



Gabriola  
Health & Wellbeing  
Collaborative

# GABRIOLA HEALTH AND WELLBEING REPORT 2024

— *taking the pulse of our island*

Photo: Bill Pope

# Territorial Acknowledgement

We live on these islands as the uninvited guests of the Snuneymuxw people and acknowledge that these are the unceded territories of the Snuneymuxw nation. We acknowledge, with respect and appreciation, the stewardship of generations of Snuneymuxw people in caring for this land. We recognize that the health of this place is fundamental to the health of our community. It is our desire to work with the Snuneymuxw to improve the health and wellbeing of all our peoples.

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The Gabriola Health and Wellbeing Collaborative (GHWC) is a voluntary network of over 50 charities, non-profits, public services, informal groups, and subject matter experts working to improve health outcomes for Gabriolans throughout their lives. GHWC takes a systems approach to health that looks at the environment, the people, and the ways they interact. Each year it sets priorities which it achieves through mutual support, shared advocacy and coordinated use of resources.

This project was managed by Collaborative member Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley, who vetted all data and text and raised funding for report production. Jennefer Laidley collected, analyzed, and organized the data and wrote the text, except where noted. Kevan Heughan of Gabriola Graphics translated the data into graphics and created the product before you.

Thanks to Collaborative members who responded to the survey conducted in 2023 and all those who provided data and information about their organizations.

The project would not have been possible without the generous support of the Gabriola Health Care Foundation, the Foundation's Kitty Heller Fund, and the Community Response Network of BC, as well as the participation of many individuals and organizations that contribute to Gabriola's community life.



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# A. Introduction and Background

The Gabriola Health and Wellbeing Collaborative (GHWC) is pleased to present the *Gabriola Health and Wellbeing Report 2024*, which was produced as a follow up to the 2020 Gabriola Health Report. This report is intended to provide all Gabriolans access to data that reflects the health of our island community.

Taking a broad approach to the definition of health, this report provides a comprehensive picture of many aspects of community health. It casts light on the health status of our population and provides information that can help us set priorities for improving the health and wellbeing of our community. It is our hope that this report will prove useful not only to community organizations in their activity and program planning but to all Gabriolans wanting to know more about their community.

For the first time, this report not only provides point-in-time data but also a trends analysis, where applicable, based on the data in the 2020 report, to show how the health of Gabriola has changed over time. As well, after a survey of GHWC members in 2023, this report includes more explanatory text and analysis than the 2020 report. Note that, in some instances, data included in the 2020 report was unavailable for update in this report. We hope to be able to include these data in the next report, which we anticipate will be released after the next Canadian census in May 2026.

## Data Sources and Methodology

As with the 2020 edition, this report takes a “social determinants of health” approach. As such, we have not only included data on issues like disease prevalence and health care availability, but also data that reflects on the broader social and economic conditions that can and do have real impacts on people’s health. Income levels, housing affordability and quality, attachment to the workforce, education levels, environmental quality, food security, social inclusion, and engagement in civic and community life are all aspects of not only healthy individuals but also a healthy community.

The data in this report comes from two sources: the 2021 Canadian Census of Population, produced by Statistics Canada, and data shared by local Gabriola organizations or gathered from their websites.

Most of the demographic and economic data in this report comes from the 2021 Gabriola Island Trust Area Census Profile.<sup>1</sup> Note that this profile includes data about residents of Mudge and Decourcy islands as well as Gabriola itself. While most Census data reflects the situation of respondents as of the May 11, 2021 census date, income data reflects full-year 2020 incomes. Also, we recognize that Census data has some limitations, including that people in some

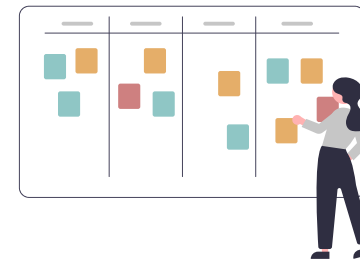
demographic groups – such as those who may be economically disadvantaged or socially excluded – have a higher rate of non-response to the Census than others. For example, since the Census is largely delivered through the mail, the experiences of people who are homeless are not considered.

Data provided by local organizations provides a more in-depth look at aspects of Gabriola life, such as issues reflecting community wellbeing, sustainability, social inclusion and civic engagement. We thank those organizations that contributed their data to the report and have highlighted their contributions in the text. We hope that future editions of this report will include even more local data to create a more robust picture of Gabriola’s health and wellbeing.

To understand how Gabriola fits within the region and the province, we have included data comparisons with other communities, where available and applicable. We chose to compare with Bowen Island, because it is a ferry-dependent Trust Island with a similar population and proximity to a large urban centre; the Nanaimo Census Metropolitan Area, because it is our major service centre encompassing urban and more rural areas; and, BC as a whole, to show how all three communities fit in the larger picture.

**We’re very pleased to announce that, after much effort, a Community Wellbeing Coordinator position will be implemented in 2024.**

In 2022, the Collaborative approached the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) to establish a paid position to coordinate health and wellbeing efforts on Gabriola. The RDN financed a feasibility study that recommended a position be established.<sup>2</sup> This position will coordinate activities across the 50+ members of the Collaborative, undertake strategic planning, provide support for funding applications, and ensure communications with various service providers, working groups, external partners, and residents.



# B. Gabriola: Its Land and People

The health and wellbeing of Gabriola’s land and its people are deeply interconnected. This section provides information about physical aspects of Gabriola, Mudge and DeCourcy islands, such as climate and geology. It also includes information about the traditional stewards of the land, the Snuneymuxw First Nation. As well, this section presents data about the people who live here, gathered primarily from the 2021 Census.

## Land

### Size and Location

Gabriola, Mudge, and DeCourcy are among more than 200 islands located in the Salish Sea between the British Columbia mainland and Vancouver Island and are dependent on regular BC Ferry service for access.



### Snuneymuxw First Nation

The Snuneymuxw are “a vibrant First Nation of the Coast Salish People, residing in the centre of Coast Salish territory on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, with villages on the Fraser River and waterways in the Gulf Islands.”<sup>5</sup> Gabriola is one of those Gulf Islands.

The Snuneymuxw have stewarded and safeguarded the land we call Gabriola from time immemorial, welcoming and supporting explorers and newcomers. On December 23, 1854, the Snuneymuxw entered a Treaty “to forever and always preserve and protect Snuneymuxw villages, enclosed fields, waterways, harvesting and gathering, and the rights to hunt and fish as formerly.”<sup>6</sup> Although the Treaty was breached within a few short years and land illegally expropriated from the Snuneymuxw people, they have persisted in ensuring their rights are restored. Their efforts have resulted in a 2021 Memorandum of Understanding with Canada and B.C., marking “a transformative shift from the extinguishment of rights, to recognizing and implementing the Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854.”<sup>7</sup> One thousand acres on Gabriola (roughly 7%) has been set aside as part of the effort to redress Treaty breaches.

### Ecosystem

Gabriola Island lies within the Coastal Douglas-fir Moist Maritime Biogeoclimatic Zone (CDFmm), which is the smallest and rarest of 16 ecological zones in BC and part of the larger Coastal Douglas-fir Conservation Partnership Region. Unfortunately, the region “is at risk of losing many of the species, relationships, and healthy ecosystems that define it. Located on southeastern Vancouver Island, small areas of the Lower Mainland and islands in the Salish Sea, the natural ecosystems are competing with human pressures, including development, industrial landscape use, increasing numbers and frequency of invasive species, and increased recreational use. Some of the ecosystems associated with the CDFCP Region, such as Coastal Bluffs, Garry Oak



Photo: Nola Johnston

ecosystems, and wetland ecosystems, have lost well over 75% of their former area.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, climate change is having wide-ranging impacts on our biogeoclimatic subzone. As just one example, the hotter, drier summers are causing the composition of the forest canopy to shift.

## Climate

Gabriola has a “Mediterranean” climate, with wet winters and dry summers. Based on data compiled by Eric Boulton between 2011 and 2017, Gabriola had an average of 113 rainy days per year and 4.6 days with more than 2 mm of snowfall. Daily average temperatures were 4.0° C in winter (Dec-Feb) and 15.8° C in summer (June-Aug), with extreme temperatures as high as 27° C and as low as -10° C. Gabriola is warming quickly, however. Over the period from 2011 to 2017, the average temperature increased by a total of 2° C. Over the same 7-year period the global average temperature increased by 0.3° C.<sup>9</sup> Expected extreme heat and cold events will disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, especially those who are homeless, unhoused, or underhoused.



## Geology

Gabriola Island is made out of sandstone, shale and conglomerate of the Cretaceous Nanaimo Group (rocks that are also found on other Gulf Islands and part of the eastern edge of Vancouver Island). The rocks of Gabriola were deposited in the ocean between about 75 and 65 million years ago and are made up of sediments that came from as far away as the Rocky Mountains. The sandstone and conglomerate are resistant to erosion and so they form cliffs and hills and rocky points. The weaker shale forms valleys and inlets. The Nanaimo Group rocks are also covered with a thin layer of glacial sediments and, in many places, limited good soil.<sup>10</sup>



Photo: Gabriola Graphics

## Water

Most Gabriolans rely on groundwater for their water supply, but an increasing number are becoming more dependent on rainwater collected from roof tops. While there is plenty of groundwater beneath us, it can be difficult to get it out of the rocks, and sometimes the quality is questionable. Some wells produce water that is sulphury, or iron rich and so not good to drink, and some produce water with more fluoride than is recommended. Rainwater is good to drink, but climate change is making our rain less predictable, forcing an increasing number of Gabriolans to depend on water imported from Vancouver Island.<sup>11</sup>

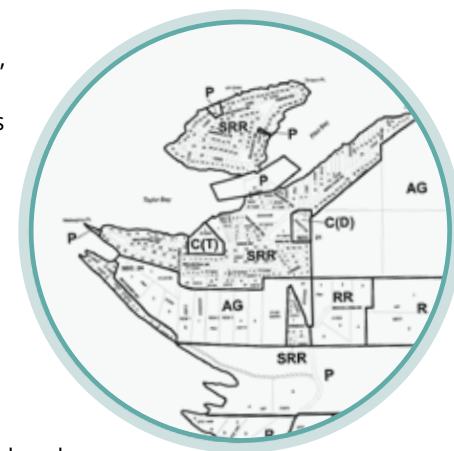


The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) promotes the collection of rainwater to reduce stress on local aquifers and rivers, leaving more water available for communities and environmental needs, including maintaining critical base flow in streams to protect fish and aquatic health and helping reduce saltwater intrusion in coastal areas. The RDN’s Rainwater Harvesting Rebate program provides up to \$1,000 for a cistern and associated collection system expenses.<sup>12</sup>

## Land Use

Under the authority of the Islands Trust, Gabriola’s lands are divided into a number of “zones” in which certain uses and activities are allowed. These zones are laid out in Gabriola’s Official Community Plan (OCP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB).<sup>13</sup>

The current zoning designations include Residential Zones of different sizes, Resource Zones for agriculture, forestry, and conservation, Commercial and Light Industrial Zones including the Village and other areas, and Recreational and Institutional Zones for parks, the cemetery, day care, and the museum. A number of Water Zones are also outlined, for general, commercial, and industrial use as well as protected areas. Mudge and DeCourcy islands have their own Official Community Plans that outline permitted uses on those lands.



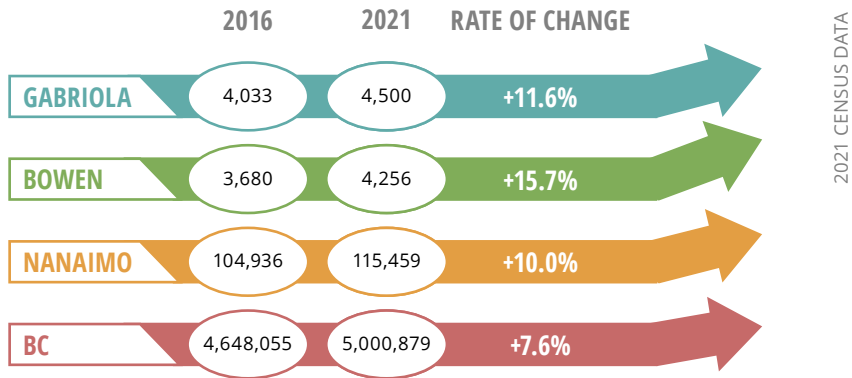
Gabriola’s OCP and LUB are currently under review by the Local Trust Council. Important decisions have to be made to find the right balance between using land for human activity and preserving and protecting environmental values. It will be important for community members to get involved in the review to have their voices heard.

# People

This section examines various aspects of the people of Gabriola through Census data related to total population, population change, births and deaths, movement of people on and within Gabriola, age, gender, sexual orientation, Indigenous identity, visible minority status, and various features of Gabriola's households and families.

## Total Population

As of the Census collection date in May 2021, there were 4,500 people living on Gabriola. Note that BC Medical Services Plan registrations indicated a population of 4,733 Gabriolans as of August 2022.<sup>14</sup>



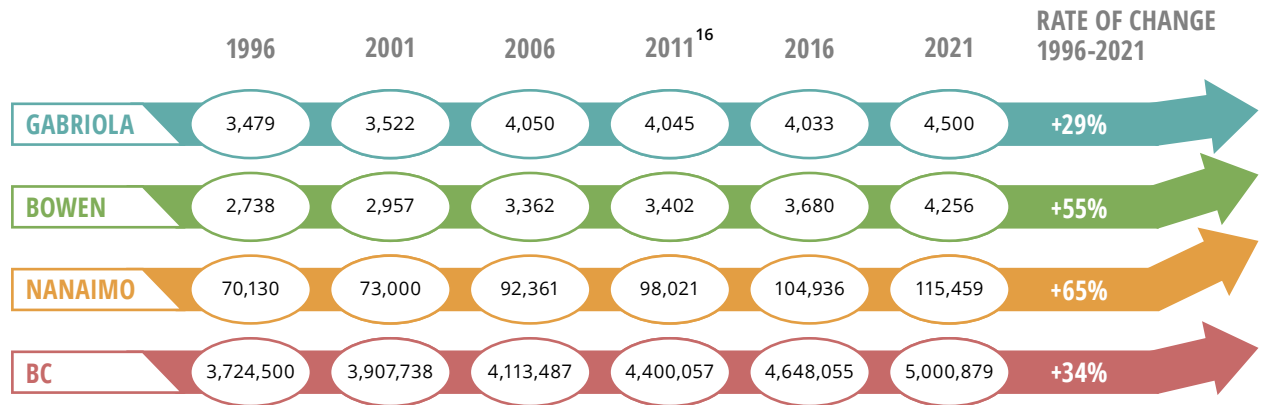
**TREND:** Gabriola's population grew by nearly 12% in the five years between the 2016 and 2021 censuses. This compares with a higher growth rate on Bowen Island and lower growth rates in Nanaimo and BC.

## Population Change

In the 25 years between the 1996 and 2021 censuses, Gabriola's population increased by 29%. This is a much lower rate than the rate in Nanaimo and on Bowen Island, and a slightly lower rate than that for all of BC.

The five-year period that saw the most growth on Gabriola was between 2001 and 2006, with a growth rate of 14.9%, followed by 2016-2021, which saw 11.6% growth.

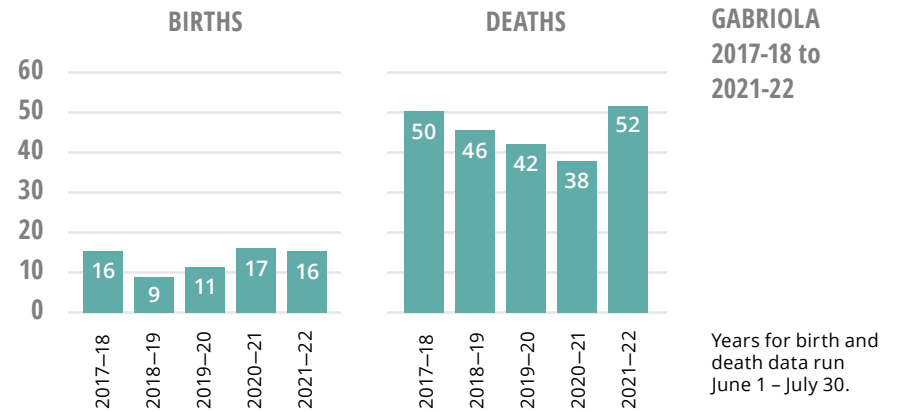
The years between 2006 and 2016 actually saw negative growth – that is, a loss of population.



CENSUS DATA - ALL COMPARATORS

## Births and Deaths<sup>15</sup>

Many fewer births occur on Gabriola than deaths. In the five-year span between 2017 and 2022, the average number of births was 13.8 and the average number of deaths was 45.6. Population growth on Gabriola in that timespan was not driven by people being born here.

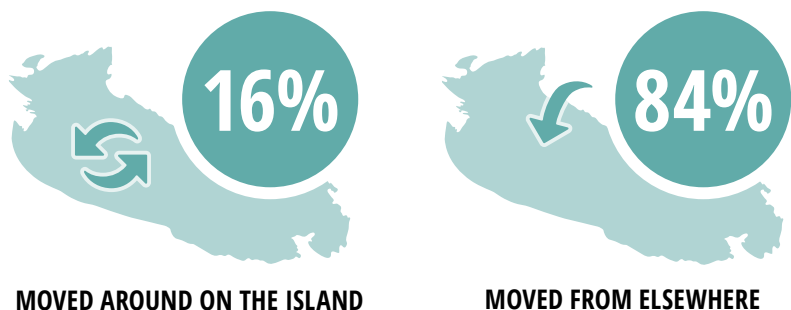




## Mobility

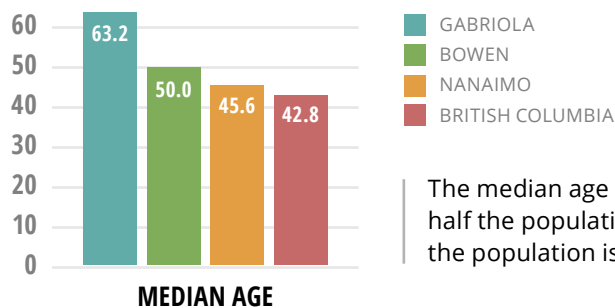
Between 2016 and 2021, Gabriolans mostly stayed where they were – nearly 62% did not move in that five-year period. However, of those who did move, the vast majority, or about 84%, moved to Gabriola from another community, while only about 16% moved from one residence to another on the island. Unfortunately, the Census does not give us data on how many Gabriolans moved off the island in the five-year period.

### MOBILITY 2016-2021



**TREND:** A smaller proportion of Gabriolans moved in the five years prior to the 2016 Census (32%) than prior to the 2021 Census (38%). However, a much larger proportion of people who did move came from off-island in 2021 (84%) as opposed to in 2016 (68%).

## Median Age



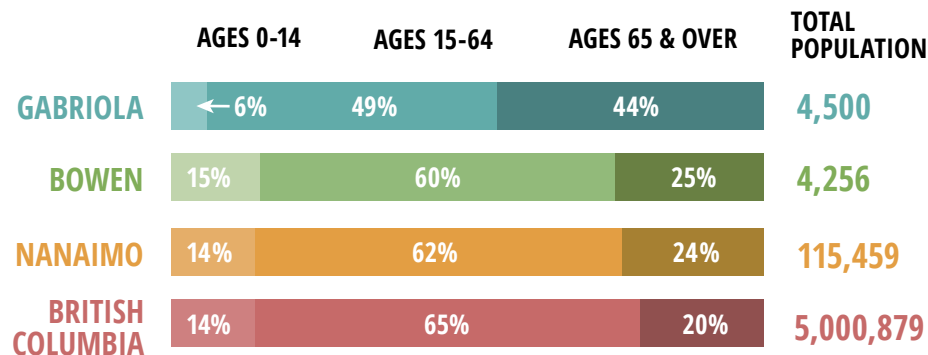
The median age is the age at which half the population is older and half the population is younger.

**TREND:** Gabriola's population is much older than our comparator communities.

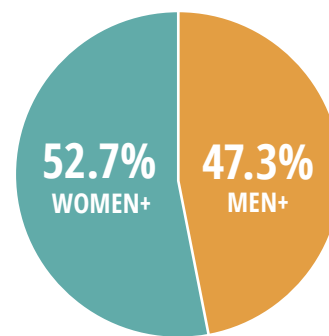
Between 2016 and 2021, Gabriola's median age increased by just over two years and Bowen's by just over one year, while in both Nanaimo and British Columbia the median age has actually decreased very slightly, by less than one year in both instances.

## Age Distribution

The largest proportion of residents on Gabriola is those of working age (49%), while the second highest is those of retirement age (44%). This is very different than our comparator communities, where the majority of the population – 60% or more – is of working age, and only one quarter or less is of retirement age. As well, only 6% of Gabriolans are 14 years or younger, whereas children make up more than twice that proportion in our comparator communities.



## Gender

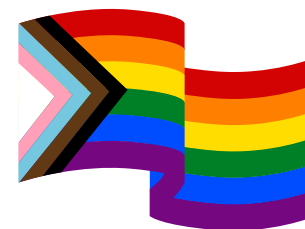


The gender breakdown of Gabriolans in 2021 was 47.3% men+ and 52.7% women+.

The 2021 Census was the first to ask about sex at birth, and the first to include gender distinctions in data that is analysed by gender. However, Statistics Canada has grouped cis- and trans-gendered people together into the two categories of “men+” and “women+” in order to address confidentiality concerns, particularly for smaller communities.<sup>17</sup>

## 2SLGBTQIA+

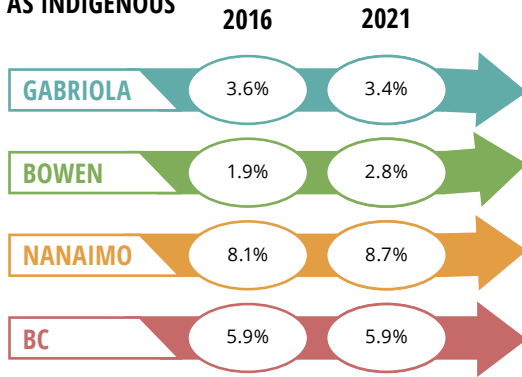
A 2016 survey indicated that almost 5% of the population on Gabriola self-identifies as two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, or non-binary.<sup>18</sup> Given that the Census does not capture this data, and a full survey of the population has not been done that would provide more up-to-date, accurate data, this proportion may be too low.



## Indigenous Identity

In 2021, only about 1 in 29 Gabriolans identified as Indigenous, which is a smaller proportion than in both Nanaimo and BC, although larger than on Bowen Island. Nanaimo's much higher proportion is to be expected given that Snuneymuxw reserve lands are in the Nanaimo Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Gabriola is part of the unceded territories of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. Historically, more than 5,000 Snuneymuxw lived on Gabriola.<sup>19</sup>

### PROPORTION OF RESIDENTS WHO IDENTIFY AS INDIGENOUS



**TREND:** The proportion of Gabriola's population that identifies as Indigenous has declined over the past five years, from 3.6% to 3.4%.<sup>20</sup> However, the actual number of Indigenous-identifying people increased (from 145 to 155), which simply means that the proportion of non-Indigenous-identifying people on Gabriola has increased more than the proportion of those identifying as Indigenous.

## Visible Minority Status

The Census defines "visible minority" as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".<sup>21</sup>

Gabriola is extremely homogeneous. We are a very "white" community with a very small proportion of residents from visible minority communities.

Ethno-cultural Identity	2016		2021	
	% of Pop.		% of Pop.	
White ("Not a visible minority")	97.6%	97.6%	98.7%	98.7%
Black	0.5%	2.1%	0.2%	1.3%
Korean	0.4%		0.0%	
Japanese	0.4%		0.4%	
Chinese	0.2%		0.2%	
Filipino	0.2%		0.0%	
Latin American	0.2%		0.2%	
Southeast Asian	0.2%	0.0%		

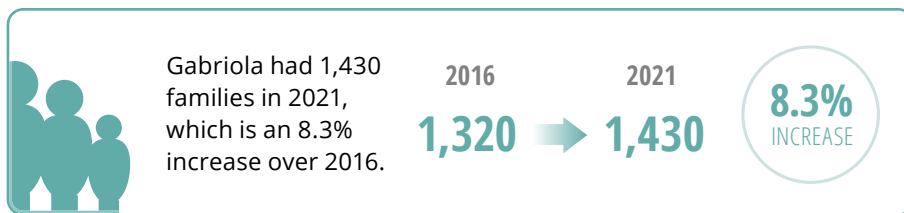
Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

**TREND:** The proportion of the Gabriola population that identifies as "not a visible minority" has increased over the last five years, while the proportion of the population that is characterized as "visible minority" has decreased.

## Families

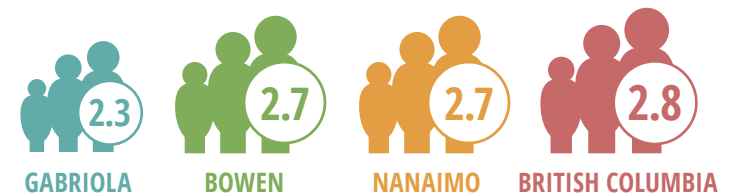
A family is a married or common-law couple, with or without children, a lone parent and their children, or a grandparent and their grandchildren (if the grandchildren's parents are not present).<sup>22</sup> It does not include people living alone.

### Total Families



### Average Family Size

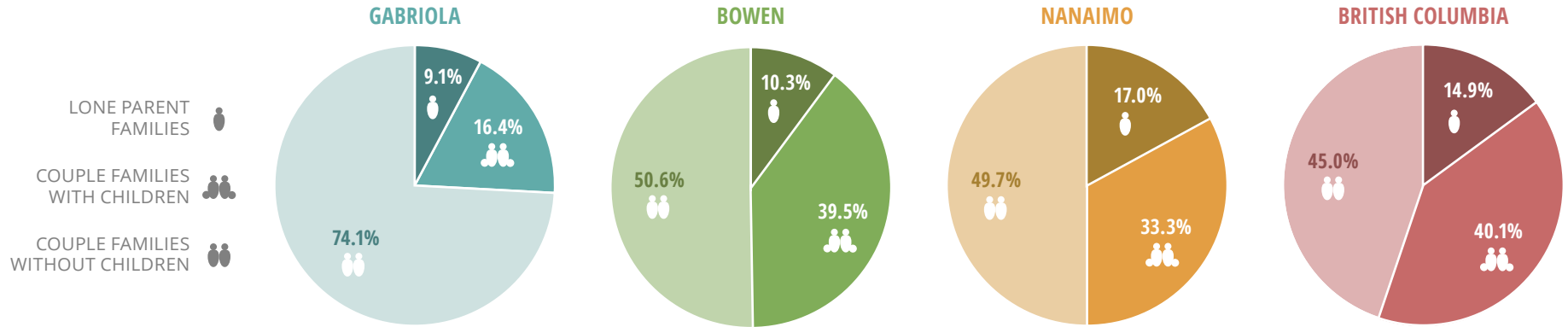
Gabriola's families are slightly smaller than our comparator communities. This likely relates to the higher overall age of our community and the smaller size of our households.



## Family Composition

Nearly three-quarters of Gabriola families are couples without children. Slightly more than one-quarter, whether couples or single parents, do have children.

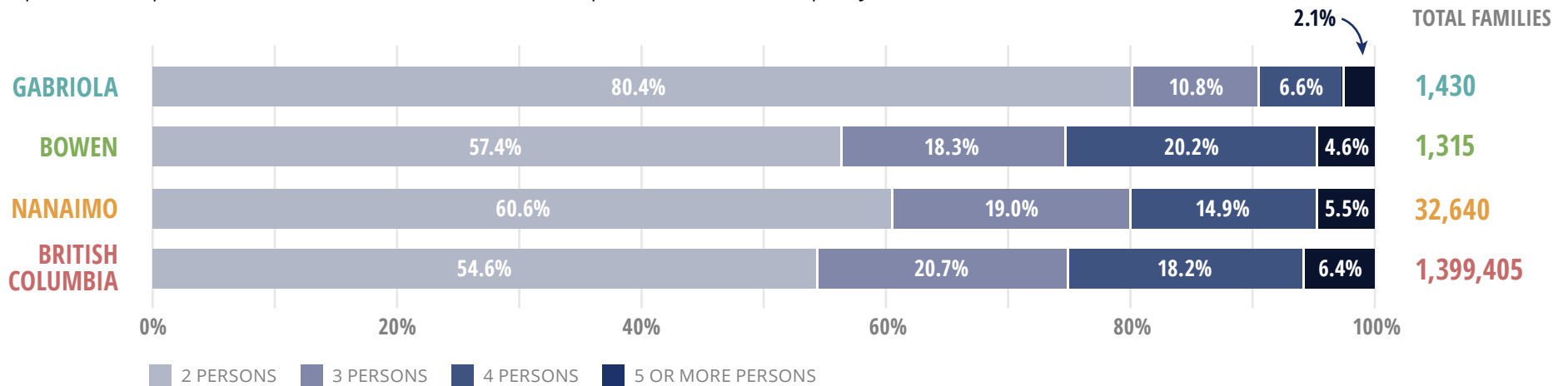
Our comparator communities have a much higher proportion of couple families with children – nearly half of Bowen’s families have children, while more than half of Nanaimo and BC families have children. The differences between Gabriola and our comparator communities align with the relatively higher age of our population and our household composition.



**TREND:** Gabriola had a higher proportion of lone parent families in 2021 than it did in 2016 (9.1% vs 8.0%) and a lower proportion of couple families with children (16.4% vs 17.8%), while the proportion of couple families without children was virtually unchanged (74.1% vs 74.2%). The actual number of lone parent families increased by 24% (from 105 to 130), while couple families without children increased by 8% (from 980 to 1060) and couple families with children stayed the same (235). The total number of families increased by 8% (from 1,320 to 1,430).<sup>23</sup>

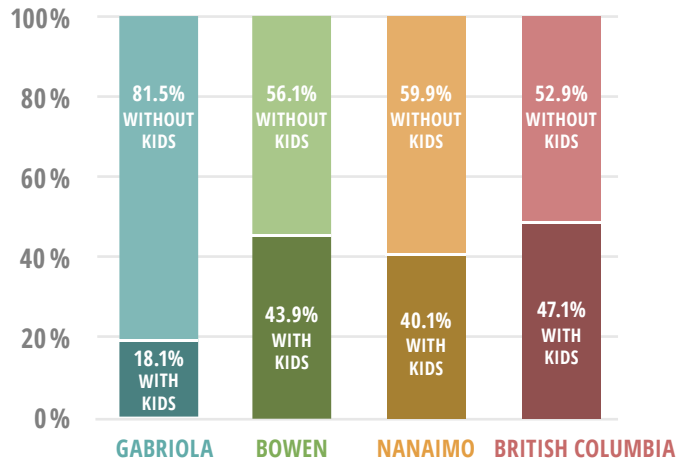
## Families by Size

The vast majority of families on Gabriola are made up of two people, as shown in the family composition data below. At 80%, we far surpass our comparator communities on this issue, where two person families make up only between 55% and 61% of families.



## Couple Families - With and Without Children

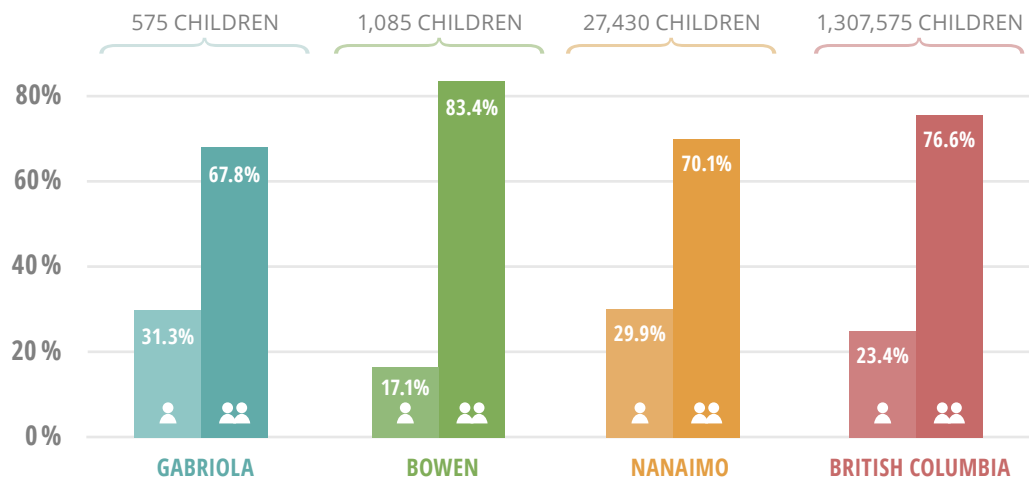
More than 80% of couple families on Gabriola have no children. This is very different from our comparator communities, wherein between 53% and 60% of couple families do have children. This difference likely reflects the higher median age of our population.



**TREND:** The proportion of couples with and without children on Gabriola has not changed significantly between 2016 and 2021. This is also the case in our comparator communities.

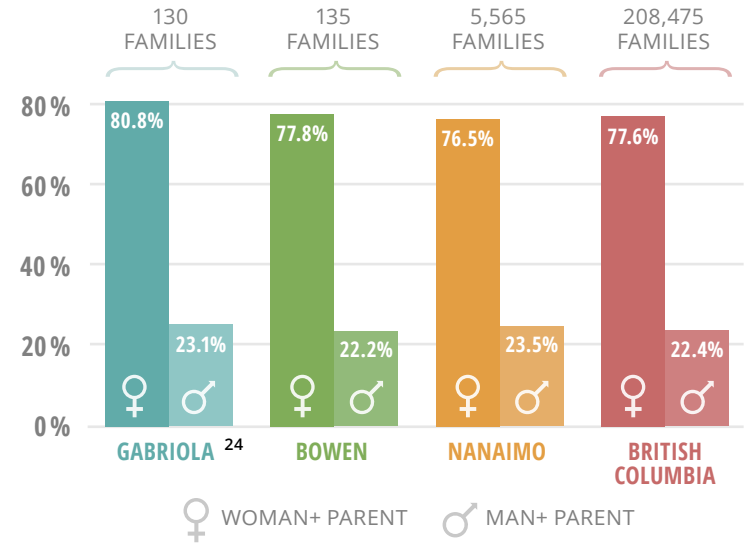
## Children in Couple and Single Parent Families

Slightly more than two-thirds of children on Gabriola live in a two-parent family, and nearly one-third live in a one-parent family. This is different than the proportions in our comparator communities, wherein more children live in two-parent families and fewer live in one-parent families.



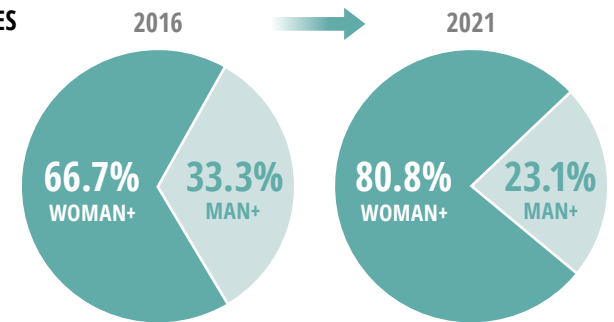
## Lone Parent Families – Sex of Parent

Slightly more than three quarters of Gabriola's lone parent families are headed by women+ while slightly fewer than one-quarter are headed by men+. This corresponds closely to the gender breakdown of lone parent families in our comparator communities. See the Gender section on page 5 for more information about the man+ and woman+ categories.



**TREND:** Nearly one-third of single-parent families on Gabriola were headed by men in 2016, but in 2021 that proportion decreased to just under one-quarter. A significant increase in the proportion of single parent families headed by women and woman-identifying people has occurred on Gabriola between 2016 and 2021.

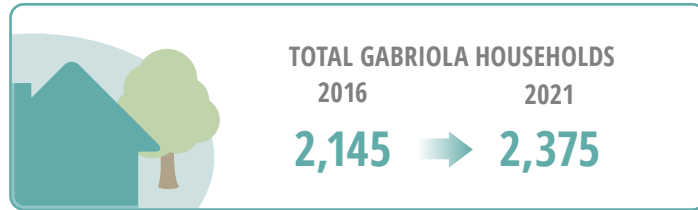
## LONE PARENT FAMILIES - SEX OF PARENT



## Households

A household is a person or a group of people who live in the same dwelling. This may be one or more families sharing the dwelling, a group of unrelated people, or someone living alone.<sup>25</sup>

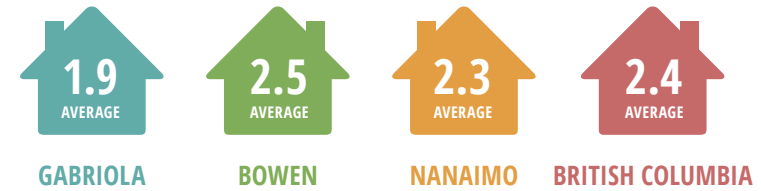
### TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS - GABRIOLA



Gabriola had 2,375 households in 2021, which is a 10.7% increase since 2016.

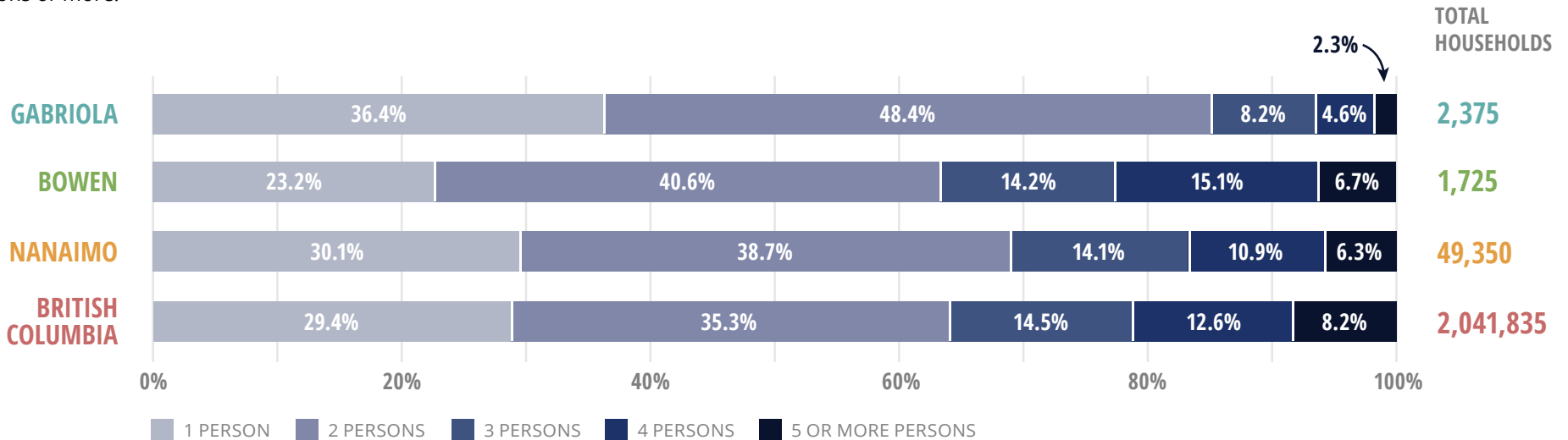
## Average Household Size

The average household on Gabriola is made up of just under 2 people, while our comparator communities all have slightly more people per household.



## Households by Size

Most households on Gabriola are made up of two people, with people living alone the second largest group. Our household makeup is different from our comparator communities, wherein more households are larger. We have the largest proportion of one-person and two-person households of the four communities, and the smallest proportion of households of three persons or more.



## Household Type

A one-family household (without additional persons) is a married or common-law couple or lone parent and any children living with them.

A one-person household is made up of a single person living alone.

A two-or-more-person non-family household is one where two or more people live together but are not related (e.g., roommates).

A one-family household (with additional persons) is one where that family has additional people living with them who are not related to them.

A multi-generational household is one with three or more generations of the same family living together.

A multiple-family household contains more than one family.<sup>26</sup>

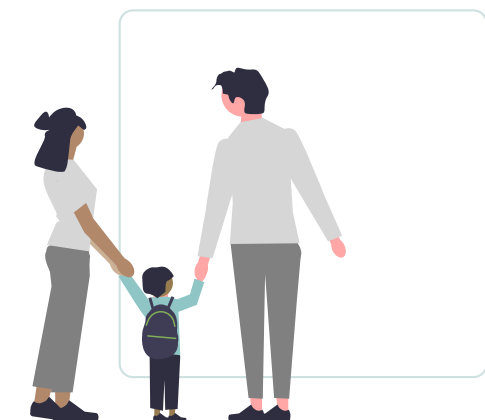
More than one-half of households on Gabriola are made up of one family, while one-third are single persons. Households with two or more people living together make up slightly less than 5%, and all other household types together make up 4.1%.

Our comparator communities are different, with higher proportions of one-family households and smaller proportions of single-person households. They also have a significantly higher proportion of multigenerational households. Only Bowen Island has a lower proportion of two-or-more-person non-family households than the other comparator communities.

	GABRIOLA	BOWEN	NANAIMO	BRITISH COLUMBIA
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	2,375	1,725	49,350	2,041,835
One-family Households (Without Additional Persons)	54.7%	66.1%	56.4%	56.7%
One-person Households	36.4%	23.2%	30.1%	29.4%
Two-or-more-person Non-family Households	4.6%	2.9%	5.7%	5.3%
One-family Households (With Additional Persons)	2.7%	4.3%	4.6%	3.9%
Multigenerational Households	0.8%	2.3%	2.4%	3.7%
Multiple-family Households	0.6%	1.2%	0.8%	1.0%

**TREND:** While this is not shown in the table above, Census data shows that a higher proportion of Gabriola households in 2021 were two or more people not in a family (i.e., roommates) than in 2016 (4.6% vs 3.0%).

As well, there was a decrease in one-family households (59.9% to 54.7%) and a small decrease in multiple family households (0.9% to 0.6%). Single-person households stayed the same, at 36.4%.



# C. Social Determinants Of Health

The social determinants of health are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.<sup>27</sup> Access to clean air, water, a habitable climate, appropriate and affordable housing, nutritious food, the ability to make a living, safe working conditions, education, and health care services, as well as feeling included in your community and having a voice in decisions that affect you, are integral to community health.

## Environmental Health

### Conservation and Protection

Conservation and protection of Gabriola’s unique ecology is shared by many organizations such as the Islands Trust and Trust Conservancy, the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust, Gabriola Streamkeepers, Gabriola Island Shore Keepers, and Sustainable Gabriola. A variety of strategies and activities are employed to protect and conserve landforms and species; information about only some of these is included below.

### Protected Land, Parks and Trail

#### LAND

The Gabriola Land & Trails Trust (GaLTT) focuses on conservation of Gabriola’s unique Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem, which is under threat from the effects of development and climate change (see page 2). GaLTT identifies priority ecosystems for protection, raises funds for land acquisition, establishes and maintains conservation covenants with private landholders, and supports people who are trying to protect natural habitats on their own lands through initiatives like the Nature Stewards and Conservation Covenants programs.<sup>28</sup>

### Protected and Unprotected Land

Nearly 20% of the total Islands Trust area is protected by public and non-profit organizations<sup>31</sup>. On Gabriola, only 12.06%, or 701.58 hectares, is protected.<sup>32</sup>

### Meeting the Protected Land Target

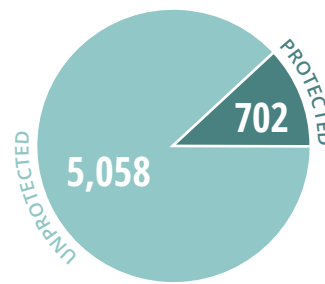
The United Nations set a land protection target of 17% for 2020.<sup>33</sup> Only 12.06% of Gabriola is protected as of 2024. We need to protect another 277.62 hectares to meet the target.

#### TRAILS

There are currently 170 kilometres of hiking trails on Gabriola.<sup>29</sup> The Gabriola Land & Trails Trust (GaLTT) works with government agencies and local landowners to develop and maintain hiking trails, and has a multi-year plan to establish a continuous system of publicly accessible trails from one end of the island to the other, running between Descanso Bay and Drumbeg Park.<sup>30</sup>

#### PARKS AND SHORE ACCESSES

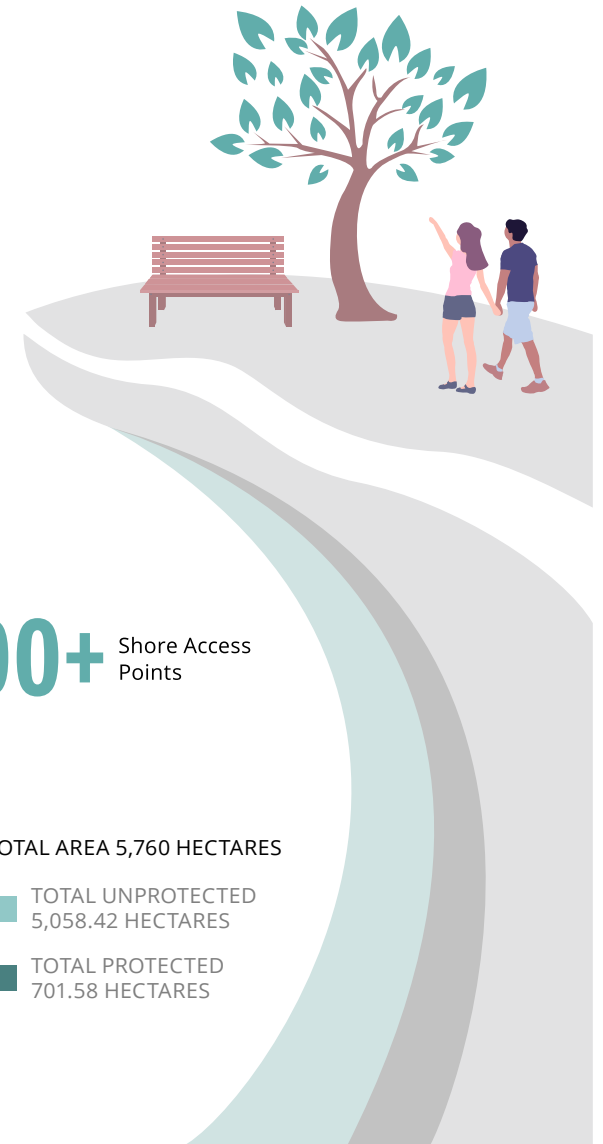
- 3** Provincial Parks
- 2** Regional Parks
- 22** Community Parks
- 100+** Shore Access Points



TOTAL AREA 5,760 HECTARES

TOTAL UNPROTECTED 5,058.42 HECTARES

TOTAL PROTECTED 701.58 HECTARES



## Managing Invasive Plants

Invasive plants are spreading aggressively across Gabriola and all of BC, crowding out local native plants. Some are so aggressive they even invade concrete foundations, while others are toxic to people or livestock. The Gabriola Land & Trails Trust (GaLTT)'s Invasive Species Committee leads a large and dedicated team of members and volunteers to manage invasive plants on public lands and educates islanders about how to best deal with them on their own properties. This work focuses on Scotch broom, Tansy ragwort, and Daphne laurel, but many other invasive plant species are an issue on Gabriola.<sup>34</sup>



Broombashing at Drumbeg, spring 2020

Photo: Lou Skinner

## Shoreline Habitat Protection

The Gabriola Island Shore Keepers Association (GISKA) is an organization of volunteers working to care for the marine riparian zones, beaches, estuaries, bays and their nearshore habitats for the benefit of the marine ecosystem and its inhabitants. GISKA has been involved in projects to map eelgrass and kelp beds around Gabriola, and currently monitors many Gabriola beaches for the presence of forage fish; all these components are integral to the health of the nearshore marine ecosystem. GISKA also works to identify and remove abandoned boats, which are an environmental risk and hazard to navigation, and undertakes beach cleanups and inventories the debris collected. A cleanup undertaken in May 2023 removed two pickup truck loads of garbage and recyclable materials from Gabriola beaches.<sup>35</sup>



Shoreline seaweed, summer 2020

Photo: Gabriola Graphics

## Sustainability

### Gabriola Climate 12-12-12

Between September 2022 and August 2023, Sustainable Gabriola brought the community together to seek local solutions to 12 “wicked problems” related to climate change – from local ecosystems to food security, and from Indigenous ways of knowing to health, wellbeing, and waste.<sup>36</sup> A second phase, called Climate-12 Action, moves from talk and ideas to making things happen. Six Action Teams have started work on various issues.<sup>37</sup> See the endnotes for more information.



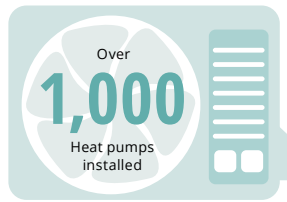
### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In 2019, personal vehicles on Gabriola emitted approximately 7,260 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>38</sup> Sustainable Gabriola is working on a project called “50 by 30”, which would see at least 50% of the vehicles on Gabriola being electric by 2030. As well, a significant proportion of Gabriola emissions come from the two new ferries, the Island Kwigwis and the Island Gwawis, each of which uses more fuel than the former ferry, the Quinsam, but carries only 70% of the number of vehicles. BC Ferries is working on the infrastructure to make them fully electric, which is scheduled to be in place by 2027.<sup>39</sup>





## Heat Pumps



In 2010, Island Futures began a project to provide heat pumps to local residents at wholesale prices, in order to reduce the use of baseboard heaters and increase energy efficiency on Gabriola. The one-thousandth heat pump was installed in November 2023. It's estimated that the total savings are 12 gWh (gigawatt hours) or the equivalent of \$150,000 worth of imported

electricity per year. Heat pumps also keep residents cool during hot spells.<sup>40</sup> More information is available at: <https://energygabriola.ca/heat-pumps-info/>

## Green Burial

In 2019, Island Futures asked two interested local islanders to take on research about the possibilities for a green burial site on Gabriola. Their work resulted in the formation of the Gabriola Island Memorial Society (GIMS). Green burials are an environmentally conscious approach to laying loved ones to rest, aiming to minimize the environmental impact typical of western burial practices. GIMS is currently working with the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust (GaLTT) to have a 40-acre forested parcel on Gabriola set aside for conservation and a small green burial cemetery.<sup>41</sup>

## Waste Vegetable Oil

Island Futures' WVO initiative, which started in 2016, aims to upcycle waste vegetable oil, creating a viable, sustainable, circular economy that could be replicated and scaled up to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Waste vegetable oil (WVO) is used to produce biodiesel as well as a purer glycerine, liquid soap, and recovered methanol. It can also be used to heat greenhouses during the winter, allowing local farmers a longer growing season and more economic opportunity. There are currently about 7,000 litres per year of WVO disposed of by Gabriola restaurants, as well as untold litres used in residential homes.<sup>42</sup>



## Recycling/Reuse

The Gabriola Island Recycling Organization (GIRO) recycled well over 188,000 kg of materials in 2022, as well as numerous items not measured by weight.<sup>43</sup>

### GIRO RECYCLING STATS (2022)

ITEM	AMOUNT	AMOUNT RECYCLED PER GABRIOLA RESIDENT
ALUMINUM	<b>3,840 pounds (1,472 kg)</b>	<b>0.85 pounds (0.33 kg)</b>
SEMI- PRECIOUS METALS	<b>\$10,361</b>	<b>\$2.30</b>
REFUNDABLES	<b>\$24,508</b>	<b>\$5.45</b>
PLASTICS (ALL TYPES)	<b>5,940 kgs</b>	<b>1.32 kgs</b>
MOTOR OIL	<b>2,800 litres</b>	<b>0.62 litres</b>
MIXED PAPER & CARDBOARD	<b>63,020 kgs</b>	<b>14 kgs</b>
GLASS (FOOD JARS)	<b>56,290 lbs (25,533 kg)</b>	<b>12.5 lbs (5.7 kg)</b>
FERROUS METALS	<b>194,660 lbs (88,296 kg)</b>	<b>43.26 lbs (19.62 kg)</b>
ELECTRONICS	<b>36 megabags</b>	<b>0.008 megabags</b>
CAR BATTERIES	<b>3,984 kgs</b>	<b>0.89 kgs</b>
TOTAL MEASURABLES IN KGS	<b>188,245 kgs</b>	<b>41.83 kgs</b>



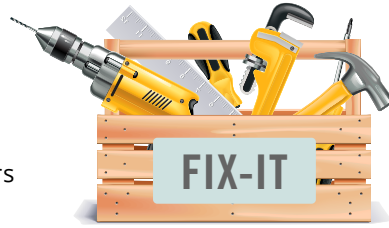
GIRO operates a Restore that sells many kinds of gently used donations. The Gabe Shop, run by the Gabriola Auxiliary for Island Health Care, also collects donations of gently used clothing, household goods, books, artwork, and jewellery and offers them for resale to support health care programs and patient comfort services on Gabriola. As well, a new store, Tuck Shop, has recently opened in the Professional Centre, which resells used clothing items on consignment.

GIRO also operates a ReLove Local textile project, which upcycles donated textiles to replace single-use products with durable, beautiful, one-of-a-kind, reusable products. This project has created over 3,000 upcycled products since its inception, with \$23,560 in sales to December 2023. Its focus on strategic expansion includes hiring a new manager, taking on new apprentices, increasing visibility, and creating new partnerships with vendors and local businesses.

GIRO is also developing its C2C Threads Makerspace project to rethink textile waste. A new building, financed in part by local donors, will allow space to develop a shredding service, markets for the shredded fibre, workshops, and a membership program.<sup>44</sup> The grand opening of the Makerspace building is scheduled for September 2024.

## Fix-It-Fairs

Sustainable Gabriola has hosted Fix-It Fairs three times a year since 2016 (except in COVID-19 pandemic years). Volunteer fixers diagnose and resolve issues with broken household items like lamps, vacuums, computers, kitchen appliances, weed whackers and more, keeping these items out of landfills and extending the life of their use.



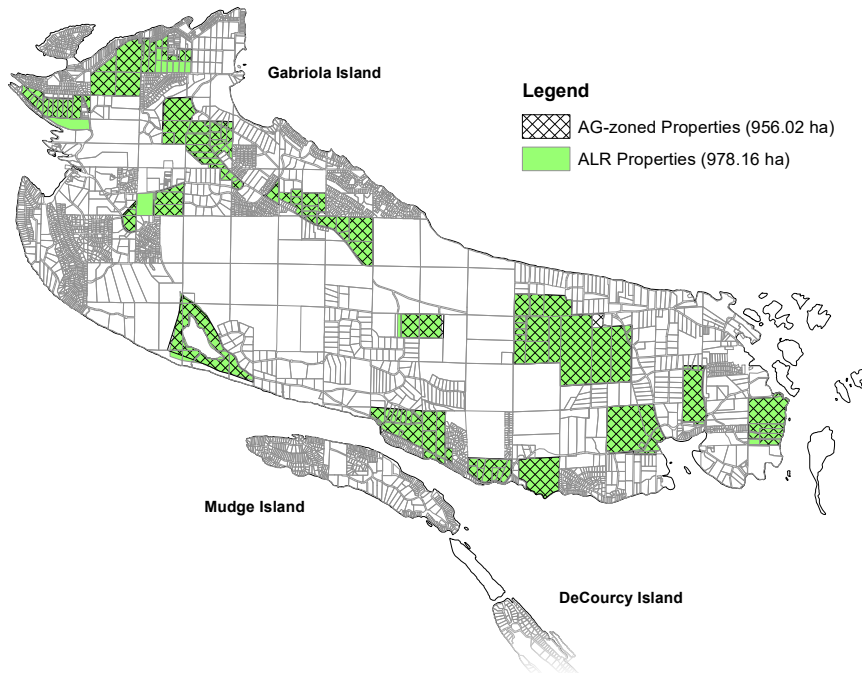
More information is available at: <https://sustainablegabriola.ca/initiatives/>

## Food Security

Food security is “the state or condition of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food to meet one’s basic dietary needs”<sup>45</sup> and is important for ensuring the health of a population.

### Agricultural Land

The map below, which was produced for the 2020 *Gabriola Health Report*, indicated that 18.6% of Gabriola’s land base is available for food production. We have not been able to confirm changes since then.



## Composting

Gabriola residents receive curbside organics pickup for kitchen food waste from the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN). Starting in March 2023, the RDN expanded the program to include small amounts of leaves, grass, and light yard trimmings. The amount of organics collected from Gabriola is not separately available from the RDN. Discussion in the community occurs sporadically about creating a local organics composting site and program. PHC composts nearly 7,000 pounds of recovered organics annually (see Food Recovery on page 15). There is no data available about the amount of composting undertaken by individuals on Gabriola for their own home use.



## Working Farms

16

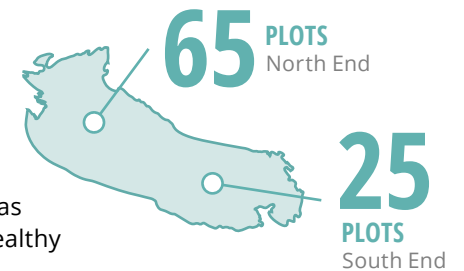
The Gabriola Agricultural Co-op website reports 16 member farms on Gabriola, whose products range from vegetables, fruits, and seeds to flowers and meats.<sup>46</sup>

Working farms in the Gabriola Trust Area



## Community Gardens

The Gabriola Commons supports a number of community garden plots used by individuals and families, both on Commons land and by agreement with Namaste Farm.<sup>47</sup> As well, the Commons hosts a large kitchen garden as well as a garden used by People for a Healthy Community’s food-related programs.



## Farmers Markets

The Gabriola Agricultural Co-op organizes the Saturday market year-round at the Agi Hall, typically for 50 weeks of the year. The Co-op also organizes a night market at the Commons on Wednesday evenings throughout the summer months, typically for 20 weeks. The number of vendors can reach 70.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the Sunday Silva Bay market at Pages Inn runs between the May and September long weekends each year.<sup>49</sup>

## PHC Food Programs

People for a Healthy Community (PHC) operates a number of food-related programs that contribute to both community and individual food security, including a weekly Grocery Program / Food Bank for people in need, as well as soup socials, a weekly hot lunch at Gabriola Elementary School (GES), breakfast and snack programs at GES, gardens, farmer's market coupons, skill building workshops, and more.<sup>50</sup>

PHC also operates a Food Recovery program, which captures unsold, excess food from Nester's Market and sorts and distributes it for use in the community. 45,025 pounds of food was recovered in 2022 and distributed in five different ways (see graphic).

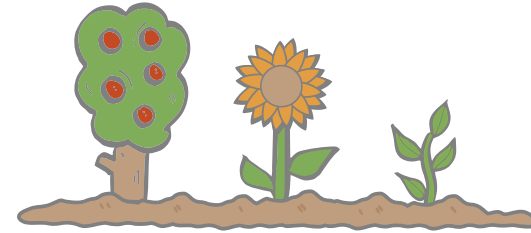


### DISTRIBUTION OF RECOVERED FOOD (2022)

Item	Amount (lbs)
Bread for people	778
Dairy for people	5,429
Produce for people	17,337
Produce for animals	14,662
Compost	6,819
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,025</b>

## PHC Garden Programs

People for a Healthy Community (PHC) operates a School Garden Program with Gabriola Elementary that runs September through November and February to June each year. The program engages all students at GES in learning how to grow food, using some of PHC's 30 garden beds at the Commons and with the help of up to 4 community volunteers. A number of other programs, including a Sunflower Project, a Spring Farm Tour, and Apple Day, contribute to students' education about the importance of local food production and to their interaction with local seniors and PHC volunteers.



PHC also runs a general garden program, engaging volunteers throughout the year and two students working 20 hours per week during the summer. One to two seasonal work bees supported by about ten volunteers ensure the PHC gardens are productive and plentiful.

About 800 lbs of produce are grown every year and used in PHC's hot lunch, grocery, and seniors' programs. Seeds are saved and provided to the Gabriola seed bank at the Commons.<sup>51</sup>

# Daily Living Conditions

## Housing

### Private Dwellings and Occupancy

A private dwelling is a place where people live that has its own private entrance.<sup>52</sup> A usual resident is someone who is the permanent resident; in other words, they live in the dwelling most of the time.<sup>53</sup>

Just over three-quarters of private dwellings on Gabriola were occupied by usual residents on the Census day, which means that slightly less than one-quarter were occupied by people who do not usually reside there. This may mean that 22% of private dwellings on Gabriola are seasonal or short-term rentals, or are owned by people who live elsewhere but visit for holidays. This is very different than in any of our comparator communities, where private dwellings were occupied by a much higher degree by their usual residents.

**TREND:** The percentage of dwellings on Gabriola that are occupied by usual residents has increased since 2016, from about 72% to nearly 78%.

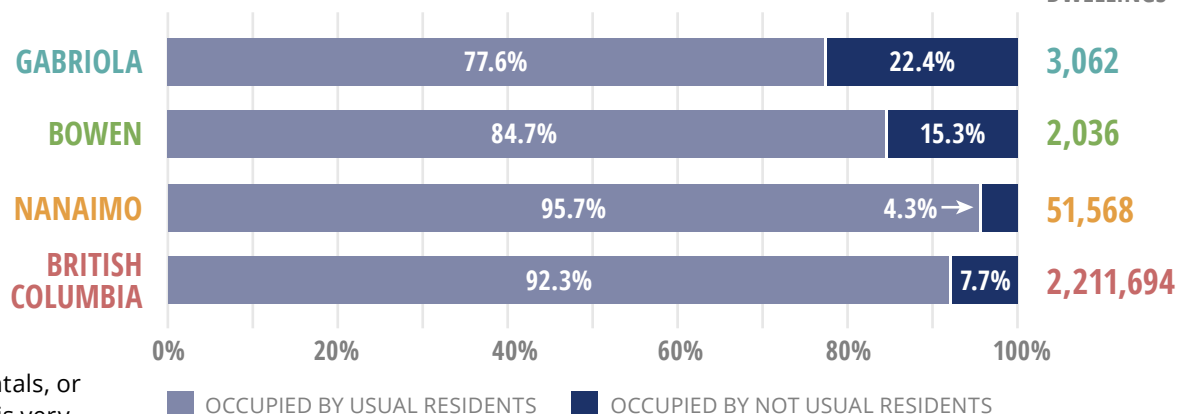
While these data are not shown in the graphic above, our comparator communities are slightly different. While Bowen Island's dwellings showed a similar trend, there was nearly no change between 2016 and 2021 in the occupancy makeup of dwellings in either Nanaimo or British Columbia as a whole.

### Housing Tenure

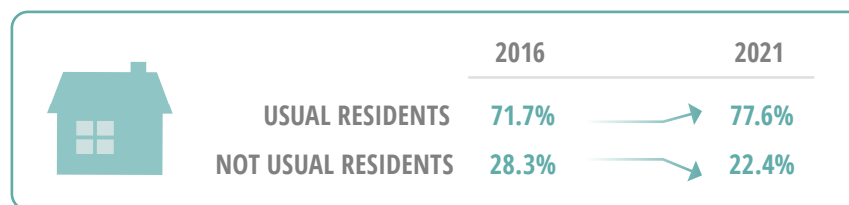
Nearly 90% of households on Gabriola own their homes, while slightly more than 10% rent. The ratio of owners to renters on Gabriola is much higher than that of both Nanaimo or British Columbia as a whole, and slightly more than on Bowen Island.<sup>54</sup>

**TREND:** The proportion of those who own their own homes on Gabriola increased from 83% to 88% between 2016 and 2021, while renters decreased from 17% to just over 11%. This trend was also seen on Bowen Island, but in Nanaimo and in British Columbia as a whole the proportion of owners dropped slightly while renters increased (note that these data are not included in the graphic at right).

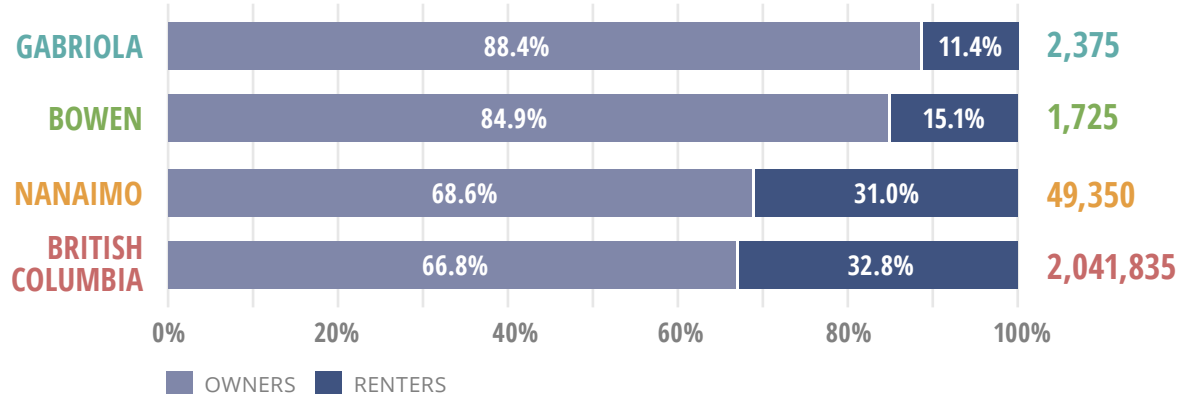
PRIVATE DWELLINGS - OCCUPANCY



TREND: PRIVATE DWELLINGS - OCCUPANCY: GABRIOLA



HOUSING TENURE



## Average Value of Dwellings

The average value of dwellings on Gabriola in 2021 was \$654,000, which was less than half that on Bowen Island, nearly the same as that in Nanaimo, and about two-thirds of the value of dwellings in BC as a whole.

**TREND:** Between 2016 and 2021, the average value of dwellings on Gabriola increased by nearly 44%, after having increased by 19% in the previous ten years. These are much lower increases than in our comparator communities, except for the 36% increase between 2016 and 2021 seen in British Columbia as a whole.

Over fifteen years, between 2006 and 2021, Gabriola's average dwelling value increased by just over 71%, which is a much lower increase than any of our comparator communities, where the average value of dwellings increased between 2006 and 2021 by about 104% in Nanaimo, 116% on Bowen Island, and 135% in British Columbia as a whole.

## Housing Condition

Housing condition refers to whether dwellings are in need of repairs (not including remodelling or additions).<sup>55</sup> Gabriola residents may also face other housing suitability issues not explored in Census data, including lack of potable water, poorly functioning septic fields, insufficient insulation, lack of kitchens and bathrooms, etc.

Nearly 8% of the dwellings on Gabriola needed major repairs in 2021. This is a higher proportion than that of any of our comparator communities.

### HOUSING IN NEED OF REPAIRS

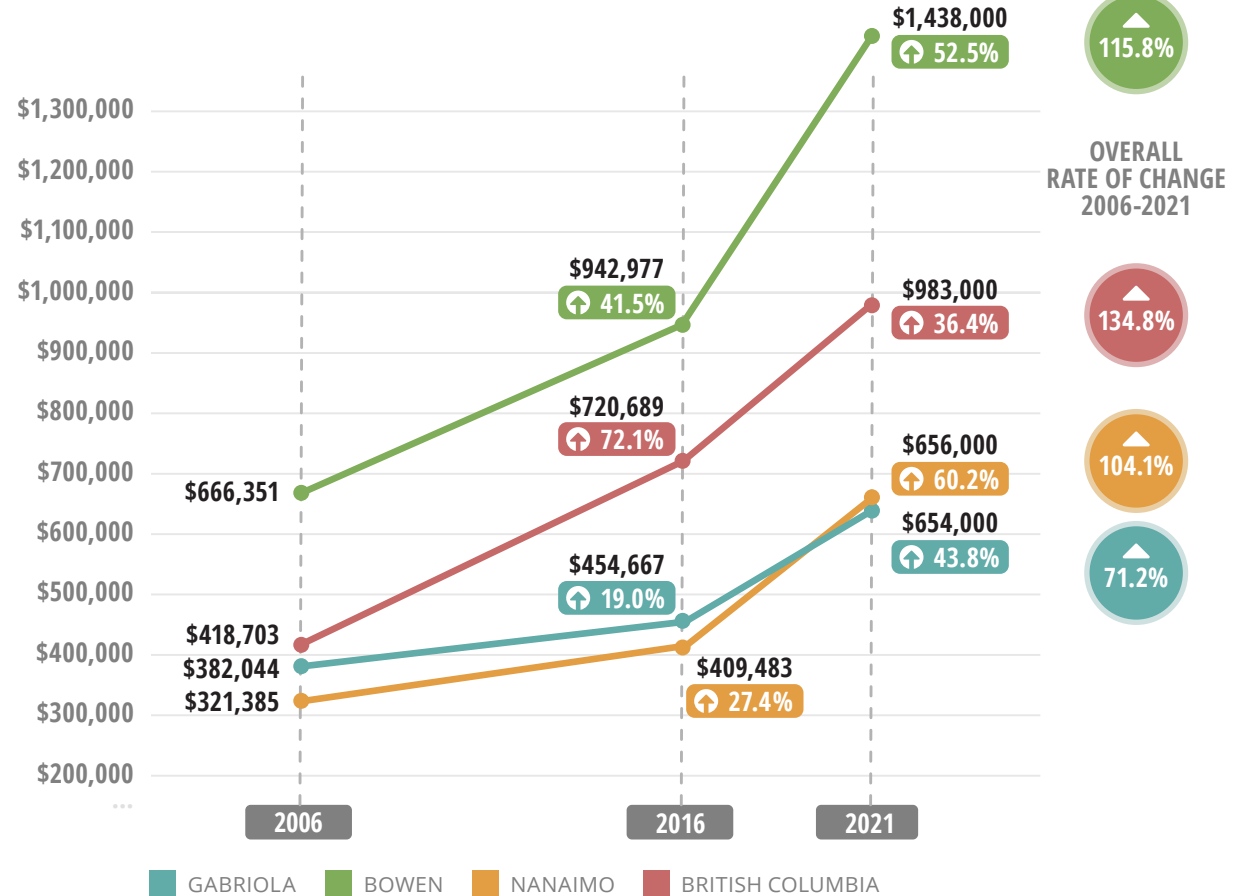
	2016	2021
<b>GABRIOLA</b>	8.9%	7.6%
<b>BOWEN</b>	7.7%	7.2%
<b>NANAIMO</b>	6.3%	5.6%
<b>BRITISH COLUMBIA</b>	6.3%	5.8%

MAJOR REPAIRS NEEDED



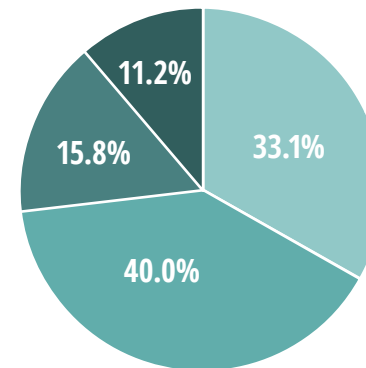
**TREND:** A lower proportion of dwellings needed major repairs in 2021 than in 2016. This may be due to an increase in new housing construction or newer houses being barged to the island rather than an improvement in existing housing conditions.

## AVERAGE VALUE OF DWELLINGS



## Age of Private Dwellings

While the majority of Gabriola's private dwellings were built before the year 2000, and most between 1981 to 2000, about one-quarter of private dwellings were built between 2001 and 2021.



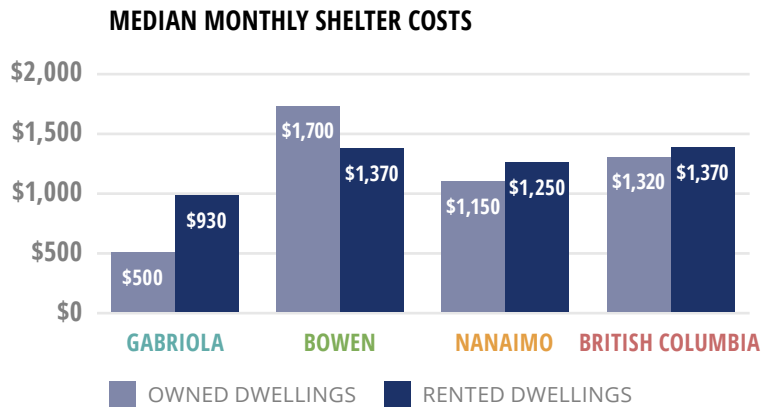
- 1980 AND BEFORE
- 1981 TO 2000
- 2001 TO 2010
- 2011-2021

## Median Monthly Shelter Costs

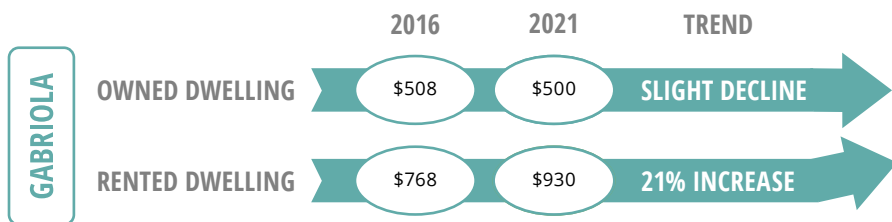
The “median” shelter cost is the point at which half of all shelter costs are higher and half are lower.

The median monthly shelter cost for people who owned their own homes on Gabriola in 2021 was \$500 while the median for people who were renting was \$930.

Median monthly shelter costs on Gabriola were far below those of our comparator communities in 2021, for both owned and rented dwellings. The very low monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings may be a reflection of more Gabriola owners having paid off mortgages than owners in our comparator communities.



**TREND:** Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings on Gabriola increased by 21% between 2016 and 2021. Conversely, median monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings decreased slightly in that same period, from \$508 to \$500. In our comparator communities, costs for rented dwellings also increased, although at a lower rate on Bowen and at a higher rate in both Nanaimo and BC overall. Costs for owned dwellings in all our comparator communities increased by between 15% and 30%.

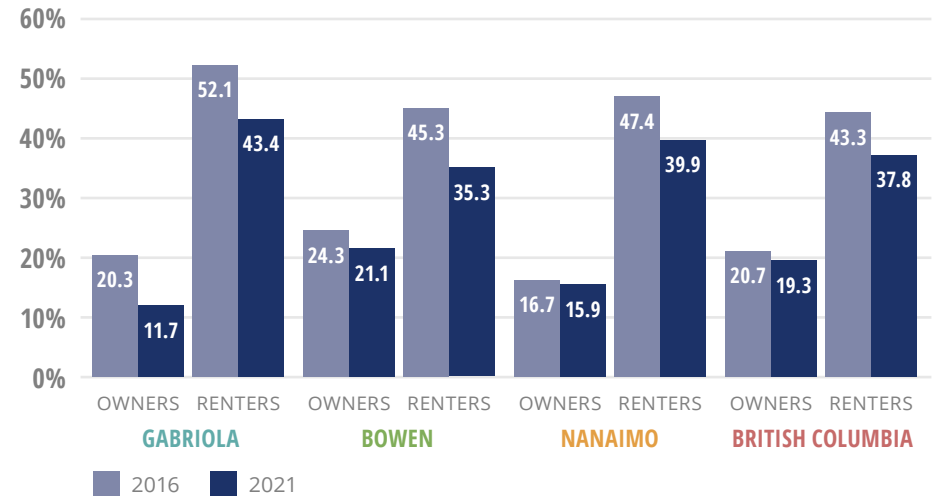


## Housing Affordability

Households that spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs are said to be living in housing that is unaffordable.<sup>56</sup>

A little more than one in ten Gabriolans who own their own homes and more than 40 percent of Gabriolans who rent are living in unaffordable housing. A smaller proportion of Gabriola owners and a larger proportion of Gabriola renters are struggling with housing affordability than those in our comparator communities.

### HOUSEHOLDS SPENDING 30% OR MORE OF INCOME ON SHELTER



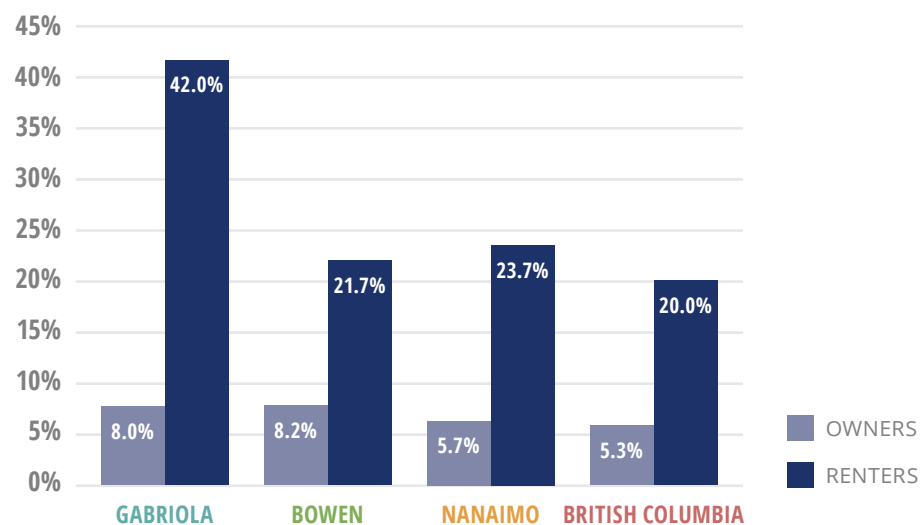
**TREND:** The proportion of owners and renters that are struggling with housing affordability on Gabriola, and in all its comparator communities, has declined between 2016 and 2021, although Gabriola’s have declined more than the others. The increase in incomes in 2020, as detailed in the Income section of this report, is the likeliest reason for this decline, rather than changes in housing costs.

## Core Housing Need

A household that is in “core housing need” is living in housing that requires major repairs, costs more than 30% of their income, and/or doesn’t have enough bedrooms, and if they were to find suitable housing they would have to spend 30% or more of their income.<sup>57</sup>

More than 40% of renter households on Gabriola are living in housing situations where either the dwelling needs major repairs, their housing costs are unaffordable, or they don’t have enough space, and they would have to pay more than 30% of their income to find alternate acceptable housing. Fewer than 10% of owner households on Gabriola are in this kind of living situation. In our comparator communities, the situation is different, particularly for renter households, who have a much lower rate of core housing need.

### HOUSEHOLDS IN CORE HOUSING NEED



CORE HOUSING NEED - 2021 CENSUS DATA

## Homelessness

Homelessness is defined as including people who do not currently have a home, are living in a car or couch surfing, or who have a home that does not have a bathroom or kitchen.

A full count of the number of people who are homeless on Gabriola has not been conducted since 2019, when 1 in 65 Gabriolans were identified as being homeless. However, a recent estimate puts the number of people who are homeless on Gabriola at 50<sup>58</sup>, which would put the rate of homelessness on Gabriola at approximately 1 in 90.

A 2023 point-in-time count found 515 people in Nanaimo were experiencing homelessness<sup>59</sup>, which would put the rate in that city at approximately 1 in 225. In 2019, the rate was 1 in 270.

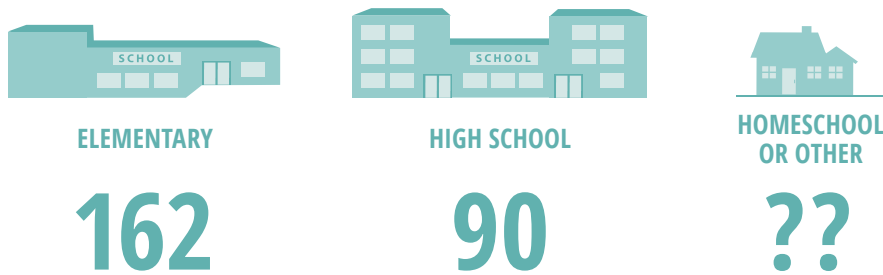
The most recent rate of homelessness for BC as a whole was in 2019, when the rate was 1 in 653.<sup>60</sup>



# Education, Learning and Literacy

## School Enrolment

340 children and youth aged 5 to 19 were living on Gabriola as of the 2021 Census. 162 children were enrolled at Gabriola Elementary School as of the end of the 2023 calendar year and 90 were registered at Nanaimo District Secondary School.<sup>61</sup> The remaining elementary and high school aged children are either home-schooled, attending other off-island schools, or are not in school.



## High School Completion

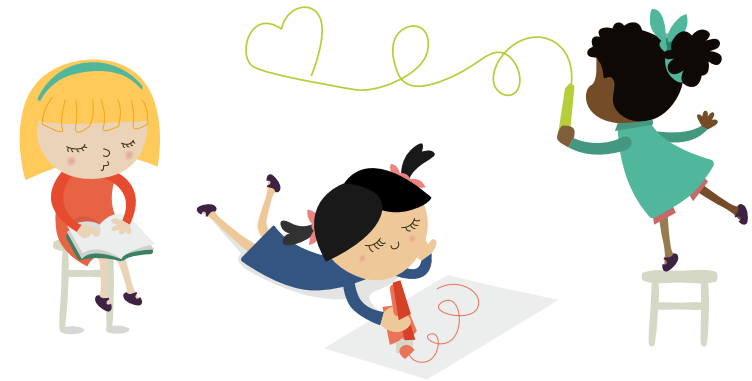
Gabriola high school students typically attend Nanaimo District Secondary School (NDSS). The data below reflect the completion rates of Gabriola students attending NDSS<sup>62</sup>; completion rates for those students who attended another school either in or out of School District 68 are not available. Note that 2020 was the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may or may not have had a bearing on completion rates.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
TOTAL NUMBER OF GABRIOLA STUDENTS ATTENDING NDSS	18	14	12	19
TOTAL NUMBER OF GABRIOLA STUDENTS GRADUATED FROM NDSS	18	10	11	18
COMPLETION RATES	100%	71%	92%	95%

## Licensed Child Care Spaces

70 children under age five and 110 between five and nine were living on Gabriola as of the 2021 Census. Gabriola parents can access childcare and early childhood education services through the Parent Participation Preschool at the Community Hall and at the HOPE Centre as well as through private providers. The preschool currently has 15 licensed spaces<sup>63</sup> while the HOPE Centre has 72 licensed spaces.<sup>64</sup>

	HOPE CENTRE	GABRIOLA CO-OPERATIVE PRESCHOOL
LICENSED GROUP CHILD CARE (36 MONTHS AND UNDER)	12	—
LICENSED GROUP CHILD CARE (30 MONTHS TO SCHOOL AGE)	16	—
LICENSED PRESCHOOL (30 MONTHS TO SCHOOL AGE)	10	15
LICENSED GROUP CHILD CARE (SCHOOL AGE)	34	—



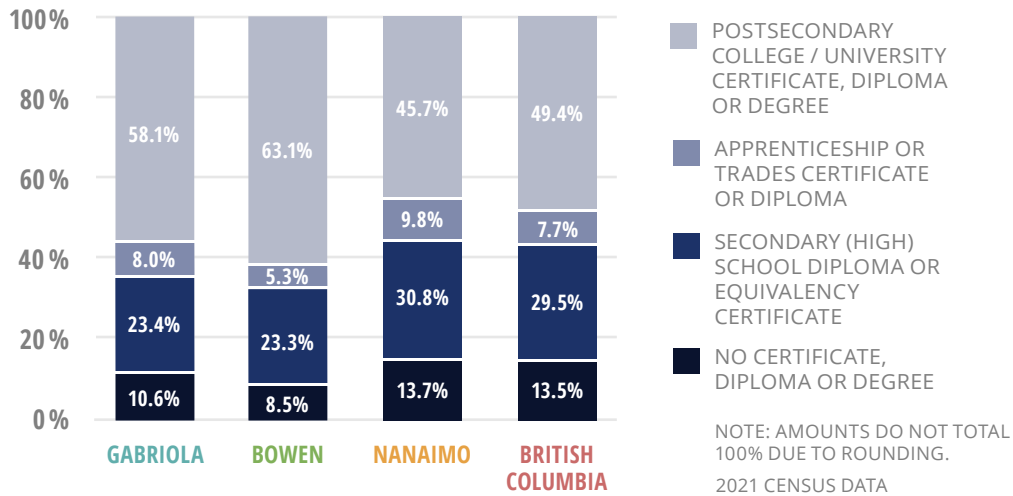
As well, Gabriola Elementary School has been selected as a site for school district-run before and after-school care, starting in September 2024. GES will have a total of 12 spaces available for before school care and 24 spaces for after school care.<sup>65</sup>



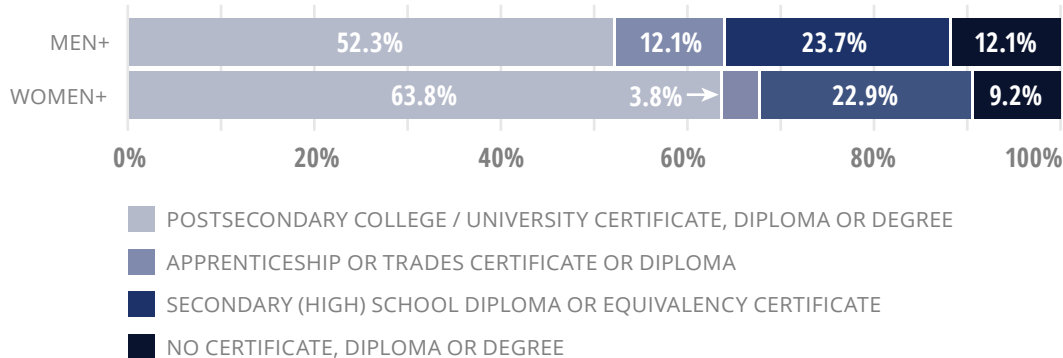
## Education Levels

This data represents the highest certificate, diploma, or degree earned by the population aged 15 or over.

Gabrielans have a high level of educational attainment, with about 66% of the population having obtained a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree or an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma. Only slightly more than 10% of the population has no certificate, diploma, or degree. Nearly one-quarter has a high school diploma.



## Education Levels by Gender - Gabriola

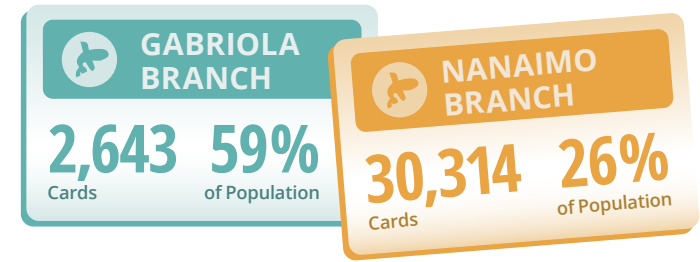


## Library Usage

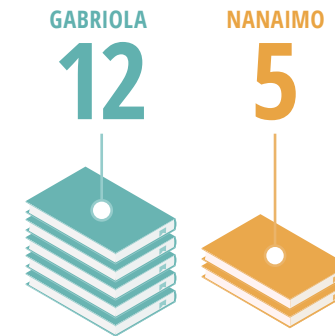
2022 DATA

Gabriola is served by a dedicated branch of the Vancouver Island Regional Library that provides access to not only books, DVDs, and audiobooks, but also numerous programs as well as public access computers, word processing, photocopying and printing, and free public wifi.<sup>66</sup>

### CARDHOLDERS



The percentage of Gabrielans who hold a library card has declined from 75% in 2019 to 59% in 2022. This is similar to the decline in Nanaimo.

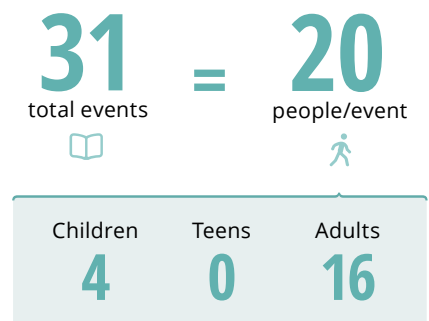


### ITEMS BORROWED PER CAPITA

The number of items borrowed per capita declined from 26 in 2019 to 12 in 2022. A similar but smaller decline was also seen in Nanaimo.

### PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Gabriola Library ran 31 events in 2022, with an average of 20 people per event. While this is a significant decline from the 307 events in 2019, which likely reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers of people attending each event has actually increased.



# Income

The 2021 Census provides detailed income data for 2020, which was the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people in Canada, and particularly those in low-paying service industry jobs, lost or had their employment disrupted and depended heavily on government transfers, like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and provincial or territorial benefit programs. In fact, 68.4% of Canadians 15 years of age and older benefited from at least one pandemic relief program in 2020.<sup>67</sup> As such, 2020 does not reflect regular income patterns and is not readily comparable to other years. The peculiarity of 2020 needs to be considered, especially where we have included a trends analysis that compares with the 2015 data in our 2020 health report.

After-tax income is used in this section, which includes all benefits received from and taxes paid to all levels of government, because it more accurately reflects the amount of money people have available to purchase goods and services.<sup>68</sup> Median income is the point at which half the population have incomes above the median and half have incomes below the median.

## Source of Income

Employment income is income from all forms of paid employment.<sup>69</sup> Other market income is income from other non-governmental sources, including investments.<sup>70</sup> Government transfers are all monies received from any level of government.<sup>71</sup>

Nearly 40% of the total income of people 15 years and over on Gabriola in 2020 was from employment, a little more than one-third came from other market sources, and just more than one-quarter was from government transfers. Government transfers included COVID-19 pandemic-related income supports and benefits.

Gabrielans received more of their income from government transfers and other market sources and less from employment in 2020 than those in our comparator communities. As well, Gabrielans received about the same proportion of their income from COVID-19 benefits as people in all of BC, although more than those on Bowen and slightly less than those in Nanaimo.

**TREND:** As with its comparator communities, the proportion of the income of Gabrielans that came from employment in 2020 declined over 2015 while the proportion from government transfers increased. The proportion from other market sources stayed virtually the same. This is to be expected given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment.

### SOURCE OF INCOME

SOURCE OF INCOME				2020 COVID BENEFITS (% of total income)
GABRIOLA	2015	2020	TREND	
Employment	43.7%	39.7%	↘	5.6%
Other Market Sources	35.3%	34.5%	—	
Government Transfers	20.9%	25.8%	↗	
BOWEN				3.3%
2015	2020	TREND		
Employment	67.1%	59.0%	↘	
Other Market Sources	26.1%	31.2%	↗	6.0%
Government Transfers	6.9%	9.9%	↗	
NANAIMO				
2015	2020	TREND		
Employment	64.9%	60.3%	↘	
Other Market Sources	20.2%	18.5%	↘	5.6%
Government Transfers	14.9%	21.2%	↗	
BRITISH COLUMBIA				
2015	2020	TREND		
Employment	70.8%	65.8%	↘	
Other Market Sources	18.1%	17.4%	—	
Government Transfers	11.1%	16.8%	↗	

## Source of Income by Gender

See the Gender section on page 5 for more information about how gender is presented in the 2021 Census.

As the table at right shows, women+ received less of their income from employment and more from government transfers than men+ in 2020 on Gabriola. The amounts of women+'s income coming from each of the three sources were fairly evenly divided, with about one-third coming from each of employment, other market, and government transfers. For men+, much more income, nearly half, came from employment, with only about one-fifth coming from government transfers. This aligns with Statistics Canada findings, which showed that women were more likely to receive pandemic-related benefits than men, primarily due to the top-up to the Canada Child Benefit, and that the majority of job losses in 2020 were recorded among women.<sup>72</sup> The proportion of income from other market sources was nearly the same between men+ and women+, although women+ had slightly more.

This is different from the situation in our comparator communities (although that data is not shown here), wherein men+ had much higher proportions of income from employment and much lower proportions of income from government transfers in 2020. Other market income was higher for both men+ and women+ on both Gabriola and Bowen compared to in Nanaimo and British Columbia.

## Individual Income

"Individual income" refers to the income from all sources for all individuals age 15 and older, whether they are part of a family or household or not – in other words, the incomes of each and every individual in the community. We are providing a gender breakdown of these data as it provides insights into other data points, such as low income.

The median after-tax income of all individuals on Gabriola in 2020 was \$30,800, which was lower than that of individuals in all of our comparator communities. And, as in all our comparator communities, the after-tax income of men+ on Gabriola was higher than the after-tax income of women+.

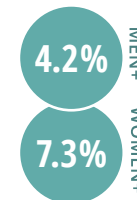
**TREND:** The median after-tax income of all individuals on Gabriola increased by nearly 27% between 2015 and 2020, which is slightly higher than the increase for all our comparator communities.

2021 CENSUS DATA

## SOURCE OF INCOME BY GENDER

GABRIOLA		2015	2020	TREND
Employment	MEN+	44.8%	45.0%	↔
	WOMEN+	42.5%	33.2%	↓
Other Market Sources	MEN+	36.2%	34.0%	↓
	WOMEN+	34.5%	35.2%	↑
Government Transfers	MEN+	19.1%	21.1%	↑
	WOMEN+	23.1%	31.6%	↑

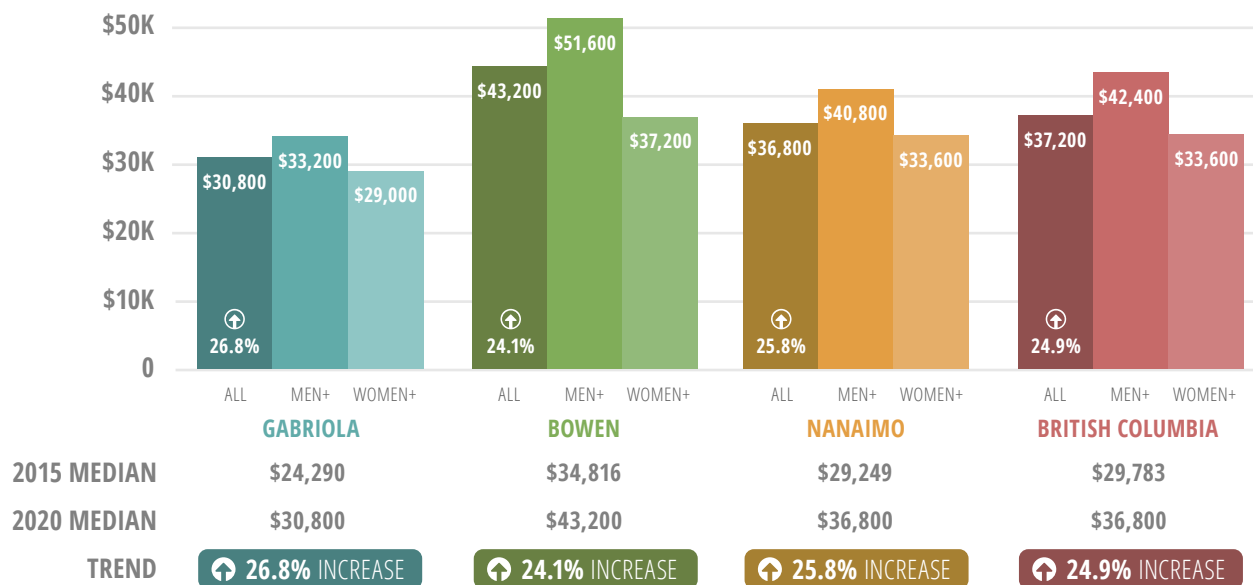
2020 COVID BENEFITS  
(% of total income)



**TREND:** The COVID-19 pandemic had a much more negative impact on the employment income of women+ on Gabriola than on that of men+. For men+, the proportion of income from employment increased slightly between 2020 and 2015, while that of women+ saw a significant drop. Correspondingly, women+ saw a much more significant increase in the proportion of their income from government transfers than men+. And while men+ saw a decline in their other market income, women+ saw a slight increase.

This is different from the situation for those in our comparator communities (although those data are not shown here), where men+'s employment income fell and government transfers increased much more, and where women+'s employment income did not fall as much.

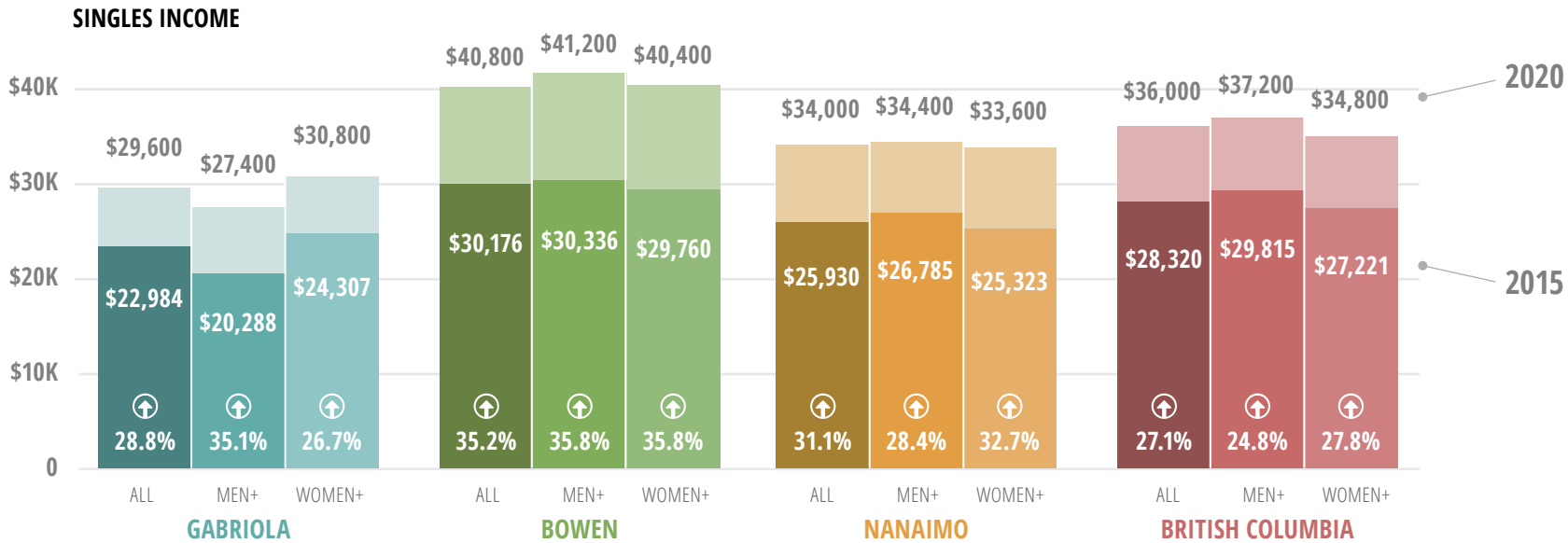
## INDIVIDUAL INCOME



## Singles Income

“Singles income” represents the median after-tax income from all sources for single people – i.e., people who are not living with a spouse or children – aged 15 and older.

As the chart below shows, the median after-tax income of single people on Gabriola was much lower in 2020 than that of those in our comparator communities. It’s also important to note that, among our comparator communities, Gabriola was the only one in which the income of single men+ was lower than that of single women+.



2015 NUMBERS IN WHITE, 2020 NUMBERS IN GREY ↑ TREND INCREASE 2015 TO 2020

**TREND:** The median after-tax income of single people on Gabriola increased between 2015 and 2020 by about the same amount as that of singles in our comparator communities. Bowen Island saw the largest increase, while BC overall saw the smallest.



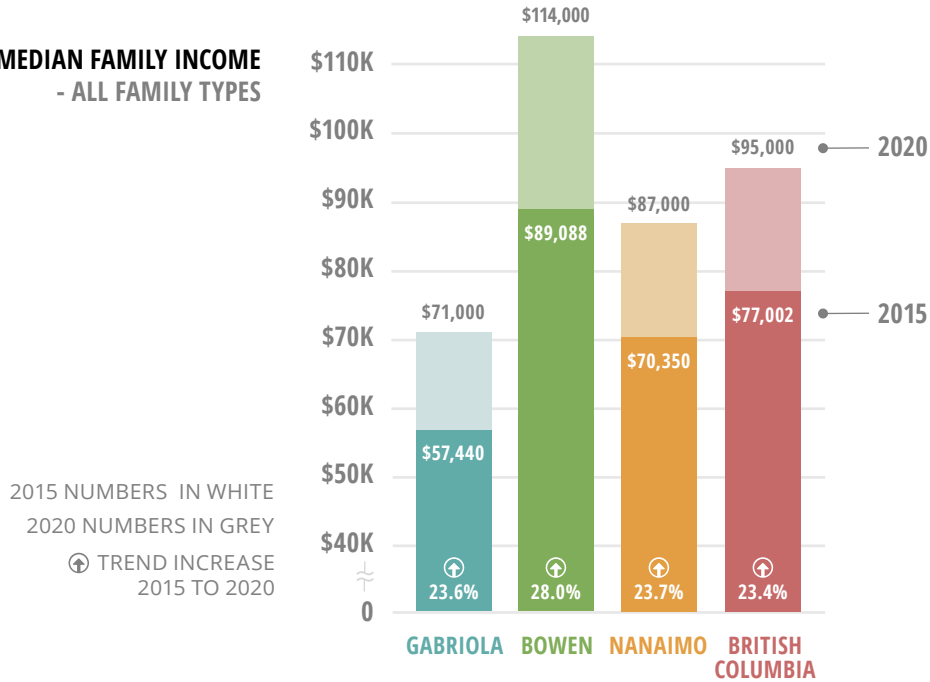
## Family Income

'Family' refers to a group of two or more people who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law union, adoption, or a foster relationship. A couple may be of opposite or same sex.<sup>73</sup>

### Median Family Income - All Family Types

The median income of families on Gabriola in 2020 was much lower than that of families in our comparator communities, by between \$16,000 (Nanaimo) and \$43,000 (Bowen Island).

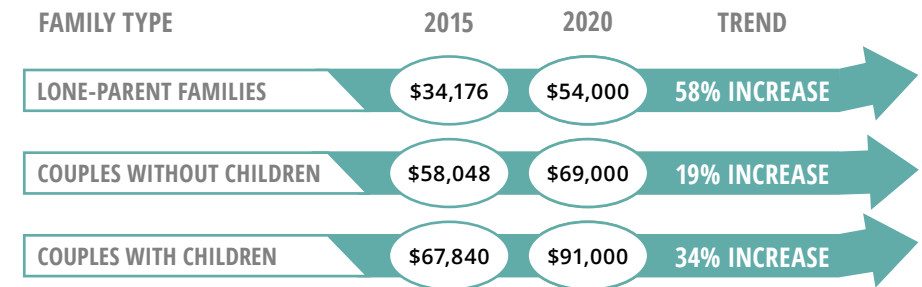
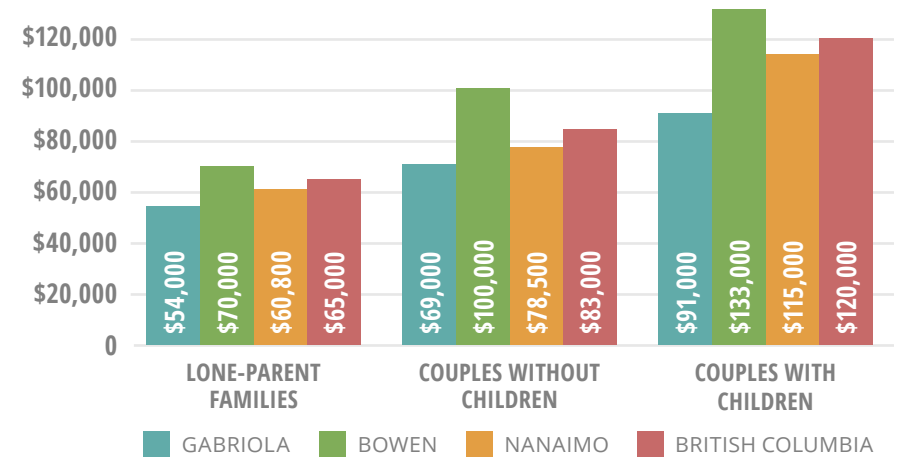
#### MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME - ALL FAMILY TYPES



**TREND:** The median income of families on Gabriola increased by nearly 25% between 2015 and 2020, which is a lower increase than on Bowen but nearly the same as that in Nanaimo and BC overall.

### Median Family Income - Various Family Types

Gabriola families of all types had the lowest median income in 2020 among all our comparator communities.



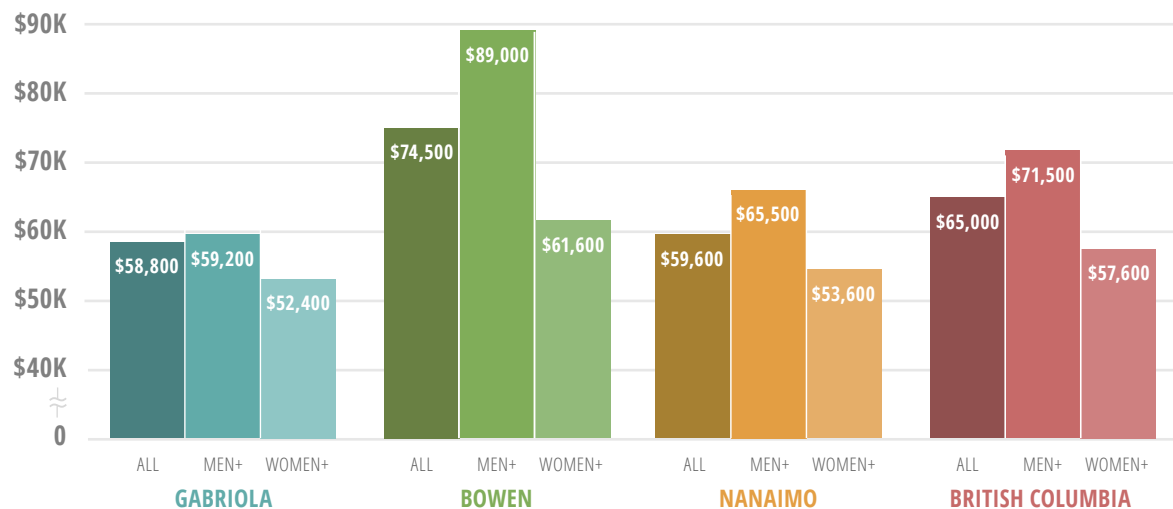
**TREND:** Gabriola families of all types saw increases in their median income between 2015 and 2020, ranging from 19% for couples without children and 58% for lone-parent families. These increases are likely due to COVID-19 pandemic benefits provided by both the BC and federal governments, as noted above. The disparity in the increases between different family types can be accounted for by the fact that some family types received more pandemic-related benefits proportional to their incomes than others (e.g., COVID-related benefits from the Canada Child Benefit). While these data are not shown in the graphic to the left, it's notable that lone parents and couples with children on Gabriola saw a much higher increase in their incomes than those in the comparator communities.

## Employment Income

| These data represent the employment income of workers aged 15 and older.

### Median Employment Income – Full-time Full-year Workers, Total and By Gender

The median employment income of Gabriolans in 2020, regardless of gender, was lower than that of people in our comparator communities. It was much lower than those on Bowen Island, lower than those in BC overall, and only slightly lower than those in Nanaimo.



	2015	2020	CHANGE
ALL	\$42,217	\$58,800	39.3%
MEN+	\$42,012	\$59,200	40.9%
WOMEN+	\$46,408	\$52,400	12.9%

**TREND:** The median employment income of all Gabriolans increased by nearly 40% between 2015 and 2020. The median employment income of men+ on Gabriola increased by nearly 41%, while that of women+ increased by only 13%.

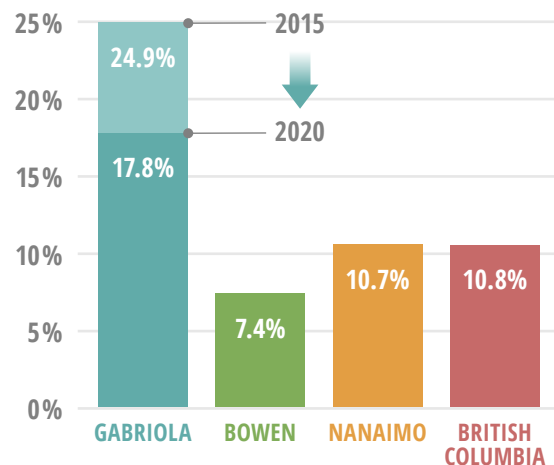
This is different than our comparator communities, where the increase was much smaller. On Bowen, median employment income increased by only about 12% both overall and for men+, and by only 3.4% for women+. In Nanaimo, the increase was 22% overall, with 19% for men+ and 20% for women+. The increase British Columbia was 21% overall, with 17% for men+ and 23% for women+.

## Low Income

Low income is measured using the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT), which marks 50 percent of the national household median income adjusted for household size. Those with incomes under this threshold are said to be in low income.<sup>74</sup>

### People In Low Income

Nearly one-fifth of Gabriolans lived in low income in 2020. This is a much higher rate of low income than in any of our comparator communities.



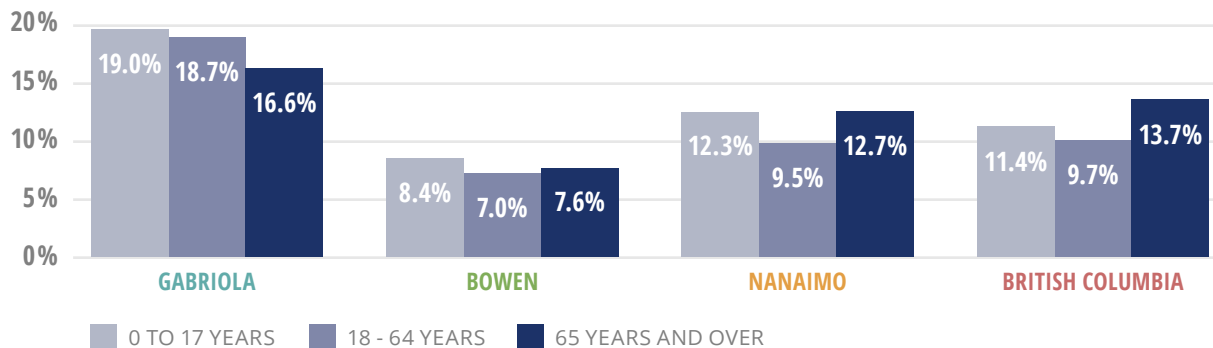
**TREND:** The rate of low income decreased significantly on Gabriola between 2015 and 2020. A similar decrease also occurred in all its comparator communities (although those data are not shown here).

As noted by Statistics Canada, the overall poverty rate in Canada declined from 14.5% in 2015 to 8.1% in 2020, and the rate of child poverty declined even more. These declines were “driven by higher government transfers in 2020, including the enhanced Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and temporary pandemic relief benefits.”<sup>75</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the vast majority of pandemic-related benefits from the federal and provincial/ territorial governments were only available for a limited time and thus will not provide ongoing support.

### People In Low Income By Age

Nearly one in five children aged 0 to 17, nearly one in five working aged people, and more than 16 per cent of seniors were living in low income on Gabriola in 2020. The rate of low income for Gabriolans of all age groups is higher than that for people of all age groups in all our comparator communities.



**TREND:** While this data is not shown in the chart above, it’s important to note that between 2015 and 2020, the rate of low income on Gabriola fell by half for children and by nearly half for working-age adults, but increased slightly for seniors. Nanaimo’s rates show a similar trend, while all age groups saw a decrease in the other two comparator communities.

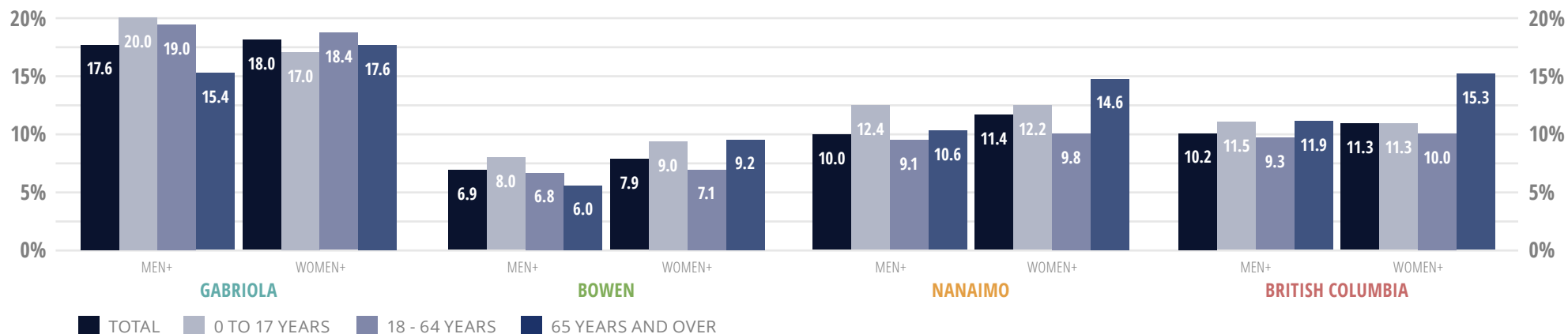
As noted previously, the decrease in low-income rates can be accounted for by the availability of proportionally higher government transfers in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Note that pandemic-related benefits are not available on an ongoing basis. The slight increase in poverty among seniors, however, is concerning and may reflect ineligibility for these benefits, which was primarily connected to receipt of employment income.

## People In Low Income By Age And Gender

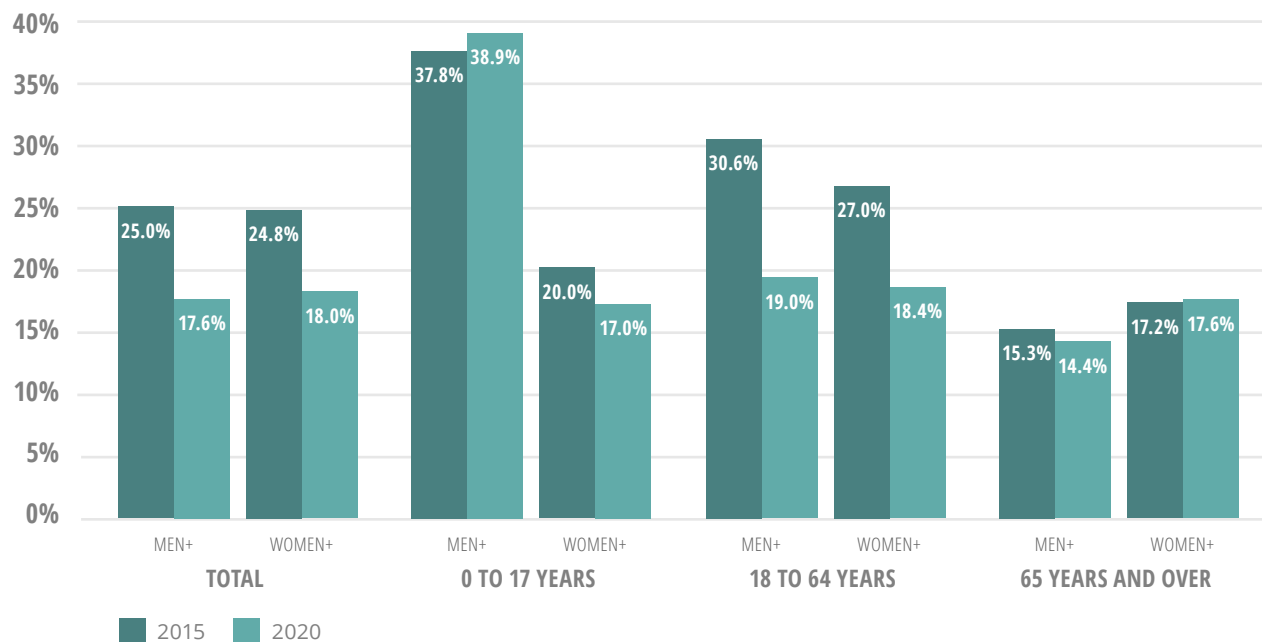
See the Gender section on page 5 for more information about how gender is presented in the 2021 Census.

Overall, Gabriola has significantly higher rates of low income for both men+ and women+ than our comparator communities. As well, a higher proportion of men+ than women+ on Gabriola in both the children and working-age adult categories live in low income. However, a higher proportion of senior women+ live in low income than senior men. This is not the case for our comparator communities, wherein women+ have higher or nearly equivalent rates of low income than men+ in almost every instance.

### PEOPLE IN LOW INCOME BY AGE AND GENDER



### PEOPLE IN LOW INCOME BY AGE AND GENDER - GABRIOLA



**TREND:** The rate of low income on Gabriola declined between 2015 and 2020 for all age and gender groups except senior women+. The largest decline in low income is seen among female/women+ children under 17. Again, the slight increase in senior women+'s poverty is concerning, and it may be associated with seniors' ineligibility for employment-related COVID-19 benefits.



# Transportation

## Bus Service and Ridership<sup>76</sup>



Gabriola islanders created their own public transit system in 2013 with the introduction of GERTIE (Gabriola’s Environmentally Responsible Trans-Island Express) to serve commuters heading to Nanaimo and all Gabriolans needing help to get from place to place on the island. Initially run totally by volunteers,

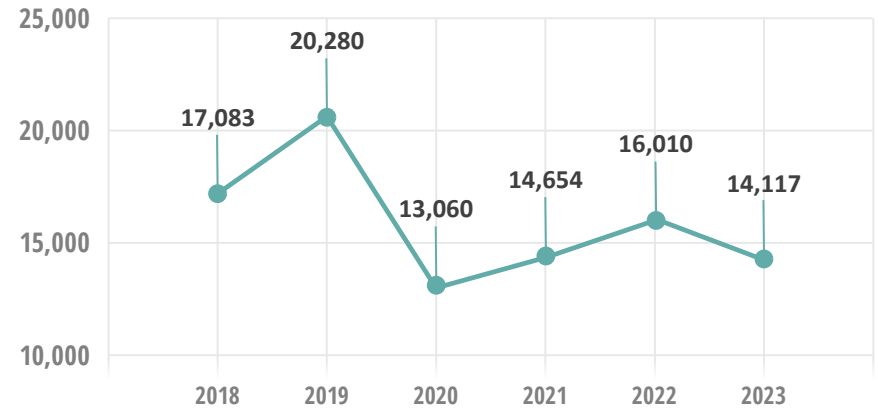
GERTIE is funded through a levy on property taxes approved by referendum and is managed by volunteers through the Gabriola Community Bus Foundation. GERTIE ridership grew consistently from 2013 to 2019, but was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Ridership has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels, and in 2023 was affected by service cuts to balance the budget.

## Ferry Service and Ridership<sup>77</sup>

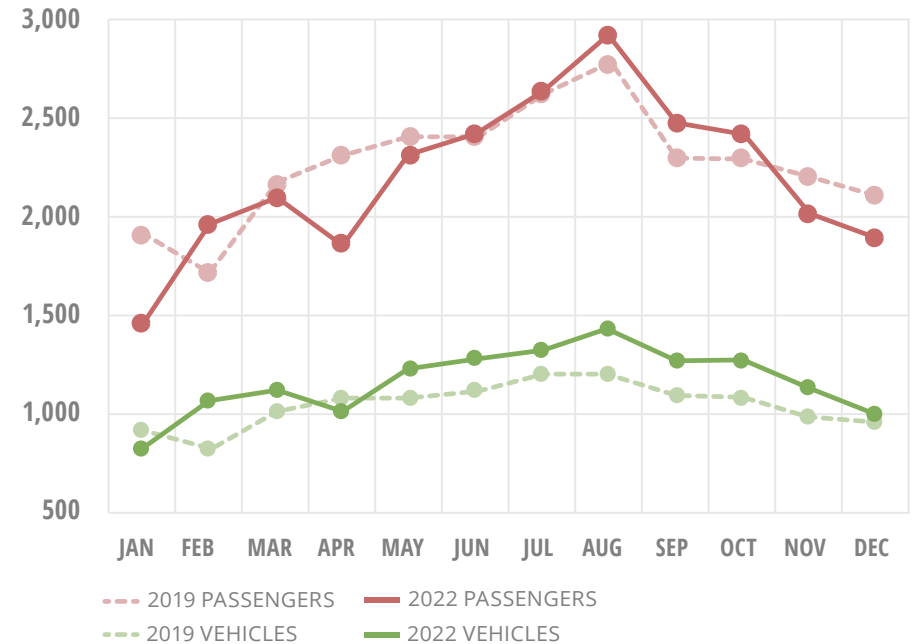
Access to Gabriola Island is currently provided by two BC Ferries vessels, the Island Kwigwis and the Island Gwawis, which replaced the larger Quinsam in April 2022. The new vessels make 23 daily round trips between Gabriola and Nanaimo. The new ferries have resulted in increased capacity overall, however, there has also been an increase in sailing cancellations, mainly due to crewing challenges on this route and on many others across the system. BC Ferries intends to upgrade terminal facilities both on Gabriola and in Nanaimo to fully electrify vessel operations.

Vehicle usage was up in 2022 over 2019 by about 12%, while the total number of passengers was down by about 3%. More people are driving on the ferry, while fewer are walking. The COVID-19 pandemic may be a significant reason for that difference, as foot-passenger counts dropped dramatically in early 2020. Many Gabriolans use the BC Ferries Experience Card to bulk purchase their trips at a reduced price.

**BUS SERVICE AND RIDERSHIP**



**FERRY SERVICE AND RIDERSHIP**



PASSENGERS	2019	2022
	Daily Average Passengers	2,266

VEHICLES	2019	2022
	Daily Average Vehicles	1,039

# Economic Health

A healthy economy depends on and helps to foster a healthy population. Good health requires an adequate income, safe working conditions, and reasonable hours of work. When these things are in balance, healthy workers can sustain and be sustained by the economy through good and bad times. The following section describes the kinds of industries, types of work, areas of investment, and kinds of labour force participation experienced by people in the Gabriola Trust Area and our comparator communities.

## Economy

### Industrial Mix

#### 2021 CENSUS DATA: TOP FIVE FOR EACH

Gabriola	Total Labour Force	1,770	% of labour force
Retail trade			11.9
Health care and social assistance			10.5
Professional, scientific and technical services			10.2
Construction			8.8
Educational services			7.1

Bowen	Total Labour Force	2,385	% of labour force
Professional, scientific and technical services			15.1
Educational services			10.9
Health care and social assistance			10.1
Construction			9.6
Information and cultural industries			8.0

Nanaimo	Total Labour Force	57,650	% of labour force
Health care and social assistance			15.9
Retail trade			13.7
Construction			9.7
Accommodation and food services			7.5
Educational services			7.1

British Columbia	Total Labour Force	2,657,275	% of labour force
Health care and social assistance			12.0
Retail trade			11.3
Professional, scientific and technical services			9.0
Construction			8.8
Educational services			7.3

**TREND:** Gabriola's industrial mix has shifted between 2016 and 2021 in some subtle but important ways. One industrial category fell out of the top five ("administrative and support, waste management and remediation services") and another took its place ("educational services"). As well, while "retail trade" continues to occupy the top spot, with the highest proportion of

workers in that industry, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of workers in "health care and social assistance", a decline in the proportion of workers in "construction", and a slight decline in the proportion of workers in "professional, scientific, and technical services". The total labour force on Gabriola increased by only 3.8% in the five-year timeframe.

### Labour Force - Trends

Gabriola	2016		2021		Trend
	Rank	%	Rank	%	
Retail trade	1	12.0	1	11.9	Virtually unchanged
Health care and social assistance	5	7.0	2	10.5	Increase
Professional, scientific and technical services	2	10.6	3	10.2	Slight decline
Construction	3	10.0	4	8.8	Decline
Educational services	-	5.0	5	7.1	Increase
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4	9.1	-	6.8	Decline

**TREND:** Since 2016, Gabriola's labour force has increased by only 3.8%, which compares with a 7.5% growth rate in BC as a whole, a 10.3% growth rate in Nanaimo, and a 13.6% growth rate on Bowen. This likely reflects the age of Gabriola's population and is reflected in the proportion of those not in the labour market on Gabriola.

Total Labour Force	2016	2021	Trend
Gabriola	1,705	1,770	+ 3.8 %
Bowen	2,100	2,385	+13.6 %
Nanaimo	52,265	57,650	+ 10.3 %
British Columbia	2,471,665	2,657,275	+ 7.5 %

## Local Business

A 2016 report<sup>78</sup> showed that there were 606 businesses on Gabriola, more than 1 business for every 7 Gabriolans. The report also examined other aspects and characteristics of the business community, much of which we reported in the 2020 Gabriola Health Report. While we don't have more recent data, the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce website reports more than 125 members from a variety of backgrounds and sectors. The Chamber is currently in the process of understanding Gabriola's business and service sector skills and needs through a project called "Island Insight".<sup>79</sup> We look forward to the results of this project, which will provide a better understanding of Gabriola businesses.



## Local Investment

The Gabriola Island Community Investment Co-operative (GICIC) finances projects to create positive social and environmental impacts in the community while providing a modest financial return to members. GICIC raises capital through the sale of membership shares, then invests the funds in local business development and support for non-profits. GICIC currently has 56 members (single and joint), which is an increase of 16 members over 2020, who have invested \$83,000 to help Gabriola grow a sustainable island economy and healthy community.<sup>80</sup>

## Employment

2021 CENSUS DATA

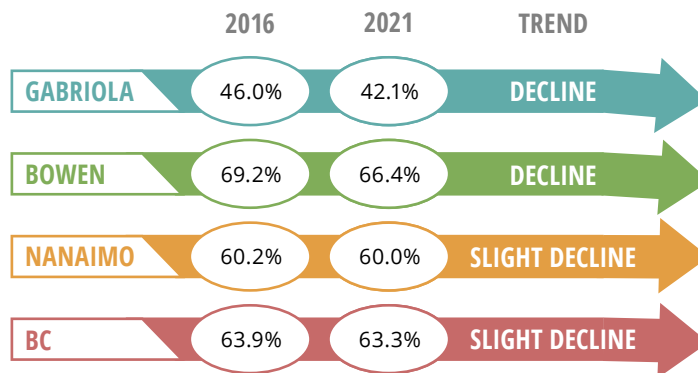
### Labour Force Status

These 2021 Census data reflect labour force status in the week of Sunday May 2 to Saturday May 8, 2021.

#### Participation Rate

The "Participation Rate" is the proportion of people aged 15 years and over who are in the labour market – this means they either have a job or are actively looking for work.<sup>81</sup>

The proportion of people on Gabriola who were in the labour market in 2021 was 42.1%, which is much lower than in our comparator communities. This likely reflects the higher median age of our population and is reflected in the lower rate of employment among our residents.

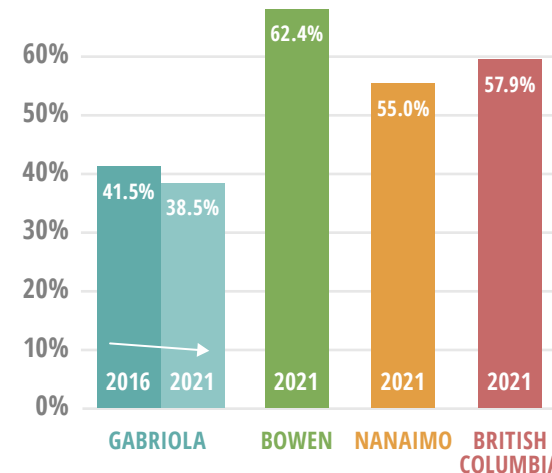


**TREND:** The participation rate for Gabriola declined between 2016 and 2021, which likely reflects the increasing median age of our population in those five years, and may reflect lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. A similar decline was seen on Bowen, but Nanaimo and BC experienced a smaller decline.

#### Employment Rate

The "Employment Rate" is the proportion of people aged 15 years and over who are employed at a paid job.<sup>82</sup>

Gabriola's employment rate is 38.5%, which is much lower than that of our comparator communities and likely reflects Gabriola's higher median age and higher proportion of income from other market sources (see page 22).

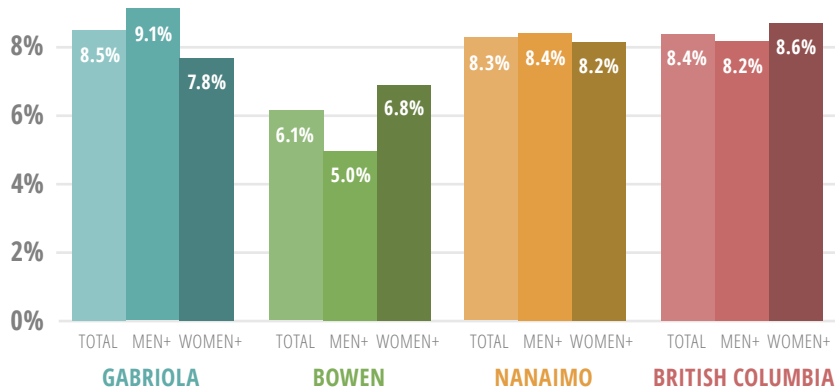


**TREND:** Gabriola's employment rate declined from 41.5% in 2016 to 38.5% in 2021. This likely reflects the relatively high median age of our population.

## Unemployment Rate - Total and By Gender

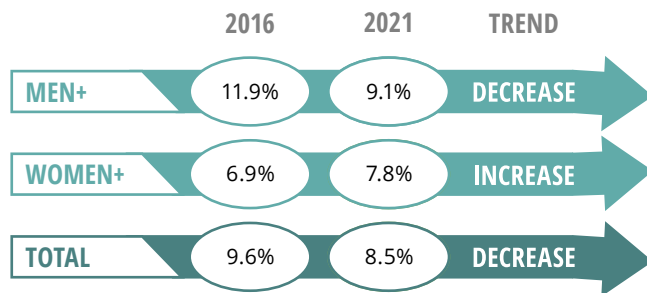
The “Unemployment Rate” is the proportion of people aged 15 years and over who are in the labour market but who can’t find a job.<sup>83</sup> It does not include people who are not in the labour market – i.e., people who are retired or who are unemployed and have given up looking for work.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE - TOTAL AND BY GENDER



In 2021, Gabriola had an unemployment rate of 8.5%, which is similar to that of Nanaimo and British Columbia overall, but higher than the rate on Bowen Island. As well, Gabriola had a much higher unemployment rate among men+ (9.1%) than among women+ (7.8%) in 2021.<sup>84</sup> This was not the case in Bowen or BC overall, and while Nanaimo had a similar pattern, the unemployment rate among men+ there was only slightly higher than for women+. Gabriola’s high low-income rate among men+ may be connected to their higher unemployment rate (please see page 28).

**TREND:** The unemployment rate among working-age people in Gabriola declined between 2016 and 2021. The rate among men+ also declined, while the rate among women+ increased.

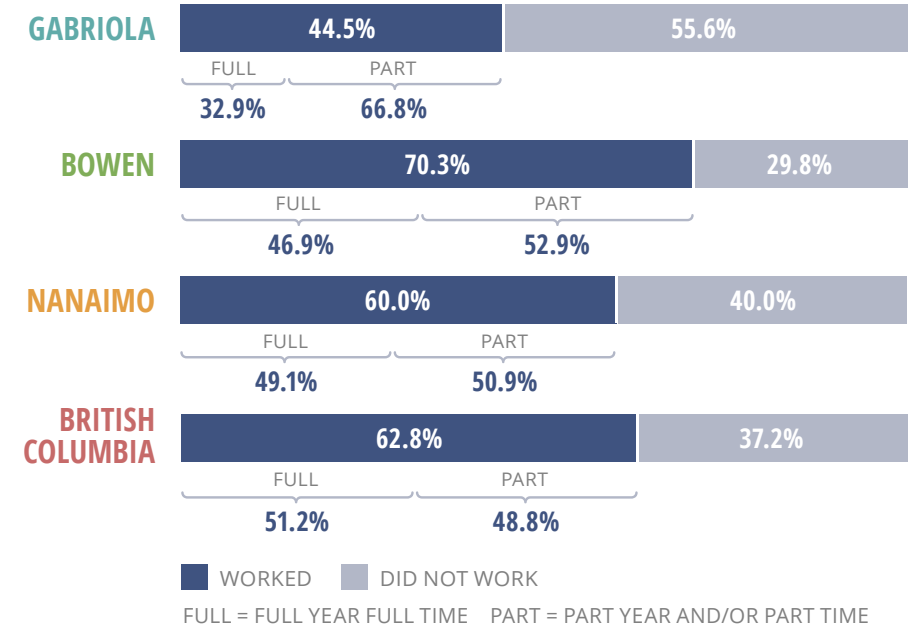


## Worker Activity

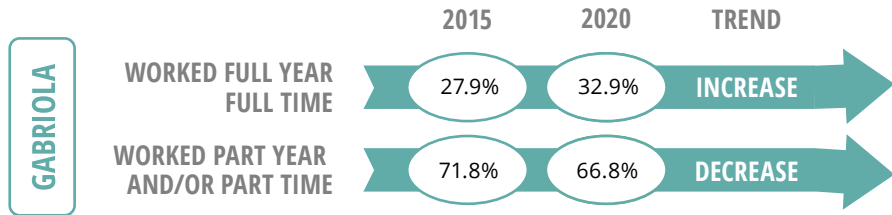
Full time is defined as 30 hours or more per week, whereas part-time is less than 30 hours per week. These data refer to work activity in 2020.<sup>85</sup>

In 2020, only one-third of Gabriola’s working-age population was employed full time for the full year, while two-thirds worked part of the year and/or part time. This is very different than our comparator communities, wherein a larger proportion worked full year full time.

As well, 45% of Gabriola’s working-age population worked in 2020 whereas 56% did not work. This is also very different from our comparator communities, where a much higher proportion of the working-age population worked. This may explain our higher levels of low income than in our comparator communities.

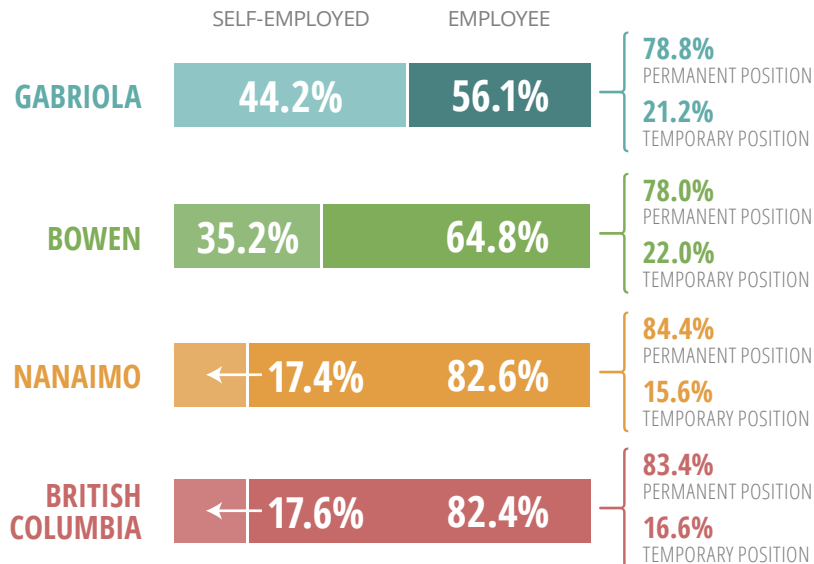


**TREND:** More Gabriola workers worked full year full time in 2020 than they did in 2015. This is surprising given the impact of COVID-19 on employment and on the change in demographics between 2015 and 2020. However, these data only reflect those Gabriolans who worked in 2020, which was a smaller proportion at 45% than it was in 2015 at 52%.



### Class of Worker

56% of Gabriola workers were classed as employees in 2021 while 44% were self-employed. Among those who were employees, 79% were in a permanent position while 21% were in a temporary position. This is very different from Nanaimo and BC, wherein nearly 83% of workers were employees, and about 84% of those were in permanent positions. Bowen had similar proportions to Gabriola's, although more were employees and fewer were self-employed.



**TREND:** For all our comparator communities there was a decrease in those classed as employees and an increase in those who are self-employed between 2016 and 2020 (although the graphic above does not include these data). On Gabriola, employees decreased from 62% to 56%, while those who are self-employed increased from 39% to 44%.

### Occupations

The data categories changed between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses. "Management" was a category in 2016 whereas "Legislative and senior management" was a category in 2021. The two are not directly comparable.

Nearly one-quarter of workers on Gabriola in 2021 were in "sales and service occupations". The next largest proportion is those in "trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations". These two occupations totaled nearly 43% of workers on Gabriola.

OCCUPATIONS - GABRIOLA	2016	2021
SALES AND SERVICE	22.3%	24.7%
TRADES, TRANSPORT AND EQUIPMENT OPERATORS AND RELATED OCCUPATIONS	13.6%	17.7%
MANAGEMENT*	12.2%	-
EDUCATION, LAW AND SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES	11.3%	14.0%
BUSINESS, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	9.8%	11.9%
ART, CULTURE, RECREATION AND SPORT	11.0%	9.9%
NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES AND RELATED OCCUPATIONS	7.4%	7.6%
NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND RELATED PRODUCTION	6.5%	5.8%
HEALTH	3.6%	4.1%
MANUFACTURING AND UTILITIES	2.4%	2.3%
LEGISLATIVE AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT*	-	1.7%

**TREND:** The largest occupational category on Gabriola increased slightly between 2016 and 2021, although the proportion of other categories have shifted, sometimes significantly. There is a much larger proportion of workers in the "trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations" and in "education, law and social, community and government services" whereas those in "art, culture, recreation and sport" has declined. Some of this change may be reflected in the data category change noted above.

# Community Wellbeing

## Primary Health Care

Primary health care “refers to an approach to health and a spectrum of services beyond the traditional health care system. It includes all services that play a part in health, such as income, housing, education, and environment.”<sup>86</sup>

### General Information

Primary care “focusses on health care services, including health promotion, illness and injury prevention, and the diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury.”<sup>87</sup> A wide range of primary care services are available on Gabriola, while most specialist services are only available off-island.

The Gabriola Health Care Foundation owns and operates the Gabriola Community Health Centre (GCHC) which provides space for physicians, visiting specialist services, Island Health services including home care and community care, seniors outreach, public health, mental health and addictions, social work, as well as a medical lab, dental hygiene office, massage services and an urgent treatment facility. The Gabriola Medical Clinic, housed at GCHC, currently has three permanent family physicians and one locum, and one nurse practitioner, serving a total patient population of 4,733 in 2023.

A number of allied care providers, such as massage therapy, chiropractic, physiotherapy, pharmacy, counselling services, social workers, psychologists, and more, operate in different facilities on the island, including the Professional Centre. As well, a wide variety of alternative health care services are available on Gabriola, including acupuncture, Ayurveda, craniosacral therapy, healing touch, reflexology, Reiki, and more.<sup>88</sup>

### Physician Attachment

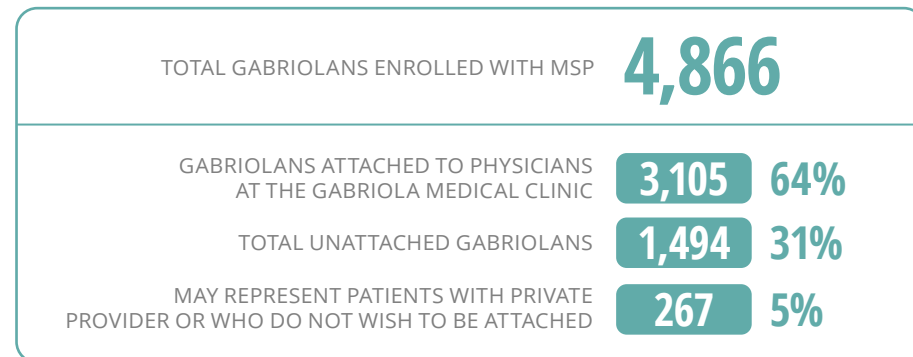
Physicians at the Gabriola Medical Clinic are members of the Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice (RRDFP). The RRDFP supports rural practices in communities across BC and provides a voice for rural physicians at provincial planning tables. The Gabriola Chapter is engaged in discussions with the Ministry of Health and Island Health regarding resource requirements for Gabriola.



Presently, the Gabriola Medical Clinic has funding for four physicians, a Nurse Practitioner, a part-time social worker, and a part-time mental health nurse. One physician position is currently vacant while the others are filled. The Gabriola Health Care Foundation works closely with the Clinic to support their recruitment efforts.

As of 2023, 3,105 Gabriolans were attached to physicians at the Gabriola Medical Clinic. According to Ministry of Health estimates there are currently 1,494 unattached patients.<sup>89</sup>

### UNATTACHED PATIENTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BC MSP ENROLMENTS

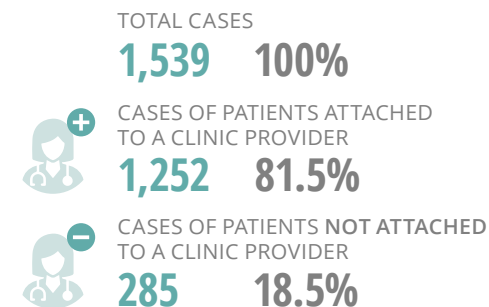


### Acute Care Services<sup>90</sup>

“The term acute care encompasses a range of clinical health-care functions, including emergency medicine, trauma care, pre-hospital emergency care, acute care surgery, critical care, urgent care and short-term inpatient stabilization.”<sup>91</sup> For Gabriolans, acute care is provided through the Gabriola Community Health Centre’s Urgent Treatment Facility (UTF) and Nanaimo Regional General Hospital.

### Urgent and Emergent Stabilization Care Services

In 2023, in addition to regular patient visits, the UTF provided urgent and emergency stabilization care to 1,539 patients, down from 1,873 in 2019. The 2023 numbers include 285 patients not attached to a Gabriola physician or nurse practitioner. These 285 patients generated 367 appointments.

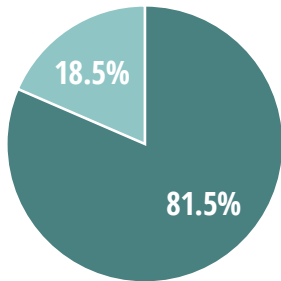


### Cases by Diagnosis

Of the 1,539 patient visits to the UTF for urgent and emergency stabilization, the majority were for hypertension, nervous & muscular/skeletal conditions, and skin and subcutaneous tissue conditions.

CONDITION	%
Hypertension	26%
Nervous & muscular/skeletal	21%
Skin & subcutaneous tissue	17%
General symptoms	17%
Depression	4.8%
Coronary artery disease	4.5%
Cystitis	4.2%
Back pain	2.6%
COPD	1.3%
Diabetes	1.2%

### Cases by Attachment to Clinic Physician

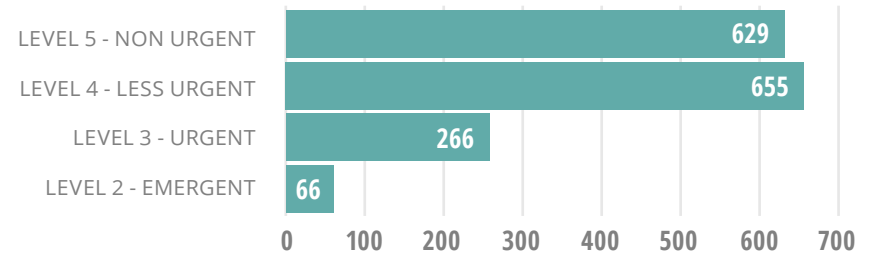


#### TOTAL URGENT/EMERGENT CASES BY ATTACHMENT (N=1537)

- ATTACHED URGENT/EMERGENT UTILIZATION
- UNATTACHED URGENT/EMERGENT UTILIZATION

### Cases by Urgency

#### JANUARY - DECEMBER 2023 CASES



### Cases by Type and Outcome

Patients who were “not transferred” are those who were treated on Gabriola and did not require a hospital visit. The remaining data indicates the transfer method for those patients who did require a transfer to hospital.



TRANSFERRED BY HELICOPTER

2



TRANSFERRED BY AMBULANCE

45



NOT TRANSFERRED

786

### Gabriola Ambulance Society

The Gabriola Ambulance Society is a not-for-profit organization that assists its members on Gabriola and Mudge Islands with ambulance bills and medical equipment needs.<sup>92</sup>

In 2022, GAS contributed to our community in a number of ways:



MEDICAL EQUIPMENT LOANED TO MEMBERS  
Approximate pieces loaned out.

427



SCHOLARSHIPS

\$2,500



SHORT-TERM HOME ASSISTANCE COSTS REIMBURSED

\$2,000



FIRST-AID / CPR TRAINING SUBSIDIES

\$1,500



AMBULANCE USER FEES REIMBURSED

\$7,040

## Health Status of Gabriolans

As noted in the latest CHSA Health Status Report for Gabriola, “One of the biggest challenges to achieving healthy communities is the prevention and management of chronic conditions, especially with an aging British Columbian population.”<sup>93</sup> The age of Gabriola’s population (see page 5) means this is of particular concern for our community.

### Chronic Diseases by Prevalence

The prevalence of a disease tells us the number of people in a population with that disease at any given time.

For the top four chronic diseases in BC by prevalence, Gabriola has a lower prevalence than the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) as a whole. The difference ranges from 9.7% lower for mood & anxiety disorder to 28.9% lower for hypertension. Gabriola has a lower prevalence than VIHA for most other chronic diseases except for: multiple sclerosis, hospitalized stroke, and schizophrenia and delusional disorders.

Compared to BC as a whole, Gabriola has a much lower rate of hypertension (33.3% lower), and a lower rate of asthma (9.7% lower), but a higher prevalence of mood & anxiety disorder (3.0% higher) and depression (2.5% higher). Among the other chronic diseases, Gabriola has a much lower prevalence of diabetes, COPD, and osteoporosis, but a higher prevalence of hospitalized stroke, schizophrenia & delusional disorders, and a much higher prevalence of multiple sclerosis.<sup>94</sup>

### ANNUAL AGE STANDARDIZED PREVALENCE RATE (PER 1,000 POPULATION)

	GABRIOLA	VIHA	BRITISH COLUMBIA	DIFFERENCE COMPARED TO VIHA BC	
Mood & Anxiety Disorder	328	363.4	318.3	-9.7%	3.0%
Depression	262.4	291.6	255.9	-10.0%	2.5%
Hypertension	157.5	221.7	236.2	-28.9%	-33.3%
Asthma	114.6	135.5	126.9	-15.4%	-9.7%
Osteoarthritis	77.3	95.9	90	-19.3%	-14.0%
Ischemic Heart Disease	63.5	68.9	76.1	-7.8%	-16.5%
Osteoporosis	55.9	79	87.1	-29.3%	-35.9%
Diabetes	46.5	74.3	87.5	-37.4%	-46.8%
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)	32.9	55.8	53.9	-41.0%	-39.0%
Chronic Kidney Disease	25	33.1	34.9	-24.5%	-28.5%
Gout	23	28.1	32.6	-18.1%	-29.5%
Alzheimer’s Disease & Other Dementia	17.7	22.8	22	-21.9%	-19.0%
Acute Myocardial Infarction	15.3	17.7	18.2	-13.2%	-15.9%
Heart Failure	14.7	20	21.4	-26.4%	-31.4%
Schizophrenia & Delusional Disorders	13.4	12.4	11.7	8.6%	14.7%
Rheumatoid Arthritis	10.6	11.5	12.4	-7.9%	-14.8%
Hospitalized Stroke	9.8	8.4	9.4	16.7%	4.5%
Epilepsy	7.3	10.8	9.6	-33.0%	-24.4%
Multiple Sclerosis	4.3	3.6	2.9	18.1%	46.2%
Parkinsonism	3.9	4.5	4.7	-13.3%	-16.8%



## Chronic Diseases by Incidence

Incidence data tells us the number of new occurrences of a disease or condition in a population over a period of time. In this instance, the data represent disease incidence for 2020-2021.

### ANNUAL AGE STANDARDIZED INCIDENCE RATE (PER 1,000 POPULATION)

	GABRIOLA	VIHA	BRITISH COLUMBIA	DIFFERENCE COMPARED TO VIHA	DIFFERENCE COMPARED TO BC
Mood & Anxiety Disorder	34.1	29.4	24.4	15.8%	39.8%
Depression	19.8	19.4	16.1	2.3%	23.1%
Hypertension	13.4	15.6	16.2	-13.9%	-17.2%
Ischemic Heart Disease	8.4	8.2	7.7	3.2%	10.2%
Osteoarthritis	6.2	7.7	7.0	-19.1%	-12.0%
Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementia	5.0	5.3	4.9	-6.4%	1.3%
Chronic Kidney Disease	4.0	5.1	5.5	-20.9%	-26.7%
Osteoporosis	3.2	5.4	5.9	-41.2%	-46.7%
Asthma	2.9	5.5	4.9	-46.2%	-40.2%
Heart Failure	2.8	3.5	3.4	-19.7%	-18.3%
Diabetes	2.4	5.6	7.1	-56.5%	-65.6%
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)	2.3	4.6	4.6	-51.3%	-50.8%
Gout	2.1	2.4	2.7	-9.7%	-21.1%
Acute Myocardial Infarction	2.0	1.8	1.8	9.5%	12.6%
Hospitalized Stroke	1.3	1.2	1.3	6.0%	-1.7%
Parkinsonism	0.8	0.6	0.6	26.0%	31.7%
Epilepsy	*	0.7	0.7		
Multiple Sclerosis	*	0.2	0.2		
Rheumatoid Arthritis	*	0.7	0.9		
Schizophrenia & Delusional Disorders	*	0.8	0.7		

\*Denotes data that is not publicly releasable due to privacy concerns related to sample size.

For the top four chronic diseases in BC by incidence, Gabriola has a lower incidence of hypertension (13.9% lower) than the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) as a whole, but a higher incidence of mood & anxiety disorder (15.8% higher), ischemic heart disease (3.2% higher), and depression (2.3% higher). For most of the other diseases, Gabriola has a much lower incidence, including for diabetes and COPD. Gabriola does have a much higher incidence of Parkinsonism and a slightly higher incidence of acute myocardial infarction.

For the top four chronic diseases by incidence, Gabriola has a much higher incidence than all of BC for mood & anxiety disorder (39.8% higher), depression (23.1% higher), and ischemic heart disease (10.2% higher), but a much lower incidence of hypertension (17.2% lower). For most of the other diseases, Gabriola's incidence is significantly lower, particularly for diabetes, and COPD. However, Gabriola's incidence of diabetes is significantly higher, and the incidence of acute myocardial infarction is much higher.<sup>95</sup>

## Cancer

Between 2016 and 2020, Gabriola had a 990.5 crude incidence rate per 100K population per year.<sup>96</sup>

## Physical Activity



Physical activity reduces the risk of multiple chronic diseases and provides improved fitness, strength, mental wellbeing, and quality of life. 84.4% of Gabriolans are physically active.<sup>97</sup>

# Social Inclusion

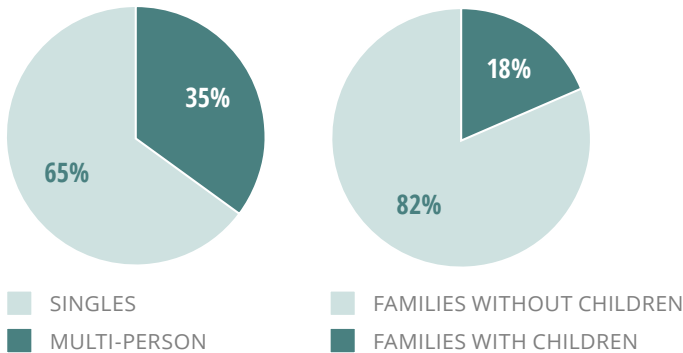
## Community Belonging and Loneliness

People's sense of belonging to their local community relates to their social engagement and participation within their community. Research has shown that social engagement and a strong sense of community belonging are associated with positive health outcomes. Social engagement and community belonging are also linked to improved physical and mental health, even when influential factors such as age and sex are considered. Loneliness, on the other hand, is shown to be associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes, a particular concern for the elderly and frail who live alone. Local and Indigenous governments, community organizations, and health authorities can promote social engagement and peoples' belongingness to their communities by supporting or providing a variety of social programming.<sup>98</sup>

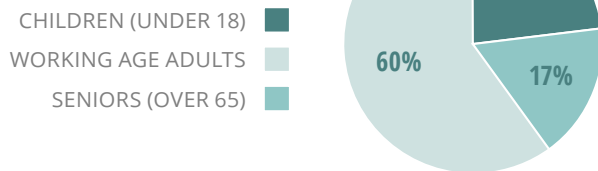
## Grocery Program

People for a Healthy Community Gabriola (PHC) prioritizes social inclusion in all its programs, which include food-related programs such as their grocery (food bank) and meals programs, as well as health- and education-focused programs for children, seniors, caregivers, and others. The following statistics about participants in PHC's Grocery Program come primarily from the March 2023 Hunger Count, which is an annual data-gathering exercise. Income data comes from PHC's registration data.<sup>100</sup>

### GROCERY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY FAMILY TYPE (TWO TYPES)



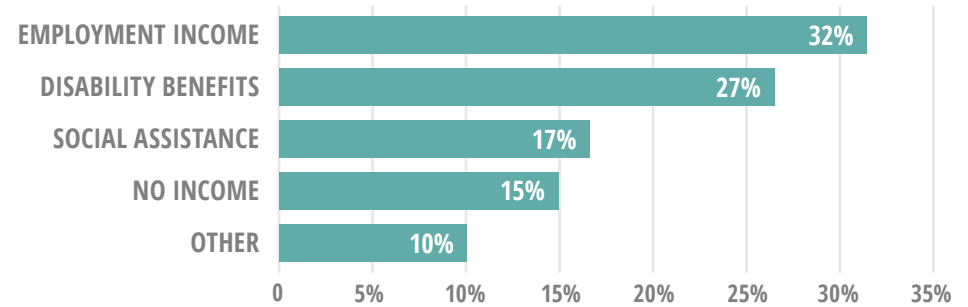
### GROCERY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY AGE



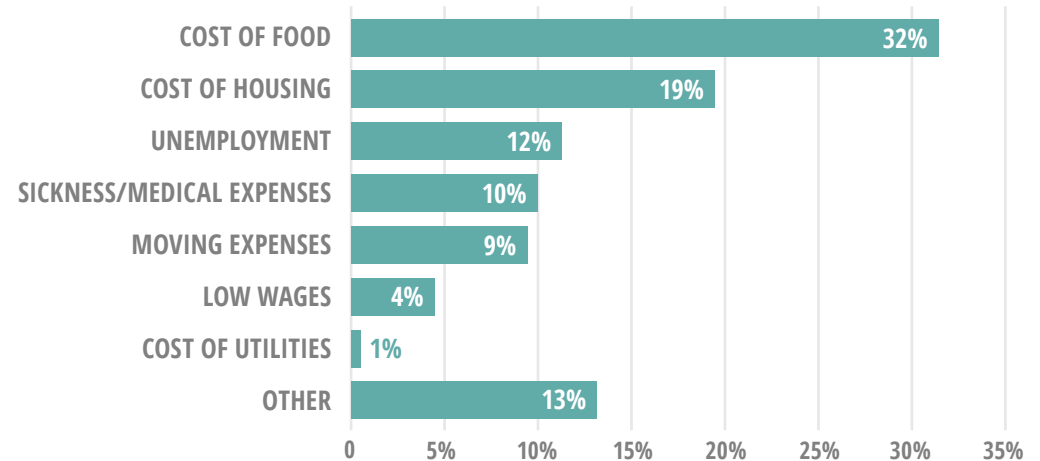
## Affordable Housing

Housing affordability remains a challenge on Gabriola, as noted on page 18 of this report, but no subsidized housing is currently available. In 2022, the Gabriola Housing Society received rezoning approval from and entered into a Housing Agreement with the Local Trust Committee to develop 24 units of affordable rental housing units, including studios, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom homes, on a site on Paisley Place. Monthly rents in the development will be based on three tiers: deep subsidy, rent-geared-to-income, and affordable market. Funding from BC Housing is being pursued and, if approved, construction is expected to begin in 2024/25.<sup>99</sup>

### GROCERY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE



### GROCERY PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY PRIMARY REASON FOR ACCESSING FOOD BANK



## Meal Programs

People for a Healthy Community (PHC) provides meals at Soup Socials, the weekly Gabriola Elementary School Hot Lunch, Sandwiches/Snacks, and Breakfast programs, and the Stepping Up Stepping Out (SUSO) and Seniors' Luncheon programs.<sup>101</sup>



## Farmers' Market Coupon Program



In 2022, 110 lower-income Gabriolans received BC Association of Farmers' Markets' coupons through People for a Healthy Community (PHC), redeeming \$38,778 worth of coupons at the Gabriola Agricultural Co-op's market. This province-wide program is a

healthy-eating initiative that supports farmers' markets and strengthens food security across British Columbia, allowing participants to purchase vegetables, fruits, nuts, eggs, dairy, herbs, vegetable & fruit plants, honey, meat and fish and has been funded by the Ministry of Health since 2012.<sup>102</sup>

## Older Adults

People for a Healthy Community Gabriola (PHC) operates several programs for older adults (55+) that encourage social involvement with their peers and connection with the community. Their monthly Seniors' Luncheon sees an average of 25 participants each month. The Adult Day Program (Stepping Up Stepping Out) has an average of 17 participants on Mondays and 12 on Saturdays, with 31 unique participants and 11 who attend on both days. Their Choose to Move program saw 8 sessions with a group of 12 participants in 2023. In the fall/winter of 2022/23, the New Age of Aging educational program saw 4 sessions with an average of 24 participants, and a new program will run in February 2024. Their ActivAge program runs in partnership with the Gabriola Recreation Society. PHC also employs a Seniors Navigator who helps older adults link to transportation and food services and social opportunities.<sup>103</sup>



## Inclusive Transportation

### Subsidized GERTIE Rides

GERTIE (Gabriola's Environmentally Responsible Trans-Island Express) is Gabriola's locally created and managed bus service. Free ride passes, funded by GERTIE, People for a Healthy Community, and the Auxiliary for Island Health Care, are made available to lower income Gabriolans in need of affordable transportation options.<sup>104</sup>

	SUBSIDIZED RIDES	SUBSIDIZED RIDES AS PROPORTION OF TOTAL RIDES
2022	3,618	22.5%
2021	3,018	20.5%
2020	2,972	22.7%



### Taxi Saver

In collaboration with the Regional District of Nanaimo, People for a Healthy Community (PHC) offers Taxi Saver coupons for 50% discounted travel on Gabriola and medical appointments in Nanaimo, for seniors and people with disabilities. Sixty-six Gabriolans were registered in the Taxi Saver program as of late 2023. In 2022, PHC sold 320 sheets of coupons, each of which provided \$60 worth of taxi travel for \$30. Gabriolans in need were able to save \$9,600 on necessary travel.<sup>105</sup>



\$9,600 SAVINGS

### Discount Ferry Experience Cards

People for a Healthy Community, the Gabriola Ferry Advisory Committee, and Mid-Island Co-Op collaborated in the past to provide single-use Experience Cards for those who may not have the funds to buy a multiple-use card from BC Ferries or who have difficulty affording regular single fares. Unfortunately, these cards stopped being issued during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as yet, the program has not started again. In 2019, before the pandemic, 95 car and driver and 101 foot passenger cards were issued.<sup>106</sup>

### Travel Assistance Program (TAP) Forms

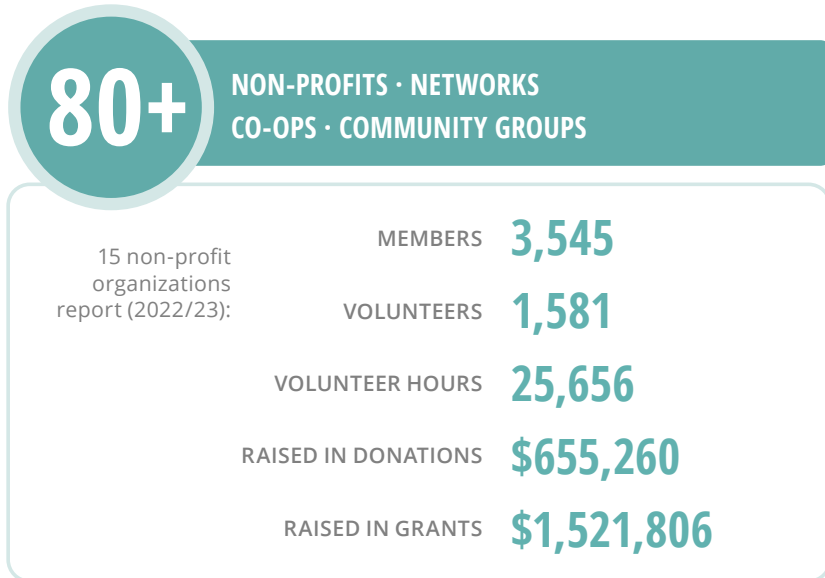
TAP is a partnership between the BC Ministry of Health and transportation carriers, like BC Ferries, to help alleviate transportation costs borne by residents who must travel within the province for non-emergency medical specialist services not available in their own community. An estimated 3,900 to 5,200 TAP forms were provided to Gabriolans by the Gabriola Medical Clinic in 2023. This number does not include TAP forms provided to Gabriolans by medical professionals not located on island.<sup>107</sup>

## Local Governance and Civic Engagement

Self-determination and self-governance have been noted as important indicators of health, and the extent to which people perceive they have a voice and participate in the decisions that affect them is an important aspect of ensuring healthy individuals and communities.<sup>108</sup> Serving on community boards, volunteering, running for elected office, and voting are just some of the ways that people can influence community health.

### Local Governance

Membership and participation in groups and organizations can improve physical and mental health, not only through becoming more active but also through increasing social capital and decreasing social isolation. Community participation improves anxiety, depression, hypertension, cardiovascular health, and cognitive impairment. Building strong social ties through participation not only contributes to the strength and resilience of the community, it builds better health in those who participate.<sup>109</sup> Gabriola provides countless opportunities for residents to get involved, through becoming a member of or volunteering with local groups and organizations.

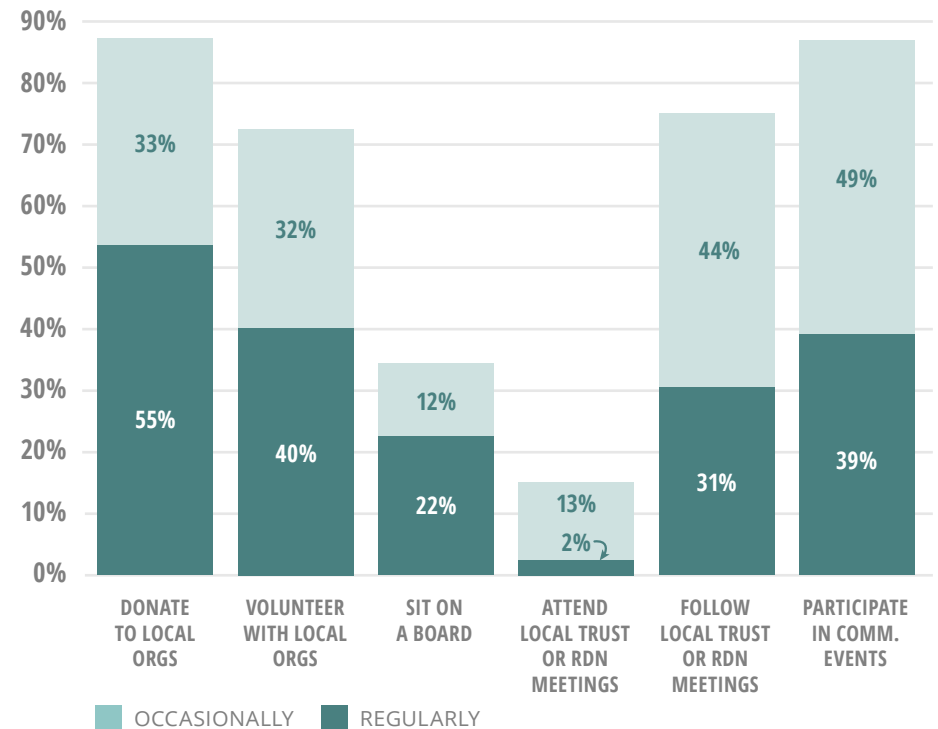


Our rough estimate resulted in a tally of more than 80 non-profits, networks, co-ops and community groups on Gabriola, although we are certain there are many more. With only 15 organizations reporting, 3,545 members were identified in 2022/23, as well as 693 volunteers who contributed 25,656 volunteer hours to the Gabriola community. These organizations also reported receiving more than \$1.5 million in grants and more than \$650,000 in donations, which are put towards critically important services and activities in our community.

### Community Involvement

Respondents to a 2023 community health and wellbeing survey provided information about their community involvement.<sup>110</sup> Almost 90% said they regularly or occasionally donate to and more than 70% regularly or occasionally volunteer with local organizations. More than 85% said they regularly or occasionally participate in community events. More than 75% regularly or occasionally follow Local Trust Council or Regional District of Nanaimo activities, although only 15% attend those meetings.

**PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**



## Other Community Activity: Faith-Based Organizations

Spiritual community participation has been linked to greater longevity, less depression and suicide, and less substance use, and has an influence on key outcomes such as a quality of life and medical care decisions.<sup>111</sup> Gabriola is home to a number of faith-based organizations that not only provide for a congregant community but also offer important services to the broader community as a whole.

Congregant activities include regular weekly services / meetings, prayer and bible study groups, groups for different ages, such as parent and child meet-ups, and potluck gatherings.

Broader services to the community include volunteering at or offering supplies and equipment for a variety of community events, such as the Farm to Table Feast or the Spirit Feast. As well, church groups often loan the use of their buildings to outside organizations and activities, such as the Community Hall, various multi-organizational initiatives, the Health and Wellness Collaborative, Naloxone training, AA and Al Anon, the Boy Scouts, the many programs offered by People for a Healthy Community, and others.<sup>112</sup>

## Voter Turnout

### Local Elections Voter Turnout

Gabriola has a unique form of local governance: land use is governed through the Islands Trust Local Trust Committee while recreation, waste management, emergency services, and building services are provided by the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN). Bowen Island has a dual governance model as both a municipality and Local Trust Area. Nanaimo is a municipality.

Local voter turnout data are reflective of the following conditions: Gabriola's turnout reflects the election of two trustees to the Islands Trust Local Trust Committee and one RDN regional director. Because it is an island municipality, Bowen's turnout reflects the election of two Islands Trust trustees as well as a mayor and six municipal councillors. As a city, Nanaimo's turnout is reflective of the election of one mayor and eight municipal councillors. The British Columbia number is a total of voter turnout in all local government elections based on both eligible voter estimates and information voluntarily provided by the various local jurisdictions in the province.<sup>113</sup>

### LOCAL ELECTIONS VOTER TURNOUT

	2018	2022
GABRIOLA	44.5%	33.4%
BOWEN	64.2%	59.7%
NANAIMO	40.4%	23.9%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	36.5%	29.2%

Just over one-third of eligible Gabriola voters participated in the 2022 local elections. This is much lower than on Bowen Island but higher than in Nanaimo and in British Columbia as a whole.

**TREND:** Fewer eligible Gabriola voters voted in the 2022 election than in 2018, which was also the case in our comparator communities. Note that our RDN representative was acclaimed, which may have had an impact on voter turnout.

Nearly 68% of Gabriola voters participated in the 2020 provincial election. This is higher than in all other comparator communities.

**TREND:** More Gabriola voters voted in the 2020 election than in 2017, which was not the case in our comparator communities. This could be due to the prevalence of voting by mail due to the COVID-19 pandemic in that year. Voting in our comparator communities dropped between 2017 and 2020.

### PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS VOTER TURNOUT<sup>114</sup>

	2017	2020
GABRIOLA	64.1%	67.6%
BOWEN	67.1%	65.3%
NANAIMO	63.0%	55.6%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	61.2%	53.9%

Nearly 62% of eligible Gabriola voters participated in the 2021 federal election. This is lower than on Bowen Island and Nanaimo, and about the same as in British Columbia as a whole.

**TREND:** Fewer eligible Gabriola voters voted in the 2021 election than in 2019, which was also the case in our comparator communities. However, voter turnout dropped by much more on Gabriola than on Bowen, in Nanaimo, or in BC as a whole.

### FEDERAL ELECTIONS VOTER TURNOUT<sup>115</sup>

	2018	2021
GABRIOLA	73.6%	61.9%
BOWEN	73.7%	66.6%
NANAIMO	68.9%	63.6%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	66.0%	61.4%

## Public Safety

Public safety describes services established to ensure the welfare and protection of the public in response to situations that may imperil health and wellbeing. On Gabriola these services include ambulance, fire, and police services. Disaster response planning and coordination are provided through the Regional District of Nanaimo.

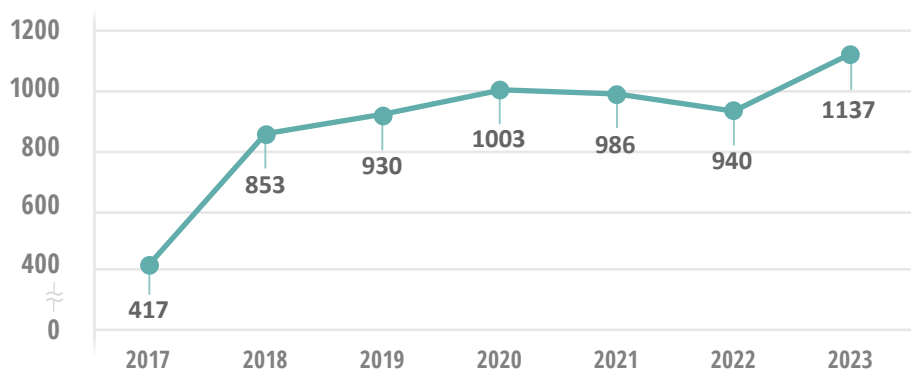


### Emergency Services

These graphs represent the number of times that emergency services – i.e., ambulance, fire, or police – have been called to an emergency, and include data for Gabriola, Mudge and DeCourcy.<sup>116</sup> All three emergency services are experiencing increasing numbers of calls, which is likely related to increases in both residents and tourists.

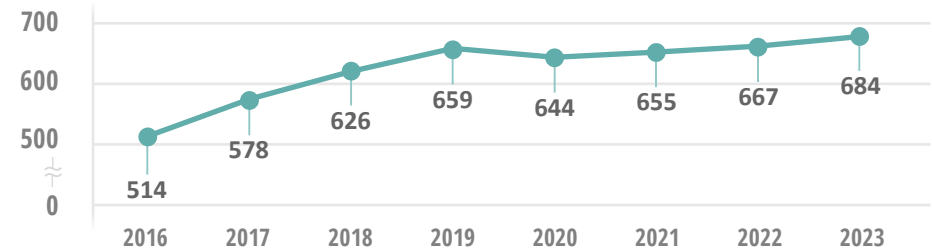
### Police Service Calls

Police services on Gabriola are provided by the RCMP. These calls data include calls to Valdes Island. More information about police services calls can be found on the next page.



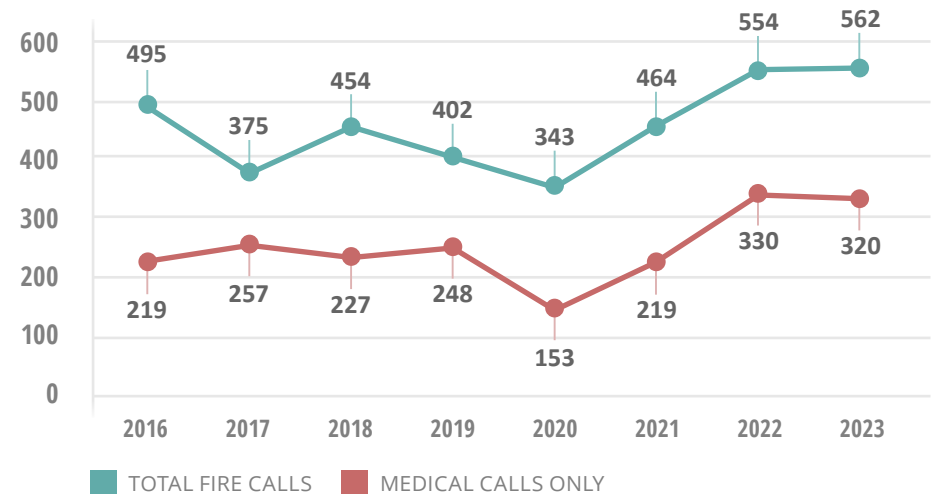
### Ambulance Service Calls

Ambulance services are provided by BC Emergency Health Services, which maintains a dedicated station on the island. The data for 2023 includes 176 calls considered “immediately life threatening” or “time critical” and 508 calls considered “urgent” but not life-threatening or “not urgent”. The data also includes 384 ground transports and 13 air transports off island. 105 calls were resolved on the island.



### Fire Service Calls

Fire services on Gabriola are provided by the Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department (GVFD), which has two stations on the island. The top line in the graph below represents the total number of calls that the GVFD received. The bottom line represents only medical calls, which make up a large proportion of total calls. As in other fire departments, the GVFD often acts as a first responder to provide critical first aid care in medical emergencies.



## Policing Statistics

Policing on Gabriola is done by three RCMP officers stationed in a dedicated detachment on the island. The work of the detachment's officers runs the gamut of issues and covers investigation and enforcement of local and regional bylaws as well as provincial and federal legislation.

The table below shows the top ten reasons for police being called in 2023 and, for comparison, in 2019, as presented in our previous report. The data includes all categories of calls, including situations where only assistance or information was provided, where there was insufficient evidence or the claim was unfounded, as well as where charges were recommended or laid.<sup>117</sup>

2023	Number of Calls	Percent of Total	2019	Number of Calls	Percent of Total
Total Number of Calls	1,117		Total Number of Calls	896	
Suspicious Person, Vehicle, Occurrence	102	9.1%	Property Lost / Found	91	10.2%
Well-being Check	76	6.8%	Suspicious Person, Vehicle Occurrence / Traffic-Related	76	8.5%
Canada Shipping Act	71	6.4%	Assault (incl. sexual assault) / Breach of Peace	47	5.2%
Traffic-Related	70	6.3%	Theft	45	5.0%
Theft / Unspecified Assistance	64	5.7%	Missing Persons / Unspecified Assistance	38	4.2%
Property Lost / Found	61	5.5%	False or Abandoned 911 Calls / Mental Health Act	37	4.1%
Breach of Peace	55	4.9%	Mischief	28	3.1%
False Alarms	54	4.8%	Collision / Harassment	26	2.9%
Assault (incl. sexual assault)	52	4.7%	Bylaw Infractions	24	2.7%
Impaired Driving	43	3.8%	False Alarms	23	2.6%

\* Note that some categories are tied, and that calls to Valdes Island are not included here.

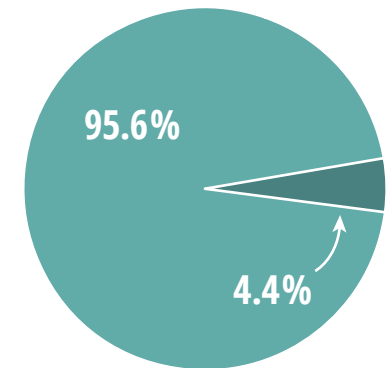
The total number of policing calls went up by nearly 25% between 2019 and 2023, from 896 to 1,117. This was partially driven by a large increase in the number of Canada Shipping Act calls, which went up due to an increase in proactive enforcement resources from the provincial government. The increase in population is also a driver of increasing call numbers. Mental Health Act calls did not make the top ten in 2023, but impaired driving calls did. The number of well-being check<sup>118</sup> calls went up, becoming second highest in 2023, as did calls about thefts (which took place particularly in marine environments) and assaults (which include prevention activities and providing assistance to other agencies). On the other hand, the number of calls about lost or found property and traffic-related incidents went down.

## Emergency Preparedness

Gabriola participates in the RDN's Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP).<sup>119</sup> This program provides information and resources that neighbours can use to build neighbourhood-based plans to keep each other safe and respond appropriately in the event of an emergency such as a fire or earthquake, which includes planning for pets and other domestic animals in the event of emergency. Several neighbourhood groups across the island became active during the dry season in 2023 and, in May 2024, the Sustainable Gabriola "GabriHoods" event brought together people from across the island to encourage neighbourhoods without plans to develop them.



## POLICE SITUATION RESOLUTIONS - 2023



- NO CHARGES PURSUED
- CHARGES RECOMMENDED OR LAID

The vast majority of police work on Gabriola involves situations that are resolved without charges being pursued or filed – 95.6% of police calls in 2023. This means most of the work focuses on problem-solving, information-sharing, assistance, and referrals. This is very comparable to 2019, when the ratio was 95.9% / 4.1%. Note that some of the 4.4% include criminal offences where there may have been multiple charges laid, or are related to provincial statutes such as impaired driving or traffic offences.

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112. Particular thanks to Mary Charlotte Wilcox of the Gabriola Fellowship Church for providing information for this section.
113. RDN 2022 General Local Elections, Gabriola, RDN: <https://www.rdn.bc.ca/2022elections>; Bowen: Civic Info BC: <https://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/election-results-v3/index.php?localgovernmentid=180&select-year=2022&select-view-by=municipality>; Nanaimo: Civic Info BC: <https://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/election-results-v3/index.php?localgovernmentid=180&select-year=2022&select-view-by=municipality>; BC: Civic Info BC: <https://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/election>
114. Note that Gabriola data include not only Mudge and DeCourcy but also Valdes, Ruxton and Pylades islands. Gabriola polls are 17-21 and 22; Bowen Island polls are 49 and 65-68. Data provided by request to Voter Services at Elections BC, 9 July 2024. Nanaimo turnout includes both the Nanaimo and Nanaimo-North Cowichan ridings. Overall BC voter turnout data are from: <https://elections.bc.ca/resources/results/voter-turnout>
115. Calculations by author. Gabriola turnout represents polls 175-183 and 604 in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith electoral district. Bowen Island turnout represents polls 150-158 in the West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky Country electoral district. Nanaimo turnout represents the Nanaimo-Ladysmith electoral district. BC turnout is calculated by Elections Canada. Available at: <https://www.elections.ca/res/rep/off/ovr2021app/home.html>
116. Data provided by Derek Kilbourn, 9 February 2024.
117. Data provided by Corporal Jordan Mullen, Detachment Commander, Gabriola RCMP, January/February 2024. Calculations and analysis by author.
118. Note that well-being checks are those that are not associated with mental health crises; the latter are classified as Mental Health Act calls.
119. NEPP website: <https://www.rdn.bc.ca/neighborhood-emergency-preparedness>

## Gabriola Health and Wellbeing Collaborative Member Organizations

BC Ambulance Service	Gabriola Emergency Support Services (RDN)	Gabriola Sounder
Christ Church Gabriola	Gabriola Fellowship Church	Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department
Community Nutritionist	Gabriola Ferry Advisory Committee	Gabriolans for Local Food Choices
Community Social Worker	Gabriola Healing Arts Network	GES Parent Advisory Council
Gabriola Agricultural Co-op	Gabriola Health Care Foundation	Haven Foundation
Gabriola Ambulance Society	Gabriola Historical & Museum Society	HOPE Centre
Gabriola Arts Council	Gabriola Housing Society	Island Futures Society
Gabriola Auxiliary for Island Health Care Society	Gabriola Island Community Hall Association	Islands Trust, Local Trustees
Gabriola Branch, VI Regional Library	Gabriola Island Community Investment Co-op	NOW (Naut'sa mawt Oceanside Wellness) Network
Gabriola Chamber of Commerce	Gabriola Island Land Stewards Society	People for a Healthy Community Society
Gabriola Chapter, Rural & Remote Division of Family Practice, BC Family Practice	Gabriola Island Memorial Society	Regional District of Nanaimo, Area B Director (Gabriola, Mudge, DeCourcy)
Gabriola Commons Foundation	Gabriola Land & Trails Trust	School Health Promotion Specialist
Gabriola Community Bus Foundation (GERTIE)	Gabriola Lions Club	Sustainable Gabriola Network
Gabriola Detachment, RCMP	Gabriola Medical Clinic	Approximately ten individual members with specific expertise
Gabriola Ecumenical Society	Gabriola Outreach Program	
Gabriola Elementary School (GES)	Gabriola Recreation Society	
	Gabriola Senior Citizens Association (Rollo Centre)	

For questions about this report, please contact us at: [gabriolahealthreport@gmail.com](mailto:gabriolahealthreport@gmail.com)

To find out more about the Gabriola Health & Wellbeing Collaborative, visit our website at: <https://ghwcollaborative.ca>



PUBLISHED AUGUST 2024



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