



Sustainable Tourism Observatory:
Thompson Okanagan, Canada
Annual Report: 2024

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Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)

Sustainable Tourism Observatory

Annual Report - 2023 Edition

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We thank the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), chaired by Dr. Dirk Glaesser and coordinated by Ms. Cordula Wohlmuther, for the continued knowledge exchange through this network. We also thank our partners and colleagues at TOTA and our research department Symphony Tourism Services, who kindly shared their time and effort.

Current and past TOTA INSTO reports can be found here: <https://www.totabc.org/committed/insto>

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Acknowledgements

The INSTO team at TOTA would like to express gratitude to all those who provided their time and expertise towards the completion of this year's report, including:

Contributors from the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association:

- Mike Overend, Director of Destination Development and Stewardship, is a member of the INSTO team and has contributed to the organisation, management, and writing of this report. Further, Mike provided insights on the Destination Economic Benefits section.
- Eve Layman, Destination Development & Stewardship Specialist, is a member of the INSTO team and has contributed to the organisation, management, and writing of this report. Eve contributed to Gender Equity, Climate Action, Conservation and Solid Waste management.
- Sonja Gaudet, Access & Inclusion Liaison, is a retired Paralympic athlete and gold medalist. Her knowledge and lived experience as an active and independent daily wheelchair user allows TOTA to offer wheelchair accessibility consultations, including assessments of key priority features for individuals who have low vision, hard of hearing, and sensory requirements. Sonja gave the report a true understanding of the Accessibility section.
- Jamie Bourne, Indigenous Tourism BC - Thompson Okanagan Indigenous Tourism Specialist, works to assist 37 First Nations communities in the Thompson Okanagan region and the Fraser Canyon region. Jamie works to assist Indigenous communities in the Thompson Okanagan region to support Indigenous individuals and businesses develop the skills, abilities, and tools to offer market-ready tourism products, programs, and services. She supports Indigenous organizations and communities through information–marketing business skills and training programs in Indigenous economic and business development efforts in order to promote Indigenous culture, products, and services. · Jamie believes that Indigenous-led cultural tourism can balance socio-economic development for Indigenous people and communities.
- Harshit Srivastava, Energy Specialist, analyses energy management for tourism businesses and contributed to the content and analysis of the energy section of this report.
- Leonardo Arroyo Trejo, Research Specialist at Symphony Tourism Services, a TOTA subsidiary. He was responsible for sourcing, updating, and analyzing key tourism data, including DBC satisfaction surveys and visitation indicators, and contributed significantly to the report's charts, explanations, and overall editing.

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INSTO issue area checklist:

Issue Area	Description	Status
Local satisfaction with tourism	Community sentiment surveys, perception data	Available
Destination economic benefits	Visitor spending, business revenue, ADR/RevPAR	Available
Employment	Tourism jobs data, full-time/part-time breakdown, wages	Available
Tourism seasonality	Arrivals, occupancy trends, seasonality index	Available
Energy management	Energy audits from Biosphere businesses	Available (partial)
Water management	Water consumption data, conservation programs	Available (partial)
Waste water management	Recycling & treated wastewater into lakes	Available
Solid waste management	Waste volumes by region, disposal methods	Available
Governance	Stakeholder engagement, committee participation	Available
Climate action	Wildfires, floods, Glasgow Declaration, CO ₂ emissions	Available
Accessibility	Access audits, policy frameworks, infrastructure data	Available
Indigenous tourism	Economic data, cultural activities, First Nations policy	Available
Nature conservation	Conservation groups, tourism-related eco-programs	Available
Gender equity	Wage comparison, workforce demographics	Available

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Foreword

Rich in Indigenous culture, the Thompson Okanagan region lies on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territory of three Interior Salish nations: the Syilx, Secwépemc, and Nlaka'pamux peoples.

Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) is committed to working towards truth and reconciliation by collaborating with Indigenous tourism companies and communities in the Thompson Okanagan region and beyond. As an organisation and team, we continuously reflect on our relationship with the land and our commitment to reconciliation. We pledge to be an ally to the Indigenous peoples and communities in these territories and in our travels.

TOTA is a not-for-profit society governed by an elected Board of Directors representing business and community tourism interests throughout the Thompson Okanagan region.

Thompson Okanagan is one of British Columbia's six Regional Destination Management Organisations (RDMO), which reflect the strategic direction of the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture, and Sport; Destination British Columbia; and the needs and priorities of tourism stakeholders.

The primary objective of this Observatory is the continued implementation of measurement and management practices to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the region. As a result of TOTA's work to date and the March 2020 Regional 10 year strategy update, the following objectives have been identified for continued monitoring and development:

- Strengthen the delivery of responsible tourism with a focus on Biosphere sustainability, accessibility, and Indigenous tourism
- Create alignment and synergy through strengthened partnerships and further cross industry collaboration
- Utilise big data through data collection, cross referencing, validation, analysis, and interpretation
- Crisis management through monitoring, mitigation, planning, and communications
- Strategic marketing and communications through research, education, and feedback mechanisms
- Influence change through municipal, provincial, and federal advocacy and resident awareness



Executive Summary

Current Status

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Industry continues to face challenges that have become more prominent during and after the onset of the 2020 pandemic. Tourism visitation has seen a steady rise over the past 3 years, however the current year seeing a small decline in tourism numbers from post covid recovery. The visitor number decline underscores numerous challenges that are plaguing our regional tourism. Destination BC conducted a province wide survey to better understand the motivations for the declining visitor numbers. First and foremost, the global economic outlook has been seen as the primary driver for tourism decline, as international visitation remains stagnant while domestic numbers have decreased. Secondly, natural disasters in our region continue to create a destination reputation problem, as visitors seem to take a “wait and see” approach to travel and will not book if there are active fires in the region during the peak summer months. Furthermore, local policies around short term rentals have had an immediate impact on visitor numbers. Although we have yet to see the full data outlook on the new policy for reduced short term rentals, the initial consensus is that it is contributing to the overall decrease. On top of the main factors; economic outlook, emergency management, and policy change, the industry faces numerous other challenges that further exacerbate the issues.

TOTA continues to evolve our approach to regional sustainability, sharpening our focus on the tools and strategies needed to confront the growing complexity of tourism-related challenges. Launched in Spring 2022 in collaboration with regional Destination Management Organisations, the *Tourism Impact Portal* was envisioned as a cornerstone of our data-informed approach—an online dashboard monitoring key tourism indicators across two critical dimensions: *Economic* and *Socio-Cultural*.

While the Portal has been a valuable tool for industry insight, maintaining and enhancing this digital infrastructure has presented ongoing challenges. Chief among them is the absence of a sustainable funding model to support the platform’s long-term viability. Despite its strategic importance, securing consistent financial support for its maintenance, data updates, and technological improvements has proven difficult. This has impacted our ability to fully leverage the Portal’s potential and provide uninterrupted access to regional performance indicators.

Despite these hurdles, TOTA continues to build momentum in other areas of our sustainability framework. The *Biosphere Commitment Program* remains a strong pillar of our regional sustainability strategy. Businesses are not only enrolling but actively progressing toward *Biosphere Certification*, with TOTA providing support throughout their journey. The program continues to demonstrate the tangible value of sustainability, as operators increasingly recognize its role in cost savings, operational resilience, and long-term competitiveness.

As we move forward, resolving the funding gap for the Impact Portal will be essential to ensuring our region can continue making evidence-based decisions and tracking the real-time impacts of tourism on our communities and environment.

The following INSTO report highlights areas of growth and areas that require further improvements as TOTA continues to champion sustainability for regional tourism stakeholders.

Refining Our Approach within the INSTO Framework

As TOTA continues to engage with the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), we recognize the need to evolve our methodology to be both more focused and more impactful. Moving forward, our hope is to narrow the scope of our monitoring to concentrate on select indicators where TOTA can offer clear, actionable insights and provide replicable best practices for other regional observatories. This shift reflects a deliberate move away from broad, diffuse data collection toward a more curated, strategic approach rooted in local relevance and regional strengths.

Rather than attempting to track the full breadth of the INSTO indicators equally, we will concentrate our efforts on a refined set that aligns with the most pressing regional challenges and the most promising opportunities for intervention — areas where TOTA has existing partnerships, data infrastructure, or demonstrated leadership. This focused monitoring will not only allow us to produce more accurate and actionable data, but also enable deeper engagement with stakeholders who can turn these insights into measurable change.

By narrowing our focus, we also aim to elevate the quality of our reporting and the utility of the Tourism Impact Portal. Concentrated data efforts will allow us to implement more rigorous methodologies, validate findings with greater confidence, and streamline reporting mechanisms for industry stakeholders. This revised approach positions TOTA to become a model of methodological refinement within the INSTO network—demonstrating how destination observatories can maintain alignment with global sustainability goals while customizing implementation to local conditions.

To support this evolution:

- TOTA is also exploring strengthened partnerships with academic institutions. Formalizing relationships with university research departments can provide valuable analytical capacity, methodological expertise, and student engagement in data projects.
- The potential involvement of our provincial crown tourism corporation (DBC). Working more closely with the province offers an opportunity to align regional indicators with provincial strategies—creating a more unified data ecosystem and enhancing the potential for coordinated action and long-term policy influence.
- We anticipate a more active role from our subsidiary, *Symphony Tourism Services*, in supporting the technical and operational delivery of this refined approach. Their specialized expertise in data systems, reporting tools, and strategic advisory services will be instrumental in strengthening the backend of our monitoring framework and ensuring alignment with industry needs.
- Work more closely with UN Tourism to deepen our understanding and application of the Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST) framework.

Ultimately, this evolution is about effectiveness over volume—delivering insights that not only measure change, but drive it. Through this recalibrated focus, TOTA is committed to producing high-value outputs that can inform policy, empower businesses, and support peer learning across the global network.



A. General information

Located in the Southern Interior of British Columbia (BC), Canada, the Thompson Okanagan region covers approximately 71,600 km². Its name is derived from two major geographic features: the Thompson River and Okanagan Lake. The diverse landscape of the Thompson Okanagan ranges from the alpine of the tallest peak in the Canadian Rockies in the north to the semi-arid steppe of the Okanagan Desert in the south.

The population is 653,300, and is home to over 120 communities, 37 Indigenous communities and 2,100 tourism businesses. It is a region rich in Indigenous culture, located on the traditional and unceded territories of the Syilx, Nlaka'pamux and Secwépemc First Nations people.

The following statistics are taken from the Canadian National Census completed in 2021 which is not due to be repeated until 2026.

A.1. Population's characteristics

A.1.2. Total distribution (%) of the population by broad age groups in 2021

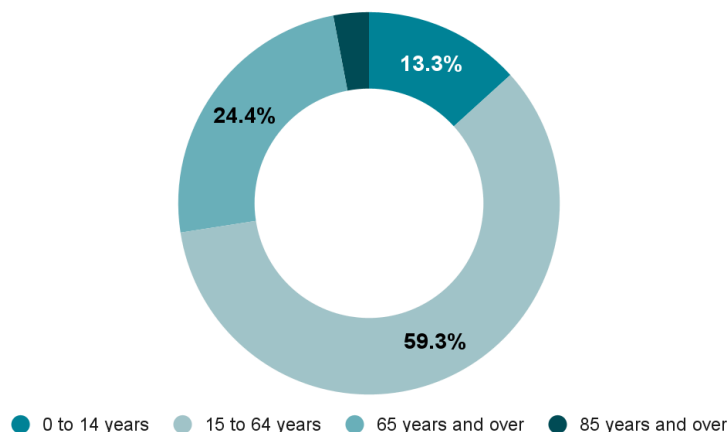


Figure A.1.2. shows that the majority of the population is aged between 15 and 64 (59.3%), the second largest group is aged 65 and over (24.4%), the third is aged between 0 and 14 (13.3%) and only 3% of the population is aged 85 and over.

A.1.3. Distribution (%) of the population by broad age groups between men and women in 2021

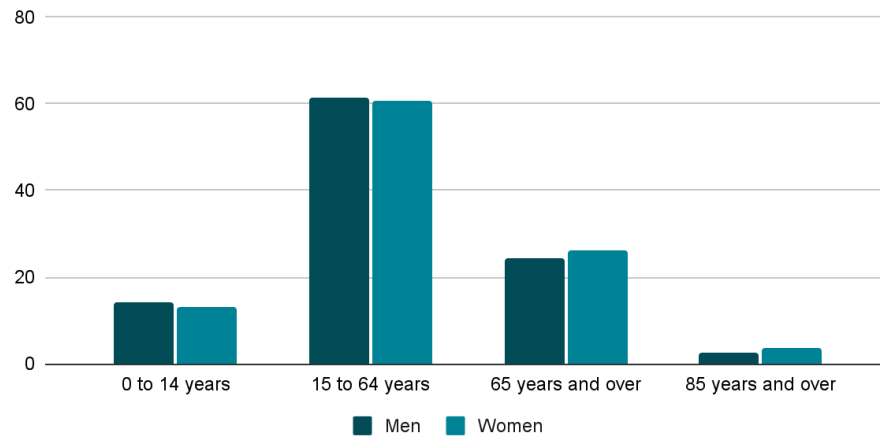


Figure A.1.3. shows the distribution of the population between men and women. Gender representation is essentially equal, there are slightly more men until women start outliving men in the 65 years and over segments.

A.1.4. Total first official language spoken in 2021

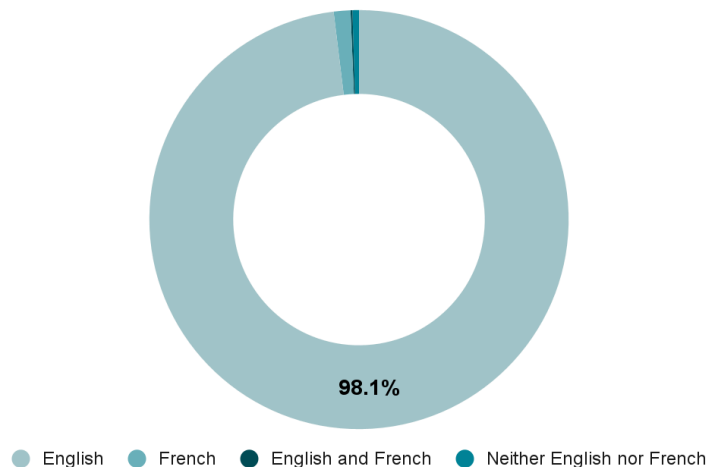
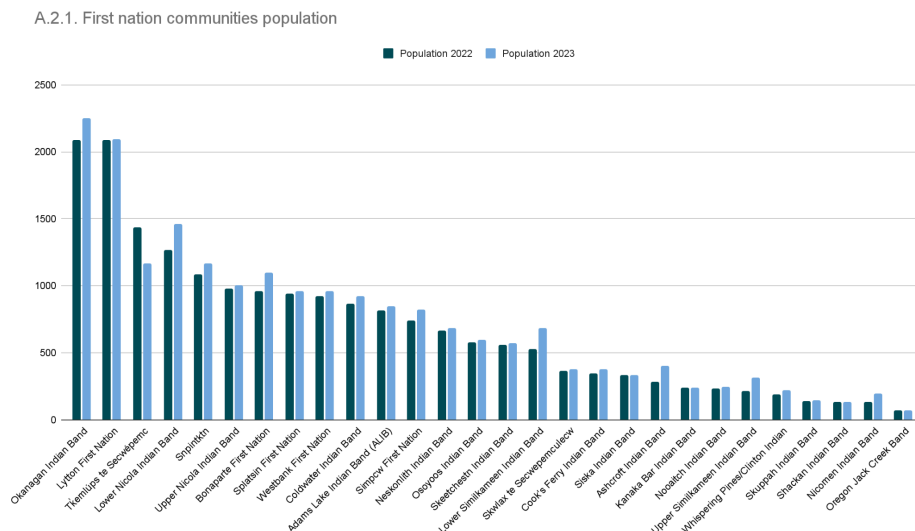


Figure A.1.4. explains that in total, there are 585,570 English speakers which represents the majority, 7,705 French speakers, 2,995 people who speak neither English nor French and only 855 English and French speakers.

A.2. First Nation communities population

The Thompson Okanagan region is home to the traditional, unceded territory of three Interior Salish nations: the Syilx, Secwépemc, and Nlaka'pamux peoples.

Indigenous people have lived in the area now known as B.C. for more than 10,000 years. They developed their own societies, cultures, territories and laws. When European explorers and settlers first came to B.C. in the mid-18th century, the province was home to thousands of Indigenous people. Some estimates are modest, ranging from 80,000 to 100,000. Others are as high as 350,000, and there are outlier estimates in excess of 1 million. There are currently 33 Interior Salish Nations. Figure A.2.1. shows some of the First Nations communities by population size.



A.3. Natural area

The Thompson Okanagan is characterised by distinctive landscapes that range from deserts and arid grasslands to abundant valleys, lakes, forested highlands, and alpine meadows, and by hot, dry summers and relatively mild winters. The region's diverse environment, cultural heritage, and mosaic of communities have contributed to a range of distinctive experiences and activities. These range from wine and culinary tourism to soft and extreme nature-based adventure, and from extensive golf and winter opportunities to Indigenous cultural tourism, diverse festivals and events, and wellness opportunities.

B. Tourism seasonality

B.1. Measuring Degree of seasonality

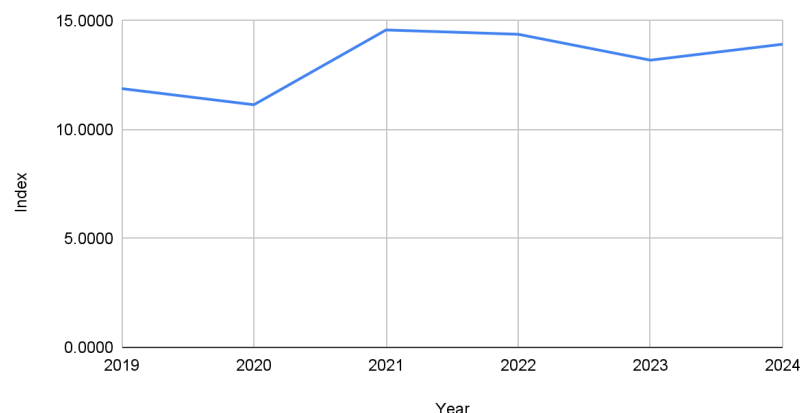
The Thompson Okanagan, exhibits pronounced seasonal tourism patterns that profoundly impact visitor influx and activity choices year-round. A clear grasp of these annual fluctuations is crucial for strategically managing tourism and enriching the overall visitor journey.

Summer, from June to September, typically marks the peak period, with a significant influx of visitors drawn by warm, sunny conditions perfect for diverse outdoor pursuits. The autumn months, September through November, are synonymous with the vineyard harvest season, celebrated with local festivals highlighting the region's rich food, wine, and cultural tapestry. Winter transforms the area into a prime destination for winter sports enthusiasts between December and February. Spring, a season of renewal from March to May, invites visitors to witness the stunning bloom of local orchards and immerse themselves in the awakening natural landscapes.

By continually analyzing these varied seasonal tourism rhythms within the Thompson Okanagan, stakeholders can more effectively plan resource allocation and tailor experiences, ensuring every visitor enjoys a memorable stay, regardless of the season.

While widely recognized as a “sun and fun destination,” this seasonality was not economically sustainable for the Thompson Okanagan tourism industry or for individual businesses, especially in the case of a fire, flood, or poor weather conditions. To determine the seasonal performance of tourism in the Thompson Okanagan we have developed an index to represent the spread of tourism over a year by analysing the percentage share of tourism income from the top 6 months compared to half of the annual income. The lower the index's value the more evenly spread out tourism revenue is on a monthly basis throughout the calendar year. Figure B1.1. Shows the pre pandemic (2019), the Thompson Okanagan region had an 11.9 on the index and as of 2024 the index reached 13.9, showing an increase in seasonality.

B 1.1 Spread of Income by Year

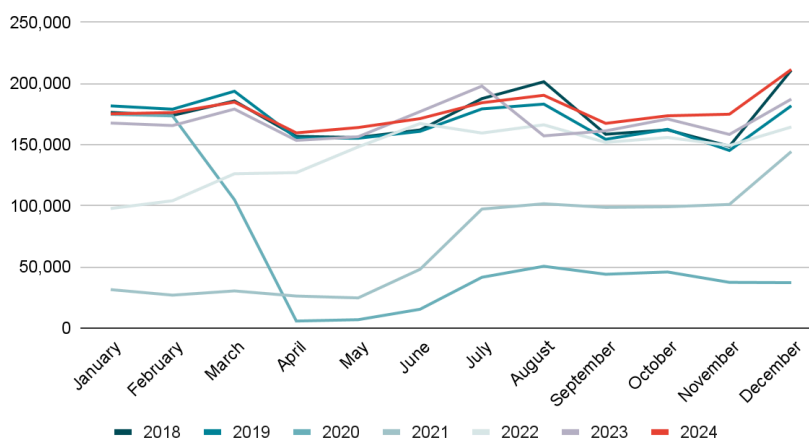


B.1.1. Tourist arrivals by month or quarter

Figure B.1.1.1 displays monthly passenger volumes at Kelowna International Airport, capturing both the disruption caused by COVID-related government restrictions and the subsequent recovery. Setting aside the pandemic-affected years, the data suggest that passenger numbers have returned to pre-COVID

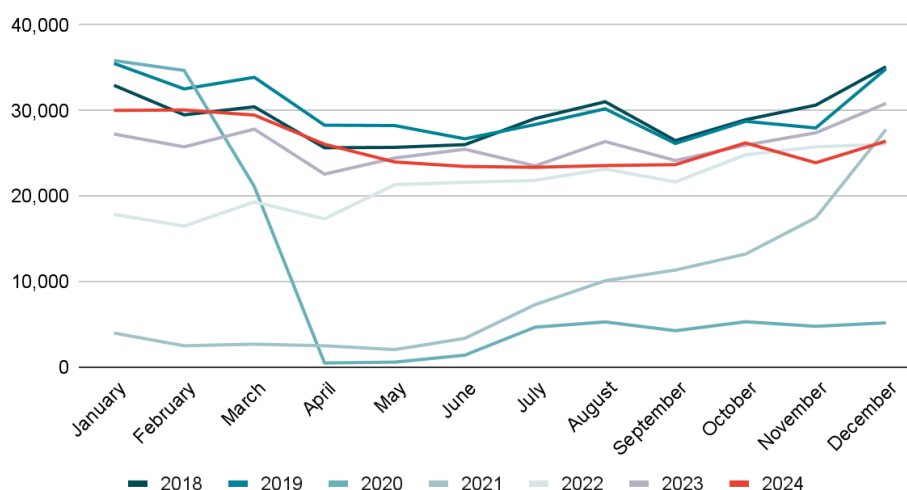
levels. In fact, the final four months of 2024 surpassed all prior seasonal highs, indicating a normalization—and possible strengthening—of travel demand through the airport.

B.1.1.1. Kelowna Airport passenger volumes



Monthly passenger volumes at Kamloops Airport show a different recovery trend compared to Kelowna. While 2024 levels exceeded those recorded in 2020, 2021, and 2022, they remained below pre-COVID figures. In the second half of 2024, passenger volumes were generally lower than in the same period of 2023, indicating a more gradual and uneven return to typical traffic levels. These patterns are illustrated in Figure B.1.1.2.

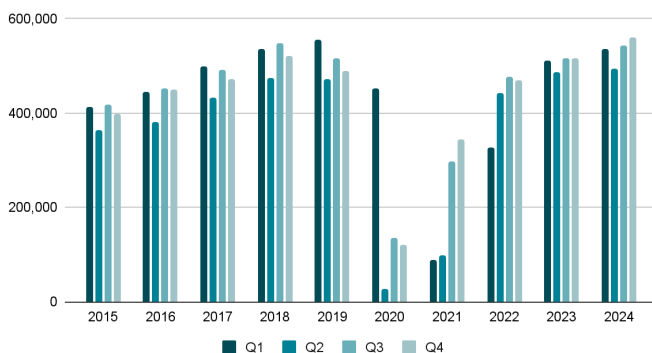
B.1.1.2. Kamloops airport passenger volumes



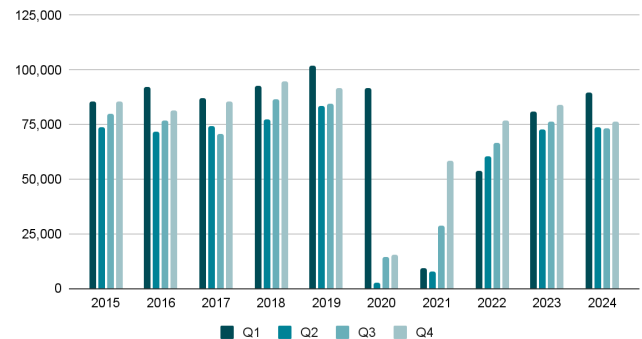
Quarterly data on airport passenger volumes, as shown in Figures B.1.1.3 and B.1.1.4, provide a longer-term perspective on traffic trends at Kelowna and Kamloops airports. At Kelowna, there was a clear

upward trend prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was abruptly interrupted by travel restrictions. By 2024, passenger volumes were approaching the pre-pandemic peak, with a notable post-COVID shift showing increased activity in the fourth quarter—an emerging pattern not observed in earlier years. In contrast, Kamloops displayed a more stable trajectory before the pandemic but has not yet recovered to its 2019 levels. This suggests that while Kelowna’s air travel has nearly rebounded, Kamloops continues to experience a more limited recovery.

B.1.1.3. Kelowna airport passenger volumes by quarter

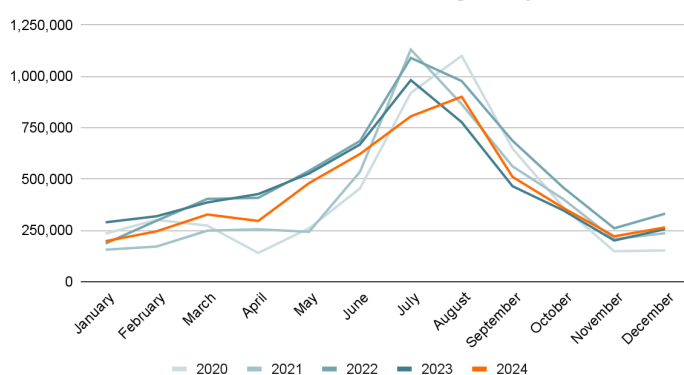


B.1.1.4. Kamloops airport passenger volumes by quarter

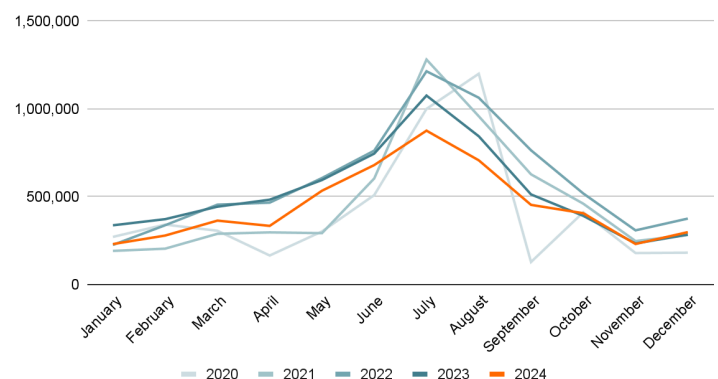


Figures B.1.1.5. explains the total number of domestic arrivals with overnight stays in Thompson Okanagan shows a very strong seasonal trend. Visits: approximate number of unique domestic travellers who spent one or more nights in the destination. Excludes repeat visits, i.e. visitors are counted once per month even if they have visited the destination twice. Includes travellers to the region who travelled 60 km or more from home to stay overnight. Figure B.1.1.6. shows that trips represent approximately the number of trips made by domestic travellers who stayed one or more nights over a given period as part of an ongoing visit to the destination. Repeat visitors, i.e. visitors who came twice in one month, are counted as two trips. Figure B.1.1.7. shows that stays are an approximate count of the total number of nights spent by domestic visitors in the destination over a certain period. The figures are estimated on the basis of samples of mobile devices observed during the period in question.

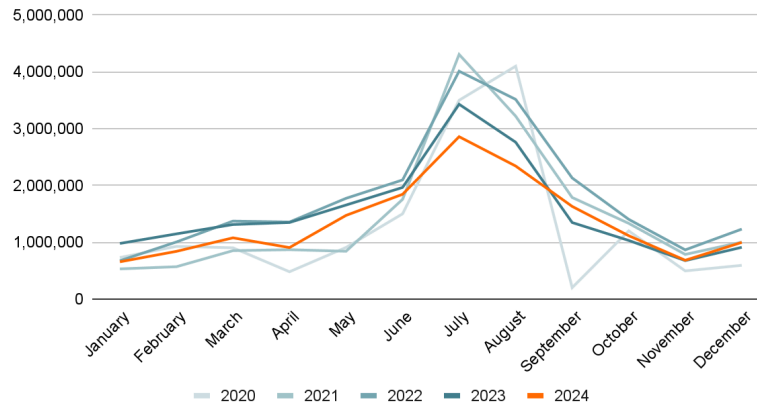
B.1.1.5. Total domestic arrivals with overnight stays for visits



B.1.1.6. Total domestic arrivals with overnight stays for trips



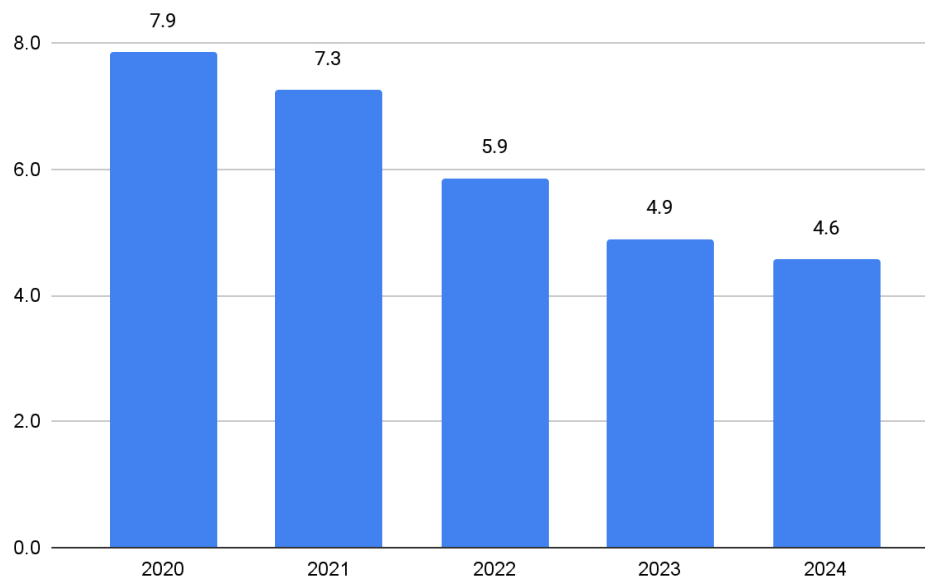
B.1.1.7. Total domestic arrivals with overnight stays for stays



The three line charts above, which track the number of visitors, trips, and overnight stays, indicate that visitation levels in 2024 declined compared to recent years. This downward trend can be attributed to several overlapping factors. First, the lingering effects of inflation—partly driven by supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 period—have likely constrained consumer spending on travel. Second, ongoing recovery from previous public health restrictions continues to influence travel behavior. Finally, the wildfires that occurred in 2023 may have had a residual impact on regional tourism activity.

B.1.2. Ratio of number of tourists (in peak month to lowest month)

In 2024, August recorded 4.9 times more visitors than January, highlighting the strong seasonality in tourism patterns. However, as illustrated in the chart below, this ratio has been gradually decreasing over time. This trend is primarily driven by a notable increase in visitation during the traditionally lower-traffic months, such as January. While it is also true that peak summer months like August have seen slight declines, the overall narrowing of the gap reflects a more balanced distribution of visitor activity throughout the year.



2024 saw a slight softening in tourism activity (reflected in lower overall visitation and consequently slightly lower hotel occupancy than 2023), the underlying patterns of how and when visitors use licensed accommodation (length of stay, seasonal occupancy trends) remained largely consistent with recent years. The accommodation sector appears to be performing in line with overall tourism demand.

B.1.3. Occupancy rates for licensed (official) accommodation by month (distribution throughout the year)

B.1.3.1 Average length of stay for domestic overnight visitors

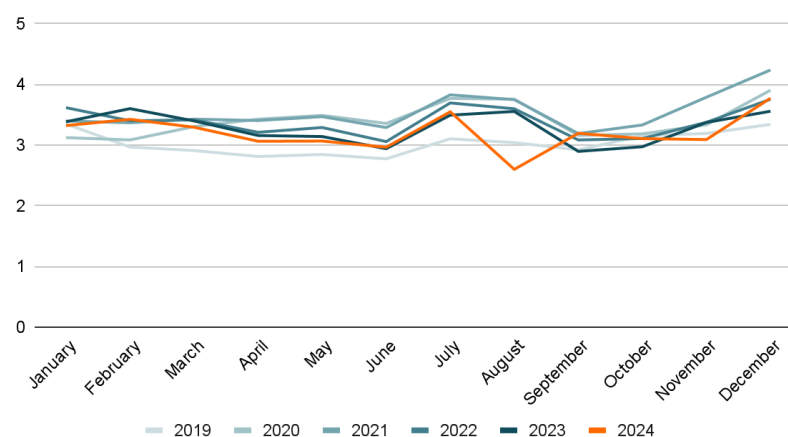
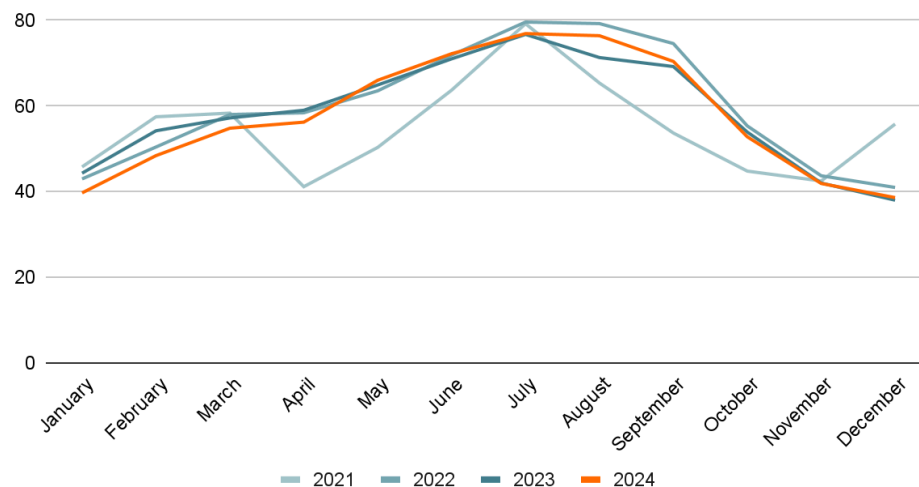


Figure B.1.3.1. presents the average length of stay of domestic visitors in 2024 and during the previous years, it was fairly consistent throughout the year, with a slight increase during the high season and at the end of the year.

B.1.3.2. Hotel occupancy rates (%)



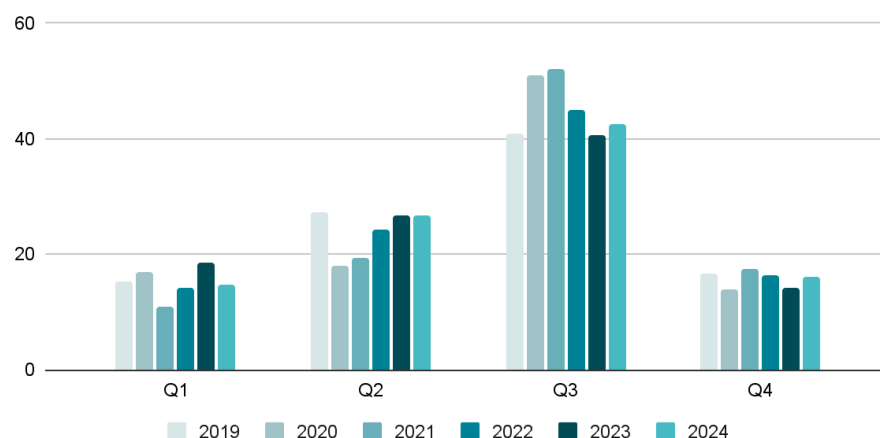
B.1.3.2. Hotel occupancy rates

Source: Tourism Industry Dashboard, Destination BC. URL: <https://www.destinationbc.ca/tourism-industry-dashboard/>

Hotel occupancy rates from 2019 to 2024, as illustrated in Figure B.1.3.2, show that 2024 followed a pattern similar to those observed in 2022 and 2023. Although slightly below compared with the 2023 levels, the trend remained relatively stable, aligning with the broader decrease in visitation noted during the same period.

B.1.4. % of all occupancy in peak quarter

B.1.4.1. Share of domestic annual visitors with overnight stays in the peak and quarter



The third quarter of the calendar year (July, August, September) remains the most important quarter each year for overnight domestic visitors according to figure B.1.4.1.

B.2. Strengthening shoulder season and low season tourism

B.2.1. Number of facilities offering alternative activities (during shoulder and low season)

The shoulder season in the Thompson Okanagan is between April/May and October/November. During these periods, various facilities offer alternative activities to those of winter and summer. These include cycling, boating, fishing, hiking, golf, arts, and heritage activities, shopping, dining, wellness, nature, and wildlife activities.

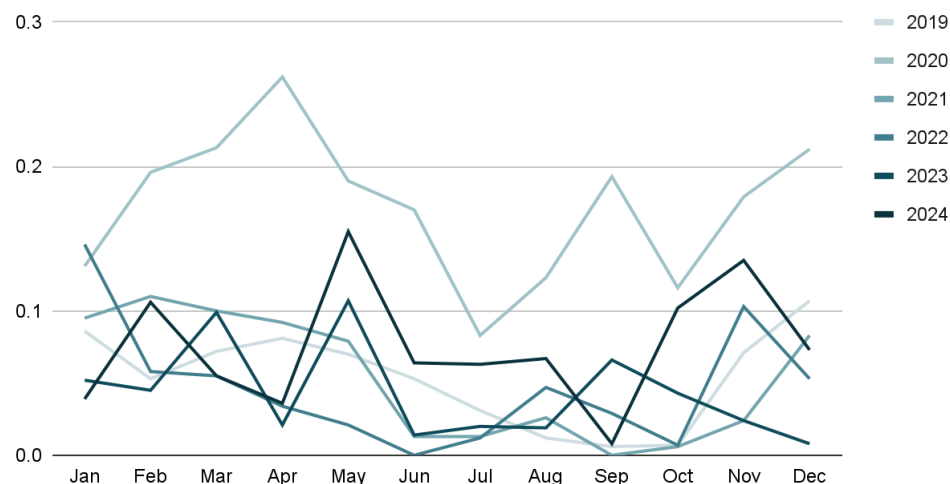
B.2.2. Special events (e.g. festivals, conferences) held during shoulder and low season (number of events, participants)

Special events are held during the shoulder season. Numerous communities within the TOTA region have event calendars that are highlighting shoulder season activities. These festivals and events range from Indigenous cultural festivals, music concerts, culinary themes, sports and the arts.

B.3. Short term and seasonal employment

B.3.1. Local unemployment rate in shoulder season

B.3.1.1 Unemployment rate



The unemployment rate in the tourism sector across Thompson Okanagan was higher in 2024 than in most previous years, except for the exceptional spike in 2020. This trend reflects ongoing economic challenges and structural features within the sector. Inflation, weakened travel demand, post-pandemic adjustments, and the effects of wildfires have all contributed to reduced employment stability. Recent government policies may also have played a role in slowing the recovery. These dynamics are clearly illustrated in Figure B.3.1.1, which shows monthly unemployment levels from 2019 to 2024.

Conclusion

Ensuring the sustainability of tourism seasonality in the Thompson Okanagan is critical to its long-term preservation. Although the region experiences peaks and valleys in visitor numbers throughout the year, it is essential to manage these fluctuations in a way that minimises negative impacts and maximises positive outcomes. TOTA manages these challenges by diversifying the tourism offerings to encourage visitation during shoulder seasons, promoting low-impact activities, and developing infrastructure and services that respect the environment and culture.

C. Employment

The Thompson Okanagan region is a major source of employment thanks to its thriving tourism industry. From vibrant cities to charming villages, the region offers a variety of opportunities for those seeking a career in tourism. Tourism jobs in the Okanagan cover a wide range of roles and industries, from hotel and resort staff to tour guides, restaurant staff, agritourism activities, event planners and outdoor adventure providers. The tourism industry is a key economic driver, generating employment opportunities for both full-time and seasonal workers.

C.1. Number and quality of employment in the tourism sector

C.1.1. Total number employed in the tourism sector, by industry (e.g. traveller accommodation, restaurants, air transportation etc.) occupation and level

C.1.1 Employment in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry, 2024

Sectors	Thompson Okanagan		British Columbia	
	#	%	#	%
Accommodation	5,458	12.7%	27,350	8.0%
Food and Beverage	20,563	47.8%	146,313	43.0%
Recreation and entertainment	11,563	26.9%	101,979	30.0%
Transportation and travel	5,396	12.6%	64,438	18.9%
Total	42,979	100.0%	340,079	100.0%

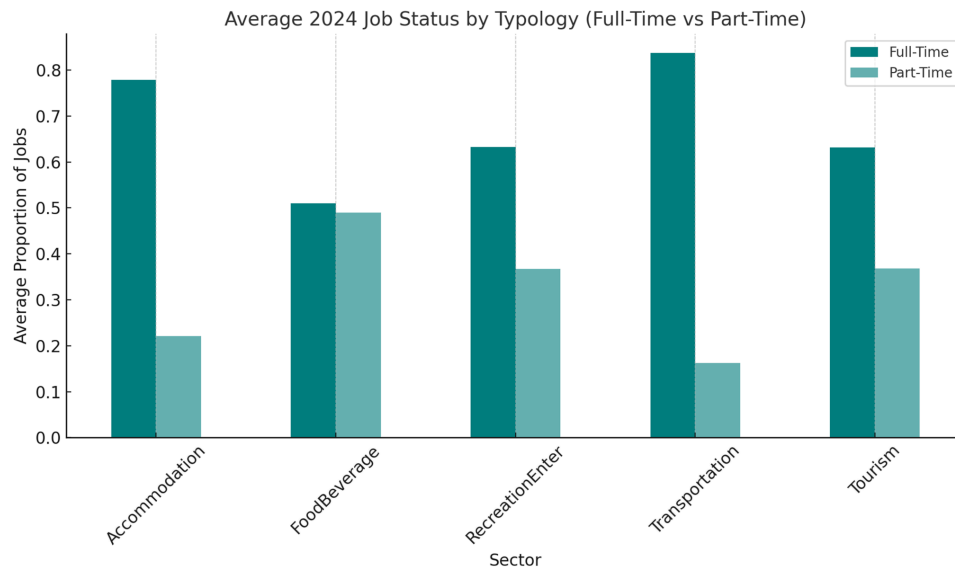
Note: The LFS data in this table are annual averages.

Source: <https://www.go2hr.ca/workforce-profiles>

C.1.1 The Tourism and Hospitality industry in the Thompson-Okanagan region employed 42,979 people in 2024, of which 47.8% were employed in the food and beverage sector and 26.9% in the recreation and entertainment sector. The region accounted for roughly 12.6% of the total provincial Tourism and Hospitality workforce, and its workforce distribution across sectors is slightly more concentrated in the food and beverage sector than the provincial distribution.

C.1.2 Percentage of jobs that are full time, full year

C.1.2.1 Thompson-Okanagan Region Tourism and Hospitality Industry Demographics, 2024



Source: <https://www.go2hr.ca/workforce-profiles>

Figure C.1.2.1, The 2024 Thompson-Okanagan Region Tourism and Hospitality Industry Demographics data shows notable differences in job stability across tourism sectors in British Columbia. In the accommodation and transportation industries, the majority of workers—ranging from 78% to 84%—are employed full-time. This reflects the ongoing need for consistent staffing in hotels, resorts, and travel services, where year-round operations and visitor demand support more stable employment.

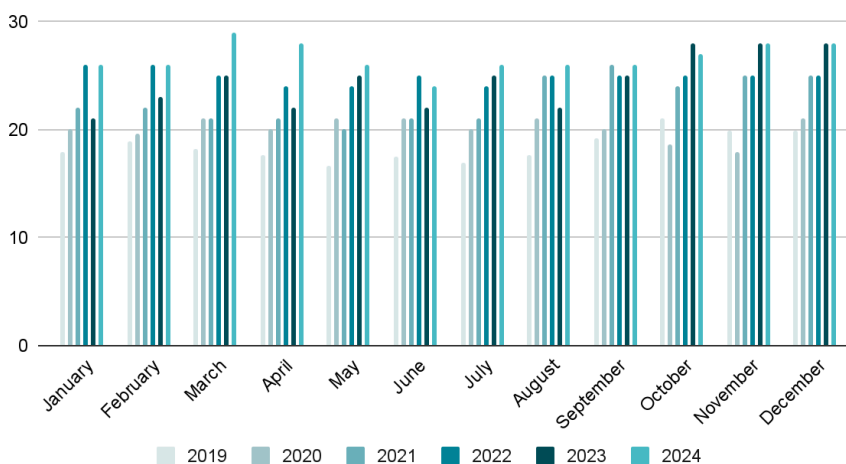
In contrast, the food and beverage sector continues to rely heavily on part-time labour. Full-time positions account for only about half of all jobs, indicating that many workers in restaurants, cafés, and bars are juggling fewer hours or multiple roles to make ends meet. Recreation and entertainment businesses fall somewhere in between, with roughly two-thirds of their workforce employed full-time.

Overall, across the tourism industry, approximately 63% of jobs in 2024 were full-time. While this marks a slight improvement from previous years, part-time work still represents a significant portion of the sector. These trends are important to track as they shape the experiences of workers and the long-term strength of the region's tourism economy.

C.1.3. Income analysis

In 2024, the average hourly wage in the tourism sector across Thompson Okanagan was \$26.70, based on a simple monthly average. A noticeable increase was observed during the first half of the year compared to the same period in 2023. By the final months of 2024, wages in both years had converged, with hourly earnings reaching approximately \$28.00.

C.1.3.1. Average tourism-related wages



Conclusion

Tourism employment in the Thompson Okanagan plays a vital role in the local economy, employing 423,250 people in 2024 which is approximately 10% of the total tourism workforce in BC (4,080,750). Offering a diverse range of opportunities for those seeking a career.

D. Destination economic benefits

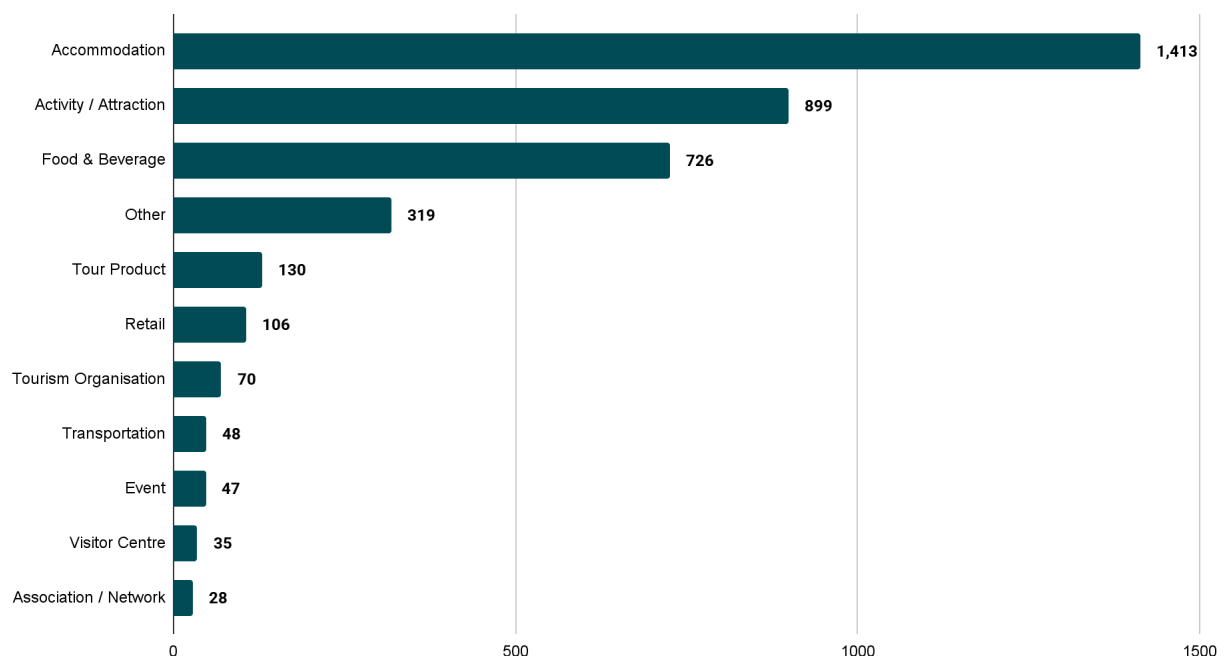
Tourism is a significant driver of development within the Thompson Okanagan region, triggering the desired investment and employment opportunities. It is a vital source of employment, with opportunities which include accommodation, transportation, retail, and entertainment. The tourism industry supports many residents, stimulating economic activity and improving the overall quality of life in the region. The influx of tourist dollars nourishes entrepreneurship and supports the growth of small and medium-sized businesses, creating a vibrant and dynamic business environment.

D.1. Employment

D.1.1. Number of tourism businesses in the community and % owned locally

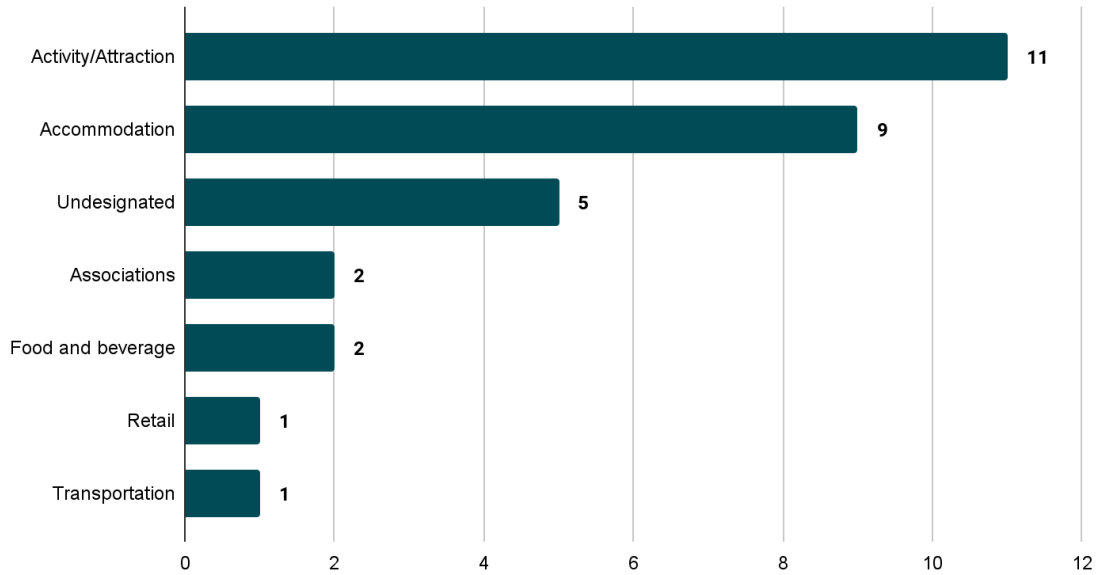
In 2024, a total of 3,821 businesses were registered with TOTA across the Thompson Okanagan tourism region. When looking at their primary sector of operation—recognizing that some businesses engage in multiple activities—accommodation leads with 1,413 businesses. This is followed by the activity and attraction sector with 899, and food and beverage-related businesses with 726. While smaller in number, visitor centres and tourism associations also play a vital role in supporting the regional tourism ecosystem.

D.1.1.1. Number of tourism businesses

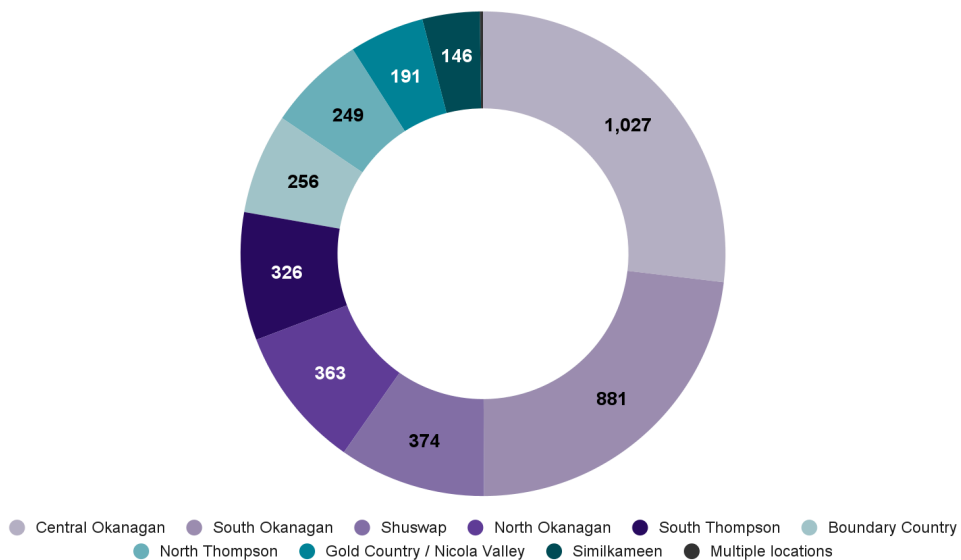


Out of the total businesses registered with ITBC in the TOTA region, 77 are Indigenous-owned (Figure D.1.1.2). The majority of these operate within the activity and attraction sector, reflecting a strong presence in cultural and experiential tourism. Accommodation is the next most common sector, showcasing the diversity of Indigenous tourism offerings in the region.

D.1.1.2. Number of indigenous tourism businesses



D.1.1.3. Number of tourism businesses by sub-region

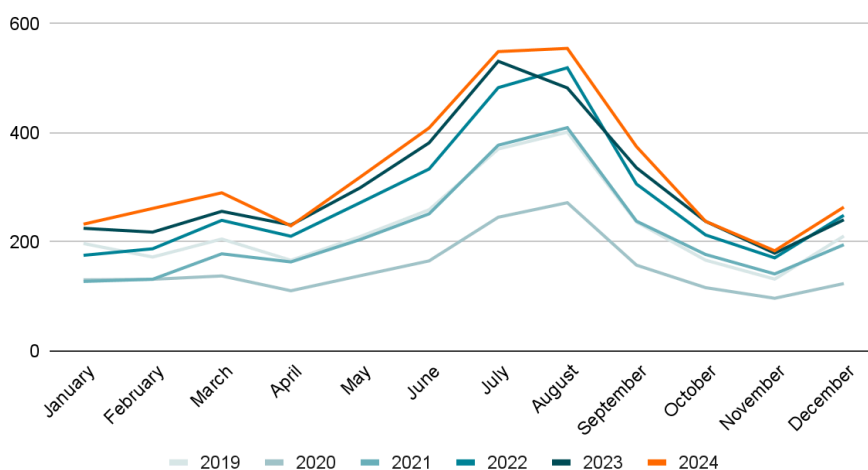


D.2. Tourism revenue

D.2.1. Tourist spending / Spending per tourist

As shown in Figure D.2.1.1, monthly tourism spending in Thompson Okanagan during 2024 exceeded the levels recorded in 2023. At first glance, this increase may appear counterintuitive; however, it is important to note that the figures are reported in current dollars. The rise is influenced by recent inflationary trends, which have elevated nominal spending values without necessarily reflecting real growth. Despite this, the seasonal pattern remains consistent, with July and August continuing to stand out as the peak months for tourism-related expenditures.

D.2.1.1. Total expenditure by visitors (millions of CAD\$)



In 2024, the distribution of tourism revenue across economic activities in Thompson Okanagan remained relatively stable, as illustrated in Figure D.2.1.2. Food and beverage services accounted for the largest share at 28.9%, followed by accommodation services at 24.9%. On the other end, retail trade represented the smallest share, with 7.3% of tourism-related revenue. This composition has remained consistent over time, indicating that consumer spending patterns within the tourism sector have not experienced any significant structural shifts.

D.2.1.2 Share of Revenue by Economic Activity, 2024 (%)

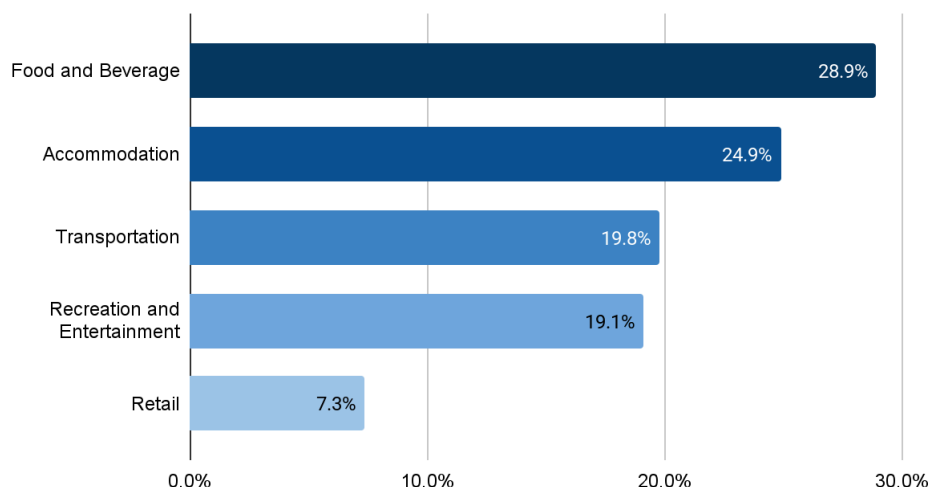
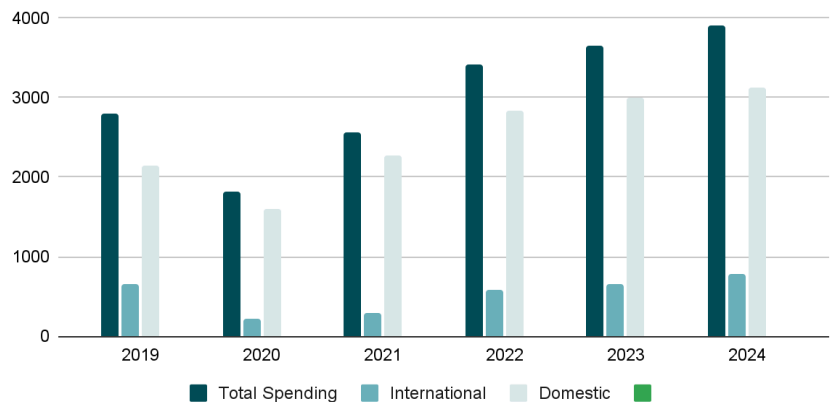


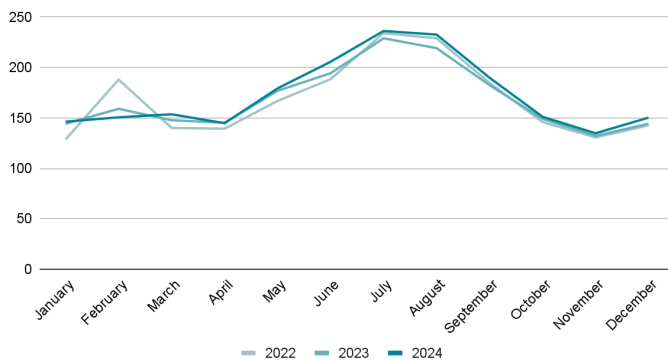
Figure D.2.1.3 highlights the evolving share of international visitor spending in Thompson Okanagan from 2019 to 2024. In 2019, international spending accounted for approximately 23% of total tourism expenditures. This share dropped during the pandemic years—falling to 12% in 2020 and 11% in 2021—as a result of global travel restrictions. While recovery has been gradual, by 2023 international spending had risen to over 17%, and in 2024, it reached around 20%. Although still below pre-pandemic levels, this trend signals a rebound in international visitation to the region.

D.2.1.3 Total vs International vs Domestic spending per year (in Million CAD\$)



D.2.2. Revenues generated by hotels

D.2.2.1. Average Daily Rate (ADR) for hotels (\$)



D.2.2.2. Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) for hotels (%)



Based on Figures D.2.2.1 and D.2.2.2, hotel revenue performance in Thompson Okanagan improved in 2024 compared to 2023. The Average Daily Rate (ADR) rose from \$168.20 in 2023 to \$172.90 in 2024, on a monthly average basis. Similarly, Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) increased from \$101.20 to \$105.00 over the same period. The peak months for both ADR and RevPAR were July and August, reflecting the region's strong summer tourism season. In contrast, the late fall period remained the quietest time of the year for local hotels.

D.3. Community expenditures

D.3.1. Existence of tourism budget/plan

Destination British Columbia (Destination BC) is a Provincially funded, industry-led Crown corporation that supports a strong and competitive future for BC's tourism industry through a combination of global marketing, destination development, industry learning, cooperative community-based programs, and visitor servicing. Destination BC's programs help to improve the visitor experience, support businesses and communities across the province, and strengthen BC's worldwide reputation as a destination of choice.

DBC coordinates three funding streams to support Tourism activities in the Province of BC::

1. The Destination BC Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program (Co-op Program) is an application-based program that provides co-operative consumer-focused marketing and promotion support to Community Consortia (three or more communities) and Provincial Tourism Product/Experience Sector organizations in British Columbia. The program is designed to promote and facilitate deep collaboration. The Co-op Program encourages partnerships between sectors and communities to achieve common marketing goals and leverage funding to maximize marketing efforts.
2. The Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) was introduced in 1987, by the Provincial Government, to provide funding for local tourism marketing, programs, and projects. The tax is intended to help grow BC revenues, visitation, and jobs, and amplify BC's tourism marketing efforts in an increasingly competitive marketplace. The MRDT is an up-to three percent tax applied to sales of short-term accommodation provided in participating areas of British Columbia on behalf of municipalities, regional districts and eligible entities. The MRDT is jointly administered by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, and Destination BC.
3. External Funding sources - There are a number of external funding sources available to tourism businesses, regions, communities and sectors for the development and marketing of tourism products. DBC has two tools to explore these sources:
 - a. The Economic Development Funding and Grants Search Tool
 - b. The Federal Funding and Grants Tool

D.4. Changes in cost of living

D.4.1. % increase/decrease in land and housing prices over time

Figure D.4.1.1 presents the monthly average residential sale prices across all property types. Compared to the pre-COVID period, prices increased by approximately 50%, reaching a peak in early 2022. Although prices have since declined from that peak, both 2023 and 2024 maintained a relatively steady trend. The chart also reveals seasonal fluctuations, with noticeable price dips and recoveries throughout the year. Overall, average prices in 2024 remained slightly below those of 2023.

D.4.1.1. Residential average price

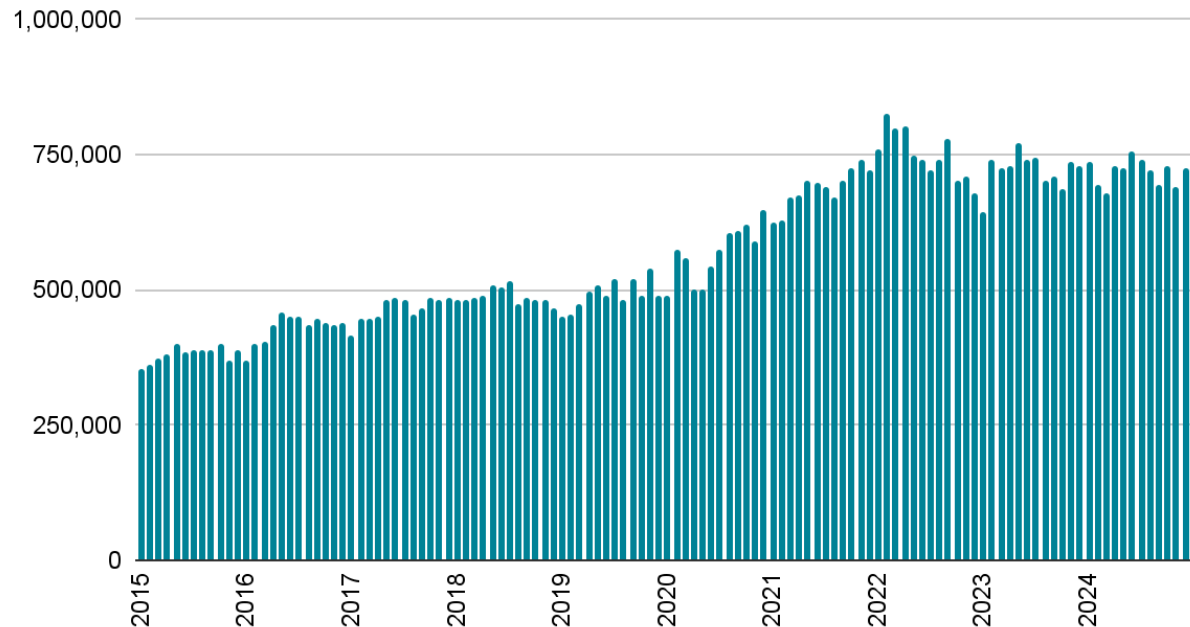


Figure D.4.1.2 tracks the quarterly median sale prices for single-detached homes. Following a sharp increase during the COVID-19 period, prices stabilized at elevated levels, around \$800,000 from 2021 onward. In 2024, the chart shows consistent quarterly growth compared to the previous year, culminating in a peak of approximately \$855,000 in the third quarter.

D.4.1.2. Single detached sales - median price

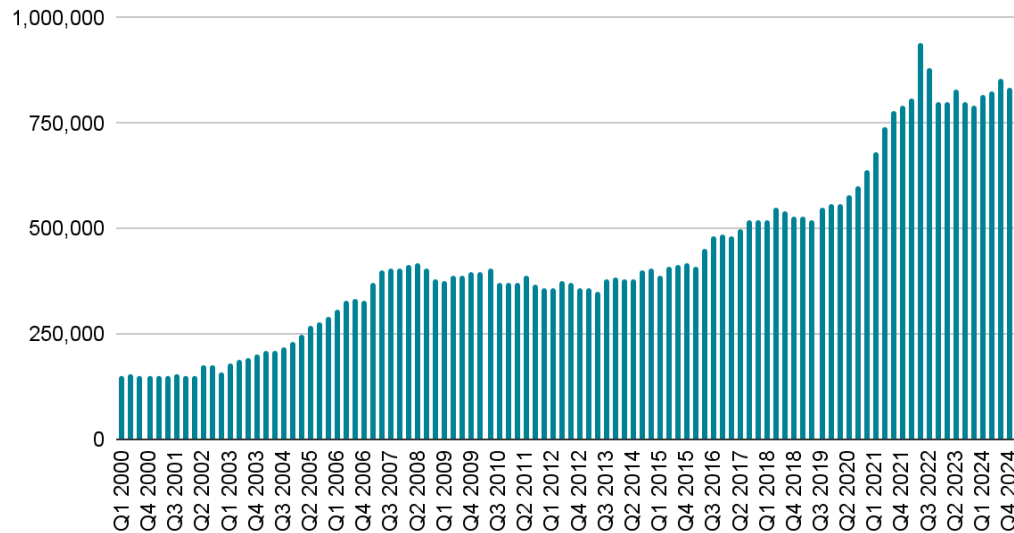
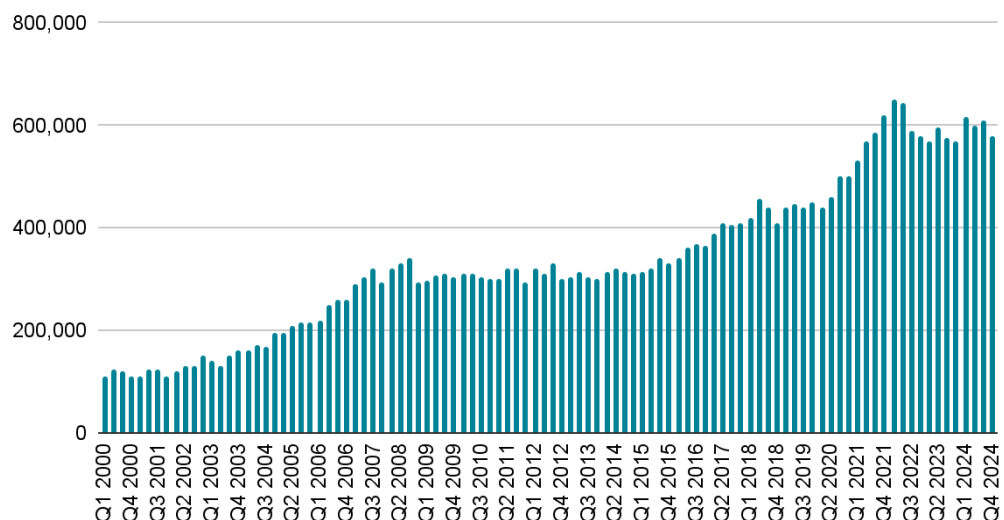


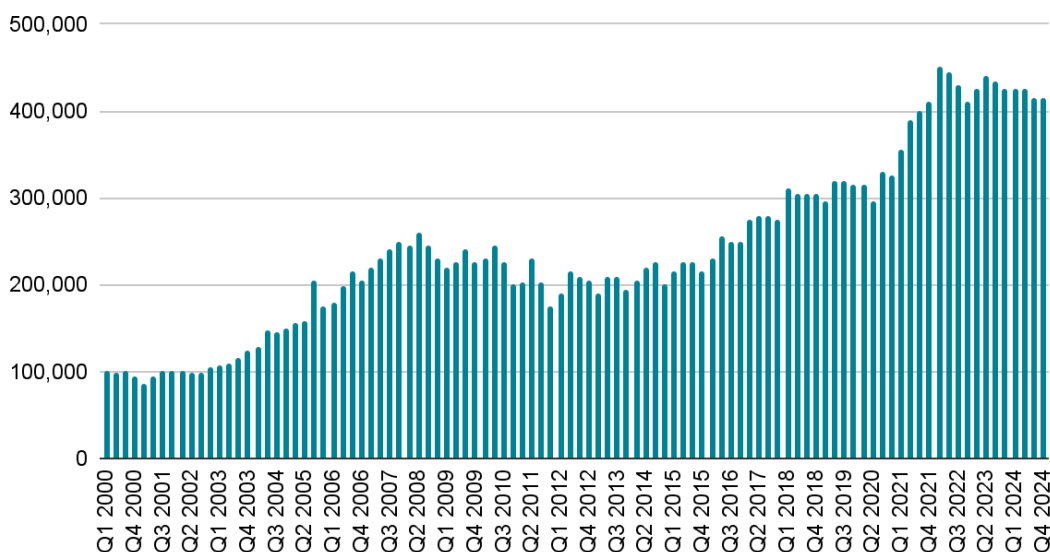
Figure D.4.1.3 illustrates quarterly changes in the median sale price of townhouses in Thompson Okanagan. After a dip in 2023, the 2024 data show a renewed upward trend. Median prices climbed steadily throughout the year, returning to levels above \$600,000—similar to those seen in 2021. This suggests a rebound in the regional townhouse market following the previous year's softening.

D.4.1.3. Townhouse / row sales - median sale price



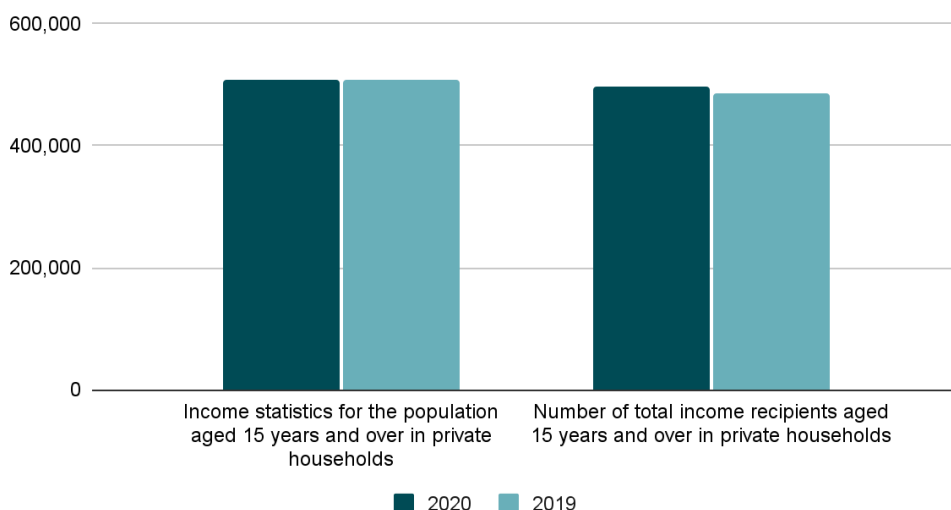
As shown in Figure D.4.1.4, the median price of apartment unit sales continued its downward trend in 2024, with prices in each quarter falling below their 2023 levels. This decline extends a broader pattern of reduction that began in 2021, suggesting a sustained cooling in the apartment market. Despite this recent softness, current prices remain notably higher than pre-pandemic levels, indicating that the market has not fully reversed the sharp gains experienced during the peak years of the housing surge.

D.4.1.4. Apartment unit sales - median price



D.4.2. % increase/decrease in average family weekly income

D.4.2.1. Income of individuals



There is no data available for the 2023 incomes of individuals in the region. The comparison between 2020 and 2019 gives us a good overview of the situation. In 2020, the number of recipients of total income has increased compared to 2019.

Conclusion

The Thompson Okanagan region's tourism industry is a significant economic driver, providing diverse employment opportunities and contributing substantially to the local economy. While tourism spending saw a nominal increase in 2024, influenced by inflation, international visitor spending continues its gradual recovery towards pre-pandemic levels. The hotel sector shows improved revenue performance, particularly during the peak summer months. However, the region faces challenges related to the high cost of housing and the impact of short-term rentals on the long-term rental market, which in turn affects hospitality labor. Addressing these housing issues is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the tourism workforce in the Thompson Okanagan.

E. Energy management

Energy management in the tourism sector plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices and reducing the environmental footprint in the Thompson Okanagan region. Managing energy consumption is essential to minimising greenhouse gas emissions and preserving the region's natural environment. The region's tourism sector recognises the importance of energy efficiency and responsible energy consumption in minimising the effects of climate change. Through collaborative efforts the region is actively working towards sustainable energy management.

It is difficult to obtain information and data on energy management for tourism in the region. Most of the data on energy management comes from the province and is not specific to tourism. Fortunately, TOTA employs an energy analyst, Harshit Srivastava, who analyses the Thompson Okanagan region in terms of energy management for tourism.

As part of his work, the Energy Analyst audits tourism businesses to understand and analyse their energy consumption. The businesses audited are part of the Biosphere program and are known as Biosphere Committed Companies. As the Biosphere program recently started in 2021 data collection is still in its early stages.

E.1. Measuring energy use and conservation

E.1.1. Energy consumption as per area footprint of tourism businesses

According to the available data for the year 2024, the Site Energy Use Intensity (EUI) in the Thompson Okanagan region was reported as 0.0125 GJ per square feet. This figure specifically applies to 50 tourism businesses in the region. EUI serves as a measurement of energy consumption per unit area and provides insights into the efficiency of energy use. The recorded value suggests that these 50 tourism businesses have made efforts to manage and minimise their energy consumption, indicating a commitment to sustainable practices. It is important to note that this data is specific to these businesses and may not represent the entire tourism sector in the Thompson Okanagan region.

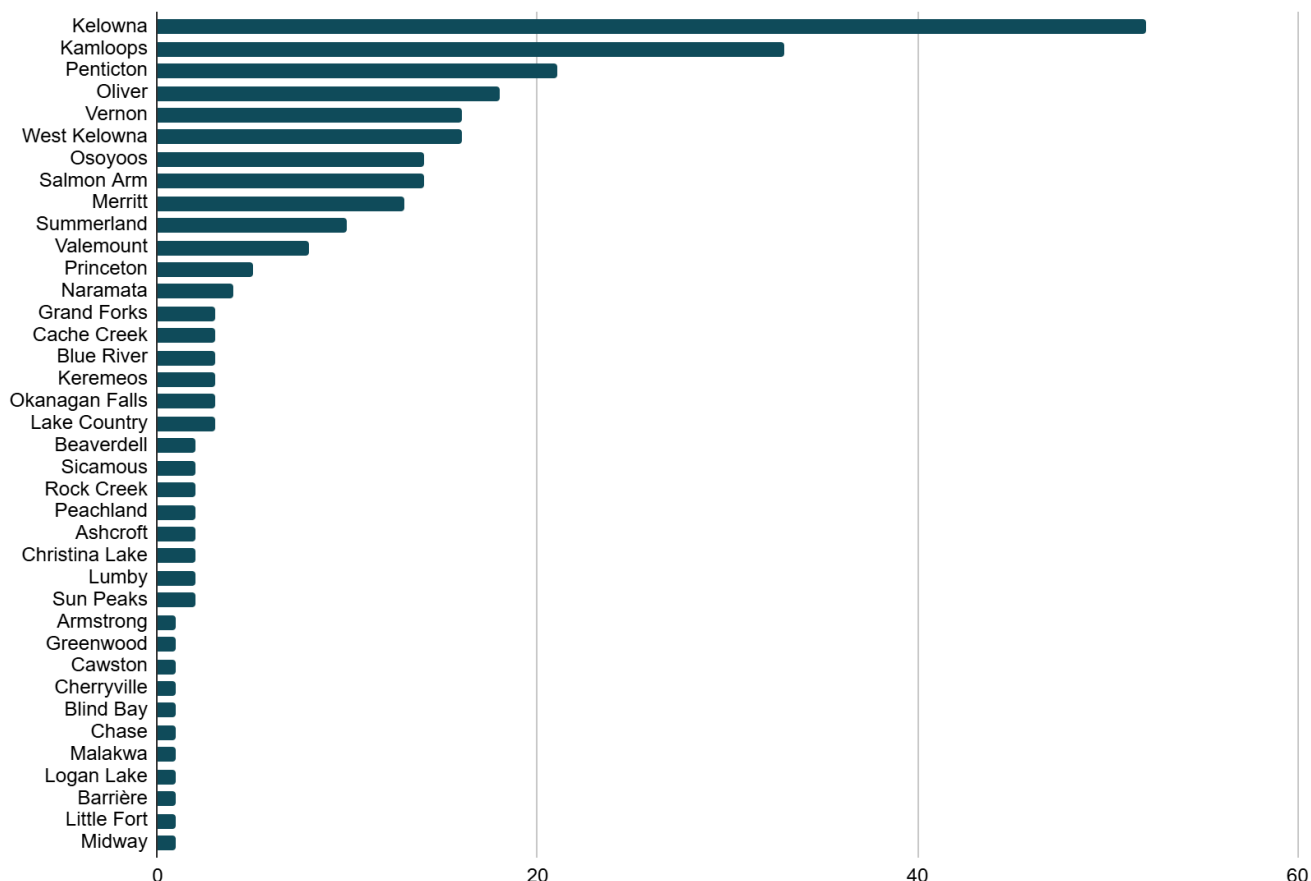
E.2. Use of renewable energy sources

E.2.1. Electric vehicle energy management

In 2024, the distribution of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations across the Thompson Okanagan reflects a strong regional commitment to supporting sustainable transportation. Urban centres such as Kelowna and Kamloops lead with 52 and 33 stations respectively, aligning with their roles as major population, tourism, and service hubs. Mid-sized communities like Penticton (21), Vernon (16), West Kelowna (16), and Merritt (13) also show significant infrastructure, supporting both local residents and regional travel. Popular tourism destinations such as Oliver, Osoyoos, and Salmon Arm are well-served, highlighting the importance of EV infrastructure in supporting visitor mobility. Meanwhile, smaller and rural communities including Valemount, Princeton, and Cache Creek provide essential charging access along key travel corridors, though coverage remains limited in many low-density areas. As EV adoption continues to rise,

the region's current charging network demonstrates thoughtful planning along population and tourism patterns, with future expansion likely needed to ensure equitable access and full regional connectivity.

E.2.1 Number of electric charging stations by community (2024)



The Thompson Okanagan region had a total of 269 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations as recorded by www.plugshare.com. The Thompson Okanagan region's EV charging network is comprehensive, with a significant concentration in urban centers like Kelowna and Kamloops. The availability of both Level 2 and DC fast chargers ensures that EV drivers can travel confidently throughout the region.

While still in early stages, the Thompson Okanagan region has taken promising steps toward energy sustainability in tourism. With dedicated auditing through the Biosphere program and growing EV infrastructure, a foundation for long-term energy management is emerging. Continued data collection, along with alignment to BC's clean energy goals, will be key to expanding impact across the tourism sector.

F. Water management and wastewater management

Water underpins every dimension of the Thompson Okanagan—supporting resident well-being, sustaining wildlife habitats, and enabling the lakeside and river-based activities that attract visitors. As tourism and population pressures converge, demand on this shared resource grows. Effective water management must therefore balance recreational enjoyment with the everyday needs of households and the ecological functions that keep local ecosystems healthy. By prioritizing conservation, efficient use, and collaborative planning, the region can safeguard a resource on which residents, tourists, and wildlife alike depend to live and prosper.

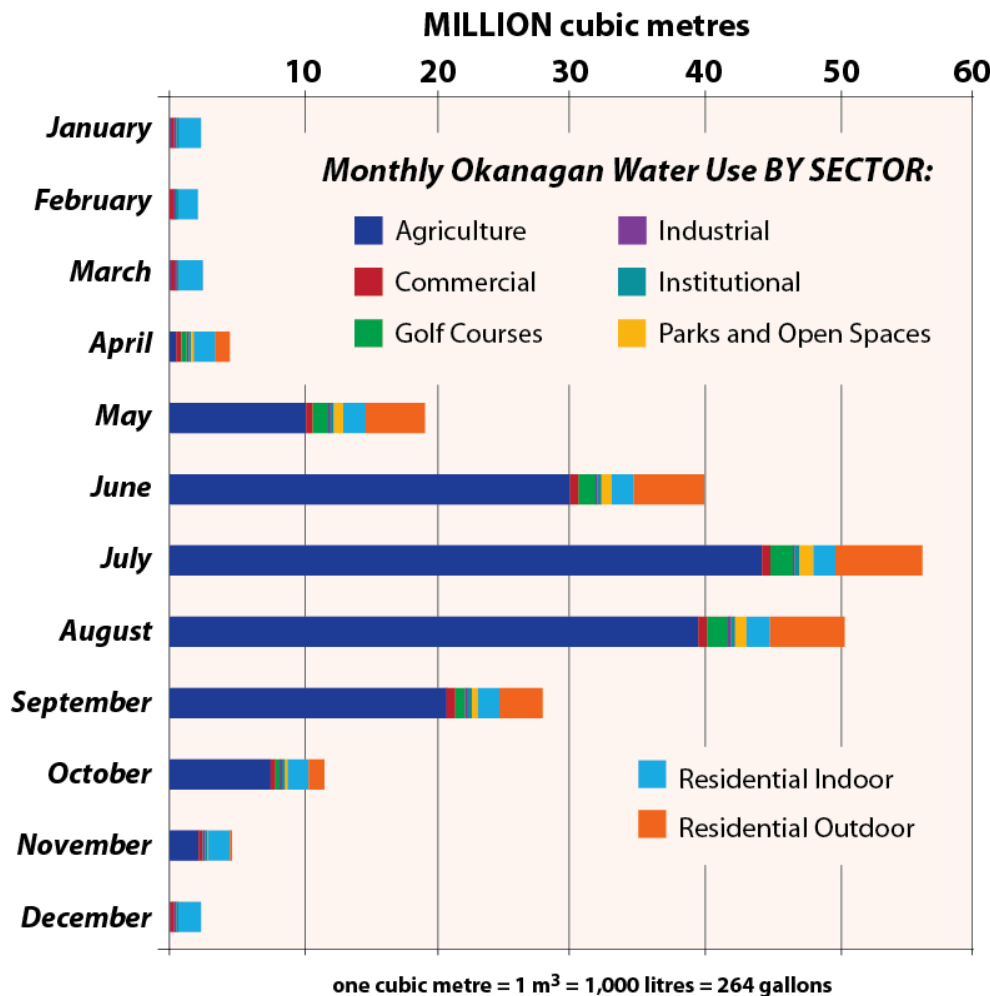
A significant challenge in the Thompson Okanagan remains the limited public availability and monitoring of data specifically related to water and wastewater management within the tourism sector for 2024. This lack of comprehensive data collection hinders the ability to fully assess and address water-related issues in the tourism industry.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) was legislated in 1970 to coordinate regional water initiatives across the entire Okanagan watershed—not confined by municipal or regional borders—stretching approximately 200 km and covering around 8,000 km², from Armstrong down to the U.S. border. While it lacks direct regulatory authority, the OBWB has taxation powers enabling it to fund basin-wide programs, offer leverage grants, and coordinate efforts among partners with a unified mission: "One Valley, One Water"

TOTA has a seat on the Council and acts as a technical advisor to the OBWB. The Okanagan Water Supply and Demand Study, most recently conducted between 2015 and 2018, found that the average Okanagan household uses 1,032 litres of water each day. In 2021 the average Okanagan resident used about 675 litres per person per day annually, which is approximately three times the national average. Most of this water is used for outdoor landscaping during the summer months. As reported in previous years, Okanagan residents use significantly more water than the average Canadian. With the intense population growth the pressure on water supply is increasing. However, with efforts to increase population density the impacts of population growth are not linear as many new residents live in multi-family homes and the lack of yards and increases in water use efficiency have helped keep added water use down.

As of 2021, the average Canadian used approximately 223 litres per person per day in the residential sector. The significantly higher water usage in the Okanagan region, especially during summer months, underscores the importance of water conservation efforts. Implementing measures such as efficient irrigation systems, drought-resistant landscaping, and public education campaigns can help mitigate excessive water consumption in this semi-arid region.

Even though Okanagan municipalities and residents use more water than average, the total amount of water used by the agricultural industry far outstrips municipal water use. The OBWB works closely with water utilities in the valley and farmers to improve irrigation practices and conservation efforts. There are designs to update the 2015-2018 study and get a better sense of water supply and demand, however that study is still a few years out.



Source: <https://obwb.ca/wsd-index/about/state-of-the-basin/>

The BC Water Portal, officially known as the BC Water Tools suite, is a provincial, map-based platform developed by the BC Ministry of Forests and the BC Energy Regulator. It centralizes a wide range of water-related data and tools for public access. The BC Water Portal is a one-stop hub for provincial-scale water monitoring, allocations, environmental flows, and real-time data. While a fully-fledged NEWT/NWWT for the Thompson–Okanagan is still pending, much of the groundwork and data infrastructure—including streamflow, groundwater, licences, and drought/flood monitoring—is already accessible through this platform. Once a regional tool rolls out, it will integrate seamlessly into this ecosystem, making it ideal for holistic water quantity planning and management in the TOTA region.

The largest community in the TOTA region, the City of Kelowna’s water conservation efforts consist of all water connections being metered, requiring residents to adhere to stage 1 water restrictions for outdoor irrigation during the summer months and educations initiatives like Water Smart and programs run through OBWB “Make Water Work” etc. Additionally, the City is switching all the water meters over to cellular

endpoints so that data on water use can be collected in real time, providing a new opportunity for identifying leaks in our system faster and more efficiently, this project is slated to finish in 2026.

F.1. Conservation initiatives and results

F.1.1. % waste water recycled

The Thompson Okanagan region of British Columbia, spanning from Osoyoos in the south to Valemount in the north, is home to a diverse mix of wastewater treatment systems that reflect the region's geography, population distribution, and commitment to environmental stewardship.

Urban Hubs with Advanced Treatment

The region's three largest facilities—Kelowna, Westside Regional (West Kelowna/Peachland), and Vernon—serve over 200,000 residents combined. These plants operate advanced biological nutrient removal systems with tertiary treatment and UV disinfection, aligning with best practices for effluent quality and public health. Each also features resource recovery elements: Kelowna composts biosolids, and Vernon reuses treated effluent for irrigation.

Mid-Sized Municipal Systems

Towns such as Merritt, Osoyoos, Oliver, Princeton, Okanagan Falls, and Valemount operate smaller municipal wastewater treatment plants, typically serving populations between 2,000 and 7,000. These range from lagoon systems (e.g. Osoyoos) to more modern facilities like Okanagan Falls' biological nutrient removal system. Some, like Merritt's system, use rapid infiltration to manage treated effluent sustainably.

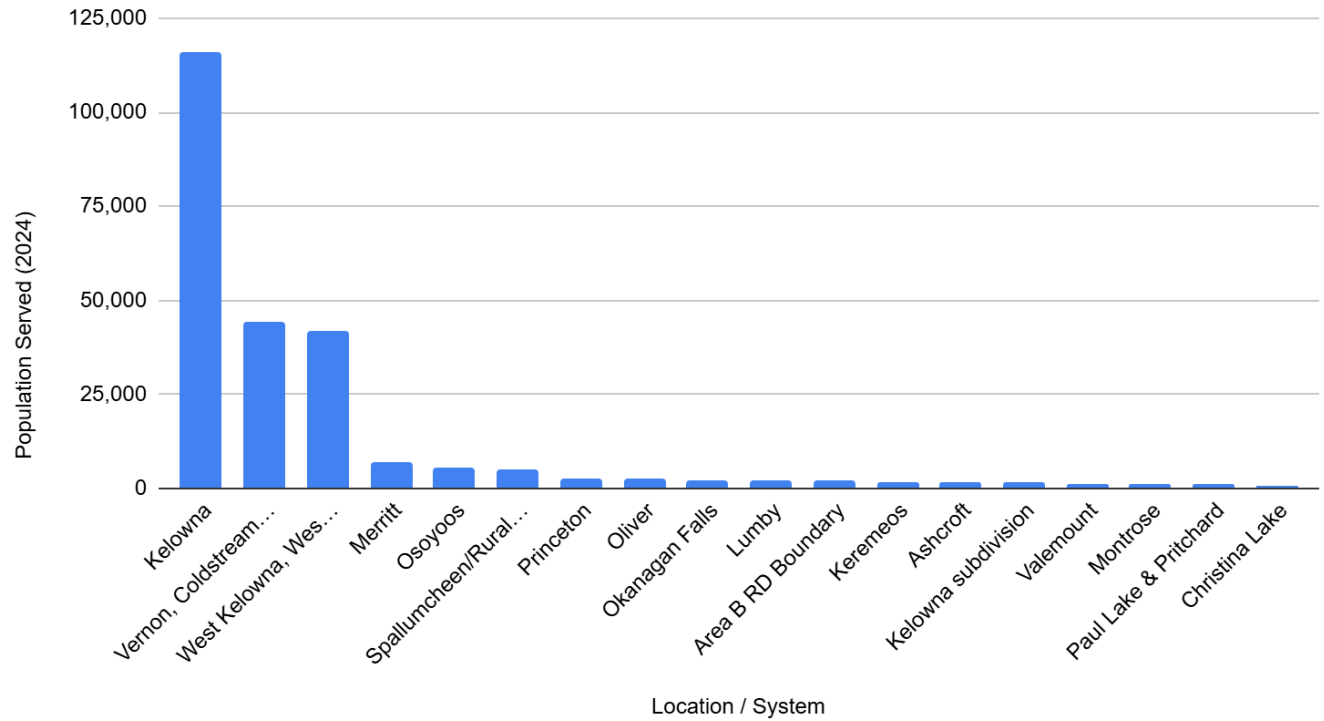
Rural & Cluster Systems

Regional Districts, including TNRD and RDNO, support wastewater collection and treatment in smaller or unincorporated communities like Paul Lake, Pritchard, and Spallumcheen. These systems often replace aging septic infrastructure with shared treatment networks—critical for water quality protection in sensitive watersheds.

Innovative & Private Systems

The region also boasts unique and sustainable designs, including the Christina Lake Solar Aquatic System, which treats wastewater in a greenhouse using biological and plant-based processes, and the Gallagher's Canyon private WWTP, serving a Kelowna subdivision.

F 1.1 Wastewater Treatment - Population Served (2024)



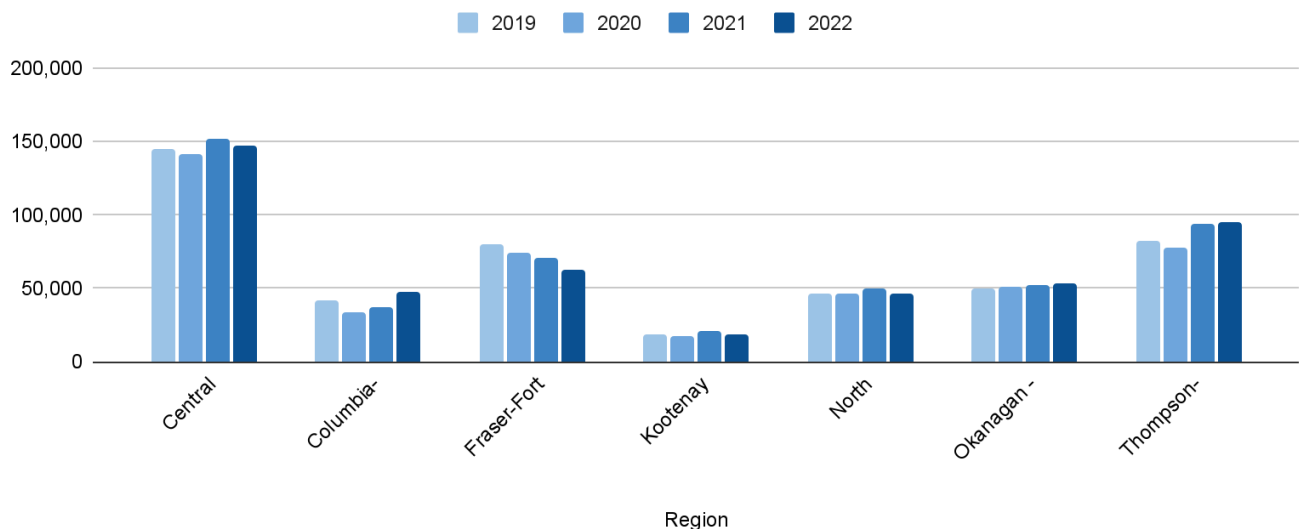
G. Solid waste management

Solid waste management remains a critical issue in the Thompson Okanagan as the region continues to experience population growth and evolving consumption habits. These factors present ongoing challenges for effective waste management and disposal strategies. The Okanagan, celebrated for its natural landscapes and vibrant communities, must proactively address the environmental, social, and economic consequences of solid waste to secure a sustainable future. This section reviews the state of solid waste management in the region, incorporating available 2023 data and summarizing changes observed from 2019 to 2022. As 2024 annual totals are not yet published for most districts, 2023 is the latest full-year dataset available.

G.1. Managing total waste collected in a destination

G.1.1.Total amount of waste collected

G 1.1.1. BC municipal solid waste data at the community level (Tonnes) 2019 - 2022



The total amount of waste collected represented in this graph is for subregions in the Thompson Okanagan and includes municipalities and unincorporated areas where consistent data is available up to 2022. Figure G.1.1.1. shows that Columbia-Shuswap saw a dramatic rebound in 2022 (+27.9%) after a steep drop in 2020. Likely reflects pandemic-related closures and post-disaster clean-up (e.g. floods or fires).

Thompson-Nicola had a notable jump in 2021 and continued rising into 2022—suggesting increased waste generation or recovery from backlog. Kootenay Boundary and North Okanagan both experienced a waste spike in 2021, followed by a drop in 2022. Okanagan-Similkameen was the most stable, with a gradual increase year over year, which may indicate predictable population or tourism growth without major events.

Columbia-Shuswap Regional District (CSRD):

The 2023 annual report for the Salmon Arm Refuse Disposal Site indicated that approximately 33,268 tonnes of refuse and recoverable wastes were managed, a 55% decrease from 2022. Municipal

solid waste landfilled at this site in 2023 was 22,910 tonnes, a 36% decrease from 2022. The report notes that 2022 figures were skewed by a large one-time clean-up project, and 2023 tonnage is more indicative of annual averages.

The Sicamous Refuse Disposal Site managed approximately 5,653 tonnes of refuse and recoverable wastes in 2023, a 32% increase from 2022. Municipal solid waste landfilled was 3,122 tonnes, a 3% decrease from 2022.

The dramatic rebound noted in the 2023 report for CSRD in 2022 (+27.9% overall) after a steep drop in 2020 was likely influenced by factors including pandemic-related changes and specific clean-up projects, such as the one mentioned for the Salmon Arm site. The 2023 data for these specific landfills shows a mixed pattern, with a significant decrease at Salmon Arm (returning to more typical levels) and an increase in managed waste at Sicamous.

Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD):

The notable jump in 2021 and continued rise into 2022 previously suggested increased waste generation or recovery from backlogs. As of early 2024, the TNRD was focused on fully implementing an expanded Mandatory Recyclable Material Bylaw. While specific 2023 total waste collected figures for the entire TNRD were not available in the immediate search, the per-person landfill disposal rate for TNRD residents was 639 kilograms in 2021, significantly higher than the B.C. average at that time. The TNRD's Solid Waste Management Plan aims to reduce this to 500 kilograms per person by 2028.

Kootenay Boundary Regional District (RDKB):

This region experienced a waste spike in 2021, followed by a drop in 2022. No specific consolidated 2023 total waste figures for the entire RDKB were immediately available. The RDKB implemented new garbage tag requirements effective January 1, 2024.

North Okanagan Regional District (RDNO):

This region also saw a waste spike in 2021, followed by a drop in 2022. The RDNO has published its "Solid Waste Quantities Reports- Annual Summary of Diversion, Disposal and Solid Waste Management Plan Progress" for 2023. Accessing this report directly would provide the specific 2023 figures.

Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District (RDOS):

Previously the most stable with a gradual increase year over year. The 2023 Annual Report for the Okanagan Falls Landfill is available. This report would contain specific tonnage for this facility. Additionally, early 2024 saw a dramatic increase in yard waste at the Oliver landfill due to a significant frost event affecting the agricultural sector. While this is specific to yard waste and one landfill, it highlights how unforeseen events can impact waste volumes.

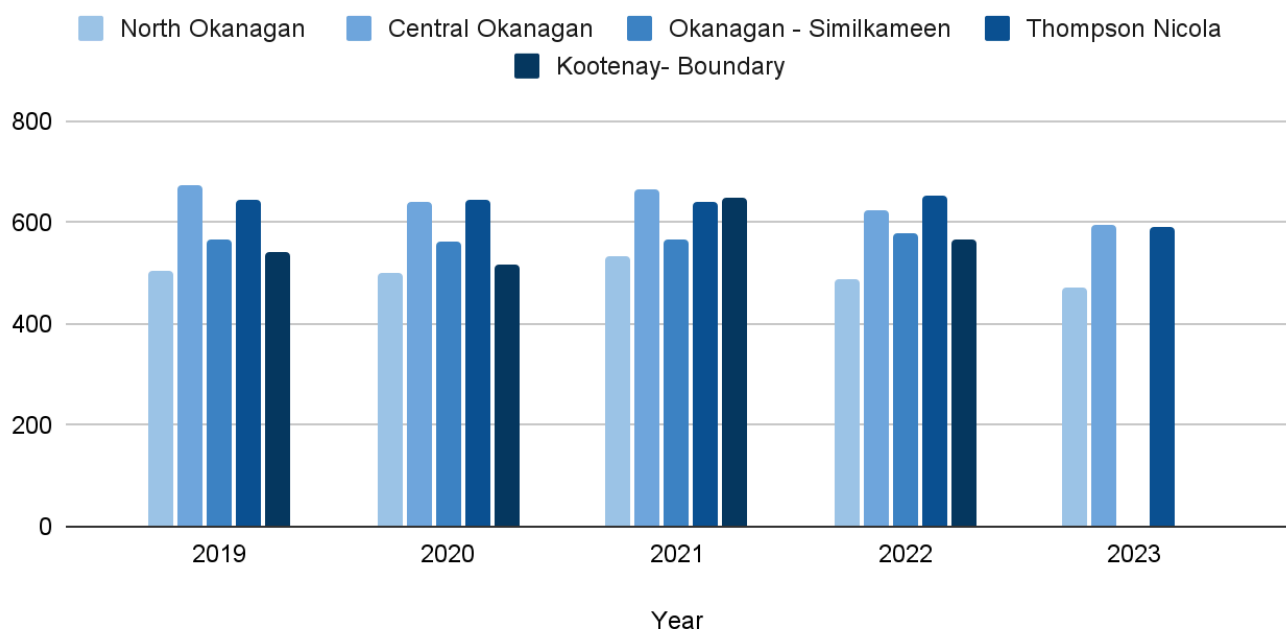
Central Okanagan Regional District (RDCO):

No specific consolidated 2023 total waste figures for the entire RDCO were immediately available. The RDCO launched an AI-powered recycling technology pilot program from October 2023 to March 2024 aimed at reducing contamination in curbside recycling.

G.1.2. Waste volume produced by the destination (kg) / Person years

G.1.2. Waste volume produced by the destination (kg) / Person years

Regional District Disposal Rates Comparison (kg) / Person years



The Regional Districts are responsible for waste management and work closely with the municipalities contained within their regions. Included in the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association's Tourism region these are: North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, Okanagan - Similkameen, Thompson Nicola and the western portion of the Kootenay- Boundary. Data is available up to 2022. Provincial per capita disposal rate decreased by 22 kg from 2019 to 2022, indicating a positive trend in waste reduction efforts. 3 regions (North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, Kootenay-Boundary) showed meaningful decreases from 2021 to 2022. Okanagan-Similkameen and Thompson-Nicola were more stable or slightly increasing over time. Kootenay-Boundary in 2021 stands out as an anomalous spike, possibly due to disaster debris from atmospheric river events. Central Okanagan remains the highest waste producer per capita, though it is improving. Data is available up to 2022 for comprehensive regional comparisons, with some 2023 per capita data points now available for specific areas. The BC provincial per capita disposal rate was forecast to be 460 kg/person for 2022/23, down from a 497 kg/person baseline in 2020/21. This indicates a positive trend in provincial waste reduction efforts.

G.1.3. Waste disposed of by different methods (specify, e.g. incinerated, deposited in landfill, etc.)

Organic waste

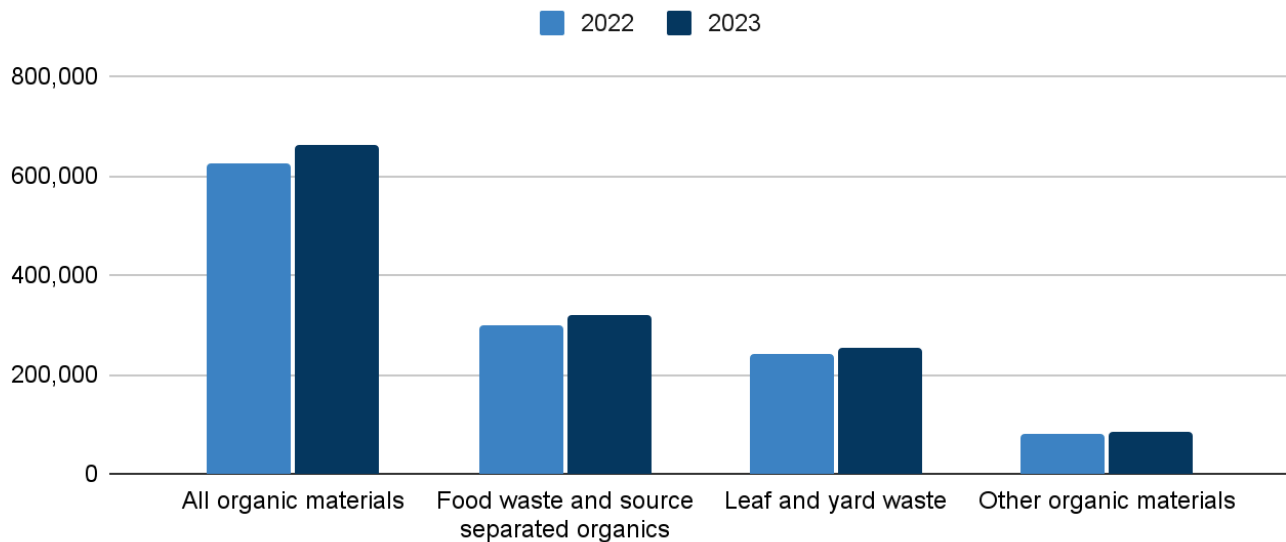
In general the tourism sector generates organic waste from seasonal yard waste such as grass cuttings, dead leaves and plant prunings, as well as paper products and food waste such as kitchen leftovers and food products that have expired. Events may also generate recyclable waste from beverage sales on site if available. The beverage producer sector generates fermentation waste such as grape/fruit pomace, distillation grains and spent yeast in addition to the organic waste sources mentioned above.

To manage organic waste, the tourism sector generally uses off-site management by a waste carrier or other third-party facility. Agritourism businesses are most likely to consider and use products from on-site organic waste management, such as compost as part of their operations. Improving off-site solutions will involve using organic waste in a more sustainable way and at a lower cost. On-site and off-site organic waste management practices are considered very important by wineries in terms of management costs and carbon footprint emissions. The separation and disposal of organic waste is not standard practice for all accommodation establishments. The sector is still struggling with organic waste management practices and could be improved through specific programs or more natural solutions.

In the Thompson Okanagan region we have food waste collection services available to pick up food waste directly from food and beverage companies: Spa Hills, Valley Pro Recycling, Lomi Food Recycling Program, Waste Connections of Canada and Environmental 360 Solutions.

In 2024, the Central Okanagan Regional District [engaged community members](#) regarding adding food waste pick up to the existing yard waste pickup service. The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is reviewing the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). SWMP reflects a long-term vision for how each regional district manages solid waste, including diversion and disposal.

British Columbia's total organic waste diverted from landfills (Tonnes)



British Columbia's total organic waste diverted from landfills (Tonnes)

While no comprehensive, regional data is available, Statistics Canada shows that BC diverted slightly more organic waste in 2023 compared to 2022. Data availability is occasional on this topic, 2023 data was released on 2025-04-04.

Recycling

Recycle BC is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for residential packaging and paper recycling throughout BC servicing over 1.8 million households. Recycle BC ensures the household materials are picked up, sorted, and responsibly managed and recycled. The program is funded by over 1,200 businesses. The annual report for 2024 is not available until after July 1, 2025.

G.2. Providing waste collection services

G.2.1. % of destination area (especially in urban sites) covered by solid waste collection services

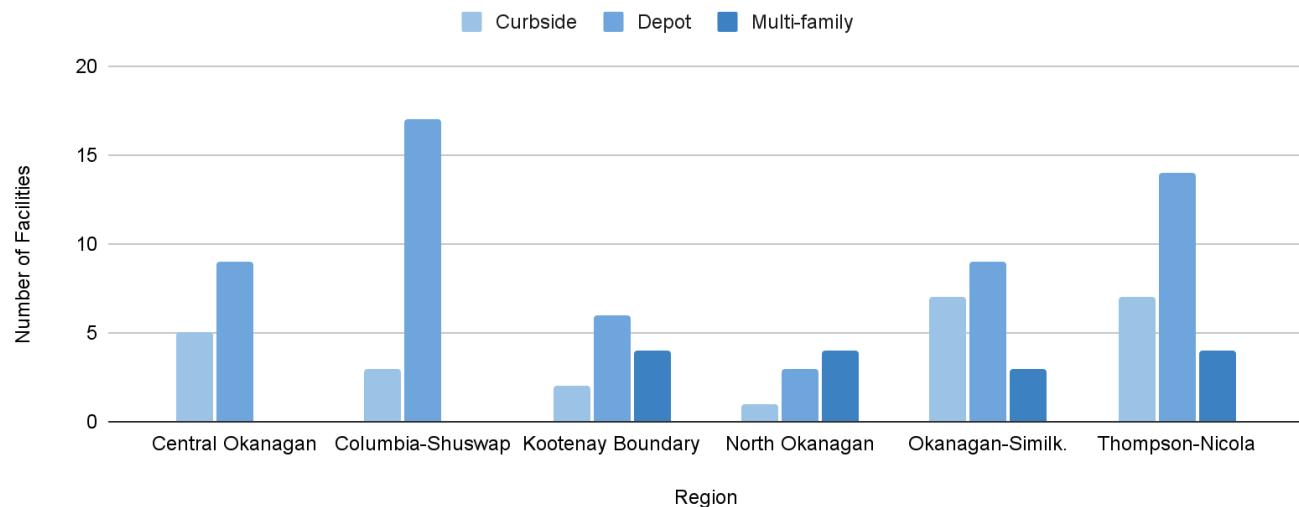
In the Thompson Okanagan region, solid waste collection services cover essentially all the destination area, including urban sites. This means that the percentage of the destination area covered by such services is approximately 90%. Thompson Okanagan has implemented comprehensive and efficient solid waste management systems that ensure the collection and proper disposal of waste materials throughout the region. [Recycle BC](#) is a not-for-profit organization responsible for residential packaging and paper product recycling throughout British Columbia, servicing over two million households or over 99% of BC through curbside, multi-family and/or depot services. They provide a comprehensive annual report and lists all the collection, depot and multifamily service area facilities.

Key Insights:

- Columbia-Shuswap leads in the number of Depot facilities (17).

- Thompson-Nicola has the most balanced spread across all three service types.
- North Okanagan has the fewest curbside services, but good multi-family coverage.
- Okanagan-Similkameen and Central Okanagan are strong in curbside and depot, with some multi-family facilities.

G 2.1.1 Curbside, Depot and Multi-family solid waste collection services



G.3. Hazardous substances (reduction, handling)

G.3.1. Number and volume of hazardous substances in use (for key substances, volume of use over time)

The management of hazardous waste in BC is governed by the Environmental Management Act and the Hazardous Waste Regulation, ensuring proper handling, storage, transportation, treatment, and disposal to protect human health and the environment. To prevent harming human health and the environment, it's essential that hazardous waste is handled, stored, transported, treated and disposed of properly. There are six different types of hazardous waste used in this region: Paints, oils, solvents, acids, heavy metal-containing sludges, pesticides.

G.3.2. % of these substances for which appropriate management and disposal policies and programs are in place

The region has a broad infrastructure distribution, covering both urban and rural sites. Programs are informed by regulation, backed by public education, and tailored to facility capabilities. For all the hazardous substances mentioned above, appropriate management and disposal policies and programs are in place. Five major program elements were identified to advise on development of safe, acceptable methods and facilities:

- Technologies to recycle, treat, store, transport, and dispose of hazardous wastes
- Operators for hazardous waste management facilities

- Suitable locations for these facilities
- Laws and regulations to ensure proper and safe operation of the system
- Programs to inform the public about the hazardous waste system

18 regulated landfills provide a network of controlled hazardous waste disposal options across the region. There are [18 Regulated landfills](#) under the Landfill Gas Management Regulation (LFGMR) in the Thompson Okanagan region and each has its own hazardous waste disposal rules and regulations.:

- The Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen has 3 landfills: Penticton (Campbell Mountain), Oliver Landfill, Okanagan Falls Landfill.
- Regional District of the Central Okanagan has 1 landfill, the Glenmore Landfill
- Regional District of North Okanagan has 3: Armstrong/Spallumcheen Diversion & Disposal Facility, Greater Vernon Diversion & Disposal Facility and Lumby Diversion & Disposal Facility
- The Thompson Nicola Regional District operates 2 landfills: Mission Flats Landfill and GFL Resource Recovery Centre.
- Other 9 landfills in the region are: Summerland Sanitary Landfill, Princeton & District Landfill, the Osoyoos & District Sanitary Landfill, West Boundary (Greenwood) Landfill, Grand Forks Regional Landfill, Campbell Hill Landfill, Kamloops Indian Band, Barhthartvale Landfill, Heffley Creek Eco-Depot

New Year-Round Household Hazardous Waste Facility in Kamloops - As of May 1, 2024, a dedicated drop-off facility for household hazardous waste opened at 480 Okanagan Way in Kamloops' Mount Paul Industrial Park. It serves residents of Kamloops and the Thompson-Nicola Regional District. Accepted materials include paints, batteries, and other common household hazardous items.

Revised Hazardous Waste Regulation (HWR) Requirements - Effective February 1, 2024, Return Collection Facilities (RCFs) are mandated to Register with the Ministry of Environment. Develop and submit operational plans if collecting hazardous waste beyond moderate risk waste or e-waste. Comply with updated storage and shipping protocols. These changes aim to enhance the safe handling and diversion of hazardous materials from the general waste stream.

Mandatory Recyclable Material Bylaw in Thompson-Nicola - The Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD) is set to fully implement its Mandatory Recyclable Material Bylaw in Spring 2024. This bylaw enforces stricter sorting and disposal requirements, ensuring recyclable materials are appropriately diverted from landfills.

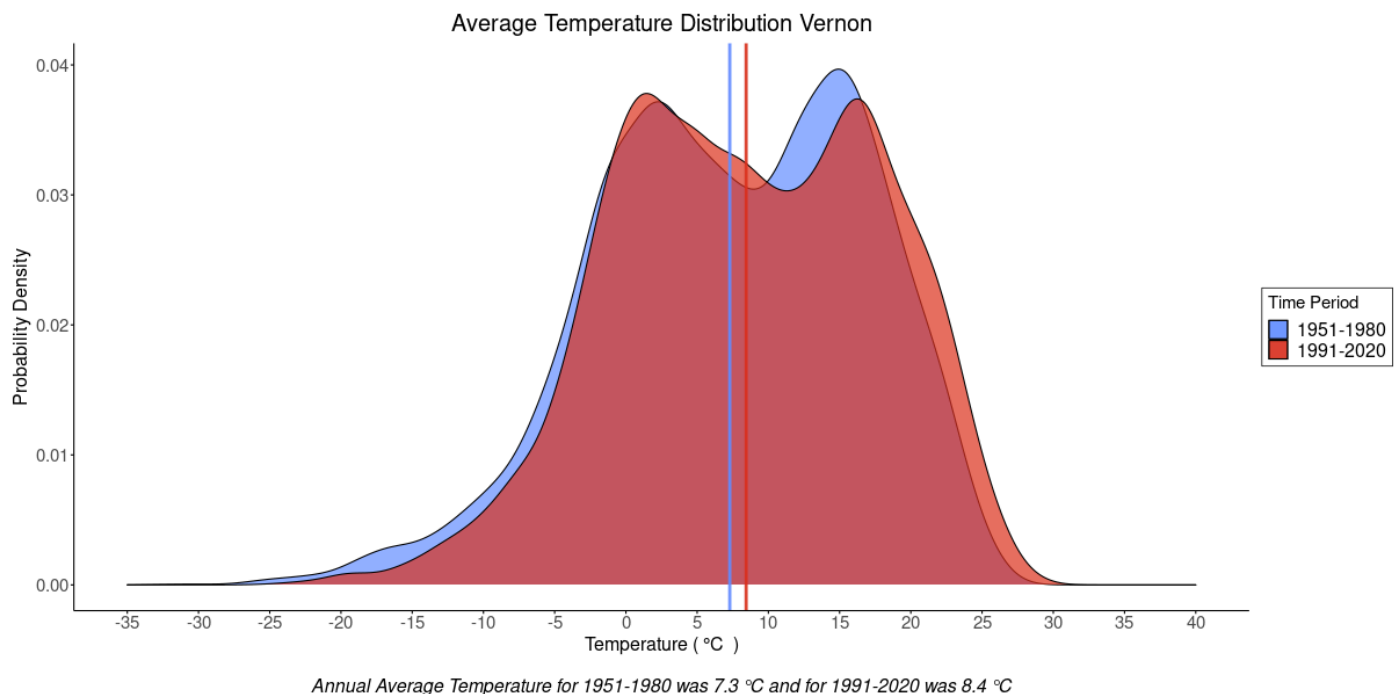
H. Climate action

The Thompson Okanagan is adopting measures to combat climate change in the tourism sector and making it a fundamental pillar of its sustainable tourism strategy. Deeply committed to the region's natural beauty and aware of the challenges posed by climate change, the Thompson Okanagan is committed to taking action to mitigate its impact on the environment. Through collaborative partnerships and community engagement, the region is actively working towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implementing sustainable practices. By prioritising climate action, the Thompson Okanagan seeks to preserve its natural landscapes, protect biodiversity, and ensure a resilient and sustainable future for both residents and visitors.

On May 16, 2022, TOTA became a signatory to the UNWTO [Glasgow Declaration](#) on Climate Action in Tourism. We commit to taking action in the five pathways of the Glasgow Declaration: Measure, Decarbonise, Regenerate, Collaborate, and Finance. In 2023 we published our [Climate Action Plan](#), and in 2024 we published the first [Carbon Inventory for the Thompson Okanagan Destination](#) using the baseline year of 2022.

H.1. Level of damage related to extreme climatic events

The region is experiencing both changes in average temperatures and extreme events. Significantly, the region now often experiences multiple extreme events within the same year. For example the warmest summer on record in 2023 which also led to a severe drought was followed by a cold snap in January 2024 which led to significant crop damages. The graphic below illustrates the shift to warmer average temperatures for Vernon.



Source: https://larrattaquatic.shinyapps.io/obwb_indicators/

H.1.1. Frequency of extreme climatic events

Wildfires

In 2024, British Columbia experienced its fourth-largest wildfire season on record, highlighting the increasing frequency and severity of extreme climatic events. From April 1 to October 31, 1,688 wildfires burned approximately 1.08 million hectares of land across the province .

Key Impacts:

- **Evacuations and Structural Losses:** The Grouse Complex fire alone led to the evacuation of 30,700 people and destroyed 303 structures, resulting in insured losses exceeding \$480 million .
- **Cultural and Ecological Damage:** Wildfires impacted cultural sites, ecological values, infrastructure, and local economies, with indirect effects on agriculture, tourism, and other weather-dependent businesses.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** The fires had unquantifiable impacts on people's health and wellbeing, exacerbated by smoke and the stress of evacuations.

Response and Preparedness:

Incident Management: Five BC Wildfire Service Incident Management Teams (IMTs) and three out-of-province IMTs were deployed 27 times to manage major incidents and wildfire complexes .

Community Collaboration: The BC Wildfire Service enhanced preparedness by collaborating with local communities, expanding recruitment efforts—particularly among First Nations—and establishing a dedicated wildfire training and education centre in partnership with Thompson Rivers University .

- Over 70 per cent of wildfires in 2024 were caused by lightning while just under 30 per cent were attributed to human activity. A small percentage remain undetermined or under investigation.
- Wildfires resulted in 51 evacuation orders, which affected more than 4,100 properties, and 112 evacuation alerts, which affected more than 12,500 properties.
- As of November 1, the estimated cost of wildfire suppression for the Province was \$621 million.

The Kamloops Fire Centre (KFC), encompassing a significant portion of the Thompson Okanagan tourism region, experienced several notable wildfires in 2024. While specific data for 2024 is limited, the region's susceptibility to wildfires remains a concern, emphasizing the need for continued vigilance and preparedness.

These developments reflect a broader trend of increasing wildfire activity in British Columbia, driven by factors such as prolonged droughts, reduced snowpacks, and extended periods of heat without precipitation. Projections indicate that, without significant climate action, severe wildfire seasons could occur as frequently as once every three to ten years by 2050.

H.1.1.1. Notable Wildfires for the Kamloops Fires Centre in 2024

Fire Name	Suspected Cause	Size (ha)	Discovery Date - 2024
Calcite Creek (K61067)	Natural	6,684	July 17
Dunn Creek (K21354)	Natural	2,577	July 22
Hulcar Mountain (K41796)	Natural	784	Aug. 4
Lower Blue Mountain (K51866)	Undetermined	46	Aug. 4
Shetland Creek (K70910)	Natural	27,956	July 12
Sitkum Creek (K41109)	Natural	1,262	July 18
Hook Creek (R90740)	Natural	355	July 7
Little Oliver Creek (R50752)	Human	219	July 8

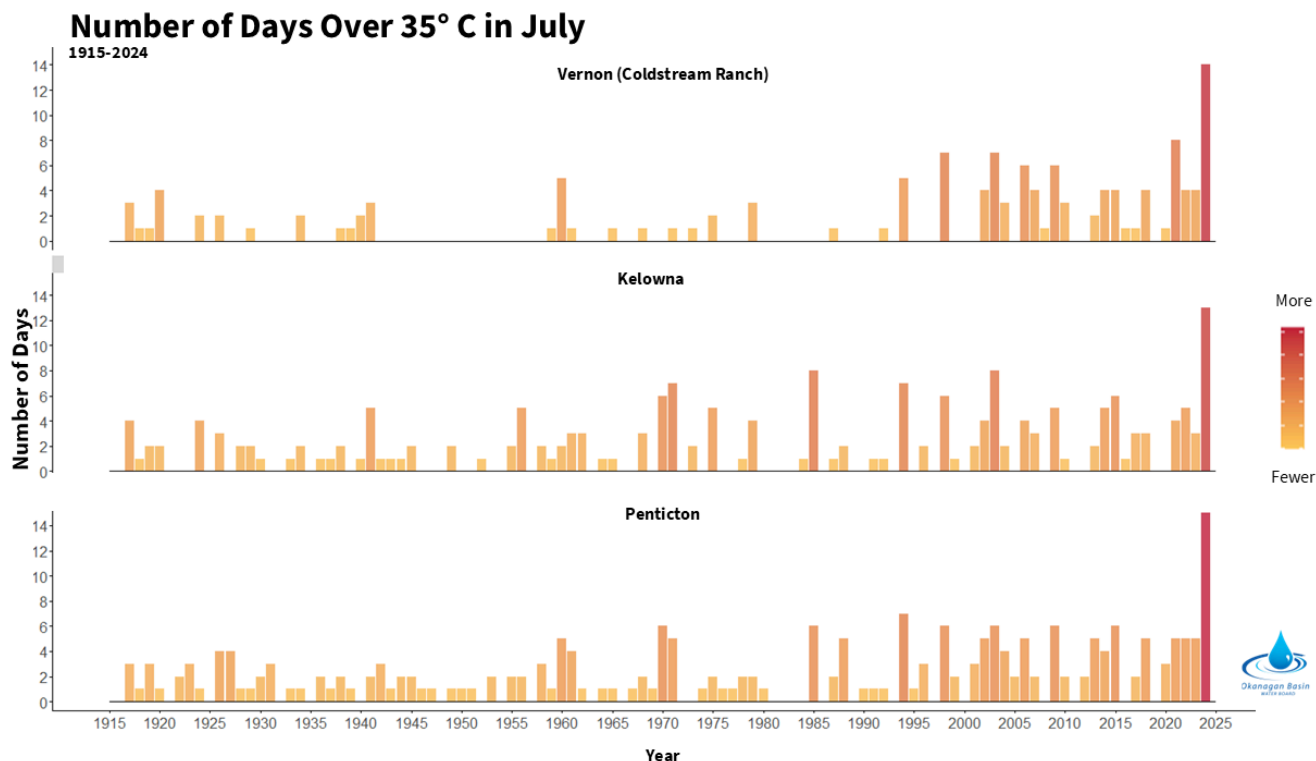
Source: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/wildfire-history/wildfire-season-summary#statistics>

Flood Events

The Ministry of Forests reports each year flood watch in the Thompson Okanagan regions. In 2024, the British Columbia River Forecast Centre issued flood warnings and advisories for parts of the Thompson-Okanagan region.

On May 8, 2024, a flood warning was issued for the Lower Thompson area, including Cache Creek, Deadman River, Criss Creek, Bonaparte River, and surrounding areas. Additionally, flood watches were in effect for Guichon Creek and the Salmon River near Falkland and Salmon Arm, indicating that river levels were rising and could approach or exceed bankfull, potentially leading to flooding in adjacent areas.

H.2. Level of exposure to risk - Heat



The number of very hot days is increasing - especially in the Okanagan where in the month of July 2024, saw a total of two weeks of days where the temperature was over 35 °C. Temperatures are increasing throughout the year which is not just increasing in summer months but also in winter months. For example, the 2024 cold snap - which killed off a significant proportion of the fruit and wine crop - was so harmful because a warmer than normal fall reduced cold hardiness.

H.2.1. Percentage of tourist infrastructure (hotels, other) located in vulnerable zones

Tourism in the Thompson Okanagan is anchored by its lakefront beaches, riverside campgrounds, and vineyard-view resorts. Those same waters, however, also mark the region's chief climate risk. Updated mapping shows that about one-third of all hotel and other accommodation properties—roughly 450 businesses out of 1,400—sit inside a floodplain or alluvial-fan hazard zone. The pattern has hardly shifted since last year: most exposed sites line the shores of Okanagan Lake or occupy low, creek-fed valleys such as Cache Creek and the lower Similkameen.

In 2024 the region saw low snow and high heat. Snowpack peaked below 90 percent of normal and July delivered two solid weeks above 35 °C. That combination meant no record freshet floods but it did confirm the other side of the climate coin: hotter, drier summers that parch hillsides and help wildfires destabilise slopes.

In August 2024, a cloudburst sent debris across Westside Road near Lake Okanagan Resort, closing a key tourism corridor for a day. It was a reminder that rain-on-steep-slope events strike outside the areas shown on traditional lake- and river-flood maps.

First wave of hard-defence projects. Ottawa, Victoria and local governments committed C\$9.1 million to new dikes and bridge upgrades in Vernon and Lumby—the valley’s first large, shovel-ready flood-mitigation works since 2020.

Operators in at-risk areas reported revenue dips of around 12 percent during May’s flood-watch week as bookings paused and staff hours were cut. Waterfront resorts renewing policies late in 2024 saw flood deductibles jump 15–25 percent, channelling money away from room upgrades toward rising premiums. While no major evacuation orders were issued this year, social-media footage of August’s road washout circulated widely, reinforcing the sense that peak-season plans can change overnight.

The Okanagan Flood Story is a public, interactive ArcGIS StoryMap and data portal launched by the Okanagan Basin Water Board in 2020 that translates valley-wide LiDAR, hydrologic and hydraulic modelling—including mid-century climate-change scenarios—into easy-to-explore flood-risk maps and guidance. Users can zoom to any address to see how far and how deep water would spread in once-in-200- or once-in-500-year events today and in 2050, read the region’s flood history, and download depth grids or live WMS feeds for their own planning software. By converting dense technical studies into searchable visuals and plain-language advice on preparedness, response and recovery, the Flood Story bridges science and action, giving residents, businesses and local governments a clear picture of where future floods are most likely and what steps can reduce the risk

The Okanagan Flood Story website remains the public’s entry point to state-of-the-art hazard maps. In 2024 the platform was rebuilt in the latest ArcGIS template and, crucially, now allows planners and hotel owners to download the underlying depth grids directly into their own mapping software. Better data access means quicker, cheaper site checks before expansion or renovation.

At the same time, funded dikes and bridge works mark a policy shift toward protect-in-place for critical community hubs, including clusters of hotels. Whether that strategy can keep pace with future river levels will be tested when the province finishes re-setting the Okanagan Lake rule curve—a decision expected after 2026 that could raise or lower design flood lines.

Even after the new works are finished, hundreds of tourism businesses will still occupy low-lying, high-value waterfront. One in three beds, campsites, and guest rooms in the Thompson Okanagan lie in places where rising water can reach them. The 2024 season may have escaped major flooding, but it underscored a widening gap between climate realities and where we built the region’s tourism heart. Closing that gap is now the central task for planners, investors, and communities alike.

H.3. Degree of planning for climate change impacts

H.3.1. Degree to which key tourist zones are covered by contingency or emergency planning (existence of plan, % area included)

In response to climate change, British Columbia has renamed Emergency Management to Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) and this provincial department has been given many more responsibilities and now operates year-round. The Tourism Emergency Management Committee, of which TOTA is a member, is a group that provides advisory support and has developed a framework outlining the roles and responsibilities of tourism in emergency situations. There is also the Tourism Emergency Response Team (TERT), which is set up in the event of a crisis and meets once a week or more to collaborate and coordinate actions from a tourism perspective.

H.4. Impact on mountains

H.4.1. % ski areas or ski-able terrain with snowmaking equipment

The region has 9 ski resorts: Apex Mountain Resort, Big White Ski Resort, Clearwater Ski Hill, Crystal Mountain Resort, Harper Mountain, Mount Baldy Ski Area, Phoenix Mountain Ski Resort, Silver Star Mountain Resort, Sun Peaks Resort.

At Apex Mountain Resort, the skiable terrain is 1112 acres and has a total of 60 acres of snowmaking. At Sun Peaks Resort, the skiable terrain is 4270 acres and has a total of 250 acres of snowmaking.

H.5. Impact on wildlife and biodiversity

H.5.1. % of tourism dependent on viewing species (% of key species considered vulnerable to changes in climate)

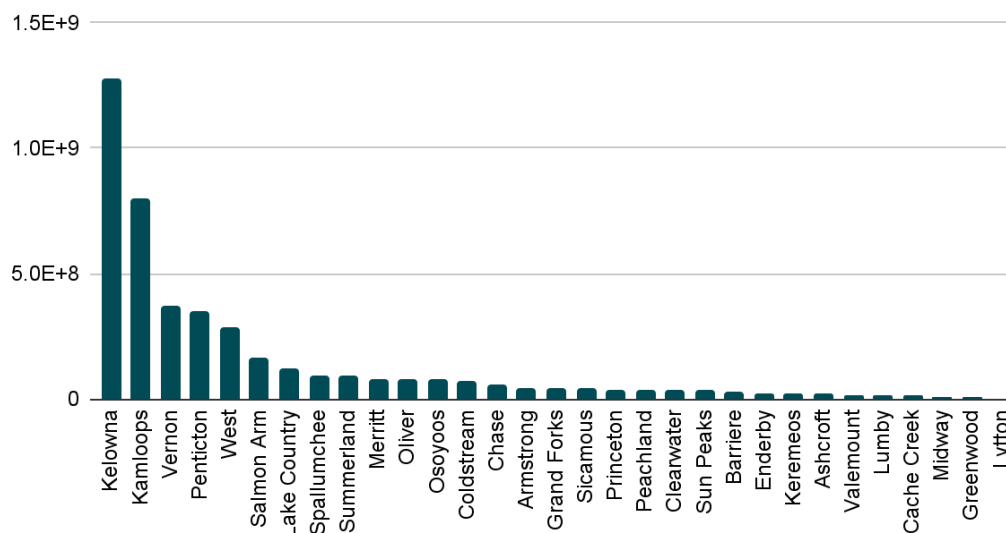
Wildlife watching in the region plays an important role in attracting tourists and enhancing the overall tourism experience. With its diverse ecosystems and abundant wildlife, the region offers unique opportunities for visitors to engage with nature and observe a variety of species in their natural habitats. From birdwatching to bear spotting, wildlife watching activities captivate tourists and foster a deep appreciation for the region's biodiversity. (See Appendix B)

The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) is currently developing a Conservation Planning Tool that will support local government environmental impact assessment processes by providing new spatial information, reports and mapping that is critical for conservation planning in the Okanagan. The tool will initially identify the cumulative impacts of proposed developments and evaluate the impacts to habitat connectivity across the region. This information will allow planners to make more informed decisions and ensure policies and guidelines are in place to protect our remaining natural areas.

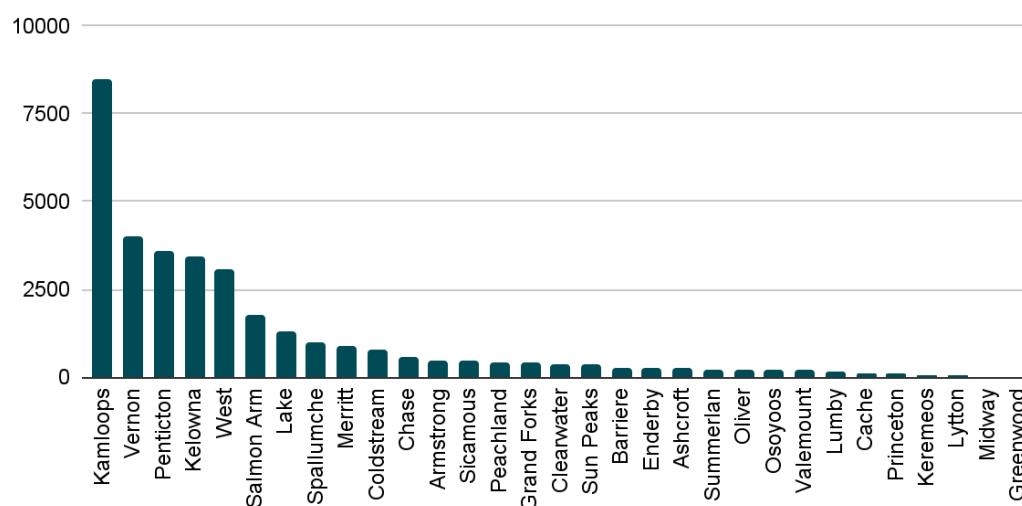
H.6. Greenhouse gas emission by the destination and by the tourism component

H.6.1. Total CO₂ produced due to the community's energy consumption

H.5.1.1. Total electricity consumption by city in 2021 (kWh)

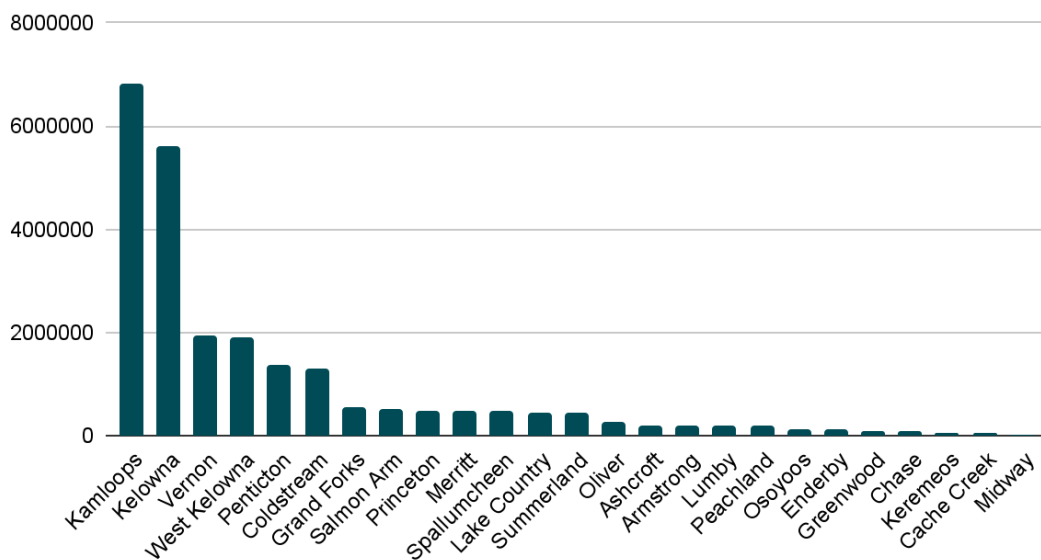


H.5.1.2. Total CO₂ emissions from electricity by city in 2021 (tonnes)

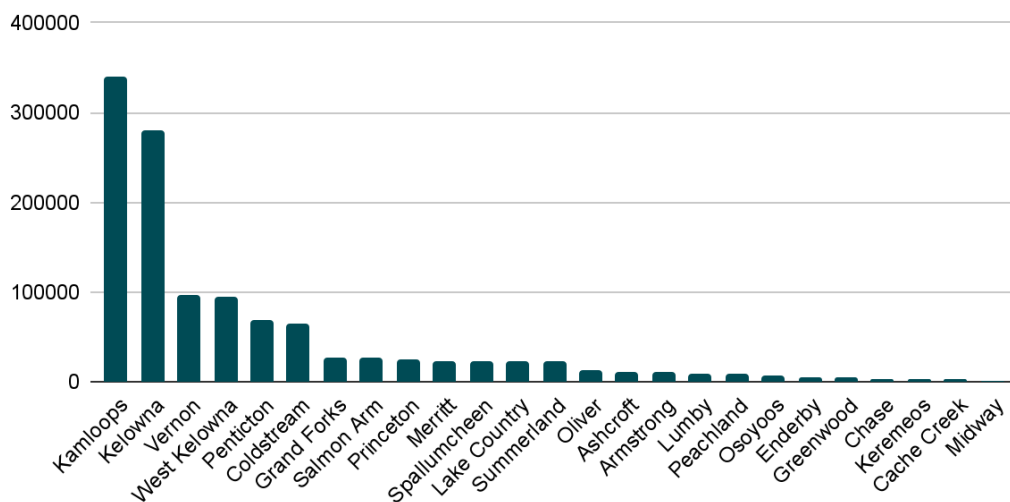


The consumption of electricity is shown for the most recent data available (which is for the year 2021). Figure H.5.1.1. The CO₂ emissions of electricity depend on the population, however cities differ from the choice of electricity they use. Here we can see that Kelowna consumes more electricity than Kamloops, but has far less CO₂ emissions than Kamloops (also Vernon and Penticton), according to Figure H.5.1.2.

H.5.1.3. Total gas consumption by city in 2021 (kWh)



H.5.1.4. Total CO2 emissions from gas consumption by city in 2021 (tonnes)



Gas consumption and CO2 emissions are similar to electricity consumption and CO2 emissions in the sense that the consumption of gas in the region is higher in the most populated cities and the CO2 emissions of electricity depends on the population and also differs from the choice of gas cities use based on Figure H.5.1.3. Here we can see that Kamloops consumes more gas than Kelowna and has more CO2 emissions than Kelowna, following Figure H.5.1.4.

H.7. Energy consumption related to temperature control

H.7.1. Number and % rooms with air conditioning and/or heating

In the Thompson Okanagan region, the prevalence of air conditioning and heating systems in accommodations is exceptionally high. With the fluctuating weather conditions experienced in this area, characterised by hot summers and cold winters, it is crucial for residents and visitors to have access to comfortable indoor environments. The high number and percentage of rooms equipped with air conditioning and heating systems reflect the region's wealth and commitment to providing optimal comfort and convenience to its residents and tourists, ensuring their well-being and satisfaction throughout their stay.

H.8. Coverage of natural areas

H.8.1. % of natural area coverage in the territory of the destination (change over time)

A Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) — is a strategic planning document developed by governments (often in collaboration with local stakeholders) to guide the use, protection, and development of land and natural resources within a defined geographic area.

Kamloops Land & Resource Management Plan

The Kamloops Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) encompasses a vast area of 2.7 million hectares in south-central British Columbia. The LRMP was developed through a collaborative and inclusive two-year decision-making process. It aimed at balancing the diverse interests and priorities within the region while promoting sustainable land use practices and effective resource management.

Okanagan-Shuswap Land & Resource Management Plan

The Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) encompasses a vast area of approximately 2.5 million hectares, providing comprehensive guidance for the management of Crown land and resources within the plan area. The plan concluded in 2000 that nearly fifty new protected areas were designated, further emphasising the commitment to conservation and environmental stewardship within the region.

Eight Peaks Sustainable Resource Management Plan

The Eight Peaks Winter Recreation Sustainable Resource Management Plan (SRMP) encompasses approximately 44,500 hectares of picturesque mountain slopes located within a 15-kilometre radius of the community of Blue River. The primary objective is to provide a strategic framework for the integration of forest management, heli-ski run development, and various other winter recreational activities. By effectively managing these natural assets, the Eight Peaks SRMP aims to strike a balance between preserving the environment and fostering the region's vibrant winter recreation industry.

Valemount to Blue River Sustainable Resource Management Plan

The Valemount to Blue River Winter Recreation Sustainable Resource Management Plan (SRMP) encompasses a vast expanse of approximately 700,000 hectares of land, stretching from Mount Robson Park in the east to Wells Gray Park in the west, and from Horsey Creek in the north to Blue River in the south. Winter recreation activities, including heli-skiing and snowmobiling. Recognizing the environmental concerns associated with winter recreation, particular attention is being given to address potential impacts on the mountain caribou population, a nationally threatened species listed as red-listed.

Merritt Old Growth Management

Within the Thompson Okanagan region, the preservation of old-growth forests is effectively achieved through the establishment of designated areas called old growth management areas (OGMAs). These OGMAs play a crucial role in ensuring that desired levels of old-growth forest are maintained across the landscape. Conserving old-growth forests is a key strategic objective in promoting sustainable management practices for the Crown land base. Merritt Old Growth Management plan contains 1,305 spatial Old Growth Management Areas totalling 114 589 hectares.

Roughly 5.2 million hectares of the Thompson-Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) region are governed by at least one of these land-use or resource-management plans – about 52,000 km², or $\approx 73\%$ of the region's total land base. Because all sub-plans sit inside the LRMP “umbrella,” adding their areas separately would double-count land and give an inflated figure (~ 6.1 million ha). The 5.2 million-ha number is therefore the best single estimate of unique plan coveral. Accessibility

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association is committed to supporting the tourism industry in our region to become a world-renowned accessible destination, and has embarked on the journey of making this beautiful region more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive for all visitors and local community members. Outdoor experiences and built environments that provide key accessible features and equipment, are key to ensuring equal opportunity and participation for everyone, regardless of ability, size, gender, or culture. Living, working, playing and travelling with and alongside family and friends is a basic human need and human right, and an essential part of everyone's mental, emotional, and physical well being.

Much of this work to date has been conducted by our Access & Inclusion Liaison, Sonja Gaudet. Sonja is a retired Paralympic athlete. Her knowledge and lived experience as an active and independent daily wheelchair user allows TOTA to offer wheelchair accessibility consultations and recommendations of the built environment and provide outdoor experience providers adaptive equipment and service provider knowledge. These assessments also include key priority features for individuals who have low vision, are hard of hearing, or have sensory requirements.

These are the key initiatives that TOTA is engaged in on an ongoing basis:

- Creating relationships with tourism partners and stakeholders in the TOTA region
- Onsite built environment accessibility consultations
- Research accessible travel best practices
- Identifying existing accessible experiences, services and products in the region

- Assisting in creating accessible and inclusive content
- Assisting in creating accessible and inclusive itineraries
- Building partnerships with accessible travel trade organisations
- Building partnerships with adaptive outdoor service providers
- Building partnerships with existing support agencies
- Provide recommendations about accessibility on Rail Trails and other trail systems in region
- Presentations about TOTA's Access and Inclusion Program and initiatives at tourism related events and conferences
- Support stakeholders with potential funding opportunities
- Provide stakeholders with accessible tourism resources

I.1. Access throughout the destination

I.1.1. Existence of disabled-friendly policy

The Thompson Okanagan region operates under the framework of the Accessible British Columbia Act. At the provincial level, British Columbia is committed to developing laws, standards, and policies that make BC more inclusive for everyone. Through the Accessible British Columbia Act, passed into law in June 2021, the Province is working to identify, remove, and prevent barriers, promote fairness and equity, and support a culture of access and inclusion throughout BC. Regional districts and municipalities align their local policies with these provincial mandates. The [BC Building Code](#) introduced significant updates to accessibility standards in 2024.

New commercial and public buildings, along with their common spaces, are now required to include:

- Power-operated doors: These must be installed on all primary building entrances and the entrances to all accessible washrooms.
- Elevators: Required in most new large two- and three-storey buildings to ensure access to all floors.
- Universal washrooms: Must include a full-sized (adult) changing space.
- More inclusive signage: To improve wayfinding and building safety.
- Assisted-listening systems: For people with hearing loss in relevant assembly spaces.

A major focus of the 2024 BC Building Code is to increase the availability of adaptable housing. Providing more adaptable dwellings is crucial for enhancing accessible housing options across the province.

Benefits of Adaptable Dwellings:

- Enable individuals to remain in their homes through periods of illness or temporary or permanent injury.
- Support seniors who wish to "age in place" comfortably and safely.
- Offer suitable housing options for people living with disabilities.
- Reduce the necessity and cost of future retrofitting.

In 2024 the Province also released an "Adaptable Dwelling Unit Illustrative Design Guide" to support the implementation of these new requirements. It's important to note that there are also transition provisions for "in-stream" projects that had substantial design work completed under the previous 2018 BC Building Code.

I.1.2. Existence of disabled access policy including all tourism services, products, and experiences (e.g. airports, piers, bus stations, sidewalks, restaurants, public washroom facilities, etc. (% meeting or exceeding standards))

The tourism industry of BC and the Thompson Okanagan region, has a responsibility to ensure that accessibility meets the BC Building Code and infrastructure accessibility standards. The BC Building Code is a provincial regulation governing how new construction, building alterations, repairs and demolitions are done. A building is required to meet the standards of the BC Building Code that is in force when it is constructed, but unfortunately, many of these standards can be minimum and do not include all of the accessible features that a diverse community of individuals require. To continue to achieve a higher level of accessibility, important changes are being addressed at a National and Provincial level, and these will influence accessible standards and features within the BC Building Code¹.

I.1.3. Existence of public transport suitable for mobility impaired (number of or % transport vehicles)

The larger communities throughout the Thompson Okanagan region have public bus transportation that is accessible for people who have mobility requirements to access the bus.

Taxi services are also available throughout the communities within the region, but only some taxi companies have a vehicle that is equipped with a lift or ramp, and there are very few private wheelchair accessible shuttle services available throughout our region. The majority of vehicle rental providers will install hand controls, but this is something that needs to be pre-arranged many weeks ahead of the time of need. Research on private or not-for-profit wheelchair accessible vehicle rental service providers was conducted, and for now we know that there are two providers, resulting in a minimal number of accessible vehicles available for rent. There is a minimum number of wheelchair accessible shuttle services available throughout our region, but these private services can be very expensive, which causes a significant barrier for many individuals.

I.1.4. Number of tour companies in destinations offering tours and/or guides trained for persons who require accessible features

Unfortunately, not all the tour operators offer tours and/or guides that are accessible to everyone.

The research conducted to date did not go through every tour company in the region. For now we know that there are six tour companies offering tours that have vehicles equipped with a lift or a ramp².

¹ In BC, there is no compliance process if the services, products, and experiences within the tourism industry do not follow the accessibility standards guideline provided in the BC Building Code.

I.2. Access to accommodations and tourist services

I.2.1. Accommodations (hotels with guest rooms accessible to persons with disabilities (easy access, bathrooms that accommodate wheelchairs, safety bars etc.)

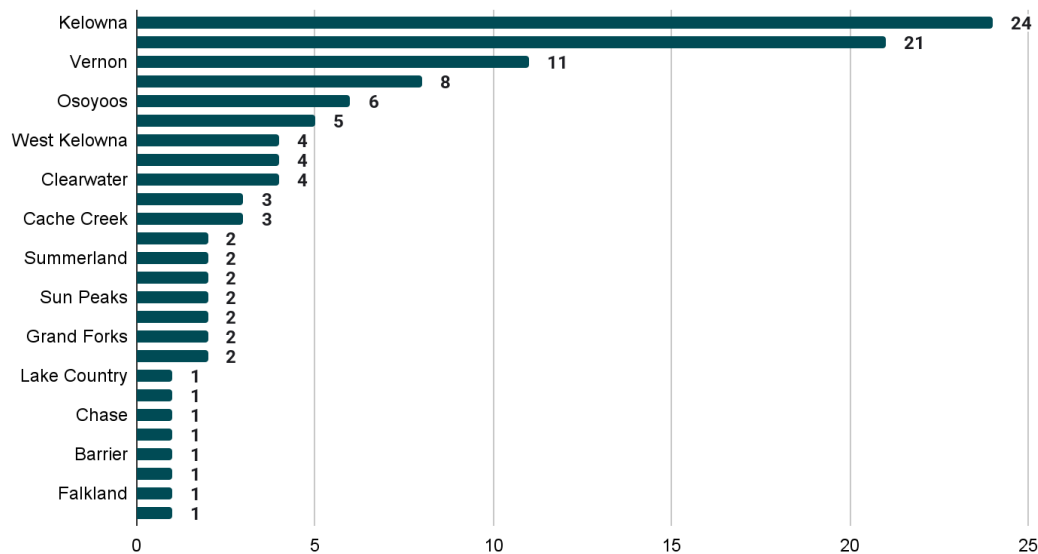
It is difficult to rate the level of accessibility at each accommodation. Everyone has accessible feature requirements that are very diverse, specific, and personal to their level of ability¹.

Guest room key priority accessible features

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parking ● Access aisles and routes ● Automated main entrance ● Doorways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Width ○ Easy to push/pull open ○ Closing speed ○ Threshold ○ Handle style ● Flooring surface ● Wayfinding signage with raised text and/or braille | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Washrooms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wheel-in shower ○ Hand held shower heads ○ Wheel-under sink vanity ○ Mirror height ○ Lever style faucets ○ Grab bars at toilet & in bathtub or shower ○ Toilet height ○ Shower / bath bench type ○ Amenities at an accessible height and location | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tactile surfaces ● Lighting ● Service animal friendly ● Lowered bed heights ● Beds to accommodate a portable lift system ● Audio & visual alarm system ● Floor, wall, and furniture colour contrast ● Amenities within the room at an accessible height and location ● Space between furniture for ease of movement |
|---|--|---|

Accommodations identified below are not all of the accommodations that are available in the region, but they are ones that have some accessible features in their accessible guest rooms related to vision, mobility, and hearing requirements. The research conducted to date identified 115 accommodations throughout the region that have some level of accessibility, with the majority being in the larger communities where there is a higher concentration of accommodations².

I.2.1.1. Number of accessible accommodation in 2024



The HelloBC website lists 56 accommodations that have self-identified their accessible features².

I.2.2. Food and drink

Although there are approximately 1,000 restaurants in the region, and they have a responsibility to provide a level of access that is compliant with the BC Building Code Accessibility Standards, this is not always the case¹.

Key priority accessible features

- Parking
- Access aisles and routes
- Automated main entrance
- Doorways
 - Width
 - Easy to push/pull open
 - Closing speed
 - Threshold
 - Handle style
- Flooring surface
- Wheel-under table height options available
- Menu text contrasting \ braille
- Tactile surfaces
- Lighting
- Wayfinding signage with raised text and/or braille
- Service animal friendly
- Specific dietary food options
- Washroom
 - Wheel-under sink vanity
 - Mirror height
 - Lever style faucets
 - Grab bars at toilet
 - Toilet height
 - Amenities at an accessible height and location

For now it is difficult to provide an exact number of accessible and inclusive restaurants in the region as this is not a component of our research.

² Another resource used to identify tourism experiences in the region is HelloBC, which is the Destination BC'S (DBC) website. Services, products and experiences that are identified on HelloBC, are ones that have chosen to self-identify, but there are many more that have yet to identify themselves. It is very important that visitors call ahead of time to inquire about the specific accessible features information that they require. DBC encourages all experiences throughout the region to self-identify their accessible features through the accessible attributes checklist, and once this has been completed, many more services, products and experiences will be identified.

I.2.3. Visitor centres

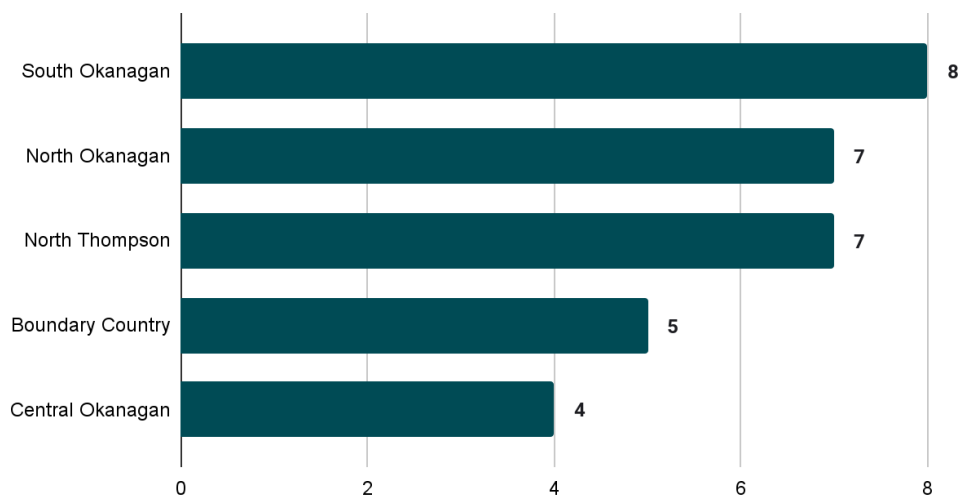
The following accessible features have been used to identify the visitor centres that have some level of accessibility.

Key priority accessible features

- Parking
- Access aisles and routes
- Automated main entrance
- Doorways
 - Width
 - Easy to push/pull open
 - Closing speed
 - Threshold
 - Handle style
- Flooring surface
- Tactile surfaces
- Wayfinding signage with raised text and/or braille
- Lighting
- Service animal friendly
- Accessible picnic tables
- Information resources & retail products at an accessible height for everyone
- Washroom
 - Wheel-under sink vanity
 - Mirror height
 - Lever style faucets
 - Grab bars at toilet
 - Toilet height
 - Amenities at an accessible height and location

There are 31 visitor centres in the region and all of these Visitor Centres provide some level of accessibility¹.

I.2.3.1. Number of accessible visitor centres in 2023



I.3. Access to tourist attractions

(including natural and cultural sites, viewpoints including some which have traditionally been accessible only to the fit)

The region has several viewpoints and vistas that can be accessed along trail systems that have a low grade and slope, and a ground surface that is either paved or hard packed gravel.

There are also many views and vistas to enjoy and experience from the comfort of a vehicle while on road trips along lakes, through valleys, and up steep mountain roads.

Key priority accessible features (nature and science centres, art galleries, museums)

- Parking
- Access aisles and routes
- Automated main entrance
- Doorways
 - Width
 - Easy to push/pull open
 - Closing speed
 - Threshold
 - Handle style
- Flooring surface
- Text contrasting and braille
- Tactile surfaces
- Wayfinding signage with raised text and/or braille
- Lighting
- Service animal friendly
- Audio & visual alarm system
- Floor, wall, and furniture colour contrast
- Height of displays
- Space inside for ease of movement
- Washroom
 - Wheel-under sink vanity
 - Mirror height
 - Lever style faucets
 - Grab bars at toilet & in bathtub or shower
 - Toilet height
 - Amenities at an accessible height and location

I.3.1. Nature and Science Centres

The nature and science centres that we have identified are not all that are available in the region, but they are ones that have some accessible features. We know that there are eight accessible for people with mobility, vision, hearing and sensory requirements^{1/2}.

I.3.2. Art galleries

The art galleries that we have visited and identified are not all of the art galleries that are available in the region, but they are ones that have some accessible features. We know there are seven accessible for people with mobility, vision, hearing and sensory requirements ^{1/2}.

I.3.3. Museums

The museums that we have visited and identified are not all of the museums that are available in the region, but they are ones that have some accessible features. We know that there are 17 museums accessible for people with mobility, vision, hearing and sensory requirements.

I.4. Access to tourist experiences

(including adventure travel, access to suitable tours, which match the capabilities of the traveller)

I.4.1. Number of support agencies and programs who can provide tours to adventure travel experiences that accommodate persons with disabilities

There are 20 accessible support programs and agencies identified for people with mobility, vision, hearing and sensory requirements that can provide access to a number of outdoor recreation, sport, and adventure experiences such as: hiking, cycling, basketball, tennis, rugby, skiing, sledding, fishing, sailing, paddling, and glamping. The support agencies and programs that we have identified may not be all of the support agencies and programs that are available in the region.

- CRIS Adaptive Adventures
- Vernon Adaptive
- Adaptive Sailing Association of Kelowna
- Kootenay Adaptive Sports Association
- Cycling Without Age
- Powder Hounds / People in Motion Kelowna
- Adaptive Sports Sun Peaks
- Silver Star Adaptive Snow Sports
- BC Wheelchair Sports
- Kelowna Bike Rental
- Baldy Blue Jays Adaptive Sports / People In Motion
- Snow Limo Tour
- Mountain Man Dog Sledding
- Snow Mobile Tours / Sun Peaks
- Sovereign Lake Nordic Ski Club
- Agur Lake Camp Society
- Owls Roost Private cabins
- Marigold Fishing Resort
- Accessible Okanagan
- Spinal Cord Injury BC / Access BCProgram

I.4.2. Number of persons with accessible requirements who might visit our destination

New data from Statistics Canada's 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) indicates a notable increase in the prevalence of disability in British Columbia and provides updated insights into the nature of these disabilities.

As of 2022, approximately 1,225,100 British Columbians aged 15 and older, representing 28.6% of this demographic, identified as having a disability. This is an increase from the 24.7% (926,100 individuals) reported in the 2017 survey.

The 2022 national data, which is noted to be similar to 2017 rates, shows that a significant majority of individuals with disabilities experience more than one type. Nationally, 71% of persons with disabilities reported having two or more disabilities (37% with two or three, and 34% with four or more). This aligns closely with the 70% previously reported for British Columbia in 2017.

Across Canada, the most common type of disability reported among those with disabilities in 2022 was pain-related, affecting 62% of this group. This is comparable to the 64.1% reported specifically for British Columbia in 2017.

For young people aged 15-24 with disabilities, national data from 2022 highlights mental health-related disabilities as the most common, reported by 68%. Learning disabilities were the second most common for this age group, affecting 46%, followed by pain-related disabilities at 34%. These figures represent an

update from the 2017 B.C. data, which reported 59% for mental-health related disabilities and 42% for learning disabilities in this age cohort.

This updated information underscores the growing number of individuals with accessible requirements who might visit destinations in British Columbia and reinforces the importance of considering a wide range of accessibility needs, particularly those related to pain, mental health, and learning.

I.4.3. Some of the key sites and activities considered accessible for those with differing levels of mobility or fitness

The Thompson Okanagan region is home to many lakes, mountains, rail trails, golf courses, wineries, and ranches which provide abundant opportunities for outdoor activities and recreation. These activities are ones that are more commonly and easily experienced by persons who have accessibility requirements and require access to adaptive equipment: paddling, sailing, fishing, boating, swimming, river rafting, skiing, snowmobiling, mountain biking, biking, sightseeing, hiking, golfing, camping, bird watching, horseback riding, wine tasting, vineyards tours, and culinary tours.

I.5. Assistance when needed

(including specialised assistance for those with disabilities such as blindness, deafness, mobility restrictions or with need for nursing and other care)

I.5.1. Distance to nearest hospital (Km) or medical facility

(estimated time to nearest medical assistance - whether ambulance, paramedical, hospital, heli-evacuation)

There are four main hospitals that all visitors have access to in the Thompson Okanagan region. Due to the region being very large, and depending on the communities that visitors are touring and experiencing, the distance could range from 10 km - 300 km. The largest hospitals are located in Kelowna, Vernon, Penticton and Kamloops.

I.5.2. (for longer tours) Presence of medical personnel

The adaptive support agencies and tour guides that provide adaptive and accessible tours have persons on staff with first aid and medical knowledge. They also have access to medical emergency attention at the four larger hospitals throughout the region.

Conclusion

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) is actively working towards establishing the region as a leading accessible destination, recognizing that true inclusivity is fundamental to the well-being and rights of all individuals. This commitment is demonstrated through a multi-faceted approach, spearheaded by an Access & Inclusion Liaison whose expertise guides consultations and the identification of adaptive solutions.

Provincially, the Accessible British Columbia Act and the updated 2024 BC Building Code provide an improving regulatory framework. However, the information gathered indicates that while foundational policies are in place, the practical application and availability of comprehensive accessibility across all tourism touchpoints present a mixed landscape. Progress is evident in areas such as BC Parks' initiatives and the availability of some accessible public transport in larger centers. TOTA's own Access & Inclusion Program, including collaboration with Spinal Cord Injury BC and their Access BC Program, signifies a structured approach to monitoring and fostering improvements.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. The current data reveals limitations in consistently accessible transportation options, particularly for specialized vehicle rentals and affordable shuttles. While numerous accommodations and restaurants exist, a comprehensive inventory of their specific accessible features remains an ongoing task, complicated by the diverse and personal nature of individual requirements. Similarly, quantifying the accessibility of all tour operators and cultural heritage sites is complex.

The updated 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability data, showing that 28.6% of British Columbians aged 15 and over identify with a disability and 71% of those report multiple disabilities, strongly underscores the significant and growing portion of the population for whom these considerations are paramount. Information dissemination through various provincial, regional, and community channels, alongside dedicated training programs, are vital components of TOTA's strategy. However, the full impact of these training initiatives is yet to be measured.

In essence, while the Thompson Okanagan region is on a clear path towards greater accessibility, supported by TOTA's dedicated programs and collaborative partnerships, the journey involves continuous assessment, addressing identified gaps, and building upon existing strengths to ensure the region is truly welcoming and navigable for every visitor.

J. Local satisfaction

Until 2023, TOTA commissioned its own “Resident Sentiment Survey” to track how people across the Thompson Okanagan viewed tourism’s economic, social-cultural and environmental effects. Beginning with the 2024 cycle, Destination BC (DBC) absorbed that work and now delivers a single, province-wide program that includes our region.

DBC conducted one standardized online survey in November 2024 (BC-wide n = 4,872; Thompson Okanagan n = 667) and published the results as a “Snapshot Series” and full technical report on 4 March 2025. The new series provides comparable resident-sentiment metrics at provincial, regional, sub-regional and large-community scales, eliminating duplication across DMOs.

Using DBC’s dataset removes the cost and survey-fatigue risk of running a separate poll while giving TOTA a larger, statistically reliable sample that aligns with provincial benchmarks. DBC supplies an open toolkit should any municipality within TOTA’s region require more granular data; local findings can be integrated back into the provincial series.

J.1. Community attitudes to tourism

J.1.1. The following graphs correspond to the indicators:

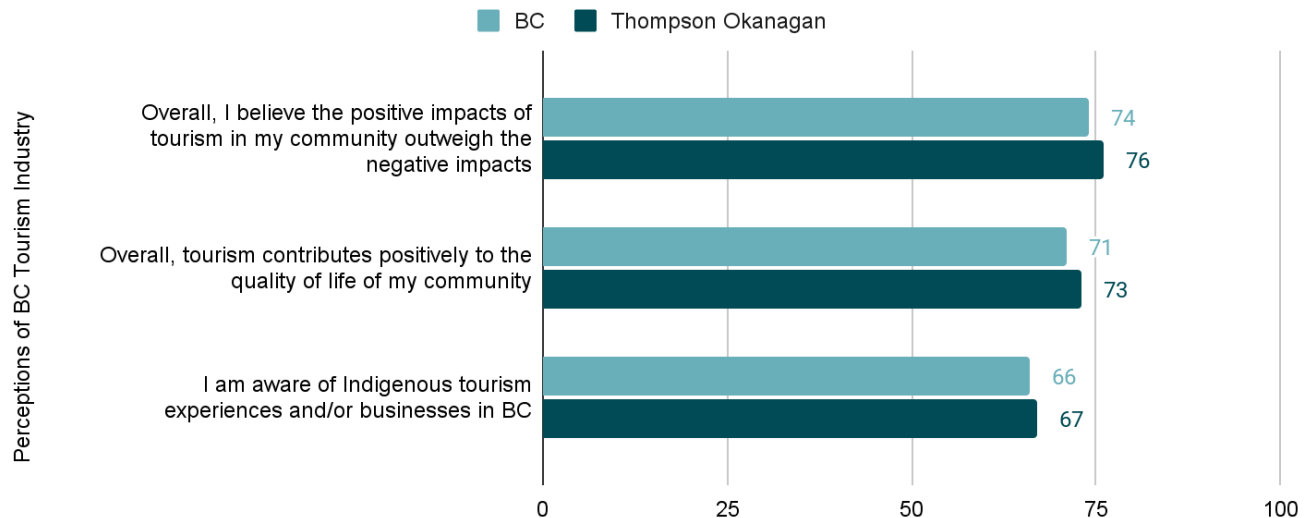
- Overall Sentiments
- Economic Impact
- Commitment to Sustainability
- Welcoming Community
- Perceptions of the Amount of Tourism

These indicators contain graphs based on both the Thompson Okanagan and British Columbia. The Thompson Okanagan population’s opinions are only agree and disagree, without the layered perspectives of the British Columbia population.

Perceptions of Tourism’s Community Impact, 2024

Figure J.1.1.1 presents the proportion of respondents in 2024 who agreed or strongly agreed with three statements about tourism’s impact on their community. In all three cases, Thompson Okanagan respondents showed slightly higher levels of agreement compared to the provincial average. For the statement “I believe the positive impact of tourism in my community outweighs the negative impact,” 76% of Thompson Okanagan respondents agreed, compared to 74% province-wide. Similarly, 73% of respondents in the region felt that “tourism contributes positively to the quality of life of my community,” slightly above the 71% observed at the provincial level. Finally, awareness of Indigenous tourism experiences and businesses was also marginally higher in Thompson Okanagan (67%) than across British Columbia overall (66%).

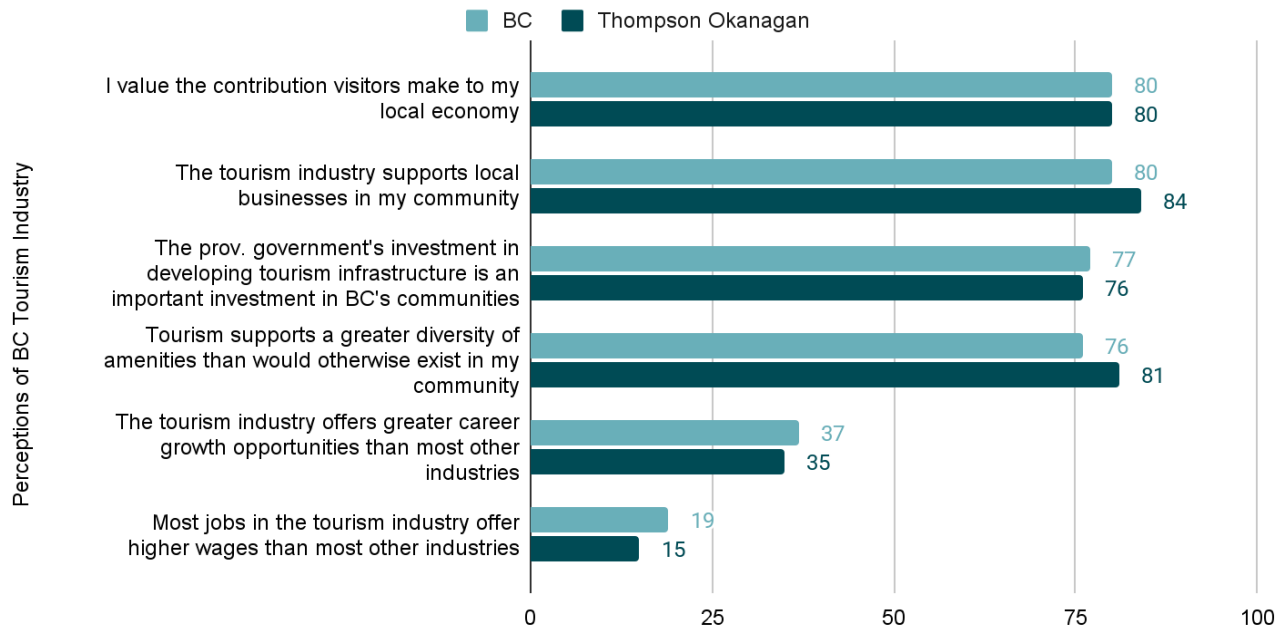
J.1.1.1 Perceptions of Tourism's Community Impact, 2024 (% Strongly Agree / Agree)



Economic Impact:

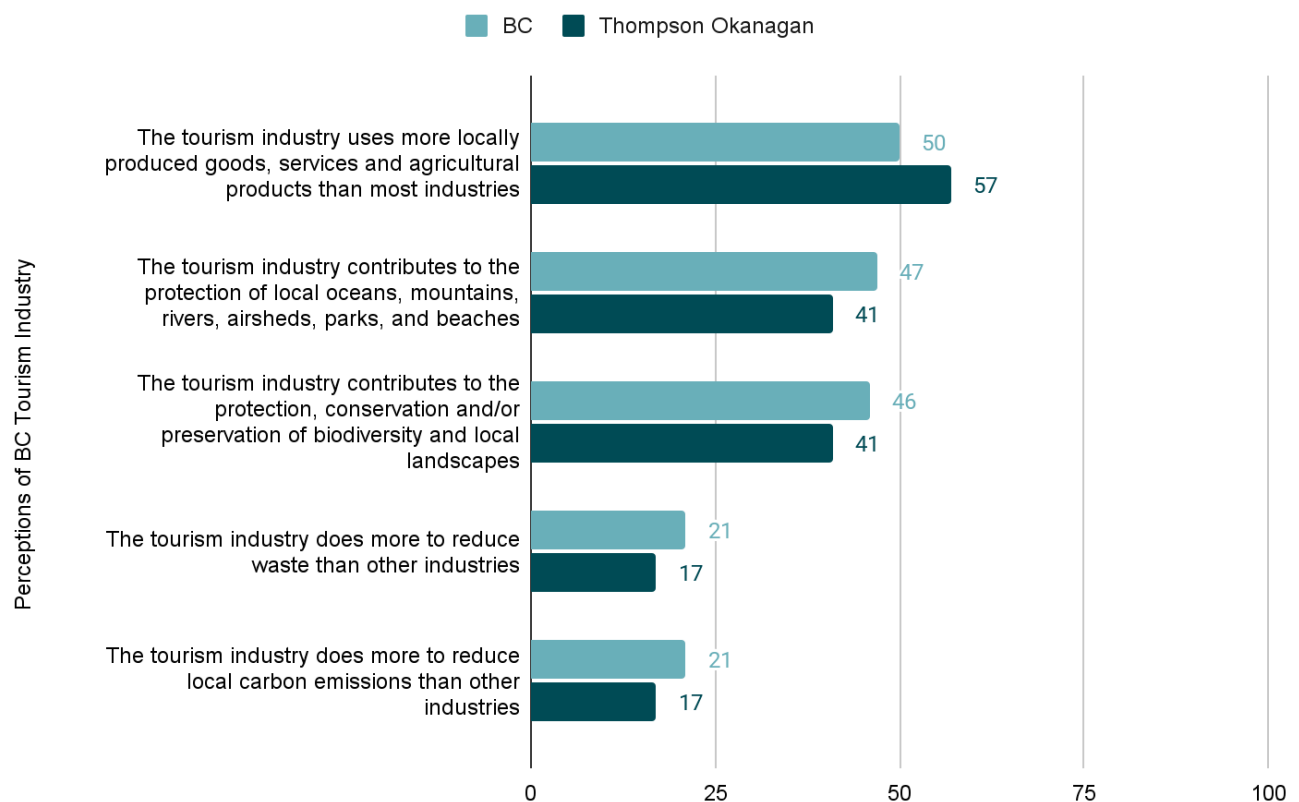
In 2024, residents across British Columbia largely recognized tourism's economic value, with 80% agreeing that the tourism industry supports local businesses—a view that was even stronger in the Thompson Okanagan Region, where 84% shared this sentiment. This highlights the region's appreciation for tourism's role in sustaining the local economy. However, perceptions were more cautious when it came to the quality of tourism-related employment. Only 19% of provincial respondents believed that tourism jobs offer higher wages than other industries, with even fewer (15%) in Thompson Okanagan agreeing. This gap between tourism's visible economic presence and its perceived value as a source of quality employment indicates that many residents see limited personal or long-term community benefits.

J.1.1.2 Economic Impact in 2024 (% Strongly Agree / Agree)



Commitment to Sustainability:

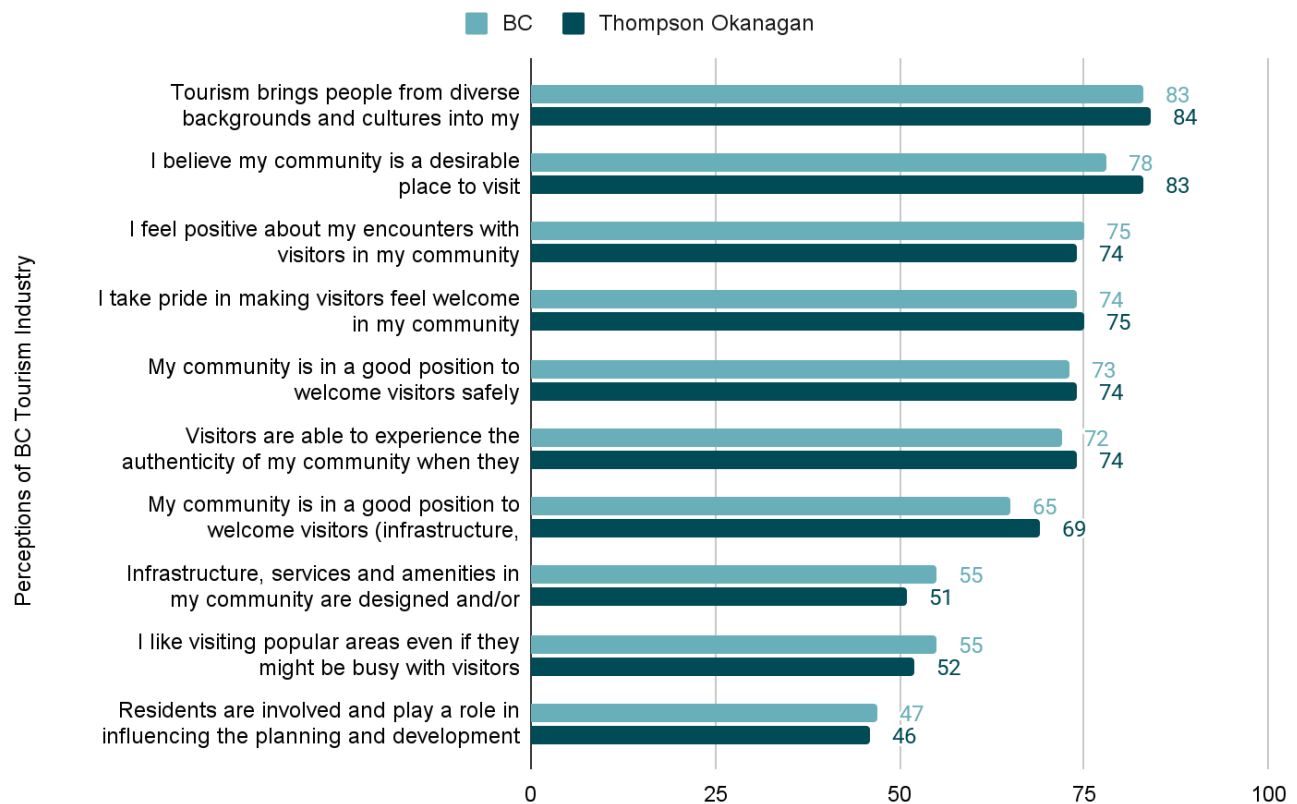
J.1.1.3 Commitment to Sustainability in 2024 (% Strongly Agree / Agree)



Welcoming Community:

Perceptions of community hospitality and involvement in tourism planning were also explored in 2024. A strong majority of respondents across British Columbia (83%) agreed that tourism brings people from diverse backgrounds and cultures into their communities—a sentiment that was slightly more pronounced in the Thompson Okanagan Region. However, when it came to the community’s role in shaping tourism development, only 47% of respondents province-wide felt that residents influence tourism planning. In Thompson Okanagan, this sense of involvement was slightly lower, at 46%. A particularly notable finding is that 83% of respondents in Thompson Okanagan believed their community is a desirable place to visit—exceeding the provincial average of 78%. Additional results can be found in Figure J.1.1.4.

J.1.1.4 Welcoming Community in 2024 (% Strongly Agree / Agree)

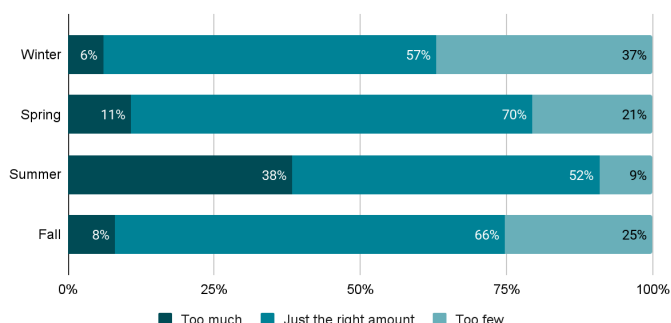


Perceptions of the Amount of Tourism:

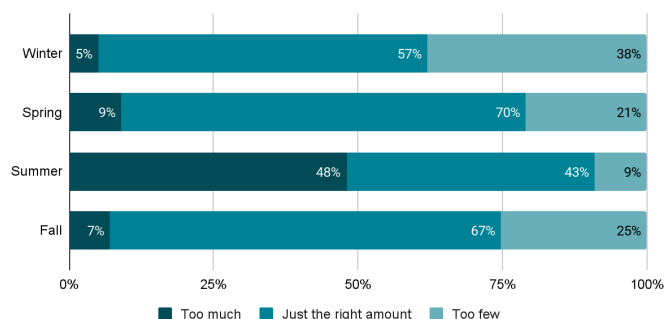
In 2024, provincial (Figure J.1.1.6a) perceptions of tourism levels in local communities varied by season, but overall sentiment leaned positive. Across all seasons, the majority of respondents—over 50%—believed the amount of tourism was “just right.” This consensus was less pronounced in summer, where 52% felt tourism levels were appropriate, although 38% expressed concerns that there was “too much tourism” during the peak season. Interestingly, winter revealed a different dynamic: while tourism activity is typically lower, 37% of respondents felt there was “too little tourism,” suggesting an opportunity for off-season development or promotion.

In the Thompson Okanagan Region (Figure J.1.1.6b), summer brought the highest concern over tourism volume, with nearly half of respondents (approximately 48%) believing there was “too much tourism.” This sentiment was stronger than the provincial average for the same season. Still, 43% of local respondents felt the summer tourism levels were appropriate. During the remaining seasons, the dominant view shifted toward balance, with most respondents indicating the amount of tourism was “just right.” In winter, the perception that there was “too little tourism” was slightly more common in the region than across the province, hinting at potential interest in attracting more off-season visitation.

J.1.1.6a Perceptions of the Amount of Tourism in 2024
British Columbia



J.1.1.6b Perceptions of the Amount of Tourism in 2024
Thompson Okanagan



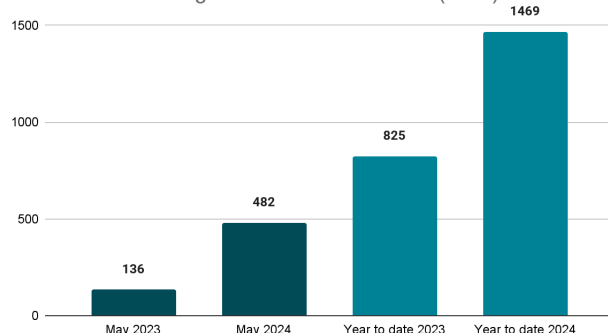
J.2. Housing issues

J.2.1. Number of new housing starts and % for local residents

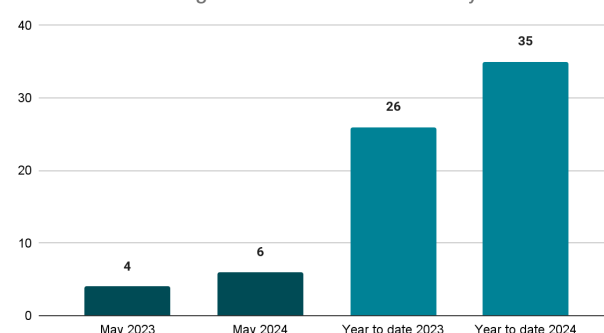
After dipping in 2023, new construction bounced back strongly in 2024—an extra 885 homes, taking the region back above its pre-slump 2021-22 levels. Virtually all of 2024’s growth came from condos, apartments and townhomes. Multi-unit housing now accounts for five out of every six new homes. Kelowna alone supplied roughly 75 % of all new units in the region last year, helping the city meet its Housing Accelerator Fund commitments. Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (CPABC) notes that starts declined or remained subdued in most other population centres (Kamloops, Vernon, Penticton, Salmon Arm), so the region’s net gain is almost entirely a Kelowna story.

The Housing Accelerator Fund is a C\$4.4 billion federal grant program that pays Canadian municipalities, regional districts and Indigenous governments to “cut red tape and build more homes, faster.” because Canada’s housing starts were not keeping up with population growth. Kelowna and West Kelowna are currently the only TOTA municipalities with signed HAF contribution agreements.

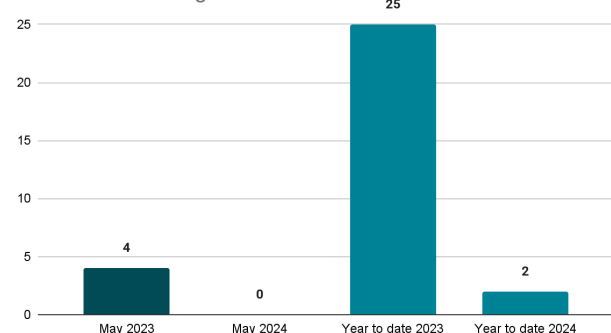
J.2.1.5. New housing construction in Kelowna (2024)



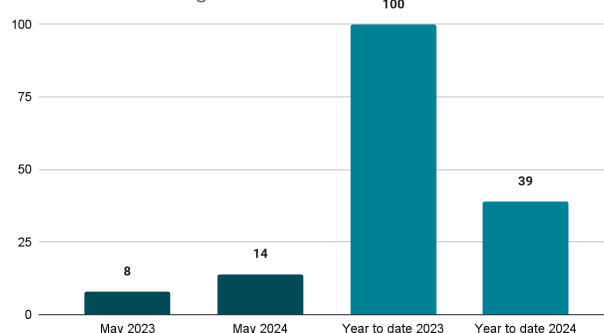
J.2.1.6. New housing construction in Lake Country



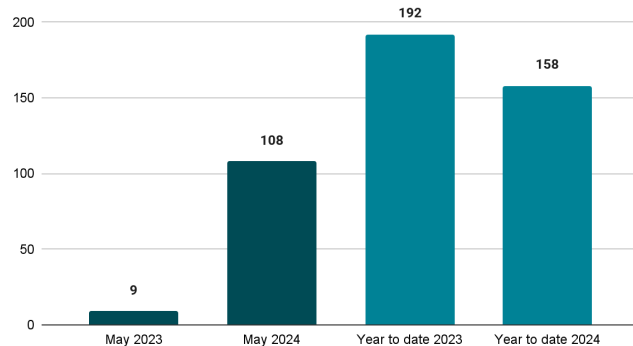
J.2.1.7. New housing construction in Peachland



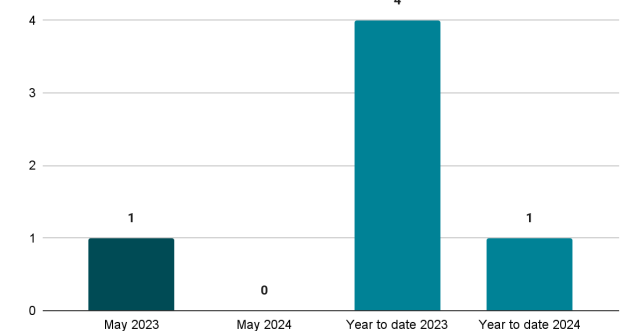
J.2.1.8. New housing construction in West Kelowna



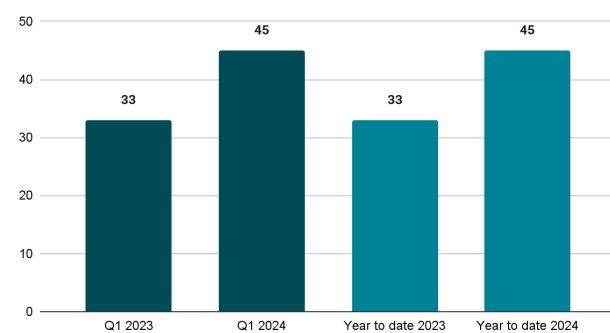
J.2.1.9. New housing construction in Kamloops (area)



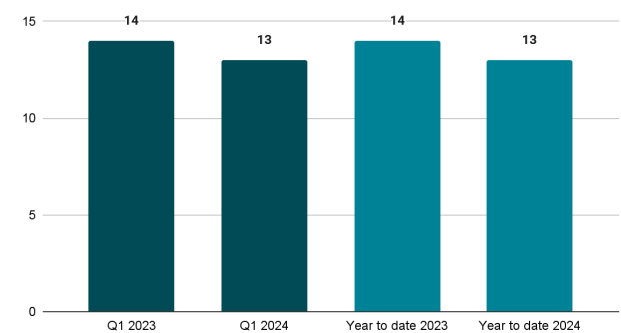
J.2.1.10. New housing construction in Chase



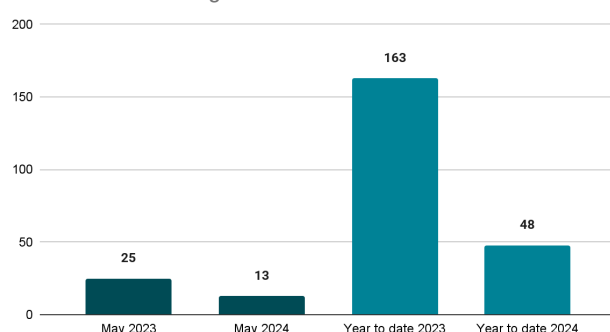
J.2.1.11. New housing construction in Penticton



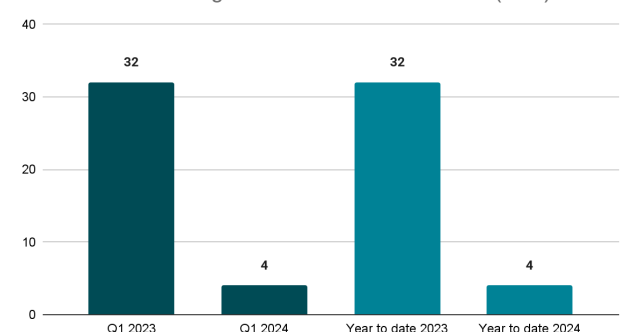
J.2.1.12. New housing construction in Salmon Arm (area)



J.2.1.13. New housing construction in Vernon



J.2.1.14. New housing construction in Summerland (area)



J.3. Community demographics

J.3.1. Net migration into/out of community (sort by age of immigrants and out-migrants)

Between the 2021 census and BC-Stats' most recent (July 1 2024) sub-provincial estimate, the region has grown by roughly 10 % (about +63 000 residents). Growth has slowed a little from the post-pandemic surge of 2022-23, but 2024 still came in well above the long-run provincial average.



POPULATION CHANGE

Despite losing residents to other provinces for the first time since 2002, population growth remained strong due to a larger than usual influx of international arrivals. Migration to the Thompson-Okanagan from other parts of BC also remained elevated after reaching a record high in 2022.

Population Growth by Type



Source: <https://www.bccpa.ca/getmedia/97f60a3f-be64-4fc2-823b-e7b9fea9c55f/BC-Check-up-LIVE-2024-2025.pdf>

K. Community participation in tourism

Community involvement plays an essential role in the development and success of tourism in the Thompson Okanagan region. Local communities actively engage and contribute to the tourism industry, recognizing the value of their cultural heritage, natural resources and unique experiences. By collaborating with tourism organisations, community members actively participate in the development of tourism initiatives, offering their knowledge, traditions and resources to create authentic and sustainable visitor experiences. Community involvement can take many forms, including the creation of local tourism associations, the organisation of community events and festivals, and the provision of homestays or cultural visits. This active participation not only improves the tourism offering, but also fosters a sense of pride and belonging among community members, promotes sustainable tourism practices and preserves the region's distinct identity.

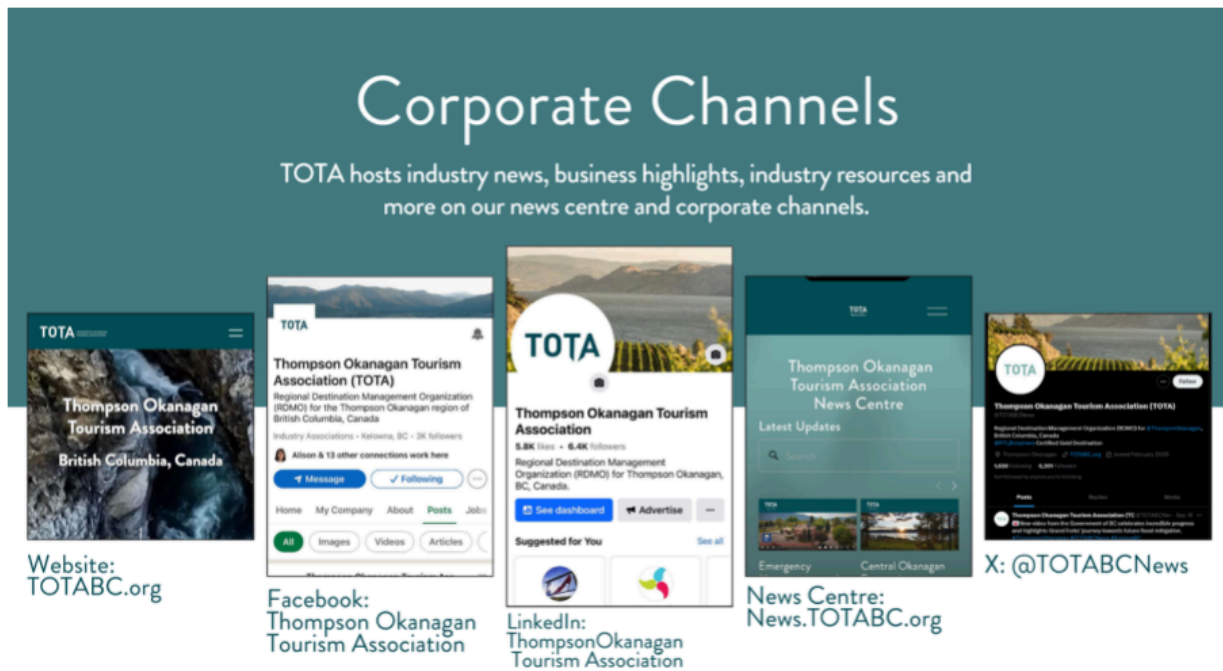
K.1. Availability of information

K.1.1. Number and types of channels used to promote sustainable tourism

(e.g. audiovisual and printed media, events, Internet)

The number and types of channels used to promote sustainable tourism in the region include a dedicated website, sponsored content on the internet, and active presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These channels serve as effective tools to engage with a wide audience, share information about sustainable tourism practices, showcase the region's attractions, and encourage visitors to make sustainable choices during their travel experiences. Through a combination of online platforms, sponsored content, and social media engagement, the region strives to promote sustainable tourism and raise awareness about the importance of responsible travel.

Social media hashtags for TOTA are #ThompsonOkanagan, #TOTABCNews, and #ExploreBC



K.1.2. Number of places in the destination where information is available

In the region, information about the destination is available at various places to cater to visitors' needs. These include visitor centres, billboards in airports, tourism businesses such as hotels, attractions, and food and beverage establishments, as well as conservation areas such as parks and protected areas. These locations serve as valuable sources of information, providing visitors with details about the region's attractions, activities, services, and conservation efforts. By ensuring information is easily accessible in multiple places, the region aims to enhance visitor experiences and facilitate their engagement with the destination's offerings. Thompson Okanagan has 31 Visitor Centres (2024):

L. Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Heritage in the Thompson Okanagan

The Thompson Okanagan region is rich in Indigenous communities and cultural heritage, offering a varied and vibrant tapestry of Indigenous traditions and stories. The region is home to 33 First Nations, which includes the Secwépemc, Syilx and Nlaka'pamux nations, as well as the Metis and Inuit peoples who have inhabited these lands since time immemorial. Their deep connection to the land, water and resources is reflected in their cultural practices, art, language and spiritual traditions. The Indigenous communities of the Thompson Okanagan region have a deep respect for their ancestral territories and are actively engaged in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Through their traditions, ceremonies, museums and cultural centres, they share their knowledge, stories and teachings, fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous history and contributions in this remarkable region. There is not one culture for all First Nations. Each Nation has its own culture, customs, beliefs, traditions, and world views. Cultural practices, symbols, and belief systems are influenced by each Nation's unique experience on the land and with each other and are always connected with the Spirit world.

L.1 Legislative agreements

L.1.1. Number and type of new legislation or amendments introduced to align with the UNDRIP and DRIPA act at the regional and provincial levels.

The First Nation communities in the Thompson Okanagan region have entered into various agreements.

1. B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) – 2019
 - Enacts UNDRIP as the legal framework guiding provincial law alignment, Indigenous-led action planning, and transparent progress reporting.
2. Columbia River Treaty Interim Revenue-Sharing Agreements (June 2023)
 - The Secwépemc, Syilx Okanagan, and Ktunaxa Nations which includes those in the Thompson Okanagan region—now each receive 5% of downstream power revenues over four years. This treaty acknowledges impacts of dam infrastructure and implements steps toward collaborative decision-making and reconciliation.
3. ETSI-BC DRIPA Engagement under Section 4.39
 - The Economic Trust of the Southern Interior BC conducted DRIPA-section consultations with 32 First Nations—including 25 in the Thompson Okanagan region—to support inclusion in regional economic governance and updates to legislation such as the Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust (SIDIT) Act.
4. Municipal-First Nation Agreements in the Region

- City of Penticton and Penticton Indian Band signed a community and economic development agreement in response to Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action.

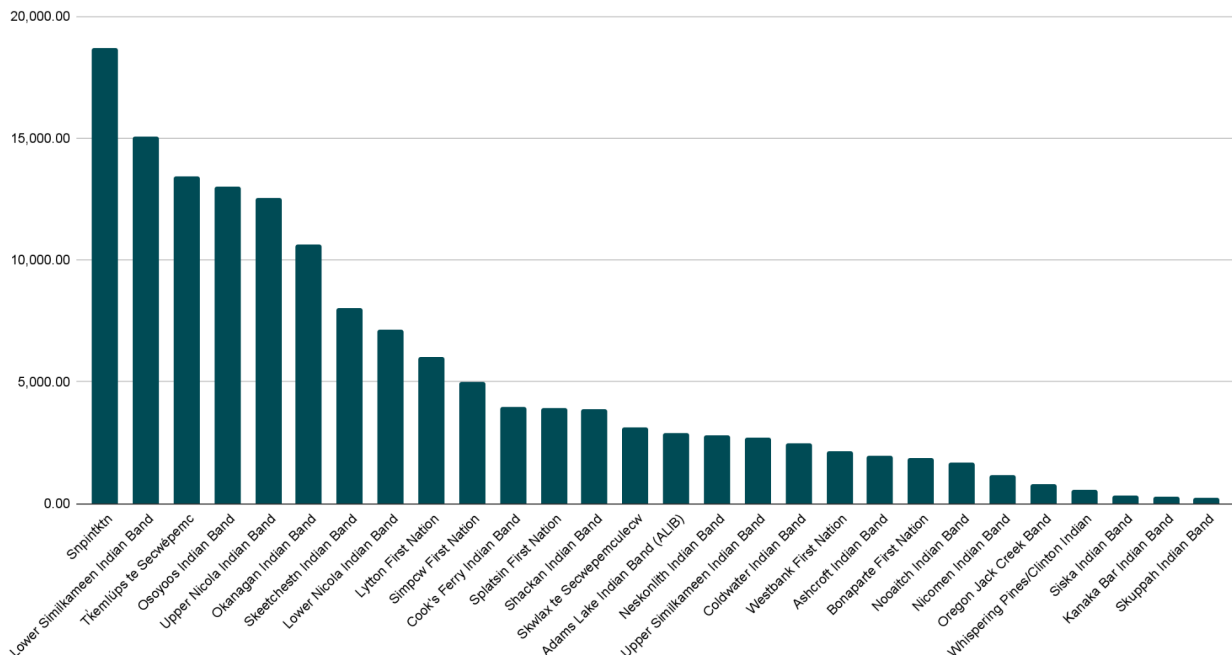
Collectively, these measures establish legal frameworks that legitimize Indigenous rights and embed consultation in all levels of decision-making; provide revenue-sharing and other financial mechanisms that strengthen self-determination and protect cultural heritage; foster collaborative governance models that place Nations at the forefront of regional economic strategy; and, taken together, enhance the region's capacity for reconciliation-driven tourism and sustainable development.

L.2. Threats to the integrity and authenticity of land use

L.2.1. Increase / decrease in threats and their type to the original purpose and use of a site

Indigenous Nations in the Thompson Okanagan maintain enduring economic, cultural, and spiritual relationships with their lands. Those lands now face a range of overlapping pressures—from residential expansion and recreational development to forestry, mining, and climate-driven ecosystem change—that can diminish traditional uses and constrain community access. The nature and severity of these pressures vary by place, and each Nation evaluates them through its own knowledge systems and priorities. In response, new consent-based consultation protocols, co-governance agreements, and Indigenous-led management plans are emerging across the region. Together they aim to prevent or reduce disturbance, protect culturally significant areas, and ensure that any future land use aligns with Indigenous rights and values. The sections that follow outline the principal threats identified by participating Nations and describe the collaborative measures now under way to safeguard the integrity and authenticity of these lands.

L.2.1.1. Area of reserves in First Nations communities (ha)



L.3. Indigenous Tourism Economy

L.3.1. Indigenous Tourism Sector Profile – 2025

Indigenous tourism in BC represents a vital intersection of economic development and culture rooted in the values and traditions of 204 First Nations communities. With over 30 First Nation languages and 60 dialects, there are cultural experiences in BC that connect visitors to millennia-old knowledge systems. Indigenous tourism is an opportunity for First Nation communities and Indigenous Peoples to create economic sovereignty and present their culture if and how they choose. Tourism, guided by responsible and regenerative travel practices, connects visitors to the land, water, sky, people and place.

Published by Destination BC in April 2025, a comprehensive report details the economic contributions of Indigenous tourism in the province. In 2023, the sector generated a total economic impact of \$1.1 billion, with a direct GDP contribution of \$239.7 million. The industry supported nearly 10,000 jobs, particularly in rural and First Nation communities. The report also highlights that 41% of Indigenous tourism businesses are classified as “doors-open,” with 33% offering visitor-ready experiences and 26% operating at a market-ready level.

Indigenous Tourism at a glance in BC

- \$1.1B - Indigenous tourism in BC annual economic impact contribution.
- \$239.7M Direct GDP (2023).
- 400+ open Indigenous tourism-related businesses in BC.
- 9,962 Total jobs supported (2023).

- 88% of people in Canada are interested in Indigenous cultural activities.
- 31% of international visitors seek Indigenous experiences, with strong interest from Germany, France, and UK markets.
- Contributes to cultural practices, stewardship, sharing, learning, and creating meaningful connections between land, water, sky, nature and people.

Indigenous Values in Tourism

Beyond economic value, the growing interest in cultural tourism products has created new opportunities for Indigenous peoples in BC to develop businesses that share aspects of their traditions, histories, and cultures. Tourism provides opportunities for Elders, youth and community members to share their stories, dances, and songs. Indigenous tourism is associated with Indigenous values in culture, stewardship, sharing, learning, and creating meaningful connections between land, nature, and people. Indigenous tourism can create opportunities for meaningful interactions and space for conversation and collaboration between visitors and local communities, helping to deepen respect for Indigenous knowledge and land.

Characteristics of the Indigenous Tourism Industry

There are 525 Indigenous Tourism BC Stakeholders.¹¹ An estimated 41% of Indigenous tourism businesses are classified as “doors-open”, with 33% offering visitor-ready experiences and 26% operating at a market-ready level.¹²

Before the pandemic, Indigenous tourism emerged as the fastest-growing segment of Canada’s tourism market, making a significant impact on both job creation and the country’s GDP. Over 50% of the workforce in Indigenous tourism identified as Indigenous.¹³ Tourism is a significant employer of Indigenous peoples, who often find their first job in the industry. 62% of Indigenous tourism businesses are in rural and remote areas.

Key factors affecting First Nations communities include capacity, funding, economic conditions, access to capital, training, and climate impacts. Additional considerations include infrastructure improvements—such as roads, services, water, and connectivity—as well as the presence of extractive industries and complexities around licensing, permits, and tenures within

Indigenous Tourism BC target travellers for Indigenous tourism includes:

- **Conscious Travellers** - those couples and families that are interested in learning, connecting with each other, and giving back.
- **Indigenous Peoples** - those that are interested in supporting their own community, businesses, and economies.
- **Corporations / Organizations** - those that are looking to implement Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and applying First Nation learning principles.

Trends in Indigenous Tourism

- **Youth Leadership** - Indigenous youth are stepping into leadership roles and are creating new pathways for Indigenous tourism. They are innovators and change makers, weaving ancestral knowledge with modern ways of being.

-
- **Global Market Growth** - The Indigenous tourism sector is experiencing unprecedented growth, projected to reach \$96 billion globally by 2034.²¹ Canada is a leader in this growth at \$3.7 billion in revenues (2023)²², with BC hosting 22% of Indigenous tourism businesses in the country.
 - **Cultural Focus** - Travellers are increasingly seeking authentic and meaningful experiences and Indigenous tourism offers this.
 - **Digital Information** - Some First Nation communities are focusing on secure and equitable digital information practices by prioritizing Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) principles to ensure data sovereignty and community benefit.
 - **Sustainable Practice Integration** - There's a growing emphasis on incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into tourism operations, creating experiences that balance cultural sharing with environmental stewardship.
 - **Culinary Tourism Growth** - Indigenous culinary experiences are emerging as a distinct and popular subsector, offering visitors authentic taste experiences that connect them to traditional food practices and cultural stories.
 - **Capacity Development** - Indigenous tourism faces a positive challenge where demand is outpacing supply capacity, creating opportunities for business expansion.
 - **Community-led Innovation** - First Nations are taking the lead in tourism development, ensuring authentic representation and sustainable economic benefits while innovating in areas like digital presence and experience design.

The Thompson Okanagan's experience shows that when UNDRIP-aligned legislation, revenue-sharing agreements, and Nation-to-Nation governance are combined with community-led tourism initiatives, reconciliation can translate into measurable cultural, social, and economic gains. Ongoing success will depend on sustained investment in Indigenous capacity, vigilant protection of ancestral lands, and a visitor economy that honours the distinct identities and knowledge systems of each Nation while advancing shared stewardship of the region's natural and cultural heritage.

M. Tourism as a contributor to nature conservation

Tourism in the Thompson Okanagan region plays an increasingly vital role in supporting nature conservation. Beyond its economic value, tourism contributes to the protection of ecosystems by generating funding for conservation programs, creating public awareness, and promoting sustainable land use. Visitor spending can directly support initiatives such as protected area management, habitat restoration, and species preservation, particularly when aligned with local stewardship goals.

Importantly, tourism also serves as a platform to educate both visitors and residents about the value of local biodiversity. Responsible travel practices encouraged throughout the region—such as low-impact recreation, respect for sensitive habitats, and wildlife viewing ethics—enhance environmental awareness and build long-term support for conservation. This intersection of tourism and stewardship has led to the integration of science-based planning tools and partnerships that align destination development with ecological resilience.

M.1. Measuring potential impact of tourism on the natural environment

M.1.1. Reports on a scientific understanding of potential environmental problems

Understanding the relationship between tourism and the natural environment requires a foundation of strong ecological data and collaborative planning. In the Thompson Okanagan, while most scientific reporting focuses on ecosystem health rather than tourism-specific impacts, these tools nonetheless provide a critical foundation for assessing tourism's footprint on biodiversity and natural systems.

Conservation-focused organizations in the region are actively developing and implementing tools that can help planners, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders make better-informed decisions. These tools improve understanding of land use pressures, habitat connectivity, and ecological sensitivities—all factors that intersect with tourism development.

A few examples are below:

- Thompson-Nicola Conservation Planning Portal — a powerful new web-based resource designed to support planners, practitioners, and decision-makers advancing conservation across the Thompson-Nicola region. This interactive portal offers direct access to essential legislation, programs and plans, networks and organizations, funding opportunities, and mapping tools — all in one place.
 - <https://tnccollaborative.org/tncpp/>
- The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) is working with UBC researchers, data programmers, and an advisory team of planners, qualified environmental professionals (QEPs), and provincial staff to develop a conservation planning tool for the Okanagan region. The tool will support local government environmental impact assessment processes by providing new spatial information, reports and mapping that is critical for conservation planning. The tool will initially identify the cumulative impacts of proposed developments and evaluate the impacts to habitat

connectivity across the region. This information will allow planners to make more informed decisions and ensure policies and guidelines are in place to protect our remaining natural areas.

- <https://data.okcp.ca/index.php/projects/current-projects/767-conservation-planning-tool>
- South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) is a partnership initiative that brings together a wide array of government and non-government organizations, indigenous cultural and academic institutions and others under one umbrella to conserve the region's unique species and spaces. Founded in the year 2000, there are now fifty SOSCP partners working collectively to conserve nature in one of the most biologically diverse and at-risk areas of Canada. SOSCP is committed to influencing sustainable and responsible use of land through establishing a community of practice, sharing ideas and professional development, expertise, and capacity building.
 - <https://soscp.org/about-soscp/land-use/resources-for-planners/>

M.2. Source of financing for biodiversity conservation and maintenance of protected

The Thompson Okanagan region relies on several collaborative conservation programs—now strengthened with new public, private, and philanthropic funding in 2024—to support biodiversity and protected areas.

1. Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) A public–non-profit partnership that brings together governments, Indigenous communities, and environmental organizations. It funds and advises on conservation planning and projects.
 - BC Parks Foundation and Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund contributed to shoreline conservation along Okanagan Lake, particularly protecting Kokanee salmon habitat.
 - The Federal Environmental Damages Fund (EDF) remains available for conservation and remediation projects.
2. South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) A coalition of over 50 partners—including governments, NGOs, Indigenous groups—dedicated to conserving one of Canada's most biodiverse regions.
 - South Okanagan Conservation Fund (SOCF), managed by RDOS, continues to accept project proposals for land acquisition and restoration, allocating over \$2 million since 2017, with the next intake due October 31, 2024.
 - The Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen also provides smaller local grants for biodiversity initiatives.
3. Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative (TNCC) A regional partnership involving Indigenous groups, government, and nonprofits focusing on ecosystem stewardship.
 - Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund's Capacity Grant, supported by the Hudson's Bay Foundation, awarded to First Nations-led conservation projects.
 - Canada Nature Fund's Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) supported large-scale habitat projects in 2023–2024.

- Ongoing monitoring of watershed-focused grants like the Watershed Security Fund, with rolling webinar and funding opportunities.
- Local TNRD Grant-in-Aid program supports on-the-ground community conservation (spring intake 2024).

4. Regional & Local Conservation Funds - Supporting smaller-scale, high-impact biodiversity projects:

- North Okanagan Conservation Fund (RDNO) supports municipal and stewardship projects with over \$80,000 available annually in 2024.
- South Okanagan Conservation Fund (SOCF) under RDOS eligible to biological and land-use projects in targeted electoral areas.

M.3. Economic alternative for local people to reduce exploitation of wildlife and resources

M.3.1. Number (membership) in local programs

(lists of supported programs or lists of membership)

Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP)

The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program has 43 partners:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Allan Brooks Nature Centre (Registered Charity) | • Okanagan Basin Water Board (NGO) |
| • Armstrong Wetland Association (Society) | • Okanagan College (College) |
| • Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary (Foundation) | • Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society (Society) |
| • BC Ministry of Environment (Provincial Government) | • Okanagan Xeriscape Association (Not for Profit Organization) |
| • Central Okanagan Land Trust (Land Trust) | • North Okanagan Parks & Natural Area Trust (Registered Charity) |
| • City of Kelowna (Municipal Government) | • North Okanagan Naturalists Club (NGO) |
| • City of Vernon (Municipal Government) | • Regional District of the Central Okanagan (Local Government) |
| • City of West Kelowna (Municipal Government) | • Regional District of the North Okanagan (Local Government) |
| • Community Mapping Network (ENGO) | • Sciences Opportunities for Kids (Registered Charity) |
| • Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Federal Government) | • Society for the Protection of Kalamalka Lake (Charitable Organisation) |
| • District of Lake Country (District Municipality) | • Southern Interior Land Trust (Registered Not-For-Profit Charitable Organisation) |
| • District of Coldstream (District Municipality) | • Sustainable Environmental Network Society (Registered Non-Profit Society) |
| • District of Peachland (District Municipality) | • The Land Conservancy of BC (Non-Profit, Charitable Land Trust) |
| • Ducks Unlimited of Canada (Registered Charity) | • The Nature Conservancy Canada, BC Region (Non-Profit Organisation) |
| • Environment and Climate Change Canada (Federal Government) | • Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (Not-For-Profit Society) |
| • Fresh Outlook Foundation (Foundation) | • Village of Lumby (Municipal Government) |
| • Friends of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park (Registered Charitable Non-Profit Society) | • Vernon in Transition (Registered Charity) |
| • Grasslands Conservation Council of BC (Society and Registered Charity) | |
| • Okanagan Institute for Biodiversity, Resilience, and Ecosystem Service (Institute) | |
| • Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia (Land Trust (non-profit, charitable organisation)) | |

South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP)

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program has 46 partners:

- BC Conservation Foundation
- BC Government
- BC Lake Stewardship Society
- BC Nature (Thompson-Okanagan Region)
- BC Wildlife Federation - Okanagan Region
- Bat Education and Ecological Protection Society (BEEPS)
- Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - BC Chapter
- Conservation Northwest
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Destination Osoyoos
- District of Summerland
- Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory
- Ducks Unlimited
- En'Owkin Centre
- Environment Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service
- GEM - Green Earth Movement
- Grasslands Conservation Council of BC
- Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
- Land Trust Alliance of BC
- North Central Washington Resource Conservation & Development Council (NCW RC&D)
- Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program
- Okanagan College
- Okanagan Nation Alliance
- Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance
- Okanagan Similkameen Park Society
- Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society
- Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS)
- Osoyoos Desert Society
- Osoyoos Indian Band
- Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society
- Pacific Salmon Foundation
- Partners in Flight
- Penticton Museum and Archives
- Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen
- Royal BC Museum
- South Okanagan Rehabilitation Centre for Owls
- Southern Interior Bluebird Trail Society
- Southern Interior Land Trust
- The City of Penticton
- The Land Conservancy of BC
- The Nature Conservancy Washington State
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada, BC Region
- The Nature Trust of British Columbia
- Town of Oliver
- Town of Osoyoos
- University of British Columbia - Faculty of Land and Food Systems
- University of British Columbia - Okanagan
- Village of Keremeos

Thompson Nicola Conservation Collaborative (TNCC)

The Thompson Nicola Conservation Collaborative (TNCC) is a broad partnership of over 19 local, regional, provincial and national organisations, communities, agencies, and local governments.

- BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD)
- Canadian Wildlife Service – Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC–CWS)
- City of Kamloops
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Grasslands Conservation Council of BC
- Invasive Species Council of BC
- Kamloops Naturalists Club
- Lower Nicola Indian Band
- Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP)
- Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance
- Simpcw First Nation
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Upper Nicola Band
- Wild Sheep Society of BC

M.4. Communication helps promote biodiversity conservation by tourists

Communication continues to be a cornerstone of promoting biodiversity conservation among tourists in the Thompson Okanagan region. In 2024, enhanced collaboration among conservation groups, tourism operators, and Indigenous communities has expanded the range and reach of educational efforts. Interpretive signage, interactive mobile applications, and social media campaigns now complement

traditional tools like guided tours and visitor centre exhibits. These resources provide tourists with engaging and accessible information about the region's ecosystems, native species, and current conservation initiatives. Operators include climate-smart messaging and Leave No Trace principles in pre-arrival and on-site communications, helping visitors understand how to travel responsibly. Events such as the "Stewardship on the Land" walking series and "EcoTalks" in parks have increased public literacy around conservation challenges and successes.

Engagement with Indigenous communities has deepened in 2024, with co-developed interpretive programming, seasonal storytelling events, and cultural heritage walks growing in popularity. These initiatives emphasize Indigenous knowledge systems, language, and cultural stewardship practices. Such communication not only supports biodiversity goals but also promotes reconciliation and mutual understanding, while strengthening the cultural authenticity of the tourism experience.

M.5. Provision of opportunities for participation by tourists in conservation

M.5.1. Number of conservation organisations coordinating for tourism activities at conservation sites

As of 2024, coordination of conservation-related tourism activities in the Thompson Okanagan region has expanded beyond the original three anchor programs — Thompson Nicola Conservation Collaborative (TNCC), Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP), and South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP).

New partners actively coordinating tourism-linked conservation activities now include:

- Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) – offering visitor-friendly invasive species removal days and identification walks.
- Osoyoos Desert Centre - offers on site self guided tours as well as guided tours and education opportunities and events.
- South Okanagan Stewardship Society (SOSS) – providing public planting days and habitat tours.
- Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) – delivering land-based educational events, including salmon release ceremonies and riparian zone restoration walks.
- Regional Districts and Municipalities – increasingly formalising stewardship programs that include visitor participation components across local parks and public spaces.

M.5.2. Number of conservation programs/activities open for tourist participation

(level of participation) (e.g. clean up days, guided learning events)

In 2024, a growing number of conservation activities are open to public and tourist participation, reflecting increased integration of nature-based tourism with hands-on environmental action. These include:

- Watershed clean-ups along lakes and rivers, supported by regional districts like the Central Okanagan and South Okanagan.
- Volunteer planting and habitat restoration days offered seasonally by TNCC, SOSS, and OCCP partners.

- Citizen science events, such as bat monitoring, bird counts, wildflower tracking, and water quality testing—often promoted through visitor centres and tourism networks.
- Guided conservation walks led by biologists, Indigenous Elders, or land stewards, focusing on pollinators, wetland ecology, and climate resilience themes.
- Eco-cultural programs coordinated by ONA and local bands, inviting respectful visitor engagement in traditional knowledge-based conservation practices.

Many of these activities are advertised through tourism partners, visitor centres, and conservation group websites, ensuring visitors can find and join meaningful stewardship opportunities. Regional governments support these efforts by providing materials (e.g., gloves, bags, signage), logistical support, and promotional coordination. These efforts strengthen the link between tourism and conservation while offering immersive experiences that contribute to the protection of the region's ecological and cultural heritage.

N. Gender equity

Gender equity remains a critical priority within the Thompson Okanagan region, with continued efforts aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and equitable treatment for individuals across all gender identities. The region actively values and promotes diverse perspectives and contributions, implementing targeted initiatives to address ongoing gender-based discrimination, stereotypes, and biases. By fostering an inclusive environment and pursuing substantive gender equity, the Thompson Okanagan region endeavors to cultivate a community in which everyone can fully participate and thrive.

Tourism continues to be instrumental in advancing gender equity and women's empowerment. Nevertheless, disparities in leadership remain pronounced, with men still significantly more likely than women to ascend to senior positions—approximately ten times more likely to attain principal, partner, or president roles, and over fifteen times more likely to reach CEO positions. Women constitute roughly 70% of the tourism and hospitality workforce yet occupy fewer than 40% of managerial roles, under 20% of general management positions, and less than 8% of board seats. Despite these challenges, optimism persists, with 84% of men and 70% of women expressing confidence that women entering the hospitality industry today have improved prospects for achieving senior executive positions compared to previous generations.

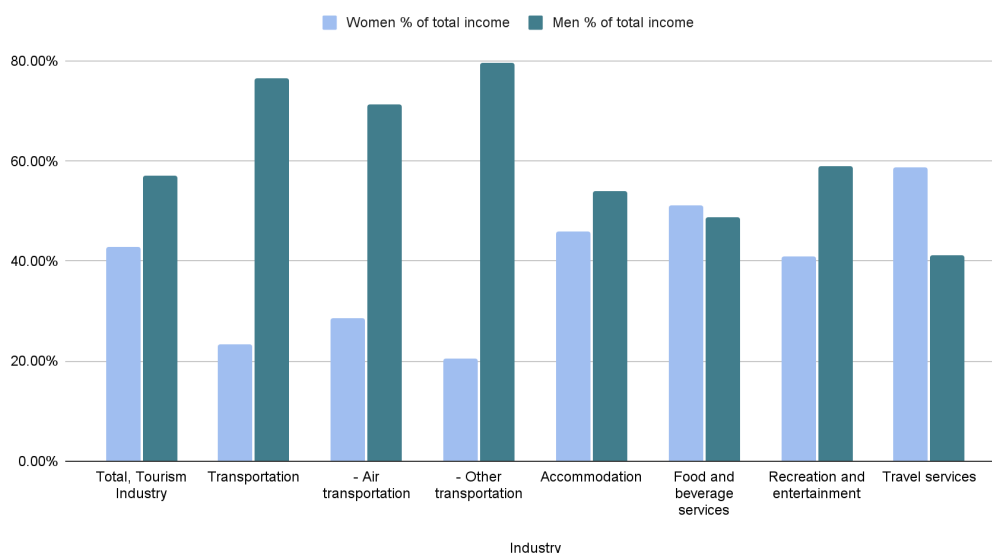
Statistics Canada only includes census data up to 2022.

N.1. Equal opportunities in formal employment

N.1.1. % of women/men in different tourism income earning categories

Income of individuals in 2022 in Thompson Okanagan for all tourism sectors

N 1.1. Wages and Salaries by Tourism Industry in British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada Table 36-10-0702-01 (2022)

This analysis leverages the most recent available data (2022) from Statistics Canada (Table 36-10-0702-01), focusing on wages and salaries by gender within key tourism-related industries in British Columbia. Although provincial, these insights offer a reliable proxy for understanding broader regional trends in the Thompson Okanagan.

Income Distribution by Gender and Industry

The data reveals pronounced disparities in wages and salaries earned by women and men across different tourism industries. In aggregate, women accounted for approximately 42.8% (\$4.59 million) of total tourism sector wages, whereas men accounted for 57.2% (\$6.14 million). These findings underscore persistent gendered income inequality within the sector.

Industry-specific analysis highlights significant variation:

Transportation: Men overwhelmingly dominate this sector, capturing 76.6% (\$1.93 million) of total earnings compared to women's 23.4% (\$588,000). Within transportation, other transportation services reflect the greatest disparity, with women earning just 20.4% of total wages.

Accommodation: Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with women earning 46.0% (\$655,000) and men 54.0% (\$770,000), indicating moderate gender equity in income distribution.

Food and Beverage Services: Women slightly surpass men in earnings, holding 51.1% (\$2.53 million) of the total, reflecting the higher participation of women in traditionally lower-paying, service-oriented roles.

Recreation and Entertainment: Men retain a significant earnings advantage, earning 59.0% (\$881,000) versus women's 41.0% (\$612,000), highlighting gender disparities in roles offering higher remuneration or senior management opportunities.

Travel Services: Women notably dominate this sector, accounting for 58.8% (\$209,000) of total earnings, a contrast to other subsectors, yet reflecting generally lower median incomes compared to transportation and recreation sectors.

These gender disparities indicate structural and systemic barriers limiting women's access to higher-paying roles within tourism, notably in transportation and recreation industries. The concentration of women in lower-paying, customer-facing roles perpetuates significant wage inequities.

Conclusion and Future Outlook

The previous report framework design has remained in place and has continued to support year-over-year data continuity. Over the past year, TOTA has refined its approach to better balance breadth with depth—focusing on key indicators where we can generate high-value insights and actionable outcomes. While the original intent was to respond to as many sustainability indicators as possible to maintain a wide lens, in 2024 we have begun transitioning toward a more targeted methodology that prioritizes quality, comparability, and policy relevance over volume. This evolution reflects our commitment to producing meaningful, evidence-based reporting that can inform real change.

In 2023, TOTA focused heavily on enhancing data partnerships to strengthen the integrity and diversity of our information sources. This focus has continued into 2024, alongside efforts to recalibrate our Tourism Impact Portal to ensure better alignment with emerging challenges and opportunities. As noted throughout this report, the Thompson Okanagan region remains under growing pressure from climate-related disruptions, economic volatility, and shifts in public policy. The 2023 wildfire season—Canada’s most destructive on record—served as a stark reminder of the vulnerability of our natural assets and the critical importance of climate resilience planning.

In the face of the ongoing climate crisis, TOTA remains committed to improving monitoring mechanisms and advancing evidence-based decision-making. Our focus areas—including seasonality, employment, economy, energy, water, wastewater and waste management, climate action, biodiversity, accessibility, local satisfaction, community participation, Indigenous inclusion, and gender equity—remain essential pillars of sustainable tourism development. In 2024, we are also increasing our efforts to align with global standards, including a renewed commitment to working closely with UN Tourism to better understand and apply the Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST) framework.

Efforts to combat seasonality have progressed, with continued diversification of tourism offerings and an emphasis on shoulder-season events and experiences. Collaborative partnerships remain central to these efforts, particularly in creating year-round opportunities for businesses and communities. However, seasonality in employment persists, with peak periods driving the majority of tourism jobs. High regional attractiveness continues to place pressure on housing and cost of living—an ongoing challenge that requires integrated regional policy responses.

Reporting in areas such as energy, water, wastewater, and solid waste remains constrained by the absence of regular audits and standardized data collection. As part of our revised methodology, we are exploring deeper partnerships with academic institutions and the provincial crown tourism corporation to build capacity in these data-deficient areas. Additionally, increased support from our subsidiary, *Symphony Tourism Services*, is anticipated to play a key role in strengthening backend systems and operationalizing new monitoring strategies.

Nature-based tourism remains a cornerstone of the Thompson Okanagan’s appeal, with conservation groups continuing to play a vital role in preserving ecosystem integrity. Protecting the natural environment is non-negotiable—it is a prerequisite for long-term tourism viability.

Accessibility remains a key focus, requiring ongoing stakeholder education and infrastructure improvements. TOTA continues to encourage inclusive design and partnerships with outdoor adaptive adventure providers to expand the range of accessible tourism experiences across the region.

Indigenous tourism development has gained momentum, supported by both provincial and national Indigenous tourism organizations. Indigenous communities across the region are leveraging tourism as a tool for cultural, social, and economic revitalization. There is growing recognition that tourism can play a pivotal role in retaining youth, fostering entrepreneurship, and strengthening community cohesion.

Looking forward, the sustainability of tourism in the Thompson Okanagan will depend on our ability to remain adaptable, collaborative, and data-driven. This annual report is not just a reflection of the past year—it is a platform for informed action. As our region evolves, so too must our tools, our partnerships, and our perspective. TOTA is committed to leading this evolution with clarity, integrity, and shared purpose.

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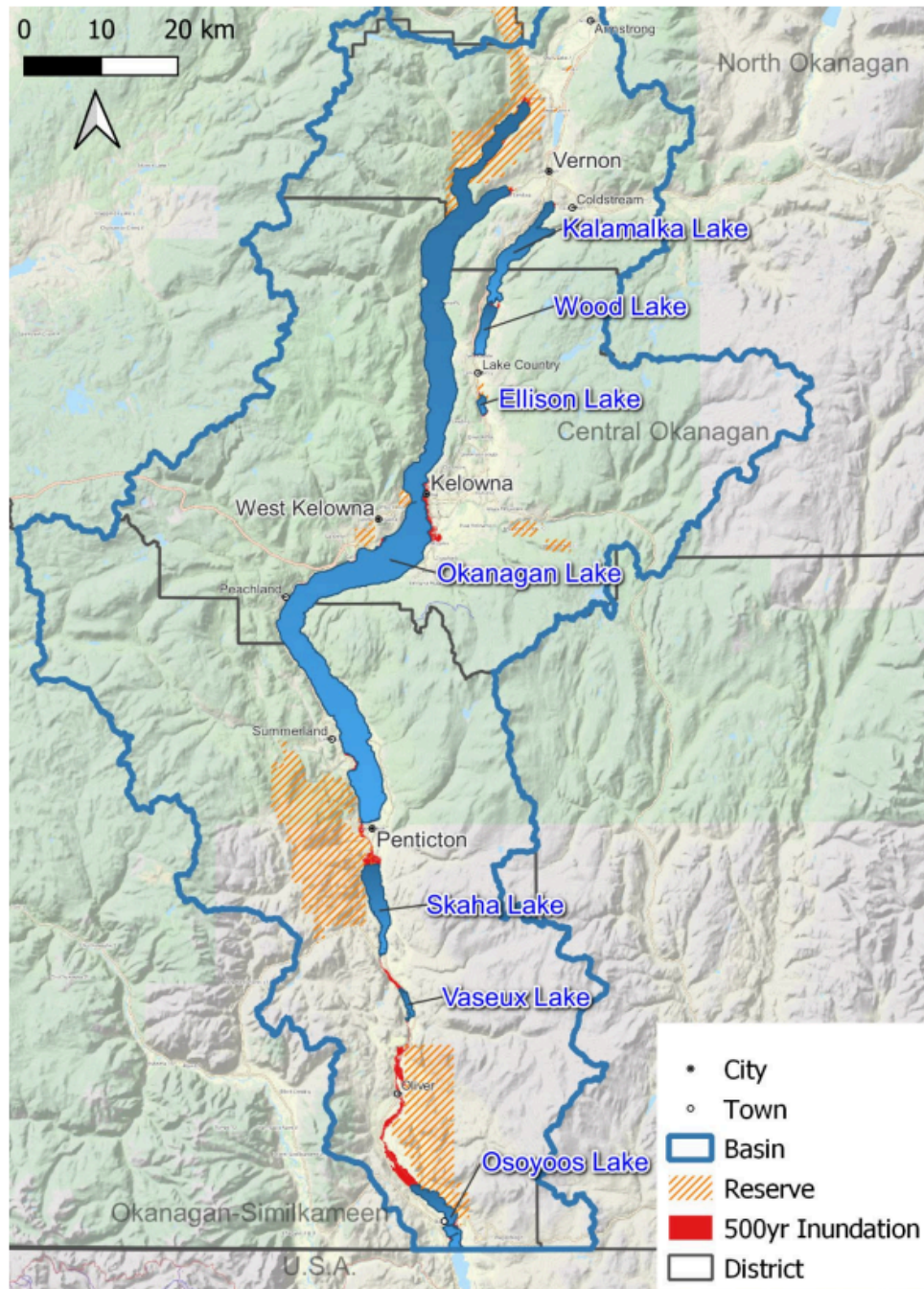
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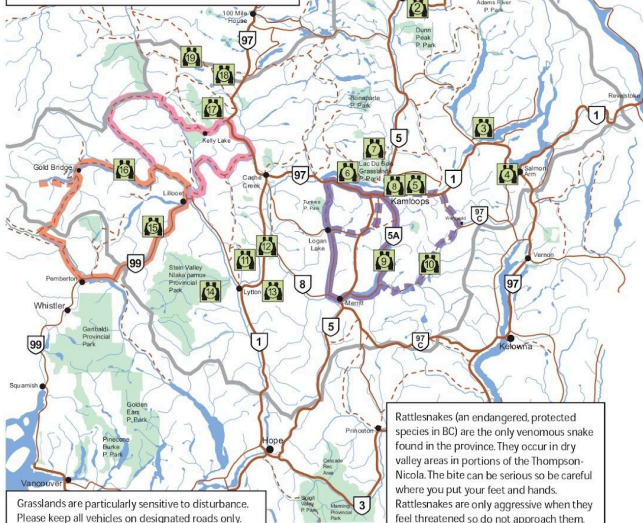
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Appendix

Appendix A: Study Area showing major lakes and boundaries



Appendix B: Wildlife viewing



Grasslands are particularly sensitive to disturbance. Please keep all vehicles on designated roads only. Ground nesting birds are common in grasslands and can be startled from their nests at critical times for young. Please look carefully before you step and maintain at least 100m from any known or potential nesting areas.

Rattlesnakes (an endangered, protected species in BC) are the only venomous snake found in the province. They occur in dry valley areas in portions of the Thompson-Nicola. The bite can be serious so be careful where you put your feet and hands. Rattlesnakes are only aggressive when they feel threatened so do not approach them. **IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A RATTLESNAKE GO TO THE NEAREST HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY FOR TREATMENT.**

Wildlife Viewing Site Number (Bibliography)	Site Name	Highlights	Viewing Season												Access				
															Foot	4x4 Road	Scenic/High Altitude	All Private	Habitat
			J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D					
Wells Gray/Clearwater Area																			
1 (212)	W dls Gray P.P. (corridor, multiple sites)	Mountain and Riparian Species (see table below for details)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
2	Rail River	Spawning Sockeye and Chinook, Bald Eagles, Turkey Vultures	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
Shuswap Lake Area																			
3 (2)	Roderick Haig-Brown P.P.	Riparian Birds (year-round), Gulls & Diving Ducks, Spawning: Sockeye, Chinook, Coho, Pink Salmon, American Dipper, Bald Eagles	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
4 (165)	Salmon Arm Bay	Osprey, Bald Eagle, Nesting Western Grebes, Migrating Shorebirds, Migrating and Nesting Waterfowl, Blackbirds, Sora, Muskrat, Painted Turtle	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		S		
Kamloops Area																			
5 (186)	South Thompson River (East Shuswap road, Kamloops to Chase)	California Bighorn Sheep, Bald Eagle, Western Bluebird, Common Loon, Painted Turtle, Great Blue Heron Colony, Tundra/Trumpeter Swans, Waterfowl Staging Area, Lewis Woodpecker, Nesting Osprey	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
6 (207)	Tranquille/Dewdrop-Rosseau W.M.A.s	Coyote, Chukar, Poorwill, Migrating Waterfowl and small Songbirds (warblers, vireos, etc.), Mule Deer, California Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Bluebirds	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
7 (94)	Lac du Bois P.P.	Waterfowl, Nesting Flammulated Owls, Grassland Birds, Mountain Bluebirds, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Long-billed Curlew, Mule Deer	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
8	Kenna Cartwright Park	Dry Forest Birds, Coyotes, Mule Deer, Blue Grouse	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
Merritt & Nicola Valley Area																			
9 (1,133)	Hwy 5A - Nicola Valley Corridor (Kootenay to Merritt)	Grassland and Riparian Species (see table below for details)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		S		
10 (30)	Douglas Lake - Monte Creek Corridor	Badger, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Mule Deer, Moose, Coyote, White Pelicans, Swainson's Hawk, Waterfowl, Long-billed Curlew, Sandhill Cranes	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		S		
Thompson River Canyon & Area																			
11	Botanik Creek Valley	Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
12 (109)	Spences Bridge	Chukar, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Migrating Sockeye, Chinook, Steelhead and Pink Salmon	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
13	Skihi to Lytton	Mountain Goats, Elk, Pink Salmon Tagging, Mule Deer, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep (across river)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
Fraser River & Tributaries																			
14	Stein Valley Nikaipamux Heritage P.P.	Grizzly, Spruce Grouse, Blue Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Mountain Goat, Mule Deer, Pike, Hoary Marmot	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
15	Downtown Creek Hike	Mountain Goats, Hoary Marmot, Common Pike, Grizzly	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
16	Carpenter Lake at Marshall Creek	Mule Deer, Spawning Kokanee, Spawning Rainbow Trout, Nesting Canada Geese, Nesting Ospreys	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
Clinton/Cariboo Area																			
17 (186)	Monte Range/Porcupine Creek Hike (between Kelly L. and Jesmond)	Blue Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Mule Deer, Moose, California Bighorn Sheep	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
18 (207)	Bozwardam and Little White Lakes	Moose, Raptor, Waterfowl, Mountain Bluebirds	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
19	Meadow Lake	Eared Grebe Colony, Black-bellied Plover, Dowitchers, Peeps sp.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
Wells Gray Provincial Park Corridor																			
3 (212)	Year-round: Mountain Caribou (unusual), White-tailed Ptarmigan, Spruce Grouse Mar-Oct: Marmot, Grizzly Bear, Black Bear, Pike, Bats May-Sept: Nesting Barn Swallows, Red Fox, Red-tailed Hawk, Columbian Ground Squirrel June-Sept: Sparrows Nov-March: Moose Sept: Chinook Salmon jumping, Bald Eagles & Common Ravens feeding on salmon carcasses																		
Hwy 5A - Kootenay to Merritt																			
30 (91, 133)	Year-round: Sharp-tailed Grouse, Red-tailed Hawk, Short-eared Owl, Great Blue Heron Colony, Coyote, Badger, Mule Deer, Bald Eagles April-Oct: Waterfowl, Coots, Common Loons, American Kestrel, Yellow-bellied Marmot April-Aug: Yellow-headed Blackbirds May-Aug: Canada Geese, Ospreys, Swainson's Hawk, Black Terns Nov-May: Rough-legged Hawk, Snow Buntings, Tundra/Trumpeter Swans April, Sept-Oct: Sandhill Cranes May-June: Sucker Run																		