

ALBERTA
SOUTHWEST

WILLOW CREEK NO. 26

Quality of Life Report

Table of Contents

Religion	4
Family Type	5
Ethnic Origin	6
Mother Tongue	7
Population Density	8
Highest Education Level	9
Household Type	10
Average Shelter Costs	11
Housing Tenure	12
Household Total Income Groups	13
High School Completion	14
Core Housing Need	15
Median Age	16
Age at Immigration	17
Immigrant Status	18

Executive Summary

Willow Creek No. 26 in 2021 appears as a sparsely settled municipal district with a stable but gradually shifting social profile. Population density remained very low at 1.4 people per square kilometre, even after a modest increase since 2016, and the median age continued to edge upward to 41.6. The population in private households was overwhelmingly non-immigrant, and its cultural profile was shaped mainly by long-established European origins. English was the dominant mother tongue by a wide margin, with German standing out as the main secondary language presence. In religion, Christian affiliation remained the largest grouping, while a substantial minority reported no religion, leaving little presence for other faith traditions in the census picture.

Household and family patterns point to a community centered on couple households, especially those without children. Married couples without children were the largest family type, and couple-family households without children were also the largest household form. At the same time, one-person households grew strongly, while households with children declined, suggesting a gradual tilt toward smaller and less child-centered living arrangements rather than any abrupt restructuring. Housing tenure remained strongly owner-occupied, with ownership growing faster in absolute terms than renting and continuing to dominate the local tenure mix. Shelter costs rose for both owners and renters, with renter costs increasing faster over five years, though owner costs still remained higher. Most households were not in core housing need, but a notable minority were, showing that housing pressure existed without defining the broader picture.

Education and income add to the impression of a community with a broad middle and upper-middle base. High school completion was common, high school diploma holders formed the largest education group, and college and trades credentials outweighed university degrees, giving the attainment profile a clear non-university emphasis. Household incomes were spread across many ranges, but the strongest concentrations sat in middle and upper-middle brackets rather than at the bottom of the distribution. Across these measures, Willow Creek No. 26 comes through as a low-density, ownership-oriented community with modest aging, strong continuity in its social structure, and gradual change concentrated in household composition rather than in the foundations of the local profile.

Religion

Christian residents were the largest religious group in Willow Creek No. 26 in 2021, at 3,275 people. No religion and secular perspectives counted 1,595 people, while other religions and spiritual traditions totaled 40.

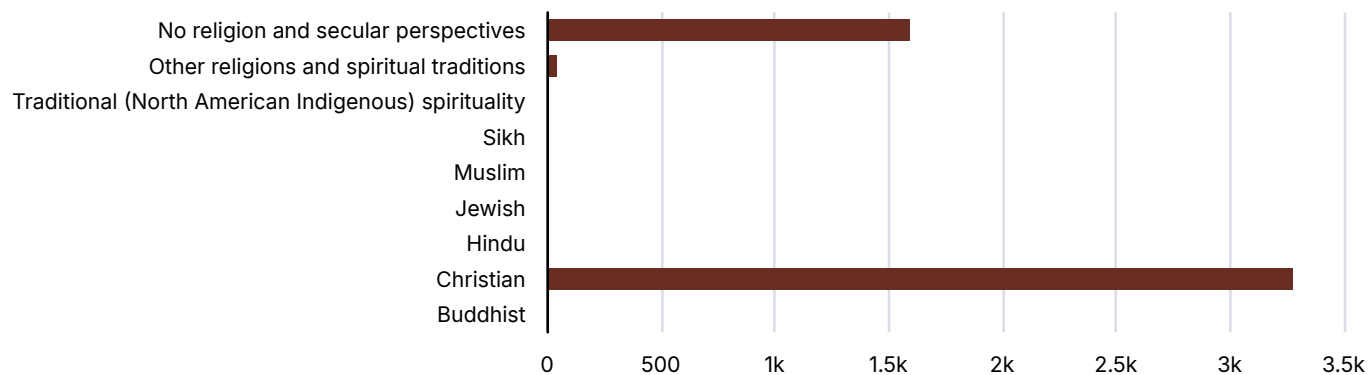


Figure 1.1: Shows residents' religious affiliation. It helps indicate the spiritual and faith-based diversity of the community. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In 2021, Willow Creek No. 26 had a religious profile marked by two dominant categories: 3,275 people identified as Christian, while 1,595 reported no religion or secular perspectives. Other religions and spiritual traditions accounted for 40 residents, and every other listed affiliation was recorded at zero. The pattern suggests a community where Christian identification remains the largest grouping, but non-religious affiliation is also substantial. The remaining faith categories are minimal in the available data, pointing to limited religious diversity in this census profile.

Religion in Willow Creek No. 26 in 2021 was concentrated in two main groups. Christians numbered 3,275 people, or about 66.7% of residents in private households, while 1,595 people reported no religion or secular perspectives, equal to 32.5%. Other religions and spiritual traditions accounted for 40 people, or 0.8%, and all remaining listed affiliations were recorded at zero. The pattern is strongly centered on Christian affiliation, with a substantial non-religious minority.



Figure 1.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Religion - Christian (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Family Type

Married couples without children remained the largest family type in Willow Creek No. 26 at 665 people in 2021, down 2.2% from 2016. One-parent families rose to 90, up 5.9%.

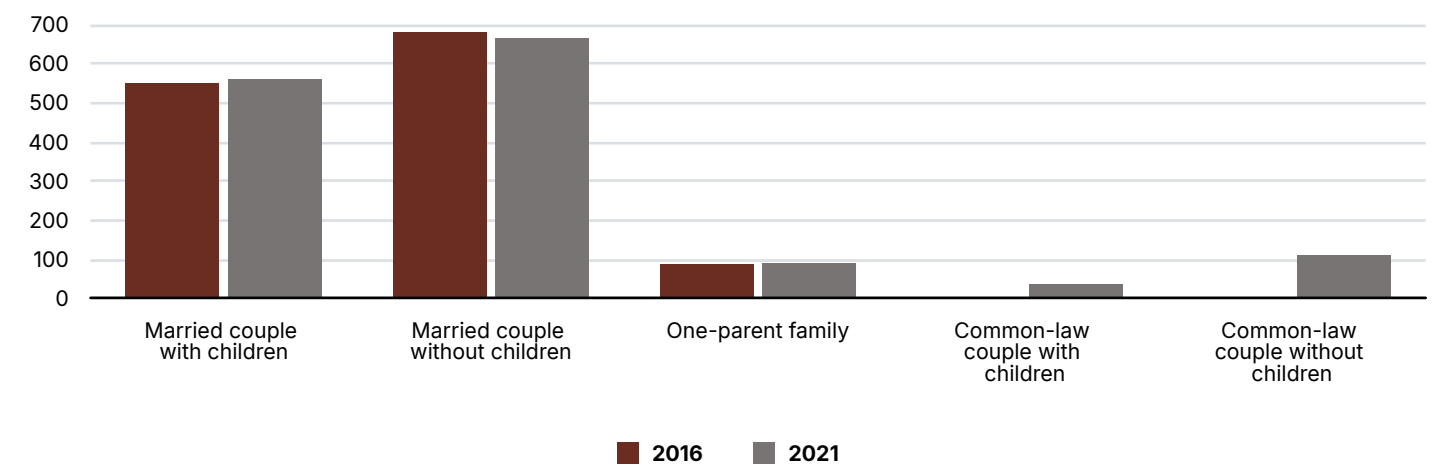
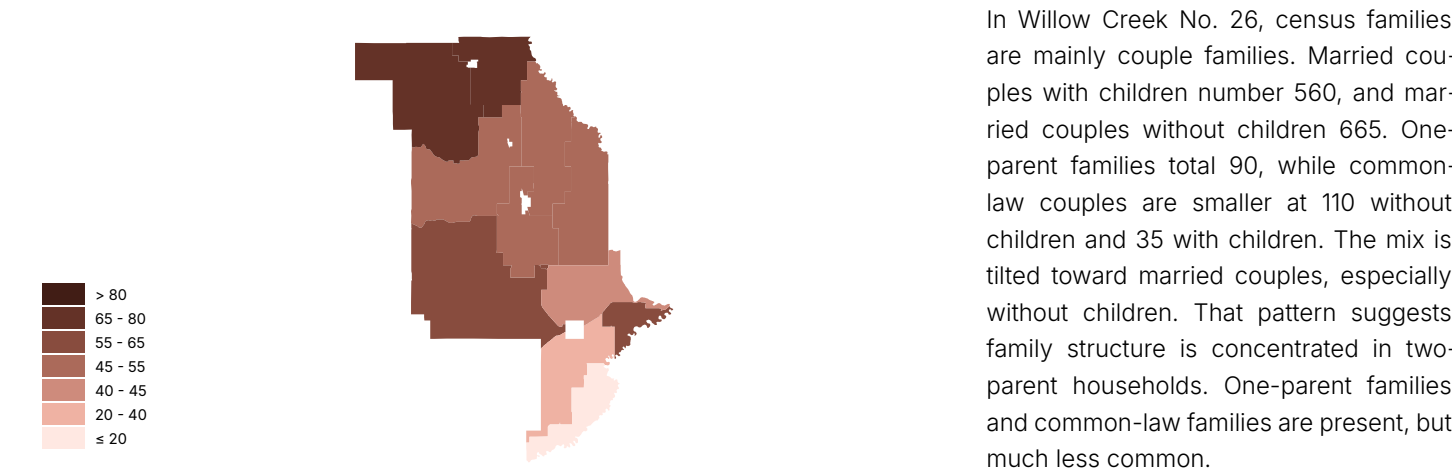


Figure 2.1: Shows the mix of family types, such as couple families and lone-parent families. It helps indicate the structure of family life in the community. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2016-2021)¹

Willow Creek No. 26’s family type profile in 2021 was led by couple families, especially married couples without children. The mix points to a community where family households are concentrated in a few core forms rather than spread evenly across many types. Married couples without children accounted for 665 people, while married couples with children numbered 560. One-parent families were smaller at 90 people, and common-law couples without children represented 110. Over five years, married couples with children rose 1.8%, while married couples without children fell 2.2%. One-parent families increased 5.9%, showing the clearest recent growth among the family types reported. The pattern suggests a relatively stable family structure, with modest shifts rather than major change.



In Willow Creek No. 26, census families are mainly couple families. Married couples with children number 560, and married couples without children 665. One-parent families total 90, while common-law couples are smaller at 110 without children and 35 with children. The mix is tilted toward married couples, especially without children. That pattern suggests family structure is concentrated in two-parent households. One-parent families and common-law families are present, but much less common.

Figure 2.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Family Type - Married couple without children (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Ethnic Origin

English was the largest ethnic origin in Willow Creek No. 26 in 2021, at 1,350 people. Dutch followed at 1,150, while Canadian fell 44.0% over five years to 540 people.

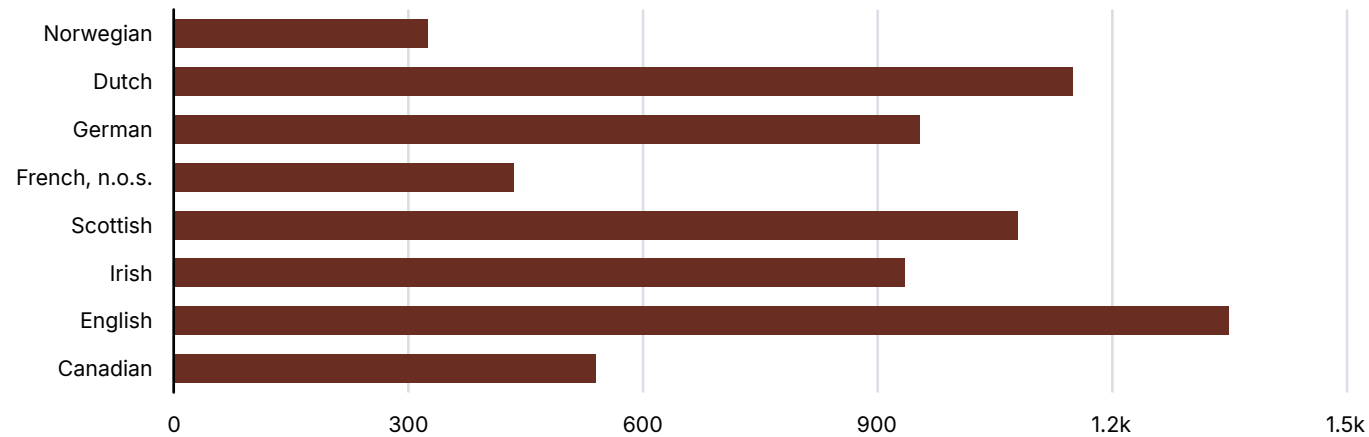


Figure 3.1: Shows the ethnic or cultural origins reported by residents. It helps indicate ancestry patterns and the community's cultural makeup. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In Willow Creek No. 26, ethnic origin in 2021 was led by English, at 1,350 people, followed by Dutch at 1,150 and Scottish at 1,080. Irish origin counted 935 people, while German stood at 955. Smaller groups included Canadian at 540, French, n.o.s. at 435, and Norwegian at 325. Recent change was mixed: Irish rose 33.6% over five years, while Canadian fell 44.0%. English increased 3.9% and Dutch slipped 3.0%.

Willow Creek No. 26 shows a strongly European ethnic origin profile in 2021, with several ancestries reporting sizable counts in the population in private households. English is the largest listed origin at 1,350 people, followed by Dutch at 1,150, Scottish at 1,080, German at 955, and Irish at 935. Canadian origin is lower at 540 and has fallen 44.0% over five years, while Irish rose 33.6% and Norwegian 25.0%.

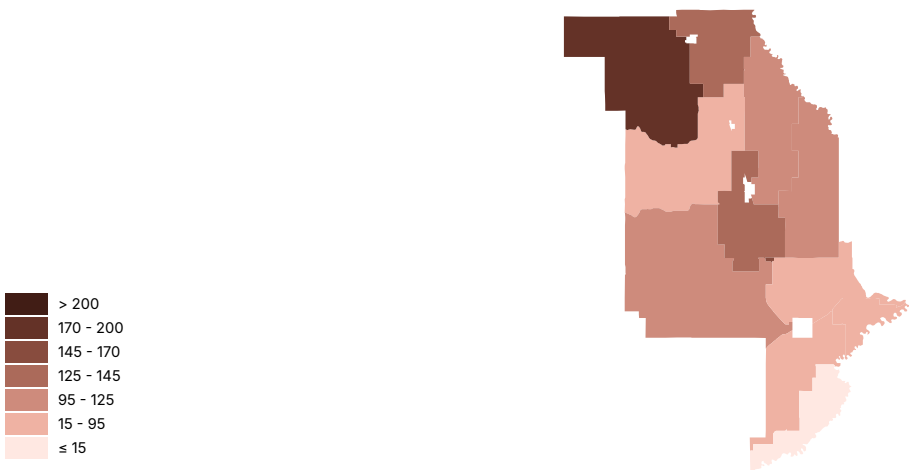


Figure 3.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Ethnic Origin - English (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Mother Tongue

English was the largest mother tongue in Willow Creek No. 26 at 4,385 people, up 8.9% over five years. German followed at 1,070, while Spanish rose to 25 people, a 400.0% increase.

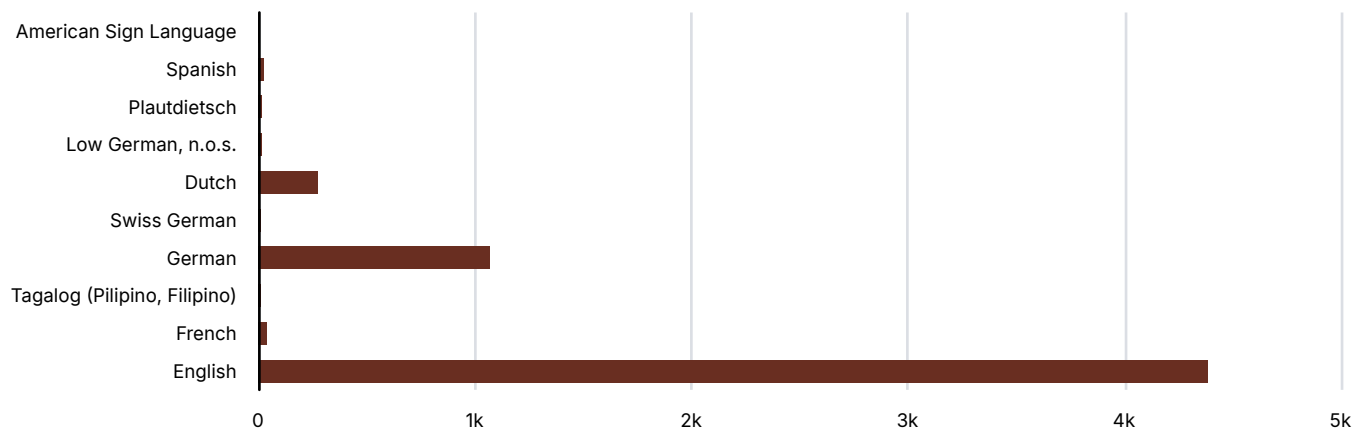
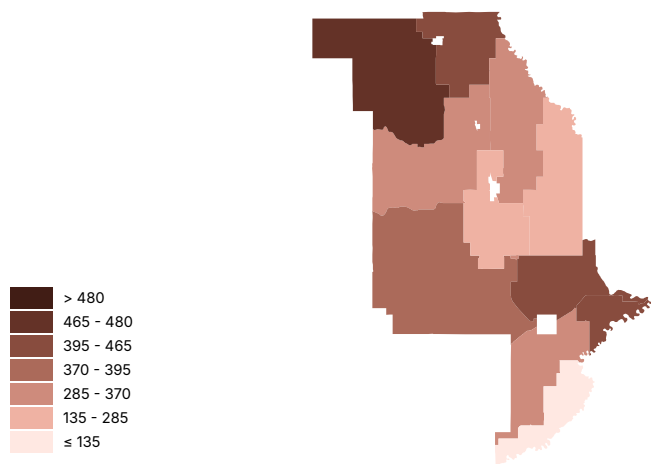


Figure 4.1: Shows the first language learned and still understood by residents. It helps indicate the linguistic roots of the population. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

Mother tongue in Willow Creek No. 26 is dominated by English in 2021, with 4,385 residents reporting it as their first language and still understood language. German is the next largest mother tongue at 1,070 people, while Dutch accounts for 275. Recent change points to growth in several languages. English rose 8.9% over five years, and German increased 35.4%. Dutch also edged up 10%. Smaller languages remain limited in number: French stands at 40, Spanish at 25, and Tagalog at 10, although Tagalog doubled over the period. The pattern suggests a strongly English-speaking community with a notable German-language presence and modest growth in a few other mother tongues.



In Willow Creek No. 26, mother tongue is strongly concentrated in a few languages. English is largest at 4,385 people, followed by German at 1,070 and Dutch at 275. French is much smaller at 40, while Spanish, Tagalog and several German varieties remain minor. The pattern suggests a population with a broad English base and a notable German-language presence, with smaller linguistic minorities adding some diversity.

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Language - English (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Population Density

Willow Creek No. 26 had 1.4 people per square kilometre in 2021, up 27.3% over five years. Density was unchanged at 1.1 in 2016 and 2011, then increased in the latest period.

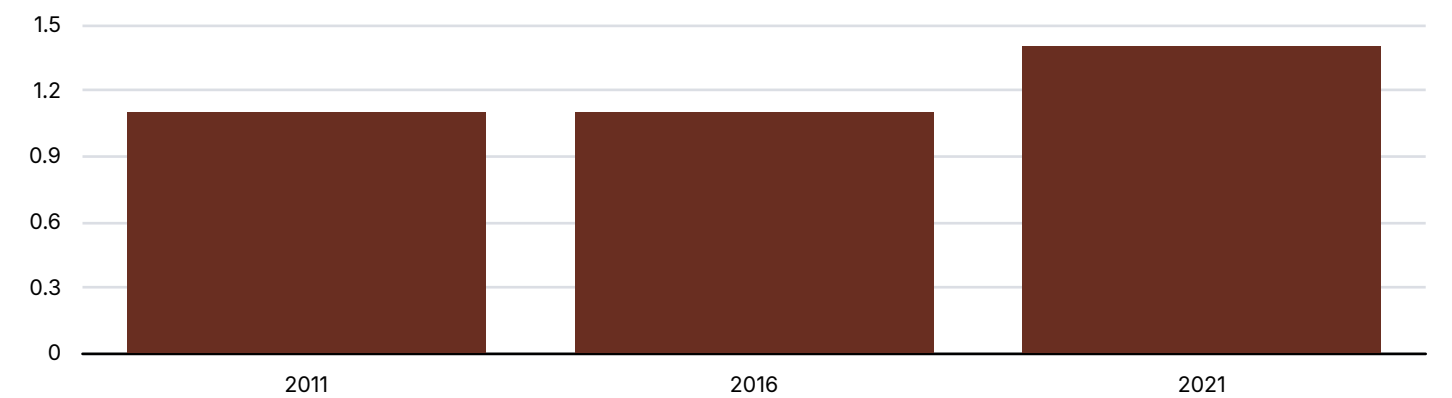


Figure 5.1: Shows how many people live per unit of land area. It helps indicate how compact or spread out the population is. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2011-2021)¹

Willow Creek No. 26 remained very sparsely populated in the census years shown, with population density measured at 1.1 people per km2 in both 2011 and 2016. By 2021, density had increased to 1.4 people per km2. That change represents a 27.3% increase over the five-year period ending in 2021, after no change between 2011 and 2016. The pattern points to a low-density place with only a modest upward shift in recent years. Even with that increase, the area stayed lightly settled, so the main story is gradual change rather than a dense settlement pattern.

Willow Creek No. 26 had a very low population density in 2021, at 1.4 people per km2. That was up from 1.1 in both 2011 and 2016, with a 5-year change of 27.3%. Even with that increase, it remained far below several nearby places. Cardston County and the main town sites such as Cardston and Fort Macleod were all above 1.4, while Hill Spring, Nanton, Claresholm, and Magrath were far higher still. The pattern points to a sparsely settled area that has become slightly more compact over time, but not enough to move it out of a very low-density range.

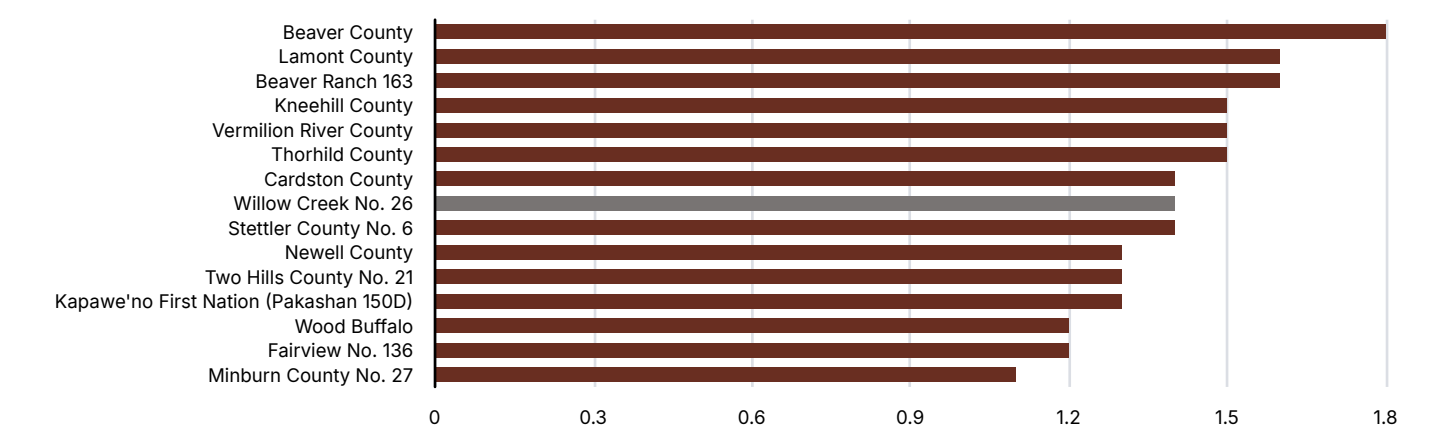


Figure 5.2: Comparison of Population Density with other locations (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

Highest Education Level

In Willow Creek No. 26, high school diploma holders were the largest group in 2021 at 1,340 people, up 87.4% from 2016. College credentials followed at 920, while bachelor’s degrees totaled 355.

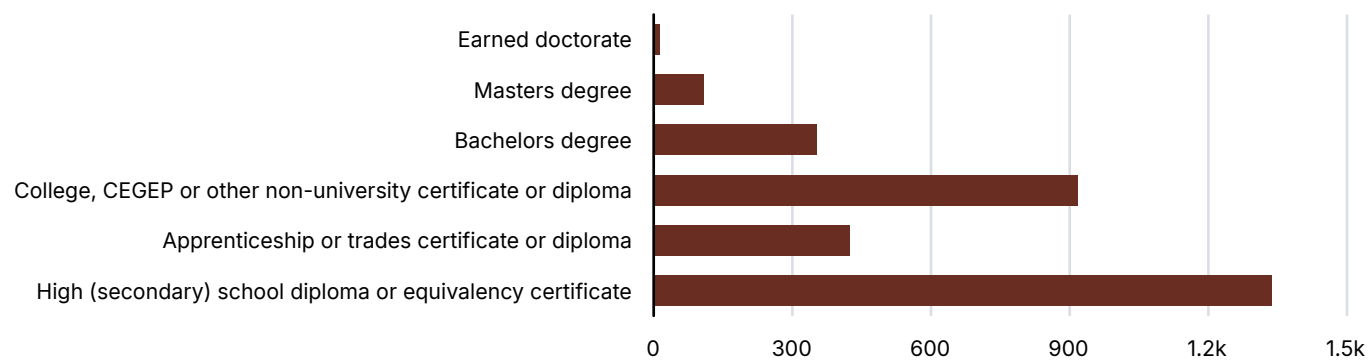


Figure 6.1: Shows the highest level of education completed by residents. It helps indicate the overall educational profile of the population. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In Willow Creek No. 26, the 2021 education profile among residents aged 15 and over in private households is centered on high school, college, and trades credentials. The largest group shown is high school completion, at 1,340 people, followed by college, CEGEP or other non-university credentials at 920 and apprenticeship or trades certificates at 425. Higher credentials are smaller in number, with 355 bachelor’s degrees, 110 master’s degrees, and 15 earned doctorates. Over five years, most categories rose, while apprenticeship or trades credentials fell 14.1%.

In Willow Creek No. 26, the largest education category in 2021 was high school completion, with 1,340 people. College, CEGEP or other non-university credentials followed at 920, while 425 people held an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma. Smaller groups had a bachelor’s degree (355), a master’s degree (110), or an earned doctorate (15). The profile is weighted toward non-university credentials, with some growth in higher education over five years.



Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Education Credential Ca - High (secondary) school diploma or equivalency certificate (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Household Type

Couple-family households without children were the largest group in Willow Creek No. 26 in 2021, at 735 households, up 10.5% from 2016. One-person households followed at 410, rising 20.6%.

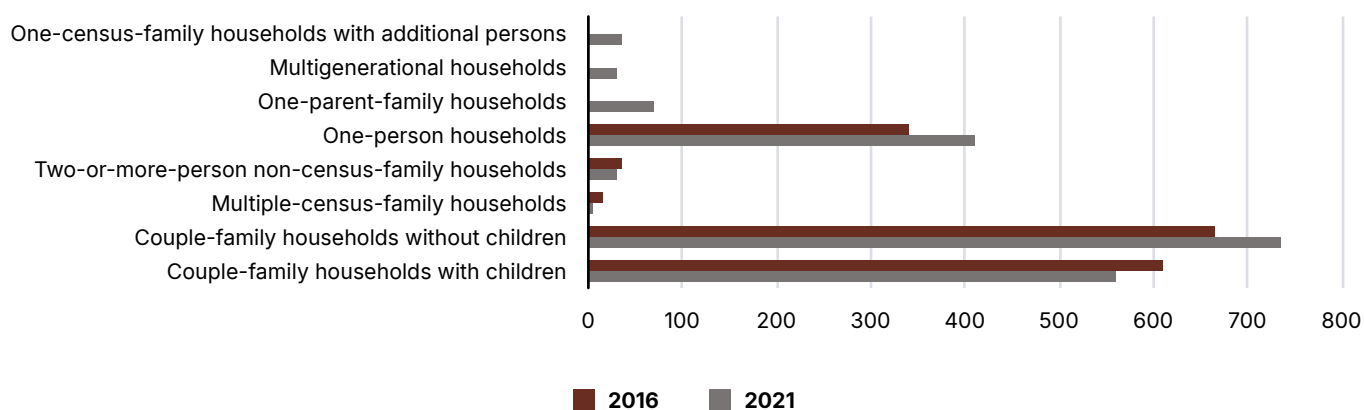
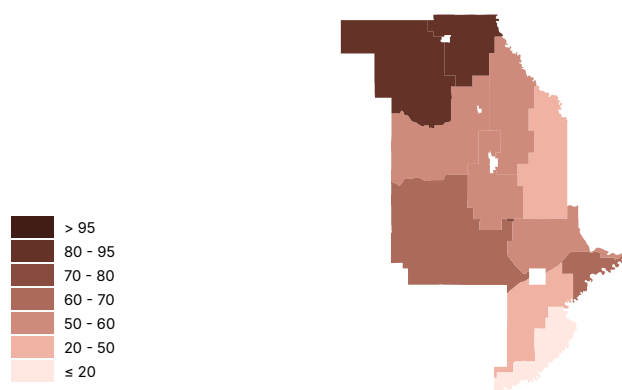


Figure 7.1: Shows the mix of household types, including one-person, family, and non-family households. It helps indicate how residents are organized across living arrangements. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2016-2021)¹

Willow Creek No. 26's household mix in 2021 was led by couple-family households without children, while one-person and couple-family households with children also made up large parts of the picture. The pattern points to a varied household structure within private households. Couple-family households without children numbered 735, compared with 560 couple-family households with children and 410 one-person households. Smaller categories included 70 one-parent-family households and 30 multigenerational households. Over five years, the clearest gains were in one-person households, up 20.6%, and couple-family households without children, up 10.5%. By contrast, couple-family households with children fell 8.2%, and two-or-more-person non-census-family households declined 14.3%. The data suggest a shift toward households without children and single-person living, alongside a smaller family-with-children share.



Willow Creek No. 26 has a household mix led by couple-family households without children, at 735 households in 2021, followed by couple-family households with children at 560 and one-person households at 410. Over five years, one-person households rose 20.6%, while households with children fell 8.2%. This points to a shift toward smaller and less child-centered household forms.

Figure 7.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Household Type - Couple-family households without children (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Average Shelter Costs

In Willow Creek No. 26, owner shelter costs were higher than renter costs in 2021, at \$1,356 versus \$930. Over five years, owners rose 13.3% and renters 24.0%, narrowing the gap slightly.

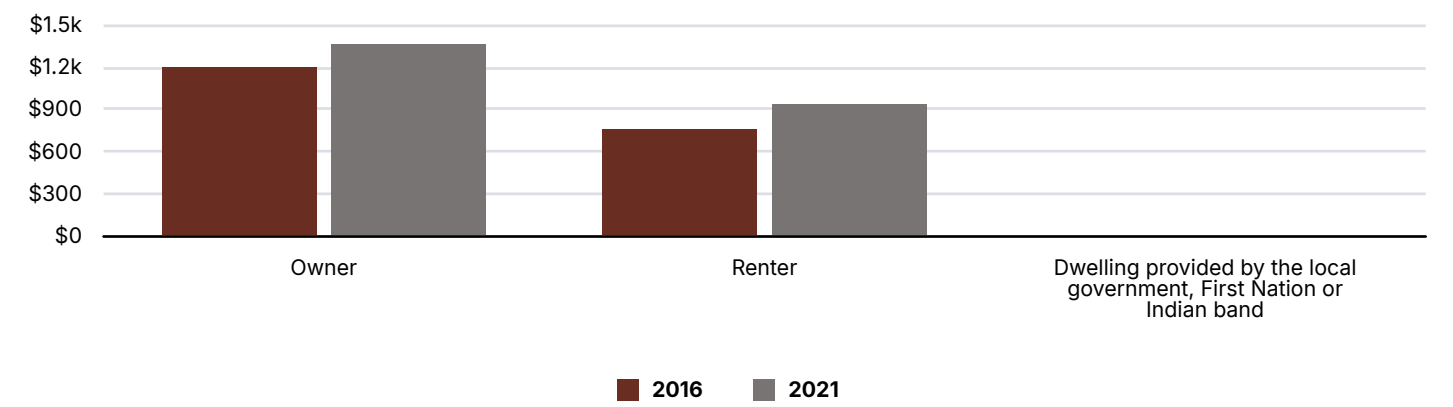


Figure 8.1: Shows the average monthly shelter costs paid by households. It helps indicate typical housing expenses faced by owners and renters. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2016-2021)¹

Willow Creek No. 26’s average shelter costs in 2021 were higher for owners than renters, with households paying \$1,356 per month for owner housing and \$930 for rent. The owner figure was up 13.3% over five years, while renter costs rose 24.0% in the same period. The census also recorded \$0 for dwellings provided by the local government, First Nation or Indian band. In this household group, the main pattern is a rise in monthly shelter costs, with renter costs increasing faster than owner costs over the five-year period.

In 2021, average shelter costs in Willow Creek No. 26 were \$1,356 for owner households and \$930 for renter households in non-farm, non-reserve private dwellings. The gap between tenure types is clear, and the wider area shows notable variation: owner costs across subareas ranged from \$720 to \$2,200, while renter costs ranged from \$0 to \$1,400. The zero value for government-, First Nation- or band-provided dwellings suggests that tenure was not a visible cost category here.



Figure 8.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Housing Tenure - Owner (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Housing Tenure

Owner households remained the largest tenure group in Willow Creek No. 26 in 2021, rising to 1,575 from 1,385 in 2016. Renter households also increased, from 290 to 315, while government-provided dwellings stayed at zero.

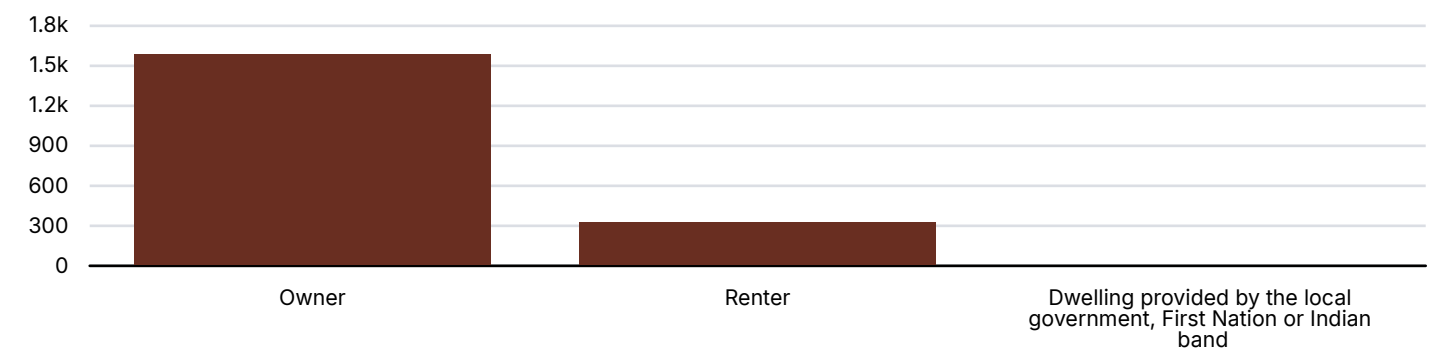


Figure 9.1: Shows whether households own or rent their homes. It helps indicate the balance between ownership and rental housing in the community. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In 2021, housing tenure in Willow Creek No. 26 was dominated by ownership among private households. There were 1,575 owner households, compared with 315 renter households, while dwellings provided by the local government, First Nation or Indian band were not reported in the count. Over five years, owner households increased by 13.7% and renter households by 8.6%, pointing to growth on both sides of the tenure mix, with ownership remaining the larger segment.

In Willow Creek No. 26, housing tenure in 2021 was strongly owner-occupied. The census subdivision counted 1,575 owner households and 315 renter households, with no households living in dwellings provided by the local government, First Nation or Indian band. Five-year change was positive for both tenures: owner households rose 13.7% and renter households increased 8.6%. That points to growth on both sides, with ownership remaining the dominant tenure. The pattern is echoed across the area's dissemination areas, where owner counts consistently exceeded renter counts, and several tracts reported no government-provided dwellings.



Figure 9.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Housing Tenure - Owner (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Household Total Income Groups

Willow Creek No. 26’s largest household income groups in 2021 were \$125,000 to \$149,999 and \$150,000 to \$199,999, each with 170 households. The \$10,000 to \$14,999 group fell to 10, down 60% from 2016.

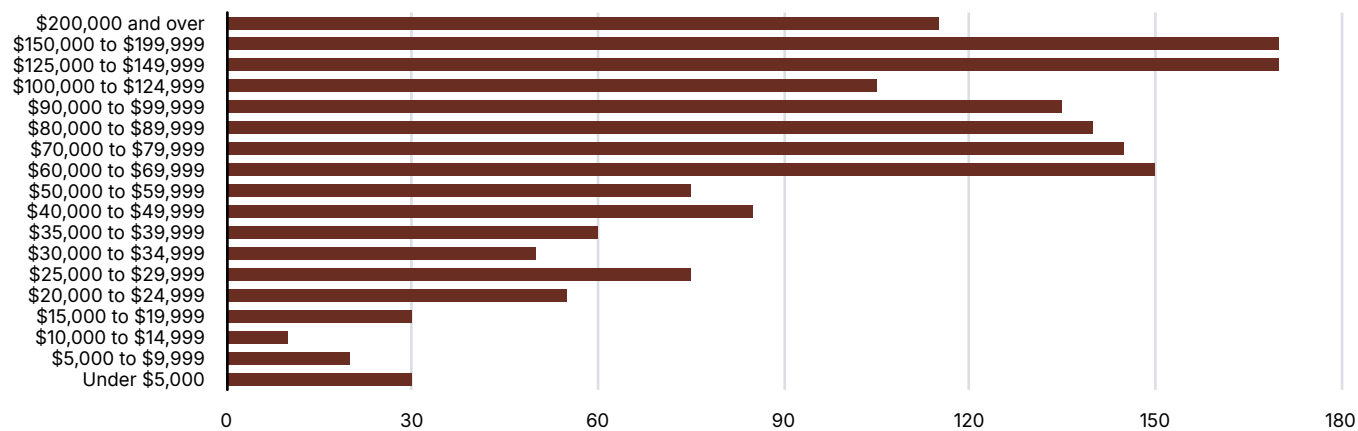
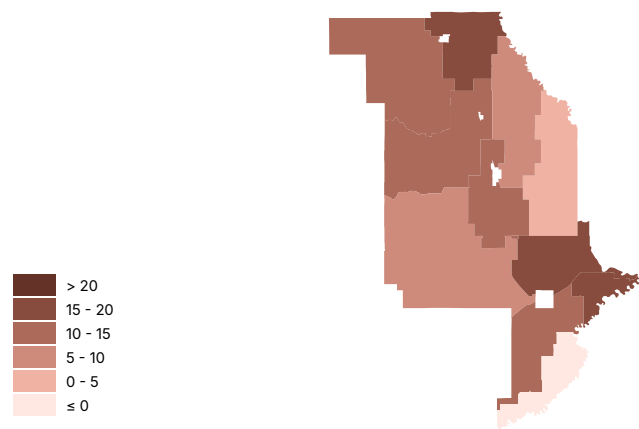


Figure 10.1: Shows households across total income groups. It helps indicate how household incomes are distributed from lower- to higher-income ranges. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In 2021, household incomes in Willow Creek No. 26 were spread across many ranges, with the strongest counts in the middle and upper-middle brackets. The distribution shows a broad base rather than a single dominant income band. The largest groups were \$125,000 to \$149,999 and \$150,000 to \$199,999, at 170 households each. Other sizable brackets included \$60,000 to \$69,999 with 150 households, \$70,000 to \$79,999 with 145, and \$80,000 to \$89,999 with 140. Five-year changes were mixed. The \$10,000 to \$14,999 group fell by 60%, while under \$5,000 rose by 50% and \$90,000 to \$99,999 increased by 42.1%. This pattern suggests a shifting income profile with notable movement in both lower and higher ranges, while the middle remains substantial.



Willow Creek No. 26’s private households in 2021 were spread across a wide income range, with a clear middle and upper-middle concentration. The largest groups were \$125,000 to \$149,999 and \$150,000 to \$199,999, at 170 households each, followed by \$60,000 to \$69,999 at 150. Lower-income brackets were smaller, including 30 households under \$5,000 and 20 in the \$5,000 to \$9,999 group. Over five years, the strongest gains were at the low and upper-middle ends, while several mid-range brackets declined.

Figure 10.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Household - \$125,000 to \$149,999 (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

High School Completion

High school diploma holders were the largest group in Willow Creek No. 26 in 2021, with 3,175 people. That exceeded the 745 residents with no certificate, diploma or degree by 2,430.

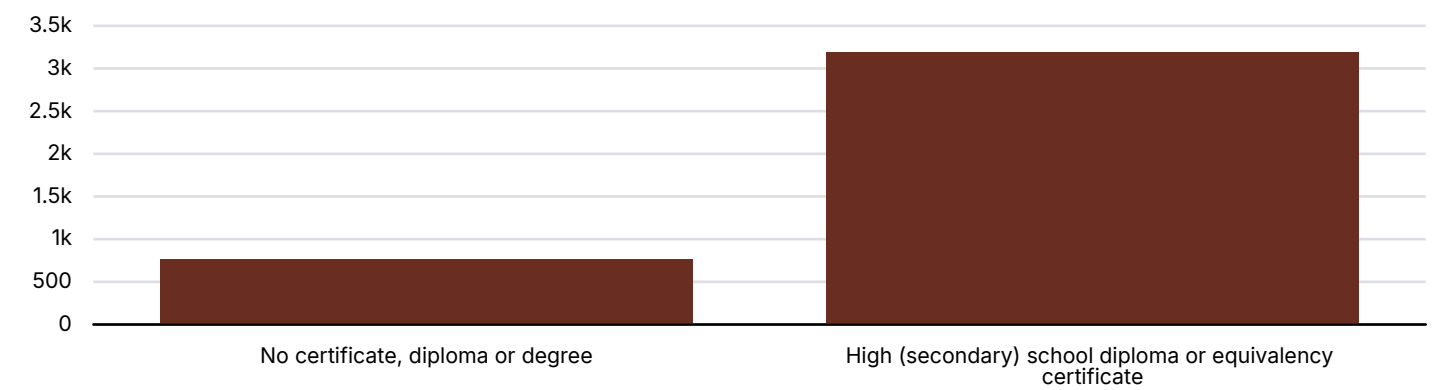


Figure 11.1: Shows whether residents have completed high school or an equivalent credential. It helps indicate a basic foundation for workforce participation and further study. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In 2021, Willow Creek No. 26 showed a higher count of residents aged 15 and over in private households with a high school diploma or equivalent than without a certificate, diploma or degree. The census recorded 3,175 people with a high school completion credential and 745 with no certificate, diploma or degree. On this measure, completion was the more common outcome, giving a basic snapshot of educational attainment in the community.

In Willow Creek No. 26, most residents aged 15 and over in private households had completed high school or an equivalent credential in 2021. The census subdivision recorded 3,175 people with a high school diploma or equivalency, compared with 745 people with no certificate, diploma or degree. That works out to about 81.0% with completion and 19.0% without. The pattern suggests a clear majority with basic secondary education, while a smaller but notable share remains without formal credentials.



Figure 11.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Education Credential Ca - High (secondary) school diploma or equivalency certificate (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Core Housing Need

In Willow Creek No. 26, most households were not in core housing need in 2021, with 1,020 households compared with 290 in core need, a ratio of roughly 3.5 to 1.

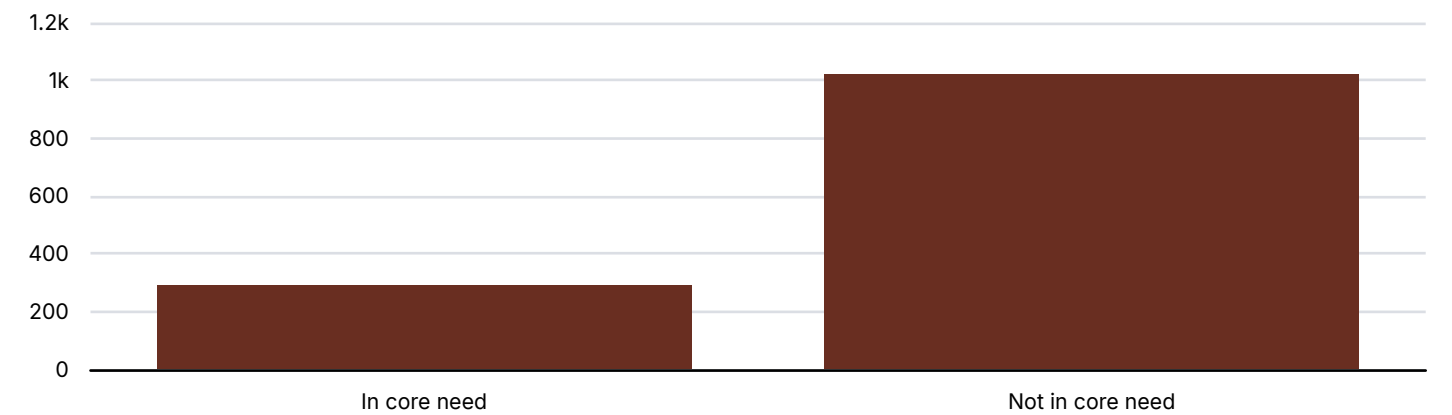


Figure 12.1: Shows the share of households living in housing that is unaffordable, unsuitable, or in need of major repairs. It helps indicate overall housing stress in the community. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In 2021, Willow Creek No. 26 recorded 290 households in core housing need, compared with 1,020 households not in core need. That places the community’s housing picture more on the side of stability than widespread stress, though a substantial number of households were still affected. The data provides a single census year, so it does not show a time trend. Within the 2021 snapshot, core need accounts for a smaller share of households than those not in core need, suggesting that housing pressures were present but not dominant.

In Willow Creek No. 26, 290 households were in core housing need in 2021, compared with 1,020 that were not. That puts the share in core need at 22.1% among the households counted in this measure. The pattern varies across descendant dissemination areas, ranging from several areas with no households in core need to others with 35 to 50. One area reported 50 households in core need and 105 not in core need, while another recorded 45 and 145.



Figure 12.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Core Housing Need - Not in core need (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Median Age

Willow Creek No. 26's median age was 41.6 years in 2021, up from 41.1 in 2016 and 39.6 in 2011. The five-year change slowed to 1.22%, compared with 3.79% previously.

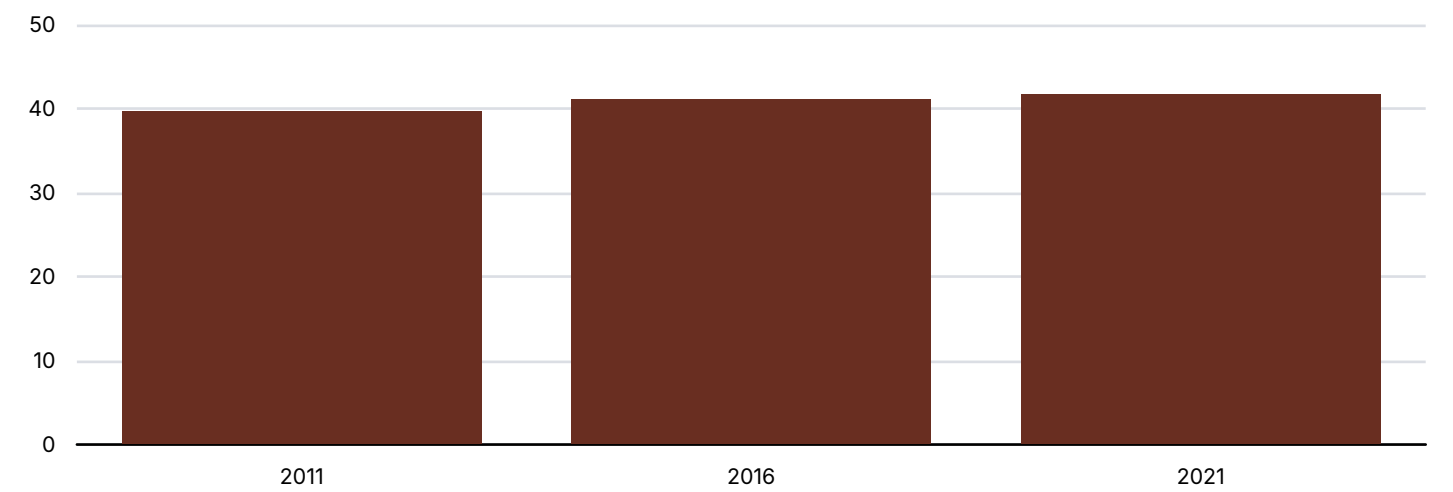
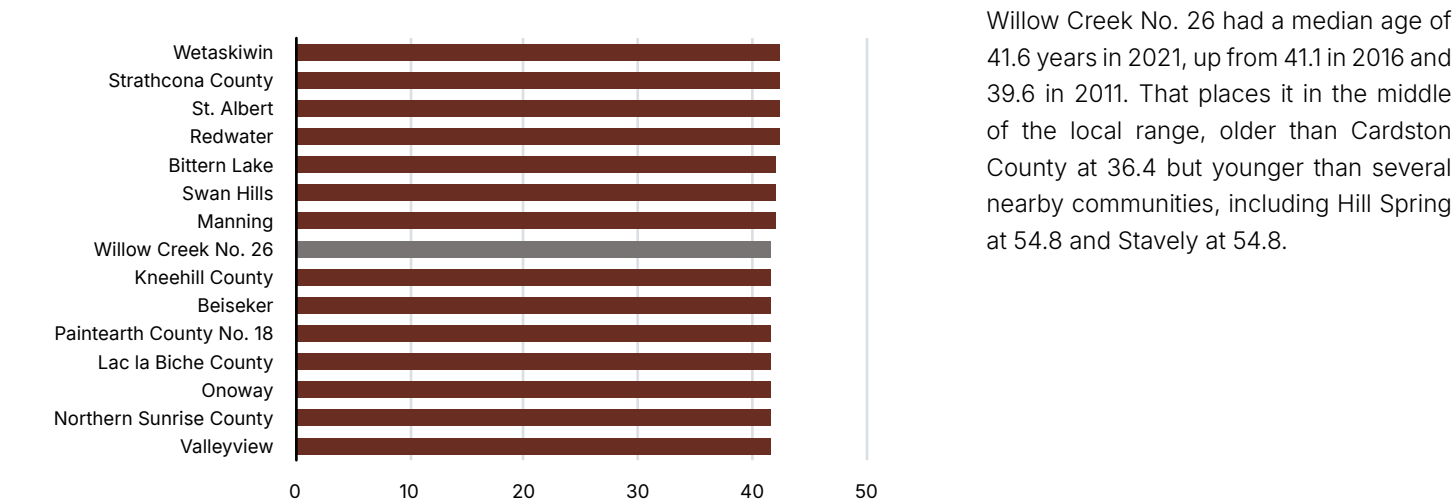


Figure 13.1: Shows the median age of residents. It helps indicate whether the population skews younger or older at the midpoint of the age distribution. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2011-2021)¹

Willow Creek No. 26 has a median age of 41.6 years in 2021, placing the midpoint of its population distribution in the early forties. The figure has risen from 39.6 years in 2011 to 41.1 years in 2016, then to 41.6 years in 2021. That means the median age increased by 2.0 years over the decade, with the pace of change slowing in the most recent five-year period. The pattern points to a gradual aging of the resident population rather than a sharp shift. In practical terms, the age profile has become slightly older, but the change remains measured rather than dramatic.



Willow Creek No. 26 had a median age of 41.6 years in 2021, up from 41.1 in 2016 and 39.6 in 2011. That places it in the middle of the local range, older than Cardston County at 36.4 but younger than several nearby communities, including Hill Spring at 54.8 and Stavely at 54.8.

Figure 13.2: Comparison of Median Age with other locations (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

Age at Immigration

In Willow Creek No. 26, immigrants aged 25 to 44 remained the largest group in 2021 at 130 people, while those under 5 fell to 55. The 15 to 24 group rose slightly to 110.

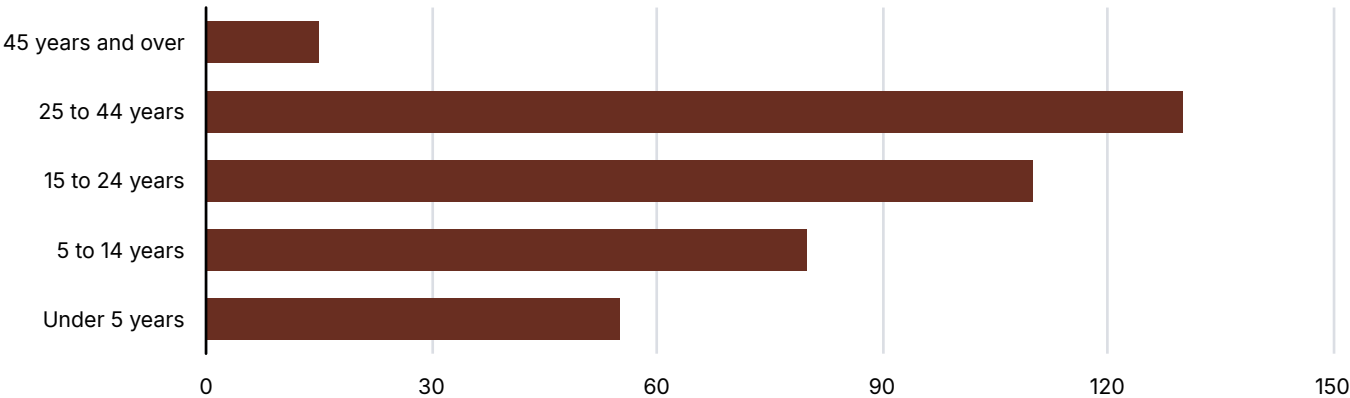


Figure 14.1: Shows the age at which immigrants first arrived in the country. It helps explain whether newcomers arrived mainly as children, working-age adults, or older adults. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In Willow Creek No. 26, the age at immigration profile in 2021 was weighted toward working-age arrivals. The largest group was people who arrived at ages 25 to 44, with 130 people, followed by those who arrived at 15 to 24, with 110. Smaller numbers arrived as children, including 80 at ages 5 to 14 and 55 under age 5. The 45-and-over group was lowest at 15. Over five years, the younger and prime working-age groups declined, while the older group was unchanged.

In 2021, Willow Creek No. 26’s immigrant population was most often counted as arriving in working age, with 130 people who immigrated at ages 25 to 44 and 110 at ages 15 to 24. Smaller numbers arrived as children, including 80 at ages 5 to 14 and 55 under age 5. Only 15 arrived at age 45 or older. The pattern points to a newcomer profile centered on early adulthood rather than childhood or late-life migration. That mix suggests immigration to the area has been shaped mainly by arrivals in prime working years.



Figure 14.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Age At Immigration - 25 to 44 years (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Immigrant Status

Non-immigrants remained the largest group in Willow Creek No. 26, rising to 4,520 people in 2021, up 16.95% from 2016. Immigrants fell to 390, while non-permanent residents increased to 15.

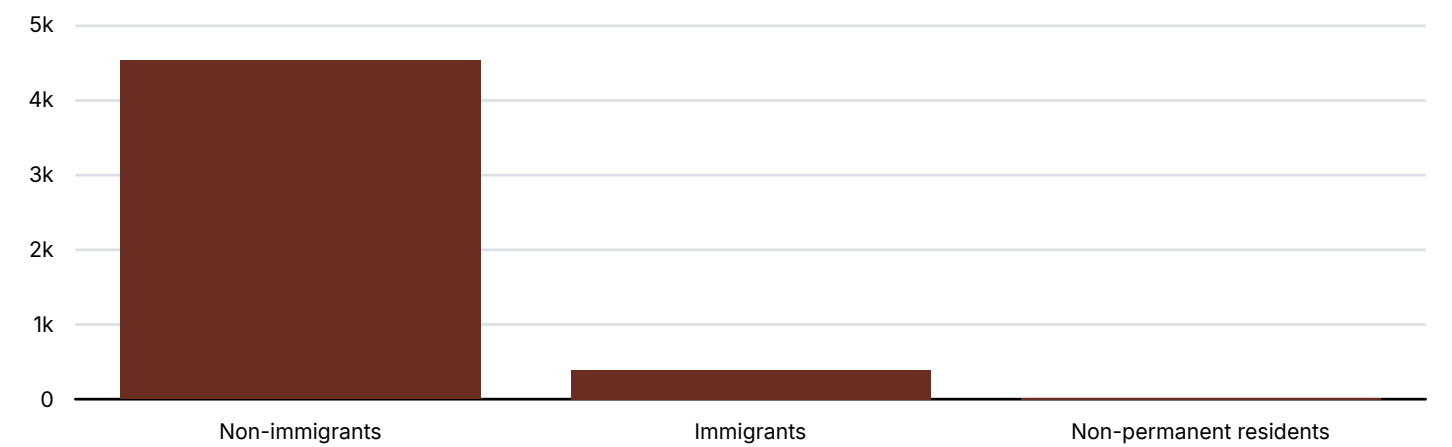


Figure 15.1: Shows whether residents are immigrants, non-permanent residents, or non-immigrants. It helps indicate the role of immigration in community growth and composition. (Willow Creek No. 26, 2021)¹

In 2021, Willow Creek No. 26’s population in private households was made up mostly of non-immigrants, with smaller immigrant and non-permanent resident groups. The immigrant status profile points to a community where non-immigrants are the clear majority. Non-immigrants numbered 4,520 people and were up 16.9% over five years. Immigrants totaled 390 people and fell 25.7% in the same period. Non-permanent residents remained a very small group at 15 people, though they increased by 50%. The pattern suggests growth among non-immigrants alongside a shrinking immigrant population, with only a limited presence of non-permanent residents.

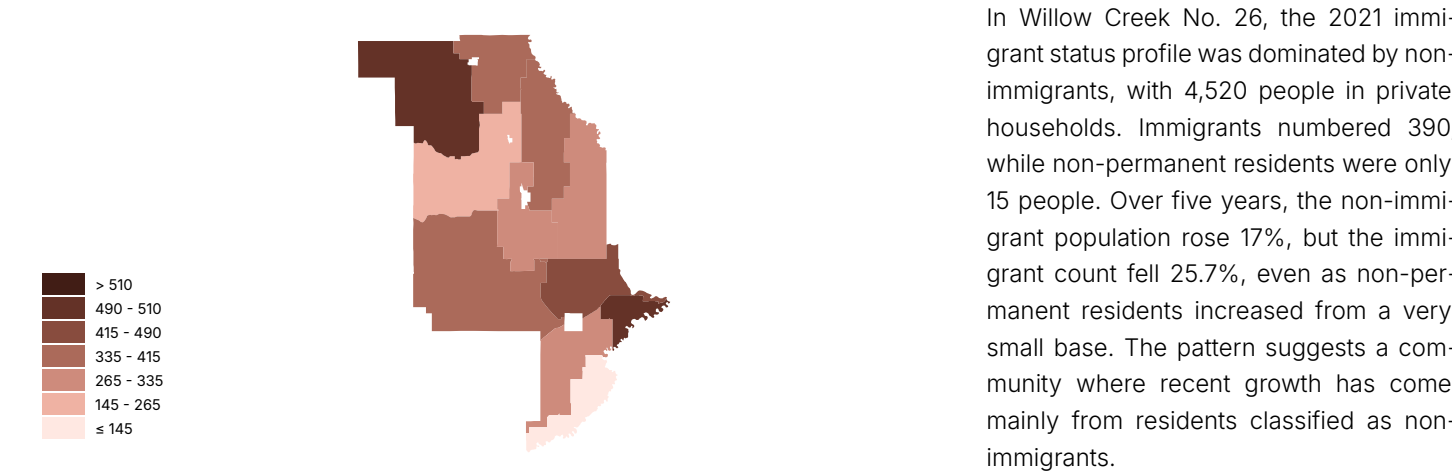


Figure 15.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Immigrant Status - Non-immigrants (Willow Creek No. 26)¹

Data Sources

1. Statistics Canada, Census Profile. Published in Dec 15, 2022.

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