

ALBERTA
SOUTHWEST

CLARESHOLM

Economic Report

Table of Contents

Employment Rate	4
Business Establishments	5
Employment by Sector	6
Establishments by Sector	7
Establishments by Size	8
Household After-Tax Income	9
Individual After-Tax Income	10
Individual Employment Income	11
Labour Force Participation Rate	12
Labour Force Status	13
Work Activity	14
Employed Residents by Occupation	15

Executive Summary

Claresholm presents a mixed local economy shaped by a weakening labour market, a business base that has not fully returned to its earlier scale, and employment that is unusually concentrated in one dominant field. Over the past decade, both the employment rate and the labour force participation rate moved steadily downward, leaving a smaller share of residents working or actively engaged in the labour market by 2021 than in earlier census years. That softer labour market is also visible in the near even split between employed residents and those not in the labour force, and in work activity patterns where people who did not work formed the largest group.

The town's job base is anchored by health care and social assistance, which stands far ahead of every other sector and gives Claresholm a distinctive employment profile. Outside that core, employment is spread across retail, public administration, agriculture, and a range of smaller sectors whose recent changes were uneven rather than moving in one direction. Occupationally, service, trades, and health related roles make up much of the employed workforce. On the business side, Claresholm had 739 establishments in 2025 after a sharp drop in 2022 and a partial rebound in the following years. That recovery left the business count relatively stable in the short term but still below earlier levels. The local business structure is heavily weighted toward very small firms, especially businesses with no employees, while larger employers are rare. Sectorally, agriculture leads the establishment base by a wide margin, with real estate and a handful of service oriented activities forming the next tier.

Income patterns add to the picture of a community with modest and uneven economic footing rather than broad based labour market strength. Household after tax income is centred in the middle bands, with fewer households in the lowest brackets than in 2016 and some growth in upper income groups, suggesting movement within the distribution rather than a simple shift up or down. At the individual level, both after tax income and employment income are concentrated in lower to lower middle ranges, with relatively small numbers at the highest earnings levels. Claresholm emerges as a town with a stable service anchor and a persistent small business presence, but with softer workforce participation and income patterns that remain weighted toward the middle and lower end.

Employment Rate

Claresholm's employment rate was 47.2% in 2021, down from 51.3% in 2016 and 53.6% in 2011. The five-year decline was 8.0%, continuing a longer downward trend.

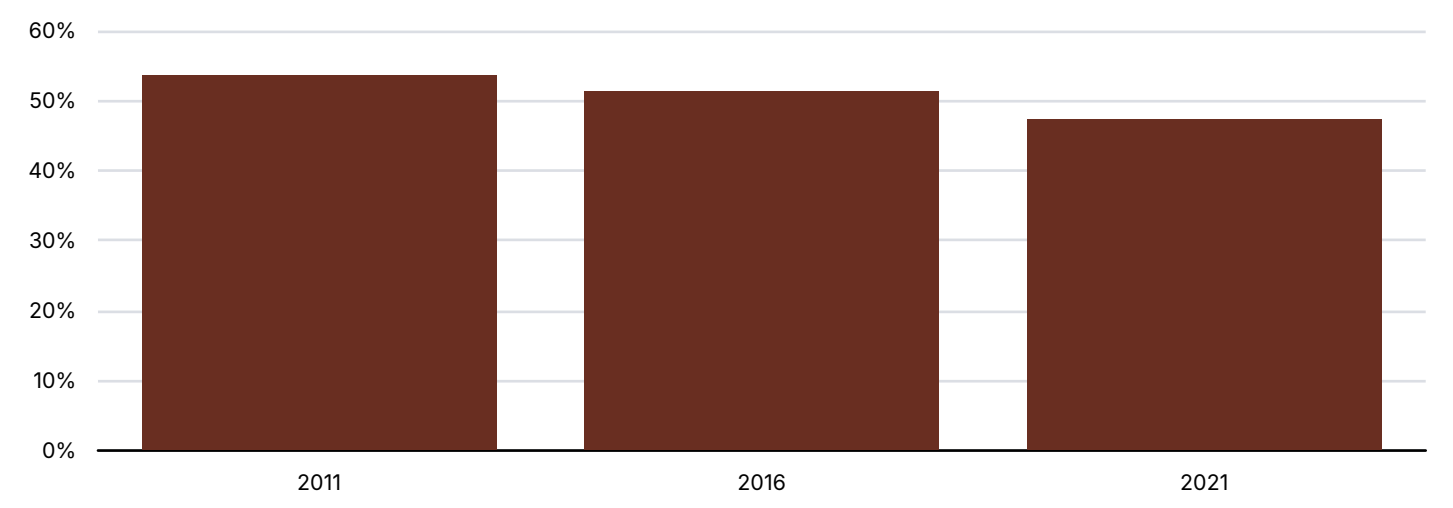
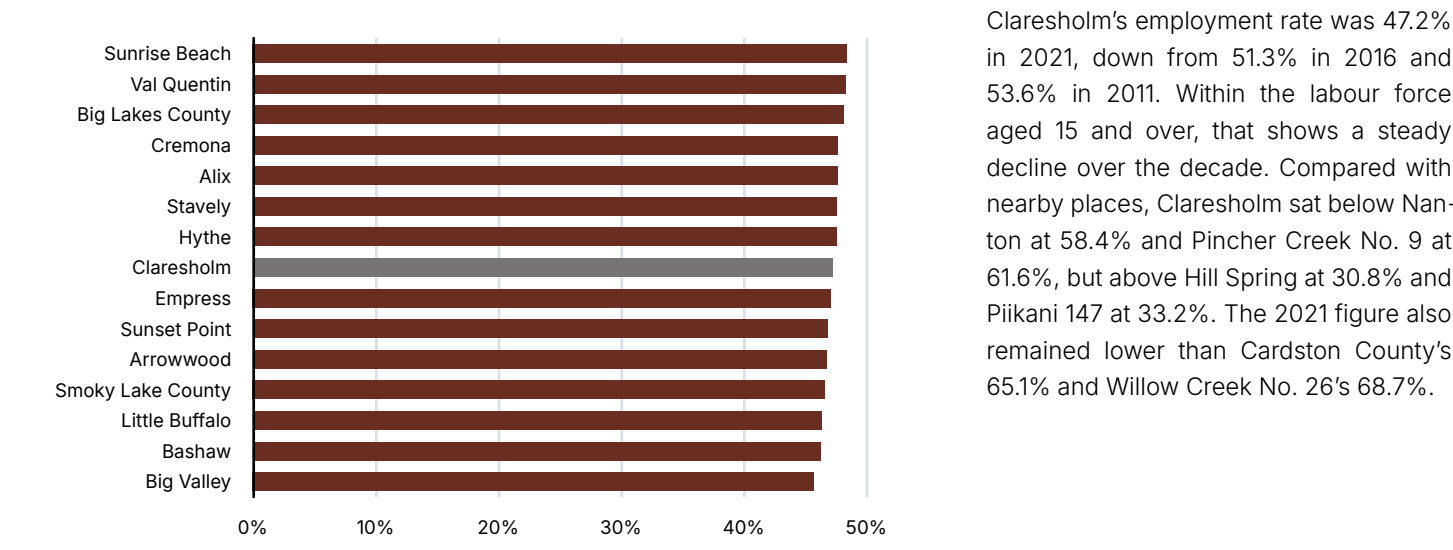


Figure 1.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed. It helps indicate overall labour market health and how fully local talent is being used. (Claresholm, 2011-2021)¹

Claresholm's employment rate has edged down over the last decade, pointing to a weaker share of the working-age population in work within the labour force aged 15 years and over. In 2011, the rate was 53.6%. It fell to 51.3% in 2016 and then to 47.2% in 2021. The 5-year changes reinforce that pattern: -4.3% over the first period and -8.0% over the second. The decline is steady rather than abrupt, with the larger drop occurring between 2016 and 2021. That leaves Claresholm below its earlier level by 6.4 percentage points across the full period.



Claresholm's employment rate was 47.2% in 2021, down from 51.3% in 2016 and 53.6% in 2011. Within the labour force aged 15 and over, that shows a steady decline over the decade. Compared with nearby places, Claresholm sat below Nan-ton at 58.4% and Pincher Creek No. 9 at 61.6%, but above Hill Spring at 30.8% and Piikani 147 at 33.2%. The 2021 figure also remained lower than Cardston County's 65.1% and Willow Creek No. 26's 68.7%.

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

Business Establishments

Claresholm had 739 business establishments in 2025, up 0.8% from 2024 but 16.9% below 2020. The count rebounded from 242 in 2022 to 746 in 2023, then eased slightly.

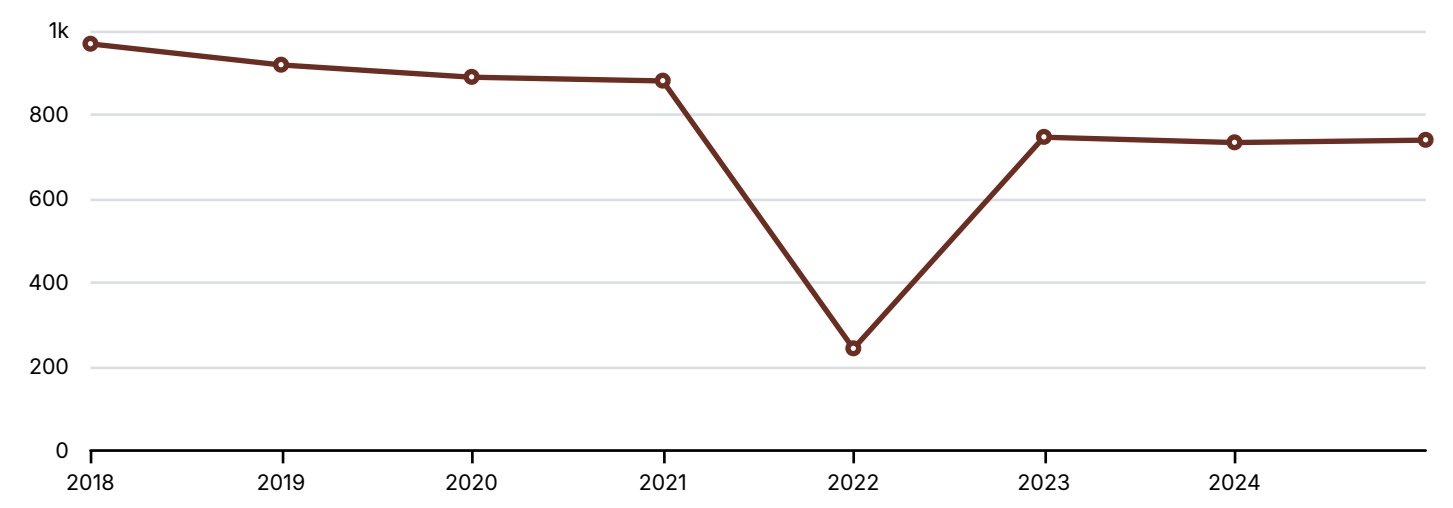
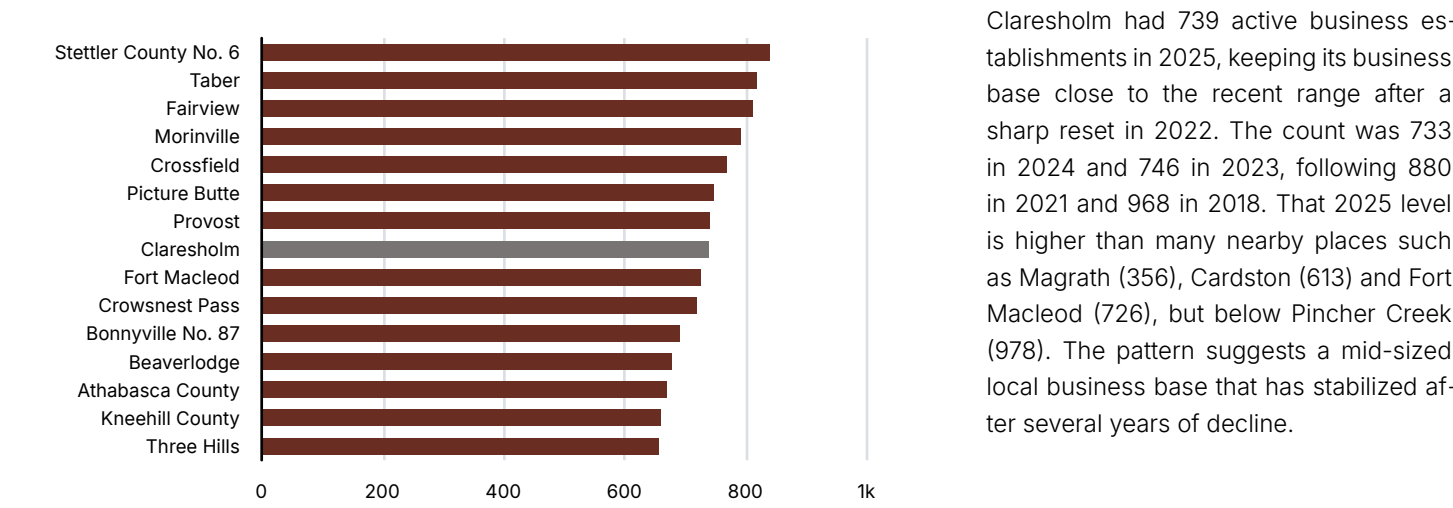


Figure 2.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Claresholm, 2018-2025)²

Claresholm had 739 active business establishments in 2025, continuing a period of decline from earlier years in the series. The local business base was 968 in 2018, then eased to 918 in 2019, 889 in 2020, and 880 in 2021. The sharpest change came in 2022, when the count fell to 242. It then rebounded to 746 in 2023 before slipping to 733 in 2024 and edging up again in 2025. The longer view still points lower than the pre-2022 levels, with a 5-year change of -16.9% in 2025. That suggests the recent recovery has not fully restored the earlier scale of business activity.



Claresholm had 739 active business establishments in 2025, keeping its business base close to the recent range after a sharp reset in 2022. The count was 733 in 2024 and 746 in 2023, following 880 in 2021 and 968 in 2018. That 2025 level is higher than many nearby places such as Magrath (356), Cardston (613) and Fort Macleod (726), but below Pincher Creek (978). The pattern suggests a mid-sized local business base that has stabilized after several years of decline.

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

Employment by Sector

Health care and social assistance remained Claresholm’s largest sector in 2025 with 1,780 people, despite a 1.6% annual decline. It still far exceeded retail trade at 282 and public administration at 240.

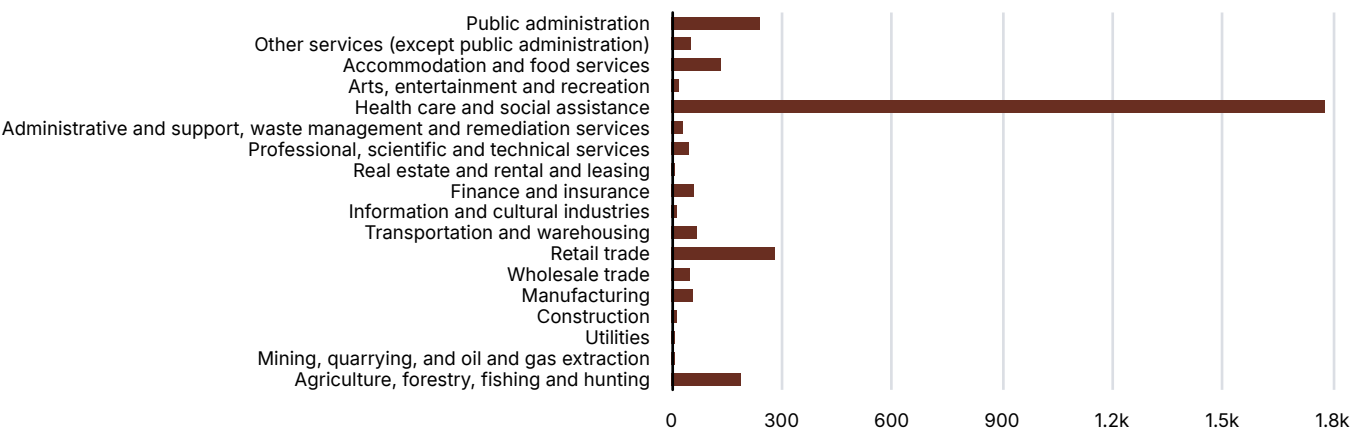


Figure 3.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Claresholm, 2025)³

In Claresholm, 2025 employment by sector was led by health care and social assistance, with 1,780 employees aged 15 and over. Retail trade followed at 282, and public administration at 240. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting also remained important at 190. Recent changes were mixed. Health care and social assistance edged down 1.6% over the year, while agriculture rose 22.6% and public administration increased 45.5%. Retail trade was nearly flat, slipping 0.7%. Several smaller sectors also moved sharply. Wholesale trade fell 52.3% from a year earlier, transportation and warehousing dropped 11.4%, and other services gained 30.0%. The pattern shows a job base concentrated in health care, with smaller sectors changing unevenly rather than moving in one direction.

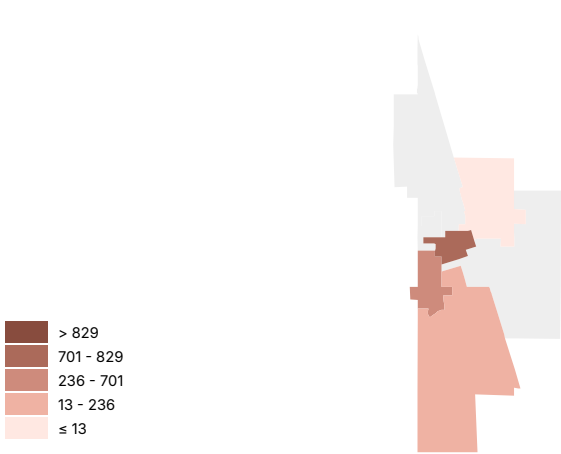


Figure 3.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Health care and social assistance (Claresholm)³

In Claresholm, employment in 2025 was concentrated in health care and social assistance, with 1,780 employees, far ahead of every other sector. Retail trade and public administration formed the next tier. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting employed 190 people, while accommodation and food services had 136. Public administration accounted for 240, and transportation and warehousing reached 70. Several smaller sectors changed unevenly: manufacturing held 57 jobs, wholesale trade 51, and finance and insurance 61. Recent movement was mixed, with health care slightly down and public administration up 45.5%. The profile suggests a local job market anchored by care services, with smaller contributions spread across trade, government, and agriculture.

Establishments by Sector

Claresholm’s business base is led by agriculture, with 218 establishments in 2025, up 5.8% from 2024 but down 33.7% from 2020. Real estate and rental and leasing followed at 110 establishments.

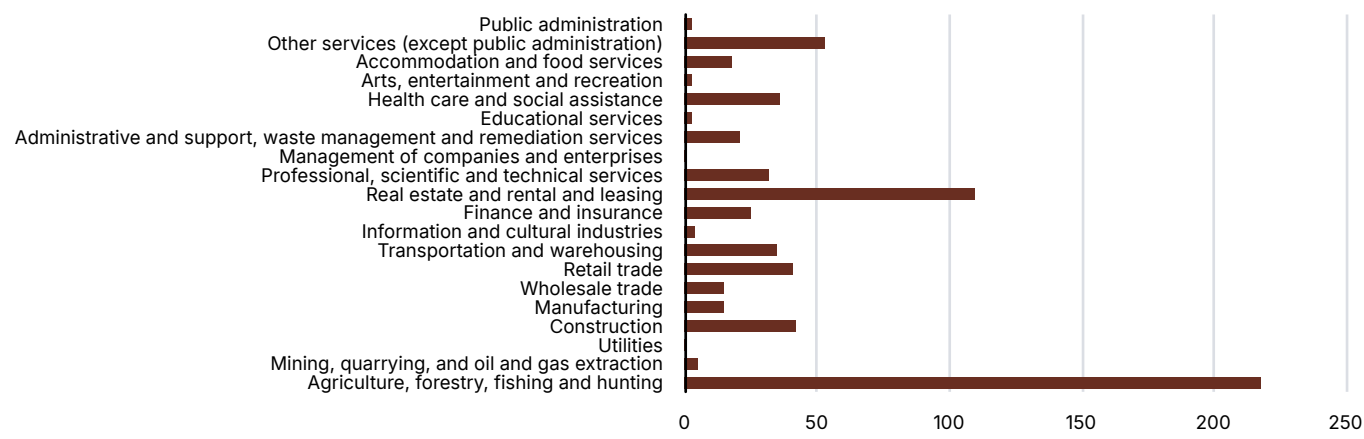
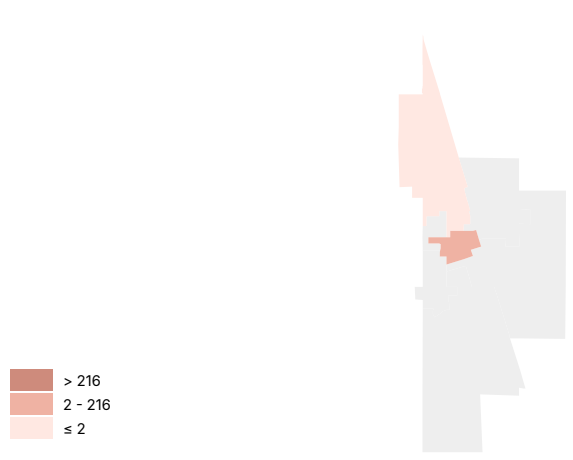


Figure 4.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Claresholm, 2025)²

Claresholm’s business base in 2025 is led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, which accounts for 218 establishments, far more than any other sector. Real estate and rental and leasing is the next largest at 110, while other services has 53 and construction 42. Retail trade, health care and social assistance, and transportation and warehousing also form notable parts of the mix, with 41, 36, and 35 establishments respectively. Recent movement is mixed. Manufacturing rose 36.4% over one year, health care and social assistance increased 12.5%, and real estate and rental and leasing grew 11.1%. By contrast, agriculture remained large but fell 33.7% over five years, and finance and insurance declined 30.6%.



Claresholm’s business base in 2025 is concentrated in a few sectors. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting leads with 218 establishments, far ahead of real estate and rental and leasing at 110 and other services at 53. Construction, retail trade, and transportation also form notable clusters, while utilities and public administration each have just one to three establishments.

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

Establishments by Size

Claresholm’s establishments are still dominated by businesses without employees, with 557 in 2025. That group rose 2.8% from 2024 but remained 16.9% below 2020. The 100 to 199 employee group doubled to 2.

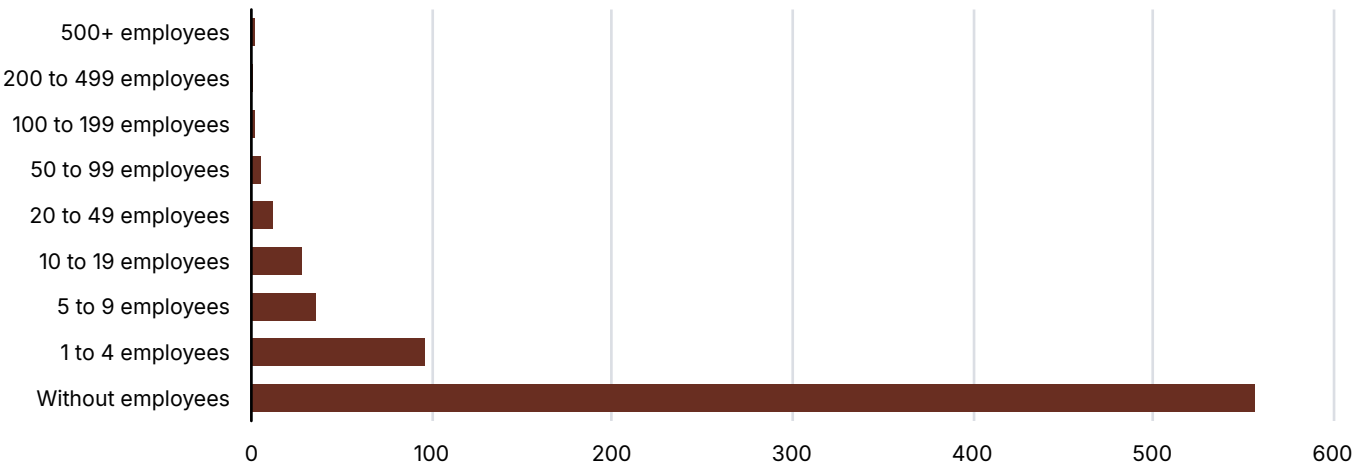
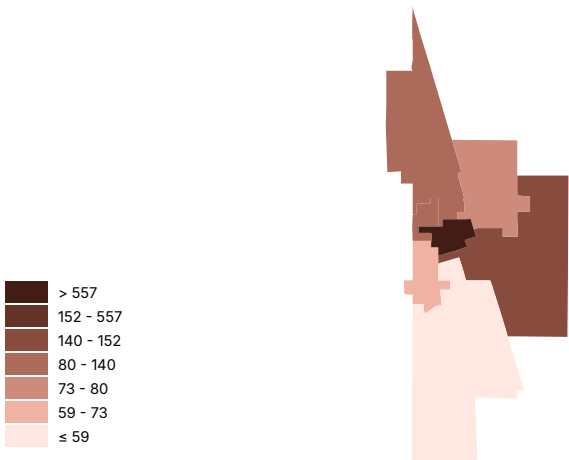


Figure 5.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Claresholm, 2025)²

Claresholm’s business base in 2025 is heavily weighted toward very small establishments. Firms without employees account for 557 businesses, far more than any other size class, while 1 to 4 employee firms number 96 and 5 to 9 employee firms 36. Larger establishments are much less common: 28 have 10 to 19 employees, 12 have 20 to 49, and only a handful fall above that. Recent change is mixed, with no-employee firms up 2.8% in a year but 1 to 4 employee firms down 8.6%.



Claresholm’s business base is concentrated in very small establishments. In 2025, 557 businesses had no employees, far more than any other size class. The next largest group was 1 to 4 employees at 96, followed by 5 to 9 employees at 36 and 10 to 19 employees at 28. Larger firms were rare: 12 had 20 to 49 employees, 5 had 50 to 99, and 2 each had 100 to 199 and 500+ employees. This points to a local economy weighted toward microbusinesses and a limited presence of larger employers.

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

Household After-Tax Income

Claresholm's largest 2021 household income group was \$60,000 to \$69,999, with 170 households, up 17.2% from 2016. The \$15,000 to \$19,999 group fell to 25 households, down 66.7%.

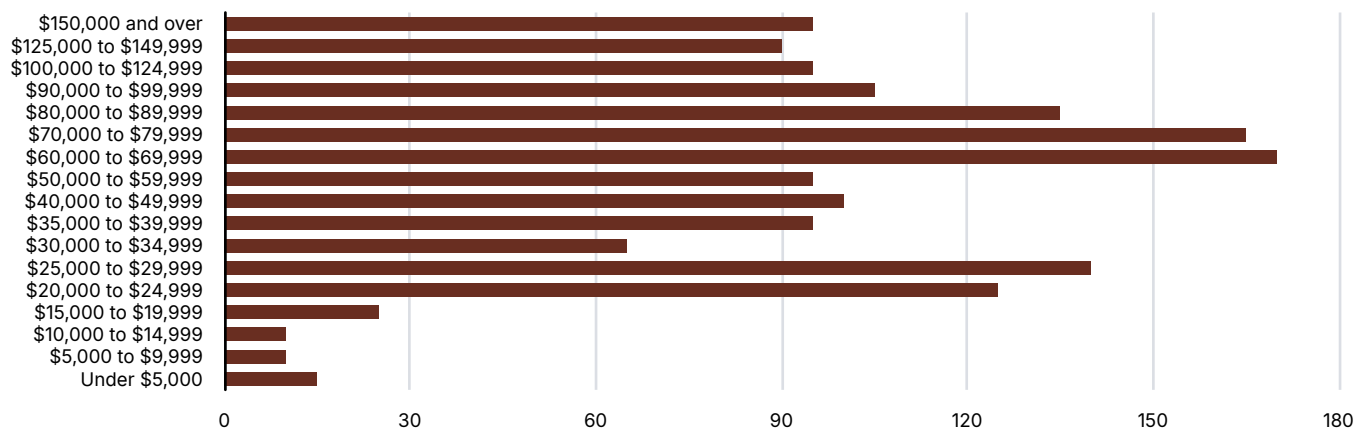
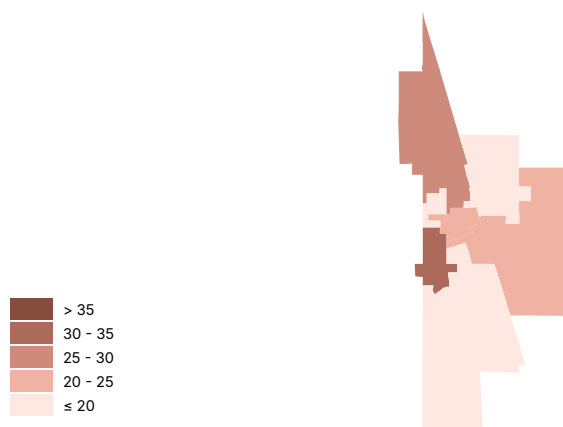


Figure 6.1: Shows household income after taxes across income groups. It helps indicate the resources households have available for day-to-day living after taxes are paid. (Claresholm, 2021)¹

Claresholm's 2021 household after-tax income profile shows a broad middle-income base, with the largest groups concentrated between \$25,000 and \$89,999. The single largest bracket was \$60,000 to \$69,999 at 170 households, followed by \$70,000 to \$79,999 at 165 and \$25,000 to \$29,999 at 140. Several lower-income brackets declined over five years, including \$15,000 to \$19,999, down 66.7%, and \$10,000 to \$14,999, down 60.0%. By contrast, \$25,000 to \$29,999 rose 64.7%, while \$150,000 and over increased 35.7%. The pattern suggests some shifting within the distribution rather than a simple move in one direction. Higher middle-income groups held steady or grew, while several smaller low-income brackets contracted. Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2021.



In 2021, Claresholm's private households were concentrated in the middle of the after-tax income range, with the largest counts in the \$60,000 to \$69,999 group at 170 households and \$70,000 to \$79,999 at 165. Lower-income brackets were smaller, while several middle bands grew over five years, including \$25,000 to \$29,999 and \$150,000 and over. Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profile.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Household - \$60,000 to \$69,999 (Claresholm)¹

Individual After-Tax Income

Claresholm’s largest income group in 2021 was \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 1,460 people. The next largest groups were \$30,000 to \$39,999 at 975 and \$40,000 to \$49,999 at 760, while 60 people earned \$125,000 and over.

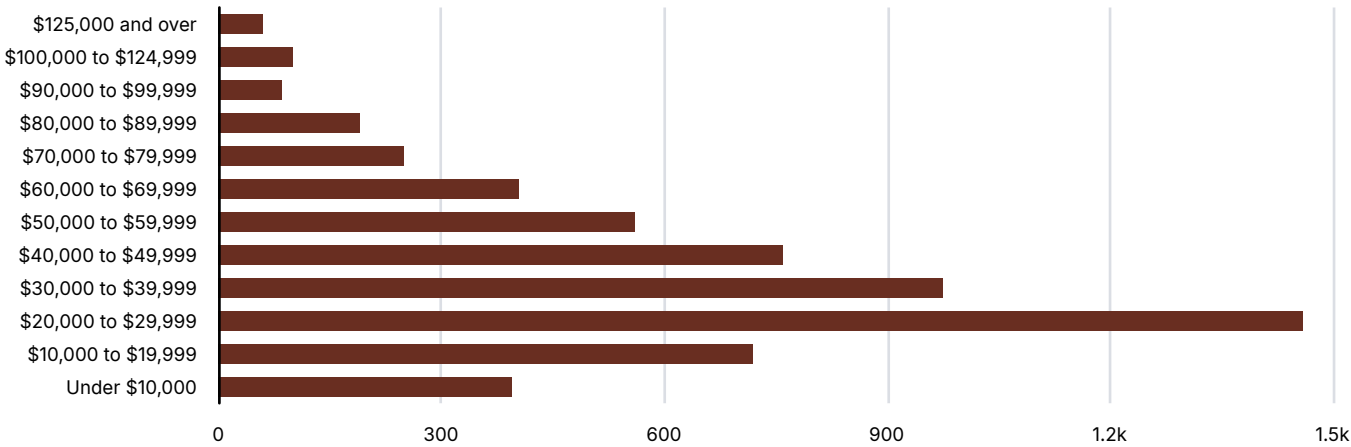
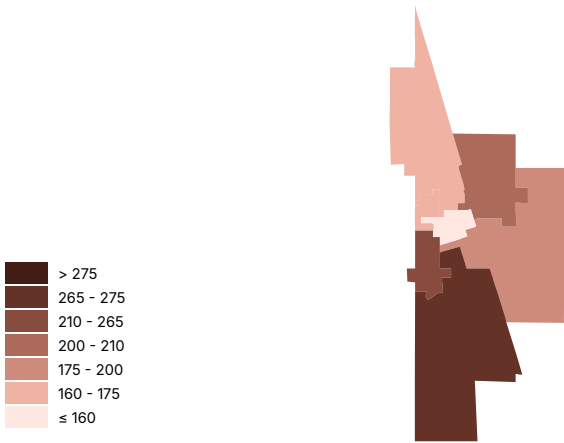


Figure 7.1: Shows individual after-tax income across income groups. It helps indicate the level of disposable income people have after taxes are paid. (Claresholm, 2021)¹

In 2021, Claresholm’s individual after-tax income profile for residents age 15 and over was concentrated in the lower-middle ranges. The largest group was those earning \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 1,460 people. The next largest brackets were \$30,000 to \$39,999, at 975 people, and \$10,000 to \$19,999, at 720. The count then fell steadily through higher income bands, reaching 60 people at \$125,000 and over. This pattern shows a broad base of residents below \$40,000 and a much smaller upper-income tail. The distribution points to modest disposable-income levels across much of the population, with fewer people in the highest brackets.



In 2021, Claresholm’s individual after-tax income profile was concentrated in the lower middle ranges for residents age 15 and over in private households. The largest group was \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 1,460 people. Another 720 were in \$10,000 to \$19,999, while 395 were under \$10,000. Higher-income groups were much smaller.

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

Individual Employment Income

In Claresholm, the largest income group was under \$5,000 with 595 people. Counts then fell across higher brackets, reaching 90 in the \$125,000 and over group, while \$10,000 to \$19,999 held 455 people.

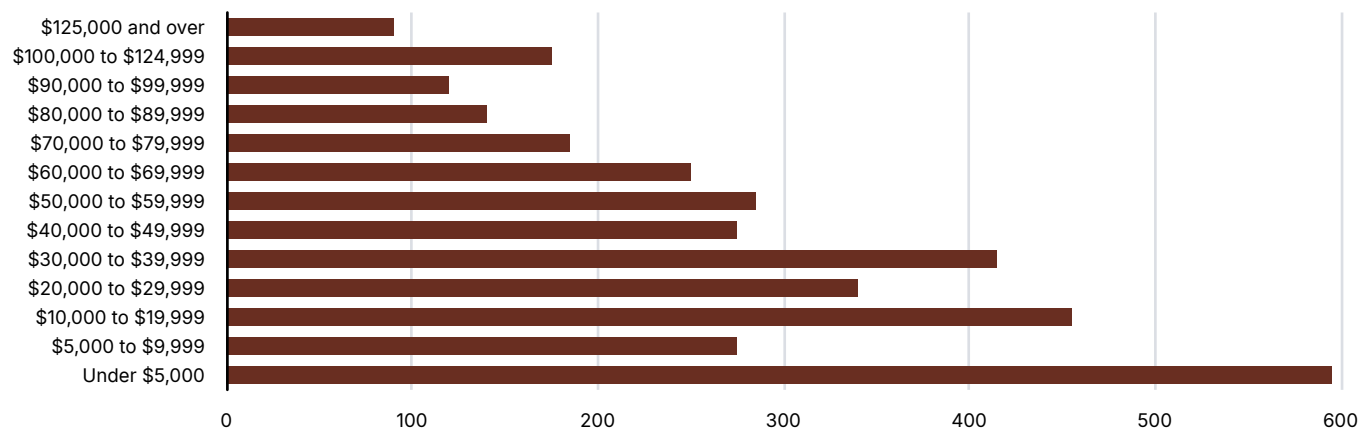
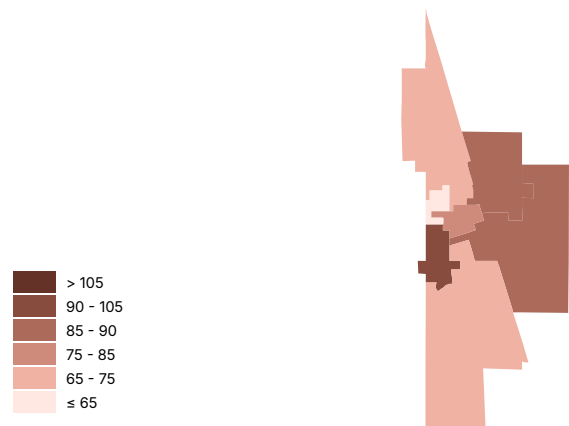


Figure 8.1: Shows individual employment income across income groups. It helps indicate how earnings from work are distributed among residents. (Claresholm, 2021)¹

In 2021, Claresholm's individual employment income profile was concentrated in the lower and middle ranges for residents aged 15 and over in private households. The largest group was under \$5,000, with 595 people, followed by \$10,000 to \$19,999 with 455 and \$30,000 to \$39,999 with 415. Several other brackets were smaller but still notable, including \$20,000 to \$29,999 at 340, \$50,000 to \$59,999 at 285, and both \$5,000 to \$9,999 and \$40,000 to \$49,999 at 275 each. Higher-income groups were thinner, with 175 people at \$100,000 to \$124,999 and 90 at \$125,000 and over. The pattern suggests a wide spread of earnings, but with more residents clustered below \$40,000 than at the top end.



In 2021, Claresholm's individual employment income profile was weighted toward the lower end of the distribution for residents aged 15 and over in private households. The largest group was under \$5,000, with 595 people. The next largest brackets were \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 455 and \$30,000 to \$39,999 at 415. By contrast, only 90 people were in the \$125,000 and over group. The pattern points to a broad spread of earnings, but with more residents concentrated in lower income brackets than at the top.

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

Labour Force Participation Rate

Claresholm’s labour force participation rate fell to 52.6% in 2021, down from 55.3% in 2016 and 56.8% in 2011. The five-year decline was 4.9%, extending the earlier 2.6% drop.

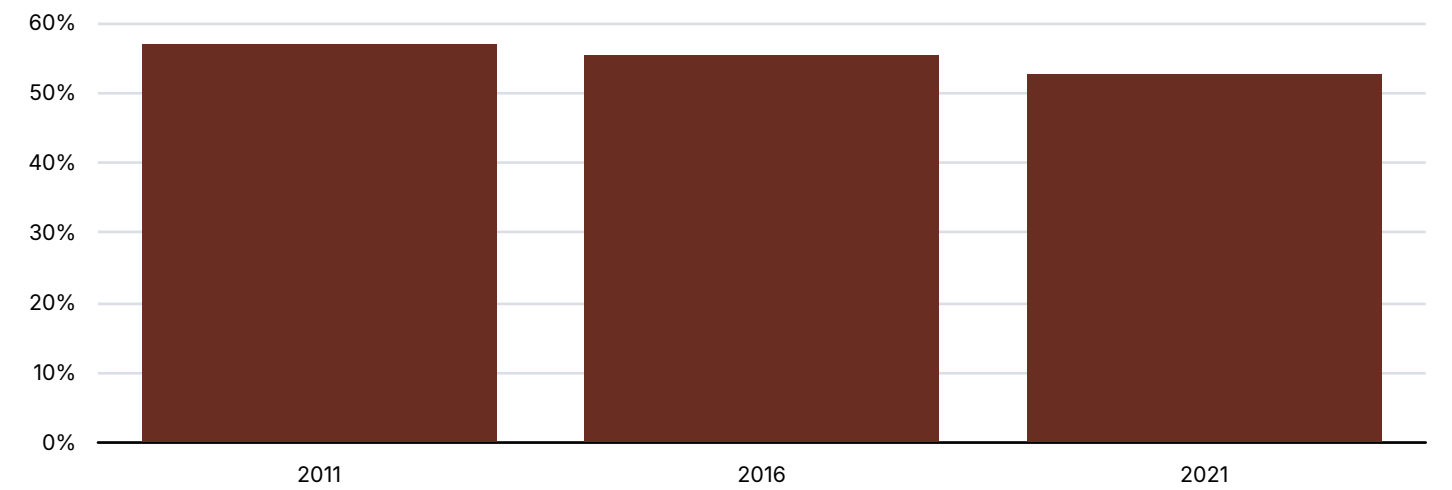
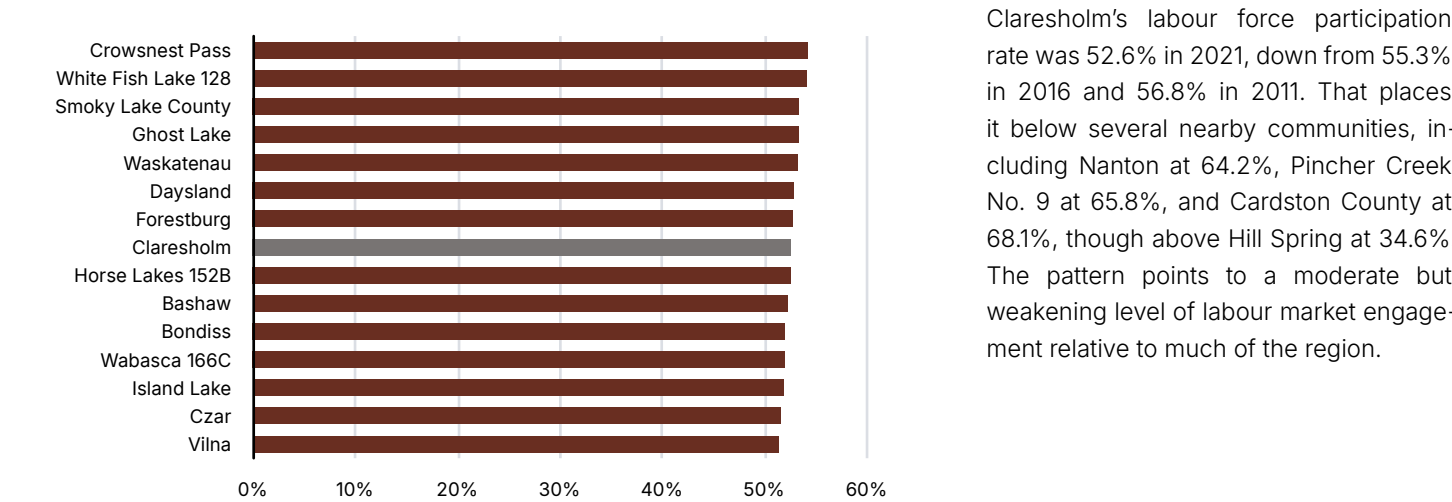


Figure 9.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed or actively looking for work. It helps indicate the level of labour market engagement. (Claresholm, 2011-2021)¹

Claresholm’s labour force participation rate has edged down over the last decade, pointing to a gradual weakening in labour market engagement among the total population. In 2011, the rate was 56.8%, slipping to 55.3% in 2016 and then to 52.6% in 2021. The 2021 figure sits 4.9% below the 2016 level, following a smaller 2.6% decline over the earlier five-year period. The pattern is steady rather than abrupt, with each census period showing a lower share of residents employed or looking for work. For this measure, Claresholm’s recent history is defined by consistent decline.



Claresholm's labour force participation rate was 52.6% in 2021, down from 55.3% in 2016 and 56.8% in 2011. That places it below several nearby communities, including Nanton at 64.2%, Pincher Creek No. 9 at 65.8%, and Cardston County at 68.1%, though above Hill Spring at 34.6%. The pattern points to a moderate but weakening level of labour market engagement relative to much of the region.

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

Labour Force Status

In Claresholm, the largest group in 2021 was people not in the labour force at 1,440, up from 1,350 in 2016. Employed residents fell to 1,435 from 1,550, while unemployed rose to 160 from 120.

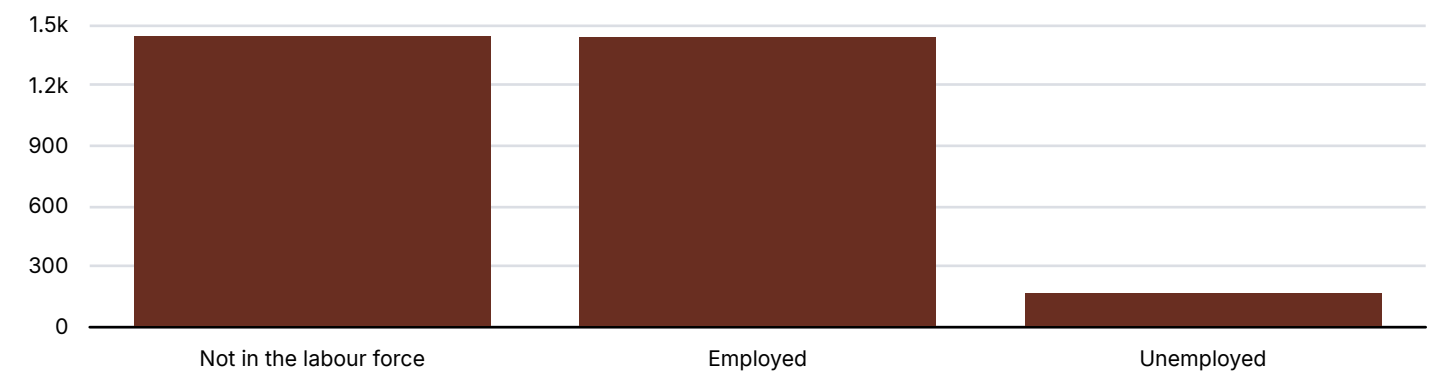


Figure 10.1: Shows whether residents are employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force. It helps indicate how people are participating in the labour market. (Claresholm, 2021)¹

In 2021, Claresholm's labour force status profile for residents aged 15 and over showed a slight tilt toward people not in the labour force. The largest group was not in the labour force at 1,440 people, followed closely by 1,435 employed residents. A much smaller 160 people were unemployed. The near balance between employed residents and those not in the labour force points to a labour market with similar numbers on either side of participation. Unemployment was comparatively limited, but the dataset does not show how these figures changed over time, so only the 2021 snapshot can be described.

In 2021, Claresholm's labour force status was split almost evenly between residents not in the labour force and those employed, with 1,440 people in the former group and 1,435 in the latter. Another 160 people were unemployed. For a population aged 15 and over, that means the largest two categories were nearly tied, each accounting for about 47% of residents, while unemployment was just over 5%. The pattern suggests a balanced local profile with little separation between participation and non-participation.



Figure 10.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Labour Force Status - Not in the labour force (Claresholm)¹

Work Activity

Claresholm’s largest work-activity group was people who did not work, reaching 1,415 in 2021, up 19.9% from 2016. Full-year full-time workers numbered 865, while part-year or part-time workers fell to 755, down 19.7%.

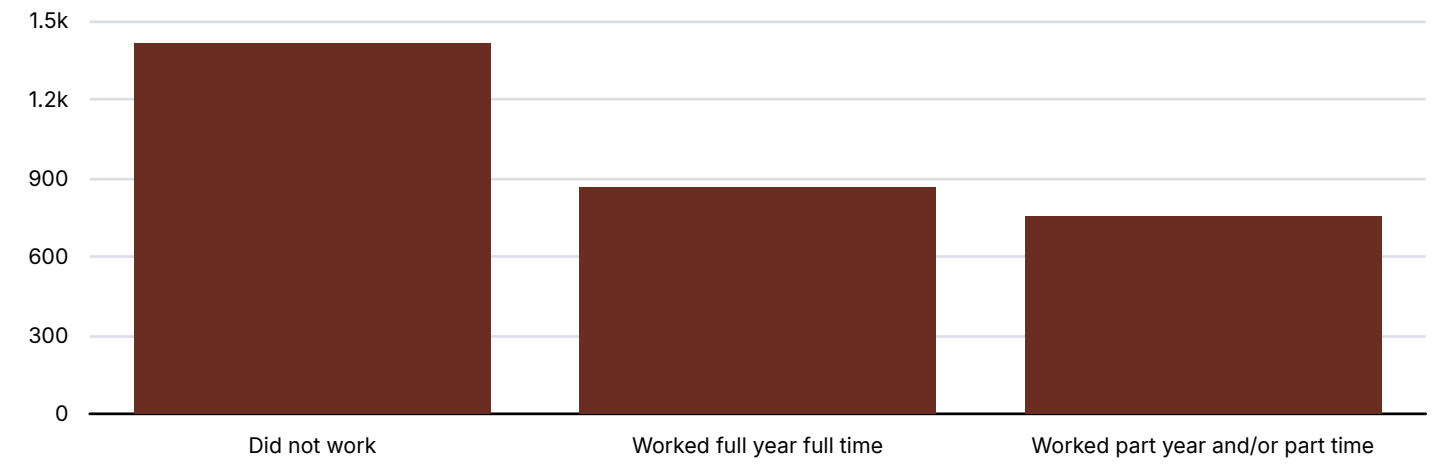


Figure 11.1: Shows the amount of work activity people had during the reference period. It helps indicate attachment to work over the year, not just at a single point in time. (Claresholm, 2021)¹

In Claresholm, work activity in 2021 shows a clear tilt toward people who did not work during the reference period. Among the population aged 15 years and over, 1,415 people did not work, compared with 865 who worked full year full time and 755 who worked part year and/or part time. The 5-year changes point in different directions. The number who did not work rose by 19.9%, while full-year full-time work fell by 3.9% and part-year or part-time work dropped by 19.7%. Taken together, the pattern suggests weaker attachment to work in the broader period, with the non-working group becoming larger than either working category.

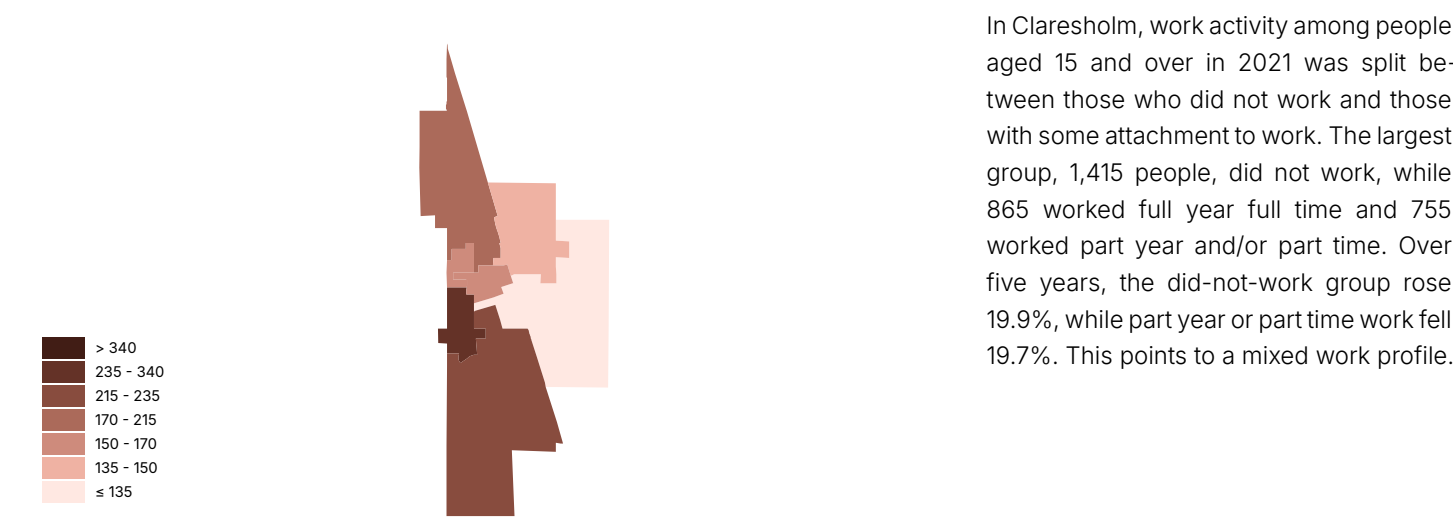


Figure 11.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Work Activity - Did not work (Claresholm)¹

Employed Residents by Occupation

Sales and service occupations were the largest group in Claresholm in 2021 at 500 people, up 8.7% from 2016. Health occupations followed at 255, while legislative and senior management fell to 20 people, down 85.2%.

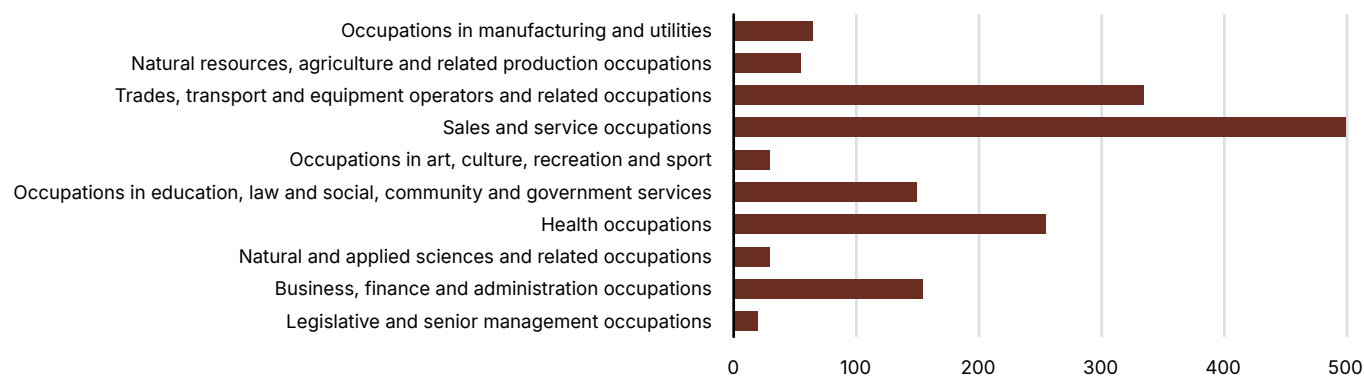


Figure 12.1: Shows the occupations held by employed residents. It helps indicate the community's skill mix and the kinds of work people do. (Claresholm, 2021)¹

In 2021, Claresholm's employed residents were concentrated in sales and service occupations, with 500 people, followed by trades, transport and equipment operators at 335 and health occupations at 255. Business, finance and administration accounted for 155, while education, law and social, community and government services reached 150. Over five years, health grew 24.4% and sales and service rose 8.7%, while legislative and senior management fell 85.2%. The mix shows a shifting local occupation profile.

In Claresholm's 2021 labour force aged 15 and over, employment is concentrated in service, trades, and care-related work. Sales and service occupations are the largest group at 500 people, followed by trades, transport and equipment operators at 335 and health occupations at 255. Business and administration accounts for 155, while legislative and senior management is small at 20. The mix suggests a broad working profile with few high-level management roles.



Figure 12.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Occupation - Sales and service occupations (Claresholm)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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