

# Municipal Indicators Factsheet – November 2022

## Population Changes 2012 - 2021

Alberta Municipal Affairs produces 13 measures related to specific aspects of a municipality's governance, finances or community. This month, we take a close look at the population change outcome measure.

### About the population change outcome measure

The population change outcome indicates whether the population change of a municipality is stable or growing. Summer Villages and Improvement Districts are excluded from this measure because of the small permanent resident population.

### Why is this measure important?

Population change is a key indicator that is used by municipalities to plan the services and infrastructure to accommodate current demand. Municipalities that have population declines by more than 20 per cent over a 10 year period will need to consider how services and infrastructure can be scaled down to accommodate reduced demand from fewer citizens and a reduced tax base.

### Notable findings from the population change outcome measure

#### There are fewer municipalities today than in 2012.

Municipal restructuring is a process that occurs when municipalities change their geographical boundaries or status to better serve needs of their residents, such as:

- changing the status of a municipality;
- amalgamating two or more municipalities;
- adjusting municipal borders (annexations);
- creating new municipalities; and
- dissolving a municipality into another municipality.

Based on restructuring events, the number of municipalities have decreased 4.3 per cent (Table 1).

**TABLE 1: MUNICIPALITIES IN ALBERTA 2012-2021**

Municipal Status	2012	2021
City	17	19
Specialized Municipality	5	6
Municipal District	64	63
Town	108	106
Village	94	80
Summer Village	51	51
Improvement District	8	7
Special Areas	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>333</b>

### Most of the fastest growing municipalities are located close to the major cities in Alberta.

As of 2021, Alberta has four Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA). CMAs are urban areas of more than 100,000 usual residents and now include the cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Red Deer.

Topping the list of the fastest growing municipalities in Alberta were the Town of Cochrane (82.3%) and the City of Airdrie (62.1%). The City of Chestermere (44.4%) and Town of Carstairs (43.8%) also experienced substantial growth in the region.

In the Edmonton region, high growth was experienced in Leduc County (49.4%) and the cities of Spruce Grove (43.8%), Leduc (33.8%), and Fort Saskatchewan (32.3%).

For the Red Deer region, substantial population growth was noted in the towns of Blackfalds (54.7%) and Penhold (40.7%). While in the Lethbridge region the Town of Nobleford had the highest population growth (43.8%), followed closely by the towns of Coalhurst (26.4%), Coaldale (17.1%) and Picture Butte (17.0%).

The Village of Czar, a central municipality located 70 kilometers from the Saskatchewan border experienced



a population increase of 48.5 per cent, from 167 to 248.

The Municipal District of Ranchland No. 66 population also grew from 79 in 2012 to 110 in 2021, an increase of 39.2 per cent. This municipality has no urban centers and is the least populated Municipal District in Alberta.

The highest growth for a rural municipality was in the Municipal District of Greenview No. 16 (62.0%). This large increase in population can be attributed to the dissolution of the Town of Grande Cache in 2019, rendering it a hamlet in the Municipal District.

**TABLE 2: FASTEST GROWING MUNICIPALITIES IN ALBERTA 2012-2021**

Municipality	2012	2021	%
Town of Cochrane	17,580	32,199	83.2%
City of Airdrie	45,711	74,100	62.1%
MD of Greenview	5,299	8,584	62.0%
Town of Blackfalds	6,767	10,470	54.7%
Leduc County	13,977	20,888	49.4%
Village of Czar	167	248	48.5%
City of Chestermere	15,352	22,163	44.4%
City of Spruce Grove	26,171	37,645	43.8%
Town of Nobleford	1,000	1,438	43.8%
Town of Carstairs	3,442	4,898	42.3%
Town of Penhold	2,476	3,484	40.7%
MD of Ranchland	79	110	39.2%
City of Leduc	25,482	34,094	33.8%
City of Fort Saskatchewan	20,475	27,088	32.3%

**Nine municipalities experienced population losses of 20 per cent or more in the last 10 years.**

Generally, municipalities with large population declines are located further from major cities.

The Town of Rainbow Lake saw their population fall from 870 in 2012 to 495 in 2021, a decrease of 43.1 per cent. Two Municipal Districts (Northern Sunrise County and Municipal District of Smoky River) also experienced declines of 43.1 per cent and 20.8 per cent, respectively.

The reduction in the population of Northern Sunrise County is due in part to their shadow population count. Shadow population refers to temporary workers, and is a count done voluntarily by the municipality. In 2012, Northern Sunrise County had counted its shadow population, which was 647. However, the federal

census does not include a shadow population count, which would account for more than half of their population decline.

Six Villages (Myrnam, Glendon, Carmangay, Edberg, Halkirk and Empress) also lost substantial population during the same period.

**TABLE 3: FASTEST DECLINING MUNICIPALITIES IN ALBERTA 2012-2021**

Municipality	2012	2021	%
Town of Rainbow Lake	870	495	-43.1%
Northern Sunrise County	2,780	1,711	-38.5%
Village of Myrnam	370	257	-30.5%
Village of Glendon	486	338	-30.5%
Village of Carmangay	367	269	-26.7%
Village of Edberg	168	126	-25.0%
Village of Halkirk	121	92	-24.0%
Village of Empress	188	148	-21.3%
MD of Smoky River	2,126	1,684	-20.8%
Town of Mundare	855	689	-19.4%
Village of Coutts	277	224	-19.1%
Village of Delia	186	152	-18.3%
Town of Swan Hills	1,465	1,201	-18.0%

Smaller populations can lead to a decreased tax base, which may challenge municipalities to meet the needs of their residents. This could lead to further loss of private and/or public services to residents.

The population figures used in this document are reflective of the 2021 federal census. Federal census numbers may be adjusted over time as more information becomes available. To view the most recent federal census results visit [Statistics Canada](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-627-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm).

**Want to know more?**

For more information on Alberta's municipal indicators and what they tell us, visit [Municipal Indicators](#).

To view municipal indicator results, by year, visit our [Municipal Indicator Dashboard](#).

**Other questions?**

If you have questions about the municipal indicators, please contact us at [ma.updates@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ma.updates@gov.ab.ca).

