



# COMMUNITY PROFILE: Fort St. John, British Columbia



Second Edition  
Fall 2024

## About the Community Development Institute

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 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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## Table of Contents

About the Community Development Institute .....	i
Contact Information .....	i
Introduction .....	1
Methodology.....	2
1.0 Population.....	3
2.0 Age profile.....	4
3.0 Household characteristics.....	6
4.0 Family characteristics .....	8
5.0 Indigenous population .....	13
6.0 Visible minority.....	15
7.0 Immigration characteristics.....	17
8.0 Education .....	20
9.0 Health.....	24
10.0 Mobility and migration .....	26
11.0 Housing .....	29
12.0 Labour force .....	34
13.0 Income .....	39
14.0 Business counts .....	42

## Table of Figures

Figure 1.1 Total Population (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	3
Figure 2.1 Population Pyramids, Fort St. John .....	4
Figure 2.2 Population Pyramids, British Columbia .....	4
Figure 3.1 Household size (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	6
Figure 3.2 Household size (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	6
Figure 3.3 Household type (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2016 .....	7
Figure 3.4 Household type (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	7
Figure 4.1 Marital status (#), Fort St. John, 1981 and 2021.....	8
Figure 4.2 Marital Status (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	9
Figure 4.3 Common-law status (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021.....	9
Figure 4.4 census family by number of persons (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021.....	10
Figure 4.5 Average size of census families (#), Fort St. John, BC, and Canada, 1981-2021 .....	10
Figure 4.6 Structure of couple and lone parent census families (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	11
Figure 4.7 Census family structure (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	11
Figure 4.8 Lone-parent census families (%), Fort St. John, 1986-2021 .....	12
Figure 5.1 Indigenous identity (#), Fort St. John, 1996-2021.....	13
Figure 5.2 Indigenous identity (%), Fort St. John, 1996-2021 .....	13
Figure 6.1 Visible minority population characteristics (#), Fort St. John, 1996-2021 .....	15
Figure 6.2 Total visible minority population (%), Fort St. John, 1996-2021.....	15
Figure 6.3 Visible minority population by ethnicity (%), Fort St. John, 1996-2021.....	16
Figure 7.1 Citizenship (#), Fort St. John, 1986-2021.....	17
Figure 7.2 Immigration status (#), Fort St. John, 1986-2021 .....	17
Figure 7.3 Immigration status (%), Fort St. John, 1986-2021 .....	18
Figure 7.4 Period of immigration (#), Fort St. John, 2021.....	18
Figure 7.5 Age at immigration (#), Fort St. John, 2021.....	19
Figure 7.6 Selected places of birth for the recent immigrant population (#), Fort St. John, 2021 .....	19
Figure 8.1 Highest educational attainment (#), Fort St. John, 2006-2021.....	21
Figure 8.2 Highest educational attainment (%), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 2021.....	21
Figure 8.3 Six-year completion rate (%), SD 60 Peace River North, 2013-2023 .....	22
Figure 8.4 Six-year completion rate (%), SD 59 Peace River South, 2013-2023.....	22
Figure 8.5 Six-year completion rate (%), Province of British Columbia, 2013-2023 .....	22
Figure 8.6 Six-year completion rate (%), comparison .....	23
Figure 9.1 Health status population aged 12 years and over (%), 2019/2020.....	24
Figure 9.2 Lifestyle habits population aged 12 years and over (%), 2019/2020 .....	24
Figure 9.3 Chronic diseases (#), most recent.....	25
Figure 9.4 Life expectancy in years (#), 2011-2015 average.....	25
Figure 10.1 Mobility status 5 years ago (#), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 2021 .....	26
Figure 10.2 Mobility status 5 years ago (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021 .....	26
Figure 10.3 Mobility status 5 years ago (%), British Columbia, 1991-2021 .....	27
Figure 10.4 Mobility status 5 years ago, movers (%), 1991-2021 .....	27
Figure 10.5 Mobility status 5 years ago, migrants (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021.....	28
Figure 10.6 Mobility status 5 years ago, migrants (%), British Columbia, 1991-2021.....	28
Figure 11.1 Total occupied private dwellings (#), Fort St. John 1981-2021.....	29
Figure 11.2 Housing tenure (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	29
Figure 11.3 Housing tenure (%), British Columbia, 1981-2021.....	29
Figure 11.4 Costs for owner households, Fort St. John, 1981-2021.....	30

Figure 11.5 Costs for owner households, British Columbia, 2006-2021 .....	30
Figure 11.6 Costs for tenant households, Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	31
Figure 11.7 Costs for tenant households, British Columbia, 2006-2021 .....	31
Figure 11.8 Housing vulnerability (%), Fort St. John and BC, 2006-2021 .....	31
Figure 11.9 Age of private dwellings (%), Fort St. John, 2021.....	32
Figure 11.10 Condition of private dwellings (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021.....	32
Figure 11.11 Occupied dwellings by type (#), Fort St. John, 1991-2021 .....	33
Figure 11.12 Composition of housing stock (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021 .....	33
Figure 12.1 Labour force participation by gender (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	34
Figure 12.2 Labour force participation (%), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 1986-2021 .....	35
Figure 12.3 Unemployment by gender (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021 .....	35
Figure 12.4 Unemployment (%), Fort St. John and BC, 1986-2021.....	36
Figure 12.5 Labour force by industry (#), Fort St. John, 2001-2021.....	36
Figure 12.6 Employment by occupation (%), male, Fort St. John, 1996-2021 .....	37
Figure 12.7 Employment by occupation, (%), female, Fort St. John, 1996-2021 .....	38
Figure 13.1 Median total income (CAD), Fort St. John, 1981-2021.....	39
Figure 13.2 Median total income (CAD), British Columbia, 1991-2021 .....	39
Figure 13.3 Female median total income (CAD), 1991-2021.....	40
Figure 13.4 Economic family median total income (CAD), 1991-2021.....	40
Figure 13.5 Composition of total income (%), 2021.....	41
Figure 13.6 Prevalence of low income, LICO-AT (%), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 2016-2021.....	41
Figure 14.1 Business counts (#), Fort St. John, 2016-2023 .....	42
Figure 14.2 Business counts (#), British Columbia, 2016-2023 .....	42
Figure 14.3 Number of businesses by number of employees (#), Fort St. John, 2016-2023 .....	43
Figure 14.4 Number of businesses by number of employees (#), British Columbia, 2016-2023.....	43
Figure 14.5 Number of businesses by number of employees (trends), Fort St. John, 2016-2023.....	44
Figure 14.6 Number of businesses by number of employees (trends), British Columbia, 2016-2023.....	44

## Introduction

Fort St. John is located in the Peace River Regional District in northeast British Columbia (BC). Situated in the traditional territory of the Dane-Zaa (Beaver) and Cree, Fort St. John bears its name from the fur trading posts that operated along the shore of the Peace River. The First Nations communities in the Fort St. John area include the Halfway River (Choonache), Doig River First Nations (Taahche Wadane), and Blueberry River.

In 1912, the Government of Canada started releasing quarter sections (12 hectares) in the Peace Region to homesteaders. For three decades, Fort St. John remained isolated and sparsely populated. Indeed, the 1941 census did not record a single person living in Fort St. John. However, the construction of the Alaska Highway by the American Army in 1942 marked a decisive turning point in the community's history as the population of Fort St. John grew from 300 to 2,000 people. When the American army left in 1945, the population of Fort St. John decreased to around 700 people.<sup>1</sup> The Village of Fort St. John incorporated on December 31, 1947.

While the Alaska Highway improved accessibility, Fort St. John continued to be a small farming community. However, in 1951, Frank McMahon of Westcoast Transmission Company struck oil just outside of Fort St. John – the first oil discovery in BC. This prompted a wave of oil and gas exploration and drilling in Fort St. John, which is situated within the Montney formation. The Montney continues to be BC's most active formation for oil and gas drilling.<sup>2</sup>

The population of Fort St. John grew alongside the expansion of the oil and gas industries. Having changed status from a village to a town in 1958, Fort St. John was patented as a City on July 1, 1975. Although oil and gas remain the largest and most important industries, forestry, agriculture, and tourism are also significant drivers of the local economy. Formerly known as BC's "Oil and Gas Capital," Fort St. John now identifies itself as the "Energetic City." The City's population has grown to over 20,000 people.

The Community Development Institute (CDI) authored a series of research reports for Fort St. John, including the Fort St. John Community Profile completed in 2018. A community profile helps build an understanding of the assets, opportunities, and challenges in a community. By highlighting demographic and socio-economic trends, a profile can provide insights into the dynamics of the population and local economy. It can also be used as a baseline and reference point for future planning initiatives. In 2024, the CDI was asked to complete an update of the Fort St. John Community Profile released in 2018. This updated report includes 2021 census data and other updated data where available.

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<sup>1</sup> Alaska Highway News. 1974. *Fort St. John and District*. Fort St. John: Alaska Highway News, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> BC Oil and Gas Commission. 2017. *2016 Oil and Gas Reserves Production Report*. Victoria: BC Oil and Gas Commission, p. 7.

## Methodology

Data for the community profile was primarily collected from Statistics Canada. Data was also collected from provincial agencies such as BC Stats, BC Ministry of Education, and BC’s Provincial Health Services Authority. Unless otherwise noted, data refers to the Census Subdivision (CSD) Fort St. John (CY).

Since the community profile draws primarily from census data produced by Statistics Canada, it should be noted that, in 2011, the mandatory long-form census was temporarily replaced by the voluntary National Household Survey (NHS). The change to a voluntary survey had the effect of decreasing the response rate as compared to previous censuses. In anticipation of this decrease, Statistics Canada took several precautions to mitigate the risks to the NHS data quality.<sup>3</sup> Further, the NHS non-response rate for the City of Fort St. John was 16.8%. This is low when compared with the NHS non-response rates for BC (26.1%) and Canada (31.4%). As Statistics Canada maintains that NHS data is reliable and the non-response rate in Fort St. John was relatively low, NHS data is used in this profile.

For this updated edition, trends and developments from 2016 to 2021 should be interpreted keeping in mind the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and related support programs, on various socio-economic aspects of life in Fort St. John.

You will find total numbers and percentages of the data throughout much of the report. Percentages are best suited to expressing the impact of any given variable on the community. However, total numbers can be helpful in determining the actual dimensions of population segments and concrete opportunities and needs.

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, W.R. 2015. “The 2011 National Household Survey—the complete statistical story.” Available at <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/blog-blogue/cs-sc/2011NHSstory>

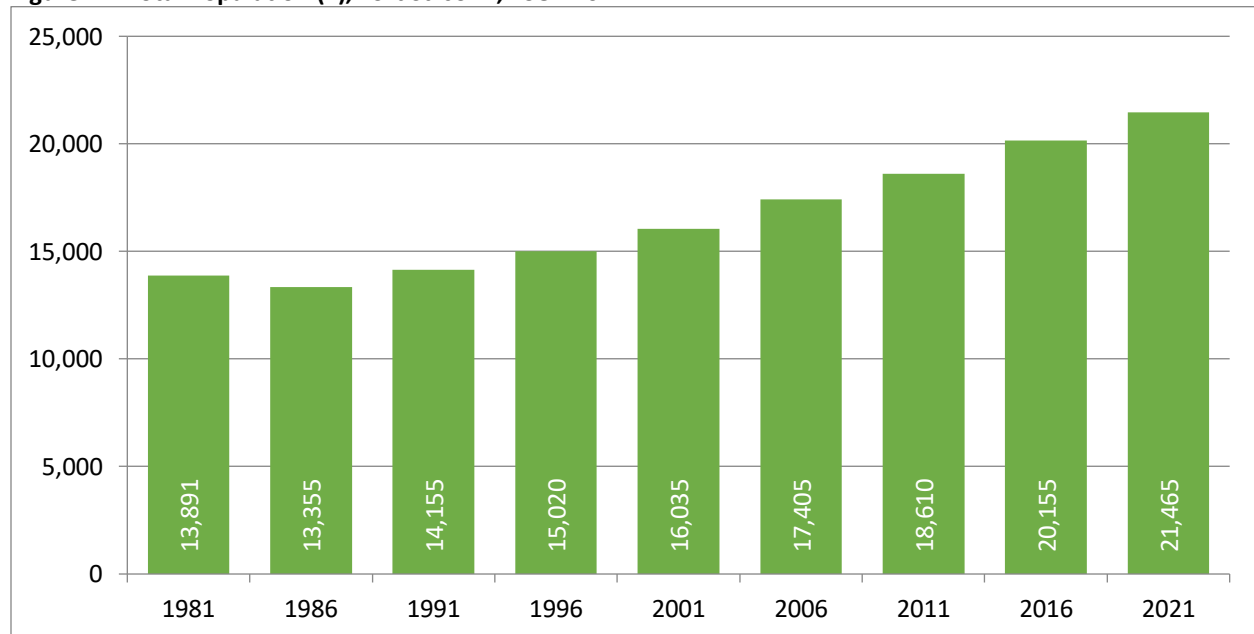
## 1.0 Population

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

There are some measurement issues to be aware of when reading population data. First, population counts can be increased through municipal boundary expansions. Since 1981, the City of Fort St. John has carried out four boundary extensions of varying sizes (in 1982, 1989, 2001, 2016, and 2018). Second, even though the census is mandatory (with the exception of the 2011 National Household Survey), there is no guarantee that everyone will receive a census questionnaire. A third, related issue with population data is that Statistics Canada does not count temporary and non-resident workers, those who reside locally but maintain their primary residence elsewhere. As a result, there is a net under-enumeration in census population counts, especially in resource-based communities like Fort St. John that have a large “shadow population” of mobile workers. Fourth, it is possible that a small number of people are counted twice if they maintain several residences.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1.1 indicates that, as of 2021, 21,465 people lived in the City of Fort St. John. This represents a 55% increase in the population since 1981. After a population decrease during the economic recession of the early 1980s, the population of Fort St. John has grown steadily, averaging 7.0% every five years. Growth for the last census period from 2016 to 2021 was just below that average with 6.5%. The average population growth of Fort St. John is slightly lower than the provincial average of 8.2% every five years.

**Figure 1.1 Total Population (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

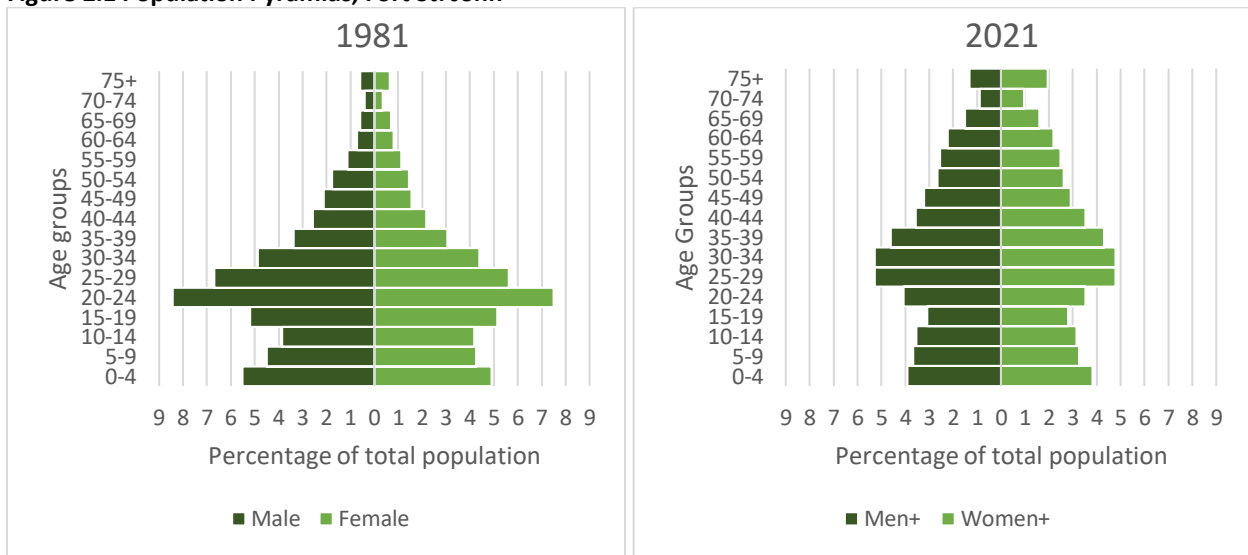
<sup>4</sup> BC Stats. “About Population Estimates.” Available at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/people-population-community/population/population-estimates/about-population-estimates>. Accessed July 10, 2024.

## 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 in determining service needs.

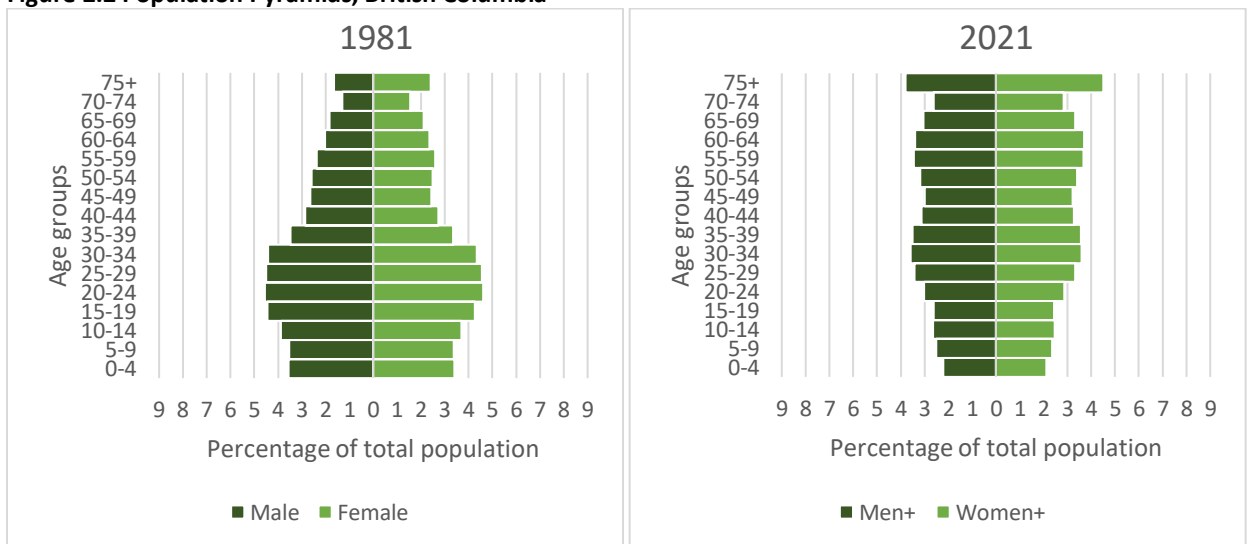
Median age is defined as the exact age where half the population is older and half is younger. In 2021, the median age in Fort St. John was 32.4 years. While this represents an increase in median age of 9.5% over the past two decades, it is much younger than the provincial median age of 42.8 years.

**Figure 2.1 Population Pyramids, Fort St. John**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2021. Census Program.

**Figure 2.2 Population Pyramids, British Columbia**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2021. Census Program.

Even though Fort St. John has a relatively young population, the population is gradually aging as illustrated in Figure 2.1. In 1981, 75% of the population in Fort St. John was under the age of 35; however, in 2021, the proportion of the population under the age of 35 had decreased to 54.9%. Meanwhile, the senior population aged 65 years and older grew from 3.2% of the total population in 1981 to 8.2% in 2021, an increase of over 156%.

Shifting the focus to the working age population, the population pyramids of Fort St. John reveal that the city still had a relatively young workforce in 2021. However, there had been a shift towards growing cohorts of older working age residents while the proportion of the young working age cohorts aged 25-34 had been decreasing over time.

Figure 2.2 allows the comparison to British Columbia and shows that the age structure of the Fort St. John population in 2021 resembled the provincial age structure in 1981. The British Columbia population pyramid for 2021 illustrates the progression of population aging over time. The notable difference in the population age structure between Fort St. John and British Columbia indicates that age-related population needs likely differed accordingly and should be taken into consideration in planning and policy making.

### 3.0 Household characteristics

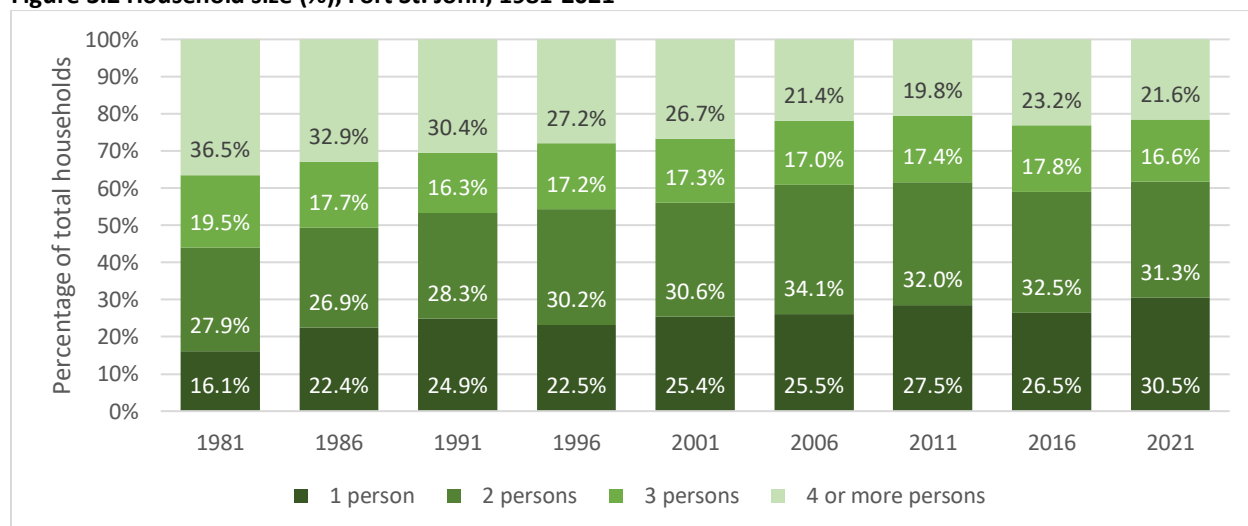
Statistics Canada defines private households as a person or group of persons occupying the same dwelling. Private households include family and non-family members. As shown in Figures 3.1 and 3.2, Fort St. John’s household size shifted considerably. In 1981, households of four or more persons were the most prevalent size at 37%, and one person households were the smallest share of households at 16%. In 2021, households of four or more persons constituted 22% of households, while the proportion of one person households increased to 31%. The shift towards smaller household sizes can be attributed to smaller family sizes, an aging population, and a growing number of “empty-nesters” (families whose children have left the household to form their own families).

**Figure 3.1 Household size (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total #</b>	4,595	4,745	5,180	5,490	6,155	6,870	7,480	7,940	8,780
<b>1 person</b>	740	1,065	1,290	1,235	1,565	1,755	2,060	2,105	2,680
<b>2 persons</b>	1,280	1,275	1,465	1,660	1,885	2,340	2,390	2,580	2,745
<b>3 persons</b>	895	840	845	945	1,065	1,165	1,300	1,410	1,460
<b>4 or more persons</b>	1,675	1,560	1,575	1,495	1,645	1,470	1,480	1,840	1,895
<b>Average Household Size</b>	3.0								2.4

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 3.2 Household size (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

The largest share of households consisted of one-census family households (60% in 2021).<sup>5</sup> However, alongside the trend towards smaller households, Figures 3.3 and 3.4 indicate there has also been a shift back towards a greater proportion of non-census-family households. These are households where the occupants bear no familial relation to one another. In Fort St. John, it is common for co-workers who have moved to town for work to rent a dwelling together. While multiple-census-family households, where there are two or more census families living in the same dwelling, continued to be rare, they had increased in proportion over the past 20 years to 2.1% of all households in 2021.

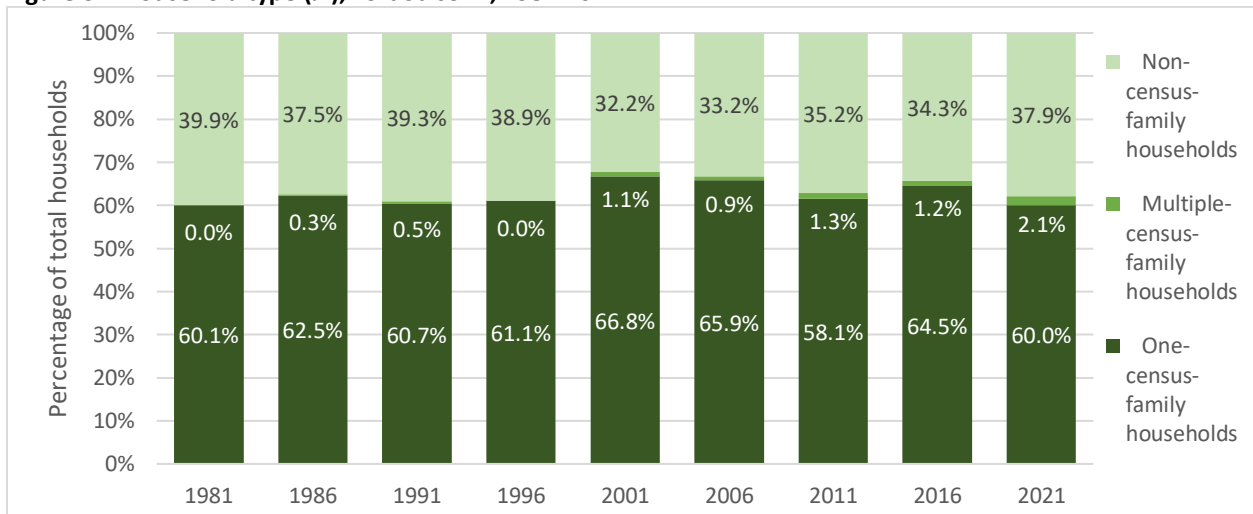
<sup>5</sup> The definition of a census family is provided in the next section.

**Figure 3.3 Household type (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2016**

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total #</b>	5,750	5,460	5,950	6,400	6,155	6,875	7,480	7,935	8,780
<b>One-census-family households</b>	3,455	3,410	3,610	3,910	4,110	4,530	4,345	5,115	5,270
<b>Without children in a census family</b>	1,025	920	1,075	1,255	n/a	n/a	1,640	1,945	1,820
<b>With children in a census family</b>	2,430	1,975	2,030	2,050	n/a	n/a	2,125	3,170	3,080
<b>Multiple-census-family households</b>	n/a	15	30	n/a	65	60	95	95	180
<b>Non-census-family households</b>	2,295	2,050	2,340	2,490	1,980	2,285	2,630	2,725	3,330

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 3.4 Household type (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

## 4.0 Family characteristics

Canadian attitudes towards marriage have changed considerably since the Second World War. These attitudinal changes are reflected in the national census, particularly in regards to common-law status separation. Common-law status applies to couples who live together, but are not legally married. Prior to 1981, common-law status was not recognized in Canadian censuses. In the 1981 and 1986 censuses, common-law unions were included among the “married” population. In the 1991 census, common-law unions were recognized as a distinct category; however, until 2006, they were still included in the “married” category of marital status and were, in addition, recorded in a separate question on common-law status where the total population aged 15 years and older was separated into “living in a common-law relationship” and “not living in a common-law relationship”.<sup>6</sup> Given these inconsistencies over time, the longitudinal marital status data presented in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 is limited to particular date ranges and/or variables to allow for best possible comparability.

**Figure 4.1 Marital status (#), Fort St. John, 1981 and 2021**

	1981	2021
<b>Population aged 15 years and over</b>	10,110	16,885
<b>Married or living common-law</b>	6,675	9,335
<b>Married</b>	n/a	6,800
<b>Common law</b>	n/a	2,535
<b>Not married and not living common-law</b>	3,435	7,555
<b>Never married</b>	2,875	5,435
<b>Separated</b>	n/a	610
<b>Divorced</b>	285	945
<b>Widowed</b>	275	560

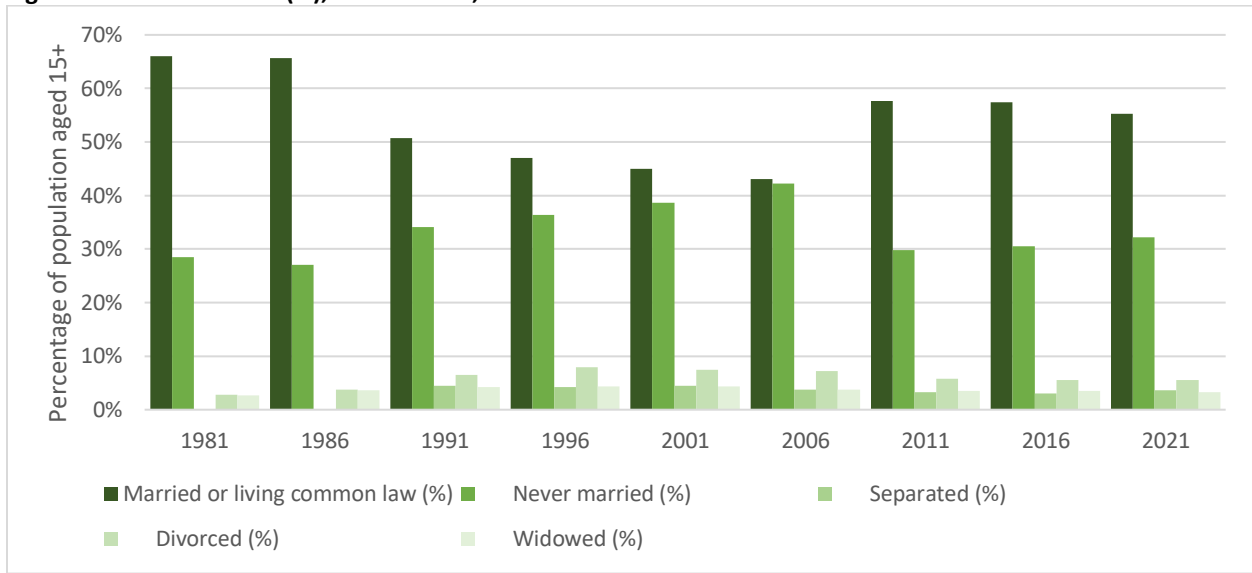
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981 and 2021. Census Program.

Note: In 1981, married includes separated and living in a common-law relationship.

Figure 4.1 introduces total numbers for marital status four decades ago and in the most recent census. The detailed breakdown of marital status for Fort St. John in Figure 4.2 reveals some trends over time. In the 1980s, around two-thirds of the population aged 15 years and older were married or in living common-law. By 2001, only half the population were married or living in common-law, and by 2006 that number dropped to 43%. This translates to a 34% decrease in the proportion of people who were married or living in common-law, between 1986 and 2006. However, after 2006, the proportion of the population married or living in common-law rebounded to 55% in 2021. During the years when the proportion of people living in relationships dropped, consequently, the proportion of singles who had never been married increased to as much as 42.2% in 2006. By 2021, the single population had dropped to around one-third of the population aged 15 years and older. Providing a more detailed insight into the nature of the couple relationships Fort St. John residents live in, Figure 4.3 shows an increase in the proportion of Fort St. John residents aged 15 years and older living in common-law relationships throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. After 2006, that proportion stayed mostly stable around 15%.

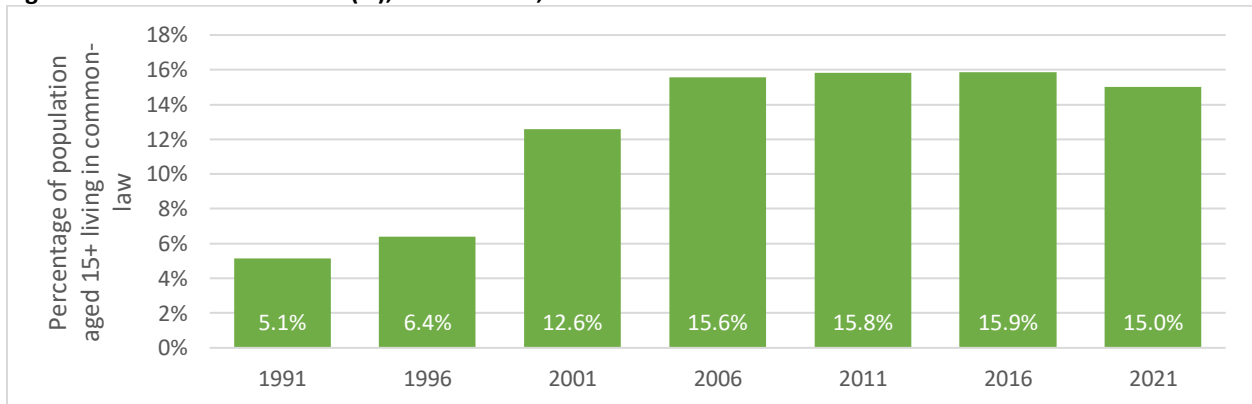
<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Dictionary.

**Figure 4.2 Marital Status (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 4.3 Common-law status (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021**



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

Statistics Canada’s definition of census family encompasses opposite or same sex couples (married and common law) with or without children (by birth, marriage, common-law union, or adoption). A census family also refers to lone-parents with at least one child living with them, as well as grandparents living with their grandchildren and with no parents present in the household.<sup>7</sup> Figure 4.4 provides longitudinal data on census family size for Fort St. John since 1981, including a comparison with average provincial and national family size.

Figure 4.5 shows that, from 1991 to 2006, the average size of the census family in Fort St. John was larger than provincial and national averages. However, the overarching trend across all three geographies is towards smaller families. By 2011, the average family size of Fort St. John aligned with the national average of 2.9 persons per census family; however, in 2021, average family size in Fort St. John showed a slightly increasing trend, whereas national and provincial family size remained unchanged for the past three censuses.

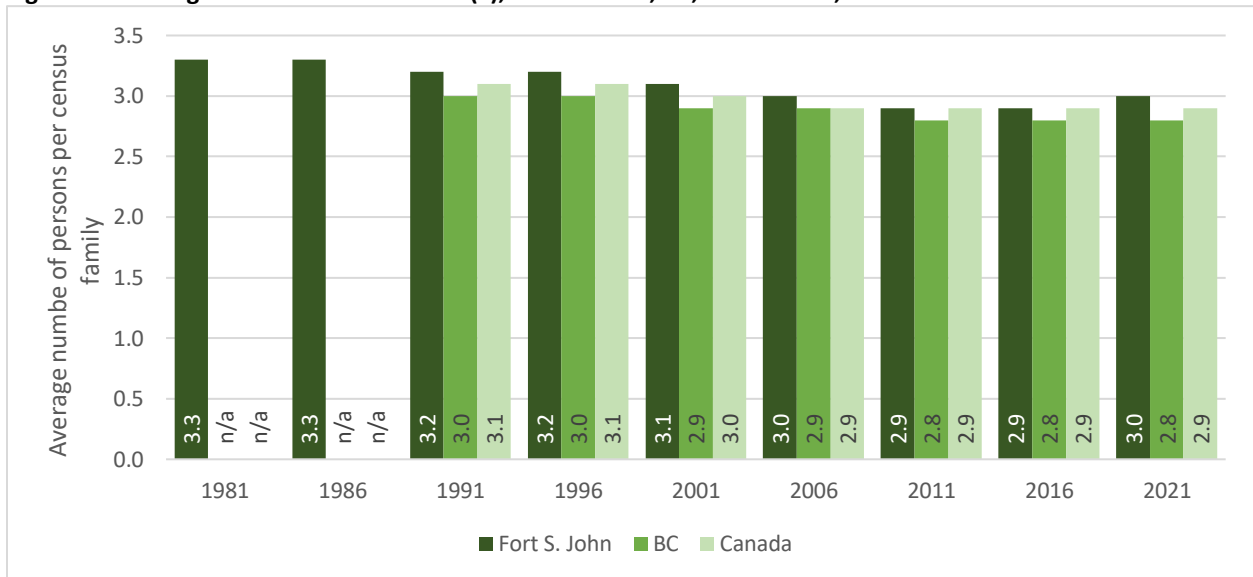
<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Dictionary.

**Figure 4.4 census family by number of persons (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - census families in private households, Fort St. John</b>	3,455	3,410	3,610	3,910	4,235	4,650	4,940	5,310	5,560
<b>2 persons</b>	1,280	1,185	1,360	1,565	n/a	2,120	2,340	2,520	2,630
<b>3 persons</b>	895	785	800	850	n/a	1,055	1,120	1,240	1,290
<b>4 persons</b>	n/a	975	965	960	n/a	970	1,045	1,050	1,075
<b>5 or more persons</b>	n/a	470	485	535	n/a	500	435	510	555

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 4.5 Average size of census families (#), Fort St. John, BC, and Canada, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

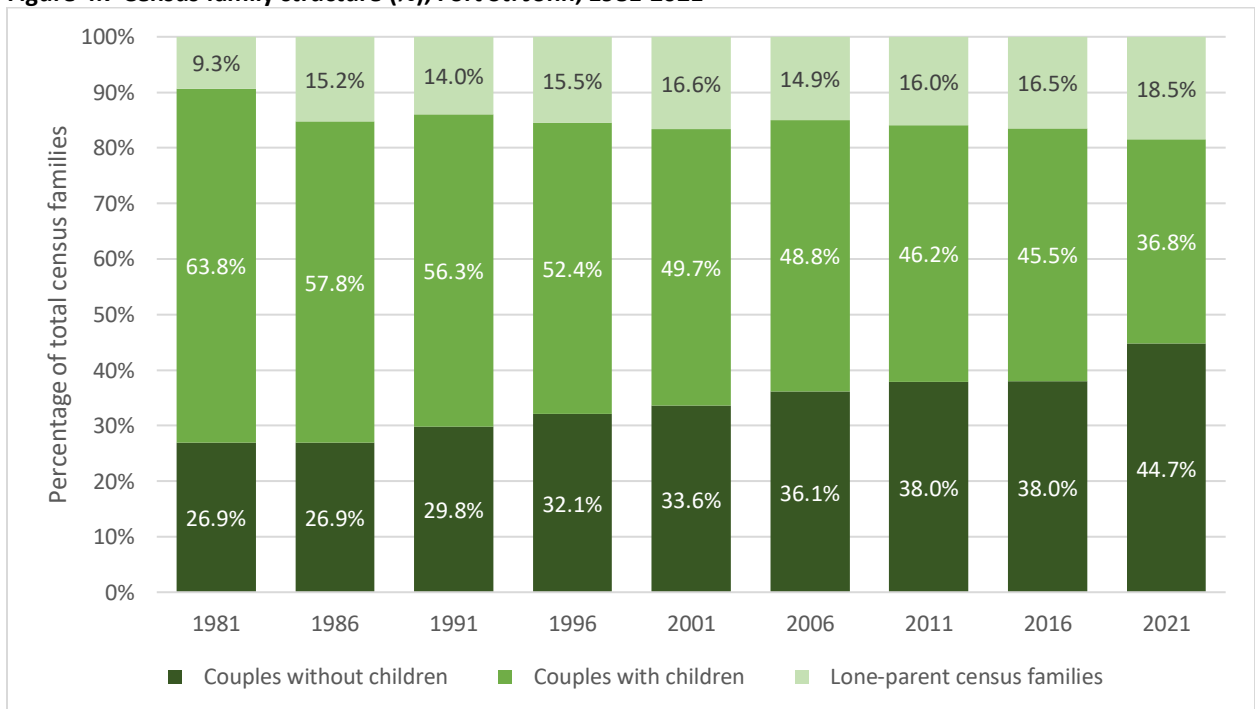
Figure 4.6 outlines census family structure of couple families and lone-parent families over time in total numbers, including information about the number of children in particular family structures. Figure 4.7 summarizes the proportions of couple census families without children, couple families with children, and lone-parent families. In 1981, couple families with children were the predominant census family structure making up over 70% of all families. After that, there was a steady trend towards increasing proportions of couples without children and lone-parent families. By 2021, couples without children were the predominant family structure (45%), while couple families with children had decreased to below 37% of all families and the proportion of lone parent families had increased to over 18% of families.

**Figure 4.6 Structure of couple and lone parent census families (#), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Couple census families</b>	3,455	2,895	3,100	3,305	3,530	3,955	4,150	4,440	4,530
<b>Couples without children</b>	1,025	920	1,075	1,255	1,425	1,680	1,875	2,020	2,485
<b>Couples with children</b>	2,430	1,975	2,030	2,050	2,105	2,270	2,280	2,420	2,045
<b>1 child</b>	835	605	655	675	745	835	885	945	n/a
<b>2 children</b>	1,010	920	905	870	915	940	985	980	n/a
<b>3 or more children</b>	585	445	460	510	470	500	420	495	n/a
<b>Total - Lone-parent census families</b>	355	520	505	605	705	695	790	875	1,025
<b>1 child</b>	n/a	260	290	320	410	435	470	500	n/a
<b>2 children</b>	n/a	170	140	175	160	210	245	290	n/a
<b>3 or more children</b>	n/a	80	80	120	125	40	80	85	n/a
<b>Female lone-parent families</b>	n/a	420	435	510	535	505	585	655	765
<b>1 child</b>	n/a	210	240	260	300	320	335	n/a	n/a
<b>2 children</b>	n/a	135	125	155	125	150	190	n/a	n/a
<b>3 or more children</b>	n/a	75	70	100	105	25	65	n/a	n/a
<b>Male lone-parent families</b>	n/a	95	75	95	170	190	200	220	260
<b>1 child</b>	n/a	50	50	60	110	115	135	n/a	n/a
<b>2 children</b>	n/a	35	15	20	35	60	55	n/a	n/a
<b>3 or more children</b>	n/a	5	10	20	20	15	15	n/a	n/a

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

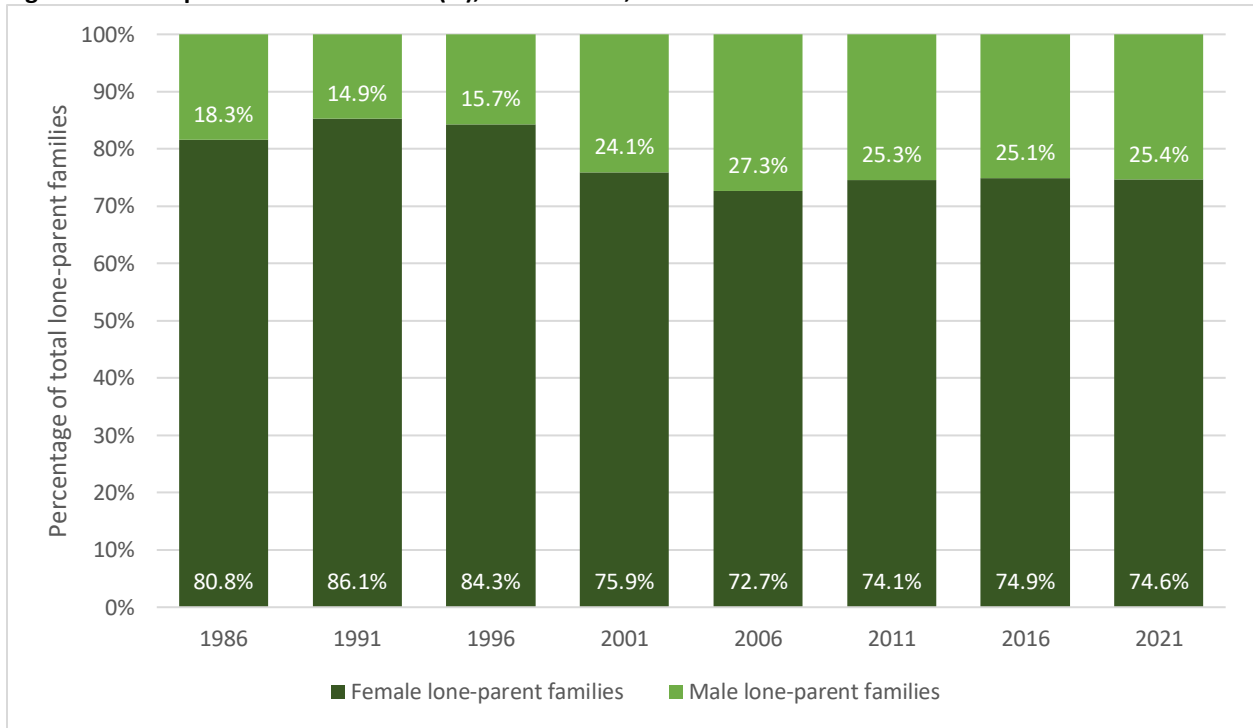
**Figure 4.7 Census family structure (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

Figure 4.8 shows the proportions of female and male lone-parent families. Lone parent families headed by a female parent consistently made up the majority of lone-parent families in Fort St. John. There was, however, a shift from the late 1990s to the early 2000s towards more male-led lone-parent families. While male lone-parent families made up around 15-18% throughout the 1980s and 1990s censuses, their proportion increased to around one-quarter of all lone-parent families by the 2001 census. Since then, it remained mostly stable around 25%, while female lone-parent families made up around 75% of all lone-parent families since the early 2000s.

**Figure 4.8 Lone-parent census families (%), Fort St. John, 1986-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1986-2021. Census Program.

## 5.0 Indigenous population

Statistics Canada identifies several factors affecting the ability to compare Indigenous census data over time: “Users should be aware that point estimates and changes over time are influenced by a combination of natural growth, changes to coverage and to measurement, and other factors affecting how people self-identify.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, this data should be read with caution.

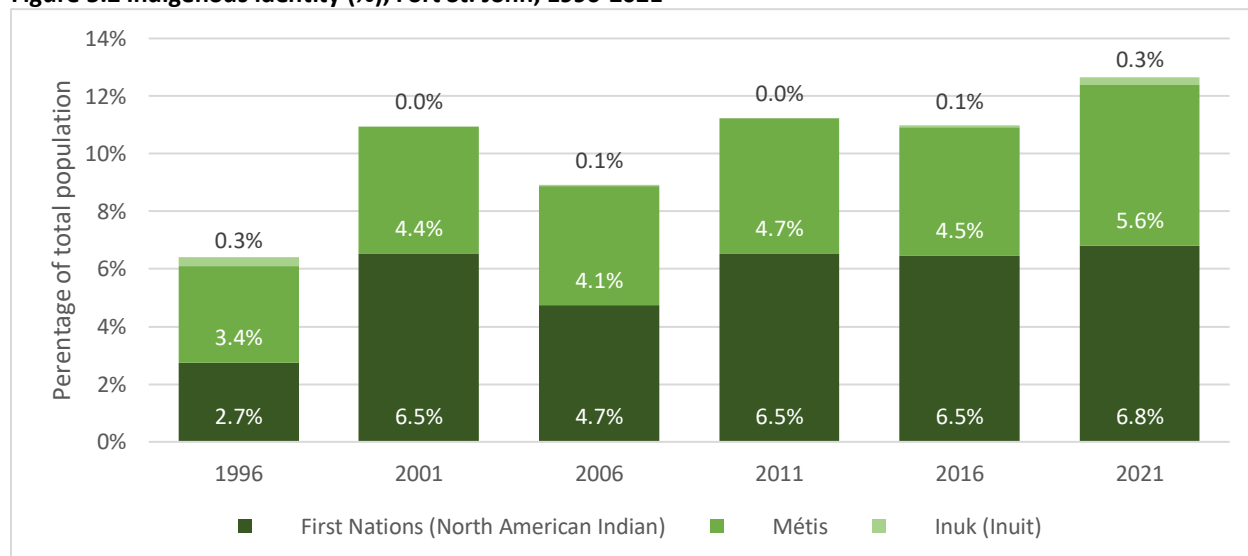
**Figure 5.1 Indigenous identity (#), Fort St. John, 1996-2021**

	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total population</b>	14,920	15,940	17,300	18,450	19,810	21,170
<b>Total Non-Aboriginal identity</b>	13,890	14,155	15,655	16,330	17,570	18,400
<b>Total - Aboriginal identity</b>	1,030	1,785	1,645	2,120	2,240	2,770
<b>Single Aboriginal responses</b>	955	1,745	1,545	2,070	2,180	2,675
<b>First Nations (North American Indian)</b>	410	1,040	820	1,205	1,280	1,440
<b>Métis</b>	500	705	715	865	885	1,180
<b>Inuk (Inuit)</b>	45	-	10	-	10	60
<b>Multiple Aboriginal responses</b>	10	-	30	35	55	80
<b>Aboriginal responses not included elsewhere</b>	75	35	75	-	10	10

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

Figure 5.1 introduces the total numbers of the population identifying as Indigenous since 1996. The total Indigenous population grew by 169% between 1996 and 2021, while the total population saw growth of 42% during that time.

**Figure 5.2 Indigenous identity (%), Fort St. John, 1996-2021**



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

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. “Definitions and concepts.” *Aboriginal Peoples Reference Guide*, Census of Population, 2016. Available at <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/guides/009/98-500-x2016009-eng.cfm>

The greater proportional growth of the Indigenous population is reflected in Figure 5.2. The proportion of the total Indigenous identity population in Fort St. John grew from close to 7% in 1996 to over 13% in 2021, which translates to a 90% increase in the proportion of Indigenous individuals in the community. Compared to British Columbia (6%) and Canada (5%) in 2021, Fort St. John had a larger Indigenous population. Figure 5.2 also shows that the proportional increases in the Indigenous population mainly occurred in the First Nations population, especially in the 1990s and early 2000s. The Métis community in Fort St. John saw its most notable proportional growth between 1996 and 2001 as well as between 2016 and 2021.

## 6.0 Visible minority

As Figure 6.1 shows, the 2021 visible minority population in Fort St. John encompassed 3,430 people. The largest visible minority groups in 2021 were South Asian and Filipino by a wide margin, followed by the population identifying as Black.

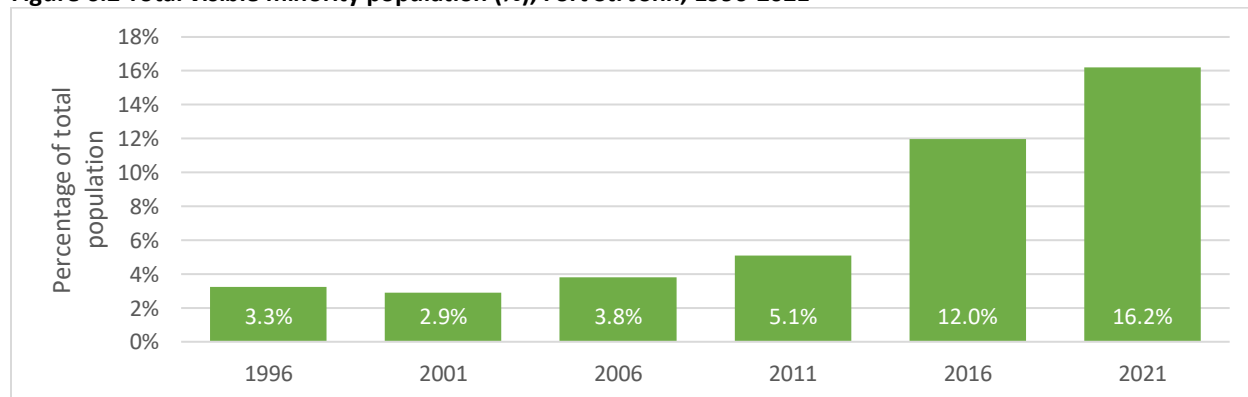
**Figure 6.1 Visible minority population characteristics (#), Fort St. John, 1996-2021**

	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Population in private households</b>	14,920	15,940	17,290	18,450	19,810	21,175
<b>Total - Not a visible minority</b>	14,435	15,475	16,630	17,515	17,435	17,740
<b>Total - Visible minority population</b>	485	460	660	940	2,370	3,430
<b>South Asian</b>	80	45	150	160	595	1,120
<b>Chinese</b>	170	80	120	205	215	160
<b>Black</b>	50	90	100	140	375	435
<b>Filipino</b>	85	100	115	280	630	1,120
<b>Latin American</b>	-	15	45	-	90	85
<b>Arab</b>	10	25	-	10	60	40
<b>Southeast Asian</b>	10	30	-	10	95	105
<b>West Asian</b>	-	-	20	25	60	10
<b>Korean</b>	10	40	70	40	65	125
<b>Japanese</b>	10	15	20	30	90	40
<b>Visible minority; n.i.e.</b>	20	15	20	-	10	70
<b>Multiple visible minorities</b>	40	10	-	35	80	120

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

Figure 6.2 demonstrates that the population of Fort St. John was becoming more diverse over time as not only the size but also the proportion of the visible minority population had been increasing. From 1996 to 2021, the proportion of the visible minority population grew from 3% to 16% of the total population. The most significant and rapid growth in the visible minority population occurred between 2011 and 2016. In that five-year period, the total number of people identifying as visible minorities in Fort St. John increased by 152%, while the total population only saw 7% growth.

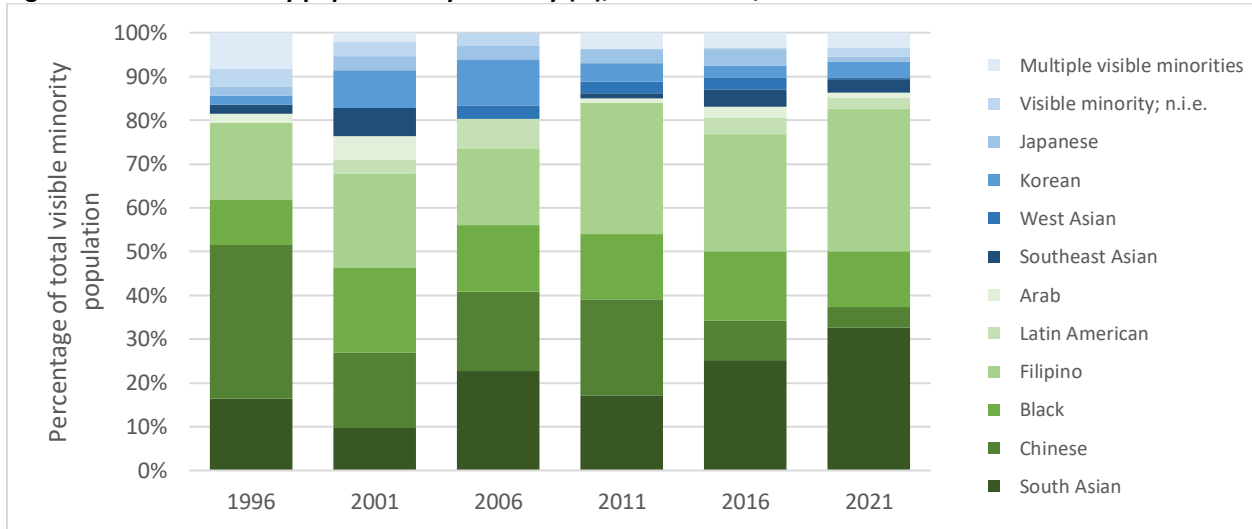
**Figure 6.2 Total visible minority population (%), Fort St. John, 1996-2021**



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

Finally, Figure 6.3 outlines which ethnicities made up the visible minority population of Fort St. John and how their distribution changed over time. For example, the mid-1990s saw a large Chinese population in Fort St. John, which decreased from 35% of the total visible minority population in 1996 to 5% in 2021. The South Asian and Filipino populations, on the other hand, saw an increase from 17% and 18% in 1996 respectively to 33% each in 2021.

**Figure 6.3 Visible minority population by ethnicity (%), Fort St. John, 1996-2021**



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

## 7.0 Immigration characteristics

Statistics Canada began collecting data on citizenship at the Census Subdivision (CSD) level in the 1986 census. Besides citizenship, census data also include immigration status and various more detailed immigration variables. It defines immigrants as persons who are, or have ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. This definition includes immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 7.1 Citizenship (#), Fort St. John, 1986-2021**

Citizenship	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Population in private households</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	14,920	15,935	17,295	18,450	19,810	21,170
<b>Canadian citizens</b>	12,445	12,955	13,685	14,525	15,650	16,200	17,695	18,080	18,985
<b>Canadian citizens aged under 18</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,555	4,660	4,655	5,105
<b>Canadian citizens aged 18 and over</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12,365	13,035	13,425	13,880
<b>Not Canadian citizens</b>	n/a	325	370	395	290	375	755	1,735	2,185

Source: Statistics Canada. 1986-2021. Census Program.

Figure 7.1 indicates that 10% of the total population in Fort St. John did not have Canadian citizenship in 2021, the highest proportion without Canadian citizenship since Statistics Canada started collecting data on citizenship.

**Figure 7.2 Immigration status (#), Fort St. John, 1986-2021**

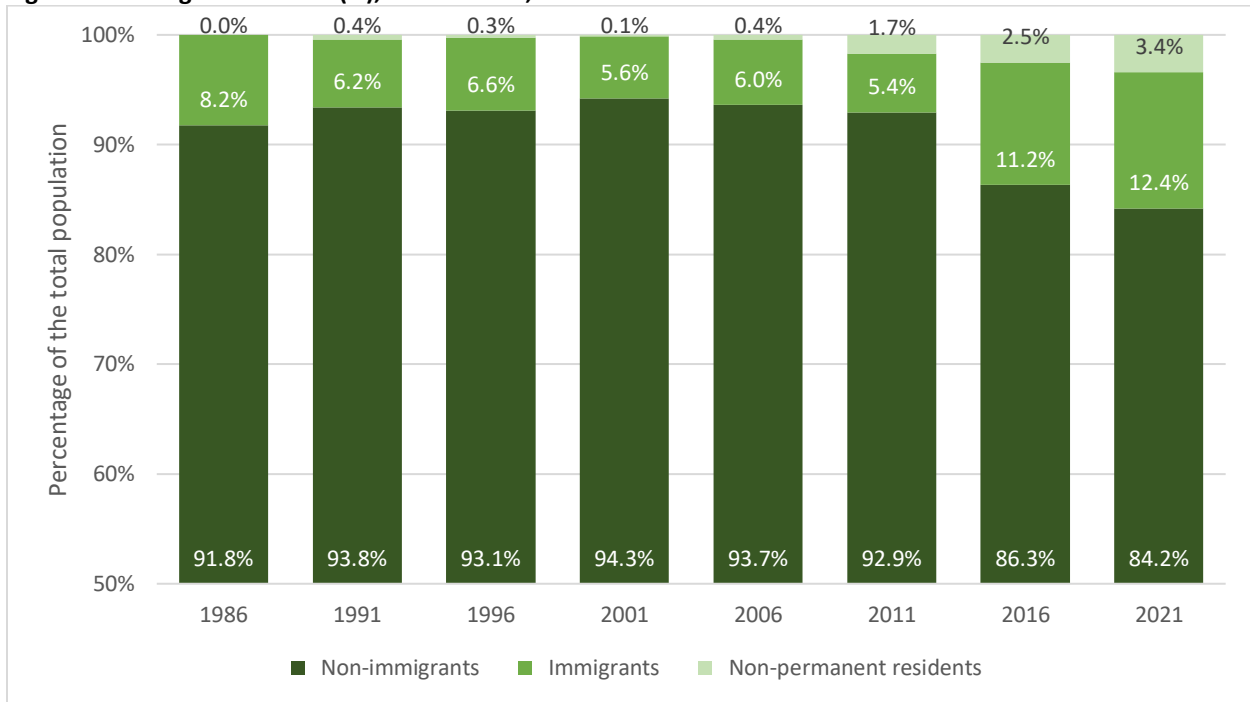
Immigration status	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Immigrant status and period of immigration for the population in private households</b>	13,270	13,995	14,920	15,935	17,295	18,450	19,810	21,170
<b>Non-immigrants</b>	12,180	13,125	13,895	15,020	16,200	17,145	17,095	17,825
<b>Immigrants</b>	1,090	870	985	900	1,030	995	2,210	2,630
<b>Non-permanent residents</b>	n/a	60	40	20	70	310	500	715

Source: Statistics Canada. 1986-2021. Census Program.

Data on immigration status confirms that there had been a recent increase in immigration to Fort St. John in 2021. This likely contributed to the diversification of the population. Figure 7.2 provides total numbers on immigration status. Figure 7.3 illustrates the proportional increases in immigrants and non-permanent residents in Fort St. John over time. In 1986, 8% of the population were immigrants, and there were no non-permanent residents noted in the city. Non-permanent residents are those persons from another country who have work or study permits, or who are refugee claimants. By 2021, the proportion of immigrants increased to over 12% and non-permanent residents made up over 3% of the total Fort St. John population.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Dictionary.

**Figure 7.3 Immigration status (%), Fort St. John, 1986-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1986-2021. Census Program.

The period of immigration refers to the time when an immigrant first obtained either landed immigrant status or permanent resident status.<sup>10</sup> Figure 7.4 reflects the recent increase in immigration as 58% of all immigrants living in Fort St. John at the time of the 2021 census arrived between 2011 and 2021.

**Figure 7.4 Period of immigration (#), Fort St. John, 2021**

	Total	Men	Women
<b>Total immigrant population</b>	2,630	1,280	1,355
<b>Before 1980</b>	270	120	145
<b>1980 to 1990</b>	85	35	50
<b>1991 to 2000</b>	200	95	105
<b>2001 to 2010</b>	540	245	290
<b>2011 to 2015</b>	680	295	380
<b>2016 to 2021</b>	855	480	375

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

While the 2018 profile noted that 52% of immigrants in Fort St. John in 2016 were children and youth under the age of 25, indicating that families were immigrating together, that proportion decreased to 43% in 2021 (Figure 7.5). A total of 51% of immigrants arrived when they were in the young working age cohorts between 25 to 44 years of age, and only 7% arrived when they were older adults (45 years and over). The fact that immigrants are mostly of working age suggests that employment may be the main reason for choosing to come to Fort St. John.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Dictionary.

**Figure 7.5 Age at immigration (#), Fort St. John, 2021**

Age at immigration 2021	Total	Men	Women
<b>Total immigrant population</b>	2,630	1,280	1,355
<b>Under 5 years</b>	185	70	120
<b>5 to 14 years</b>	460	240	220
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	480	245	235
<b>25 to 44 years</b>	1330	640	695
<b>45 years and over</b>	175	90	85

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Figure 7.6 shows the places of origin for recent immigrants who arrived in Canada in between 2016 and 2021. Making up 70% of the total recent immigrant population, the Philippines and India continued to be the countries of origin for the largest group of recent immigrants residing in Fort St. John in 2021. While 51.5% of the total immigrant population in Fort St. John in 2021 consisted of women, the female proportion of recent immigrants was only 43.9%.

**Figure 7.6 Selected places of birth for the recent immigrant population (#), Fort St. John, 2021**

	Total	Men	Women
<b>Recent immigrants</b>	855	485	375
<b>Brazil</b>	15	10	10
<b>Jamaica</b>	40	30	15
<b>Mexico</b>	20	0	20
<b>United States</b>	35	20	15
<b>Other places in the Americas</b>	10	10	0
<b>Russian Federation</b>	15	10	0
<b>United Kingdom</b>	10	10	0
<b>Other places in Europe</b>	25	20	10
<b>Nigeria</b>	30	10	15
<b>India</b>	240	155	85
<b>South Korea</b>	30	10	15
<b>Philippines</b>	355	175	165
<b>Other places in Asia</b>	10	0	10
<b>Australia</b>	10	10	0

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Note: Due to rounding by Statistics Canada, totals do not add up to 100%.

## 8.0 Education

Education is linked to community well-being in many ways, including employment, community capacity, income, and health.<sup>11</sup> 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.

The historical comparability of educational attainment is limited because of changes to definitions and the addition of categories. For instance, prior to the 2001 census, Statistics Canada enumerated for the category "Other non-university education only", which included trades certificate and college diploma. Separate categories for trades certificate and college were introduced in the 2001 census. Further, starting in the 2006 census, the category "No certificate, diploma, or degree" was introduced, where previously there were more nuanced categories such as "Less than grade 9" and "Grades 9 to 13, without secondary certificate." In addition, in the 2006 census, Statistics Canada began enumerating for university degrees above the bachelor level, with categories for different graduate and medical degrees. However, the 2011 National Household did not include these advanced degrees, which were reintroduced in the 2016 census. Given the difficulties with historical comparability, the data presented below is for the 2006 to 2021 period, covering the working age population (25 to 64 years).

Figure 8.1 provides the total numbers of the working age population of Fort St. John with each respective highest level of education for each census period since 2006. This gives an indication of current capacities and qualifications in the city. Figure 8.2 compares the proportions of education levels in the working age cohorts of Fort St. John and British Columbia. It shows that people aged 25 to 64 years in Fort St. John were more likely not to have graduated from high school (13% compared to 8% in BC) or not to have pursued any post-secondary education (32% compared to 26%). The Fort St. John working age population also had a higher proportion of people with trades qualifications (14% compared to 8% in BC). The most pronounced gap could be found in post-secondary education at bachelor level or above with 21% of the Fort St. John working age population compared to 35% for British Columbia. The findings likely do not solely reflect upon the education system but may also be connected to the availability and attractiveness of career pathways requiring minimal formal education. The findings do, however, have implications for the population and the community; limited education limits the range of opportunities for individuals as well as the capacity available to the community.

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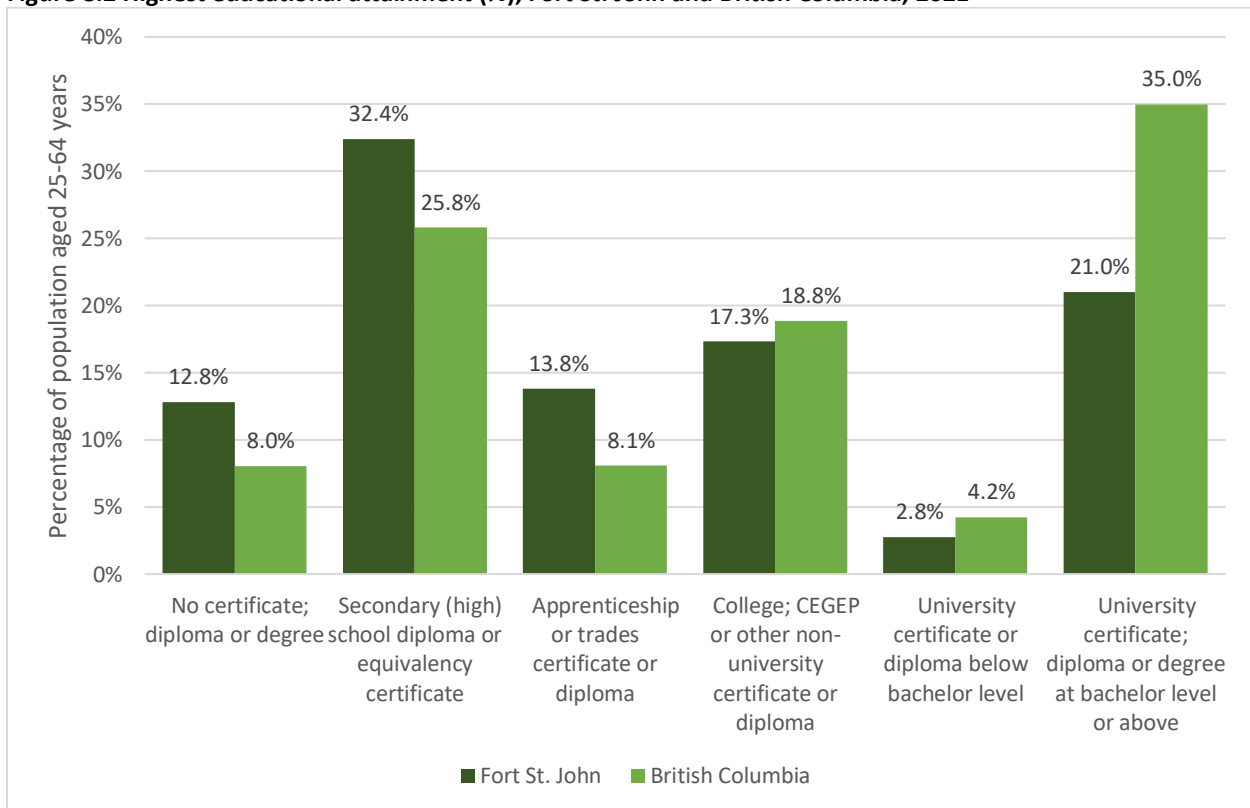
<sup>11</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. 2013. "What Makes Canadians Healthy or Unhealthy?" Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health/what-makes-canadians-healthy-unhealthy.html>

**Figure 8.1 Highest educational attainment (#), Fort St. John, 2006-2021**

	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Highest certificate; diploma or degree for the population aged 25 to 64 years in private households - 25% sample data</b>	9,325	10,525	11,425	12,155
<b>No certificate; diploma or degree</b>	1,830	1,640	1,410	1,555
<b>Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate</b>	2,620	3,145	3,825	3,935
<b>Postsecondary certificate; diploma or degree</b>	n/a	5,740	6,190	6,670
<b>Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma</b>	1,420	1,790	1,695	1,675
<b>Trades certificate or diploma other than Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification</b>	n/a	n/a	560	565
<b>Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification</b>	n/a	n/a	1,140	1,115
<b>College; CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma</b>	1,980	2,180	2,185	2,105
<b>University certificate or diploma below bachelor level</b>	320	405	320	335
<b>University certificate; diploma or degree at bachelor level or above</b>	1,150	1,360	1,985	2,555
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	780	1,010	1,500	1,890
<b>University certificate or diploma above bachelor level</b>	95	355	85	190
<b>Degree in medicine; dentistry; veterinary medicine or optometry</b>	20	n/a	40	45
<b>Master's degree</b>	215	n/a	325	375
<b>Earned doctorate</b>	45	n/a	35	55

Source: Statistics Canada. 2006-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 8.2 Highest educational attainment (%), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

The six-year completion rate is an indicator of the success of a school system. Six-year completion rate refers to “the proportion of students who graduate, with a British Columbia Certificate of Graduation or British Columbia Adult Graduation Diploma, within six years from the first time they enroll in Grade 8, adjusted for migration in and out of British Columbia.”<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 8.3 Six-year completion rate (%), SD 60 Peace River North, 2013-2023**

	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
<b>Total - Students</b>	64.8	66.0	68.8	74.3	76.3	75.7	76.6	75.7	78.3	83.3
<b>Female</b>	69.1	67.5	68.3	77.9	77.4	81.1	77.6	75.3	79.5	87.0
<b>Male</b>	60.6	64.5	69.3	70.8	75.2	69.6	75.7	76.1	77.0	79.7
<b>Indigenous</b>	34.2	55.4	44.9	64.8	63.7	65.4	65.4	67.5	60.2	79.4
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	73.1	68.9	75.2	77.2	79.8	78.5	80.1	77.9	83.0	84.5

Source: BC Ministry of Education.

**Figure 8.4 Six-year completion rate (%), SD 59 Peace River South, 2013-2023**

	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
<b>Total - Students</b>	74.2	77.2	82.9	84.3	77.3	82.6	84.7	85.5	81.9	78.7
<b>Female</b>	82.5	84.7	88.3	89.6	85.1	83.4	88.1	89.1	87.8	85.0
<b>Male</b>	67.7	70.0	78.3	79.3	69.4	81.8	81.3	82.3	76.4	70.4
<b>Indigenous</b>	61.8	68.4	77.5	64.0	63.7	73.2	78.8	72.6	66.0	68.3
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	80.7	81.2	85.6	93.1	85.1	87.4	87.6	92.1	90.8	84.9

Source: BC Ministry of Education.

**Figure 8.5 Six-year completion rate (%), Province of British Columbia, 2013-2023**

	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
<b>Total - Students</b>	87.3	87.4	87.2	87.7	88.7	89.3	89.9	90.5	91.7	92.1
<b>Female</b>	89.6	89.6	89.6	89.8	90.7	91.6	92.0	92.4	93.3	93.8
<b>Male</b>	85.1	85.4	85.0	85.7	86.9	87.1	88.0	88.8	90.3	90.5
<b>Indigenous</b>	61.7	63.0	63.9	65.9	69.0	69.2	70.7	72.4	74.6	73.7
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	90.5	90.5	90.2	90.6	91.3	92.0	92.5	93.0	94.1	94.6

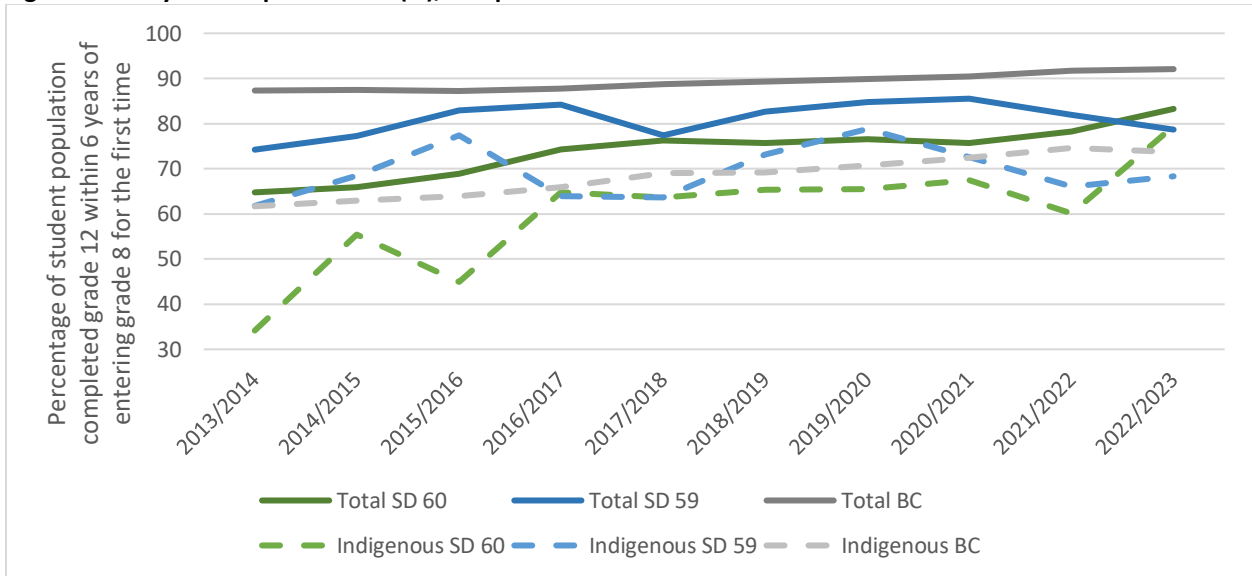
Source: BC Ministry of Education.

Fort St. John belongs to School District 60 Peace River North. Figures 8.3, 8.4, and 8.5 provide the six-year completion rates for students in Peace River North, Peace River South, and the province respectively over the past 10 school years. Figure 8.6 depicts total and Indigenous rates in a direct comparison. The latest six-year completion rate for the total student body for SD 60 (83.8%) was higher than the SD 59 rate (78.7%) but below the provincial rate (92.1%). The numbers also show that the Indigenous completion rates were below completion rates for non-Indigenous students. SD 60 saw the most improved long-term trends compared to SD 59 and BC, although with fluctuations as is common

<sup>12</sup> BC Ministry of Education. “Six-Year Completion Rate.” *Glossary*. Available at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/glossary.php?initLetter=All#sycr>

for smaller non-metropolitan communities. Recent developments especially show an increase in six-year completion in SD 60 and a notable decrease in the gap between Indigenous and total completion rates.

**Figure 8.6 Six-year completion rate (%), comparison**



Source: BC Ministry of Education.

## 9.0 Health

Data on health indicators are not collected at the Census Subdivision (CSD) level, but at the regional level. Fort St. John belongs to the Peace River North Local Health Area (LHA), which in turn is part of the Northeast Health Service Delivery Area. Figure 9.1 shows that 56.4% of people in the Northeast Health Service Delivery Area perceived their general health as very good or excellent in 2020, compared to 60.0% of the BC population. Whereas women in the Northeast Health Service Delivery Area were more likely to rate their general health as very good or excellent (62.2%), they perceived their mental health less favourably, and were least likely to report very good or excellent mental health (56.1%). This was a notable change from earlier data collection periods.

**Figure 9.1 Health status population aged 12 years and over (%), 2019/2020**

	Northeast Health Service Delivery Area	British Columbia
<b>Perceived health, very good or excellent</b>	56.4	60.0
<b>Male</b>	50.9	60.6
<b>Female</b>	62.2	59.5
<b>Perceived mental health, very good or excellent</b>	60.4	62.9
<b>Male</b>	64.4	66.6
<b>Female</b>	56.1	59.5

Source: Statistics Canada. 2019/2020. Canadian Community Health Survey.

Figure 9.2 indicates that people in the Northeast Health Service Delivery Area generally had a higher reported incidence of unhealthy lifestyle habits than the province. The proportion of people overweight or obese was nine percentage points higher for men and 20 percentage points higher for women compared with the province. While rates improved over time across both geographies, there continued to be higher rates of smoking and heavy drinking in the Northeast compared to the province.

**Figure 9.2 Lifestyle habits population aged 12 years and over (%), 2019/2020**

	Northeast Health Service Delivery Area	British Columbia
<b>Body mass index, self-reported (18 years and over), overweight or obese</b>	73.4	58.8
<b>Male</b>	74.1	65.1
<b>Female</b>	72.4	52.4
<b>Current smoker, daily or occasional</b>	19.2	10.6
<b>Male</b>	21.0	12.7
<b>Female</b>	10.6	8.5
<b>Heavy drinking</b>	15.2	17.6
<b>Male</b>	23.3	20.5
<b>Female</b>	6.7	14.7

Source: Statistics Canada. 2019/2020. Canadian Community Health Survey.

Note: Body mass index for youth aged 12-17 years is reported separately. Data for the Northeast Health Service Delivery Area was deemed too unreliable to publish by Statistics Canada.

Health data profiles are not updated with the same regularity and format consistency as, for example, census data. Therefore, the same profile and regional comparison provided in the first edition of this profile was not available for the second edition. Figure 9.3 lists more recent chronic health variables. A direct comparison with data from the first edition suggests a deterioration in cancer rates. A comparison of myocardial infarction over time was not possible as datasets refer to different population groups.

**Figure 9.3 Chronic diseases (#), most recent**

	<b>Fort St. John Community Health Service Area</b>
<b>All cancers, crude incidence, all ages (per 100,000, per year), 2016-2020</b>	426.3
<b>Hospitalized acute myocardial infarction, age 20+ (per 1,000), 2020-2021</b>	19.3

Source: BC Community Health Data. 2024. Health Status and Chronic Disease.

Life expectancy increased overall, with the greatest increase noted for men. Figure 9.4 indicates a life expectancy of 77.6 years for men, and 83 years for women in the Peace River North LHA, which were 3 years and 1.6 years shorter for men and women respectively than the provincial life expectancy. This meant the gap for men in the Peace River North LHA compared to the province decreased between the 2007-2011 measure and 2011-2015 measure, while the gap for women stayed the same.

**Figure 9.4 Life expectancy in years (#), 2011-2015 average**

	<b>Peace River North Local Health Area</b>	<b>British Columbia</b>
<b>Total</b>	80.1	82.6
<b>Male</b>	77.6	80.6
<b>Female</b>	83.0	84.6

Source: BC Centre for Disease Control. 2024. Fort St. John Community Health Profile.

## 10.0 Mobility and migration

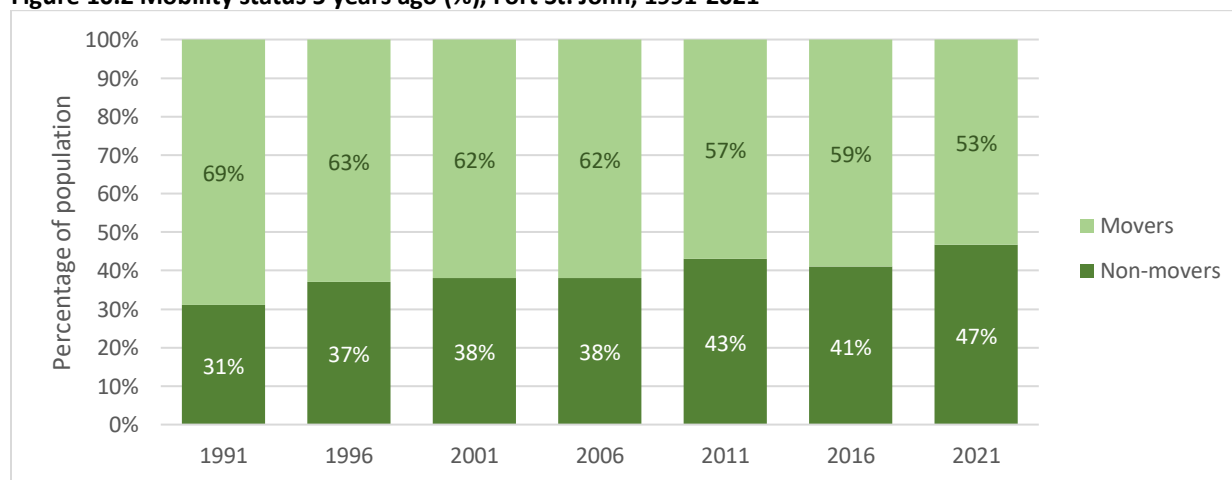
Mobility and migration provide insight into the movement of the population within the Census Subdivision (CSD) and into movement outside the community. Since 1991, Statistics Canada has been enumerating for mobility status, with respondents indicating whether they lived in the same residence as five years before. Those who remained at the same addresses as the one at which they resided five years earlier are classified “non-movers”. Those who are living at a different address than the one at which they resided five years earlier are classified “movers”. Movers are further broken down to reflect their movement within or outside the CSD. “Non-migrants” are movers who are living in the same CSD, but who have moved to a new residence within the last five years. “Migrants” are movers who were residing in a different CSD five years earlier. Migrants are further broken down; “internal migrants” refer to movers who lived in a different CSD within Canada five years earlier. “External migrants” are movers who were living outside Canada five years earlier. Internal migrants are further broken down into “intraprovincial migrants” – those living in a different CSD but in the same province five years earlier – and “interprovincial migrants” – those who were living in a different CSD in a different province five years earlier.<sup>13</sup> Figure 10.1 provides total numbers for five-year mobility in Fort St. John and British Columbia as per the 2021 census.

**Figure 10.1 Mobility status 5 years ago (#), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 2021**

	Fort St. John	British Columbia
<b>Total - Mobility status 5 years ago</b>	20,785	4,699,740
<b>Non-movers</b>	16,745	2,639,500
<b>Movers</b>	4,040	2,060,245
<b>Non-migrants</b>	2,710	757,040
<b>Migrants</b>	1,335	1,303,200
<b>Internal migrants</b>	1,185	1,016,025
<b>Intraprovincial migrants</b>	785	799,455
<b>Interprovincial migrants</b>	400	216,565
<b>External migrants</b>	150	287,175

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

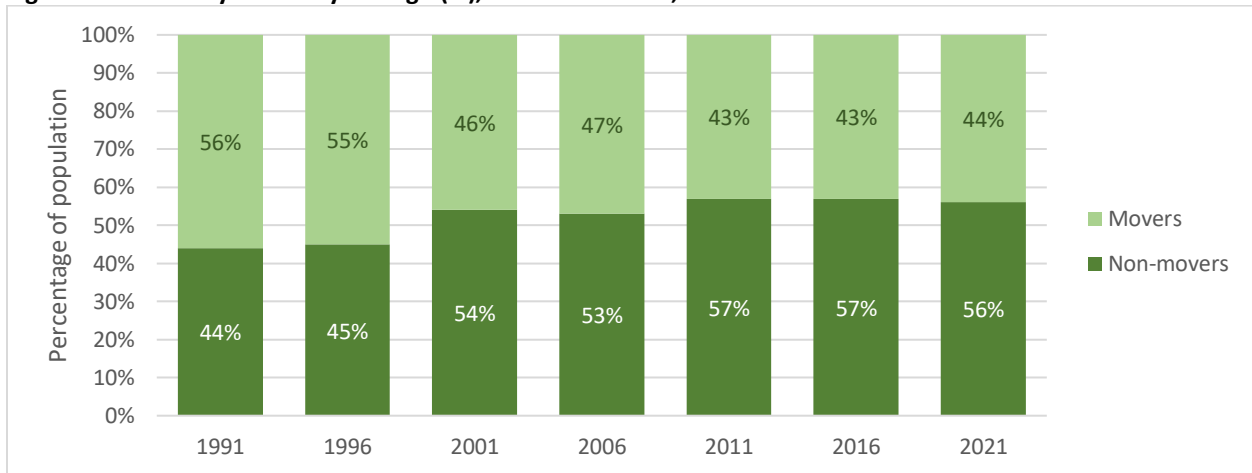
**Figure 10.2 Mobility status 5 years ago (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021**



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

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Dictionary.

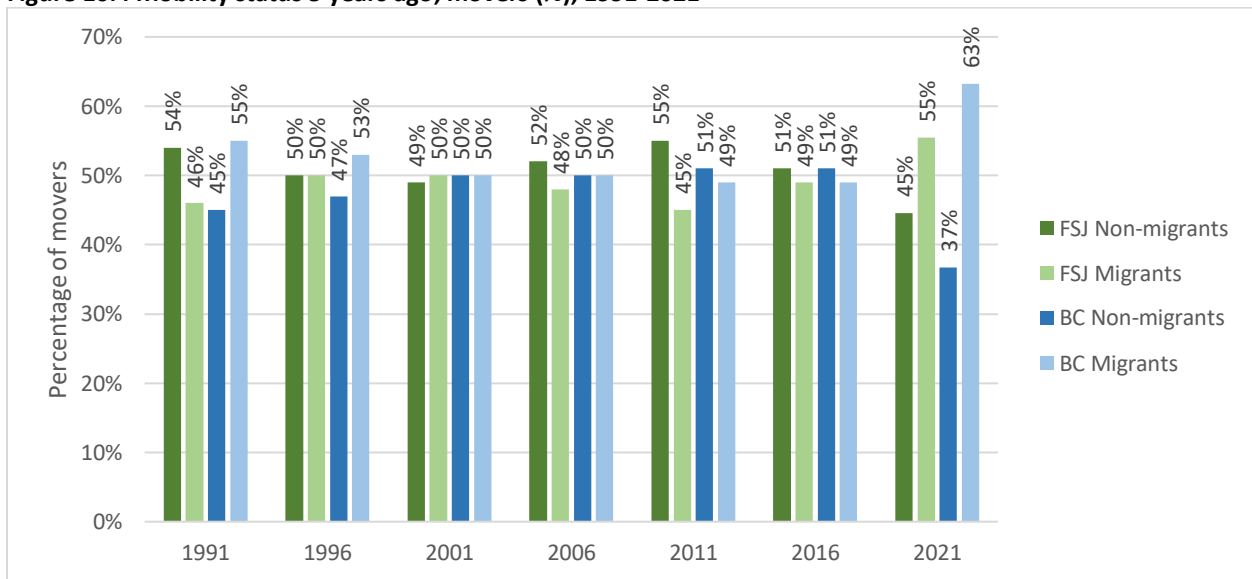
**Figure 10.3 Mobility status 5 years ago (%), British Columbia, 1991-2021**



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

Figures 10.2 and 10.3 indicate that there was considerable mobility within Fort St. John when compared with mobility within BC. Between 1991 and 2021, a majority of the Fort St. John population had moved within the last five years. However, over that same period, the prevailing trend continued to be a decrease in moving, with a 16 percentage point increase in non-movers. This downward trend in moving was similar to that experienced by the province as a whole.

**Figure 10.4 Mobility status 5 years ago, movers (%), 1991-2021**

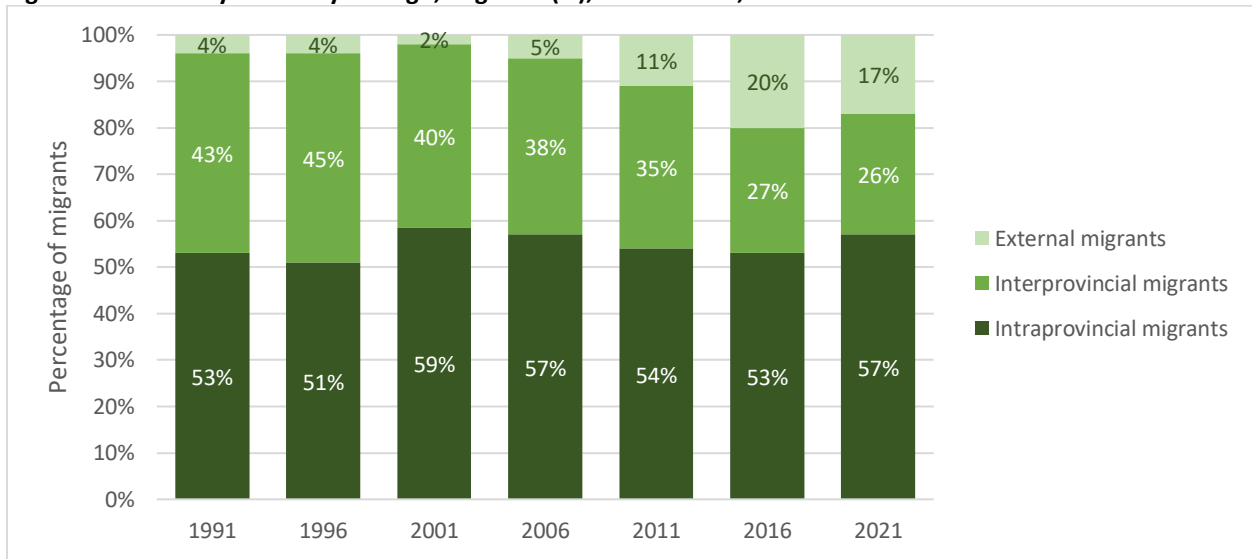


Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2021. Census Program.

Figure 10.4 shows that the ratio of non-migrants to migrants, which had remained fairly even since 1991, changed over the last census period. By 2021, for the first time, movers in Fort St. John were notably more likely to be migrants. A similar trend in BC can be observed for BC with an even more pronounced change during the last census period. In 2021, non-migrants accounted for 45% of movers, with 55% of movers having moved to Fort St. John from another CSD. The province noted 37% of movers as non-migrants, while 63% had moved to different CSDs.

Figure 10.5 breaks down the composition of migrants to Fort St. John, revealing two notable trends. First, there was significant overall growth in external migrants. The lowest proportion of external migrants was recorded in 2001 with 2%, and the highest in 2016 with 20%. By 2021, 17% of migrants came from outside of Canada. This means that Fort St. John continued to attract international migrants.

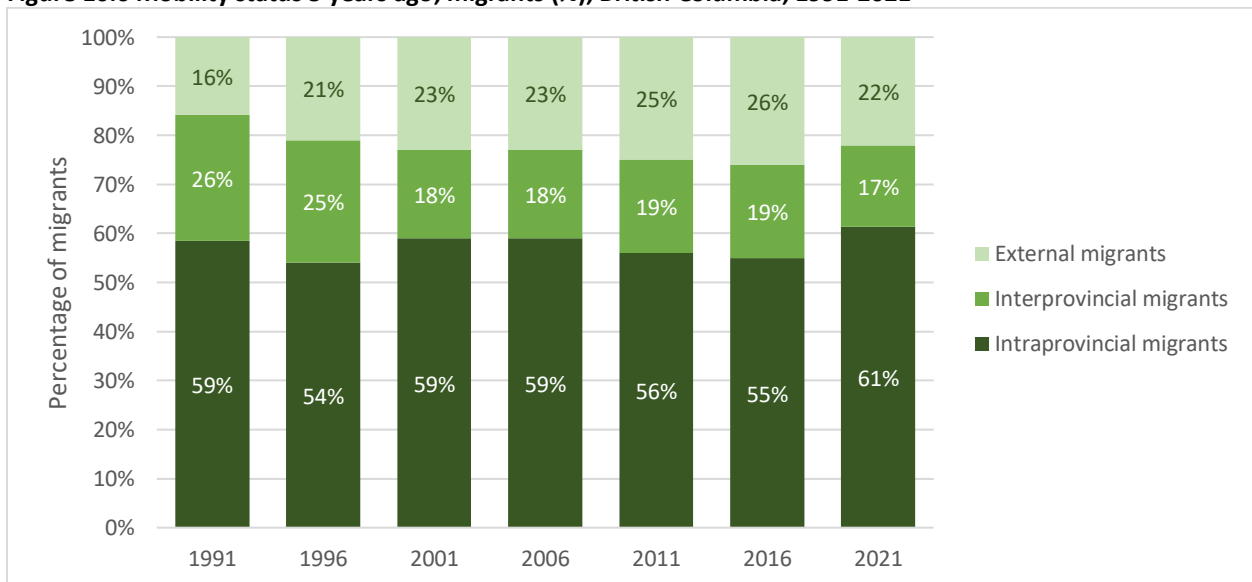
**Figure 10.5 Mobility status 5 years ago, migrants (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021**



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

Figure 10.6 shows the composition of migrants BC-wide to offer perspective into the changing migration patterns to Fort St. John. For both geographies, migration from other provinces, “interprovincial migration”, shows declining trends over time, while the proportion remained higher in Fort St. John compared to BC.

**Figure 10.6 Mobility status 5 years ago, migrants (%), British Columbia, 1991-2021**



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

## 11.0 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. According to Figure 11.1, the occupied housing stock in Fort St. John grew by 10.6% between 2016 and 2021 to a total of 8,780 occupied private dwellings.

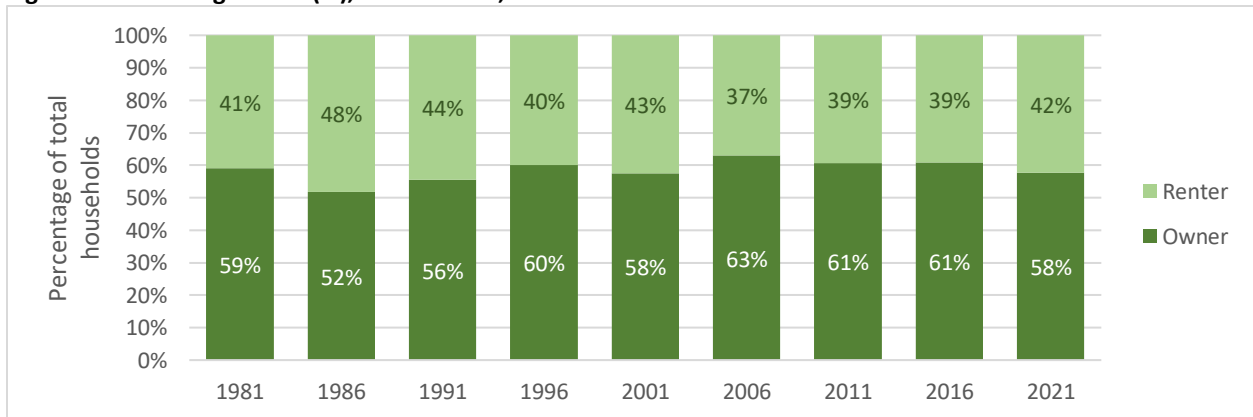
**Figure 11.1 Total occupied private dwellings (#), Fort St. John 1981-2021**

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Occupied private dwellings</b>	4,590	4,745	5,180	5,490	6,160	6,875	7,480	7,935	8,780

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

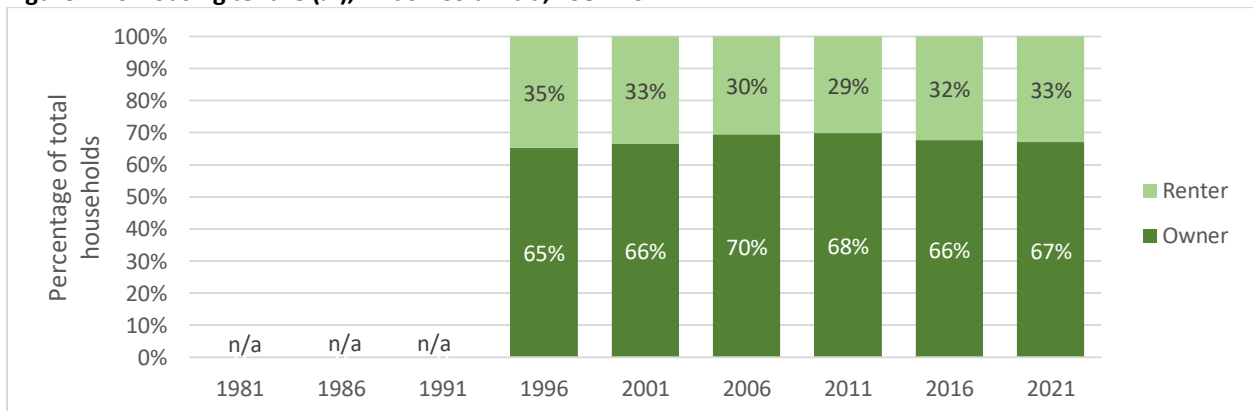
Figure 11.2 indicates that 58% of private dwellings in Fort St. John were owned in 2021, with the remaining 42% rented to tenants. Overall, the share of owners to renters remained stable since 1981 with some fluctuations and a recent downward trend. The ownership rate in Fort St. John was lower compared to the provincial average. According to the 2021 census, 67% of private dwellings were owned in BC, with 33% rented to tenants (Figure 11.3).

**Figure 11.2 Housing tenure (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 11.3 Housing tenure (%), British Columbia, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

Note: Consistent tenure breakdown was not available from public datasets prior to 1996.

Figure 11.4 details the costs of home ownership in Fort St. John. Since 1981, the average value of homes has increased 413%. After two decades of increasing home values, there was a decrease in average value of 6% between 2016 and 2021. Figure 11.4 also shows that the growing resilience noted among owner households in the 2016 census saw a slight decline between 2016 and 2021 with an increase in owner households paying 30% or more of their income on shelter costs from 9.4% in 2016 to 10.2% in 2021.

**Figure 11.4 Costs for owner households, Fort St. John, 1981-2021**

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Total - Owner households in private dwellings	n/a	1,935	2,225	2,465	3,535	4,325	4,540	4,830	5,065
% of owner households with a mortgage	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	74.1	77.1	73.4
% of owner households spending 30% or more of its income on shelter costs	n/a	11.6	9.7	9.3	14.0	15.6	19.2	9.4	10.2
Average monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings (CAD)	516	550	685	696	879	1,118	1,327	1,622	1,660
Average value of dwellings (CAD x 1000)	71.2	55.4	71.6	102.6	128.2	223.4	301.2	387.7	365.2

Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

Figure 11.5 shows the provincial figures for home ownership costs. A comparison between Figures 11.4 and 11.5 indicates that Fort St. John has a higher proportion of owner households with mortgages, 73.4%, compared with the provincial rate of 57.5%. This can be partly attributed to the younger population of Fort St. John. In 2021, the average value of private dwellings in BC was 169% greater than in Fort St. John. The average monthly shelter costs of homeowners in Fort St. John were 0.5% below the provincial average, whereas they had been higher in the previous census period. Homeowners in Fort St. John continued to be more financially resilient. The 2021 home owner vulnerability rate of 10.2% compared to 19.3% in BC.

**Figure 11.5 Costs for owner households, British Columbia, 2006-2021**

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Total - Owner households in private dwellings	1,118,160	1,202,000	1,242,600	1,330,795
% of owner households with a mortgage	n/a	57.3	58.6	57.5
% of owner households spending 30% or more of its income on shelter costs	22.7	23.8	20.7	19.3
Average monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings (CAD)	1,119	1,228	1,387	1,668
Average value of dwellings (CAD x 1,000)	418.7	543.6	720.7	983.0

Source: Statistics Canada. 2006-2021. Census Program.

While renter vulnerability had been decreasing, Figure 11.6 shows that renters in Fort St. John continued to be more financially vulnerable than owners. In 2021, 25% of tenant households were spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs.

Figure 11.7 provides the provincial data for tenant households. Renters in Fort St. John continued to be more financially resilient than the province as a whole in 2021. Contributing to this may have been the slightly lower average rental costs compared to BC.

**Figure 11.6 Costs for tenant households, Fort St. John, 1981-2021**

Cost of private dwellings	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Total - Tenant households in private dwellings	n/a	1,150	1,030	1,035	2,620	2,545	2,940	3,105	3,710
% of tenant households in subsidized housing	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.8	8.9	8.6
% of tenant households spending 30% or more of its income on shelter costs	n/a	33.5	26.2	68.6	31.3	32.2	35.8	29.5	25.0
Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (CAD)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	936	1,205	1,200
Average monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (CAD)	458	425	496	584	694	857	1,015	1,275	1,239

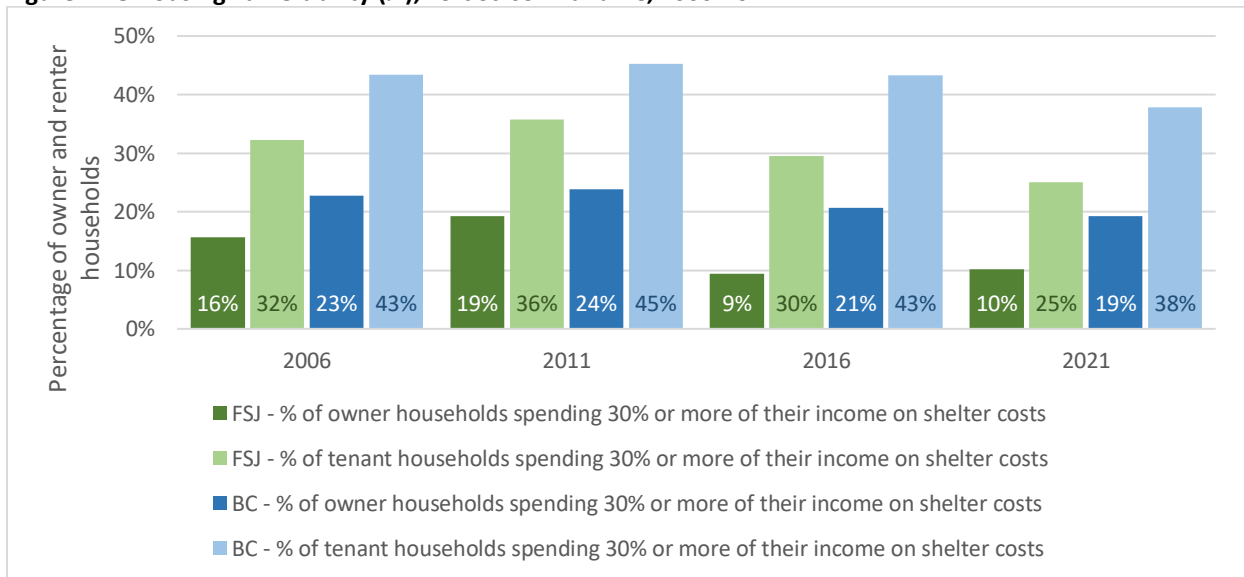
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 11.7 Costs for tenant households, British Columbia, 2006-2021**

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Total - Tenant households in private dwellings	488,715	519,855	592,825	785,000
% of tenant households in subsidized housing	n/a	13.5	12.5	11.0
% of tenant households spending 30% or more of its income on shelter costs	43.4	45.3	43.3	37.8
Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (CAD)	n/a	903	1,036	1,370
Average monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (CAD)	828	989	1,149	1,494

Source: Statistics Canada. 2006-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 11.8 Housing vulnerability (%), Fort St. John and BC, 2006-2021**



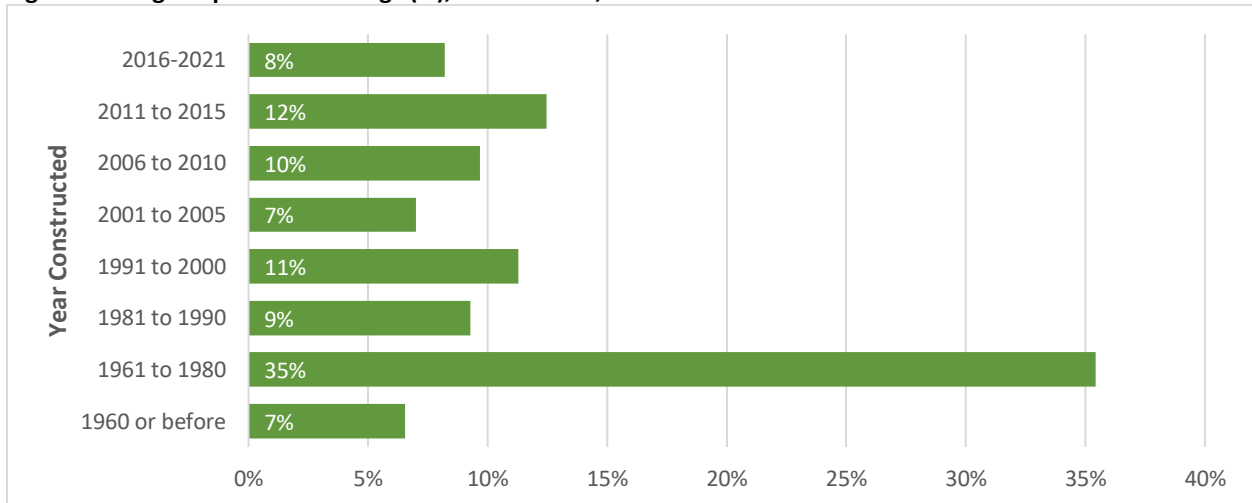
Source: Statistics Canada. 2006-2021. Census Program.

Figure 11.8 provides a comparison of financial vulnerability of owner and tenant households in Fort St. John and British Columbia from 2006 until 2021. In both geographies, tenant households were more vulnerable than owner households, while Fort St. John households were overall more resilient. Owners

in Fort St. John saw the greatest overall decrease in vulnerability but no recent improvement between 2016 and 2021. All other groups saw decreasing vulnerability between 2016 and 2021.

Figure 11.9 indicates that 42% of the total housing stock in Fort St. John was built before 1980. Fort St. John experienced small residential construction booms in 2010 and 2015.<sup>14</sup> The increasing trend in the proportion of newer homes noted in the 2018 Fort St. John Community Profile had been interrupted by 2021. As of 2021, 37% of the housing stock was built after 2001. To put the construction booms in Fort St. John into perspective, 30% of BC’s housing stock was built after 2001.

**Figure 11.9 Age of private dwellings (%), Fort St. John, 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

Figure 11.10 suggests that the proportion of dwellings in need of major repair remained fairly constant, averaging 8% since 1991. In comparison to other regions, Fort St. John housing stock is fairly new and in average to good shape.

**Figure 11.10 Condition of private dwellings (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021**

	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Total - Occupied private dwellings	5,185	5,495	6,155	6,875	7,480	7,940	8,780
Only regular maintenance or minor repairs needed	94%	91%	91%	93%	92%	93%	92%
Major repairs needed	6%	9%	9%	7%	8%	7%	8%

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

Figures 11.11 and 11.12 show the prevalence of the single-detached homes in Fort St. John. In 2021, single-detached homes represented 50% of the housing stock. Figure 11.11 shows that, between 1991 and 2021, the number of single-detached homes grew by 54%. However, the housing stock of Fort St. John also diversified somewhat. Between 1991 and 2021, the relatively small supply of semi-detached houses and apartments in duplexes increased at the fastest pace (367% and 262%). In 2021, apartments in buildings with fewer than five storeys, apartments in duplexes, and semi-detached homes constituted 40% of Fort St. John’s housing stock.

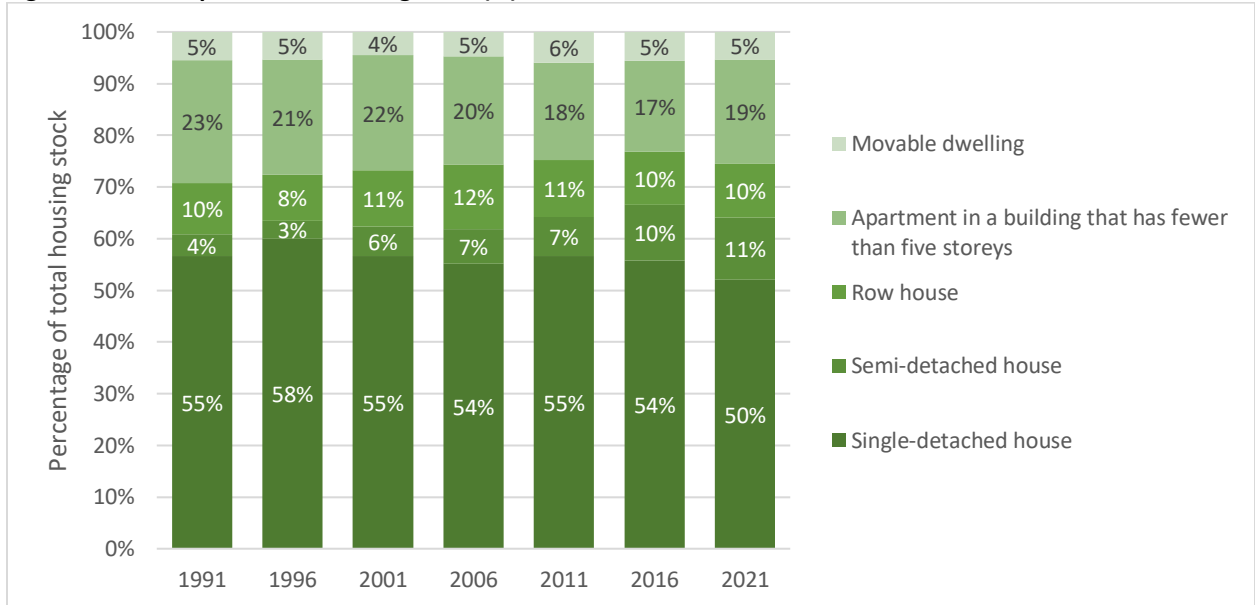
<sup>14</sup> Community Development Institute. 2016. *Fort St. John Housing & Community Profile*. Northern BC Housing Study. Available at <https://www.unbc.ca/sites/default/files/sections/community-development-institute/fortst.johnreport.pdf>

**Figure 11.11 Occupied dwellings by type (#), Fort St. John, 1991-2021**

	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021	% change
Total - Occupied private dwellings	5,180	5,490	6,160	6,875	7,480	7,935	8,775	69%
Single-detached house	2,835	3,165	3,400	3,695	4,105	4,265	4,375	54%
Apartment in a building that has five or more storeys	100	90	100	90	90	90	145	45%
Semi-detached house	215	185	345	455	550	830	1,005	367%
Row house	495	465	650	835	795	780	875	77%
Apartment or flat in a duplex	65	120	45	70	130	175	235	262%
Apartment in a building that has fewer than five storeys	1,190	1,175	1,340	1,400	1,370	1,345	1,690	42%
Other single-attached house	10	10	15	10	5	15	10	0%
Movable dwelling	275	285	270	320	430	430	450	64%

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

**Figure 11.12 Composition of housing stock (%), Fort St. John, 1991-2021**



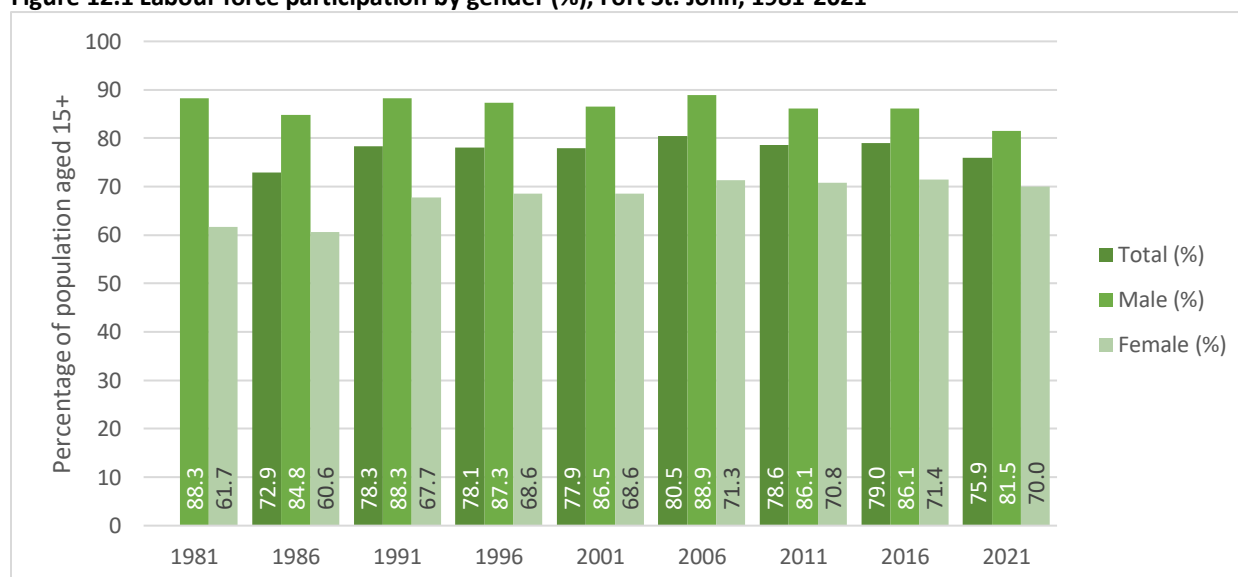
Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2021. Census Program.

## 12.0 Labour force

The strength and diversity of the local economy are reflected in the labour market. Shifts in the oil and gas industries have pronounced impacts on Fort St. John's economy. For instance, in April 1980, the price of crude oil peaked at USD\$120/barrel. The price subsequently plummeted, reaching its lowest at USD\$20/barrel in March 1986.<sup>15</sup> During this period, the unemployment rate in Fort St. John doubled, from 8.9% to 18.9%.

Labour force participation rate expresses the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over actively participating in the labour force either as employed or seeking employment. Figure 12.1 indicates labour force participation for both sexes aged 15 years and over in Fort St. John. It shows that the participation rate for women was consistently lower than men. In 2021, 81.5% of males 15 years and over were in the labour force, while only 70% of females were in the labour force. While labour force participation for women was higher in 2021 compared to 1981, it has seen an overall declining trend alongside male participation rates for the past three census periods. This may in part be a reflection of population aging and a greater proportion of retirees in the community.

**Figure 12.1 Labour force participation by gender (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



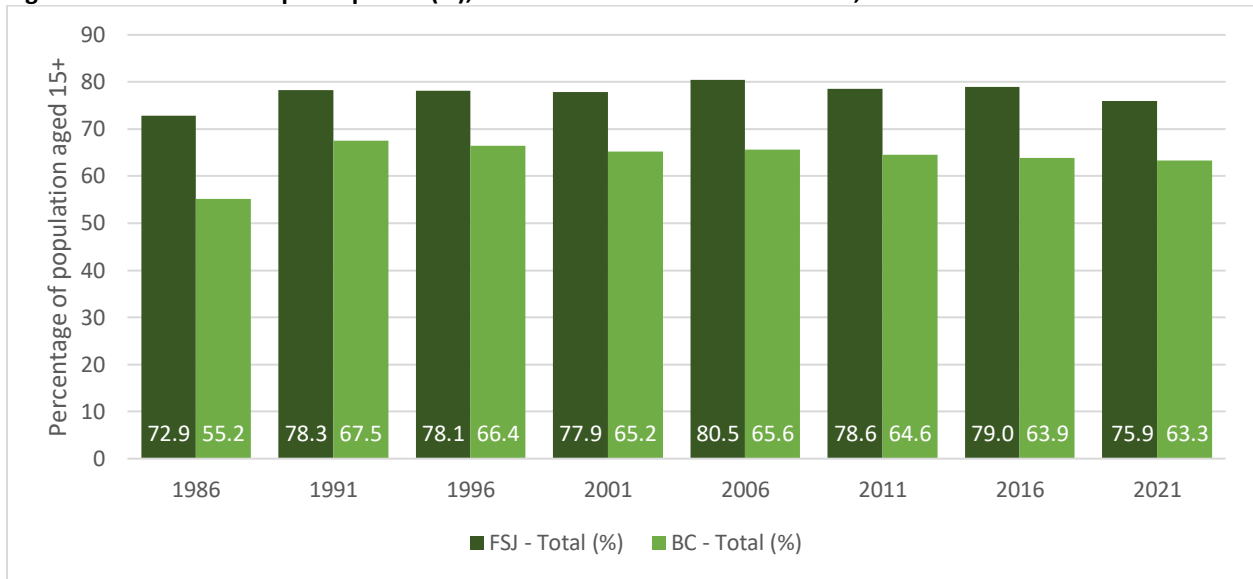
Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

Note: Census 1981 does not provide data for total labour force participation.

Figure 12.2 reveals that labour force participation in Fort St. John was higher as compared to the province as a whole. Recent trends observed in Fort St. John labour force participation were also reflected in BC.

<sup>15</sup> Macrotrends. 2018. Crude Oil Prices – 70 Year Historical Chart. Available at <http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>

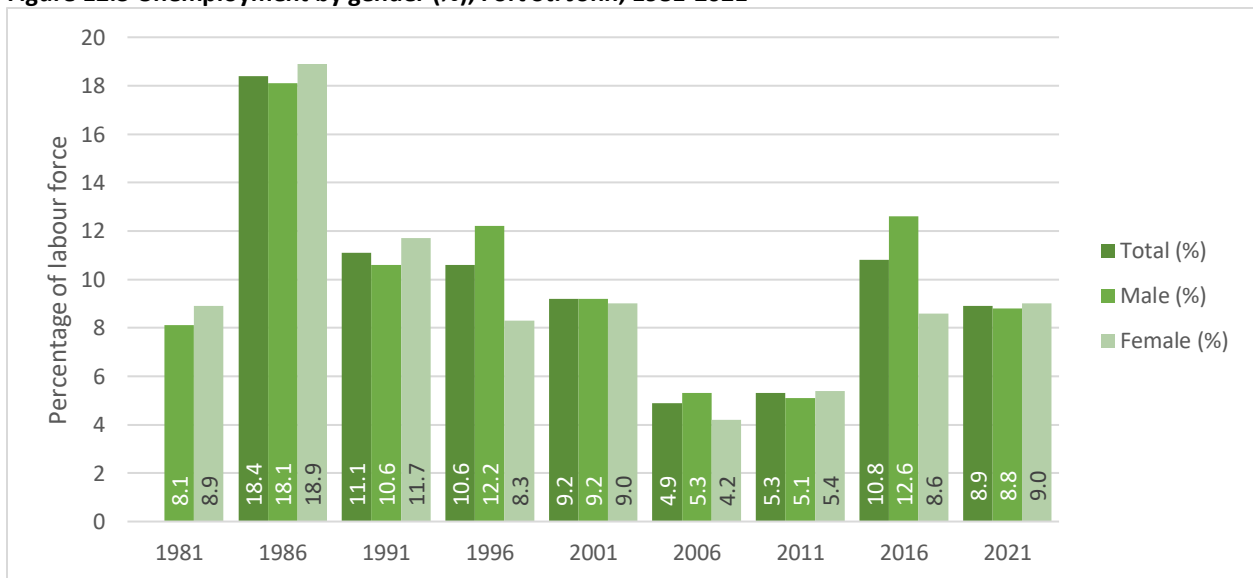
**Figure 12.2 Labour force participation (%), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 1986-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1986-2021. Census Program.

Figure 12.3 indicates that, over the last 40 years, the unemployment rate in Fort St. John averaged 10% for males, and 9.3% for females. The strong fluctuations were often driven by developments in oil and gas prices.

**Figure 12.3 Unemployment by gender (%), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**

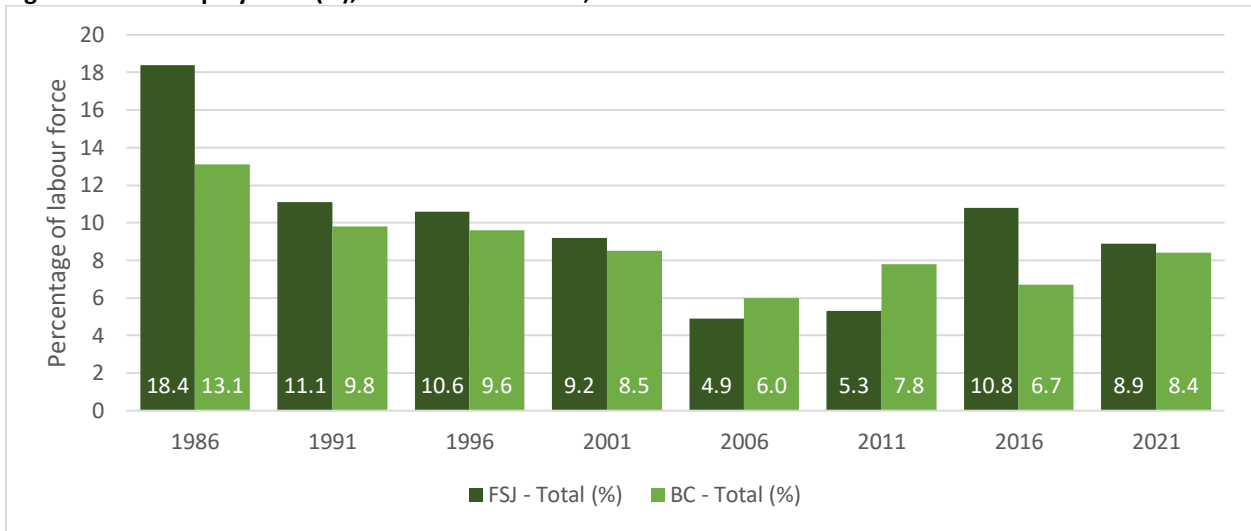


Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

Note: Census 1981 does not provide data for total unemployment rate.

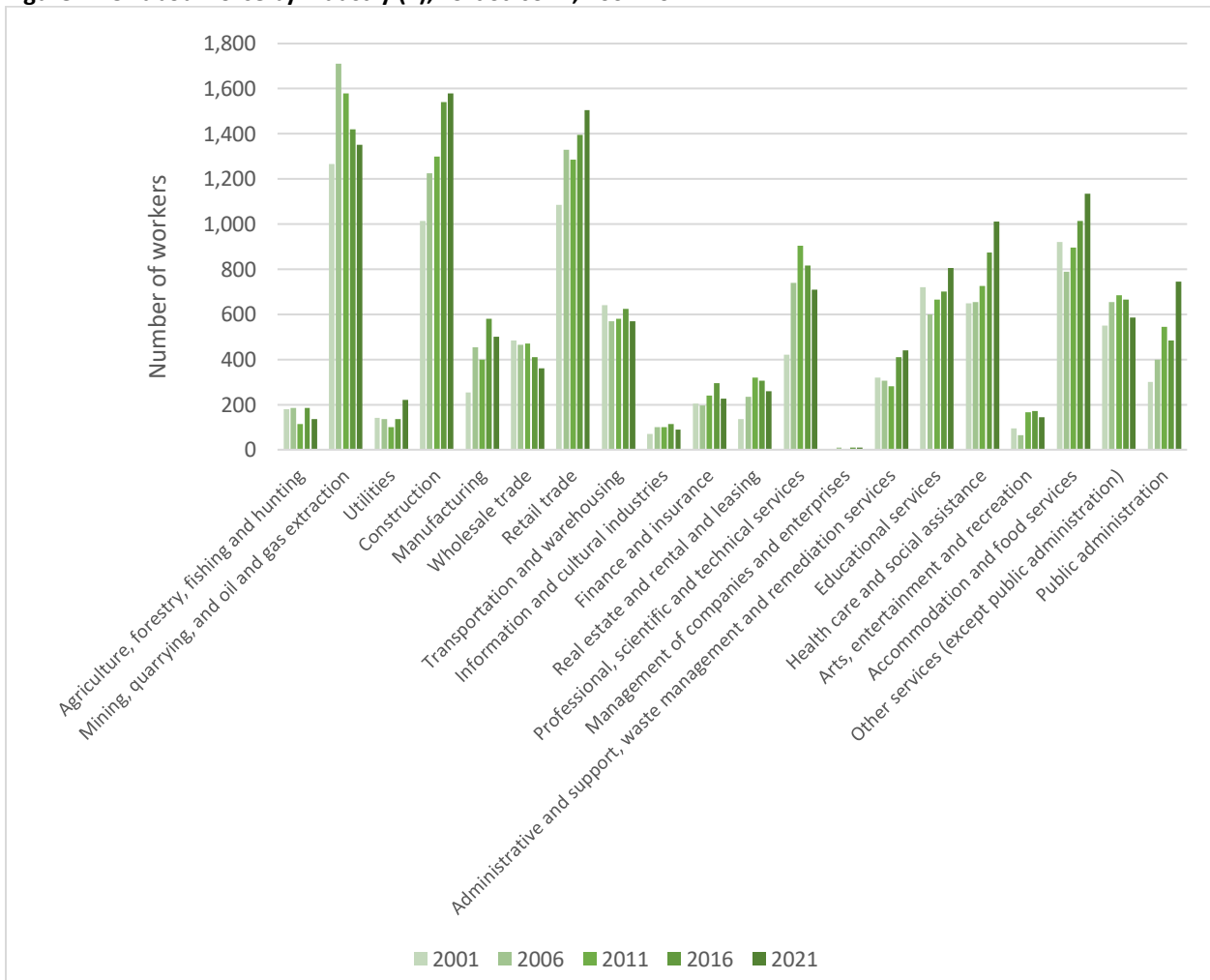
Figure 12.4 shows that, with the exception of the 2006 and 2011 censuses, Fort St. John's unemployment rate tends to be higher than the provincial unemployment rate. It also undergoes more pronounced fluctuations.

**Figure 12.4 Unemployment (%), Fort St. John and BC, 1986-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1986-2021. Census Program.

**Figure 12.5 Labour force by industry (#), Fort St. John, 2001-2021**



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

Figure 12.5 underscores recent trends towards economic diversification in Fort St. John. The graph shows the historic significance of oil and gas to the local economy as the energy sector used to be the largest employer. However, the most recent census period saw both the construction and retail trade sectors surpass oil and gas in the number of workers they employed. By 2021, construction and retail trade had grown to 1,580 and 1,505 workers respectively, while the number of workers employed in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas had decreased to 1,350.

The growing and diversifying community was also reflected in an increase in employed workers in various service sectors. This included larger public sectors such as health care and social assistance, education, and public administration, but also smaller service sectors such as utilities and administrative and support, waste management, and remediation. Finally, the accommodation and food services sector had grown to be the fourth largest sector after construction, retail trade, and natural resource extraction.

**Figure 12.6 Employment by occupation (%), male, Fort St. John, 1996-2021**

	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Labour force population aged 15 years and over, male</b>	4,930	5,465	6,270	6,425	6,900	6,940
<b>Occupation - Not applicable</b>	75	20	25	45	40	110
<b>All occupations</b>	4,855	5,445	6,245	6,380	6,860	6,830
<b>0 Management occupations<sup>16</sup></b>	11%	11%	10%	8%	9%	0%
<b>1 Business, finance and administration occupations</b>	6%	4%	5%	7%	5%	5%
<b>2 Natural and applied sciences and related occupations</b>	8%	7%	9%	12%	10%	11%
<b>3 Health occupations</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services</b>	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	6%
<b>5 Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>6 Sales and service occupations</b>	15%	15%	14%	14%	16%	20%
<b>7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations</b>	36%	38%	40%	39%	38%	39%
<b>8 Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations</b>	11%	12%	11%	9%	8%	9%
<b>9 Occupations in manufacturing and utilities</b>	7%	7%	7%	6%	7%	7%

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

<sup>16</sup> Labelling of category 0 in National Occupational Classification (NOC) has changed over time. In the 2021 Census Community Profiles, it is “Legislative and senior management occupations”. Statistics Canada (2023) *Empirical concordance: National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Version 1.0 and National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2016 Version 1.3* notes the label change. However, earlier Censuses already note errors. For example, footnote 75A in the 2006 Census Community Profiles highlights: “Census data for occupation groups in Broad occupational category A - Management occupations should be used with caution. Some coding errors were made in assigning the appropriate level of management, e.g., senior manager as opposed to middle manager, and in determining the appropriate area of specialization or activity, e.g., a manager of a health care program in a hospital as opposed to a government manager in health policy administration. Some non-management occupations have also been miscoded to management due to confusion over titles such as program manager and project manager.” Trends reflected in this category in Figures 12.6 and 12.7 of this report may therefore not be representative.

Figures 12.6 and 12.7 show that “Trades...” and “Sales ...” were the most common occupations for men, and “Sales...” and “Business...” were the most common occupations for women in 2021. Whereas the proportion of men in trades remained constant, the proportion occupied in sales saw an increase in the most recent census period. The proportion of women in sales and service occupations most recently rebounded to 37% after declining since the mid-1990s. In that same period, there was a continued increase in the proportion of women working in occupations related to education; law; and social, community, and government services, the proportion of which had doubled since the mid-1990s.

**Figure 12.7 Employment by occupation, (%), female, Fort St. John, 1996-2021**

	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
<b>Total - Labour force population aged 15 years and over, female</b>	3,715	4,055	4,600	4,990	5,370	5,665
<b>Occupation - Not applicable</b>	45	60	20	20	85	105
<b>All occupations</b>	3,665	3,995	4,580	4,970	5,285	5,560
<b>0 Management occupations<sup>17</sup></b>	7%	6%	7%	6%	8%	0%
<b>1 Business, finance and administration occupations</b>	27%	27%	31%	27%	27%	25%
<b>2 Natural and applied sciences and related occupations</b>	1%	2%	3%	4%	4%	4%
<b>3 Health occupations</b>	7%	7%	6%	7%	9%	9%
<b>4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services</b>	8%	11%	10%	15%	14%	16%
<b>5 Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport</b>	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>6 Sales and service occupations</b>	44%	40%	36%	31%	31%	37%
<b>7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations</b>	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	4%
<b>8 Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations</b>	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>9 Occupations in manufacturing and utilities</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

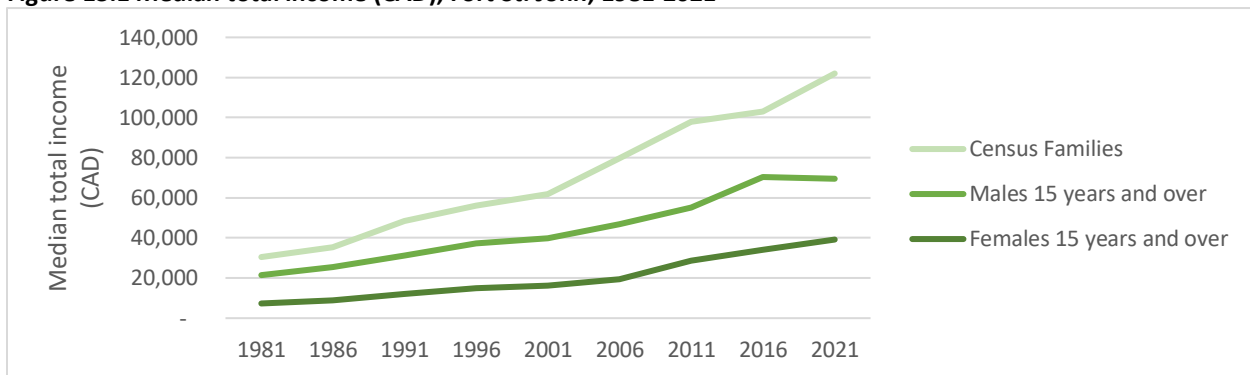
Source: Statistics Canada. 1996-2021. Census Program.

## 13.0 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.

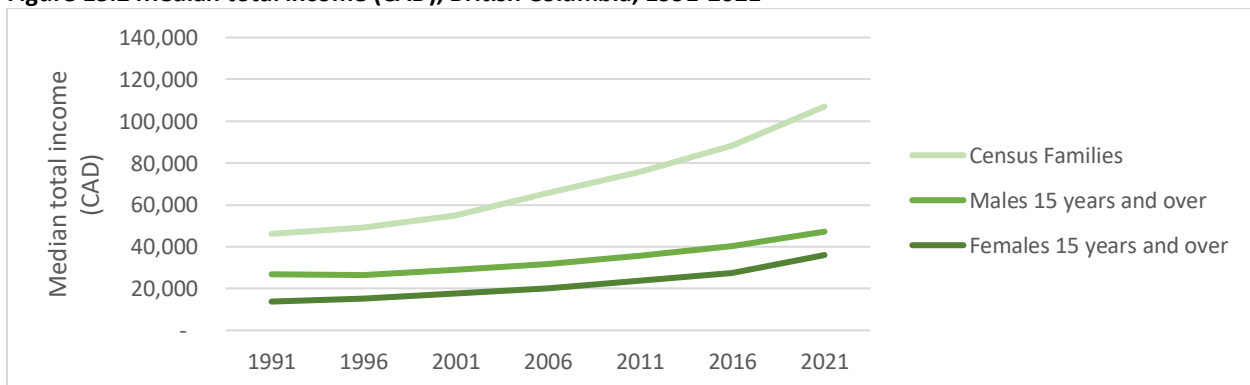
Figure 13.1 shows the median total income for Fort St. John from 1980 to 2020 as recorded in the 1981-2021 censuses. Reflecting broader social trends, there continued to be an income disparity between males and females in 2021. The proportional disparity had decreased over time from female income being 34% of male income in 1981 to female income reaching 56% of male income in the 2021 census. However, a comparison with BC income data as presented in Figure 13.2 shows that the gender gap was much more pronounced in Fort St. John. In 2021, female median total income in BC was 76% of male income. Two of the factors likely contributing to the larger difference in Fort St. John were the higher male income and the historic prevalence of women in lower paying jobs.

**Figure 13.1 Median total income (CAD), Fort St. John, 1981-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 1981-2021. Census Program.

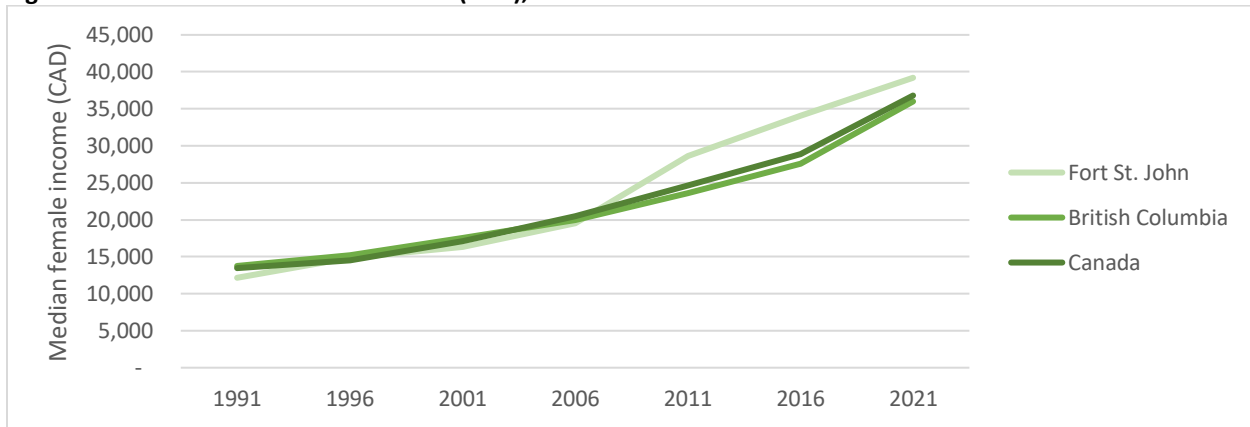
**Figure 13.2 Median total income (CAD), British Columbia, 1991-2021**



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

Despite the gendered income disparity, Figure 13.3 indicates that the median total income of women in Fort St. John surpassed that of women in British Columbia and Canada in the mid-2000s and stayed above until 2021 with \$39,200 compared to \$36,000 in BC and \$36,800 in Canada.

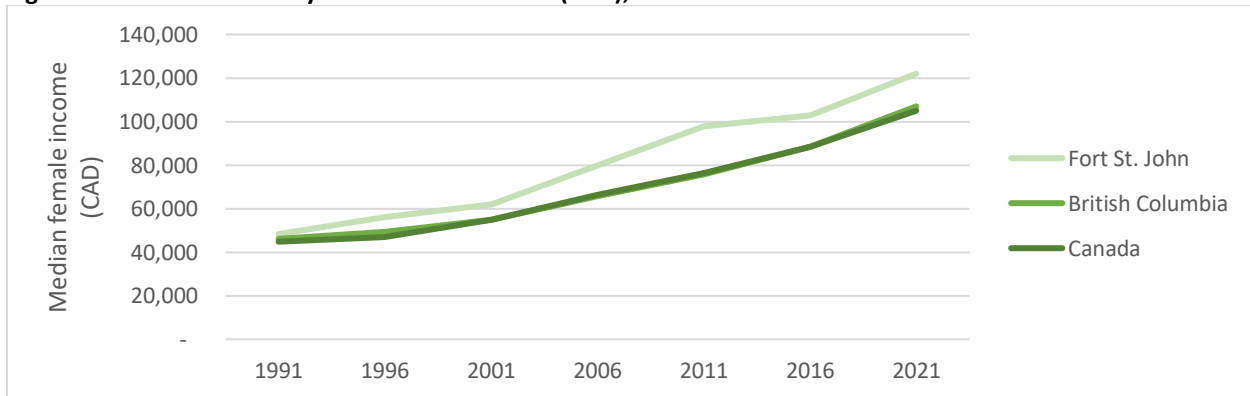
**Figure 13.3 Female median total income (CAD), 1991-2021**



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

Figure 13.4 provides a comparison of the median total income of economic families in Fort St. John with those of British Columbia and Canada. Statistics Canada defines an economic family as “a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law union, adoption or a foster relationship.”<sup>17</sup> The median income of families in Fort St. John has been consistently higher than that of families both provincially and nationally. In 2021, median total income for economic families was \$122,000 compared to \$107,000 and \$105,000 for BC and Canada respectively.

**Figure 13.4 Economic family median total income (CAD), 1991-2021**

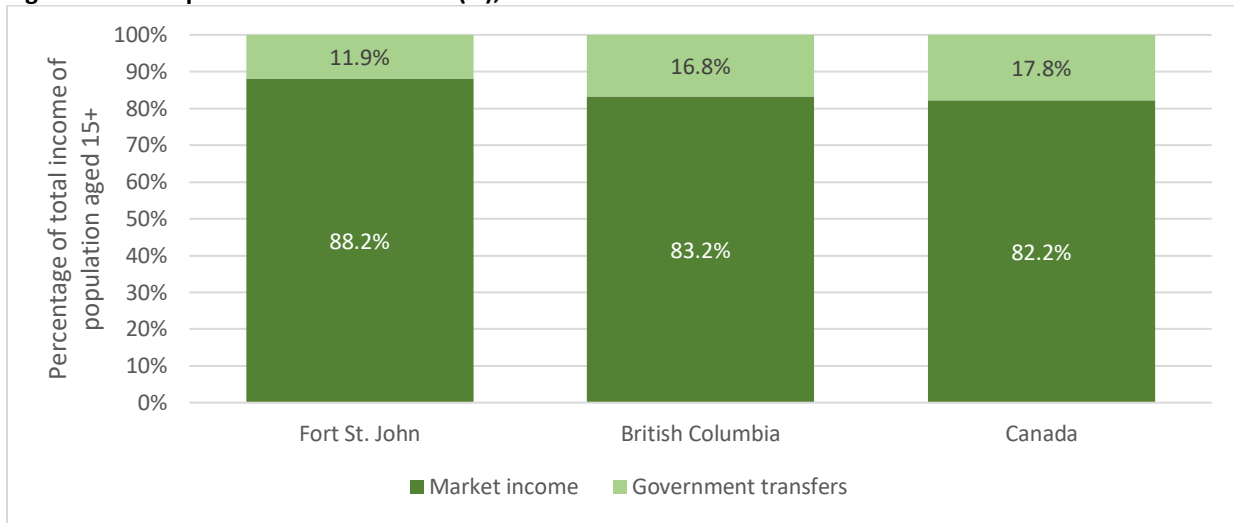


Source: Statistics Canada. 1991-2021. Census Program.

Another measure of the local economy is the percentage of income that comes from government transfers. Figure 13.5 shows that, with 12% of total incomes stemming from government transfers, the population of Fort St. John depended less on government transfers than provincial and national averages, where 17% and 18% respectively came from government transfers in 2021. However, dependency on government transfers doubled in Fort St. John between 2016 and 2021 while it only increased by 51% in BC and 52% in Canada. That time period included the outbreak of COVID-19; therefore, trends have to be considered with caution and may not be representative of longer-term trajectories. However, it shows that the effects of a combination of the COVID-19 pandemic, population aging, and other possibly other socio-economic developments were felt more intensely in Fort St. John.

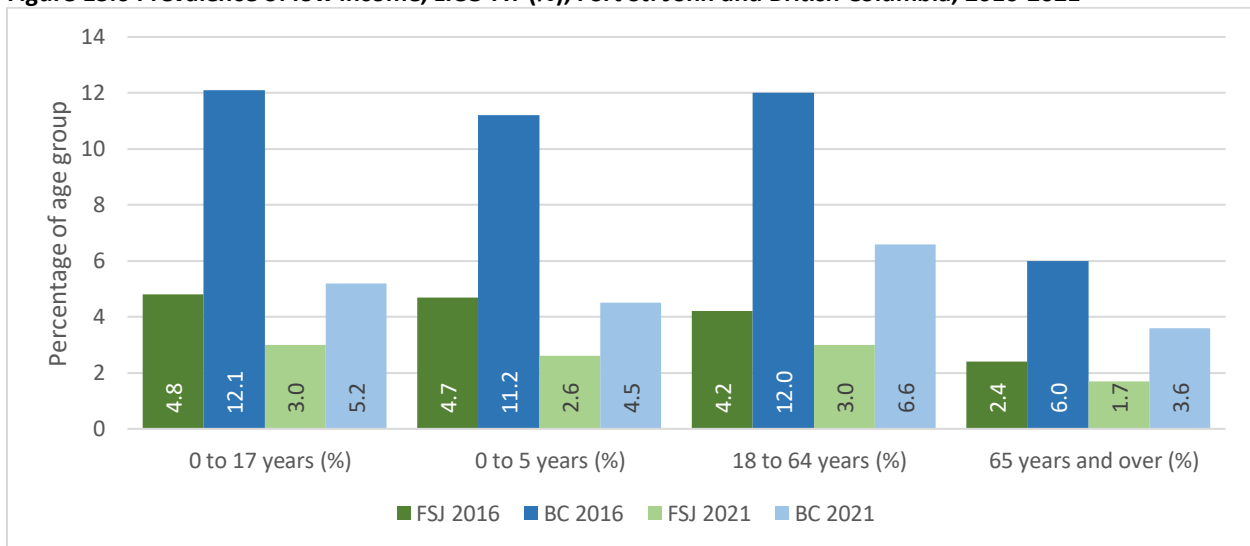
<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Dictionary.

**Figure 13.5 Composition of total income (%), 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Program.

**Figure 13.6 Prevalence of low income, LICO-AT (%), Fort St. John and British Columbia, 2016-2021**



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

Statistics Canada defines low-income cut-offs, after tax (LICO-AT) as the thresholds representing “income levels at which these families or persons were expected to spend [at least] 20 percentage points [...] more of their after-tax income than average on food, shelter and clothing.”<sup>18</sup> Figure 13.6 shows a decrease in vulnerability between 2016 and 2021. Seniors were the least financially vulnerable age group in Fort St. John according to LICO-AT, with 1.7% living below the LICO-AT threshold, while 3% of the other age groups were reported in the vulnerable category. In comparison, BC had much higher levels of vulnerability but showed even more pronounced improvements between 2016 and 2021. It should be kept in mind, that the time period included the COVID-19 pandemic, during which rent freezes, as well as additional income and rent supports, may have influenced financial vulnerability trends.

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021. Census Dictionary.

## 14.0 Business counts

Business registrations provide insight into the employers and the sources of income in an area. They indicate how many employers there are and how many individuals each of them employs. Changes over time in any size category can represent either the loss/gain of employers or it signifies the decrease/growth in the number of individuals existing employers are employing. It should be noted that businesses with “no employees” do not maintain an employee payroll, but may be operated by contracted workers or family members of business owners.

**Figure 14.1 Business counts (#), Fort St. John, 2016-2023**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total number of businesses</b>	6,309	6,399	6,363	6,238	6,193	6,259	6,069	5,699
<b>No employees</b>	4,386	4,579	4,556	4,421	4,422	4,528	4,365	4,050
<b>With employees</b>	1,923	1,820	1,807	1,817	1,771	1,731	1,704	1,649

Source: BC Stats. 2024. Number of Businesses & Employment by Industry.

**Figure 14.2 Business counts (#), British Columbia, 2016-2023**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total number of businesses</b>	1,092,744	1,119,280	1,128,719	1,141,955	1,149,988	1,182,864	1,205,406	1,223,681
<b>No employees</b>	896,764	920,656	926,791	935,423	944,132	975,480	991,862	1,008,134
<b>With employees</b>	195,980	198,624	201,928	206,532	205,856	207,384	213,544	215,547

Source: BC Stats. 2024. Number of Businesses & Employment by Industry.

As shown in Figure 14.1, the number of businesses in Fort St. John decreased overall between 2016 and 2023. This decrease was reflected in both the number of employers with and without employees. However, the proportional decrease was felt more strongly in employers with employees. In comparison, BC saw an increase in all business size categories (Figure 14.2). While BC experienced the greatest proportional increase in the largest business category, the greatest total growth was recorded among BC businesses with no employees (Figures 14.4 and 14.6). Figures 14.3 and 14.5 confirm that, among Fort St. John businesses with employees, the decrease occurred mostly in smaller businesses with fewer than 10 employees; however, a few large employers moved into the area and/or expanded their businesses to employ more individuals.

**Figure 14.3 Number of businesses by number of employees (#), Fort St. John, 2016-2023**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>1 to 4</b>	1,129	1,055	1,060	1,074	1,005	1,014	974	929
<b>5 to 9</b>	307	307	297	294	323	288	274	275
<b>10 to 19</b>	242	231	234	221	221	224	245	234
<b>20 to 49</b>	149	131	137	154	151	137	141	133
<b>50 to 99</b>	66	67	48	45	39	40	36	44
<b>100 to 199</b>	19	20	24	18	21	16	19	19
<b>200 to 499</b>	10	7	5	9	8	9	10	10
<b>500 to 999</b>	-				1	1	3	3
<b>1,000 to 1,499</b>	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
<b>1,500 to 2,499</b>	-						1	1
<b>2,500 to 4,999</b>	-							
<b>5,000 and over</b>	-							
<b>Total with employees</b>	1,923	1,820	1,807	1,817	1,771	1,731	1,704	1,649

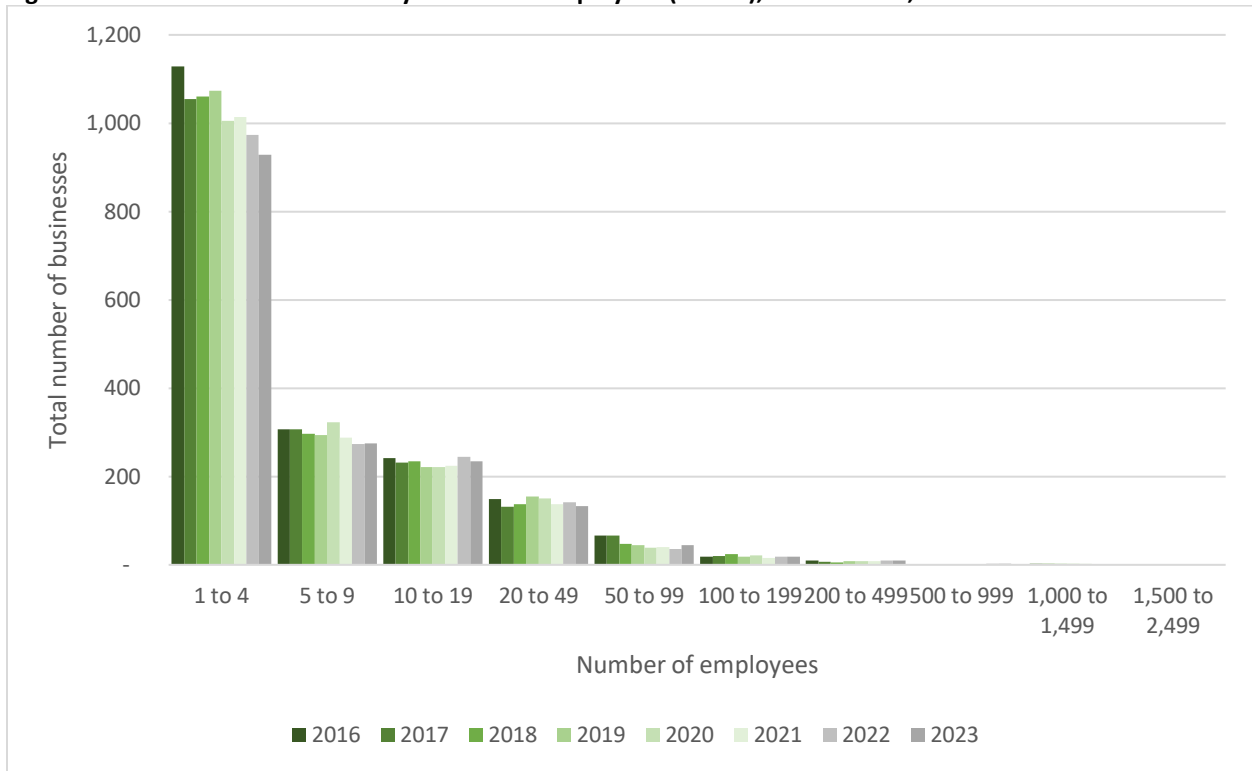
Source: BC Stats. 2024. Number of Businesses & Employment by Industry.

**Figure 14.4 Number of businesses by number of employees (#), British Columbia, 2016-2023**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>1 to 4</b>	111,072	111,546	113,186	116,705	117,475	118,749	120,908	121,698
<b>5 to 9</b>	37,890	38,636	39,050	39,173	38,506	38,962	39,993	40,042
<b>10 to 19</b>	24,210	25,098	25,821	25,664	25,158	25,272	26,593	26,911
<b>20 to 49</b>	14,885	15,120	15,451	16,283	15,988	15,794	16,904	17,368
<b>50 to 99</b>	4,787	4,959	5,051	5,341	5,431	5,264	5,576	5,724
<b>100 to 199</b>	1,894	1,992	2,029	2,065	2,016	2,067	2,192	2,352
<b>200 to 499</b>	881	917	971	925	913	937	997	1,027
<b>500 to 999</b>	208	201	207	203	193	168	202	227
<b>1,000 to 1,499</b>	58	64	71	75	87	74	87	92
<b>1,500 to 2,499</b>	48	45	44	51	38	45	41	44
<b>2,500 to 4,999</b>	30	30	31	31	35	35	32	36
<b>5,000 and over</b>	17	16	16	16	16	17	19	26
<b>Total with employees</b>	195,980	198,624	201,928	206,532	205,856	207,384	213,544	215,547

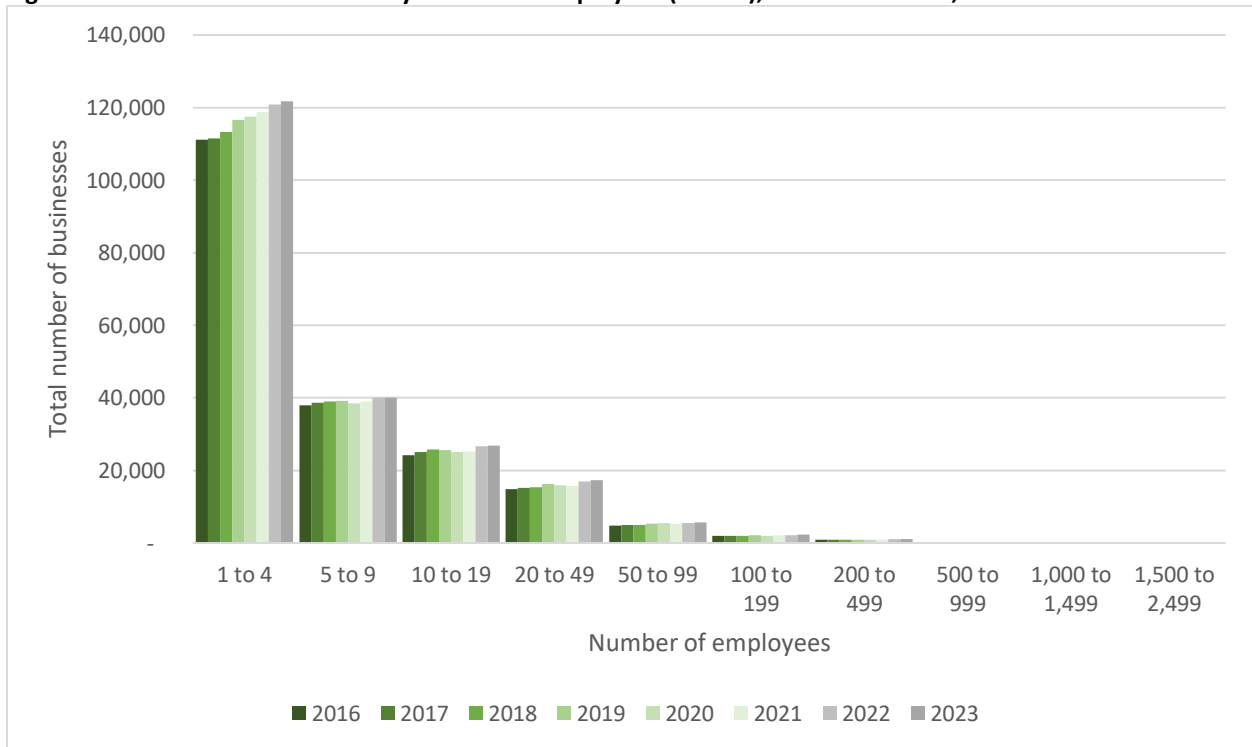
Source: BC Stats. 2024. Number of Businesses & Employment by Industry.

**Figure 14.5 Number of businesses by number of employees (trends), Fort St. John, 2016-2023**



Source: BC Stats. 2024. Number of Businesses & Employment by Industry.

**Figure 14.6 Number of businesses by number of employees (trends), British Columbia, 2016-2023**



Source: BC Stats. 2024. Number of Businesses & Employment by Industry.