



Seniors Profile: Mackenzie, BC

New Horizons for Seniors

Second Edition

Winter 2023

*Prepared by the Community Development Institute
University of Northern British Columbia*

On behalf of the College of New Caledonia

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Availability

Copies of this report have been provided to the Mackenzie New Horizons Stakeholder Committee. The final reports are also posted on the website of the Community Development Institute at UNBC:
<https://www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute/research-projects>.

Related Publications

Seniors Profile: Mackenzie, BC – New Horizons for Seniors. Fall 2020. Prepared by Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC.

Mackenzie Seniors Survey: Belonging. Survey Report, Summer 2021. Prepared by Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC.

Mackenzie Seniors Survey: Recreation and Leisure Facilities and Programs. Survey Report, Winter 2022. Prepared by Community Development Institute, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC.

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Context

This Seniors Profile is the second, updated, profile prepared as part of the New Horizons project undertaken by the Mackenzie Campus of the College of New Caledonia in collaboration with community partners, including Autumn Lodge Society, Community Futures Fraser-Fort George, Community Paramedics, District of Mackenzie, Kimta Transportation Society, Mackenzie and District Museum, Mackenzie Chamber of Commerce, Mackenzie Community Arts Centre, Mackenzie Counselling Services Society, Mackenzie Public Library, Mackenzie Recreation Centre, and the Community Development Institute at UNBC. The project aims to research, develop, and implement creative and collaborative approaches to increasing the social inclusion of seniors in the District of Mackenzie. As the project partner responsible for the research elements of New Horizons, the CDI has compiled this profile update. The purpose of the profile is to collate the most recent available information to create a snapshot of the senior population in the community, as well as some historical developments, to help the community understand seniors' situation and make informed decisions.

The Seniors Profile includes mainly data from Statistics Canada's census profiles. A census of the Canadian population is undertaken every five years to provide a statistical portrait of the country. The census consists of a mandatory short-form questionnaire sent to every household and a mandatory long-form questionnaire sent to a sample of 25% of households. For the 2011 census alone, the mandatory long-form questionnaire was replaced by the optional National Household Survey. While the mandatory short and long-form surveys in 2016 and 2021 garnered response rates of 94% and 90% respectively in Mackenzie, the optional survey in 2011 only had a response rate of 51% in Mackenzie, leading to a less representative data set for 2011. This should be kept in mind when interpreting developments over time that include 2011 census program data.

Introduction

The District Municipality of Mackenzie is located in the Fraser-Fort George Regional District in the northern interior of British Columbia (BC). It constitutes 155 square kilometres of land near Morfee and Williston Lakes, at the end of approximately 30 kilometres of Highway 39 connecting Mackenzie with Highway 97 North.

Neighbouring communities include McLeod Lake and McLeod Lake Indian Reserve 46 kilometres south of Mackenzie with a combined population of under 200. Bear Lake, 109 kilometres south of Mackenzie, has a 2021 population of 152. Highway 97 connects Mackenzie to Prince George, a northern service centre with a 2021 population of over 76,000 a little over 184 kilometres to the south. To the east, Chetwynd, a town of 2,300, is located 177 kilometres from Mackenzie. Tumbler Ridge, with a population of 2,400, and Dawson Creek, a small service centre with a 2021 population of over 12,300 are located at a distance of just under 280 kilometres. Another service centre for Mackenzie is Fort St. John, a city of just under 21,500 located 311 kilometres to the northeast.¹ Mackenzie features a local airport for charter flights. The closest international airport is located in Prince George; Dawson Creek and Fort St. John offer domestic flight connections.

Situated in Treaty 8 territory, Mackenzie's neighbouring First Nations include McLeod Lake Indian Band, Kwadacha Nation, Tsay Keh Dene, West Moberly First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, and Saulneau First Nation. European influence in the area began in the 19th century with fur trading posts and gold miners moving north after the Cariboo Gold Rush. The town site of Mackenzie was developed by British Columbia Forest Products in 1965 as an instant town with a pulp mill and two sawmills.²

Heavily dependent on forestry and mining, Mackenzie has experienced economic volatility reflecting developments in those sectors, such as periods of growth and development in the 1970s and the 1990s and downturns due to, among other things, the mountain pine beetle, fibre shortage, and wider lumber market developments in recent decades and years.

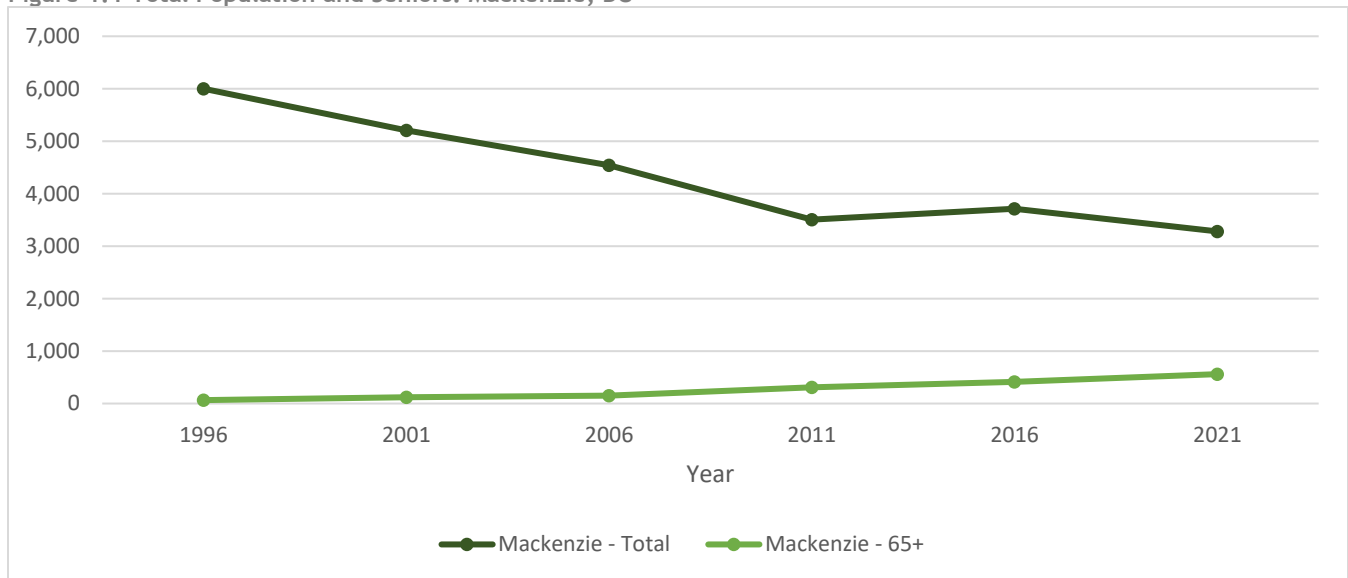
1.0 Population and Seniors

Population data provides information about the size of the community at a single point in time. In combination with other data, population information shows how events and regional trends influence the community.

Figure 1.1 indicates that 3,281 people lived in the District Municipality of Mackenzie as of 2021. In the last 20+ years, the population of Mackenzie has seen negative growth from 6,000 in 1996. During the same time period, the total senior population aged 65 years and over, as well as the pre-seniors aged 50 years and over, have seen a slight but steady increase. As depicted in Figure 1.3, this has meant a considerable increase in the proportion of the community made up of seniors. In 1996, only one percent of the total population was aged 65 years and over. By 2021, seniors made up 17% of the total population, meaning close to one in five people is of retirement age with an additional one in four people of pre-senior age ready to retire in the next decade.

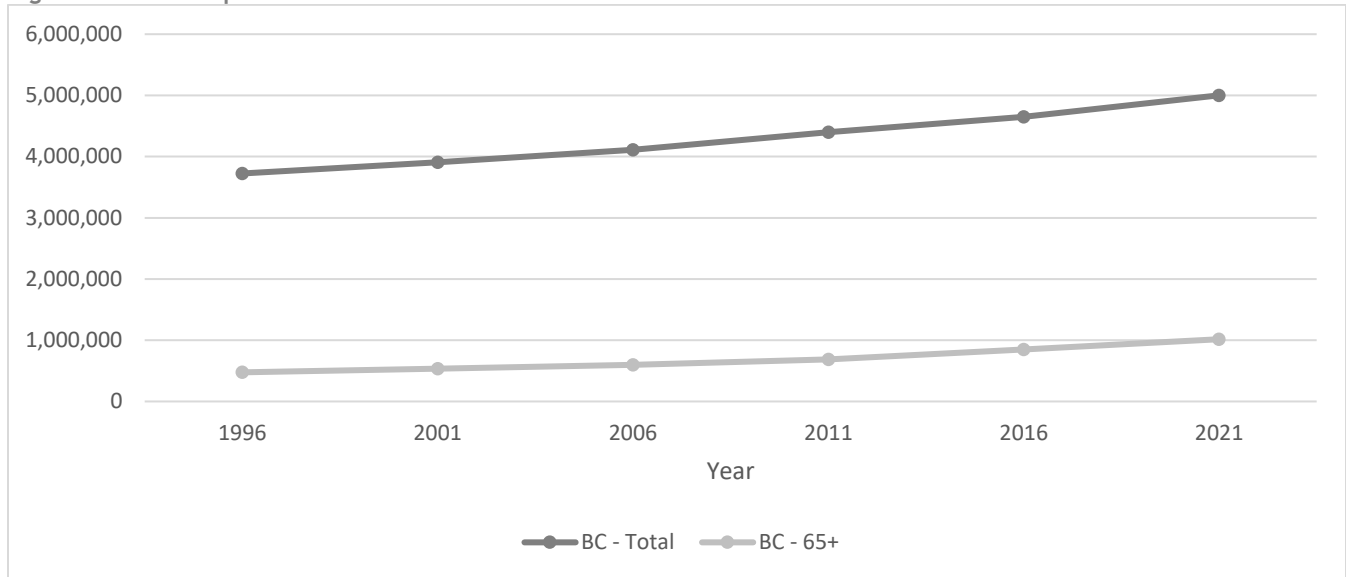
In comparison, BC has seen an increase in its overall population and an increase in seniors only slightly above total population growth (Figure 1.2). Consequently, while BC's senior population currently still makes up a larger proportion of the population than in Mackenzie, the percentage of seniors has increased at a much slower pace than in Mackenzie (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.1 Total Population and Seniors: Mackenzie, BC



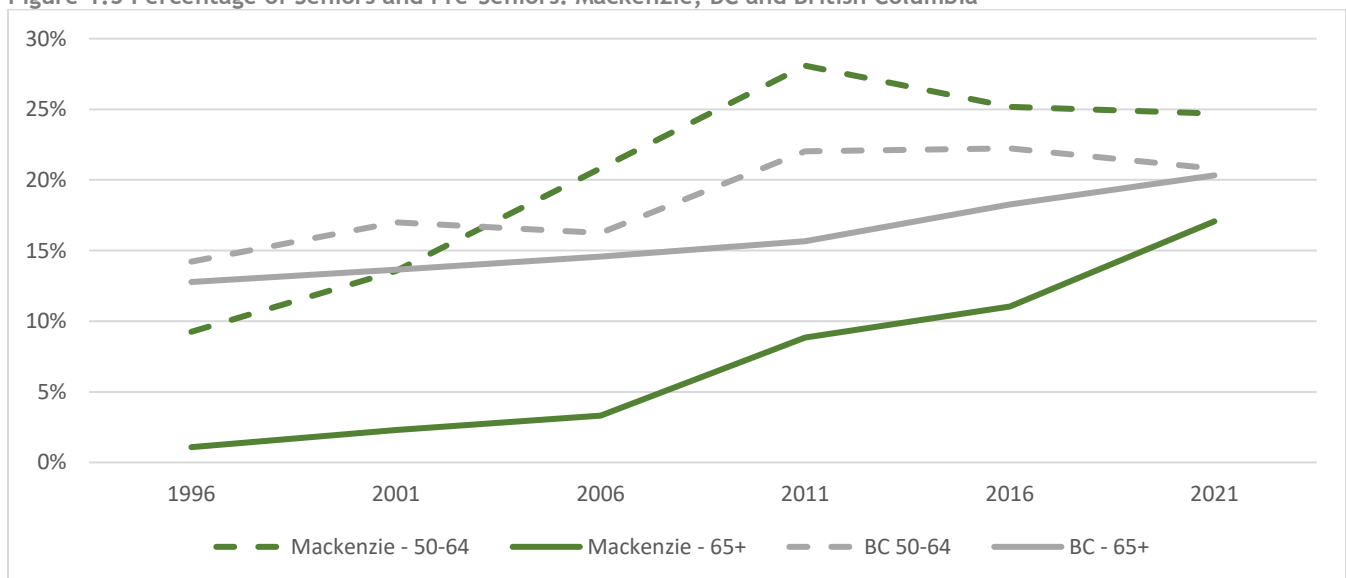
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996-2021. Census Program.

Figure 1.2 Total Population and Seniors: British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada. 1996-2021. Census Program.

Figure 1.3 Percentage of Seniors and Pre-Seniors: Mackenzie, BC and British Columbia



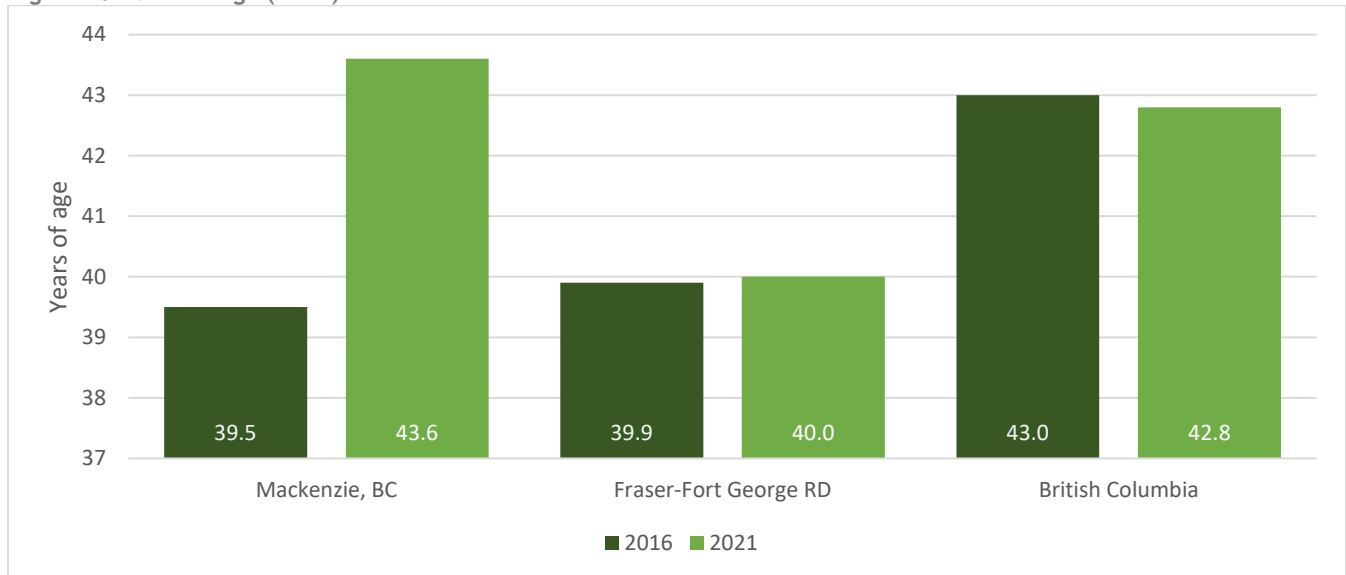
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996 -2021. Census Program.

2.0 Age Profile

The age profile of a community provides information about the age composition of the population and shows how the population age structure has changed over time. This information is useful for the study of community structure and determining service, housing, and related infrastructure needs.

Median age is defined as the exact age where half the population is older and half is younger. Mackenzie used to have a younger median age than the surrounding region and the province. In 2021, the median age in Mackenzie was 43.6 years, a 10% increase over 39.5 years in 2016. As depicted in Figure 2.1, this was above the median age for the Regional District and the Province.

Figure 2.1 Median Age (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Like many resource communities, Mackenzie was designed and developed to attract young workers and their families to support a workforce for resource extraction industries. The workforce of the 1980s and 1990s resource booms is now aging in place. Population pyramids are a useful way of expressing population age at a given point in time and visualizing community aging over a longer period of time. Each bar represents an age group, starting with the youngest at the bottom of the graph and going up to the oldest age group at the top. The graph is vertically divided into men+ and women+ population.

Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show that Mackenzie had virtually no older seniors and a generally younger population with large percentages of children and adults in the family formation years in 1996. By 2016, Mackenzie still showed a high percentage of children, but its population had aged significantly. Men and women in the family-formation years aged in their 30s and early 40s were the largest age group in 1996. By 2016, the workforce had aged with people in their late 40s and 50s making up the largest population age groups. By 2021, Mackenzie had a notably smaller proportion of children and youth, as well as a decreasing young workforce, while the aging workforce of the 1990s continued to age in place as the largest population segment. The comparison with British Columbia in 2021 highlights the aging population of retirement age in Mackenzie and the decreasing working age population segment. The 2021 population pyramid also begins to show more seniors in the oldest age groups in Mackenzie. Over 40% of Mackenzie's 2021 working age population will have reached retirement age in the next 10 years, close to 60% will be of retirement age within the next 20 years.

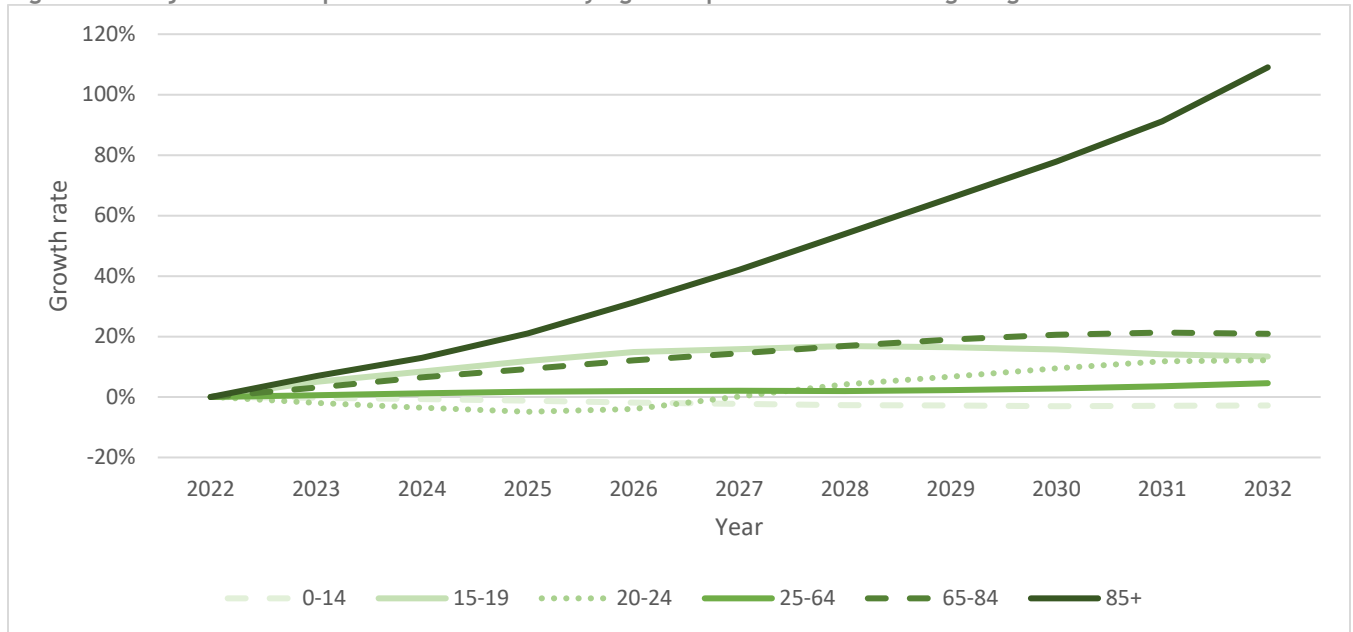
Figure 2.2 Population Pyramids: Mackenzie, BC



Source: Statistics Canada. 1996, 2016, and 2021. Census Program.

The government of British Columbia predicts population growth of 8.3% from 2022 to 2032 in the Fraser-Fort George Regional District. Figure 2.3 depicts the projected population growth broken down by age group. Seniors aged 85 and over are expected to increase at the fastest rate of 109% by 2032, while the workforce aged 15 to 64 years is expected to experience one of the lowest growth rates (6.1%). While the workforce entry population aged 15 to 24 is projected to see more substantial growth (13%), the workforce aged 25-64 is projected to see very little growth in comparison (5%). Children under 15 are the only population age group expected to see negative growth (-2.8%). These projections for the Regional District indicate a further increase in Mackenzie’s older senior population, and consequently an urgent need to take seniors’ needs into consideration in community strategic planning processes.

Figure 2.3 Projections of Population Growth Rate by Age Group in Fraser-Fort George Regional District



Source: BC Statistics. 2022. Population Projections.

3.0 Family Characteristics

While 2021 data describing the Census family characteristics for Mackenzie seniors, and whether they lived alone or not, were not available at the time of completion of this report, marital status provides some information on their likelihood of living alone. Figure 3.1 shows the 2021 marital status of adults aged 65 years and over in Mackenzie. Around two-thirds of seniors aged 65 and over were married or living in common-law, indicating they were likely not living alone. Around 55% of those living in a relationship were men, and around 45% were women. Women were slightly more likely to not be living in a relationship than men, and thereby more likely to live alone. In particular, women+ seniors were more likely to be widowed.

Table 3.1 Marital Status of Adults Aged 65 Years and Over, Mackenzie, BC (2021)

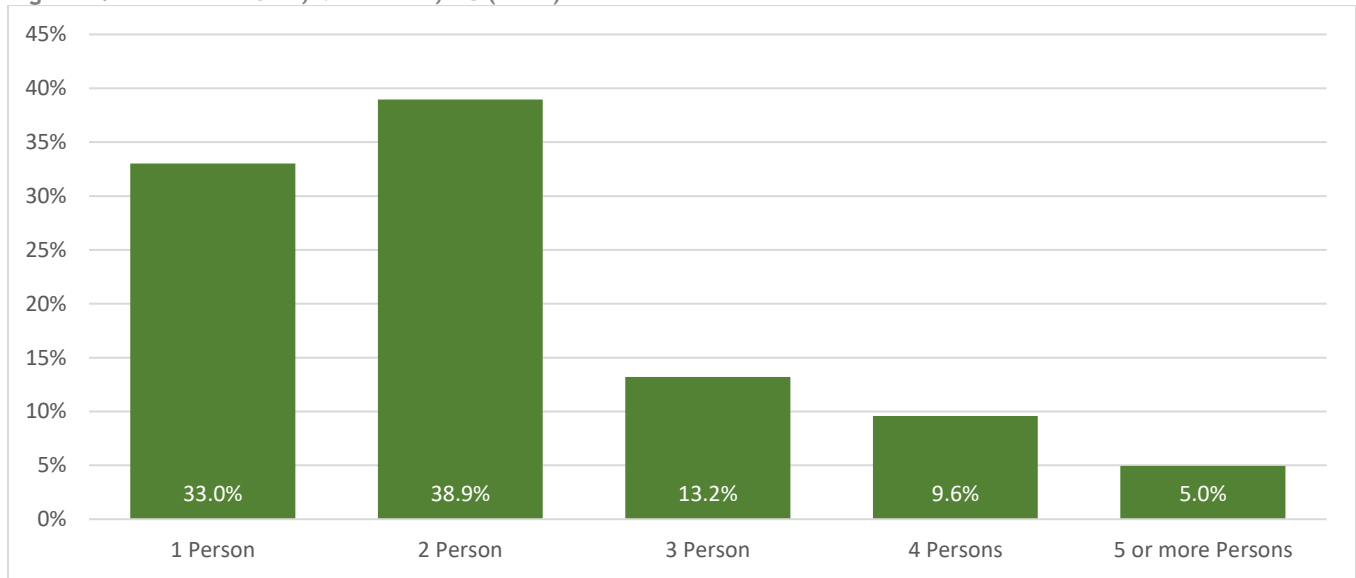
Years of Age	Total Seniors	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+
Total	560	250	145	95	40	30
Married or Common-Law	360	170	100	60	20	10
Not Married or Common-Law	210	85	45	35	20	25
Widowed	100	25	25	15	15	20
Men+						
Total	305	140	75	60	20	10
Married or Common-Law	200	85	55	40	15	5
Not Married or Common-Law	100	50	20	20	5	5
Widowed	35	5	5	15	5	5
Women+						
Total	255	110	70	35	20	20
Married or Common-Law	165	85	45	20	10	5
Not Married or Common-Law	105	30	25	15	15	20
Widowed	70	20	25	5	10	10

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

4.0 Household Characteristics

Statistics Canada defines private households as a person or group of persons occupying the same dwelling. Private households include family and non-family members.³ As shown in Figure 4.1, two-person households were the most common household size in Mackenzie in 2021, and one- and two-person households made up close to three-quarters of all households. Table 4.1 confirms that the average household size in 2021 was 2.2 persons. It also shows that one- and two-person households saw proportional growth since 2016, while larger households made up a smaller share of all households. In terms of the total number of households in the community, one-person households were the only household size with increasing numbers from 2016 to 2021 and also the household size with the largest increase in proportional representation.

Figure 4.1 Household Size, Mackenzie, BC (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

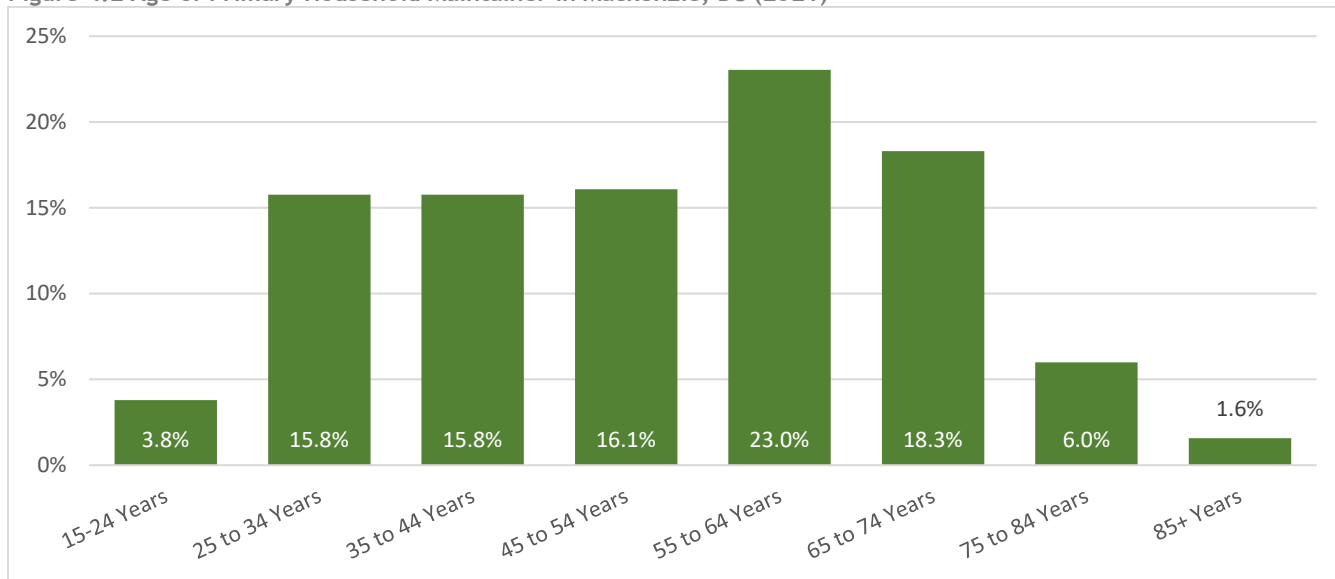
Table 4.1 Household Size, Mackenzie, BC

	Number of Households (2016)	Percentage of Households (2016)	Number of Households (2021)	Percentage of Households (2021)
Total	1610	100.0%	1515	100.0%
1 Person	480	29.8%	500	33.0%
2 Persons	610	37.9%	590	38.9%
3 Persons	220	13.7%	200	13.2%
4 Persons	190	11.8%	145	9.6%
5 or more Persons	110	6.8%	75	5.0%
Average	2.3	n/a	2.2	n/a

Source: Statistics Canada. 2016 and 2021. Census Program.

The age of 55 to 64 was the largest single age group of household maintainers (23%); however, all senior age groups combined made up a total of 26% of all households, meaning over one-quarter of all household were headed by a household maintainer aged 65 and over (Figure 4.2).

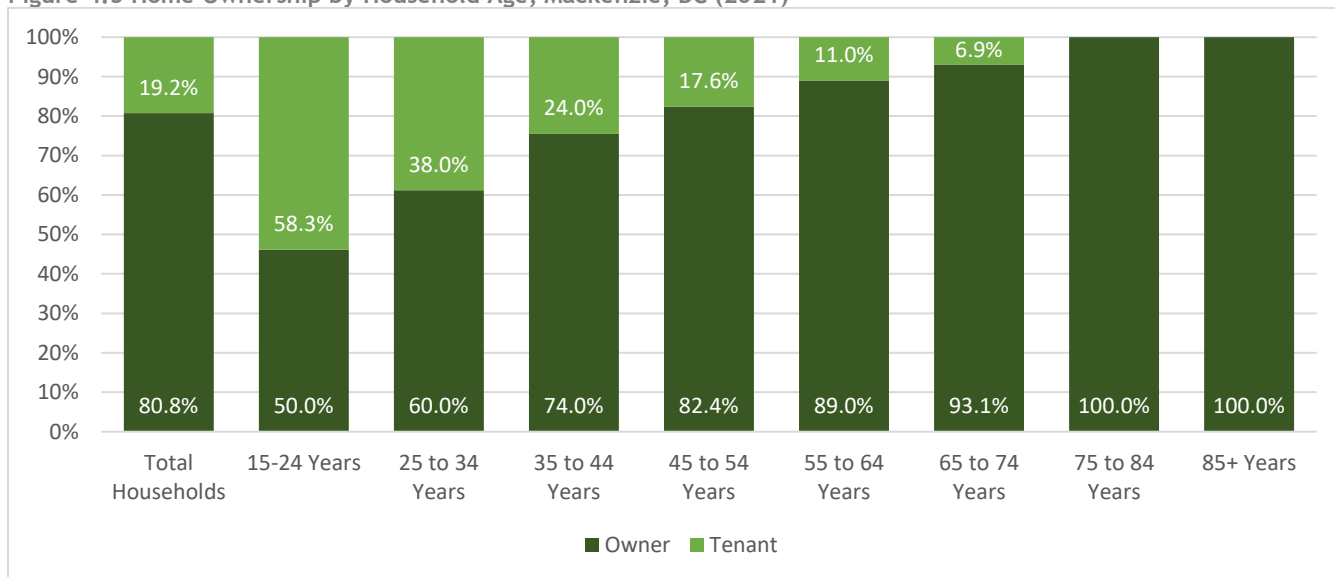
Figure 4.2 Age of Primary Household Maintainer in Mackenzie, BC (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Figure 4.3 depicts tenure by age group and shows that home ownership was more common than renting a dwelling for all adult age groups. The age groups most likely to rent were aged 15 to 34 years, a common age to start a household or a family, as well as a career (42% renting). As Mackenzie household maintainers aged after that time, they were increasingly more likely to own a home.

Figure 4.3 Home Ownership by Household Age, Mackenzie, BC (2021)



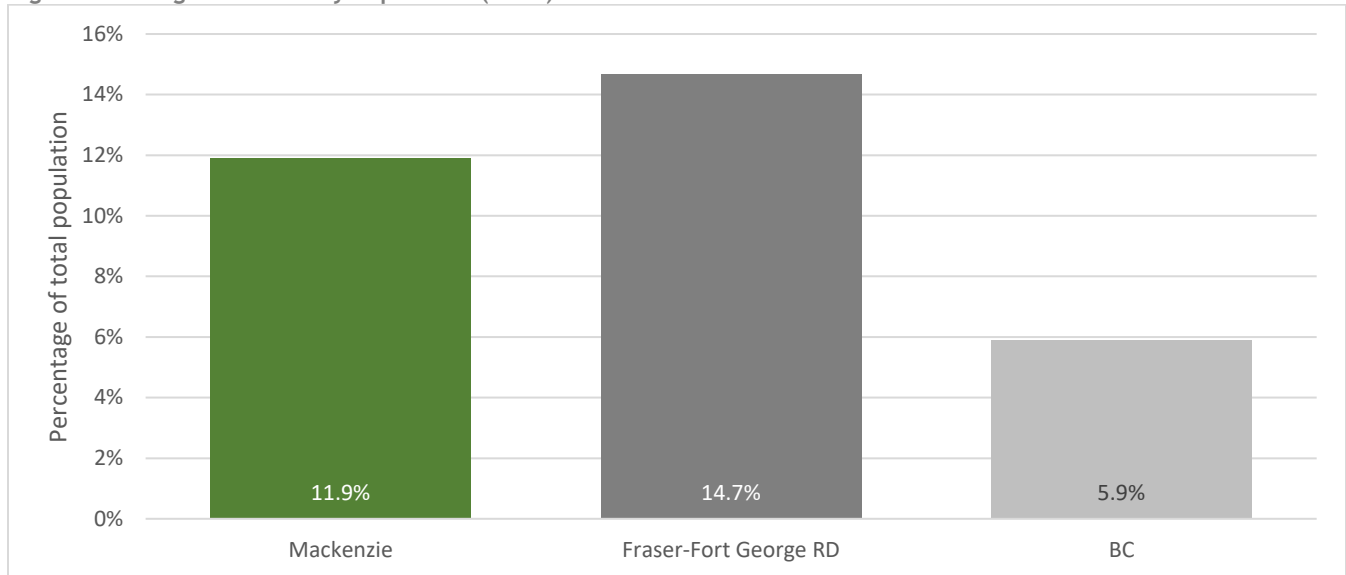
Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Note: Rounding of small numbers can lead to discrepancies in the percentages.

5.0 Indigenousⁱ Population

In northern BC regions, the population identifying as Indigenous tends to make up a larger percentage of the total population than the Indigenous population province- or Canada-wide. Figure 5.1 shows that 12% of the population of Mackenzie self-identified as Indigenous in 2021, which was slightly lower than the Indigenous identity population in the entire regional district (15%) but well above the Indigenous population of BC (6%). The total Indigenous identity population in Mackenzie had seen negative growth of 9% since the 2016 census, which represents a smaller decrease than experienced by the total population.

Figure 5.1 Indigenous Identity Population (2021)



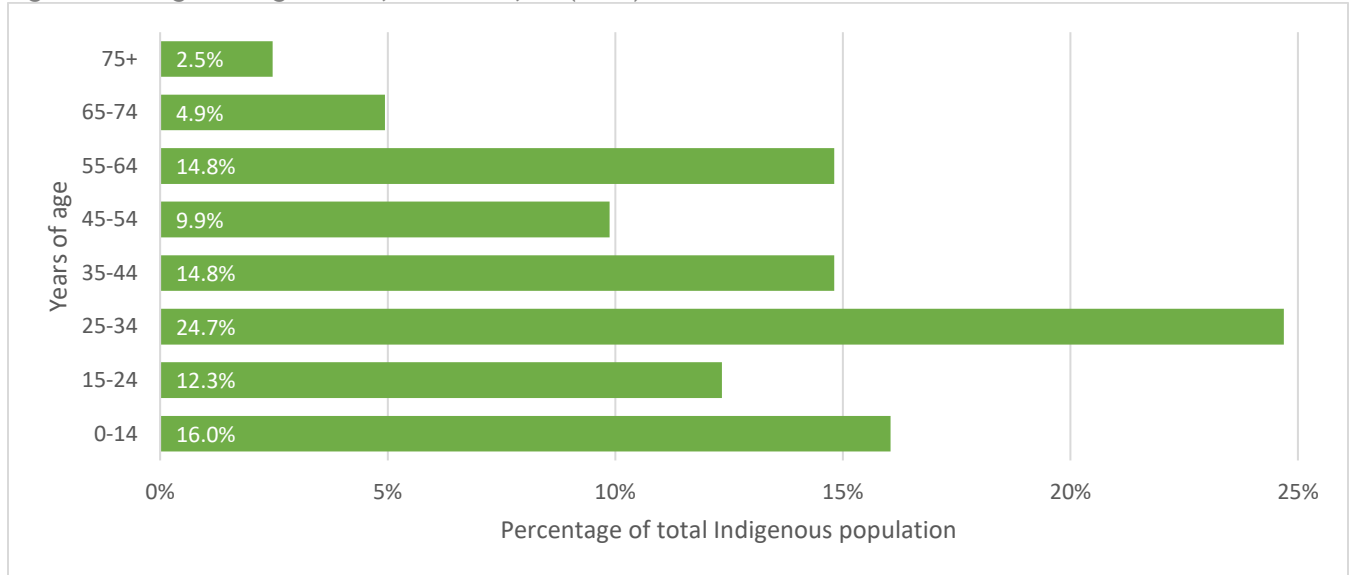
Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

The Indigenous age profile for Mackenzie (Figure 5.2) demonstrates that the Indigenous population in Mackenzie was younger than the total population (Figure 5.3). However, the Indigenous population of the community had also experienced aging since the last census. While children aged zero to 14 years made up over one-third of the Indigenous population in 2016, they only made up 16% of Mackenzie's Indigenous population in 2021. The proportion of the younger working age population aged 25 to 44 years had increased proportionally in Mackenzie's Indigenous population. The older working population aged 45 to 64 years had remained roughly the same, but the senior population aged 65 years and over had doubled in proportion. Overall, Mackenzie's Indigenous age distribution in 2021 looked notably closer to the age distribution of the total Mackenzie population (Figure 5.3) compared to 2016.

A key take-away regarding Indigenous seniors in Mackenzie is a total and proportional increase in the Indigenous identity senior population by 2021. This indicates increasing importance of inclusion of their specific health, social, and cultural needs as they age, as well as an opportunity to support their roles as elders to their Indigenous community as well as the entire Mackenzie community.

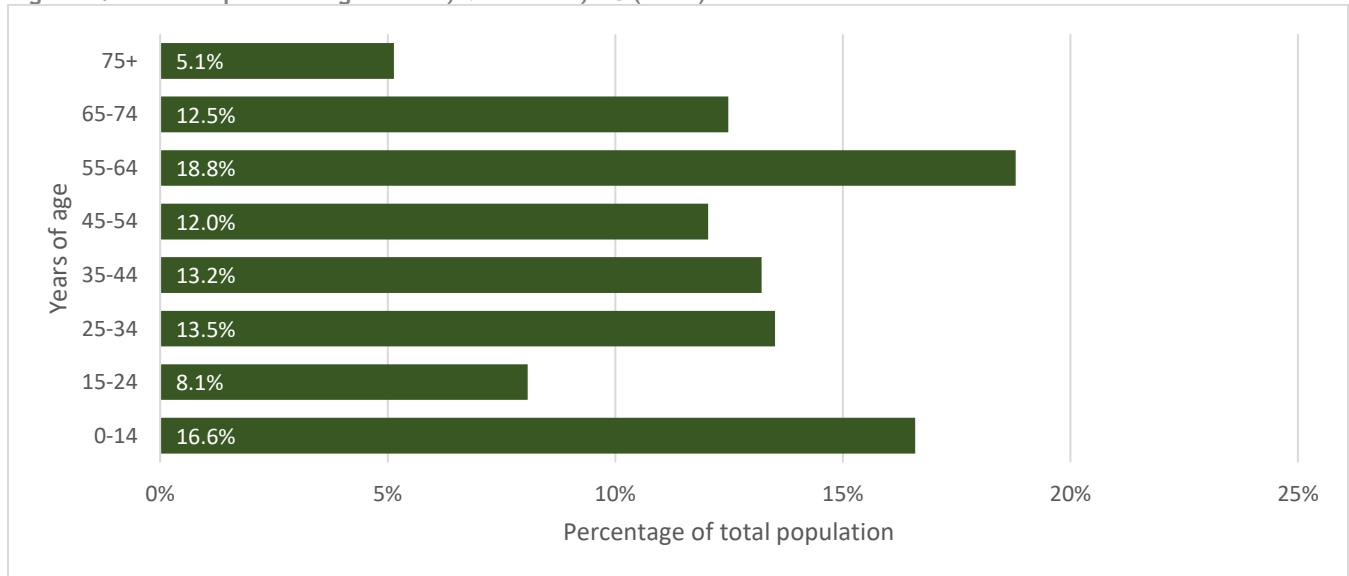
ⁱ The term 'Indigenous' is the terminology used in the Census Program in 2021. Previous Census data sets use the term 'Aboriginal'.

Figure 5.2 Indigenous Age Profile, Mackenzie, BC (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Figure 5.3 Total Population Age Profile, Mackenzie, BC (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

6.0 Visible Minority

The term ‘visible minority’ in the Canadian Census is adopted from the *Employment Equity Act* and refers to persons who are non-Indigenous, and non-Caucasian or non-white.⁴ The visible minority population of Mackenzie made up a total of 4.7% of the total 2021 population (Table 6.1). This was an increase of 1.3 percentage points over 2016. Mackenzie had seen an increase in its total visible minority population. One-half of the visible minority population was of Filipino origin, a group that has remained stable since 2016. The South Asian community made up over one-quarter of Mackenzie’s visible minority (28%) and had seen 36% negative growth in its total numbers. The relatively small black community in Mackenzie appeared to have remained stable and constituted 6% of the visible minority. Since 2016, a visible minority of Chinese origin had also formed and made up 6% of the total visible minority population. A break-down of the age groups represented in the visible minority population was not available for Census Subdivisionsⁱⁱ below a certain population size threshold.

Table 6.1 Visible Minority Population, Mackenzie, BC (2021)

	Total Numbers	Percentage of Total Population	Percentage of Visible Minority
Total population	3,410	100.0%	n/a
Total visible minority	160	4.7%	100.0%
South Asian	45	1.3%	28.1%
Chinese	10	0.3%	6.3%
Black	10	0.3%	6.3%
Filipino	80	2.3%	50.0%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Note: Discrepancies in percentages are due to Census rounding error in small communities.

ⁱⁱ According to the Census Dictionary, “Census subdivision (CSD) is the general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial/territorial legislation) [...]” (Statistics Canada. 2016. Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016. Available at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/geo012-eng.cfm>.)

7.0 Immigration Characteristics

Immigrants are defined as persons who are or have been permanent residents (formerly called landed immigrants), including those who have obtained Canadian citizenship.⁵ Mackenzie saw an increased influx of immigrants between 2011 and 2021, in particular in the latter half of that decade. The immigrant population overall had become younger by 2021 compared to 2016. Of Mackenzie's 2021 senior population, around one in eight were immigrants. Most of those immigrants arrived in Canada before 1980. Roughly two-thirds of them were of European descent, the rest came from the United States.

Looking at the data in more detail, Table 7.1 shows the total number for immigration characteristics such as time of immigration, region of origin of immigrants, and age at the time of immigration in Mackenzie. These characteristics are then also provided by population age group.

Table 7.1 Immigration Status by Age Group, Mackenzie, BC (2021)

	Total	0-14 Years of Age	15-24 Years of Age	25-54 Years of Age	55-64 Years of Age	65+ Years of Age
Total Population	3,405	565	275	1320	645	605
Immigrants	250	10	0	110	45	75
Time of Immigration:						
Before 1981	100	0	0	0	35	60
1981-1990	10	0	0	0	0	0
1991-2000	25	0	0	15	0	10
2001-2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011-2016	105	10	0	90	0	0
Immigration Status:						
Non-permanent Residents	0	0	0	0	0	0
Region of Origin:						
Americas*	35	0	0	0	15	20
Europe**	105	0	0	35	25	45
Africa	10	0	0	0	0	0
Asia***	95	0	0	65	0	0
Age at Time of Immigration						
Under 5 Years	25	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5-14 Years	55	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
15-24 Years	40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
25-44 Years	125	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
45 Years and over	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program. Population Profile and Table 98-10-0307-01.

Note: Rounding can lead to slight but noticeable discrepancies in small communities.

* United States

**UK, Germany, Poland, other

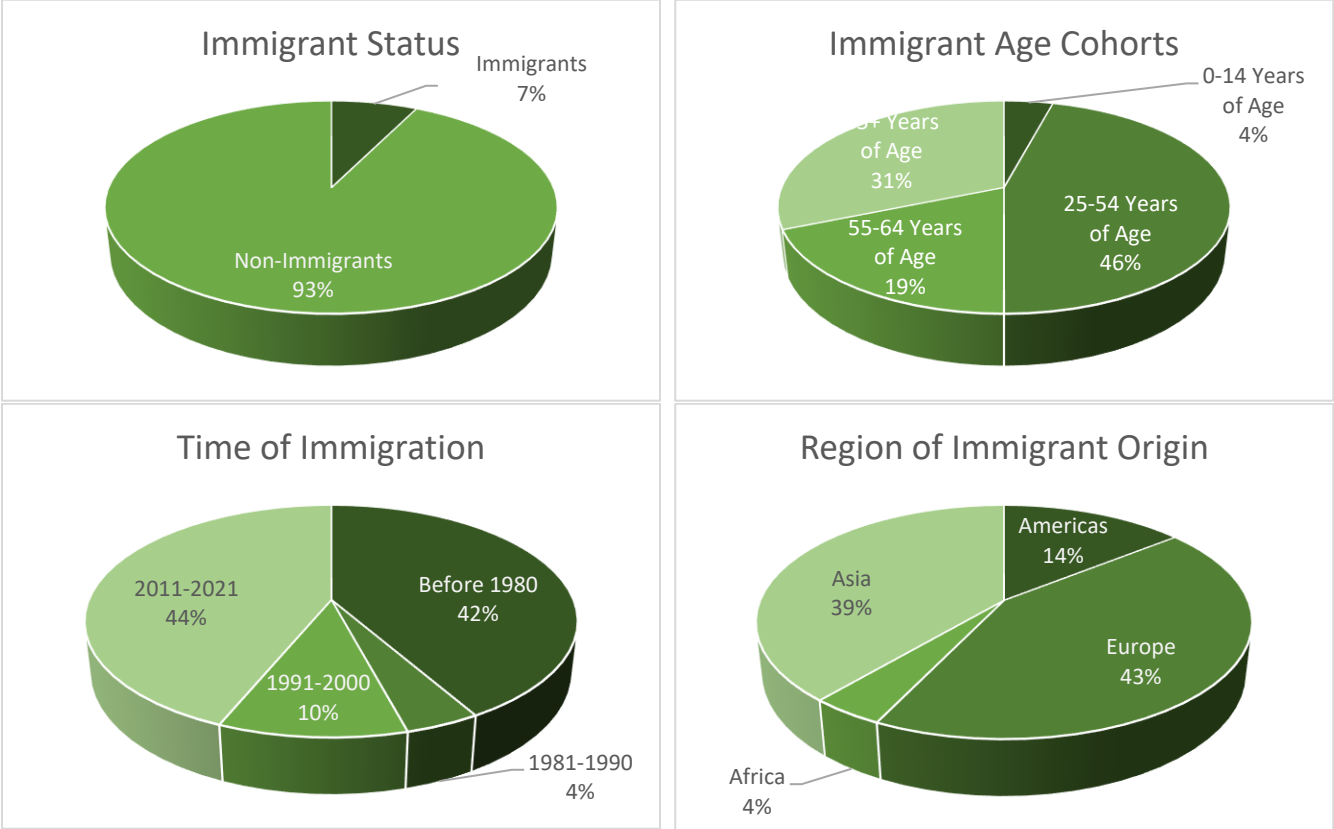
***Philippines, India

As demonstrated in Figure 7.1, 7.3% of the population were immigrants in Mackenzie in 2021. This was below the Fraser-Fort George Regional District's immigrant population (9.7%) and well below the 29.0% of the provincial population who were immigrants. The largest age cohort among Mackenzie's immigrant population made up almost one-half of all immigrants and was of pre-senior and senior age (48%). Another 44% of immigrants were part of the working age population of 25-54 years of age.

A total of around 40% of Mackenzie’s immigrants arrived before 1981 and 2011-2021 respectively. For pre-seniors and seniors as of 2021, the majority (80%) had arrived before the 1980s. Considering that the majority of immigrants who lived in Mackenzie in 2021 had immigrated to Canada as part of the working age population cohort, or as children accompanying their working age parents, it is likely that Mackenzie’s older immigrant population arrived as young workers looking for opportunity around the time many resource towns experienced a boom, and instant towns like Mackenzie were conceived and populated with workers and their families.

Over 40% of all 2021 Mackenzie immigrants originated from Europe, 38% from Asia, 14% from North America, and 4% from Africa. Looking at pre-seniors and seniors, they were exclusively from Europe (roughly two-thirds) and the United States (roughly one-third). Given that almost all older immigrants living in Mackenzie in 2021 had immigrated decades ago, they most likely were deeply familiar with Canadian culture but might also still be invested in their cultures of origin. Coming from two general regions in the world, means that immigrant seniors in Mackenzie would have the opportunity to socialize with peers of potentially similar cultural background. It also provides opportunity to introduce diverse cultural elements to seniors, and the community at large, of other cultural backgrounds.

Figure 7.1 Immigration Characteristics, Mackenzie, BC (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program. Population Profile and Table 98-10-0307-01.

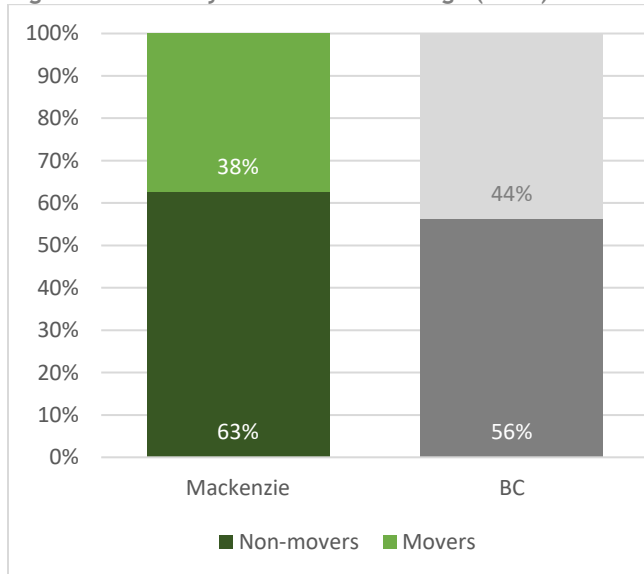
8.0 Mobility and Migration

Mobility and migration provide insight into the movement of the population within the Census Subdivision and movement outside the community. Statistics Canada’s Census data indicates whether a person lives in the same residence as five years before. Those who have remained at the same address are classified as “non-movers”. Those who were living at a different address five years before are classified as “movers”. Movers are further broken down to reflect their movement within or outside the community. “Non-migrants” are movers who have moved to a new residence within the same Census Subdivision; “migrants” are movers who resided in a different Census Subdivision five years before. Migrants can be further broken down into “internal migrants”, who moved from within Canada, and “external migrants”, who moved from outside Canada. Finally, Census data breaks down internal migrants into “intra-provincial” migrants, who resided in the same province five years before, and “inter-provincial”, who resided in a different province five years before.

Figure 8.1 shows that 38% of Mackenzie’s 2021 residents had lived at a different address five years earlier, a lower rate than the 44% of the provincial population who were movers. Of the movers in Mackenzie, 61% had moved to Mackenzie from other communities, while 39% had moved residences within Mackenzie (Figure 8.2). Of those who had moved to Mackenzie within five years prior, 66% moved to Mackenzie from somewhere else in BC, 27% moved there from another Canadian province or territory, and 7% moved there directly from residences outside of Canada.

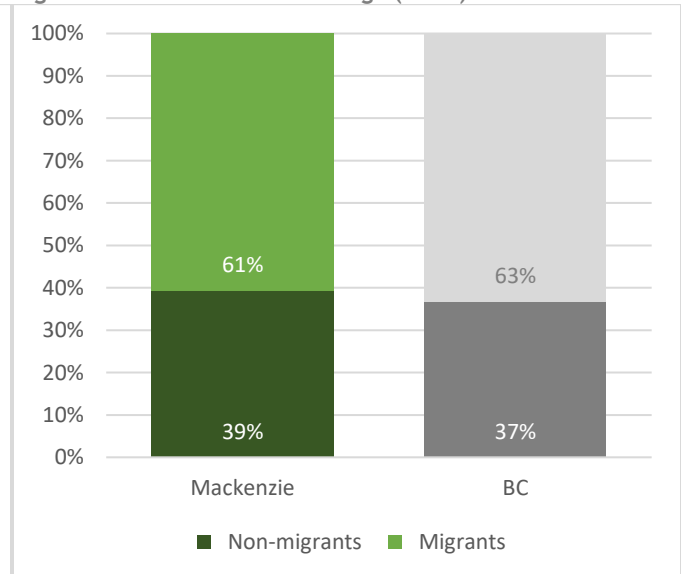
A breakdown of mobility by age group was not available at the Census Subdivision level.

Figure 8.1 Mobility Status Five Years Ago (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Figure 8.2 Movers Five Years Ago (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

9.0 Education

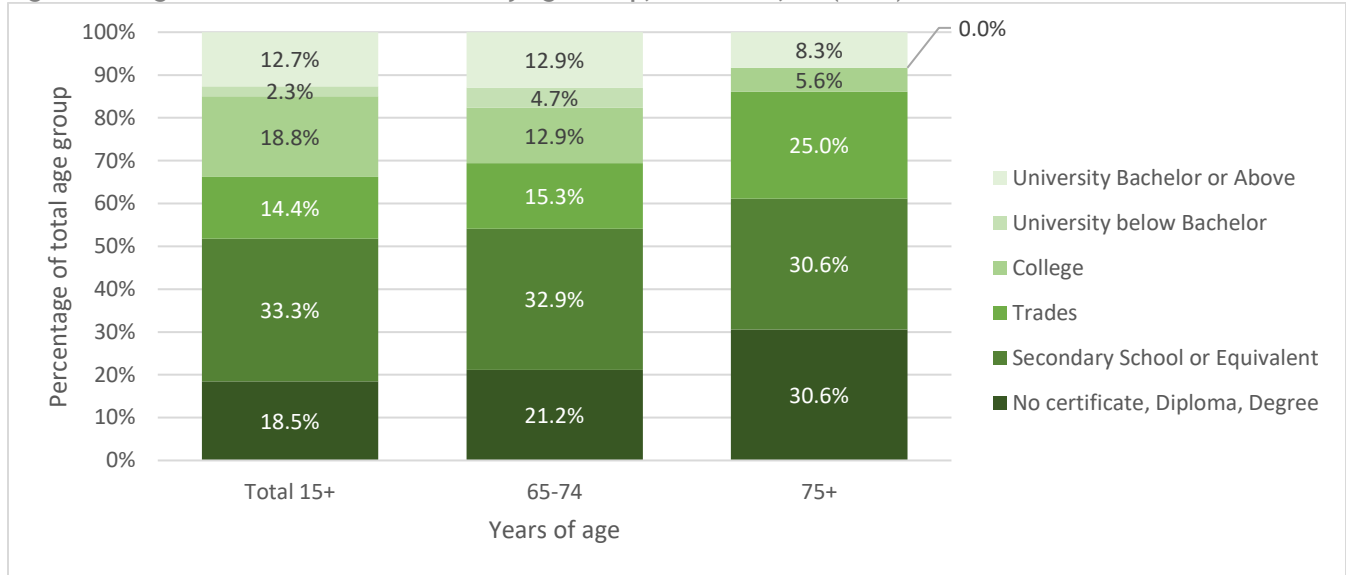
Education is linked to community well-being in many ways, including employment, community capacity, income, and health.⁶ In the context of seniors, the educational attainment of the senior population indicates the type of capacity that is available to the community through the (potential) roles of seniors, as well as the types of capacity gaps that are present or expected in the workforce through retirement. Statistics Canada conceptualizes educational attainment according to a hierarchy that progresses, in ascending order, from elementary school to secondary school, college, and university. For instance, if a person has a trade certificate and a bachelor's degree, the latter is considered their highest educational attainment. A look at educational attainment in Mackenzie in 2021, as presented in Figure 9.1, shows which types of educational attainment were prevalent in the various age groups.

It is evident that close to one-third of older seniors aged 75 and over had not completed high school, something that would have been a common occurrence in resource sector communities at the time when they entered the labour force. This generation likely learned 'on-the-job' and went through numerous positions with an abundance of hands-on experience. This combination of education and life experience can have implications about older seniors' inclination to use modern communication technologies and their comfort levels with formal paperwork and processes. In the five years between 2016 and 2021, there was a notable shift, however, as younger seniors aged into the 75+ year age cohort. The proportion of older seniors without a formal educational attainment was almost cut in half from 57% in 2016 to 31% in 2021. In addition, more individuals with post-secondary education had entered the 75+ year age group in Mackenzie by 2021, making it a more diverse group in terms of professional capacity and likely also in terms of their interests and needs.

Notable in the context of common trades shortages throughout northern communities nowadays, seniors aged 75 years and older were the age group where trades certificates were most prevalent in Mackenzie. This may also mean an increasing loss of that capacity to the workforce as more diversely qualified seniors, especially with trades and university degrees, were likely to have entered retirement. On the other hand, this also indicates an important capacity for the voluntary sector as well as ample opportunity for seniors to remain a little longer in, or temporarily re-enter, the workforce to fill trades capacity shortages.

Younger seniors in the range of 65 to 74 years featured more diverse educational attainment in 2021. Their educational attainment distribution looked much like that of the total working age population in Mackenzie. Among the working-age population overall, educational attainment had become more diverse with fewer individuals without high school completion and more university degrees at bachelor level or above.

Figure 9.1 Highest Educational Attainment by Age Group, Mackenzie, BC (2021)



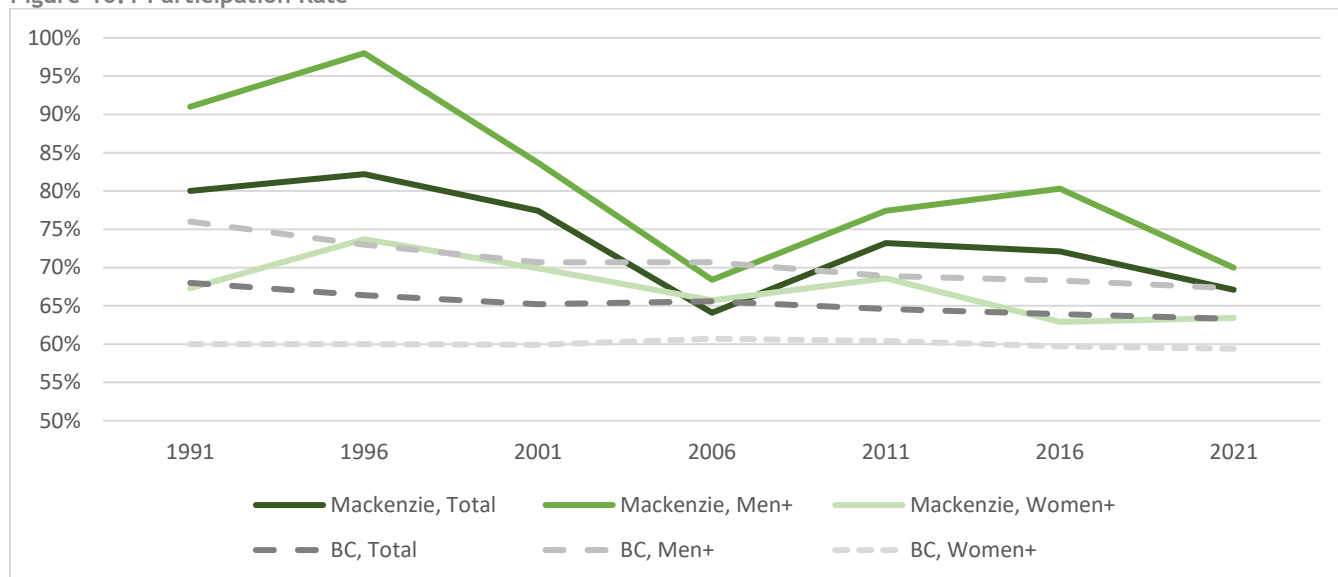
Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

10.0 Labour Force

The strength and diversity of the local economy is reflected in the labour market. It should be noted that the most current census data is from the 2021 Census and was collected in May 2021. The data presented likely reflects curtailments from 2019 and 2020 due to fibre shortage but will not include the permanent mill closures that have happened since then.

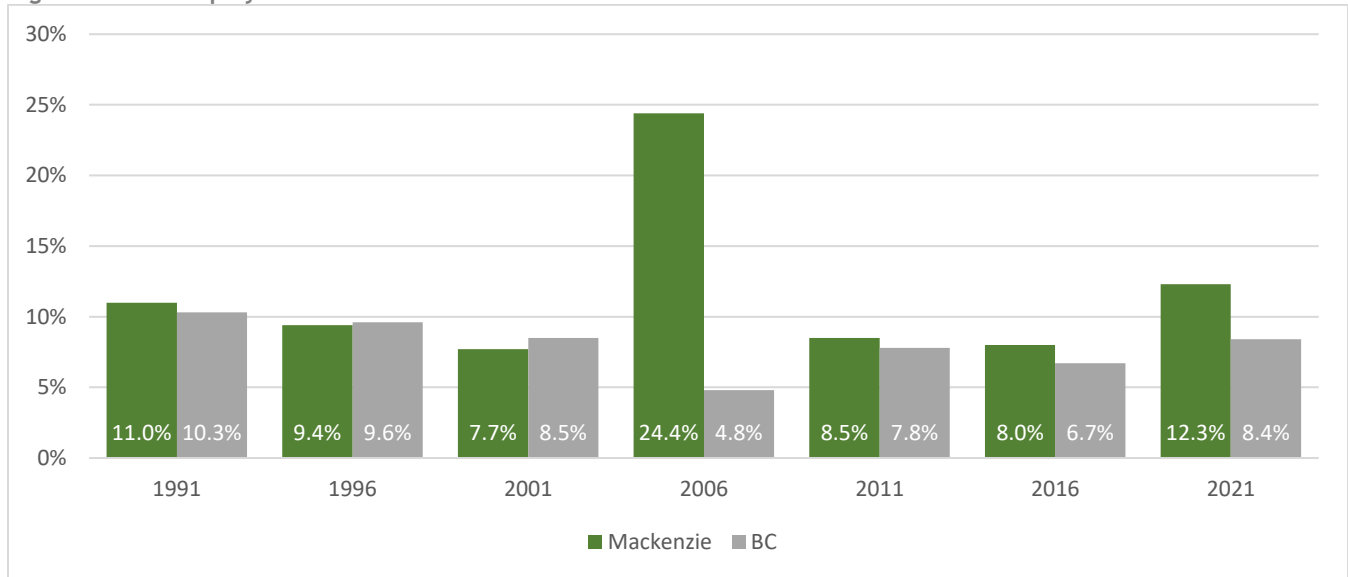
The participation rate expresses the total labour force, employed and unemployed, as a part of the total working age population. Figure 10.1 shows that Mackenzie had seen much greater fluctuation in its participation rate compared to the province as a whole, a common reflection of vulnerability to economic cycles in single-industry resource communities. Mackenzie had a generally higher participation rate than the province overall, especially among women. The sharp decline in the participation rate in the 2000s corresponds with the increase seen in unemployment at the same time caused by a downturn in the forestry sector; the 2021 decline in participation reflects the beginnings of the latest fibre shortage and its impacts on the forestry and manufacturing sectors. Figure 10.2 shows that Mackenzie's unemployment was generally close to that of the province. However, the above-mentioned sudden increase in the unemployment in 2006, when almost one-quarter of the local labour force was unemployed due to mill closures, as well as the more recent decline in forestry manufacturing and related local increase in unemployment, further underline Mackenzie's vulnerability to regional and global economic developments.

Figure 10.1 Participation Rate



Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2021. Census Program.

Figure 10.2 Unemployment Rate

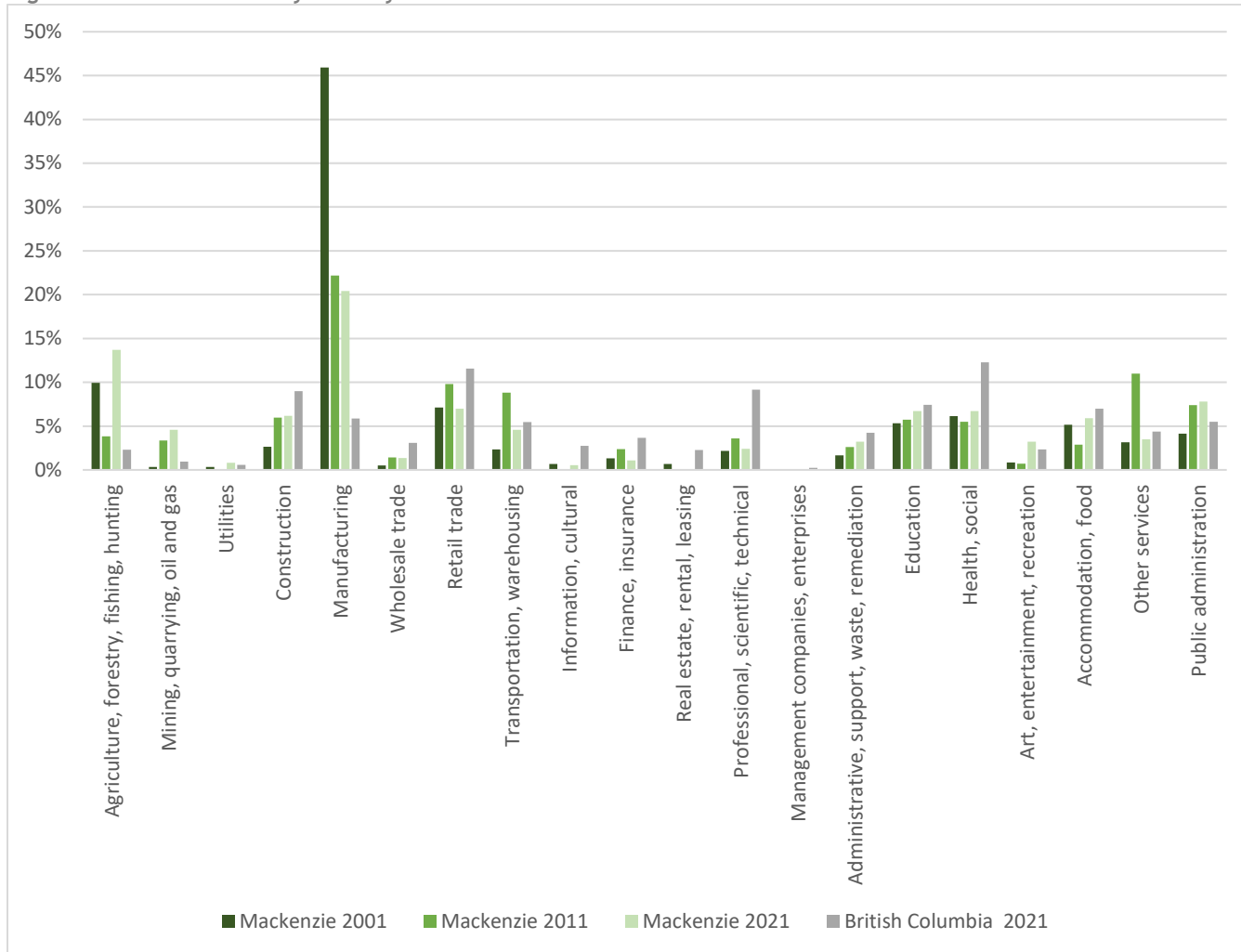


Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2021. Census Program.

A look at the labour force by industry holds information about the diversity of local employment opportunities and allows some conclusions about the state of the local service sector and its developments over time. Figure 10.3 reveals the dominant role of manufacturing in Mackenzie, a role that has seen a decrease over the past 20+ years but still clearly depicts Mackenzie's dependence on one sector by 2021. The graph furthermore shows an increasing role of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, and a resurgence in accommodation and food. Some smaller sectors, like mining, quarrying, oil, and gas, as well as arts and entertainment, are emerging and showing some growth. Construction, wholesale trade, administrative support, education, health, and public administration have been stable industries marking slight increases over the last two decades. A recent noticeable decline is evident in retail, transportation and warehousing, professional and scientific, and other services. The comparison with BC in 2021 emphasizes the difference between the diverse labour force of the province and the dependence on a single industry in Mackenzie.

A breakdown of the labour force by industry and age groups was not available for Mackenzie. While seniors are likely retired and not represented in this labour force data, the data points from 2001 and 2011 provide an indication of the industries current seniors were most likely involved in when they actively participated in the labour market in Mackenzie.

Figure 10.3 Labour Force by Industry

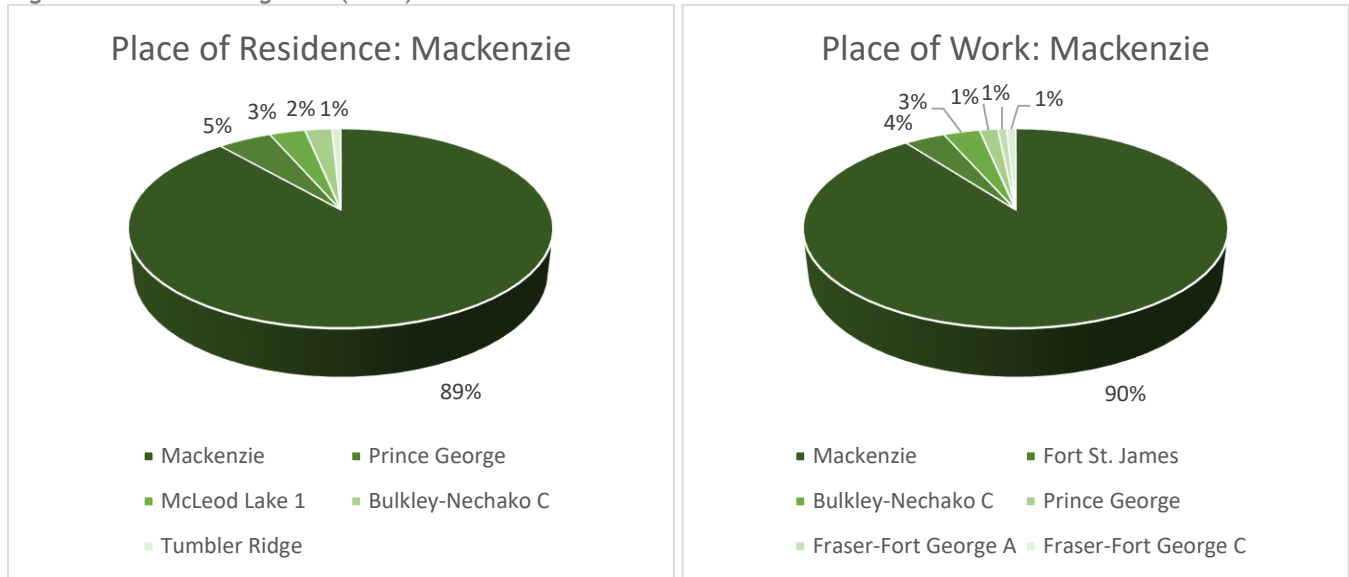


Source: Statistics Canada. 2001-2021. Census Program.

Figure 10.4 shows where Mackenzie’s 2021 workforce commuted for employment.ⁱⁱⁱ Around 89% of the workforce residing in Mackenzie work in Mackenzie, while small percentages find work in Prince George, McLeod Lake 1, Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area C, and Tumbler Ridge. Similarly, close to 90% of people working in Mackenzie reside in Mackenzie, while around 10% commute to Mackenzie from Fort St. James, Bulkley-Nechako C, Prince George, and Fraser Fort George A and C combined.

ⁱⁱⁱ Place-of-work data captures the employed workforce who had a usual place of work, excluding those who have no fixed workplace, work outside of Canada, or work at home.

Figure 10.4 Commuting Flow (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

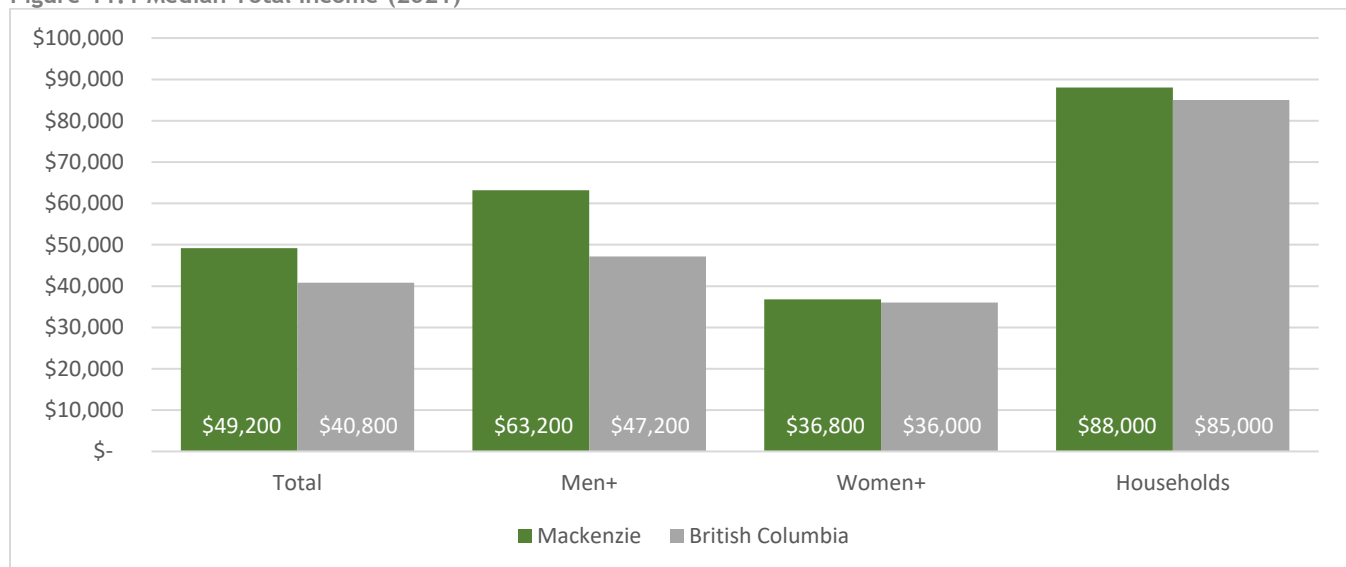
One employment statistic that was available for various age groups in Mackenzie in the 2016 Census was the type of employment, including part-time or full-time, and part year or full year. At the time of the publication of this updated report, 2021 data for these variables was not available.

11.0 Income

Income data reveals not only the wealth of a community, but also how that wealth is distributed among the population. Median income is the measure most often used because it is less likely than average income to be skewed by extremes. Median income refers to the midway point in the income distribution of a population. That is, exactly half of the reported incomes are below and the other half are above the median income.

Figure 11.1 shows median income for Mackenzie and British Columbia in 2021. The median income, especially men+ median income, in Mackenzie was above income province-wide. However, women+ income in Mackenzie was only marginally above provincial women+ income. Consequently, the gender gap in median income in Mackenzie was greater than province-wide. While median income has been increasing over time in BC, it should be noted that total median household incomes in Mackenzie saw a decrease of over 8% between 2016 and 2021.

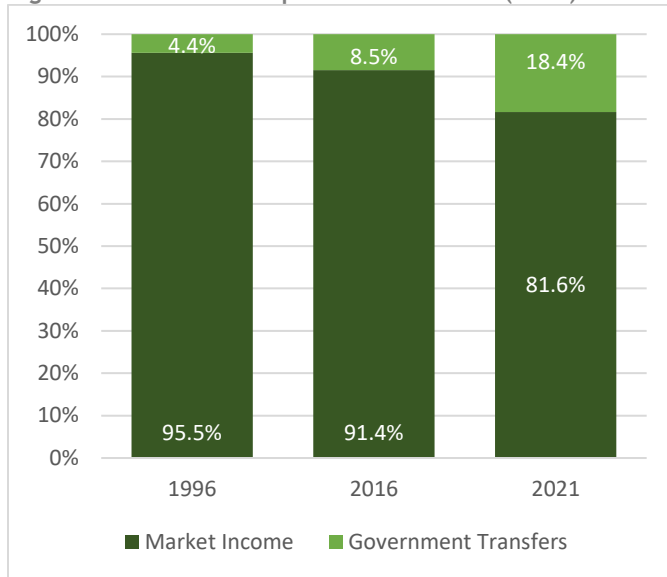
Figure 11.1 Median Total Income (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Median income was not available by age group for Mackenzie, thereby not allowing conclusions about income levels for seniors. However, there are other income indicators to provide some information about seniors' income situation. One income related measure of the local economy is the percentage of income that comes from government transfers. Government transfers refer to transfers from all levels of government, including, but not limited to, retirement income, employment insurance, various tax credits, and other benefits. As Figure 11.2 shows, Mackenzie's dependence on government transfers increased from under 5% in 1996 to over 18% in 2021. Compared to BC (17% dependence on transfers in 2021), Mackenzie's dependence was higher and saw a much more pronounced increase in government transfer dependence from 2016 to 2021. This can be explained, for example, by its faster population aging and a drop in labour force participation rates. With a large part of the workforce reaching retirement age in the next 10 years, the trend in Mackenzie is expected to continue. Government transfer income often means fixed incomes and, therefore, translates to increased financial vulnerability.

Figure 11.2 Income Composition Mackenzie (2021)

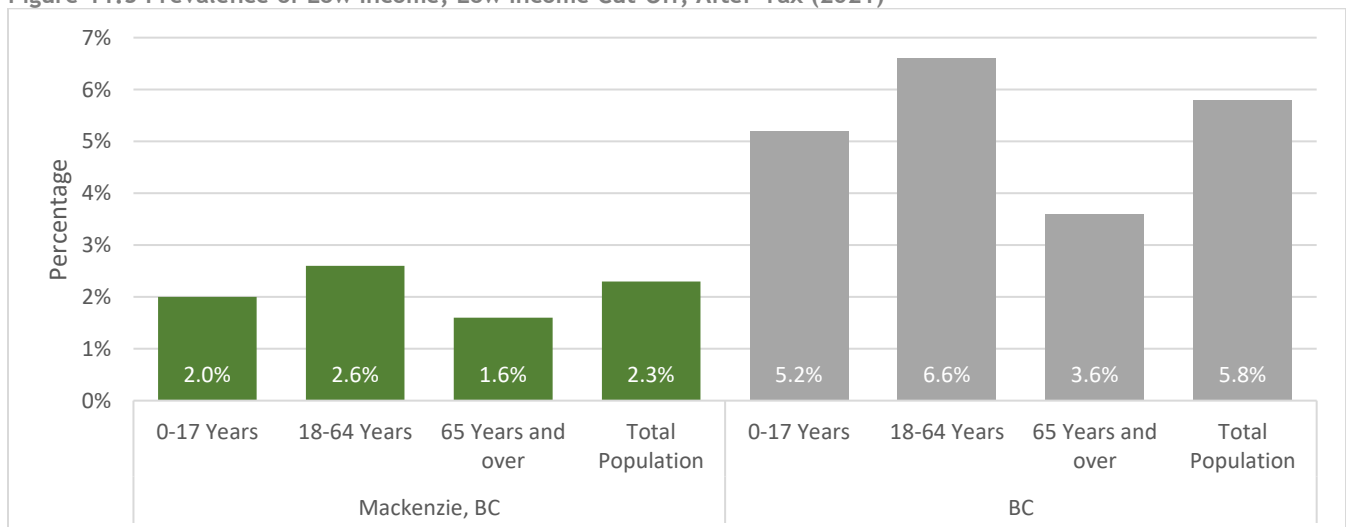


Source: Statistics Canada. 1996 -2021. Census Program.

The prevalence of low income gives an indication of the economic situation of the population. Low income cut-off, after-tax (LICO-AT) is defined as the thresholds “below which economic families or persons not in economic families would likely have devoted a larger share of their after-tax income than average to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing. More specifically, the thresholds represented income levels at which these families or persons were expected to spend 20 percentage points or more of their after-tax income than average on food, shelter and clothing.”⁷

The prevalence of low income measured by this threshold was much lower in Mackenzie than in British Columbia (Figure 11.3). However, while most age groups had seen a decrease in vulnerability between 2016 and 2021, seniors in Mackenzie actually experienced an increase from 1.2% to 1.6% living in low income. The working age population in Mackenzie were the most vulnerable age group with 2.6% living with low income in Mackenzie in 2021.

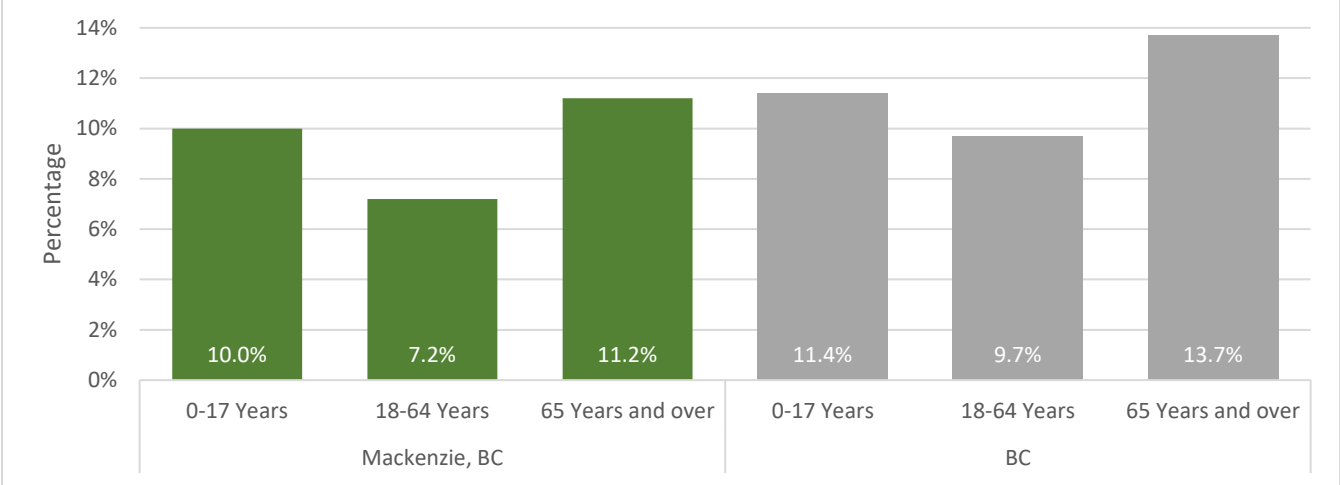
Figure 11.3 Prevalence of Low Income, Low Income Cut-Off, After-Tax (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Another way to express low income is the low income measure, after-tax (LIM-AT). The LIM-AT “refers to a fixed percentage (50%) of median-adjusted after-tax income of private households” adjusted for household size.⁸ Figure 11.4 depicts low income in Mackenzie and BC as measured by LIM-AT in 2021. This measure shows higher percentages of the population living in low income; however, Mackenzie seniors, as well as other age groups, were still below provincial low income rates in 2021. It should be noted that, according to this low income measure, seniors were the most vulnerable population age group in Mackenzie.

Figure 11.4 Prevalence of Low Income, Low Income Measure, After-Tax (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Another statistic on financial vulnerability available for Mackenzie seniors in the Individual Market Basket Measure^{iv} Poverty Status. Table 11.1 shows that men aged 18-24 and senior women were the two most vulnerable groups measured in terms of their income in comparison to the local cost of certain necessities. When focusing on seniors and their needs in the community, it is important to keep in the mind the commonly higher vulnerability of elderly women living alone, which is supported by this data for Mackenzie senior women in 2021.

Table 11.1 Percentage of People in Individual MBM Poverty, Mackenzie (2021)

	Total Population	Total Men+	Total Women+	Total Percentage in Poverty	Men+ Percentage in Poverty	Women+ Percentage in Poverty
Total Age	3,405	1,835	1,575	4.7%	4.9%	4.8%
0-17 Years	660	345	315	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
18-24 years	185	135	45	16.2%	22.2%	0.0%
25-54 Years	1320	670	650	3.8%	3.7%	3.8%
55-64 Years	640	345	295	6.3%	5.8%	0.0%
65+ Years	605	335	270	5.8%	0.0%	11.1%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

^{iv} “The Market Basket Measure (MBM) refers to Canada's official measure of poverty based on the cost of a specific basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living developed by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The MBM thresholds represent the costs of specified qualities and quantities of food, clothing, shelter, transportation and other necessities [...].

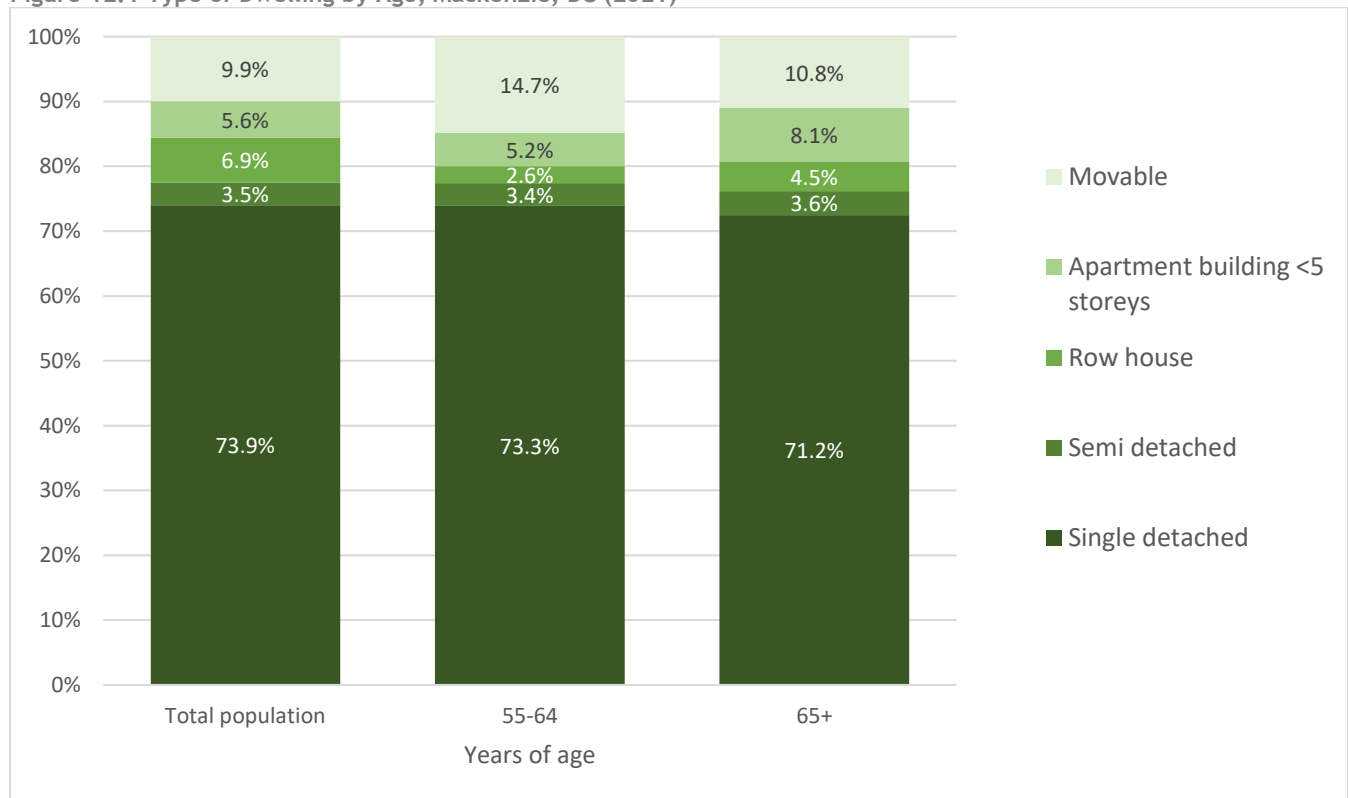
The MBM basket (2018-base) is priced for 53 different geographic areas - 19 specific communities and 34 population centre size and province combinations”, Statistics Canada, Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021.

12.0 Housing

Housing data describes the tenure, characteristics, and conditions of the housing stock in a community, as well as the dynamics of the local housing market. Two thirds of Mackenzie’s housing stock in 2021 was made up of single detached dwellings. This was followed by movable dwellings (14%), apartment buildings with fewer than five storeys and row houses (8% each), and semi detached dwellings^v (4%).

Figure 12.1 shows which types of dwellings were the predominant types of seniors’ dwellings in Mackenzie in 2021. The data shows that 74% of Mackenzie residents lived in single-detached dwellings. This was only marginally lower for seniors aged 65 years and older (71%). For the senior age group, apartments made up a somewhat more common type of dwelling compared to other age groups in Mackenzie. The second most commonly occupied type are movable dwellings (housing around 10% of the total population and close to 15% of pre-seniors). The strong prevalence of single detached dwellings means that there were few options for seniors to find housing without year-round outdoor property maintenance requirements, which becomes more challenging, especially in winter, as people age.

Figure 12.1 Type of Dwelling by Age, Mackenzie, BC (2021)

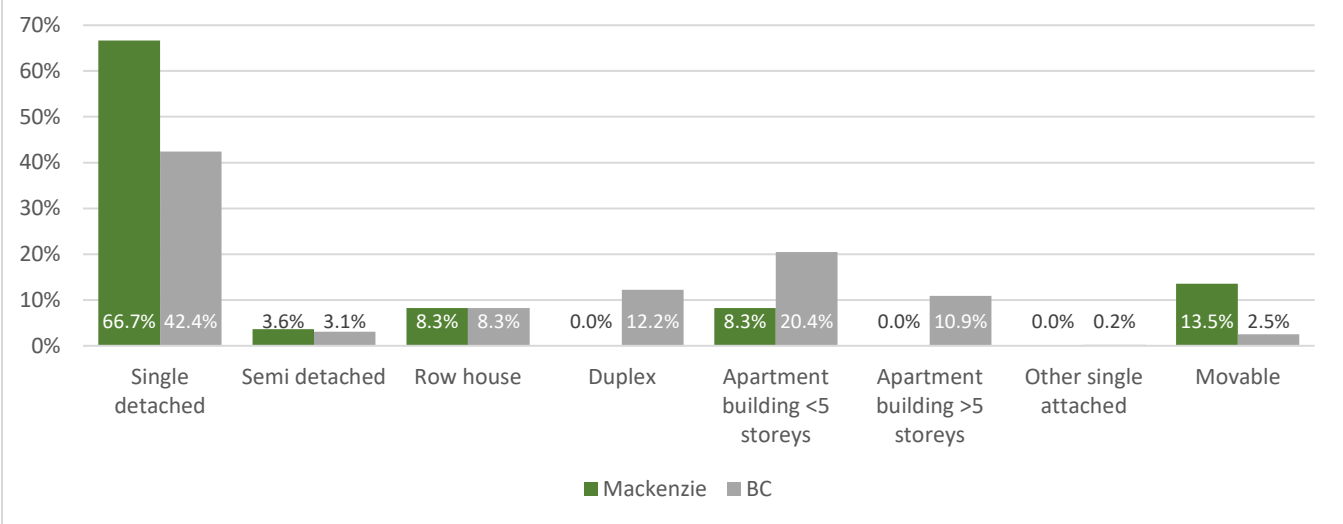


Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

^v For more information on the definition of types of dwellings, refer to the *Type of Dwelling Reference Guide*, Densus of Population, 2021. Available here: https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2022/statcan/98-500-x/98-500-x2021001-eng.pdf.

A comparison with the provincial housing stock (Figure 12.2) shows that housing province-wide was more diverse. While single detached dwellings still made up the largest segment, they constituted less than one-half of the provincial housing stock, followed by apartment buildings with fewer than five storeys, making up over 20%. At less than 3%, movable dwellings were the least common type of dwelling in BC overall.

Figure 12.2 Type of Dwelling (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

In Mackenzie, 81% of households owned their home in 2021. For seniors aged 65-74 years, that percentage was higher at 93%; and 100% of older seniors owned their homes. It should be noted that rounding in these small sub-population groups likely leads to the omission of some renters in the oldest senior age groups. Over one-half of Mackenzie home owners in 2021 were mortgage free; this information was not available by age group at the time of this updated report. Table 12.1 shows tenure information for Mackenzie households and senior age groups. According to Census data, there were no seniors in subsidized housing in Mackenzie in 2021. As with tenancy numbers, confidentiality standards of Census data and rounding may have led to the omission of a small number of seniors here.

Table 12.1 Tenure by Age of Household Maintainer, Mackenzie, BC (2021)

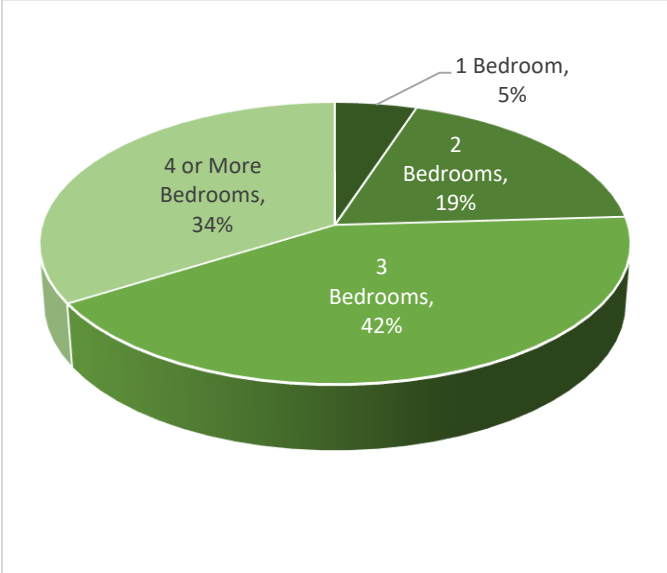
	Total Population	65-74 Years	75-84 Years	85+ years
Total	1585	290	95	25
Owner	1280	270	95	25
With Mortgage	51.4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Renter	300	20	0	0
Subsidized Housing	11.5%	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

At the time of publishing of this updated report, 2021 Census data for detailed housing indicators by population age was not available for Mackenzie. For the total 2021 population, including primary households maintainers of all ages, 7.3% lived in dwellings requiring major repairs, 1.3% reported their dwelling was not suitable^{vi}, and 11.4% experienced financial housing cost vulnerability as they paid 30% or more of their income on shelter costs. Households experiencing all three of these issues are considered to be in core housing need, and this applied to 7.3% of all Mackenzie households in 2021.

As senior households are most likely one- and two-person households, and in the context of increasing difficulty with maintaining property as seniors age, the size of dwellings in Mackenzie is of interest. At the time of the publishing of this updated report, 2021 Census data was not available to provide dwelling size information by age of primary household maintainer. As Figure 12.3 demonstrates, three bedrooms was the most common dwelling size (42% of dwellings) in Mackenzie, followed by four bedrooms (34%). This means that most seniors, like all residents of Mackenzie, had very limited options for downsizing within their community. In 2016, the distribution looked slightly different (40% four-bedroom homes, 39% three-bedroom homes); however, since no new residential construction was reported between 2016 and 2021, the changes are likely due to reporting changes and the overall decrease in occupied dwellings rather than diversification of the housing stock.

Figure 12.3 Dwelling Size, Mackenzie, BC (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

In the context of seniors, retirement and old-age housing, including assisted living options, is a crucial consideration that can determine whether a community can meet seniors’ urgent and basic needs, and offer an acceptable and desirable quality of life. The topic of senior-friendly housing includes a range of considerations, including options to age in one’s own home made possible through structural adaptations and the availability of maintenance services and other assistance; attractive and convenient housing that meets seniors’ wishes, for example, to downsize and minimize their maintenance burden, relieve their budget, or provide convenient closeness to amenities and social networks; designated seniors housing that accommodates urgent needs due to

^{vi} Suitability of dwellings in the Census refers to overcrowding and considers the number of bedrooms in relation to the number of occupants.

mobility limitations or health issues; and the range of assisted living and care facilities many seniors may eventually depend on.

There are programs not specific to Mackenzie that have potential to support Mackenzie seniors in aging in their own homes, for example BC Housing's BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations (BC RAHA) program.⁹ However, qualifying criteria limit the number of seniors who can access to the program.

When it comes to designated seniors housing that is built according to modern accessibility standards and designed to meet seniors' needs, Mackenzie has one development offering eight affordable one-bedroom units available to seniors and adults with disabilities. This is a BC Housing development, managed by Autumn Lodge Society.¹⁰ Assisted living and care facilities for seniors are not listed with the Northern Health Authority responsible for the region; however, the Health section of this profile outlines some care options. Meanwhile, other services, as described in the Health section, have been established to improve the situation of seniors aging in their own homes.

13.0 Transportation

Transportation infrastructure and services are part of a community's amenities and quality of life. For seniors, transportation is of particular interest for several reasons, including the increased likelihood of mobility challenges in old age, an increasing need to access health services within the community as well as in larger centres outside of their home community, the wish to be able to access amenities and leisure facilities, and the desire to travel in retirement.

The closest major airport is located in Prince George, just under 200 kilometres from Mackenzie. The Mackenzie Airport is located 5.6 km west of the community centre. Its capacity and services include fuel sales, charter flights, corporate flights, helicopter landings, medivac airlifts, recreational flying opportunities, and private aircraft storage.¹¹

As mentioned in the introduction, Mackenzie is located on Highway 39, 29 kilometres north of Mackenzie Junction on Highway 97 North. With only a small local airport for charter and private flights, the highway is the main connection to other municipalities and services, and personal and commercial vehicles are the main mode of transportation for Mackenzie residents. For those unable to afford a personal vehicle or unable to drive a car, public transportation options are crucial to maintaining their quality of life. The following means of public transportation are available:

- BC Bus North offers a connection to Prince George to the south, and Dawson Creek and Fort St. John to the northeast with a total of four scheduled stops in Mackenzie per week.
- Mackenzie Evergreen Taxi offers taxi services within the community and to Prince George. The taxi fleet features one five-passenger SUV, and one wheelchair accessible minivan accommodating two wheelchairs or five passengers.¹²
- A shuttle service between Mackenzie and Prince George on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. This is operated by Mackenzie Evergreen Taxi with a six-passenger van provided by Kimta Transportation Society.
- Kimta Transportation Society, a community organization, owns a 24-passenger bus with capacity for two to four wheelchairs. Trips can be booked by anyone but are usually planned by local organizations. Availability depends on the availability of volunteer drivers or an organization's ability to provide their own driver.¹³
- For health-related services, the Northern Health Connections bus service is available for medical travel to Prince George and Fort St. John. Seniors can access this service for non-medical travel as well.¹⁴

The business Mackenzie Hose and Fittings offers Driving Force commercial vehicle rentals. These rentals are, however, geared towards industrial traffic.¹⁵ The closest car rental is available in Prince George.

Conversations with community members and leaders revealed that informal ride sharing is a common means of traveling outside the community for Mackenzie residents.¹⁶

14. Health Services

A variety of health services are needed in any community. With increasing remoteness, access to basic emergency services gains in importance. At the same time, more specialized care is less likely to be accessible within the community. The absence of these services is a significant inconvenience for local residents. For seniors in particular, the need for a suite of health services and supports commonly increases over time.

The Northern Health Authority is responsible for health services in the region and provides overviews of available services.¹⁷ General medical services are offered at the Mackenzie and District Hospital and Health Centre. These services include:

- Four acute care beds
- Four long term care beds
- One respite/palliative care bed
- Medical and emergency services
- Medical imaging
- Laboratory
- Mental health and substance use services
- Medical clinic

Through private practices and not-for-profit organizations, Mackenzie residents also have access to Alcoholics Anonymous, counselling services, dietician services, Narcotics Anonymous, pharmacies, physiotherapy, reflexology, tapping, yoga, and various wellness services.¹⁸

Mackenzie Counselling Services offers the following services:

- Child and Youth Care
- Child and Youth Mental Health
- Community Navigation for Seniors*
- Connections
- Family Support
- Infant Development
- Mackenzie Better at Home**
- PEACE
- Rest of Us
- Safe Home
- Supported Child Development

***Community Navigation for Seniors** provides outreach services to address the social and emotional needs of seniors with one-on-one support, connecting to resources, providing advocacy and system navigation, identifying system gaps, and engaging community volunteers to fill these gaps.

The **Mackenzie Better at Home program supports seniors to live in their own homes and stay connected to their community by providing help with day-to-day tasks through community-based non-medical home support services. Better at Home is funded by the Government of B.C. and managed by the United Way.¹⁹

Conclusion

Seniors have been the age group with the strongest growth in the community of Mackenzie for decades. That age group is now growing older than in the past and is becoming increasingly more diverse in terms of the stages of aging, as well as education, and interests and needs. Having a growing number of seniors in the community, as well as that wider range of older age groups, health conditions, abilities, capacity, and interests will make it increasingly important for Mackenzie to pay attention to understanding and addressing the emerging and evolving needs and challenges of seniors.

Since the publication of the last Mackenzie Seniors Profile, which was based largely on 2016 Census data as well as community engagement in 2019 and 2020, the community has made strides in terms of health and social services, and transportation, as can be seen in the updated inventory of services. Other areas, such as housing and emergency public health services for example, remain a challenge as in many non-metropolitan communities. In addition, the overall negative population growth points to the need for attention to, and recruitment of, a younger workforce, not only to maintain a functional social fabric of the community, but also to provide the services increasingly wanted and needed by seniors.

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The Community Development Institute at the University of Northern British Columbia

The Community Development Institute (CDI) at UNBC was established in 2004 with a broad mandate in the areas of community, regional, and economic development. Since its inception, the CDI has worked with communities across the northern and central regions of British Columbia to develop and implement strategies for economic diversification and community resilience.

Dedicated to understanding and realizing the potential of BC's non-metropolitan communities in a changing global economy, the CDI works to prepare students and practitioners for leadership roles in community and economic development, and to create a body of knowledge, information, and research that will enhance our understanding and our ability to deal with the impacts of ongoing transformation. The Community Development Institute is committed to working with all communities – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to help them further their aspirations in community and regional development.



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