

# Sustaining Growth: Population and Demography for B.C. and Canada

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PREPARED FOR MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS  
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# Executive Summary

As the world transitions out of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada and British Columbia face a host of new challenges and opportunities. Shifts in the characteristics of the population and in the labour market, both from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as from the continuation of decades-long trends, have brought new focus on areas such as housing pricing and availability, public infrastructure needs, and changing demographics. As Canada and B.C. strengthen and build programs and policies to address the needs of our population, this report is intended to serve as a preliminary summary of population and demographics at the national level and in the province of B.C., based on the data<sup>1</sup> and methods that are currently available, and by providing a high-level narrative as to the currently anticipated growth path. This report does not provide a definitive estimate of projected population, nor does it provide policy recommendations aimed at addressing perceived issues.

This report finds that, as with most developed nations, Canada's overall population is aging, and its fertility rate is below replacement level. However, Canada has experienced population growth at a level above other developed nations over the past several years owing to its high intake of international migrants. Temporary migrants have been the largest source of growth in the population of Canada for the past two years, and the number of temporary migrants to Canada is anticipated to continue increasing until 2030. Under a medium-growth scenario, the population of Canada is projected to increase by over 25% by 2046, and under the highest-growth scenario this increase could be over 40%.

The population and demographics of British Columbia have followed a similar trend as has been observed nationally. British Columbians are older, on average, than the rest of Canada and the province's fertility rate is lower. The number of births in B.C. has been lower than the number of deaths since 2021, marking the first time in the province's history that natural population change has been negative. Nearly all of B.C.'s population growth in recent years has come from international migrants, the large majority of whom have settled in and around Vancouver.

British Columbia's population is anticipated to reach 7.9 million (+49%<sup>2</sup>) in 2046. While population is anticipated to increase across all of British Columbia's development regions, growth will be concentrated in the Lower Mainland/Southwest region, which is projected to reach a population of 4.9 million in 2046 (+51%). Growth will continue to be driven almost entirely by migration.

The above trends demonstrate that Canada and B.C. are anticipated to continue to grow and to have a more diverse population in the coming decades. Understanding the current trends and the projected future of the country and its populace will be key in addressing any societal challenges that may be faced as the result of continuing development and change. Where this report reveals gaps and uncertainties in existing data, BC Stats will continue to research and refine the data and methods that continues to inform this key policy area.

# 1. Natural Population Change

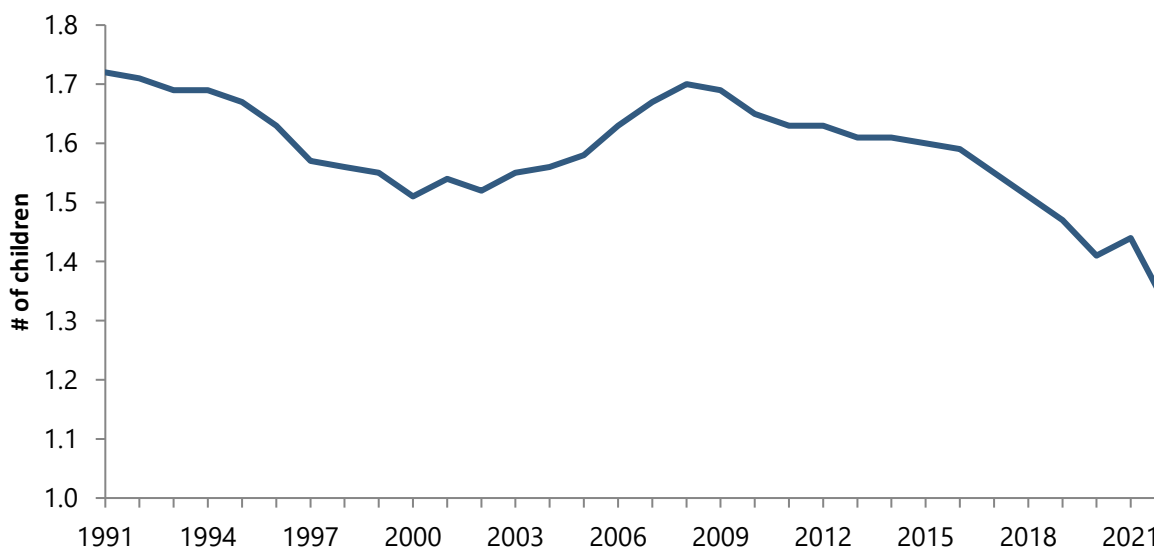
## 1.1. Highlights

- Canada's low fertility rate means that the natural growth of the Canadian population has been decreasing since 1990.
- B.C.'s fertility rate of 1.11 is well below the national average, and the lowest in Canada in 2022. Since 2021, the number of deaths in B.C. has exceeded the number of births; natural population change has been negative for the first time in the province's history.

## 1.2. Natural Population Change in Canada

As is common amongst developed nations, the national fertility rate in Canada is below the replacement level of 2.1 children per birth parent.<sup>3</sup> A fertility level below replacement means that the population of Canada would decrease over time without immigration. While Canada's fertility rate has been below replacement level since 1972, its downward trend reached a historic low of 1.33 children per birth parent in 2022 (see Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

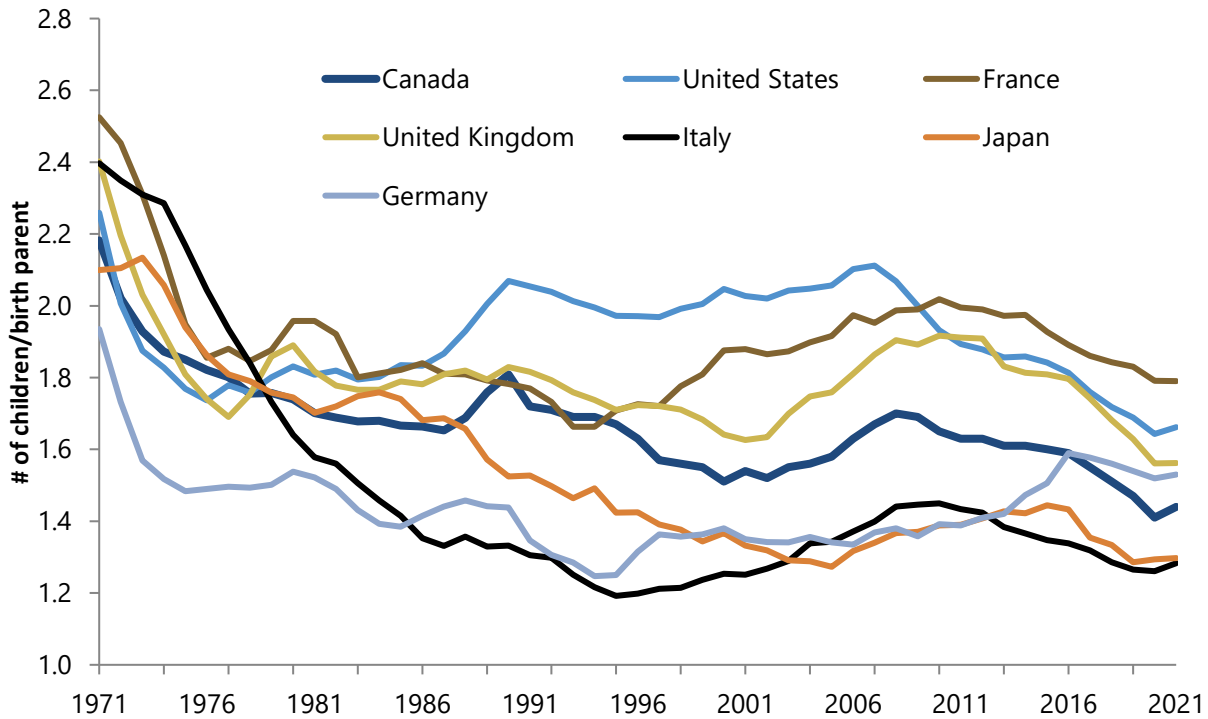
**Figure 1: Children Born per Canadian Birth Parent 1991-2022**



Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0418-01 - Crude birth rate, age-specific fertility rates and total fertility rate (live births).

Canada’s fertility rate has exhibited a downward trend that could place Canada among the countries with the lowest fertility rates (see Figure 2).<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2: Fertility Rates Among G7 Countries 1971-2021**

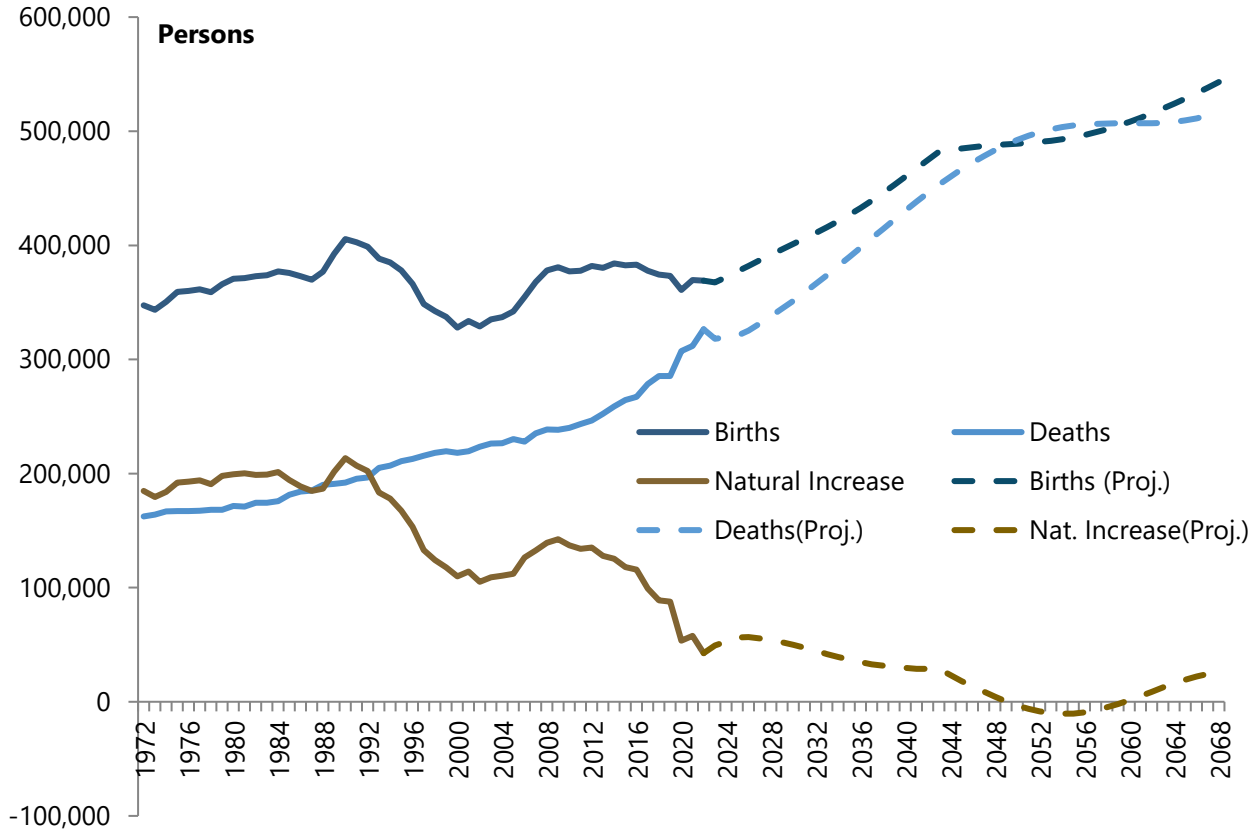


Data Source: UN (2023), *World Population Prospects*, Fertility Rates.

Over the past 50 years, as fertility has declined, the annual number of deaths in Canada has been gradually approaching the number of births (see Figure 3). This has resulted in a decline in the natural increase of Canada’s population. **Statistics Canada’s medium-growth projection (M1) scenario estimates that the number of deaths will surpass the number of births for the years 2050-2059**, meaning that immigration would be required to maintain the existing population level.



**Figure 3: Births and Deaths – Canada 1972 – 2068 (M1 Scenario)**



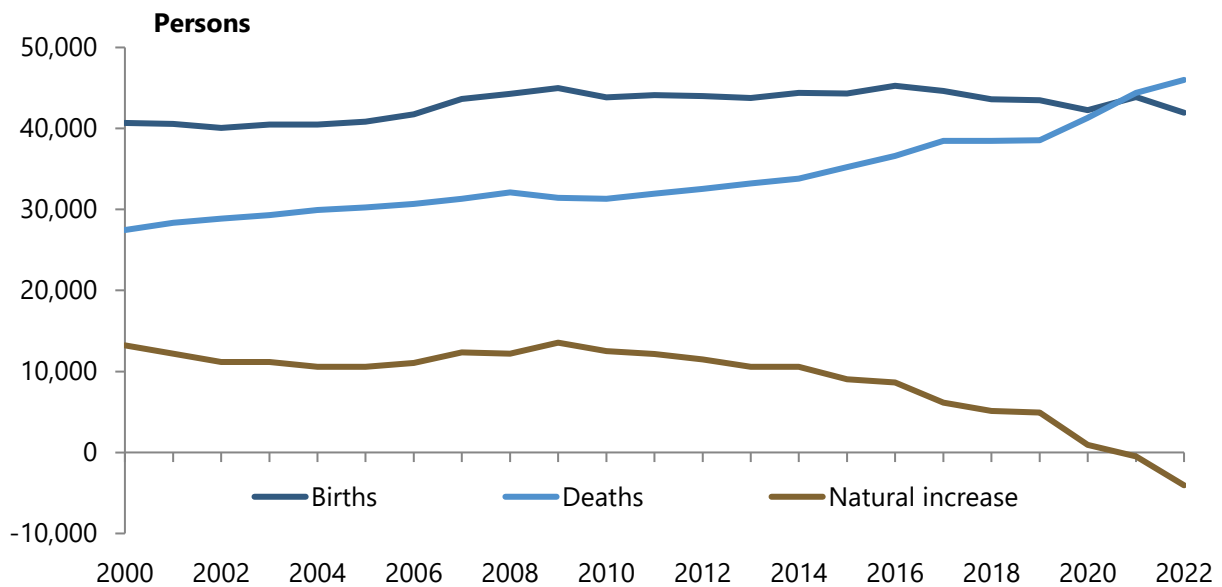
Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0059-01 - Estimates of the components of natural increase, quarterly.

### 1.3. Natural Population Change in B.C.

As at the national level, growth in British Columbia’s natural population is declining. **B.C.’s fertility rate of 1.11 is the lowest fertility rate in Canada.** B.C. also has one of the highest average age of childbearing in Canada at 32.4 years, above the national average of 31.6.<sup>6</sup>

The annual number of births in B.C. has been relatively stable between 40,000 to 45,000 since 2000; however, the number of deaths annually has been steadily increasing as B.C.’s population ages. As a result, B.C.’s natural population growth rate has been in steady decline since 2009, and for the first time in recorded history<sup>7</sup> in 2021 B.C.’s mortality rate exceeded its fertility rate, leading to a negative natural population growth rate (see Figure 4).<sup>8</sup>

Figure 4: B.C. Fertility and Mortality 2000-2022



Data Source: BC Stats. Vital Statistics

## 1.4. Life expectancy

Life expectancy in Canada has generally increased over time, from an anticipated span of 75.7 years in 1982 to a high of 82.3 years in 2019.<sup>9</sup> Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada saw the single largest year-over-year decrease in life expectancy between 2019 and 2020 (a roughly half-year decline) in the country’s recorded history.

Direct deaths from COVID-19 were the third leading cause of death in Canada in 2020, while indirect impacts, such as the reduced capacity of health care systems to accommodate patients with other ailments, likely also contributed to the decline in life expectancy. Statistics Canada anticipates that the effects of COVID on life expectancy are likely to be felt beyond the end of the pandemic, though **life expectancy is projected to increase over the coming decades to as high as 85.8 years for men and 89.6 years for women in 2041.**<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Age

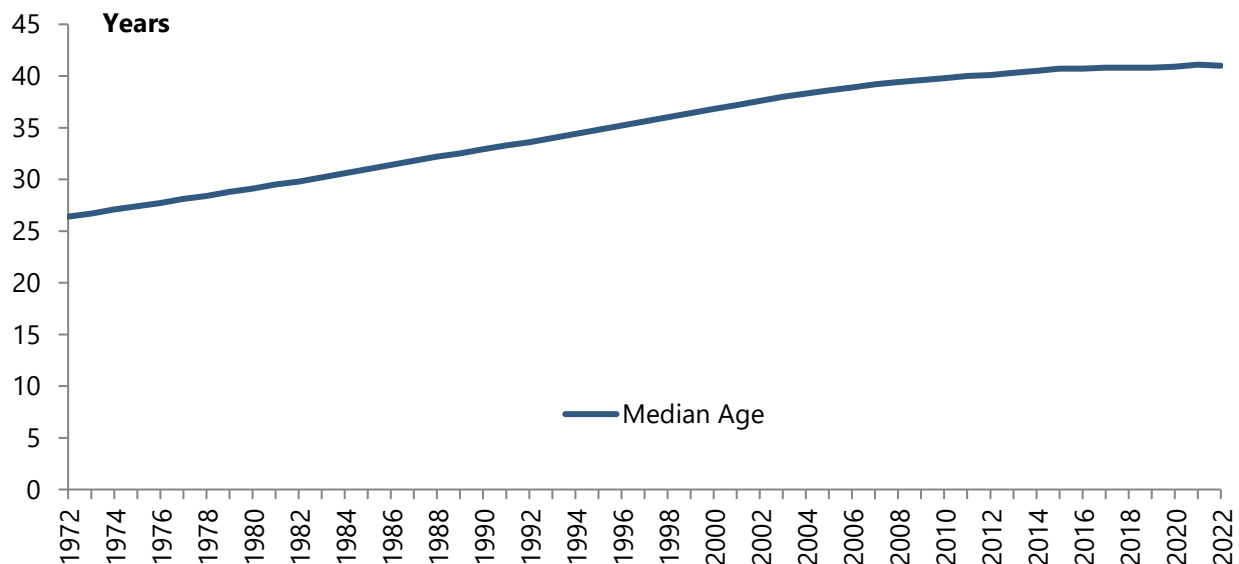
### 2.1. Highlights

- Canada’s overall population is aging, and the large baby boom cohort of the population is reaching retirement age. Projections indicate that the average age of the population will continue to increase for the next decade and that immigration will be essential in maintaining Canada’s labour force.
- B.C.’s population is older than Canada’s on average. B.C. surpassed one million people over the age of 65 for the first time in 2021.

### 2.2. Canada’s Aging Population

As discussed in the previous section, people are living longer and having fewer children year over year; and therefore, the average age of the population is increasing (see Figure 4). The median age of Canadians was 41.0 in 2022, a total increase of 3.4 years over the past 20 years (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Canada Median Age 1972-2022



Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 - Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex

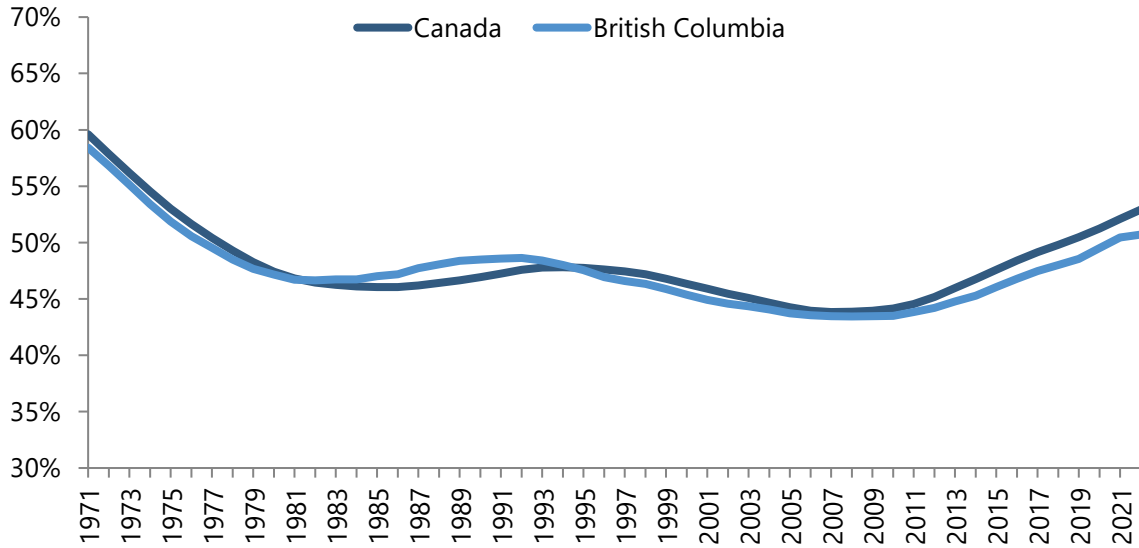
The proportion of people in Canada aged 65 and older has been increasing since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and reached a high of 18.8% in 2022. The number of people over the age of 85 has also been increasing, as this age cohort grew by 12% between 2016 and 2021 and doubled in size compared to 2001.<sup>11</sup> **In 2016, the number of people aged 65**

**and older surpassed the number of children aged 14 and under for the first time in Canada's history, and the gap has continued to widen.** In 2022, children aged 14 and under accounted for only 15.6% of the population in Canada. This is in part due to the baby boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1965), who have been reaching retirement age since 2011. As of 2022, 63.8% of people in Canada aged 65 and older were from the baby boomer generation.

Statistics Canada's population projections indicate that the overall age of the Canadian population will continue to increase over the coming decade through 2034. As international migrants tend to be of working age<sup>12</sup>, the recent high rate of immigration has slowed the rate at which Canada is aging, but it is not sufficient to reverse the trend. Statistics Canada projects that between 21.3% and 22.9% of the population will be people aged 65 and over by 2034. Beyond 2034, the direction of change in the overall age will depend on several key factors, including fertility rates and the intake of young migrants.

The overall aging of the national population has direct implications for Canada and B.C.'s work force. The demographic dependency ratio for both Canada and B.C. has been increasing since 2007 (see Figure 6).<sup>13</sup> In 2022, for every 100 people of working age, Canada had 52.9 people who were children (0 to 14 years old) or over 65. For B.C. this ratio was slightly lower at 50.7 for 2022. A smaller dependency ratio is generally preferred, as having a larger working age population is associated with higher national GDP and tax revenues, while having a larger number of dependents can require higher levels of public spending.<sup>14,15</sup>

**Figure 6: Canada Dependency Ratio 1960-2021**



Data Source: Statistics Canada age dependency ratio

### **2.3. B.C.'s population is older than the national average**

As with Canada as a whole, the population of B.C. is getting older. As of 2022, the average age of the people living in B.C. was 42.3 years old, higher than the national average of 41.7. Interprovincial migrants to B.C. also tend to skew somewhat older than other western provinces.<sup>16</sup> Figure 7 shows a comparison of B.C. and Canada's age distributions.

**Figure 7: Age Pyramid – Canada vs. British Columbia 2022**



Figure Source: BC Stats

**As of 2022, people aged 65 and older make up 19.9% of B.C.'s population; the total number of people in this age group surpassed one million in 2021.** B.C. is also home to the seven census subdivisions with the oldest average populations in the country.<sup>17,18</sup> At the Development Region level there is significant variation in the number of people aged 65 and older. As of 2022, people aged 65 and older comprise:

- 25.6% of the population of the Vancouver Island/Coast development region;
- 25.1% of the Kootenay region;
- 24.7% of the Thompson-Okanagan region;
- 17.3% of the Lower Mainland/Southwest region;
- 12.5% of the Northeast region.

## 3. Mobility (Immigration and Migration)

### 3.1. Highlights

- Canada has one of the highest population growth rates among developed nations due to high levels of international migration.
- India, the Philippines, and China are the largest sources of Canadian immigrants since 2016.
- Most immigrants settle in Canada's most populous provinces and cities.
- From 2016 to 2021, 14.9% of new Canadian immigrants settled in British Columbia.
- Non-permanent residents (NPRs) were the leading contributor to Canada's population growth in 2022. In 2022, B.C. saw a net increase of nearly 100,000 NPRs in the province.
- B.C.'s population growth is almost 100% reliant on international migration.
- From 2016 to 2021, 78% of new immigrants to B.C. settled in Metro Vancouver.

### 3.2. Canada's high population growth rate

Given the declining growth of Canada's natural population, immigration has become the most significant driver of population growth in the country. Canada saw a record-setting increase in population of over one million people in 2022 and international migration accounted for 95.9% of that growth. Despite having one of the lower fertility rates among G7 countries, Canada has the highest population growth rate. **The annual population growth rate of 2.7% in 2022 was the highest in Canada since 1957 (3.3%),** which was primarily driven by the high number of births during the post-war baby boom.<sup>19</sup>

International migration is comprised of two components: immigration (international migrants who settle permanently in Canada) and temporary migration (international migrants such as temporary workers and international students who live in Canada for a time but are expected to return to their home countries after a specified time).

#### 3.2.1. Immigration to Quebec

Under the Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec has unique powers to select immigrants and determine the number of new permanent residents they will accept. After reducing levels in 2019, Quebec gradually increased levels and plans to accept around

50,000 immigrants. However, as the growth in Quebec immigrants has been at a slower pace than national levels, Quebec's share is likely to fall, which will have implications for the number of immigrants settling in other provinces. It remains to be seen exactly what the impact of this policy will be in the long term.

### 3.3. Immigration and Canada's workforce

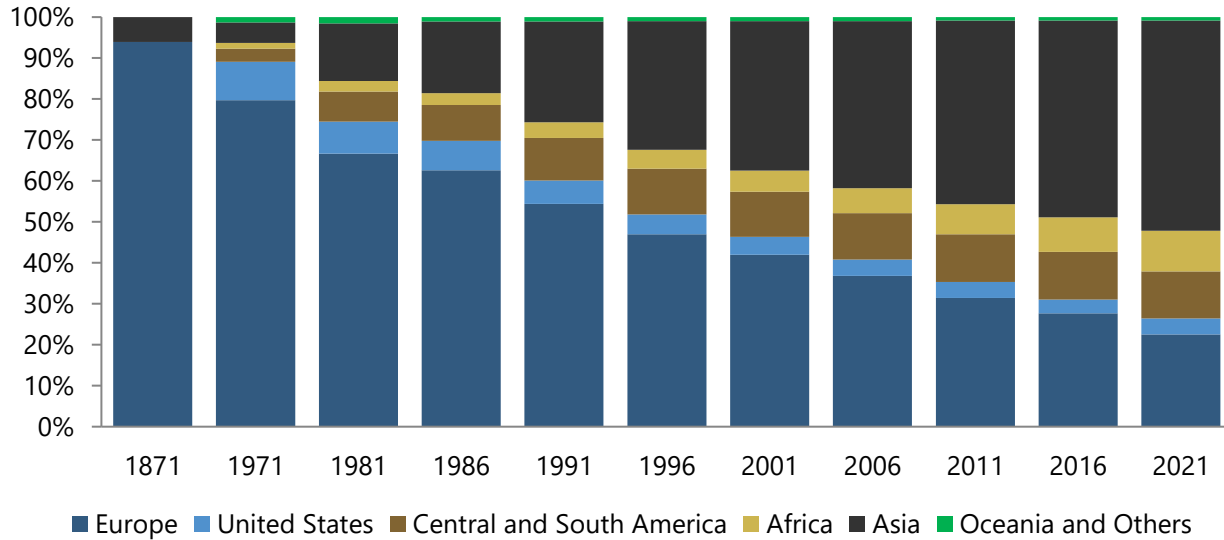
The recent surge in migration to Canada has been driven in large part by federal policy changes on immigration. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has set increasing annual targets for new permanent residents in the coming years, up to 500,000 immigrants annually by 2025.<sup>20</sup> In 2022, Canada granted permanent residence to 437,180 immigrants, exceeding its target of 431,645.<sup>21</sup>

One of the main intentions of Canada's immigration policy is to supplement Canada's workforce. Immigration is the key source of growth in Canada's workforce; **in 2022, immigration accounted for nearly 100% of workforce growth**, up from 80% in the 2010s, (including 55% of growth in high- and medium-skilled jobs).<sup>22</sup>

**As Canada's population ages, and with the recent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, immigration will become even more critical to meeting the needs of Canada's job market.**<sup>23</sup> Canada's target for economic immigrants (immigrants with specific skills or work qualifications) will increase from 57% of immigrants in 2022 to over 60% in 2025. Immigration programs like the Provincial Nominee Program and the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot are also intended to address specific work shortages across Canada.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 8: Canadian Immigrant Population by Region of Birth 1871-2021**

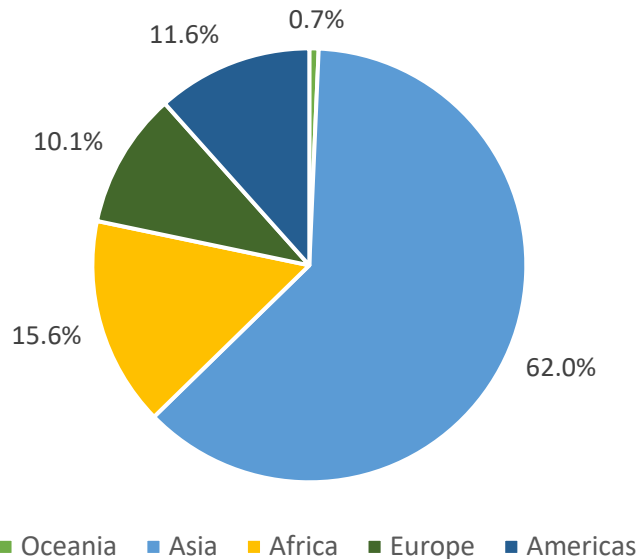


Data Source: Statistics Canada. Canadian Census, years 1871-2021

Historically, most immigrants to Canada came from Europe; however, in recent decades this trend has shifted significantly (see Figure 8). In 1971, 66.7% of Canadian immigrants were European. 1991 was the last census year for which Europeans made up the majority of incoming immigrants, and by 2021, 51.4% of all Canadian immigrants were from Asia, compared to only 22.5% from Europe.

Figure 9 shows the country of origin for immigrants arriving in Canada between 2016 and 2021. **The three countries of origin for the largest number of immigrants were India (18.6%), the Philippines (11.4%), and China (8.9%).**<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 9: Immigrants by Region of Birth Admitted to Canada between 2016-2021**



Data Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

The majority of immigrants settle in Canada’s most populous provinces and cities,<sup>26</sup> since these places provide the most economic opportunities for job seekers and already have many large and well-established immigrant communities. Between 2016 and 2021, 44.0% of immigrants settled in Ontario, with 29.5% of Canada’s total immigrants settling in Toronto. Quebec welcomed 15.3% of immigrants, the vast majority of whom settled in Montréal. **B.C. received 14.9% of immigrants** while Alberta received 14.5%.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.4. Temporary migration

In 2022, Canada received an estimated 607,782 non-permanent residents (NPRs), making this segment of the population the leading contributor to Canada’s population growth. This increase in NPRs was the largest for a single calendar year, and the first time the number of new NPRs was larger than the number of new permanent immigrants.

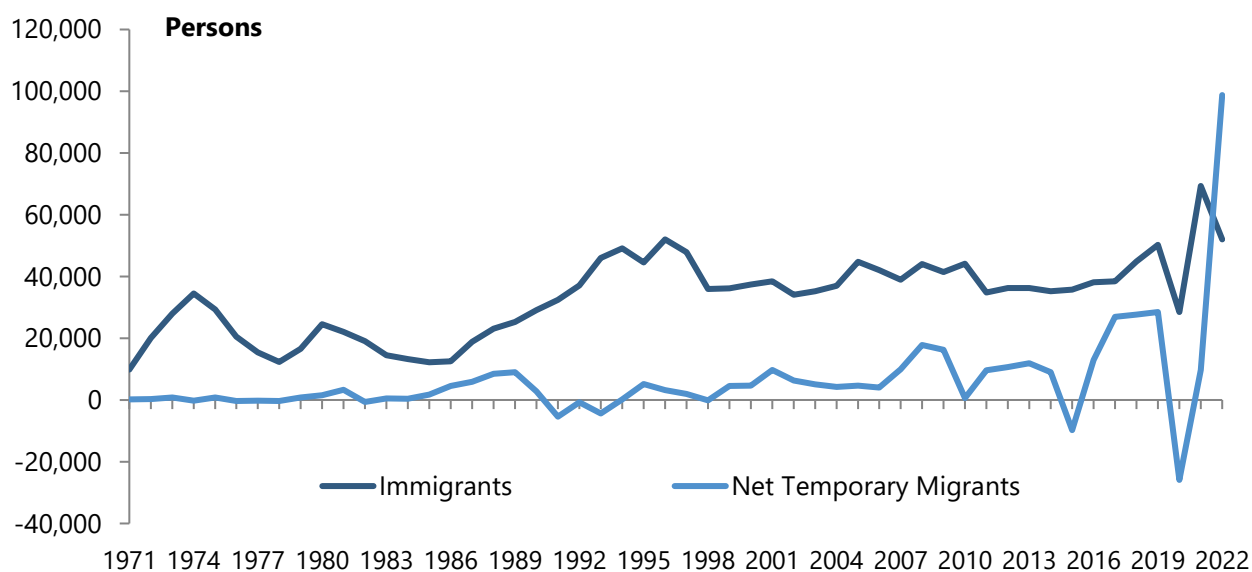
Under its medium- and high-growth scenarios, Statistics Canada projects that the number of NPRs in Canada will continue to increase through 2030, after which it will remain constant. It should be noted that these projections do not capture the record increase in NPRs in 2022, and revised projections will be required to determine the

number of NPRs which are to be expected and whether the projected trend remains reliable.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.5. International migration drives B.C.'s growth

B.C. has experienced a consistently positive net international migration since 2001, except for the period during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Post-lockdown, higher national immigration targets led to a record high of 83,200 immigrants to B.C. in 2021, more than double the 20-year average.<sup>29</sup> **2022 saw a further increase in migration, with nearly 150,800 migrants coming to the province**, roughly 52,000 of which were permanent immigrants (see Figure 10).<sup>30,31</sup> International migration helped to increase B.C.'s population growth rate to its highest level in almost fifty years. In 2023 the population of **B.C. experienced an annual growth rate above 3%, marking the highest annual increase since the 70's**. By the last quarter of 2023, temporary residents represented approximately 8.2% of B.C.'s population.

Figure 10: B.C. International Migrants 1971-2022

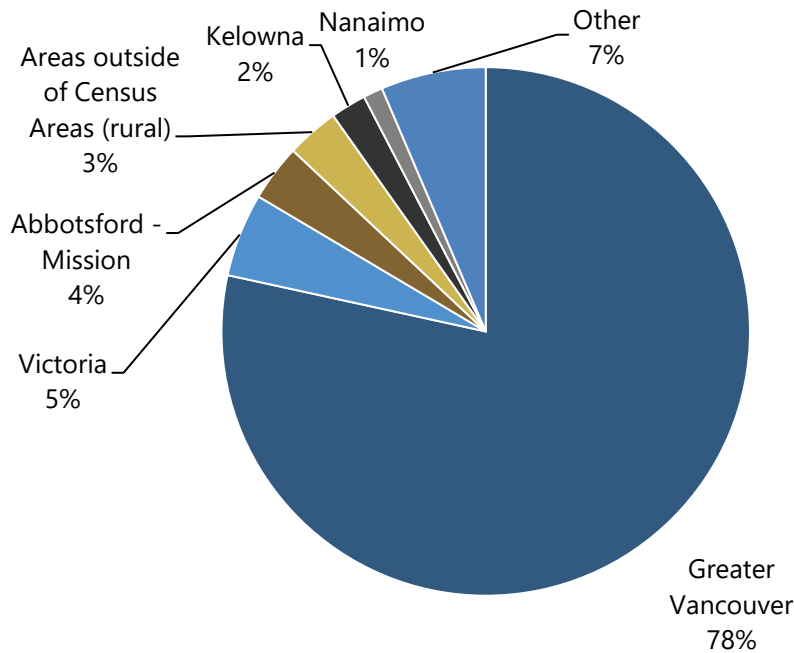


Data Source: BC Stats. Migration, Quarterly Population Highlights Issue #22-04

**Of the 197,355 immigrants who settled in B.C. between 2016 and 2021, 78.4% settled in Metro Vancouver.** Victoria was the next most significant destination, with just over 10,000 immigrants or 5.1% of the total, as shown in Figure 11. While it is anticipated that the majority of immigrants will continue to settle in Metro Vancouver, the

proportion of immigrants settling in Vancouver has been decreasing since the 1990s; for comparison, between 1990 and 2000, over 90% of immigrants to B.C. settled in Vancouver.<sup>32</sup>

**Figure 11: B.C. Immigrants 2016-2021 by Place of Settlement**



Data Source: Statistics Canada. 2021 Census.

Historically, the largest proportion of B.C.’s immigrants have come from Eastern Asia, comprising 22.8% of B.C.’s total existing immigrant population. While this group was still the largest cohort of immigrants to B.C. from 2016-2021 (45,290), there were nearly an equal number of immigrants from South Asia (43,560).<sup>33</sup>

## 4. Population Projections

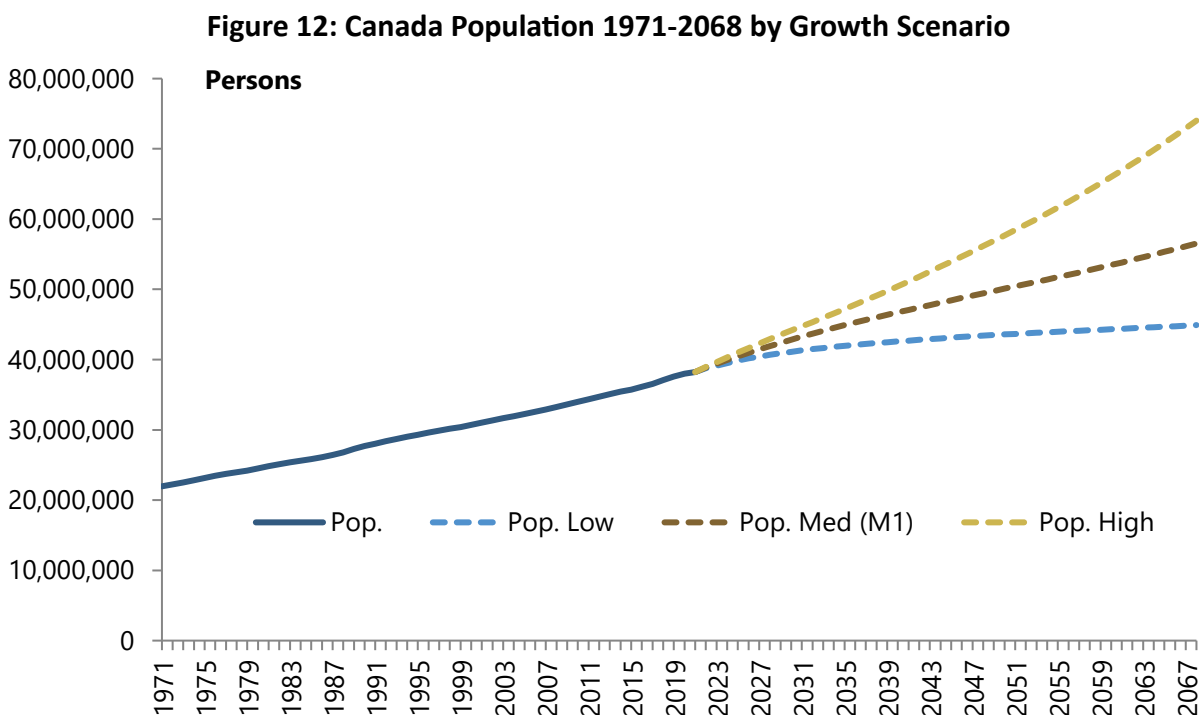
### 4.1. Highlights

- Under Statistics Canada’s medium-growth scenario, Canada’s population will increase to 48.8 million people (+27.4%) by 2046. Under its high-growth scenario, the population will reach 54.7 million (+42.8%) by 2046.
- Assuming Canada strictly maintains its annual immigration targets, B.C.’s population is projected to steadily increase through 2046 up to 7.9 million (+48.6%). All development regions of B.C. are anticipated to see population

growth; however, the most significant growth will be in the Mainland/Southwest region where most immigrants settle.

## 4.2. National Projections

Population projections by Statistics Canada estimate a growing and increasingly diverse population in Canada over the coming decades. According to Statistics Canada’s medium-growth scenario, Canada’s population will increase from 38.3 million people in 2023 to 48.8 million people by 2046, representing a 27.4% increase in the population. In the high-growth scenario, the population could reach 54.7 million by 2046, a 42.8% increase in the population (see Figure 12).<sup>34</sup>



Data Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0057-01 - Projected population by projection scenario, age, and sex as of July 1

Immigration is anticipated to remain the most significant driver of population growth in Canada. By 2041<sup>35</sup>, it is estimated that up to 34% of the Canadian population will be comprised of immigrants, up from 21.9% in 2016. **Additionally, an estimated 52.4% of the total population of Canada will be made up of immigrants and their Canadian-born children, up from roughly 40% in 2016.**

### 4.2.1. Indigenous population growth

Indigenous<sup>36</sup> populations within Canada have a higher fertility rate and are younger on average than Canada’s total population. As a result, the Indigenous population is

anticipated to grow at a faster rate than the non-Indigenous population (including population increases from migration). According to Statistics Canada’s medium-growth projection, the Indigenous population is anticipated to reach 2.8 million by 2041, a 55.6% increase from the population in 2021. Under its high-growth scenario, the Indigenous population could grow 76.7% to 3.2 million by 2041.<sup>37</sup> The median age of the Indigenous population is projected to range from 38.2 to 38.4 years in 2041, compared to 41.4 to 44.7 years for the non-Indigenous population.<sup>38</sup>

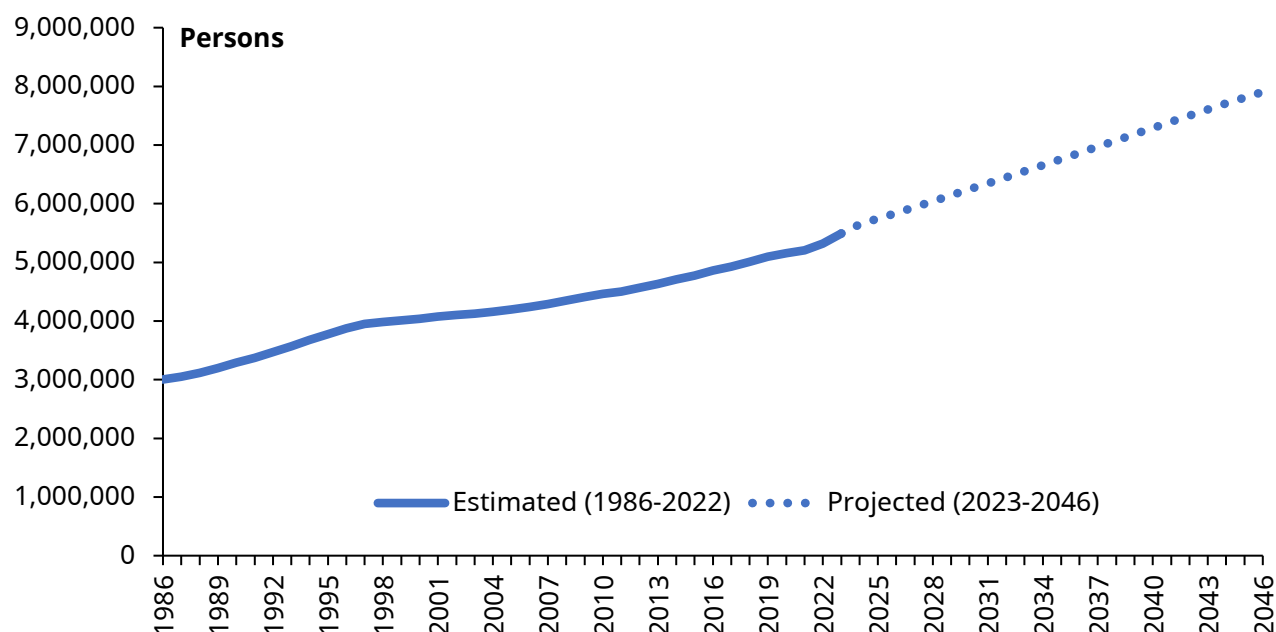
### 4.3. Provincial Projections

While Statistics Canada provides population projections for Canada and the provinces and territories, BC Stats produces its own population estimates and projections for B.C. This allows for more frequent and granular reporting that incorporates provincial data and local population trends not captured at the national level. Statistics Canada produces projections every five years when new census data becomes available, while BC Stats generates annual projections to capture a more dynamic evolution of the province’s population and demographics.

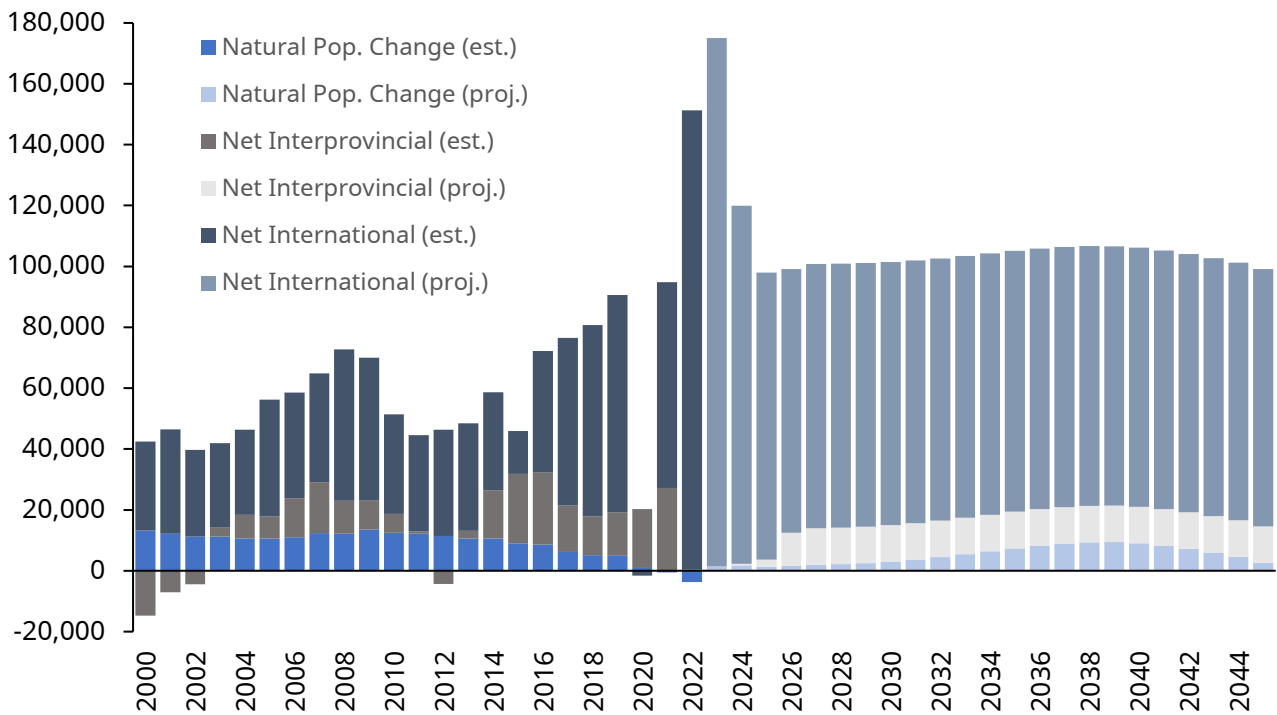
Under the BC Stats current projection, **the population of B.C. is anticipated to continue increasing through 2046, from 5.5 million people in 2023 to 7.9 million in 2046**, as shown in Figures 13, 14, and 15.

**Figure 13: B.C. Population 1986-2046**

Data Source: BC Stats. Population Estimates and Projections 2022.

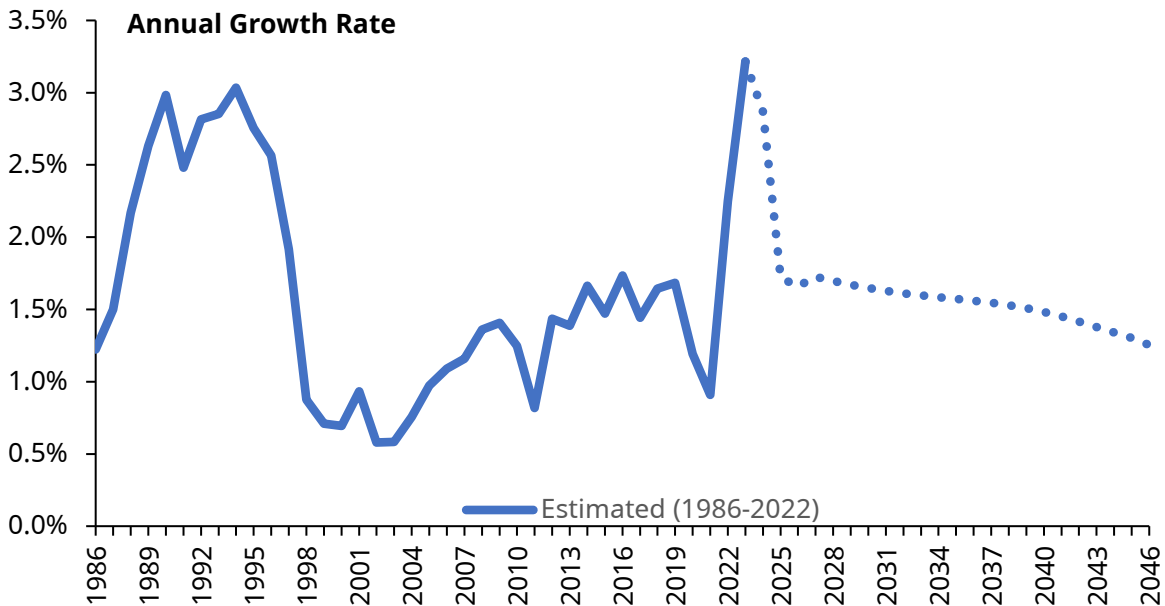


**Figure 14: Components of B.C. Population Growth (2000-2045)**



Data Source: BC Stats. Population Estimates and Projections 2022.

**Figure 15: B.C. Population Growth Rate 1986-2046**

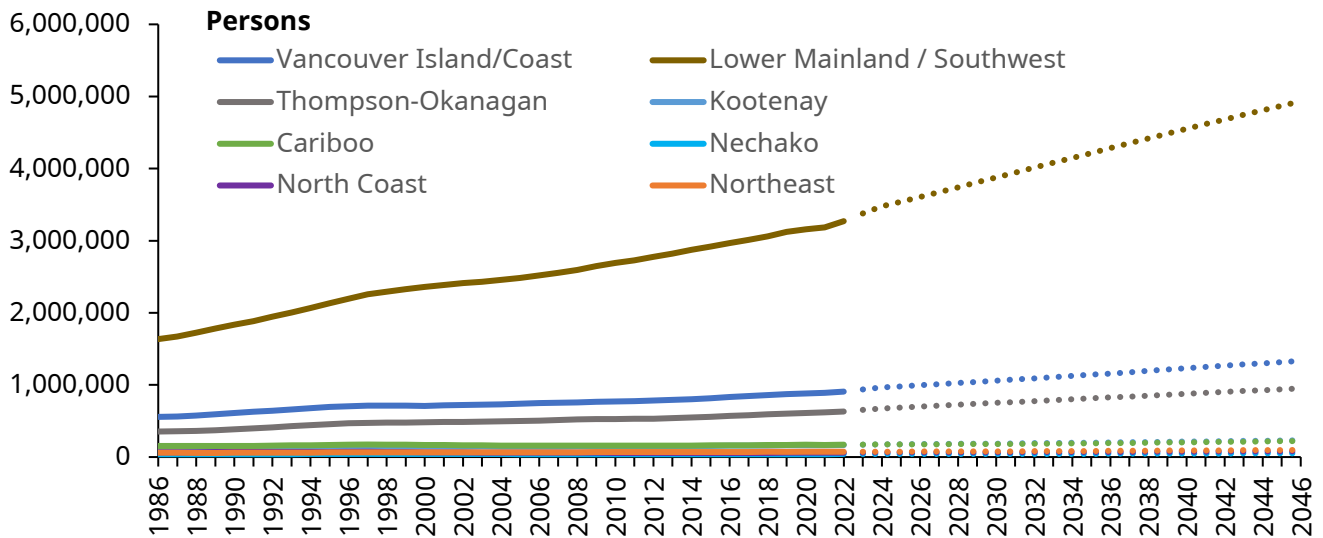


Data Source: BC Stats. Population Estimates and Projections 2022.

### 4.3.1. Regional Projections

While the population is anticipated to increase across all the development regions of B.C., growth is anticipated to be concentrated in the Mainland/Southwest region which is anticipated to reach a population of 4.9 million in 2046, as shown in Figure 16. B.C.'s growth will be driven almost entirely by international migration, which, given current and historical trends, is likely to be concentrated in Metro Vancouver.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 16: Population Estimates and Projections by B.C. Development Region 1986-2046**



Data Source: BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections 2022



### 4.3.2. Non-permanent Resident Projections

As seen in section 3.5, B.C. received a historically high number of NPRs in 2021 and 2022 (see Figure 10), and NPRs were the largest component of B.C.'s population growth in those years. It follows that the number of NPRs to B.C. may continue to be a driving factor in population growth in the province in the coming years; however, this presents a number of challenges in producing reliable population projections.

Due to the recency of the increase in NPRs to Canada and B.C., more time series data and analysis is needed to determine whether this will continue to be the trend going forward, or whether the past two years have been an anomalous shock to the historically stable trend (e.g., a temporary surge of migrants as a response to the low number admitted in 2020 during COVID-19 border restrictions). Reliable modelling of this important segment of the population will require continual updates as more data becomes available.



net increase of nearly

**100,000**

Temporary Migrants

in B.C. (2022)

B.C. saw a net increase of nearly **100,000** temporary migrants in the province in 2022, which accounts for the largest proportion of B.C.'s population growth.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about the number of temporary migrants B.C. can expect in the coming years.

**Assumptions about the number of NPRs to B.C. in the future have significant impacts on population projections.** While there was a record number of NPRs migrating to BC in 2022, BC Stats projects that the number of NPRs will be even higher in 2023. BC Stats' population projections are based on existing federal immigration policies; however, changes in immigration policies could have significant impacts on population growth going forward.

## 5. Model Limitations

While the aim of producing projections is to provide the best possible estimate of future conditions that incorporate as much information presently available as possible, the world is a dynamic system, and there will always be limitations on how well any forecasting model can predict it. For example, while the underlying factors such as population aging and declining birth rates have been and will continue to be driving forces for Canada's population, the major population and demographic trends of the past three years have been primarily driven by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine (Canada accepted 210,178 temporary residents from Ukraine between March 17, 2022 and November 28, 2023<sup>40</sup>).

**Future conditions are impossible to predict with total accuracy.** International migration will almost definitely remain Canada's main source of population growth in the coming years. As stated in the previous section, but worth mentioning again is that **BC Stats' population projections are based on existing immigration policies; changes in immigration policies could have significant impacts on future population growth.** Likewise, the impact of changing climate conditions worldwide could play a role in population movement.

There may even be important long-term impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic that have not yet been observed. The current approach of producing population projections assumes population dynamics will return to pre-pandemic trends over time. BC Stats is evaluating this assumption as more data becomes available. Ultimately, unforeseen events and conditions will continue to play a role in the development of Canada's population, and the best that can be done is to continually adjust models to incorporate new information as it becomes available.

### 5.1. Future Model Revisions

BC Stats continues to explore and assess different approaches to improve its model of population projections. Some of the approaches currently being explored include the following:

- BC Stats is exploring different approaches to estimate the non-permanent residents that flow to BC and the different regions of BC as the flow of non-permanent residents to BC has changed dramatically since the start of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

- BC Stats is evaluating the effects of the pandemic on fertility, mortality, and migration trends. In particular, BC Stats is determining how to most effectively incorporate changes in these trends in its population projections.
- BC Stats is still evaluating and improving its population estimates and projections at the Census Subdivision level. In particular, BC Stats will enhance the migration component of these projections in future iterations.
- The current population projections do not consider the impact of climate change and other weather phenomena on its projections. BC Stats is researching approaches to include these effects on its population projections.

## 6. Additional Resources

The following resources can provide additional population data for specific municipalities, racialized groups, and other groups not covered in detail in this report:

- BC Stats P.E.O.P.L.E. population projection [interactive dashboard](#)
- Statistics Canada Population projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories: [interactive dashboard](#)
- Statistics Canada Population projections on immigration and diversity: [interactive dashboard](#)

## 7. Glossary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Population Estimate	A population estimate is a measure of the current or historical population.
Population Projection	A population projection is a forecast of future population growth. BC Stats applies the Component/Cohort-Survival method to project the population. This method "grows" the population from the latest base year estimate by forecasting births, deaths and migration by age. These forecasts are based on past trends modified to account for possible future changes and should be viewed as only one possible scenario of future population.
Dependency Ratio	The proportion of people aged 15-64 (typical working age bracket) to the number of children (aged 14 and under) and people of retirement age (aged 65 and older)
Fertility Replacement Rate	The fertility replacement rate for Canada (and most developed countries) is 2.1 births per birth parent
Net International Migration	The number of international immigrants to a specific region, minus the number of existing residents of that region who move to another country.

## 8. Footnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> The population estimates and projections for B.C. that are outlined in this report are aligned to the sub-provincial population projections by BC Stats published in December 2023, available online: [Population - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov2/population/Population-Projections-Province-of-British-Columbia). This report uses population estimates and projections for sub-provincial areas that are current as of December 31, 2023, and are benchmarked to the 2016 Census. The report also uses the estimates and projections benchmarked to the 2016 Census for Canada and its provinces and territories. On September 27, 2023, Statistics Canada published new population estimates benchmarked to the 2021 Census only for Canada and its provinces and territories. Therefore, there may be differences between the figures in this report and the latest demographic estimates at the provincial or national level reported by Statistics Canada.
- <sup>2</sup> Percent changes in forecast values are relative to 2022 levels unless otherwise stated.
- <sup>3</sup> For a population to remain stable, a set of two people must produce 2 children to replace themselves in the population. The remaining 0.1 children account for factors such as premature mortality.
- <sup>4</sup> [Fewer babies born as Canada's fertility rate hits a record low in 2020 - Statistics Canada \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>5</sup> 2021 is the latest year for which estimates are available in the UN database.
- <sup>6</sup> [Fertility indicators, provinces and territories: Interactive dashboard \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>7</sup> Available historical data dates back to 1946; population growth may have been negative during the preceding wartime years.
- <sup>8</sup> [quarterly population highlights.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov2/population/quarterly-population-highlights)
- <sup>9</sup> Source: StatCan Table 13-10-0114-01
- <sup>10</sup> [Population projections on immigration and diversity for Canada and its regions, 2016 to 2041: Overview of projection assumptions and scenarios \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>11</sup> [A portrait of Canada's growing population aged 85 and older from the 2021 Census \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>12</sup> [Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>13</sup> Note that the previous peak in Canada's dependency ratio in the 1960s was driven by the large number of children born during the baby boom.
- <sup>14</sup> [Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2022 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2022001/article/00001-eng.htm). Figures provided here are from July 2022; the total annual values may differ
- <sup>15</sup> [Population Projections for Canada \(2021 to 2068\), Provinces and Territories \(2021 to 2043\) \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>16</sup> StatCan, Centre for Demography custom data request
- <sup>17</sup> Qualicum Beach, Osoyoos, Sidney, Parksville, Southern Gulf Islands, Nanaimo, and Regional District of Nanaimo's Electoral Area E.
- <sup>18</sup> [B.C.'s aging population a 'wake-up call' for health-care system, advocates say | Globalnews.ca](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>19</sup> [The Daily — Canada's population estimates: Record-high population growth in 2022 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>20</sup> [Notice – Supplementary Information for the 2022-2024 Immigration Levels Plan - Canada.ca](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>21</sup> [The Daily — Canada's population estimates: Record-high population growth in 2022 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>22</sup> [An Immigration Plan to Grow the Economy - Canada.ca](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>23</sup> [The Daily — Immigration as a source of labour supply \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>24</sup> See [WelcomeBC / Immigrate to BC - WelcomeBC](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm) and [Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot: about the pilot - Canada.ca](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm) for more information about these programs in B.C. and in Canada.
- <sup>25</sup> [Immigrant population by selected places of birth, admission category and period of immigration, 2021 Census \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>26</sup> According to the 2021 Census, 90% of immigrants settled in cities with over 100,000 residents.
- <sup>27</sup> [Immigrant population by selected places of birth, admission category and period of immigration, 2021 Census \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>28</sup> [Population Projections for Canada \(2021 to 2068\), Provinces and Territories \(2021 to 2043\): Technical Report on Methodology and Assumptions \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)
- <sup>29</sup> IRCC, Permanent Residents, Open Data
- <sup>30</sup> BC Stats, Quarterly Population Highlights Issue #22-04

<sup>31</sup> According to data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, compiled by the B.C. Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, 24,226 non-permanent residents of B.C. became permanent residents in 2022, a value equal to roughly 19.2% of NPRs admitted in that year

<sup>32</sup> [Immigrant population by selected places of birth, admission category and period of immigration, 2021 Census \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Immigrant population by selected places of birth, admission category and period of immigration, 2021 Census \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

<sup>34</sup> [The Daily — Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2021 to 2068, 2022 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

<sup>35</sup> Note that StatCan projections on racial identity and demographics only extend to 2041, while the remainder of this report uses projections to 2046.

<sup>36</sup> Includes Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit

<sup>37</sup> In addition to the population's higher fertility rate, a small component of the increase in the Indigenous population will derive from increased levels of self-reporting of Indigenous identity over time (i.e. not contributing to a net increase for the Canadian population)

<sup>38</sup> [The Daily — Projections of the Indigenous populations and households in Canada, 2016 to 2041 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix 1 and 2 for subregional population projections. Note that the boundaries of census subdivisions and metropolitan areas do not perfectly align, and thus estimates may vary from municipal population estimates.

<sup>40</sup> [Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel: Key figures](#)

# Appendix 1 – Regional Population Projections

## Lower Mainland/Southwest

Figure A1-1: Lower Mainland/Southwest Population 1986-2046

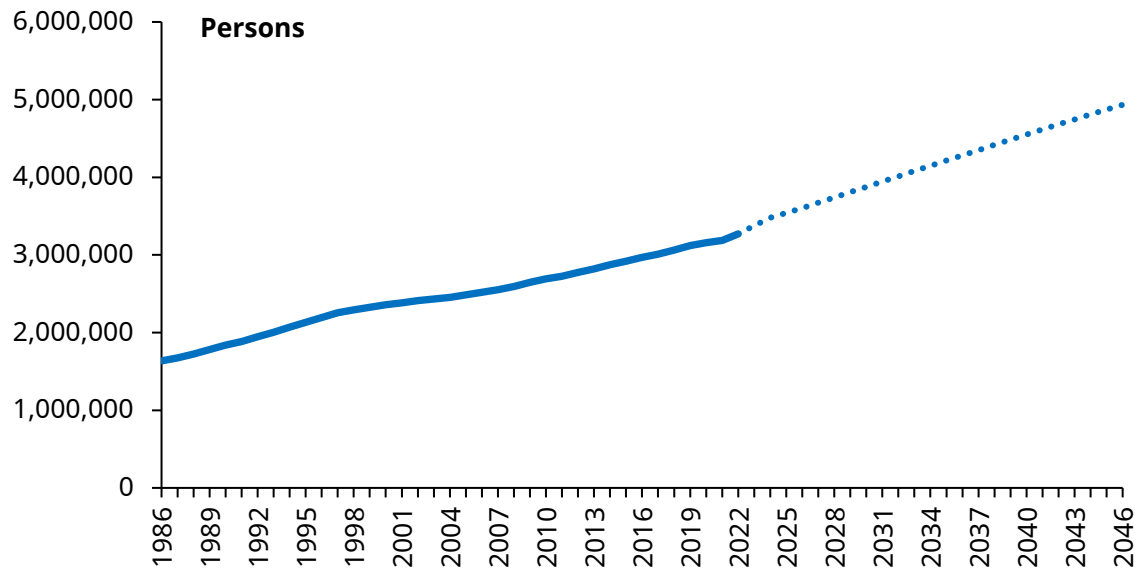


Table 1: Top 10 Lower Mainland/Southwest Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	2022 Pop.	2046 Pop.	Pop. Increase	% Pop. Growth
<b>Surrey</b>	633,229	1,054,376	<b>421,147</b>	66.5%
<b>Vancouver</b>	706,011	986,633	<b>280,622</b>	39.7%
<b>Burnaby</b>	270,264	398,094	<b>127,830</b>	47.3%
<b>Richmond</b>	222,954	320,054	<b>97,100</b>	43.6%
<b>Coquitlam</b>	159,291	254,366	<b>95,075</b>	59.7%
<b>Abbotsford</b>	168,464	257,705	<b>89,241</b>	53.0%
<b>Township of Langley</b>	142,041	229,795	<b>87,754</b>	61.8%
<b>Chilliwack</b>	97,170	150,826	<b>53,656</b>	55.2%
<b>Maple Ridge</b>	96,378	147,155	<b>50,777</b>	52.7%
<b>New Westminster</b>	85,700	131,997	<b>46,297</b>	54.0%

## Vancouver Island/Coast

Figure A1-2: Vancouver Island/Coast Population 1986-2046

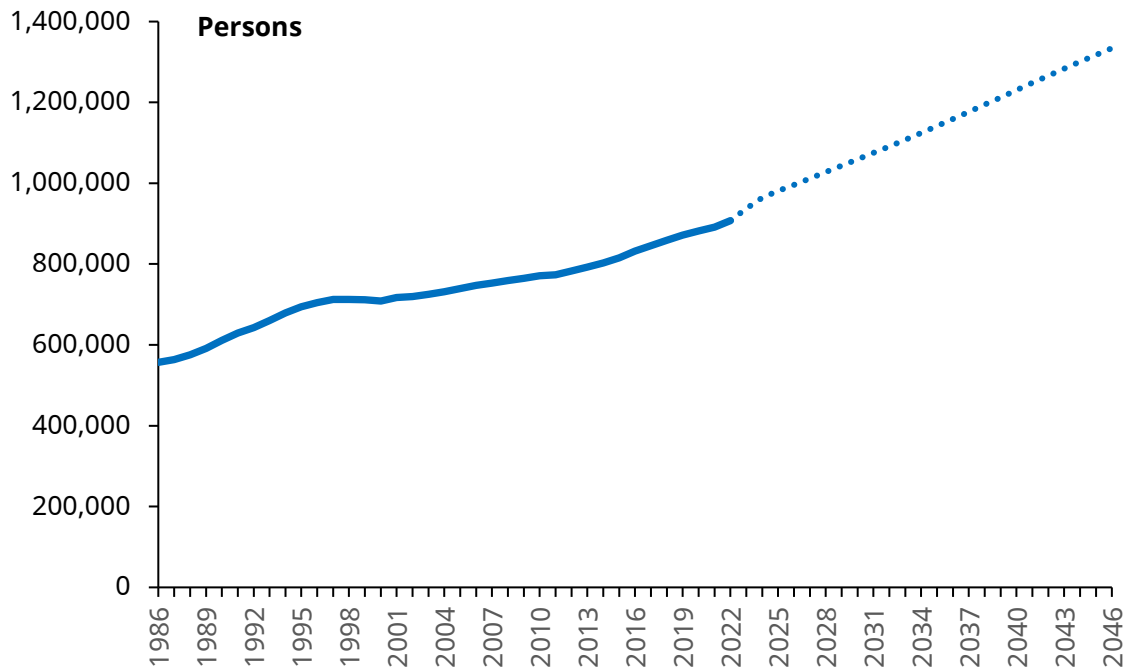


Table 2: Top 10 Vancouver Island/Coast Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	<b>2022 Pop.</b>	<b>2046 Pop.</b>	<b>Pop. Increase</b>	<b>% Pop. Growth</b>
<b>Nanaimo</b>	104,058	157,395	<b>53,337</b>	51.3%
<b>Langford</b>	49,342	100,465	<b>51,123</b>	103.6%
<b>Saanich</b>	125,856	172,632	<b>46,776</b>	37.2%
<b>Victoria</b>	96,377	136,801	<b>40,424</b>	41.9%
<b>Campbell River</b>	37,181	54,867	<b>17,686</b>	47.6%
<b>Courtenay</b>	29,888	46,819	<b>16,931</b>	56.6%
<b>North Cowichan</b>	33,340	47,895	<b>14,555</b>	43.7%
<b>Colwood</b>	20,772	33,390	<b>12,618</b>	60.7%
<b>Sooke</b>	15,987	27,151	<b>11,164</b>	69.8%
<b>View Royal</b>	12,593	20,580	<b>7,987</b>	63.4%

Data Source: BC Stats Population Projection 2022



# Thompson-Okanagan

Figure A1-3: Thompson-Okanagan Population 1986-2046

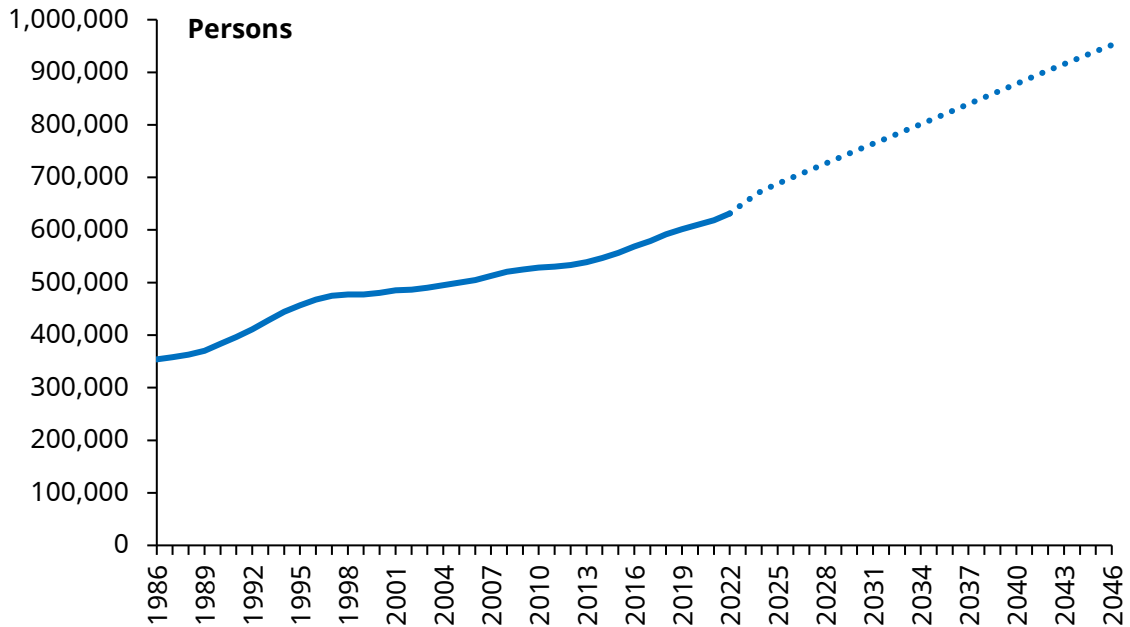


Table 3: Top 10 Thompson-Okanagan Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	<b>2022 Pop.</b>	<b>2046 Pop.</b>	<b>Pop. Increase</b>	<b>% Pop. Growth</b>
<b>Kelowna</b>	153,376	247,406	<b>94,030</b>	61.3%
<b>Kamloops</b>	103,142	151,129	<b>47,987</b>	46.5%
<b>West Kelowna</b>	38,747	62,869	<b>24,122</b>	62.3%
<b>Vernon</b>	45,552	67,356	<b>21,804</b>	47.9%
<b>Lake Country</b>	17,370	32,566	<b>15,196</b>	87.5%
<b>Penticton</b>	36,826	50,436	<b>13,610</b>	37.0%
<b>Salmon Arm</b>	20,096	29,810	<b>9,714</b>	48.3%
<b>Tsinstikeptum</b>	9,155	15,833	<b>6,678</b>	72.9%
<b>Coldstream</b>	11,882	17,235	<b>5,353</b>	45.1%
<b>Columbia-Shuswap</b>	9,207	14,175	<b>4,968</b>	54.0%

Data Source: BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections 2022

## Kootenay

Figure A1-4: Kootenay Population 1986-2046

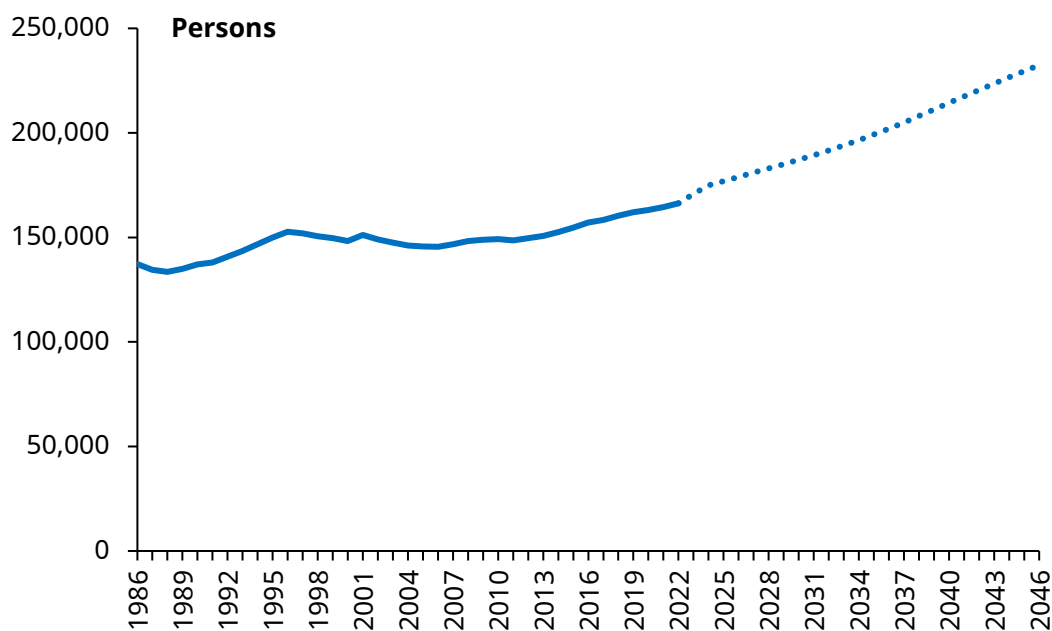


Table 4: Top 10 Kootenay Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	2022 Pop.	2046 Pop.	Pop. Increase	% Pop. Growth
<b>Cranbrook</b>	21,866	30,760	<b>8,894</b>	40.7%
<b>Nelson</b>	11,465	15,845	<b>4,380</b>	38.2%
<b>Kimberley</b>	8,393	12,183	<b>3,790</b>	45.2%
<b>Castlegar</b>	8,751	12,327	<b>3,576</b>	40.9%
<b>Trail</b>	8,196	11,324	<b>3,128</b>	38.2%
<b>East Kootenay C</b>	6,636	9,321	<b>2,685</b>	40.5%
<b>Fernie</b>	5,787	8,404	<b>2,617</b>	45.2%
<b>Creston</b>	5,691	8,025	<b>2,334</b>	41.0%
<b>Central Kootenay B</b>	5,025	6,826	<b>1,801</b>	35.8%
<b>Central Kootenay H</b>	4,985	6,784	<b>1,799</b>	36.1%

Data Source: BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections 2022

## Cariboo

Figure A1-5: Cariboo Population 1986-2046

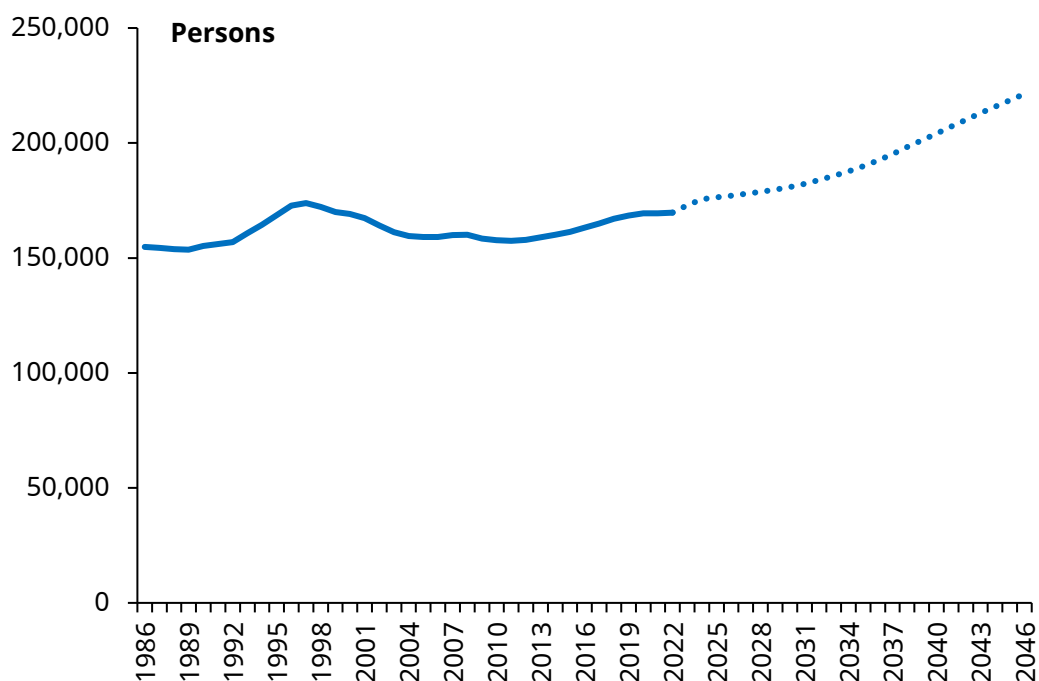


Table 5: Top 10 Cariboo Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	2022 Pop.	2046 Pop.	Pop. Increase	% Pop. Growth
<b>Prince George</b>	82,127	108,618	<b>26,491</b>	32.3%
<b>Williams Lake</b>	11,384	14,569	<b>3,185</b>	28.0%
<b>Quesnel</b>	10,198	13,019	<b>2,821</b>	27.7%
<b>Cariboo A</b>	6,722	8,843	<b>2,121</b>	31.6%
<b>Cariboo G</b>	5,719	7,781	<b>2,062</b>	36.1%
<b>Cariboo L</b>	4,753	6,656	<b>1,903</b>	40.0%
<b>Fraser-Fort George A</b>	3,873	5,297	<b>1,424</b>	36.8%
<b>Fraser-Fort George C</b>	3,823	5,202	<b>1,379</b>	36.1%
<b>Cariboo F</b>	4,809	6,174	<b>1,365</b>	28.4%
<b>Fraser-Fort George D</b>	4,616	5,860	<b>1,244</b>	26.9%

Data Source: BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections 2022

## Northeast

Figure A1-6: Northeast Population 1986-2046

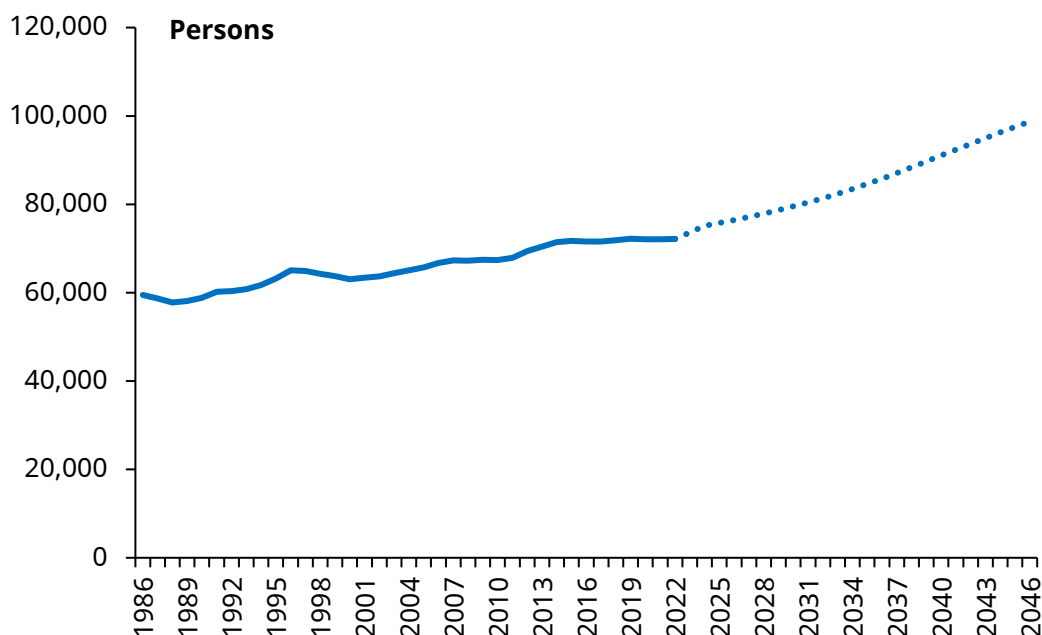


Table 6: Top 10 Northeast Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	2022 Pop.	2046 Pop.	Pop. Increase	% Pop. Growth
<b>Fort St. John</b>	22,269	31,726	<b>9,457</b>	42.5%
<b>Dawson Creek</b>	13,220	17,948	<b>4,728</b>	35.8%
<b>Ingenika Point</b>	254	2,842	<b>2,588</b>	1018.9%
<b>Peace River C</b>	6,961	9,279	<b>2,318</b>	33.3%
<b>Peace River B</b>	5,918	7,834	<b>1,916</b>	32.4%
<b>Peace River D</b>	5,864	7,057	<b>1,193</b>	20.3%
<b>Tumbler Ridge</b>	2,248	2,971	<b>723</b>	32.2%
<b>Peace River E</b>	3,089	3,769	<b>680</b>	22.0%
<b>Chetwynd</b>	2,629	3,272	<b>643</b>	24.5%
<b>Taylor</b>	1,551	2,170	<b>619</b>	39.9%

Data Source: BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections 2022

## North Coast

Figure A1-7: North Coast Population 1986-2046

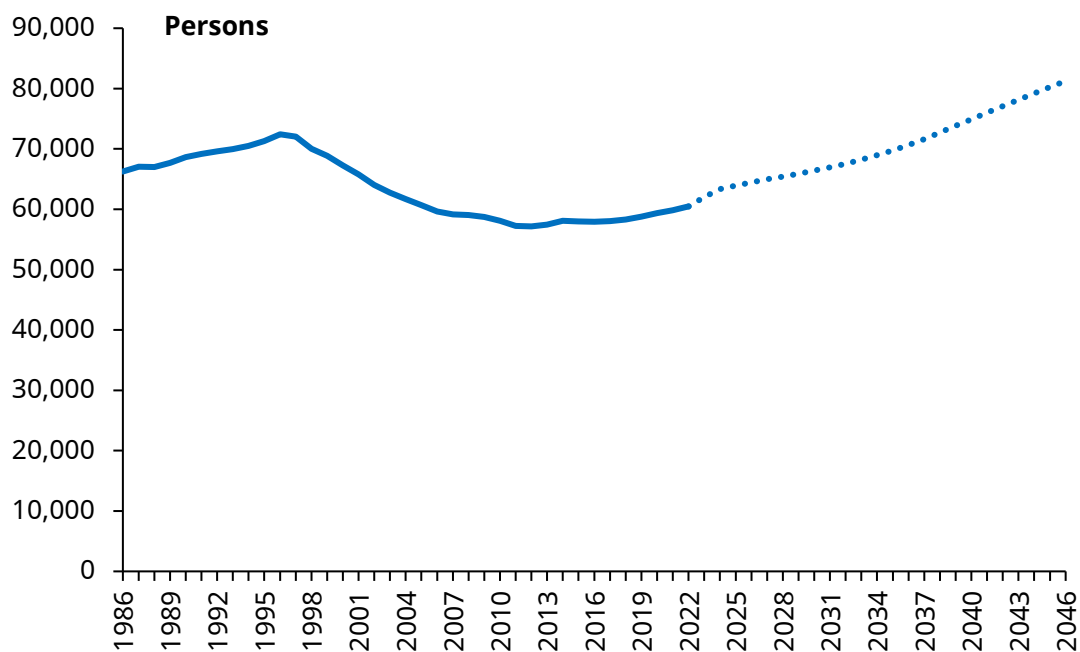


Table 7: Top 10 North Coast Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	2022 Pop.	2046 Pop.	Pop. Increase	% Pop. Growth
<b>Terrace</b>	13,379	19,267	<b>5,888</b>	44.0%
<b>Prince Rupert</b>	13,172	17,253	<b>4,081</b>	31.0%
<b>Kitimat</b>	8,643	10,743	<b>2,100</b>	24.3%
<b>Kitselas</b>	295	1,619	<b>1,324</b>	448.8%
<b>Kitimat-Stikine C (Part 1)</b>	3,072	4,199	<b>1,127</b>	36.7%
<b>Kitimat-Stikine E</b>	4,218	5,301	<b>1,083</b>	25.7%
<b>Nisga'a</b>	1,916	2,482	<b>566</b>	29.5%
<b>Skidegate</b>	890	1,274	<b>384</b>	43.1%
<b>Kitimat-Stikine B</b>	1,682	2,030	<b>348</b>	20.7%
<b>Skeena-Queen Charlotte D</b>	687	1,032	<b>345</b>	50.2%

Data Source: BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections 2022

# Nechako

Figure A1-8: Nechako Population 1986-2046

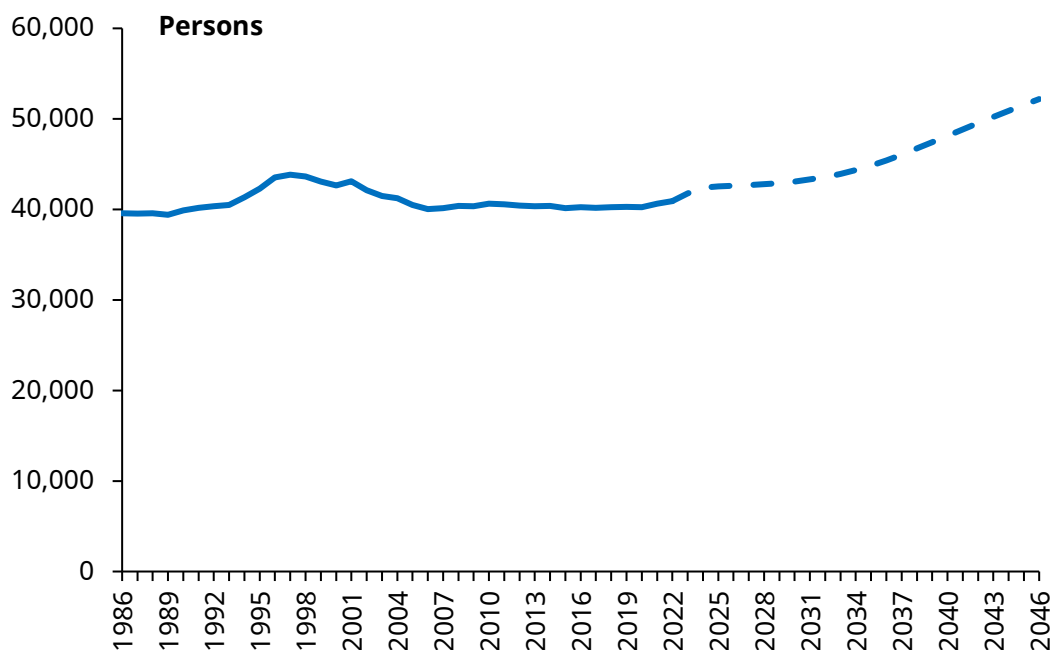


Table 8: Top 10 Nechako Census Subdivisions by Projected Population Increase

	2022 Pop.	2046 Pop.	Pop. Increase	% Pop. Growth
<b>Bulkley-Nechako A</b>	5,991	8,155	2,164	36.1%
<b>Smithers</b>	5,717	7,444	1,727	30.2%
<b>Vanderhoof</b>	4,717	6,138	1,421	30.1%
<b>Bulkley-Nechako F</b>	3,875	5,179	1,304	33.7%
<b>Houston</b>	3,187	3,880	693	21.7%
<b>Burns Lake</b>	1,891	2,368	477	25.2%
<b>Bulkley-Nechako B</b>	2,032	2,470	438	21.6%
<b>Bulkley-Nechako E</b>	1,669	2,097	428	25.6%
<b>Telkwa</b>	1,459	1,887	428	29.3%
<b>Tache</b>	485	733	248	51.1%

Data Source: BC Stats Population Estimates and Projections 2022

## Appendix 2 – Provincial Population Change Heat Maps

Figure A2-1A: Population Change by Census Subdivision, 2002-2022

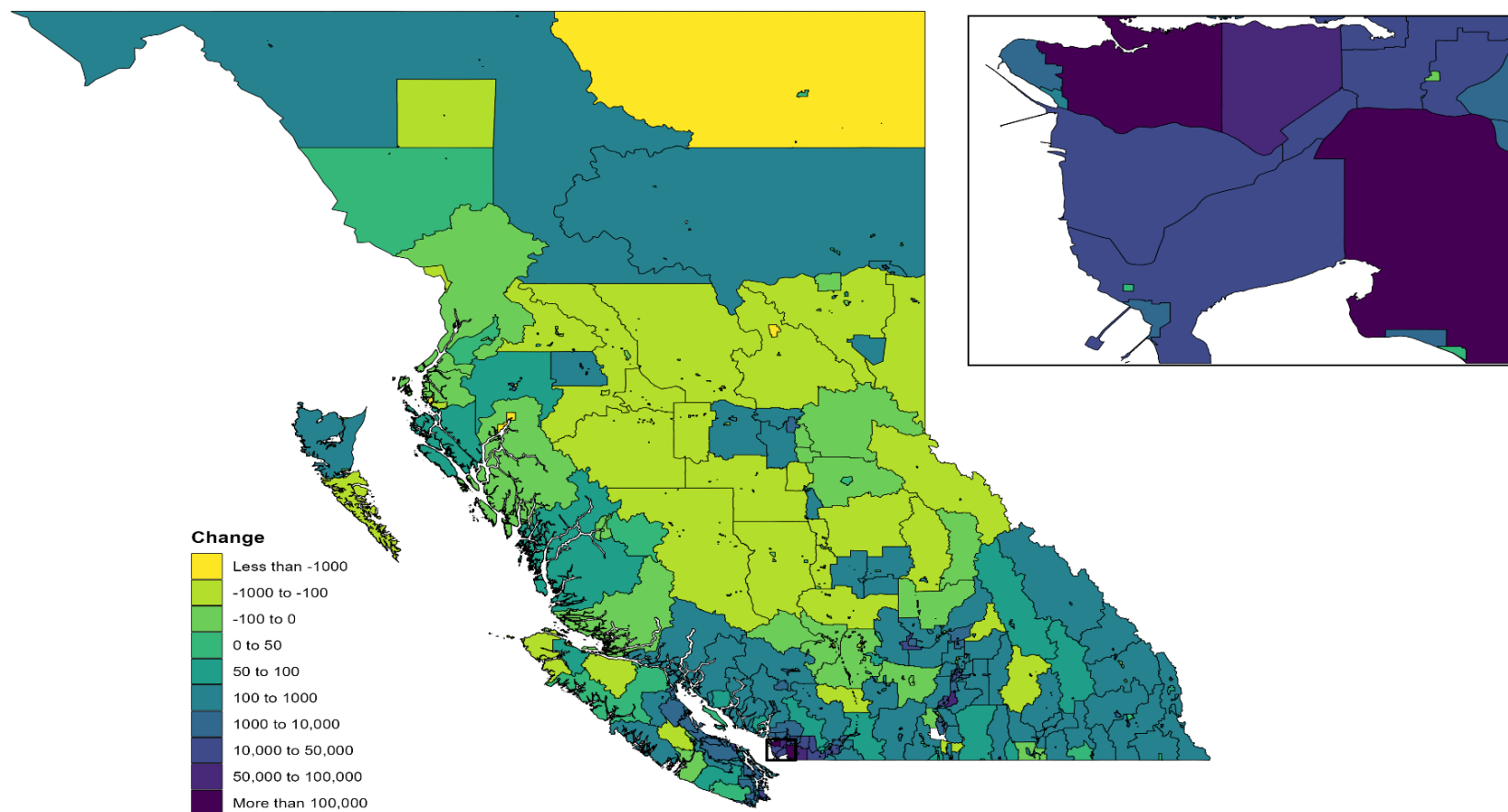


Figure A2-1B: Projected Population Change by Census Subdivision, 2022-2046

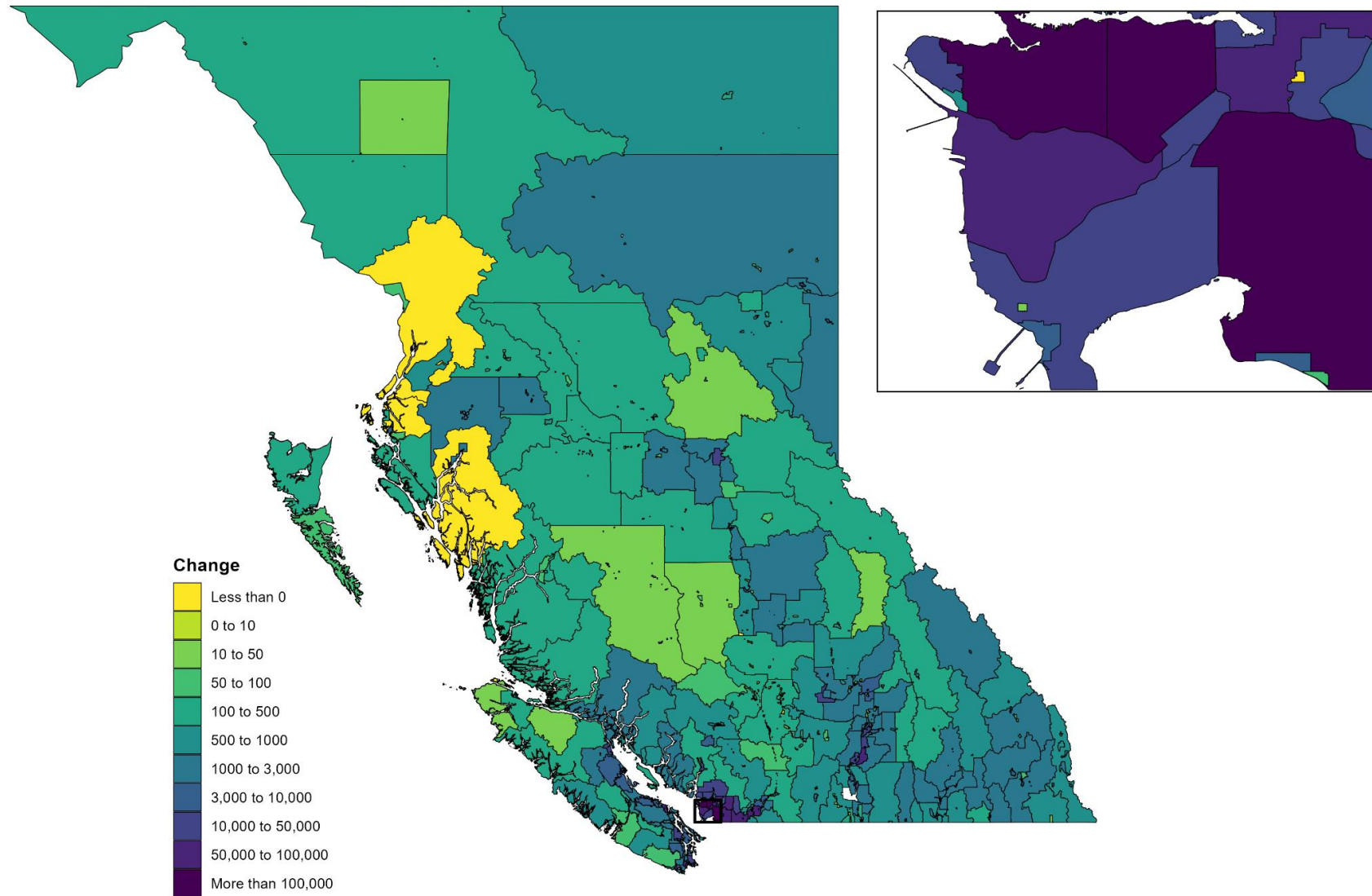




Figure A2-2A: Percentage Population Change by Census Subdivision, 2002-2022

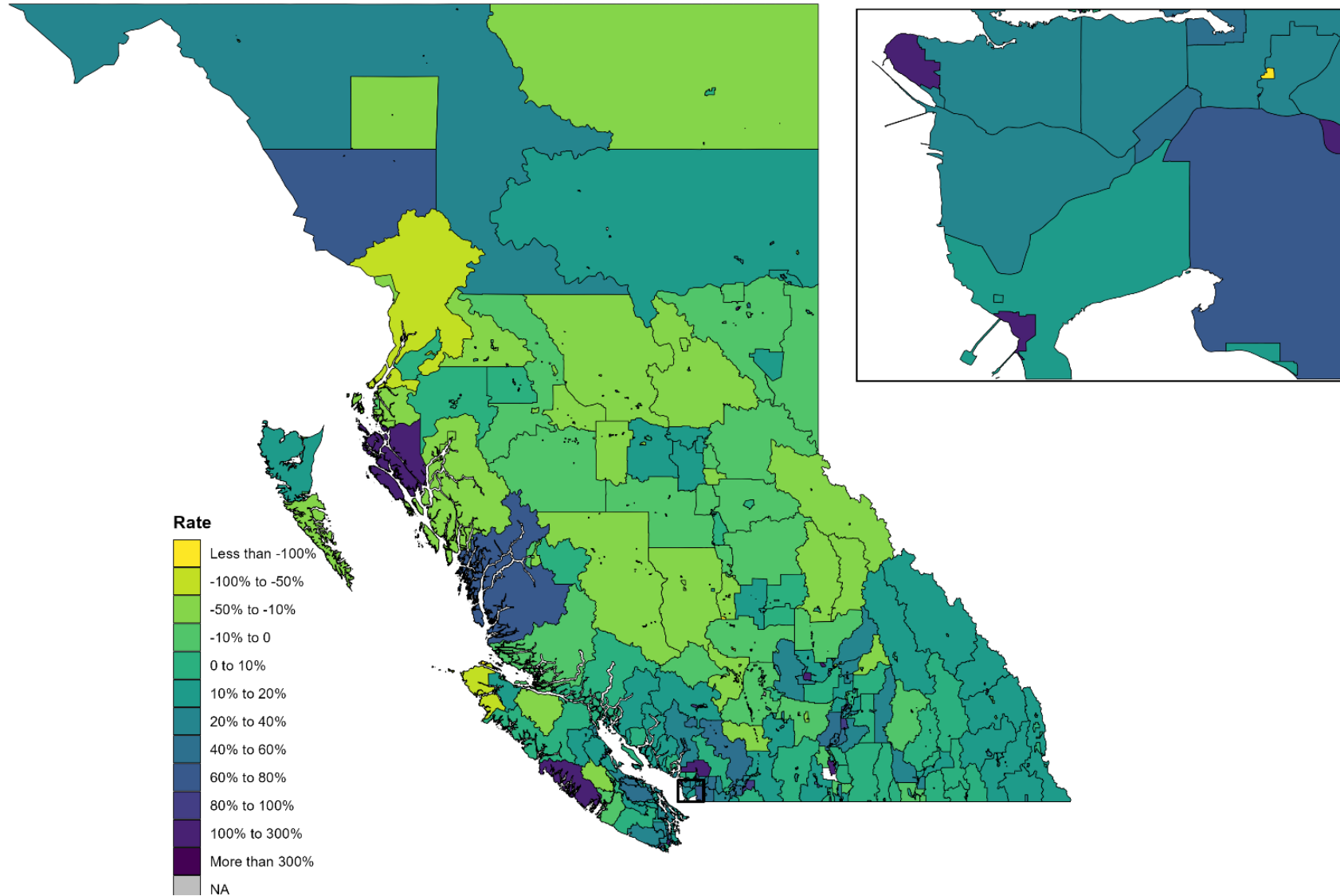


Figure A2-2B: Projected Percentage Population Change by Census Subdivision, 2002--2046

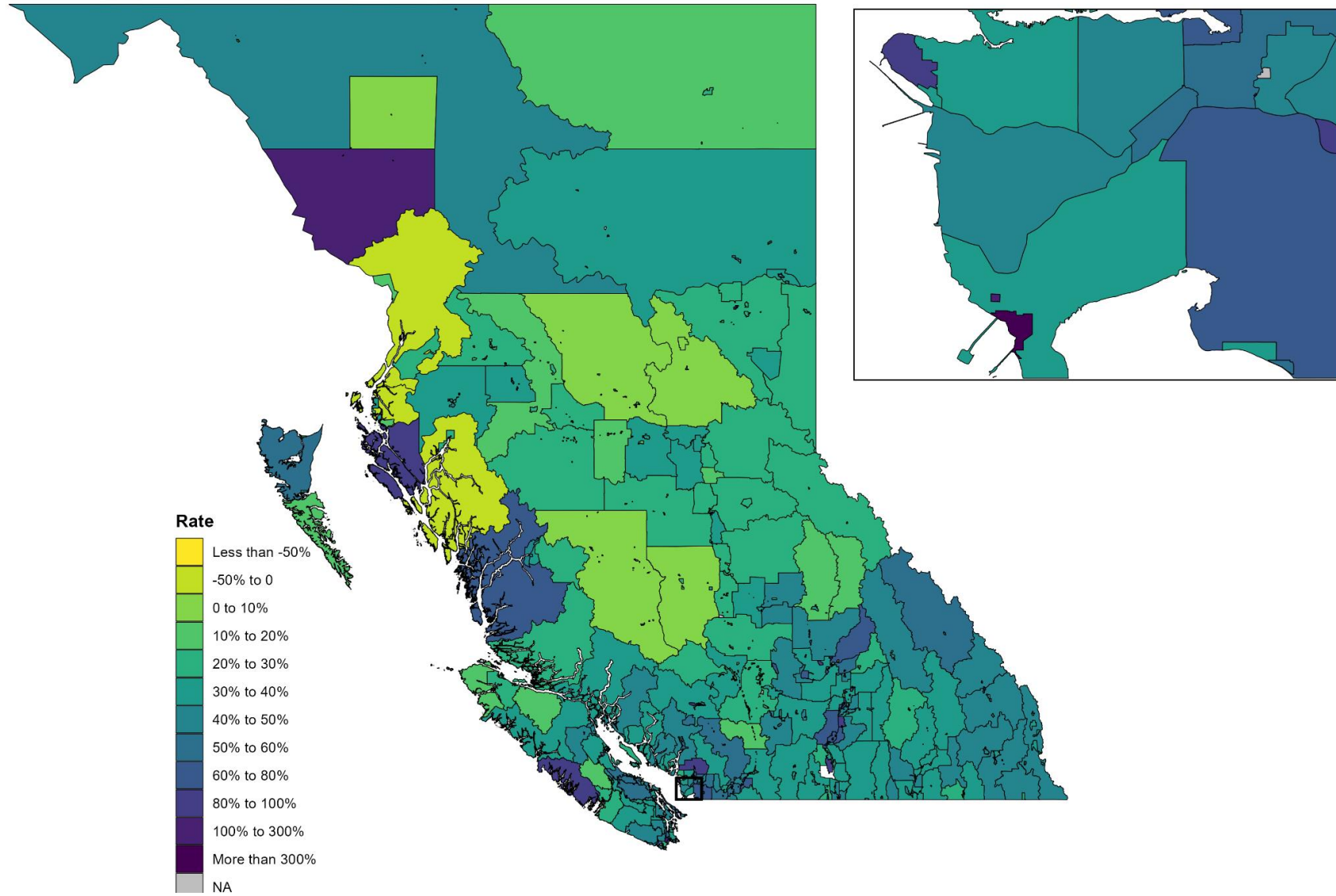


Figure A2-3A: Population Density Change by Census Subdivision, 2002-2022

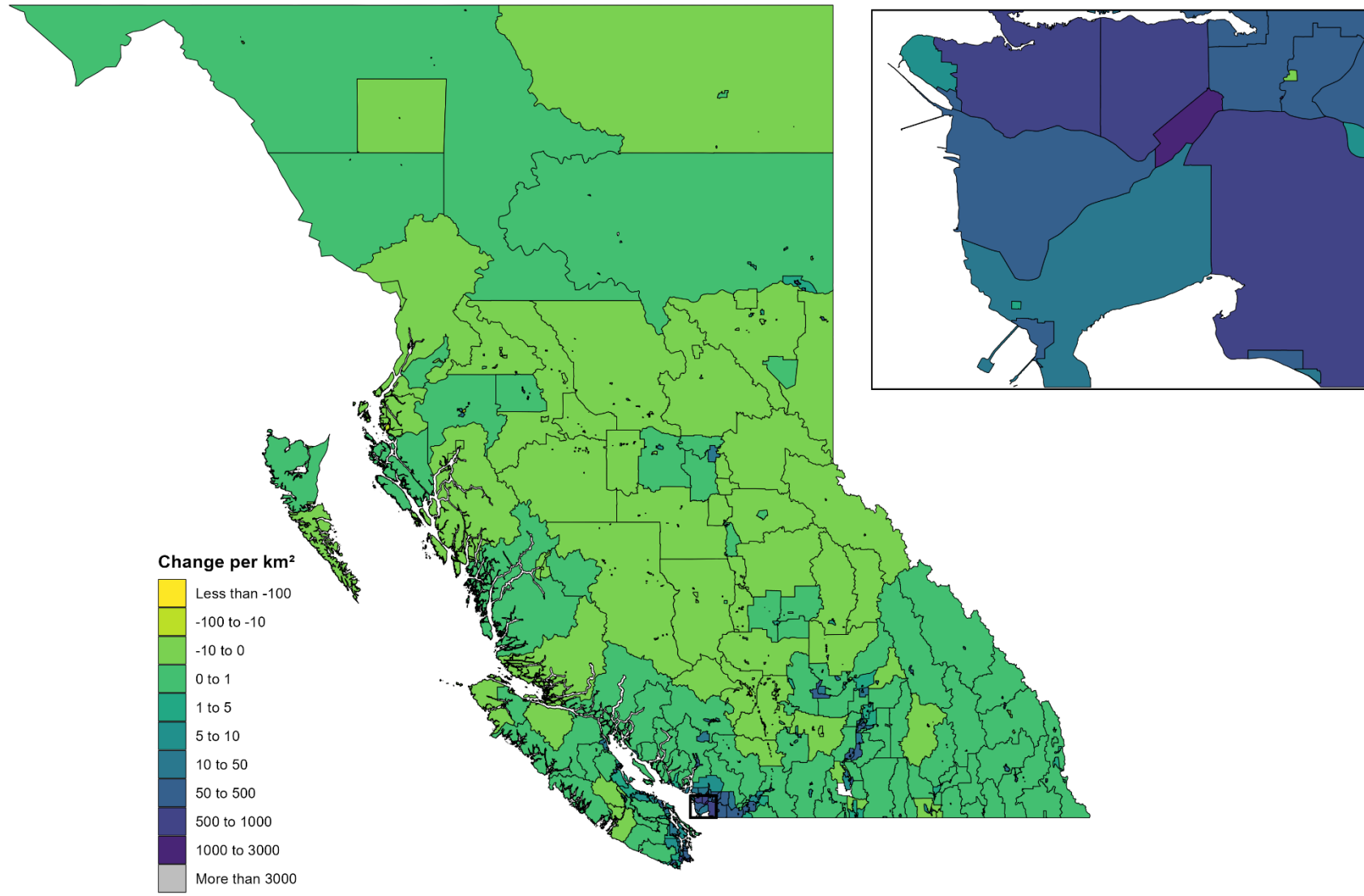
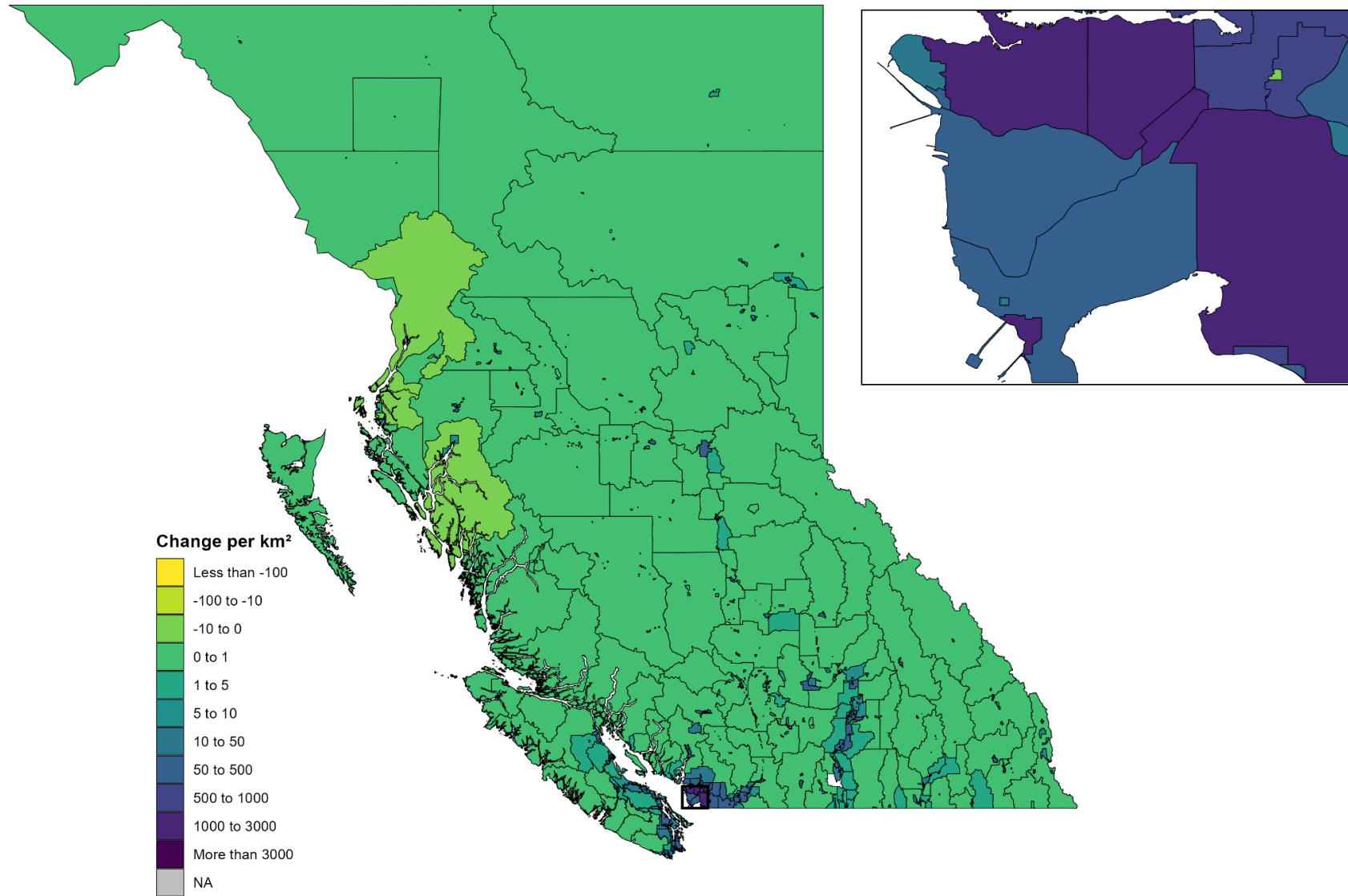


Figure A2-3B: Projected Population Density Change by Census Subdivision, 2022-2046





BCStats

BC Stats is the provincial government's leader in statistical and economic research, information, and analysis essential for evidence-based decision-making. The goal is to increase overall business intelligence—information decision makers can use.

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