



CARDSTON COUNTY

Economic Report

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Executive Summary

Cardston County presents a picture of a small, agriculture-centered local economy with steady labour market participation and a business base that has expanded sharply after a recent dip. Labour force participation and employment rates changed very little between 2016 and 2021, pointing to continuity rather than a clear shift in overall labour market engagement. In 2021, most adults were employed, unemployment remained small in count, and the county's participation and employment rates sat above several nearby communities named in the source. At the same time, work activity was mixed rather than uniformly strong, with full-year full-time work increasing modestly while the number of residents who did not work also rose over the period.

The county's economic structure is clearly anchored in agriculture. That sector dominates both employment and business establishments by a wide margin, and it also stands out in the occupational profile, where natural resources and agriculture-related work became the largest group by 2021. Beyond that core, the local business landscape remains narrow and highly small-scale. Establishments without employees make up most of the business base, while firms with even a handful of employees are far fewer. Even within that structure, recent business activity has shifted noticeably. After declining to a low point in 2023, the number of establishments rebounded strongly and reached 411 in 2025, the highest level shown. Growth was not uniform across sectors, however. Agriculture-related establishments increased further, while some areas such as retail weakened.

Income patterns add a more uneven social picture. Household after-tax income in 2021 was spread across a wide range, with the largest counts in upper-middle and higher brackets and growth in several higher-income groups. Individual income, by contrast, was concentrated much lower, with large numbers of residents in lower and middle after-tax and employment income bands and fewer in the upper ranges. That contrast suggests a county where business activity and employment remain stable and locally rooted, but where prosperity is not evenly reflected at the individual level. The result is a community defined by continuity in labour market conditions, strong agricultural concentration, and a business base that has recently grown while remaining overwhelmingly small-scale.

Employment Rate

Cardston County's employment rate was 65.1% in 2021, unchanged from 2016. The five-year change was 0.0%, showing no movement in the share of the labour force aged 15 years and over that was employed.

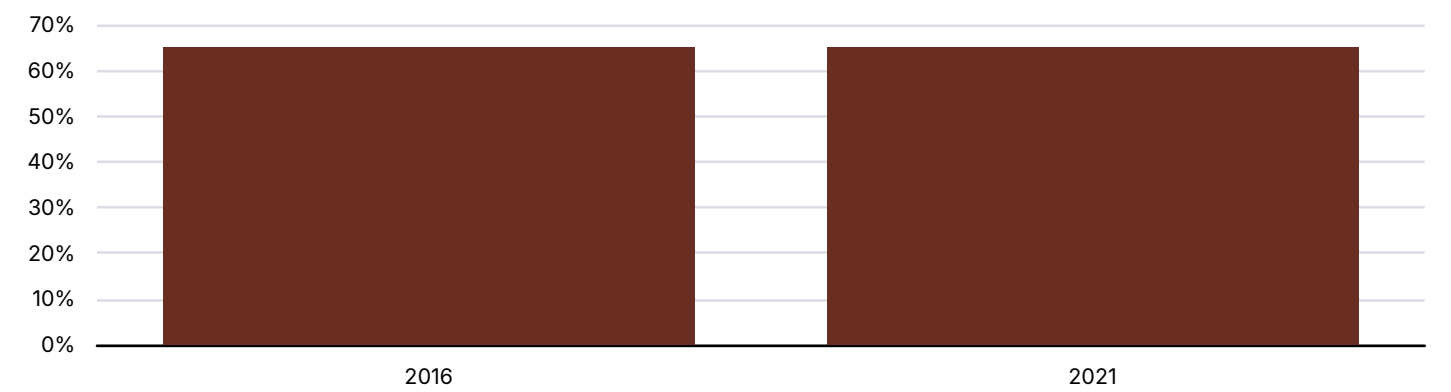


Figure 1.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed. It helps indicate overall labour market health and how fully local talent is being used. (Cardston County, 2016-2021)¹

Cardston County's employment rate was unchanged between 2016 and 2021, holding at 65.1% of the labour force aged 15 years and over. That stability suggests a steady level of labour market participation over the five-year period. The 2021 figure matches the 2016 level exactly, with a 5-year change of 0.0%. With only these two points available, the clearest pattern is continuity rather than movement. In practical terms, the data show no short-term shift in how fully working-age residents were employed during this period.

Cardston County's employment rate was 65.1% in both 2016 and 2021, showing no change over the five-year period. That level was higher than several nearby places in 2021, including Cardston at 50.5%, Claresholm at 47.2%, and Pincher Creek at 53.0%, but below Willow Creek No. 26 at 68.7% and slightly below Cowley at 62.2%. The pattern suggests a relatively stable labour market position, with local employment remaining solid rather than shifting sharply.

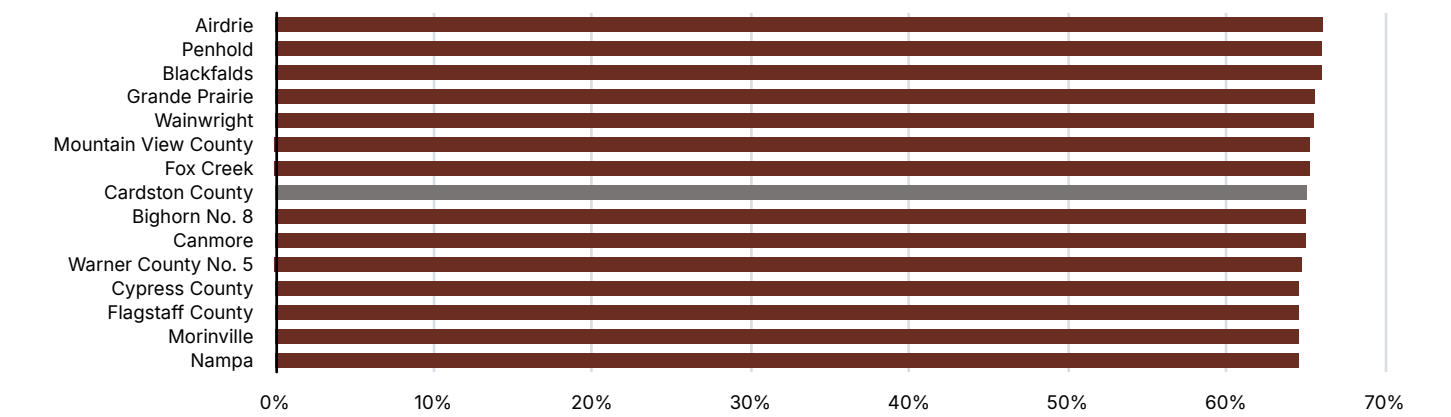


Figure 1.2: Comparison of Employment Rate with other locations (Cardston County, 2021)¹

Business Establishments

Cardston County had 411 business establishments in 2025, up 6.2% from 2024 and 57.5% over five years. The count fell to 223 in 2023 before rebounding to 387 in 2024.

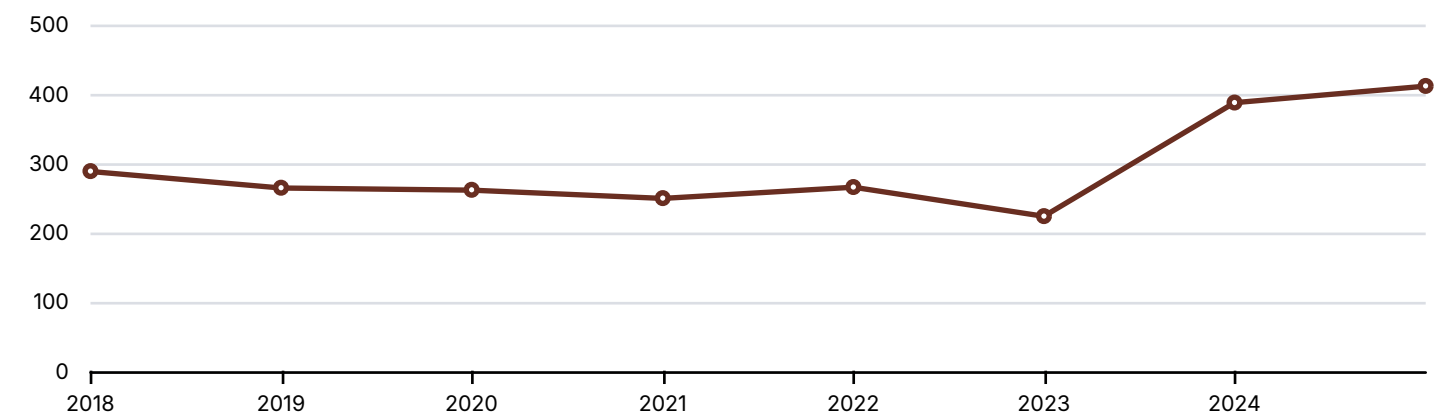


Figure 2.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Cardston County, 2018-2025)²

Cardston County's business establishment count was relatively steady from 2018 to 2022, moving from 288 to 265 after a gradual slide through 2021. The pattern shifted in 2023, when the total fell to 223, its lowest point in the series, before rebounding sharply to 387 in 2024 and 411 in 2025. That leaves 2025 well above earlier years and 6.2% higher than 2024. The five-year change in 2025 was 57.5%, while 2023 still showed a 22.6% decline over five years. The data points to recent expansion after a short downturn, without showing why.

Cardston County had 411 active business establishments in 2025, the highest count in the series provided. That followed a sharp rebound from 223 in 2023 and 387 in 2024, after earlier declines from 288 in 2018 to 249 in 2021. The county's 2025 total was below larger comparators such as Pincher Creek at 978 and Claresholm at 739, but above Cardston at 613 and Magrath at 356. The pattern points to a business base that expanded quickly after a recent low.

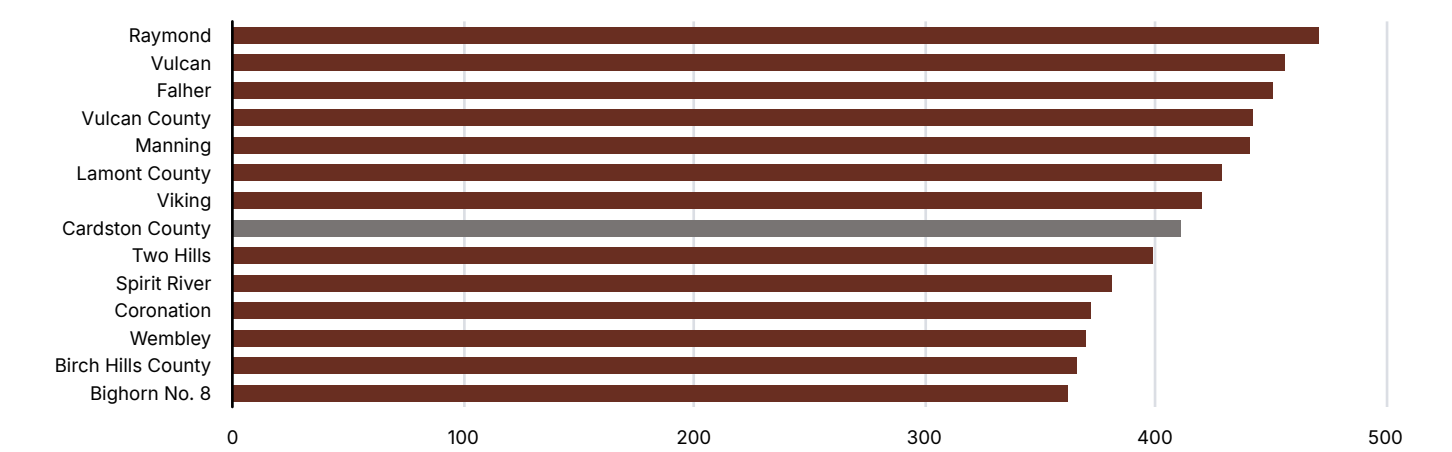


Figure 2.2: Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Cardston County, 2025)²

Employment by Sector

Cardston County’s largest sector in 2025 was agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting with 173 jobs, down 2.3% from 2024 but up 130.7% over five years. Retail trade followed at 23, while accommodation and food services reached 19.

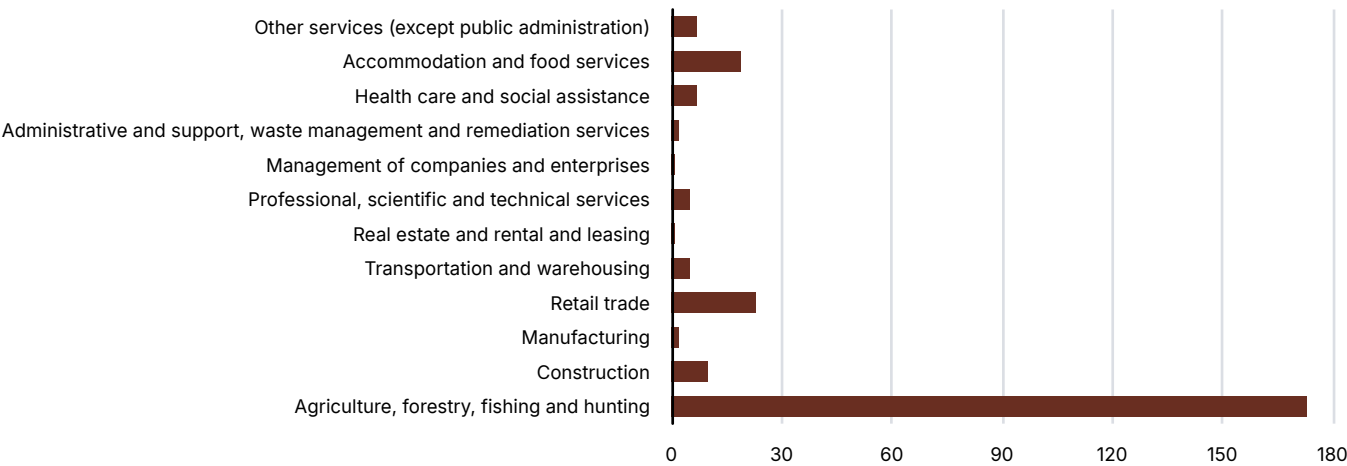
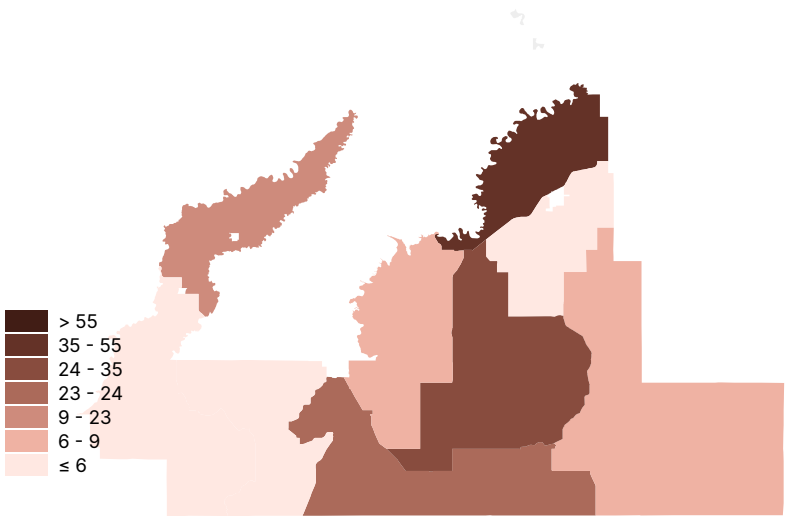


Figure 3.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Cardston County, 2025)³

Employment in Cardston County is spread across a small number of sectors, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting still the largest employer in 2025 at 173 people. That sector was down 2.3% from a year earlier, but it remained far ahead of retail trade at 23 and accommodation and food services at 19. Construction employed 10 people, while health care and social assistance accounted for 7. The longer trend is strongest in agriculture, which is up 130.7% over five years.



Cardston County's 2025 employment mix is led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, which accounts for 173 people in the employee population aged 15 and over. Accommodation and food services follows at 19, while retail trade has 23 and construction 10. Agriculture remains the clear anchor despite a small one-year decline of 2.3%. Several smaller sectors moved differently: accommodation and food services was unchanged year over year after a strong five-year rise, and retail trade fell 46.5% in the past year.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Cardston County)³

Establishments by Sector

Cardston County's largest sector is agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 256 businesses in 2025. That was up 4.9% from 2024 and 39.1% above 2023, while real estate reached 36 and construction 17.

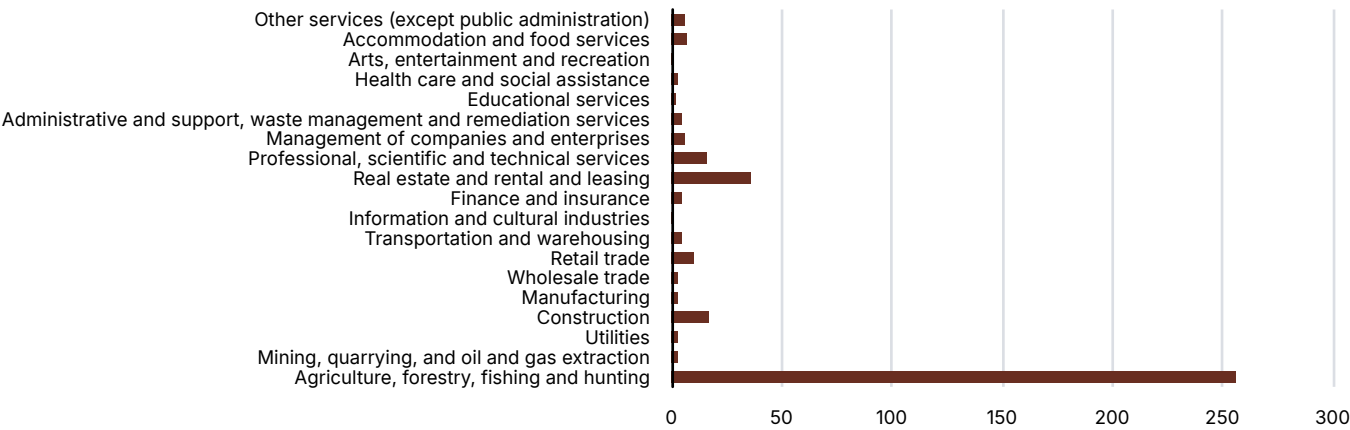


Figure 4.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Cardston County, 2025)²

Cardston County's business base in 2025 is strongly concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 256 establishments. That sector far exceeds every other category and shapes the local establishment mix. Real estate and rental and leasing is the next largest sector at 36 establishments, followed by construction at 17 and professional, scientific and technical services at 16. Retail trade has 10 establishments, while accommodation and food services has 7. Recent change is mixed. Agriculture grew 4.9% over one year and 39.1% over five years, while real estate rose 16.1% and professional services increased 23.1% over one year. Retail declined 23.1% in the past year.



Figure 4.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Cardston County)²

Cardston County's business base in 2025 is heavily concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 256 establishments, far more than any other sector. The next largest counts are real estate and rental and leasing at 36, construction at 17, and professional, scientific and technical services at 16. Several sectors remain small, including information and cultural industries at 1 and educational services at 2. This mix points to a narrow but clearly anchored local establishment structure.

Establishments by Size

Cardston County’s establishments remain concentrated among businesses without employees, which rose to 347 in 2025. Firms with 1 to 4 employees totaled 47, while 10 to 19 employee establishments increased to 7.

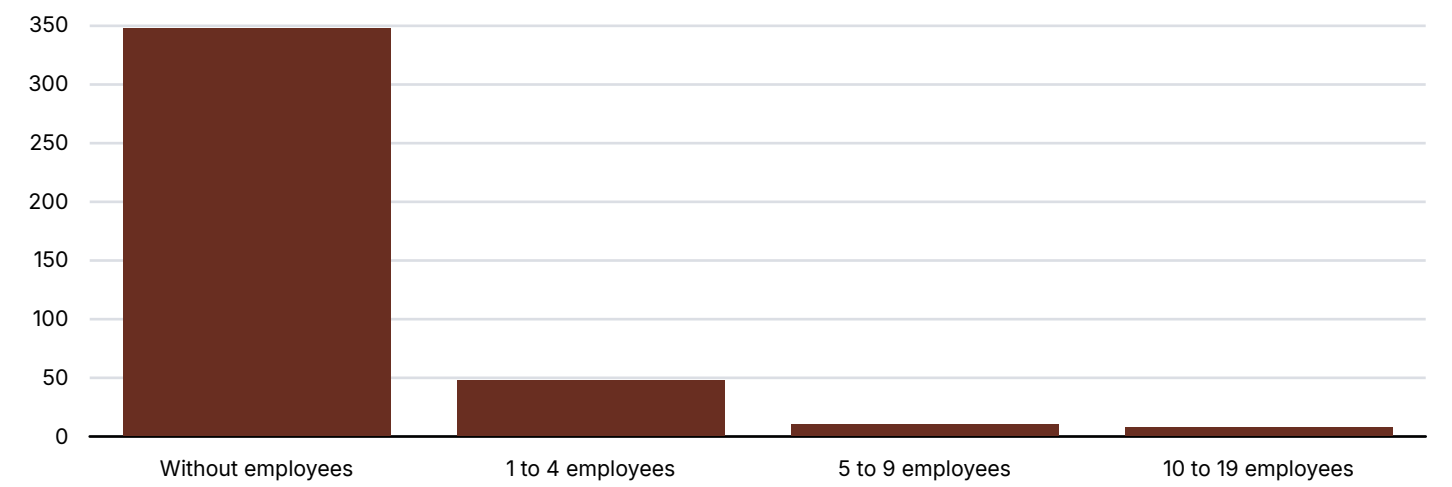


Figure 5.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Cardston County, 2025)²

In 2025, Cardston County’s business base was concentrated in very small establishments. Firms without employees made up the largest group at 347 businesses, and they were up 8.4% from a year earlier and 50.9% over five years. Businesses with 1 to 4 employees totaled 47, despite a 6.0% annual decline, while the 5 to 9 employee group held steady at 10 after a strong five-year increase of 233.3%. The 10 to 19 employee category remained small at 7, though it rose 16.7% in the past year.



Cardston County’s business base is dominated by establishments without employees. In 2025, there were 347 such businesses, far more than the 47 with 1 to 4 employees, 10 with 5 to 9 employees, and 7 with 10 to 19 employees. That mix points to a very small-firm structure. The no-employee category rose 8.4% from a year earlier and 50.9% over five years, while 1 to 4 employee firms fell 6.0% in the past year despite strong five-year growth.

Figure 5.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Cardston County)²

Household After-Tax Income

Cardston County's largest household income group was \$150,000 and over at 135 households in 2021, up 68.8% since 2016. The \$25,000 to \$29,999 group rose fastest, reaching 45 households, up 80.0%.

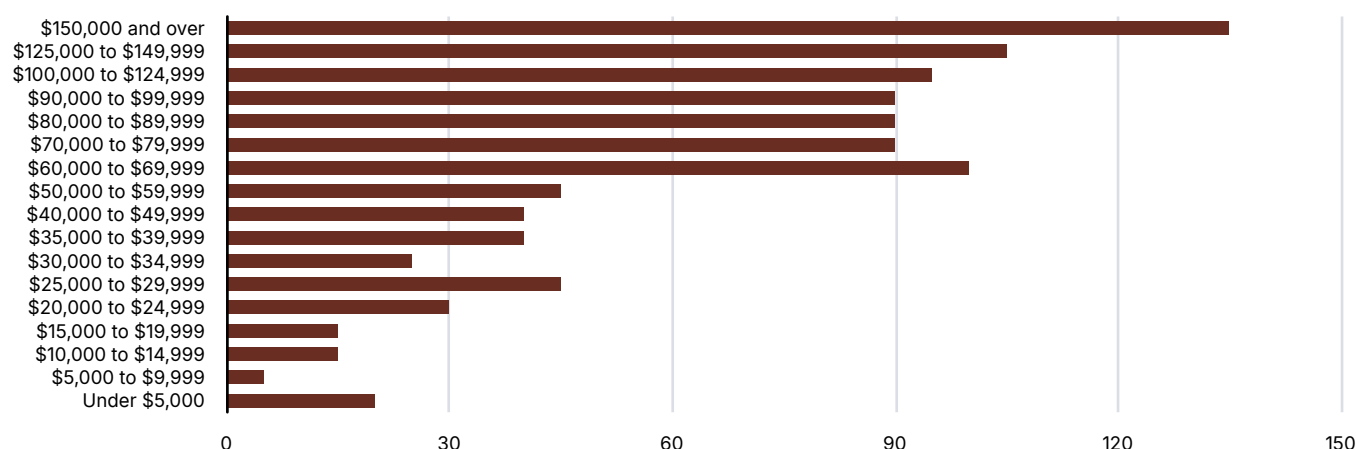


Figure 6.1: Shows household income after taxes across income groups. It helps indicate the resources households have available for day-to-day living after taxes are paid. (Cardston County, 2021)¹

In 2021, Cardston County's household after-tax income was spread across a wide set of income groups, with the largest counts in the upper-middle and higher ranges. The \$150,000 and over group had 135 households, followed by 105 in the \$125,000 to \$149,999 range and 100 in the \$60,000 to \$69,999 range. Lower-income groups were smaller, though 20 households were still below \$5,000. Over five years, several mid- and higher-income brackets grew, including gains of 80% in the \$25,000 to \$29,999 group and 68.8% at \$150,000 and over.

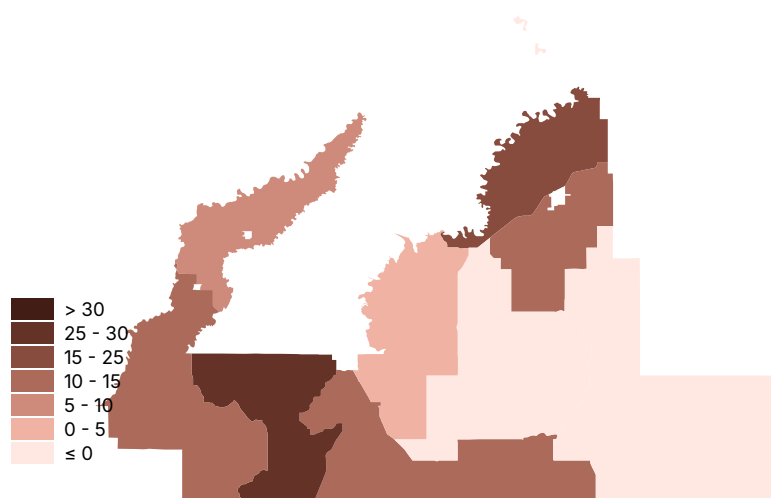


Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Household - \$150,000 and over (Cardston County)¹

In 2021, Cardston County's household after-tax income distribution was spread across a wide range, with the largest counts in the upper-middle and higher brackets. The \$150,000 and over group had 135 households, while \$125,000 to \$149,999 had 105 and \$60,000 to \$69,999 had 100. Lower-income brackets were smaller, though some remained present.

Individual After-Tax Income

Cardston County's largest income group in 2021 was \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 810 people. Counts were also high at 695 in \$10,000 to \$19,999 and 610 under \$10,000, then declined above \$40,000.

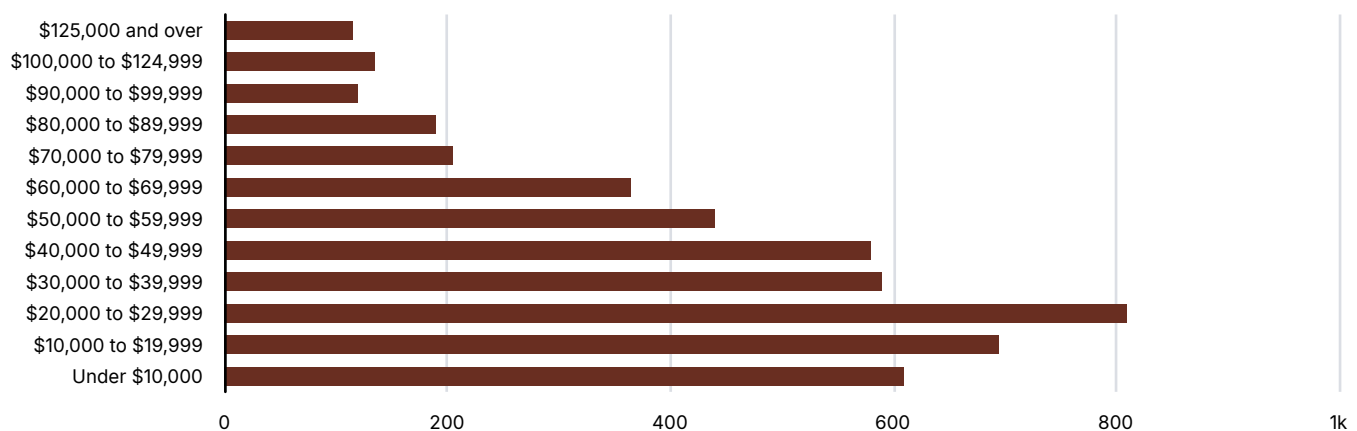


Figure 7.1: Shows individual after-tax income across income groups. It helps indicate the level of disposable income people have after taxes are paid. (Cardston County, 2021)¹

In 2021, Cardston County's individual after-tax income profile was concentrated in the lower and middle ranges. The largest group was those earning \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 810 people, followed by \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 695 and under \$10,000 at 610. Counts then tapered across higher brackets: 590 people were in the \$30,000 to \$39,999 group, 580 in \$40,000 to \$49,999, and 440 in \$50,000 to \$59,999. Another 365 were in \$60,000 to \$69,999. Above \$70,000, the numbers were smaller, ranging from 205 in the \$70,000 to \$79,999 bracket to 115 at \$125,000 and over. With only one year shown, no time trend can be assessed from this table. This distribution suggests a modest concentration of residents in lower-income brackets.

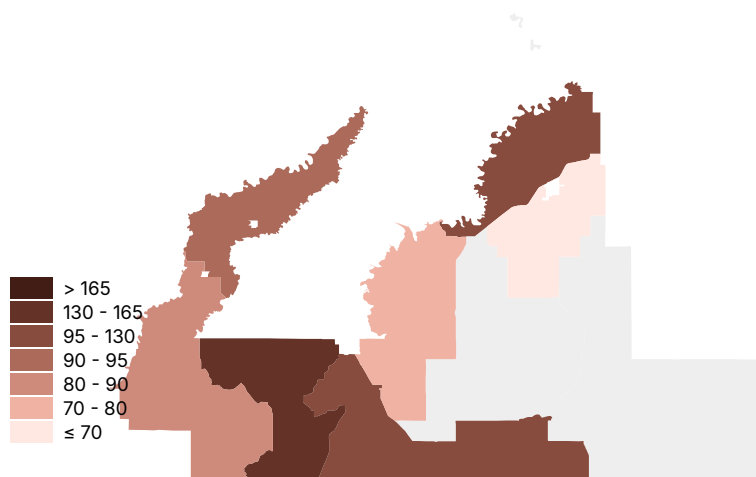


Figure 7.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Individual - \$20,000 to \$29,999 (Cardston County)¹

Cardston County's 2021 individual after-tax income profile is concentrated in the lower and middle brackets for residents aged 15 and over in private households. The largest group is \$20,000 to \$29,999, at 810 people. The next largest brackets are \$10,000 to \$19,999, with 695 people, and under \$10,000, with 610. Higher-income groups are smaller, including 135 people at \$100,000 to \$124,999 and 115 at \$125,000 and over.

Individual Employment Income

Cardston County’s largest income group was under \$5,000, with 745 people. The next largest groups were \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 500 and \$20,000 to \$29,999 at 385, while 140 people earned \$125,000 and over.

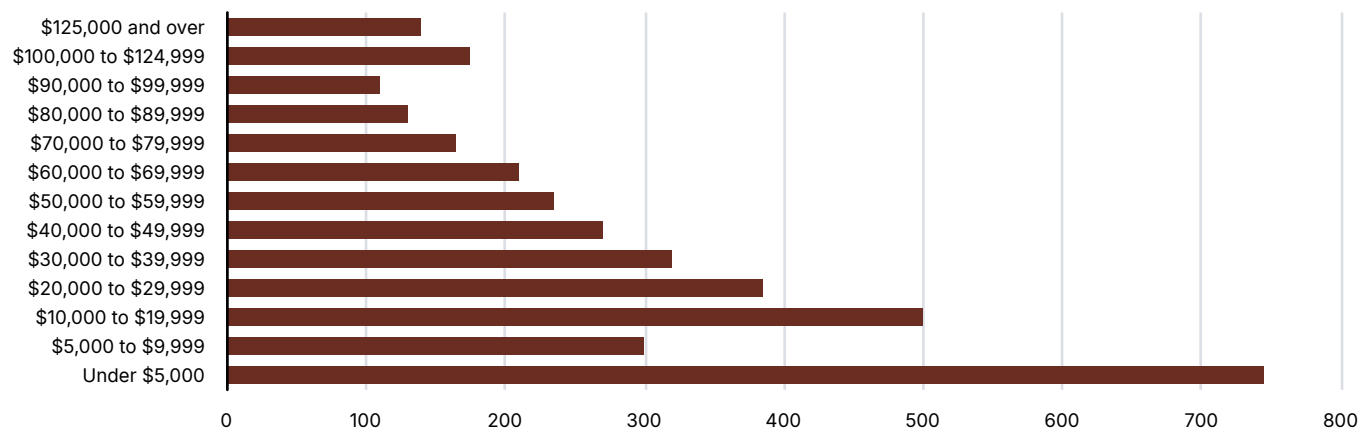


Figure 8.1: Shows individual employment income across income groups. It helps indicate how earnings from work are distributed among residents. (Cardston County, 2021)¹

In 2021, individual employment income in Cardston County was concentrated in the lower and middle ranges. The largest group was under \$5,000, with 745 people, followed by \$10,000 to \$19,999 with 500. Counts then gradually declined through the middle brackets, showing a broad spread rather than a single peak. Several brackets still had notable numbers: 385 people earned \$20,000 to \$29,999, 320 earned \$30,000 to \$39,999, and 270 earned \$40,000 to \$49,999. Higher income groups were smaller, with 175 people at \$100,000 to \$124,999 and 140 at \$125,000 and over. The pattern suggests a distribution weighted toward lower earnings, with fewer residents in the upper ranges.

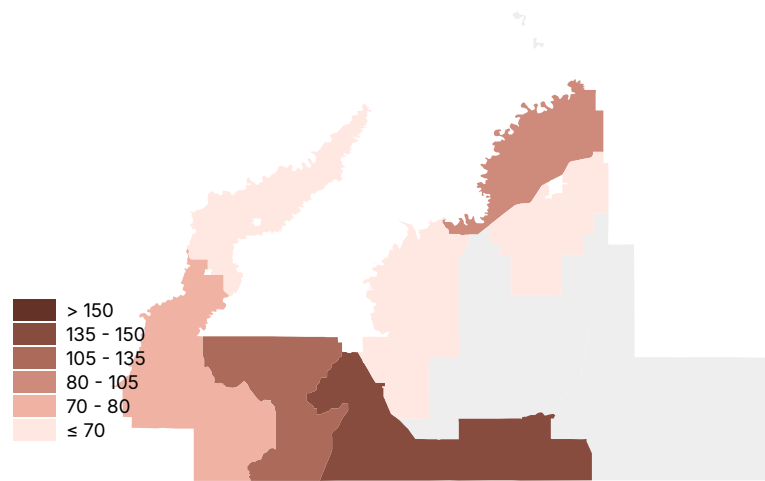


Figure 8.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Individual - Under \$5,000 (Cardston County)¹

In 2021, individual employment income in Cardston County was concentrated in the lower income bands, with the largest group under \$5,000 at 745 people. The next largest groups were \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 500 and \$20,000 to \$29,999 at 385. Higher income brackets were smaller. Counts fell to 175 for \$100,000 to \$124,999 and 140 for \$125,000 and over, while several mid-range categories remained between 110 and 320 people. The pattern shows a broad base of residents with modest employment income and fewer people in the upper ranges.

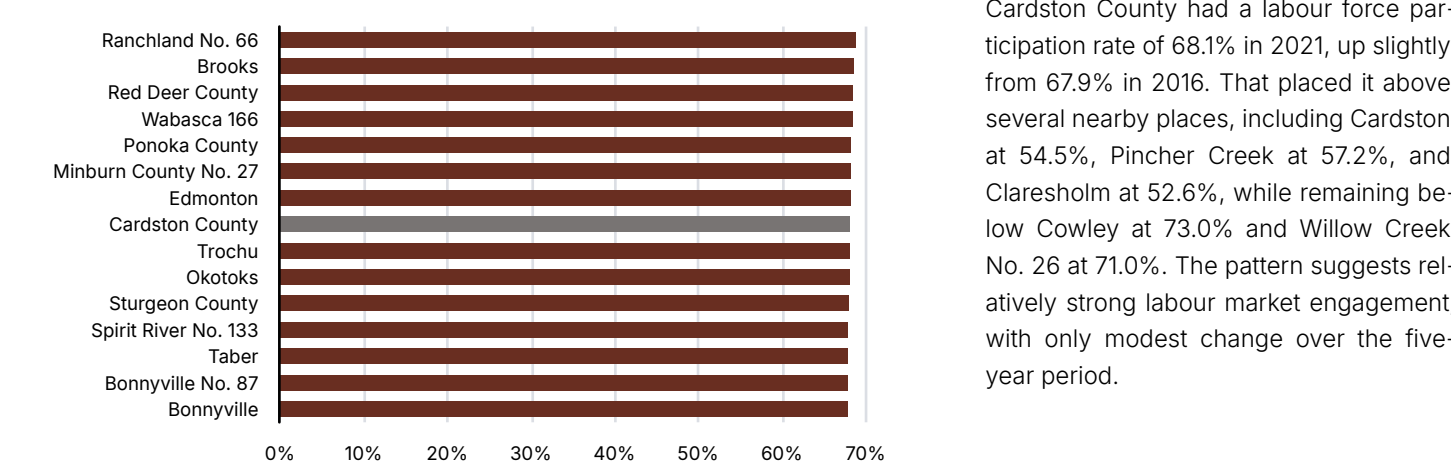
Labour Force Participation Rate

Cardston County's labour force participation rate was 68.1% in 2021, up slightly from 67.9% in 2016. The five-year change was 0.29%, showing little movement over the period.



Figure 9.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed or actively looking for work. It helps indicate the level of labour market engagement. (Cardston County, 2016-2021)¹

Cardston County's labour force participation rate was essentially unchanged between the two census points, edging up from 67.9% in 2016 to 68.1% in 2021. The 0.3% five-year change points to very limited movement rather than a clear shift in labour market engagement. With only these two observations, the clearest pattern is stability. The county remained close to the same level across the period, suggesting that the share of the working-age population either employed or actively looking for work held steady. This kind of flat trend is notable because it shows continuity rather than volatility in local participation.



Cardston County had a labour force participation rate of 68.1% in 2021, up slightly from 67.9% in 2016. That placed it above several nearby places, including Cardston at 54.5%, Pincher Creek at 57.2%, and Claresholm at 52.6%, while remaining below Cowley at 73.0% and Willow Creek No. 26 at 71.0%. The pattern suggests relatively strong labour market engagement, with only modest change over the five-year period.

Figure 9.2: Comparison of Labour Force Participation Rate with other locations (Cardston County, 2021)¹

Labour Force Status

Cardston County’s largest labour force group was employed residents, rising to 1,625 in 2021 from 1,510 in 2016. Not in the labour force increased to 795, while unemployed rose to 75.

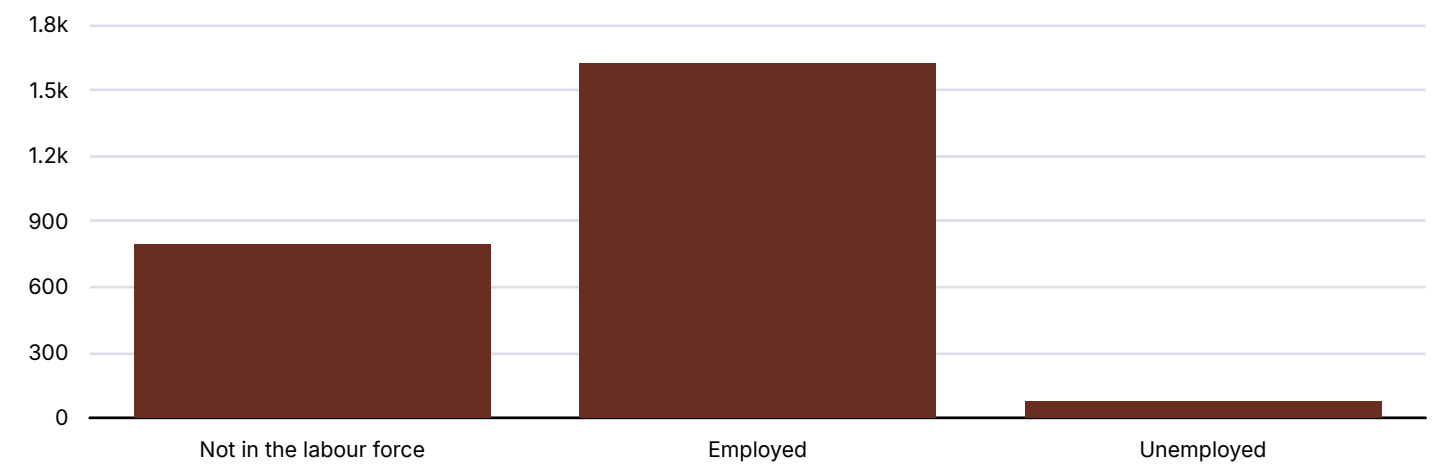
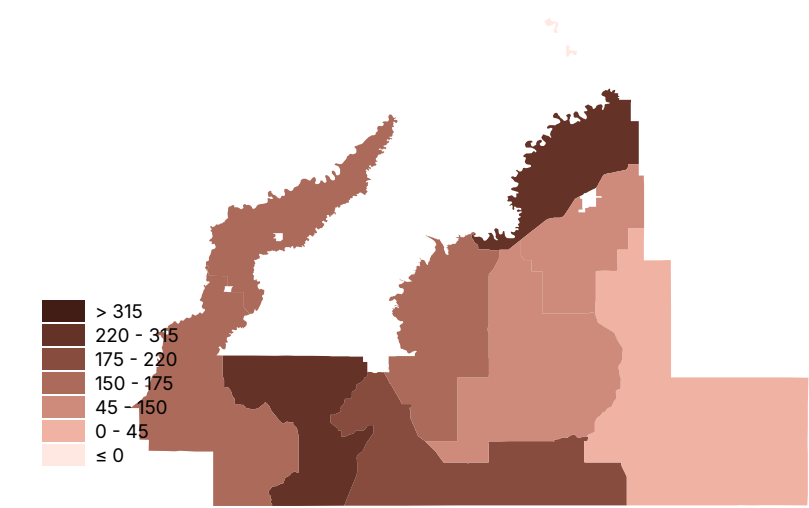


Figure 10.1: Shows whether residents are employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force. It helps indicate how people are participating in the labour market. (Cardston County, 2021)¹

In 2021, Cardston County’s labour force status showed more residents outside the labour force than in unemployment. Among the population aged 15 years and over, 1,625 people were employed, 75 were unemployed, and 795 were not in the labour force. The employed group was by far the largest, while unemployment was relatively small in count. With only a single year provided, the data offer a snapshot rather than a time trend. The pattern suggests a labour market with most people working and a substantial share not participating in the labour force.



In Cardston County, among residents aged 15 and over, employment was the largest labour force status in 2021. The county recorded 1,625 employed people, 795 not in the labour force, and 75 unemployed. That points to a labour market where most adults were working, while a smaller share was outside the labour force and very few were unemployed. At the local level, the pattern is uneven, with some small areas showing no recorded labour force activity.

Figure 10.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Labour Force Status - Employed (Cardston County)¹

Work Activity

Cardston County's largest work-activity group in 2021 was worked full year full time, at 875 people, up 4.2% from 2016. Did not work rose to 795, a 33.6% increase.

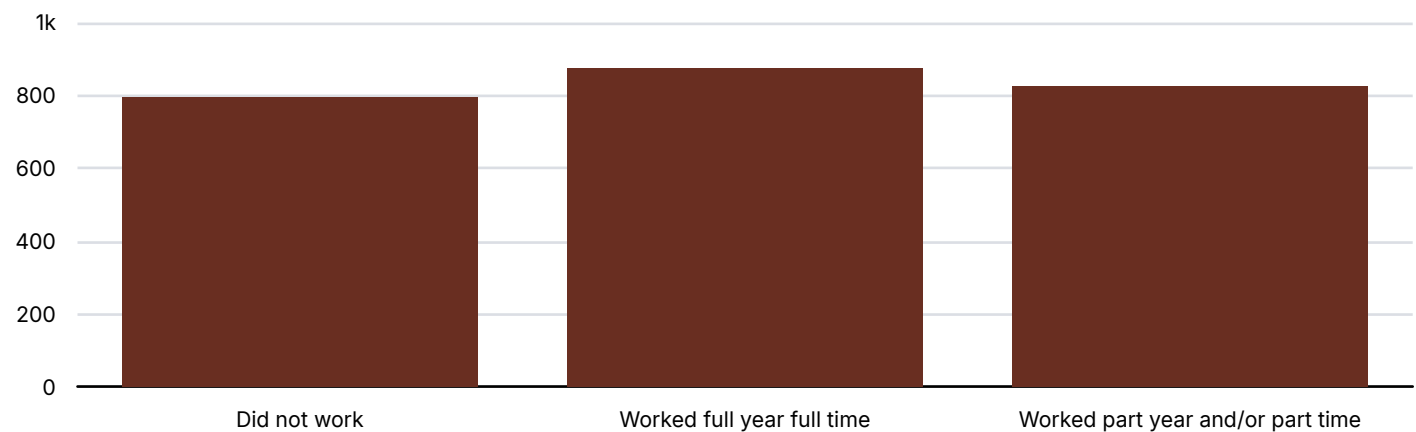


Figure 11.1: Shows the amount of work activity people had during the reference period. It helps indicate attachment to work over the year, not just at a single point in time. (Cardston County, 2021)¹

In Cardston County, work activity in 2021 was mixed among residents aged 15 years and over. The largest group did not work, at 795 people, while 875 worked full year full time and 825 worked part year and/or part time. Over five years, those who did not work rose 33.6%, full-year full-time work increased 4.2%, and part-year or part-time work fell 7.3%. This points to modest growth in stable full-year work alongside a stronger increase in non-working residents.

In 2021, work activity in Cardston County was split across the adult population aged 15 and over, with 875 people working full year full time, 825 working part year and/or part time, and 795 not working. That mix suggests a fairly even spread between steadier and less continuous work attachment. The five-year changes were mixed: full-year full-time work rose 4.2%, while part-year and/or part-time work fell 7.3% and non-work rose 33.6%. Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profile.

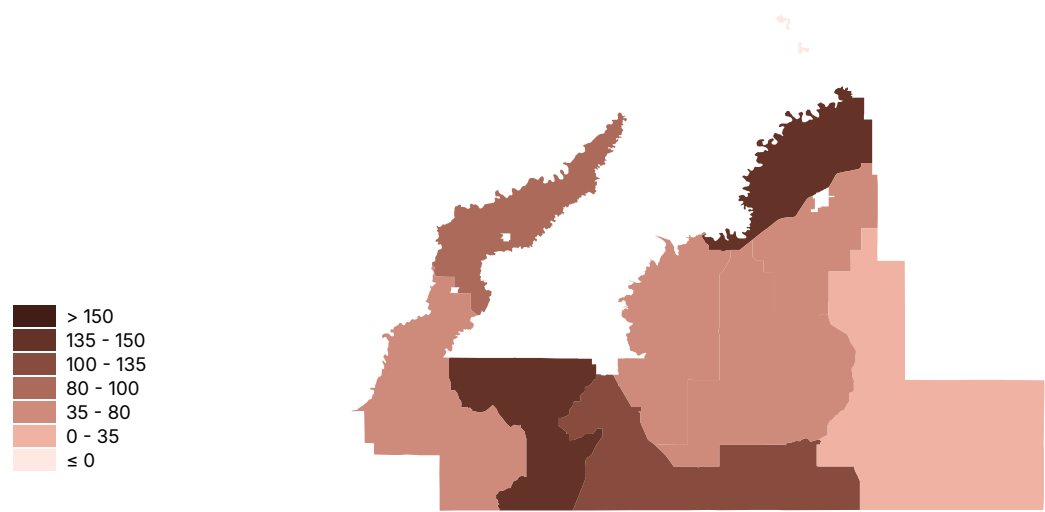


Figure 11.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Work Activity - Worked full year full time (Cardston County)¹

Employed Residents by Occupation

Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations became the largest group in Cardston County at 440 people in 2021, up 131.6% from 2016. Sales and service followed at 295, while trades stood at 245.

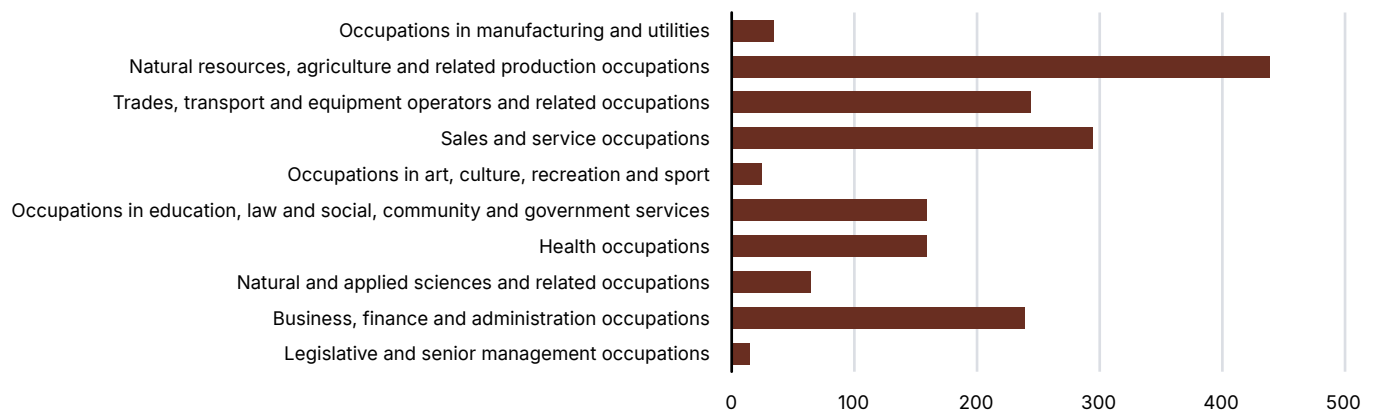
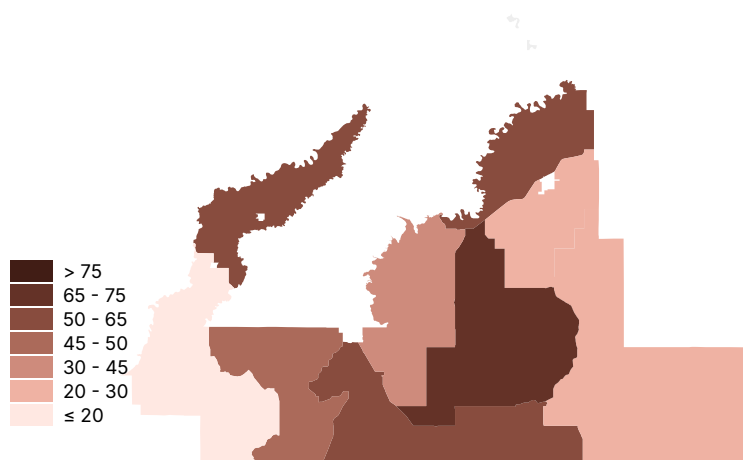


Figure 12.1: Shows the occupations held by employed residents. It helps indicate the community's skill mix and the kinds of work people do. (Cardston County, 2021)¹

In 2021, Cardston County's employed residents were spread across a fairly broad occupational mix, with the largest concentration in natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations. Sales and service occupations and business, finance and administration occupations also accounted for sizable groups, while several other fields were smaller. Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations numbered 440, up 131.6% over five years. Sales and service occupations reached 295, and business, finance and administration occupations totalled 240. Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations stood at 245. Health occupations rose to 160, while education, law and social, community and government services also had 160. Occupations in manufacturing and utilities, at 35, declined 12.5%.



Cardston County's employed residents were most concentrated in natural resources, agriculture, sales and service, and business administration occupations in 2021.

Figure 12.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Occupation - Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations (Cardston County)¹

Data Sources

1. Statistics Canada, Census Profile. Published in Dec 15, 2022.
2. Statistics Canada, Business Register. Published in Jun 1, 2025.
3. Statistics Canada, Business Register; Localintel, Employment by Industry Estimates of Census Areas. Published in Mar 13, 2026.

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