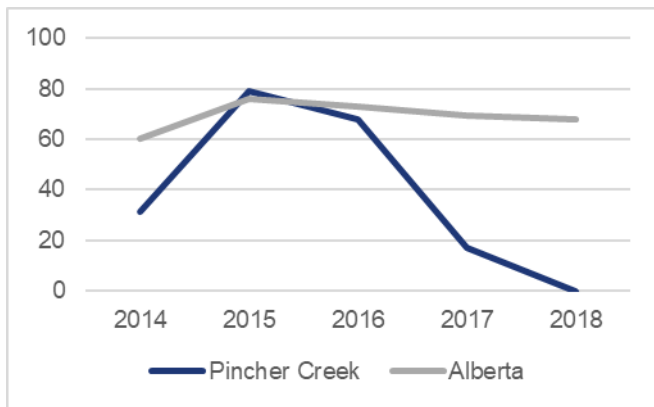
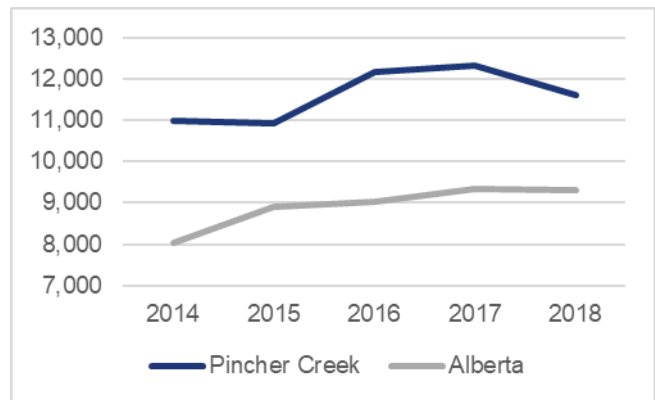


Figure 3-28: All Violations



4. Community Engagement: Priority Social Issues and Populations

The interviews, online survey, and focus group discussions provided opportunities for residents and stakeholders to provide input on priorities for enhancing quality of life in the Greater Pincher Creek Region. Additionally, input was sought on the priority groups to consider in future planning to address social needs in the community. The identified priority issues and groups are listed below in the order in which they were prioritized by residents. It is important to note that the priority populations often intersect with one another, for example, in the Pincher Creek region there may be young indigenous men who are single parents. These intersecting identity factors may make an individual more or less vulnerable to social issues. In the same way, the priority issues are often interconnected with one issue contributing to another.

PRIORITY ISSUES	PRIORITY GROUPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation and/or loneliness • Physical and Mental, Substance Abuse and Addictions • Availability of Affordable Housing • Poverty, Unemployment and Underemployment • Racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors • Families with young children, particularly single parents • Youth • Young men • Residents with mental health challenges • Indigenous neighbours, both those living on reserve and in the region.

The following subsections provide additional insights on each of these priority issues and groups based largely on feedback provided by community members and service providers. Additional analytical research to assess how the nature and magnitude of these issues in the Greater Pincher Creek Region compared to other parts of the province was not a part of the scope of this study.

4.1 Isolation and/or Loneliness

Isolation and/or loneliness were cross-cutting issues that were repeatedly brought up in interviews, focus group discussions and in the online survey. It is important to note that isolation and loneliness are not the same thing although they are related. Dr. John Cacioppo, the former director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago defines social isolation as “the objective physical separation from other people” while loneliness is “the subjective distressed feeling of being alone or separated”¹⁹. Interestingly, individuals can feel lonely while being surrounded by people and people who are alone may not feel lonely.

¹⁹ Cacioppo S, Capitanio JP, Cacioppo JT. Toward a neurology of loneliness. *Psychol Bull.* 2014;140(6):1464–1504. doi:10.1037/a0037618

Isolation and/or loneliness was identified as a significant issue for some individuals in each of the following groups:

- **Youth** – particularly those who are not interested in more mainstream activities, such as hockey and dance, or more traditional occupations in the region, such as ranching. It was heard that some youth who do not aspire to the traditional occupations and lifestyle in the Pincher Creek region may feel they have limited options for affirmation, activities, and engagement. There was speculation that this might be a factor in the prevalence of gaming among youth and youth wanting to leave the community.
- **Seniors** – particularly those living in their own homes. Although there are groups actively seeking opportunities to engage with seniors, including the Fred Huddlestun Seniors Drop-in Centre and the Windsor Heritage Drop In Centre, Seniors living in their homes have relatively fewer opportunities for social engagement as compared to those living in one of the region’s three senior’s housing facilities. In addition, concern was heard about the lack of availability of special transportation services in the region, which can potentially lead to those with mobility challenges being more isolated.
- **Residents who were not born in the region** – a number of individuals mentioned that they believe new residents can find it challenging to make friends and social connections in the Pincher Creek region. It was mentioned that some of these residents may not feel they have neighbours they can turn to for help in times of emergency or crisis.
- **Residents with health issues** – loneliness was identified in discussions as something that can be both a cause and effect of physical and mental health issues. Research has confirmed linkages between loneliness and various health issues, including depression, heart disease, obesity and cognitive decline. It has been found that people who are engaged, connected and have a sense of purpose tend to live longer and have improved wellbeing²⁰. Similar to seniors in the region, a lack of special transportation may limit the ability of individuals with health issues to attend social activities.
- **Residents dealing with unemployment or underemployment** – particularly young men and Indigenous individuals. In conversations with community members, it was mentioned that there are employment vacancies in the region, however unemployment and underemployment are still seen as priority social issues. Social capital²¹ is key to accessing employment opportunities. Building community networks and relationships and creating opportunities for individuals to access good paying jobs is key to addressing both underemployment and unemployment.

²⁰ Cacioppo JT, Cacioppo S. Older adults reporting social isolation or loneliness show poorer cognitive function 4 years later. Evidence-Based Nursing. 2014.

²¹ The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively, Oxford dictionary

4.2 Physical and Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Addictions

Physical and mental health, substance abuse and addictions were identified as concerns throughout the community engagement as issues that affect all subgroups of the population. Further, the interconnection between mental health and substance abuse and addictions was raised with each being a potential cause or effect for the others. While Pincher Creek's healthcare facilities and professionals were identified as key assets in the community, it was heard that there remain insufficient supports in the community, both formal and informal, to meet mental health and addictions needs.

Other concerns heard about the availability of health services in the community pertained to specialist and diagnostic services. Residents must travel, at times, long distances to get some of these services.

Focus group discussions provided opportunities to explore core issues related to physical health, mental health, substance abuse and addictions, along with their associated causes and effects. It is important to note that the core problem as well as the causes and effects are often interrelated and, in part, circular in nature: causes lead to effects which compound the causes and deepen the effects. The input is summarized below.

4.3 Physical Health

Core problems identified were obesity, lack of exercise, chronic disease, and cancer.

Causes identified:

- Isolation in part due to limited community events and transportation options
- The tendency of residents to depend on vehicles for transportation and limited shopping options in the main street area
- Trail systems not being accessible for those with mobility issues
- Easy access to unhealthy 'junk' foods and poor access to healthy foods in part due to grocery stores being out of walking distance from residential areas
- Low incomes which prevent people from buying better quality foods and accessing recreational opportunities
- Aging population, increased physical health issues and risks of older populations combined with limited assistance – formal and informal

Effects of these core problems identified included:

- Increased obesity which can lead to increased isolation or other health complications
- Mental health issues which can prevent people from working and living a healthy life
- Shorter life expectancy
- Increased medical interventions leading to increased health care costs
- Increased isolation

4.4 Mental Health

Core problems identified include a broad spectrum of mental health concerns including depression, anxiety, stress, and bi-polar disorders.

Causes identified, or why mental health is an issue, included:

- Stigma and recognition of mental health issues
- Isolation
- Long wait times for supports
- Lack of childcare while people are getting needed supports
- Perceived lack of privacy and trust in service providers

- Complexity of accessing and navigating the mental health system
- Access to early intervention screening
- Access to transportation
- Insufficient funding for mental health

Effects of these core problems identified included:

- Increased isolation and loss of relationships
- Unemployment
- Suicide
- Bullying
- Violence
- Increased 911 calls and emergency room visits which increases healthcare costs
- Incarceration
- Family and social problems including family violence

4.5 Substance Abuse and Addictions

Core problems with substance abuse and addictions were.

Causes:

- Isolation – social and geographical
- Unemployment
- Ease of availability of drugs
- Inadequate funding and limited access to effective treatment centres and preventive care
- Family cycle
- Untreated mental health issues
- Sexual, physical and mental abuse

Effects:

- Increased crime
- Broken families including the loss of children
- Cognitive challenges that can contribute to increased isolation

4.6 Poverty, Unemployment and Underemployment

Some of those who participated in this research mentioned that key factors contributing to poverty and underemployment are the limited number of professional jobs in the region and a high number of adults in minimum wage jobs. Although minimum wage was increased to \$15 per hour, some mentioned that they feel this is still too low for meeting basic needs. It was also mentioned that students under the age of 18 earning a minimum wage of \$13 per hour can find it difficult to save enough money for the increasing cost of post-secondary education.

Other issues connected to both unemployment and underemployment in the Greater Pincher Creek Region brought forward in discussions included:

- Limited industry and new business growth; and,
- Inadequate coordination in the region for economic development and monitoring.

4.7 Affordable Housing

A housing needs assessment was conducted for the Town of Pincher Creek in 2010 and updated in 2016²². This assessment found that, over the next 10 to 20 years, there will be a need for:

- 35 – 45 new affordable rental units for households earning less than \$25,000 per year;
- 65 – 90 new affordable rental units for households earning less than \$40,000 per year;
- 25-30 new senior's units to meet the growing supportive housing needs of an aging population in the region; and,
- 285-290 homeowners needing supports to maintain their housing situation.

Residents who were identified in the assessment as potentially needing housing supports include:

- Single parents;
- Low-income seniors; and,
- Low-income Indigenous households.

4.8 Racism

Racism towards Indigenous people is an issue that was mentioned often during this research. It was heard that racism in the community was not necessarily overt, but rather, that the social strengths and needs of Indigenous people living in and visiting the community (e.g. from the Piikani First Nation) were overlooked by many residents. The specific social needs of Indigenous people in the area perceived by those participating in interviews and focus group discussions included:

- supports for adult education;
- employment opportunities; and,
- increased participation in intercultural needs assessments, planning, and collaboration.

²² <http://www.pinchercreek.ca/residents/housing.php>

5. Social Profile: Strengths, Assets, and Challenges in Meeting Social Needs

Community engagement illustrated how the region is overall a wonderful place to live and that it provides a great quality of life. In particular, there was frequent mention of the following community strengths:

- excellent healthcare facilities and staff;
- quality and diversity in choices of schools;
- access to childcare; and,
- the natural surroundings that provide both beauty and recreational activities.

5.1 Strengths and Assets for Meeting Social Needs in the Greater Pincher Creek Region

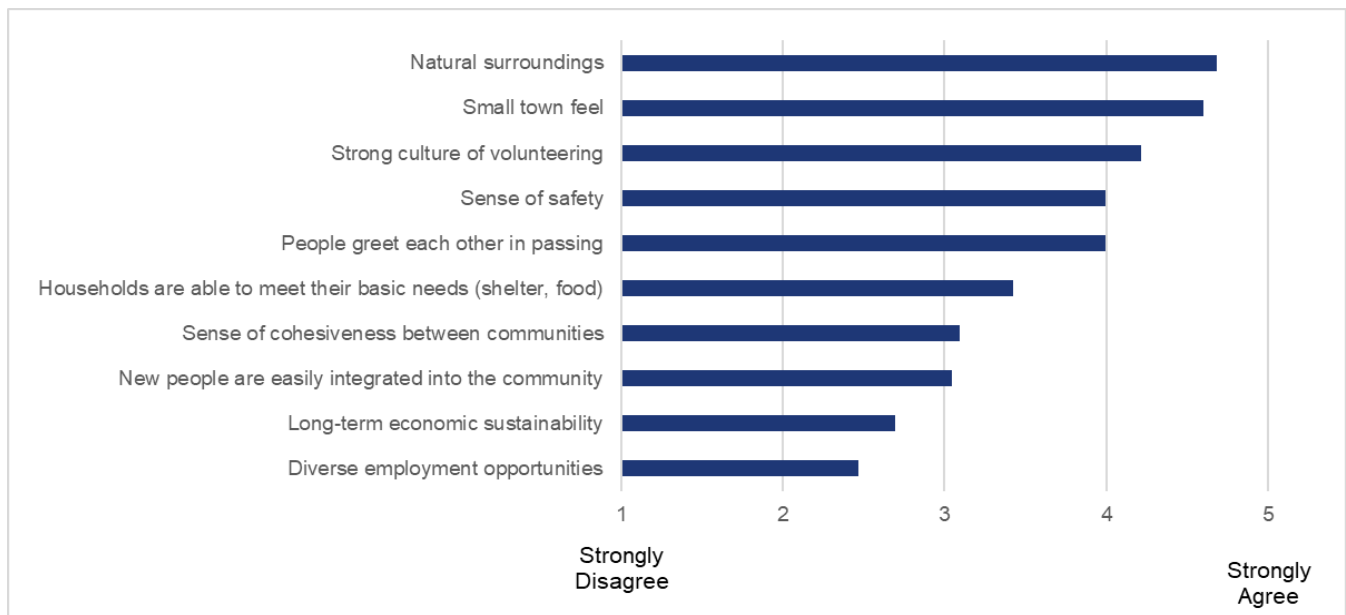
There were many additional strengths and assets identified as contributing to overall social wellbeing in the region. These included the contributions of community residents and small and large businesses; the geographic location and proximity to parks, mountains, lakes and attractions; and, the deep-rooted history and heritage of the region.

The top quality of life attributes of the region identified by survey respondents were:

- the region’s natural surroundings;
- the small-town feel; and,
- the strong culture of volunteering;
- a sense of safety; and,
- that people greet each other in passing which contributes to a sense of belonging.

In conversations with residents, it was also mentioned that the region has a strong culture of creativity and innovation.

Figure 5-1: Extent to which survey respondents agree that the following are community attributes



A number of more specific community assets that contribute to the quality of life in the region, particularly in the Town itself, were identified in the focus group with Town, M.D. and Village councillors. These assets were categorized under businesses, people or individuals, physical structures, nature or community services. These provide building blocks for future asset mapping that can support identifying linkages between the assets.

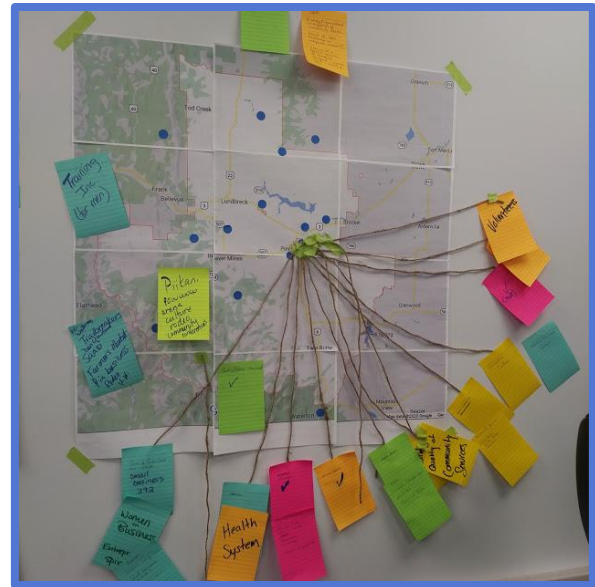


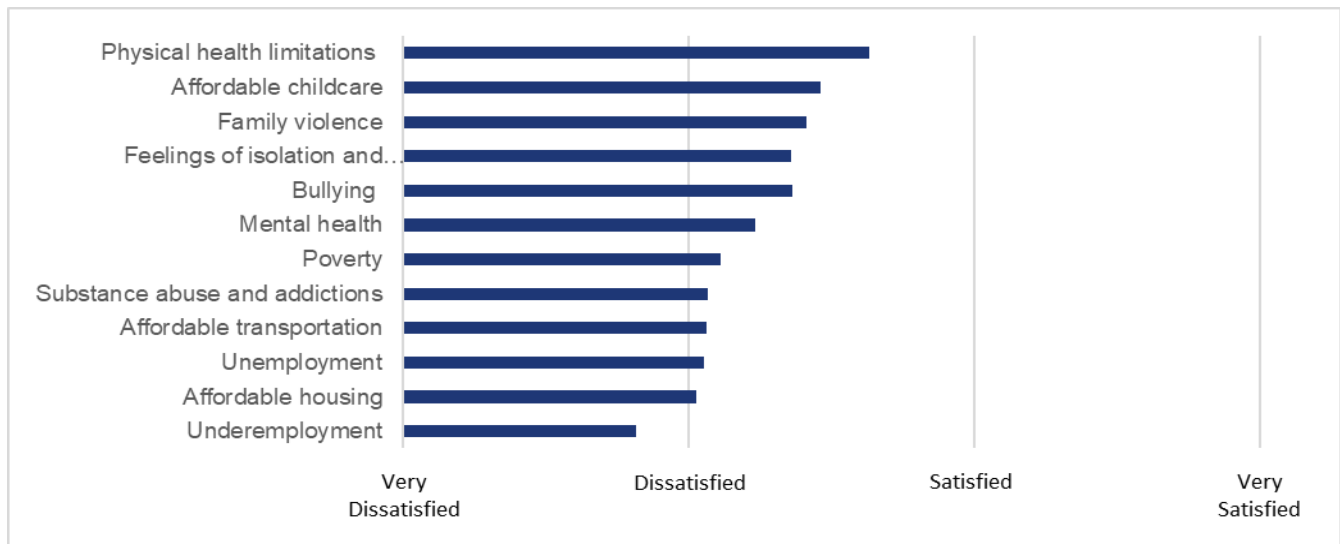
Figure 5-2: Community Assets

Cowley Glider Strip	Fibre Optic Network
Chamber of Commerce and Women in Business	Agricultural Land and Wind Energy
Service Clubs	Head Water
Heritage Acres	Hospital/Clinic/EMS/Doctors/Nurses etc.
Heritage Sites and Museum	Co-op
Recreational Activities (natural and built)	Castle Group of Companies
Natural Environment	VITAE
Transportation Hub	Early Childhood Learning Centre
Education Opportunities (K-12)	Regional Airport
Seniors Centres – Lundbeck and Town of Pincher Creek	Youth Groups/Activities – Maker Centre, Sport and Dance Clubs, Trailbreakers
The People – Professionals, Volunteers	Lebel Mansion and Arts Community
NAPI Friendship Centre	Adult Learning Council
The Annex	Family Centre

5.2 Challenges in Meeting Social Needs in the Greater Pincher Creek Region

The online survey asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the current programs and services offered. There were lower levels of satisfaction in some key areas among those who participated in the survey. These included programs and services for the underemployed and unemployed, residents requiring affordable housing and transportation, and residents with substance abuse or addictions issues or experiencing poverty.

Figure 5-3: Satisfaction with current programs and services offered



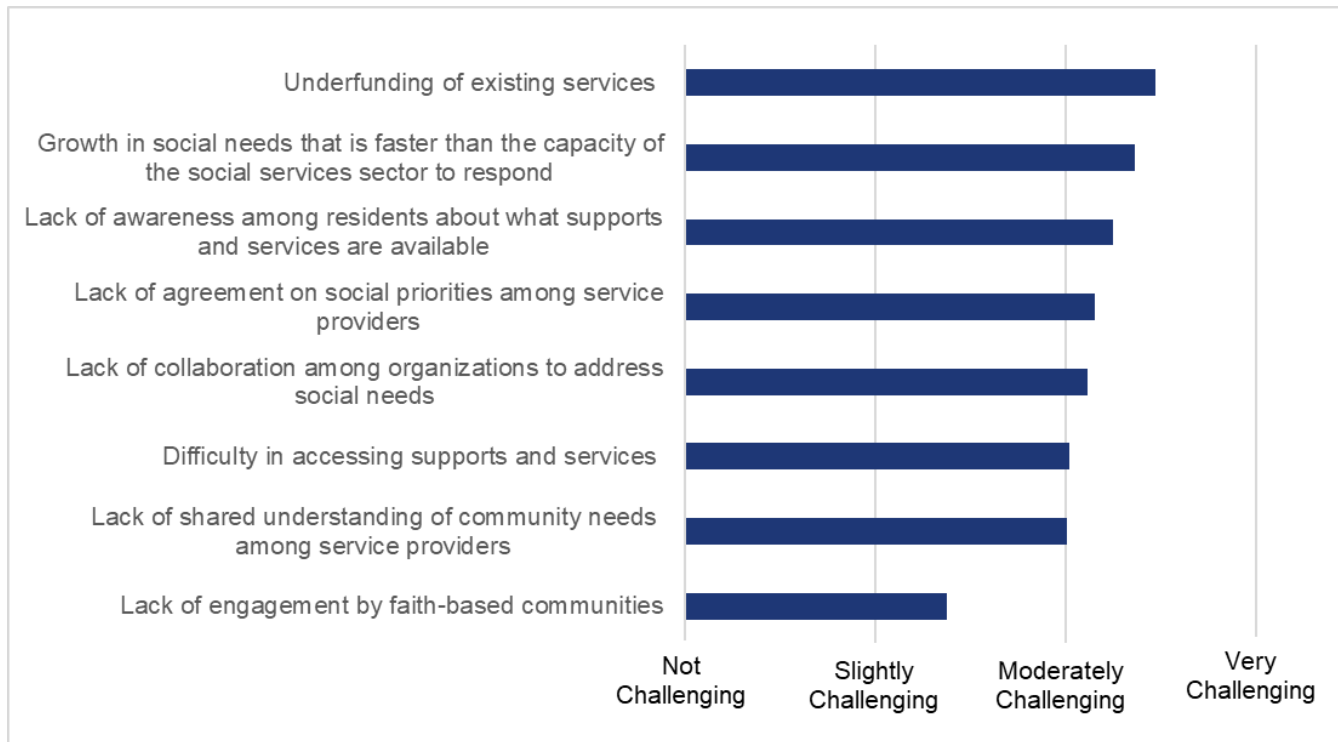
A number of challenges were identified in meeting social needs in the Greater Pincher Creek Region. These can be categorized as systemic, economic, geographical and/or social. These categories are interrelated: there are dynamic cause and effect relationships among them.

Systemic Challenges

Systemic challenges are those that relate to systems and tend to impact a community or region. These relate to the way things are done and the rules, policies, and guidelines, both formal and informal, that govern decision-making and activities. Key systemic barriers to meeting social needs in the Greater Pincher Creek Region that were identified included:

- underfunding of existing services;
- growth in social needs at a quicker pace than the capacity of the social services sector can respond;
- lack of awareness among residents about what supports and services are available;
- lack of agreement on social priorities among service providers; and,
- lack of collaboration among organizations to address social needs.

Figure 5-4: Survey respondent’s perceived systemic challenges in addressing social needs



Economic Challenges

Economic challenges highlighted in this review included:

- low oil prices leading to unstable funding for programs, higher unemployment and overall less economic activity;
- concern over the potential closure of the gas plant;
- unemployment and underemployment for residents including youth;
- lack of understanding of economic and job opportunities in the region outside of agriculture;
- lack of a robust town centre in the Town of Pincher Creek including empty properties, further exacerbated by the recent fire in the hotel;
- low wages, particularly for women who are more likely to work in minimum wage jobs; and,
- at the time of writing this report, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Geographic Challenges

Geographic challenges relate to the physical location of a community. In the case of the Greater Pincher Creek Region, while there are significant geographic assets, some geographic challenges were identified that impact quality of life in the region. These include:

- distance from major shopping centres;
- relatively small population that limits commercial investments, combined with the growth of online shopping;
- lack of affordable transportation;
- distance from post-secondary opportunities which means youth who want to further their education must move away from the region; and,

- remoteness of the region's recreational assets, which makes it more difficult to realize economic benefits from tourism

Social Challenges

Social challenges refer to issues that disrupt or damage society or prevent individuals from interacting with society²³. A number of social challenges were identified in this social needs assessment. They include:

- loneliness and isolation;
- racism, particularly towards the Piikani First Nation;
- a perceived lack of value of intellectuals, which may impact the academic pursuits of youth;
- 'culture of leaving' among the youth, which is perceived by some to be encouraged in the school system;
- increasing crime rates;
- increasing mental health and addiction issues with insufficient funding for programs;
- some residents appear to value historic cultural identities over acceptance of different identities and worldviews, which could limit innovation, inclusion and overall wellbeing for all residents; and,
- lack availability of extracurricular activities for youth and social activities for seniors who are living in their homes.

²³ Best, Joel. 2017. *Social problems*. 3d ed. New York: Norton

6. Considerations for Enhancing Quality of Life in the Greater Pincher Creek Region

The results of this social needs assessment point to a number interconnected priority needs for improving quality of life in the Greater Pincher Creek Region: isolation and loneliness, physical and mental health, substance abuse and addictions, affordable housing, poverty, unemployment and underemployment and racism. It also emphasizes the need to focus on population groups that are particularly vulnerable to having social needs. These include seniors, families with young children, particularly single parents, youth, young men, residents with mental health challenges and individuals from the Piikani First Nation, both living on and off reserve.

The conversations that took place to inform this social needs assessment highlighted the complex interplay among factors that influence quality of life in the Greater Pincher Region. For example, although transportation was not identified as a priority social need, it was raised numerous times as an issue that can impact other social needs and therefore overall resident wellbeing. Social isolation was identified repeatedly as an issue that exacerbates other social needs. An article by Peter Block posted in the Abundant Community website states that social issues are:

about the absence of possibility due to our isolation across economic classes, between elite and marginalized neighborhoods, between schools and their neighborhoods, between the elderly and young people. If this isolation, which is the breakdown of community, does not hold center stage, then nothing important will shift. Well intentioned leaders and citizens, without the consciousness and the tools to produce authentic community, will simply be left with more programs, more funding, and eventually another study to analyze progress.²⁴

This social needs assessment could be the first step in the development of a social master plan for the region. Developing a social plan would ideally involve bringing residents, community organizations, service providers, other communities in the region and the provincial government together to build shared understanding of social needs in the community, continue the work of asset mapping and identifying strengths and opportunities for moving forward. It would be particularly important that residents in priority social groups be involved in the process to ensure their needs and priorities are fully understood and addressed. A social master plan would set out the agreed community quality of life outcomes, what will be done – and by whom – to achieve the outcomes, identify the target populations for which change is sought and an approach for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of social conditions and quality of life in the Town of Pincher Creek, the M.D. and the Village of Cowley.

Identifying opportunities that can be capitalized on for addressing social needs and contributing to wellbeing is an important first step in identifying a strategy for moving forward. Some of these opportunities were identified in focus group discussions, including:

- Host the Southern Alberta Summer Games to bring people to the region and provide a short financial influx;
- Renewal of the Town of Pincher Creek main street to be more tourist friendly and useable for residents;
- Tourism draw from the historical and natural sites in the region;

²⁴ Excerpt adapted by permission from "Welcome," in *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (2d ed.), by Peter Block (Berrett-Koehler, 2018), pp xi - xix

- Potential environmental business incentives from the municipality;
- Potential to modify housing bylaws to allow for more affordable housing;
- Capitalize on the desire of some individuals to leave the city for a 'calmer and healthier' lifestyle, including tech companies;
- Follow the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be a leader in healthy relationships with the Piikani neighbours;
- Capitalize on the Lebel Mansion and the expanding arts community in the region possibly to include a performance art theatre;
- Provide opportunities for outdoor education both locally and outside the region; and,
- Capitalize on the influx of people at certain times of the year for tourism.

ADDENDUM: Potential Implications of COVID-19 on Social Needs in the Greater Pincher Creek Region

Research for this assessment was conducted prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta. However, over the course of writing the report, the pandemic has taken central stage in the lives of Albertans and, in fact, the lives of people all around the globe. Although the full understanding of how COVID-19 will impact social needs is still to be determined, a number of issues and trends are emerging.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs recently released a report²⁵ outlining the potential social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable of our communities including:

- Seniors;
- Persons with Disabilities;
- Youth; and,
- Indigenous Peoples

Seniors

- Seniors are more susceptible to the adverse affects of the virus including death. This vulnerability can increase anxiety and stress among the older populations.
- In an effort to protect ourselves and each other we are practicing social distancing. This, however, can lead to increased isolation and loneliness of seniors, particularly those who are living in their own homes.
- Seniors in care homes may have more difficulty social distancing due the supports needed for daily living.

Persons with Disabilities

- Persons with disabilities and, in the case of Pincher Creek, residents with physical, mental health and addictions issues may be faced with difficulty accessing necessary health-care services due to fear of the virus or temporary changes in services provision.
- Residents with hearing loss may experience increased difficulty communicating due to the use of face masks which limit the ability to lip read.
- Similar to seniors, individuals with health needs may require in-person supports which limits their ability to socially distance and increases their risk of contracting the virus.
- Some individuals with health issues may have difficulty implementing the necessary hygiene protocols including disinfecting homes and regular hand washing.

Youth

- The changes in education delivery are impacting children and youth throughout the world. The sudden closure of schools in the spring led to increased anxiety and isolation of youth and in some cases great difficulty in maintaining academic engagement. The impact of school disruption may have longer-term consequences to which governments and service providers should be attentive.

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/everyone-included-covid-19.html>

- The homes of some children and youth are not safe spaces, placing children and youth at risk of violence, abuse and exacerbated anxiety. The ability to attend school eliminated their ability to have a safe space for part of their days.
- The closure and limited hours of business also impacted youth's ability to find employment. For some youth, this may be impacting their overall wellbeing and it can impact future educational opportunities for some.

Indigenous People

According to Human Rights Watch, indigenous people are at risk of suffering disproportionately from COVID-19²⁶. This is due to a number of factors including:

- Inadequate housing leading to over crowding and inability to maintain social distancing practices.
- Disproportionate number of indigenous people experiencing homeless and living in poverty which limits their access to proper hygiene, healthcare, masks, and their ability to socially distance themselves from others.
- High rates of underlying health conditions which may result in increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Intersecting identity factors that are important to note include sex and income. In general, men and women are experiencing the COVID-19 crisis differently as are low-income individuals.

Women

- Women make up 39% of global employment but have experienced 54% of overall job losses²⁷. In the Greater Pincher Creek Region, approximately 25% of employed women work in sales and services. In this industry all non-essential business were ordered to close across the province on March 26th.
- The closure of daycare centres and schools left many families, particularly women, needing to stay home to care for children. This would have been particularly troublesome for lone-parent families – men or women – who had to balance employment and childcare.
- More women than men work in the healthcare field in Pincher Creek. Workers in this field have experienced increased demand and stress as well as increased risk as they prepared for an influx of COVID-19 cases.
- Indigenous, low-income single mothers may be at significantly higher risk of adverse social affects of COVID-19.

Men

- Although fewer men lost their jobs due to COVID-19 than women²⁸, the impact on many men has been significant. Some studies show that job losses have contributed to increased substance use, anxiety, isolation, and, in some cases, suicides. Health data for the Greater Pincher Creek Region illustrates that

²⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/09/systemic-inequities-increase-covid-19-risk-indigenous-people-canada>

²⁷ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects#>

²⁸ <https://lmic-cimt.ca/gender-implications-of-covid-19-unemployment/>

mental health is a significant issue for men in the community. COVID-19 may make the issue more acute.

- Indigenous, low-income men may be at increased risk of the adverse social implications of COVID-19.

Low Income Individuals

- Low income individuals are at increased risk of experiencing social issues during COVID-19 as they often lack the necessary resources to meet their basic needs, pay for masks and sanitizer, and build their savings.
- There is a risk that the impacts of COVID-19 on low-income individuals will have long-term consequences. Therefore, social planning should take into consideration the long-term recovery of these individuals.

As the pandemic continues, its impact on social issues will also continue. Social planning should attempt to take into consideration immediate needs of individuals in the Greater Pincher Creek Region with a vision of addressing long term needs that may have been rooted in the community before the pandemic or come about as a result of the pandemic.



Nichols
APPLIED MANAGEMENT INC.

Nichols Applied Management Inc.

Management and Economic Consultants
Suite 302, 11523 – 100 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0J8

Main Contact: David Schaaf, Principal]
Office: (780) 424-0091 / Direct: (780) 409-1757
Email: d.schaaf@nicholsappliedmanagement.com
www.nicholsappliedmanagement.com

MANAGEMENT & ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS