

ALBERTA  
SOUTHWEST

HILL SPRING

# 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  |
| Labour Force Participation Rate  | 10 |
| Labour Force Status              | 11 |
| Work Activity                    | 12 |
| Employed Residents by Occupation | 13 |

## Executive Summary

Hill Spring presents the picture of a very small local economy with limited labour market engagement and a business base that remains narrow in scale. The clearest long-term pattern is a weakening in employment and participation over the last decade. By 2021, both the employment rate and the labour force participation rate had fallen well below their 2011 levels, leaving Hill Spring near the low end of the nearby comparison places cited in the source text. The sharper decline in employment came earlier in the decade, while participation fell more noticeably between 2016 and 2021, pointing to a smaller share of residents either working or looking for work.

That pattern is reflected in the village's broader labour force profile. In 2021, most residents aged 15 and over were outside the labour force, while the number employed was much smaller and no unemployment was recorded. Work activity also suggests a looser connection to steady employment than five years earlier: full-year, full-time work declined, part-year or part-time work increased, and a large group did not work at all. Among those who were employed, the occupational mix was narrow, with activity concentrated in a small number of fields rather than spread across a broad range of jobs. Sector data for 2025 show the same kind of concentration. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting remained the largest source of employment and the dominant business sector, while public administration and health care accounted for much smaller counts and most service activity stayed limited.

Hill Spring's business base is small and somewhat uneven rather than steadily growing or steadily shrinking. The number of establishments dropped sharply in 2023, recovered in 2024, and eased slightly in 2025, leaving the total close to where it stood in 2022. Within that base, most establishments are very small, especially firms without employees, while payroll businesses remain a limited share of the whole. The sector mix is narrow but not entirely single-industry, with agriculture clearly dominant and a scattering of smaller service categories around it. The result is a village whose economic profile is defined less by breadth or momentum than by concentration, small scale, and relatively weak labour market attachment.

# Employment Rate

Hill Spring’s employment rate was 30.8% in 2021, down 4.1% from 2016 and 14.0 points from 2011. The decline slowed in the latest period after a larger earlier drop.

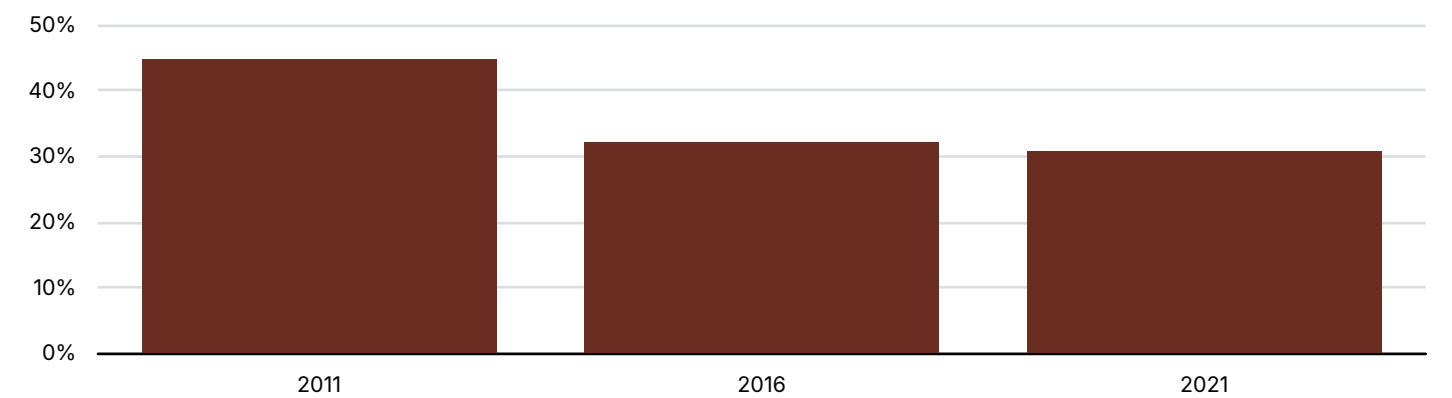


**Figure 1.1:** Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed. It helps indicate overall labour market health and how fully local talent is being used. (Hill Spring, 2011-2021)<sup>1</sup>

Hill Spring’s employment rate declined across the period shown, pointing to a weaker share of the working-age population in work. In 2011, the rate was 44.8 percent; by 2016 it had fallen to 32.1 percent, and in 2021 it was 30.8 percent. The largest drop came between 2011 and 2016, when the rate fell by 28.4 percent over five years. The later period was comparatively steadier, with a further 4.0 percent decline by 2021. The pattern suggests a sharp adjustment followed by a slower easing, rather than a quick recovery.

Hill Spring’s employment rate stood at 30.8% in 2021, measured among the labour force aged 15 and over. That was far below several nearby places and continued a downward pattern from earlier censuses. The rate fell from 44.8% in 2011 to 32.1% in 2016, then edged down another 1.3 points by 2021. In the same year, Nanton was at 58.4%, Claresholm at 47.2%, and Piikani 147 at 33.2%. By regional standards, Hill Spring sits near the lower end of the comparison set. The figures point to a relatively weak employment rate, with recent change much smaller than the earlier decline.

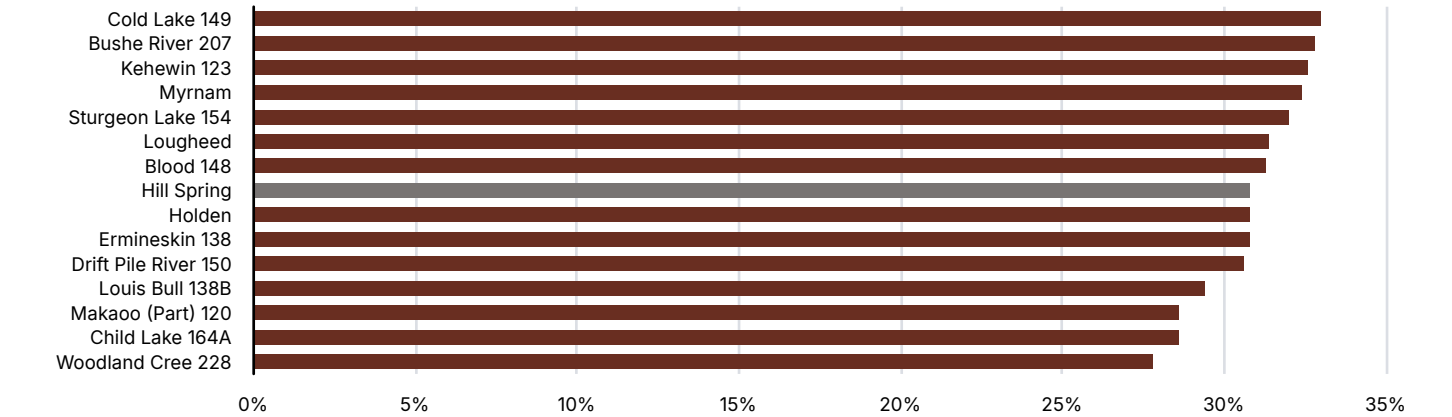


**Figure 1.2:** Comparison of Employment Rate with other locations (Hill Spring, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

# Business Establishments

Hill Spring had 66 business establishments in 2025, down 2.9% from 2024. The count was 68 in 2024 and 50 in 2023, after 67 in 2022, showing recent fluctuation.

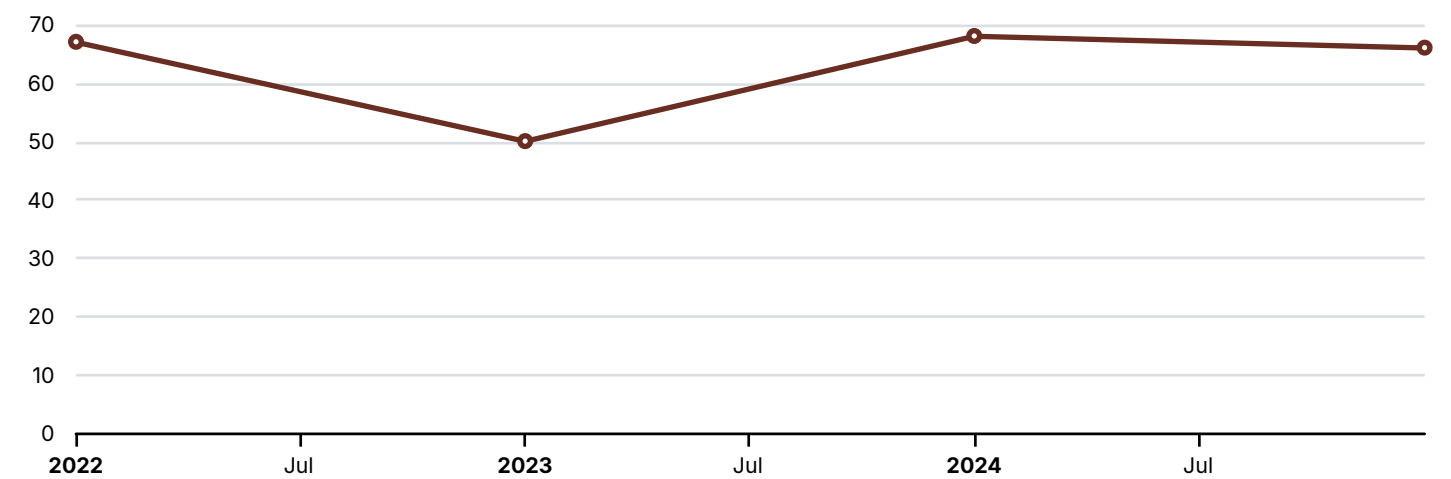
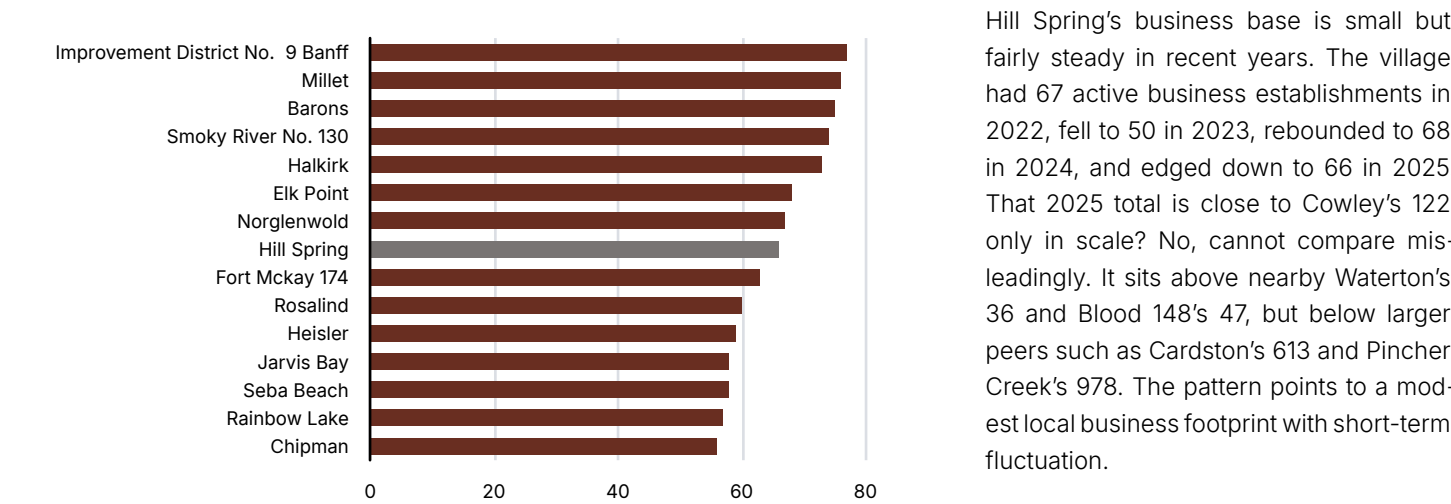


**Figure 2.1:** Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Hill Spring, 2022-2025)<sup>2</sup>

Hill Spring’s active business base has been uneven over the past four years, with a sharp drop in 2023 followed by a partial recovery. In 2022, the village had 67 business establishments. That fell to 50 in 2023, then rose to 68 in 2024 before easing to 66 in 2025. The year-to-year changes show that pattern clearly: minus 25.4% in 2023, plus 36.0% in 2024, and minus 2.9% in 2025. By 2025, the count was close to the 2022 level, but still slightly lower than the 2024 peak. For a small local business base, the data point to volatility rather than steady expansion or decline.



Hill Spring’s business base is small but fairly steady in recent years. The village had 67 active business establishments in 2022, fell to 50 in 2023, rebounded to 68 in 2024, and edged down to 66 in 2025. That 2025 total is close to Cowley’s 122 only in scale? No, cannot compare misleadingly. It sits above nearby Waterton’s 36 and Blood 148’s 47, but below larger peers such as Cardston’s 613 and Pincher Creek’s 978. The pattern points to a modest local business footprint with short-term fluctuation.

**Figure 2.2:** Comparison of Business Establishments with other locations (Hill Spring, 2025)<sup>2</sup>

# Employment by Sector

Hill Spring’s employment remains concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting with 14 people in 2025. Public administration follows with 8, while health care and social assistance rose to 6 from 1 in 2024.

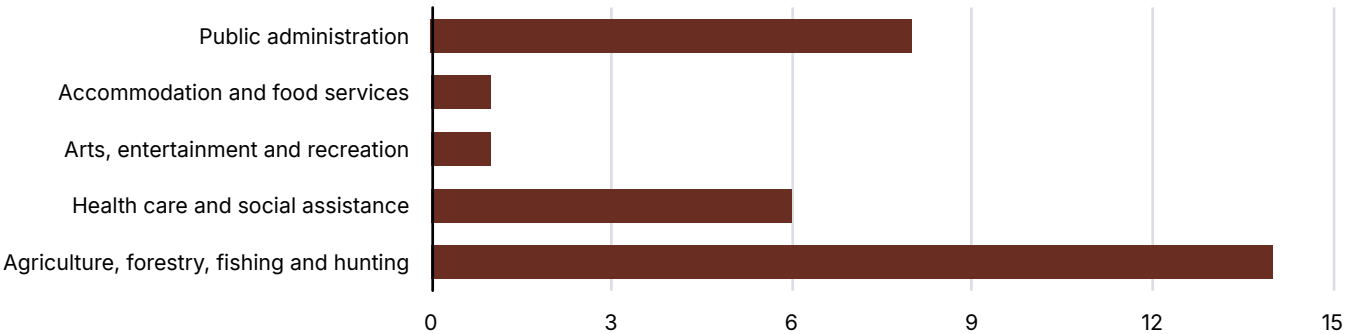


**Figure 3.1:** Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Hill Spring, 2025)<sup>3</sup>

Hill Spring’s employment profile in 2025 is concentrated in a few sectors, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting the largest at 14 people. Public administration follows with 8, and health care and social assistance has 6. Smaller sectors include arts, entertainment and recreation and accommodation and food services, each with 1 job. The clearest time trend is in health care and social assistance, which rose by 500% from the previous year, while the other listed sectors were unchanged.

In 2025, employment in Hill Spring among employees aged 15 and over was concentrated in a few sectors, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting clearly the largest employer. That sector accounted for 14 people, followed by public administration with 8 and health care and social assistance with 6. Arts, entertainment and recreation and accommodation and food services each had 1 worker. The mix is small but uneven, with agriculture standing out as the main source of jobs and the service sectors remaining limited. This pattern suggests a local employment base shaped more by primary-sector work than by broad service-sector employment.

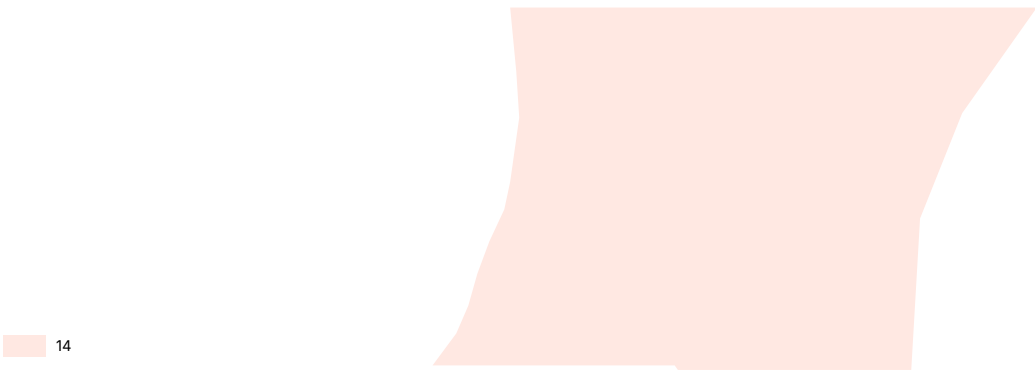


**Figure 3.2:** Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Hill Spring)<sup>3</sup>

# Establishments by Sector

Hill Spring’s establishment mix remained led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting in 2025 with 31 businesses, down 8.8% from 2024. Real estate and rental and leasing rose to 9, while utilities held at 4.

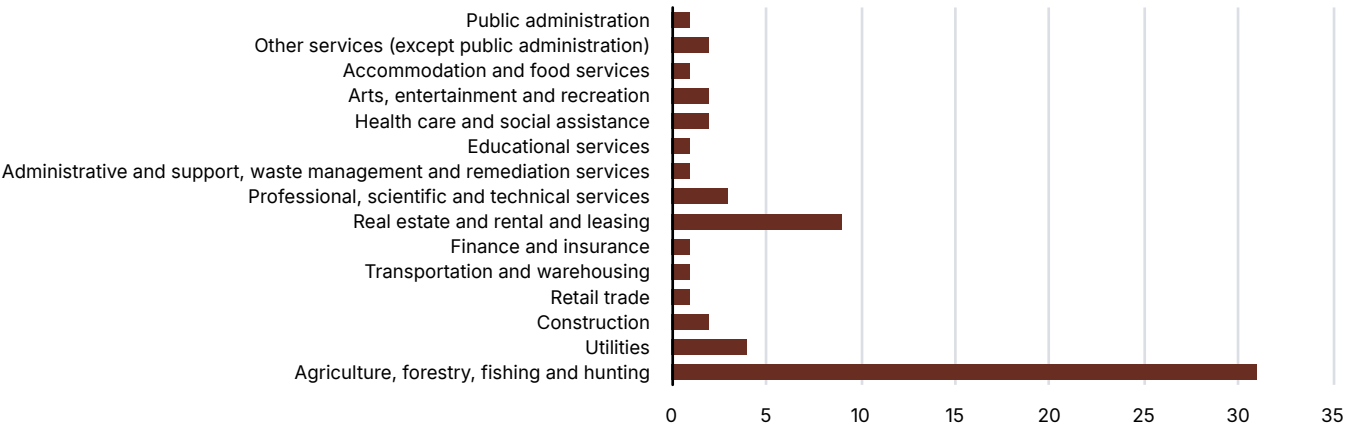


**Figure 4.1:** Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Hill Spring, 2025)<sup>2</sup>

Hill Spring’s business establishments in 2025 are concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 31 businesses, far more than any other sector. Real estate and rental and leasing is the next largest category at 9, while utilities account for 4 and professional, scientific and technical services for 3. Several smaller sectors are stable or have limited change: finance and insurance, educational services, accommodation and food services, and public administration each have 1 establishment. Health care and social assistance and other services each have 2 and both doubled over the year. The pattern suggests a small but diverse local business base, with recent growth appearing in a few service categories while agriculture remains the dominant sector.



**Figure 4.2:** Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (Hill Spring)<sup>2</sup>

Hill Spring’s business base in 2025 is concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, which accounts for 31 establishments, far more than any other sector. Real estate and rental and leasing is the next largest category with 9 establishments, while utilities has 4 and professional, scientific and technical services has 3. Several smaller sectors have 1 or 2 establishments each, including retail trade, construction, health care and social assistance, and public administration. The mix suggests a narrow but varied local establishment structure.

## Establishments by Size

Hill Spring’s establishments are dominated by firms without employees, at 58 in 2025, down 3.3% from 2024. Smaller groups remained limited, with 4 firms each in the 1 to 4 and 5 to 9 employee categories.

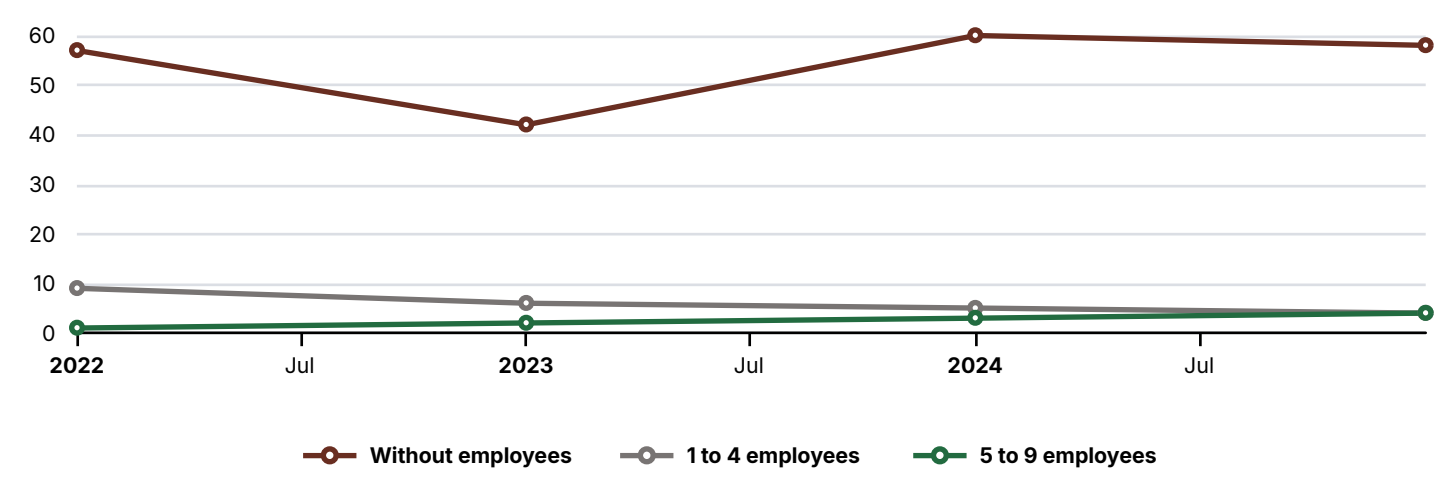
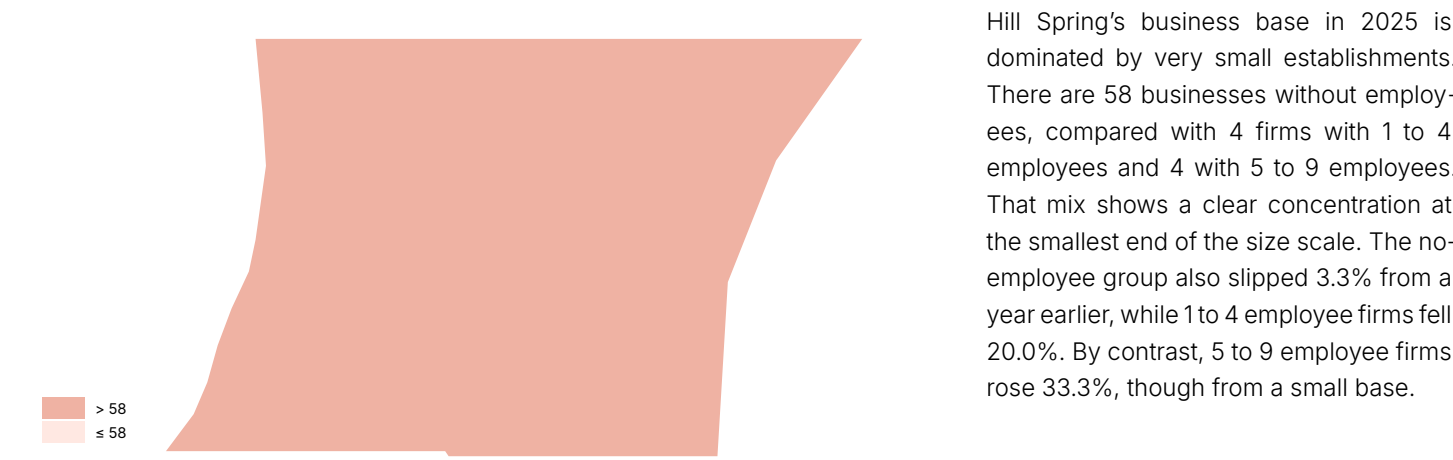


**Figure 5.1:** Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Hill Spring, 2022-2025)<sup>2</sup>

In 2025, Hill Spring’s business establishment base was concentrated in the smallest size categories, with 58 establishments without employees. By contrast, there were 4 establishments with 1 to 4 employees and 4 with 5 to 9 employees. The recent movement was mixed: no-employee establishments fell by 3.3%, the 1 to 4 employee group declined by 20%, and the 5 to 9 employee group rose by 33.3%. That pattern suggests a very small-business-heavy local profile, with change concentrated at the lower end of the size scale. Even with the increase in the 5 to 9 employee group, establishments with payroll employees remained a limited share of the total.



Hill Spring's business base in 2025 is dominated by very small establishments. There are 58 businesses without employees, compared with 4 firms with 1 to 4 employees and 4 with 5 to 9 employees. That mix shows a clear concentration at the smallest end of the size scale. The no-employee group also slipped 3.3% from a year earlier, while 1 to 4 employee firms fell 20.0%. By contrast, 5 to 9 employee firms rose 33.3%, though from a small base.

**Figure 5.2:** Distribution of Largest Group: Business Establishment Size - Without employees (Hill Spring)<sup>2</sup>

# Household After-Tax Income

Hill Spring’s household income distribution is unchanged, with every income group at zero households in 2016 and 2021. The largest group is \$20,000 to \$24,999, but it also records zero households.

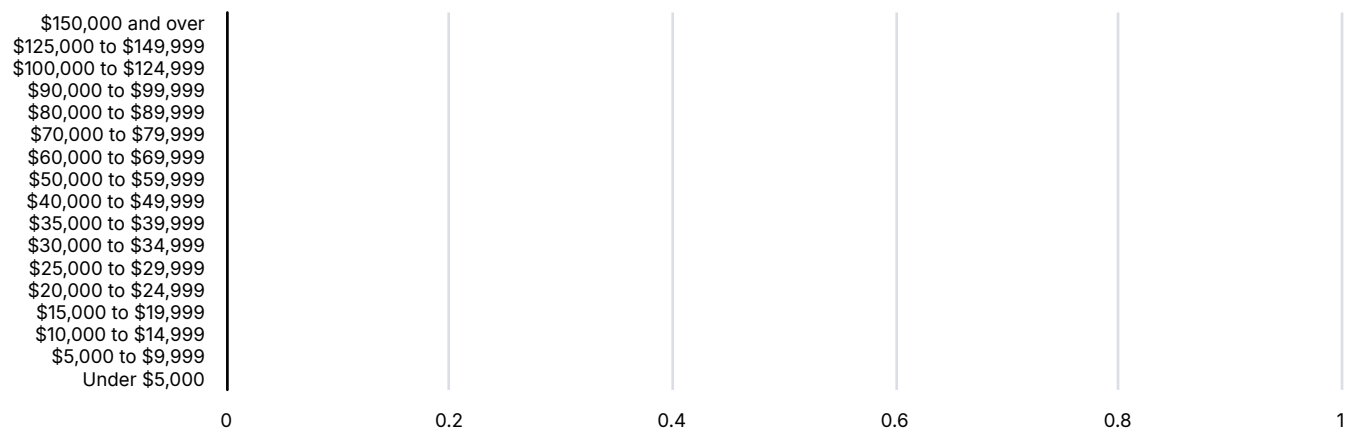


**Figure 6.1:** Shows household income after taxes across income groups. It helps indicate the resources households have available for day-to-day living after taxes are paid. (Hill Spring, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

In 2021, Hill Spring’s household after-tax income profile shows no recorded households in any income band. Every category from under \$5,000 to \$150,000 and over is listed at 0 households. That means the distribution is completely flat in the dataset, with no households counted in the lower, middle, or upper income ranges. Even the broad bands that usually capture most households are absent. With no comparator values and no variation within the location, there is no internal pattern to contrast. The data do not show a concentration, a spread, or a shift across income groups. For this topic, the main takeaway is simply that the provided census profile does not report any household counts for Hill Spring in 2021.



In 2021, Hill Spring shows no recorded private households in any after-tax income bracket, from under \$5,000 through \$150,000 and over. The same zero pattern appears in the descendant dissemination area, leaving no visible income distribution to compare or interpret within this dataset. With every category at zero, the table provides a census snapshot of absence rather than a household income structure.

**Figure 6.2:** Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Household - Under \$5,000 (Hill Spring)<sup>1</sup>

# Labour Force Participation Rate

Hill Spring's labour force participation rate fell to 34.6% in 2021, down from 42.9% in 2016 and 44.8% in 2011, a 19.4% five-year decline and 10.2-point drop since 2011.

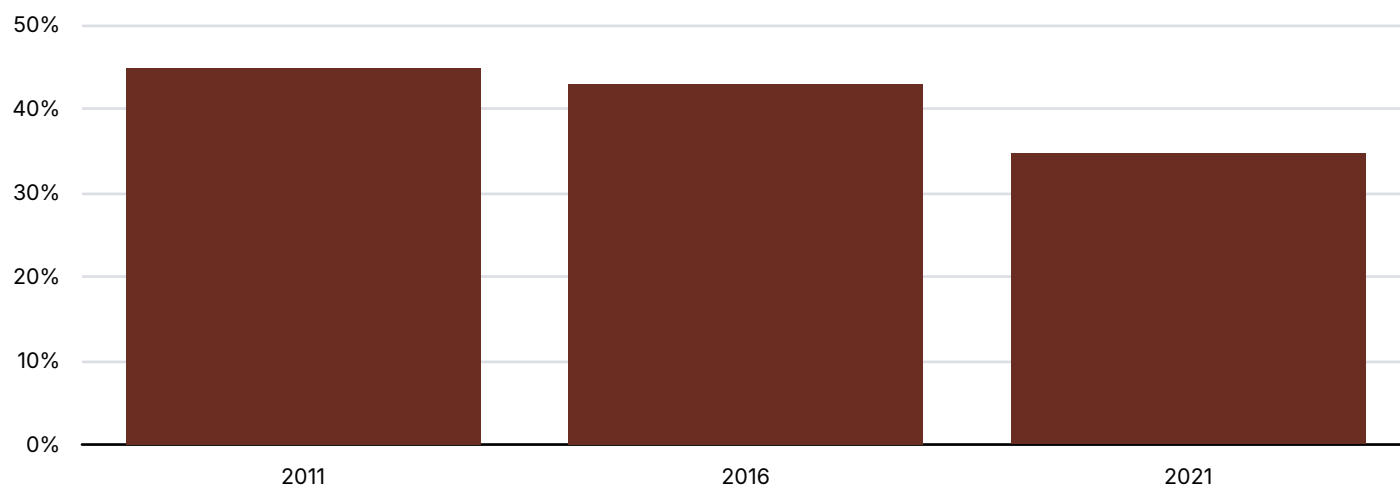
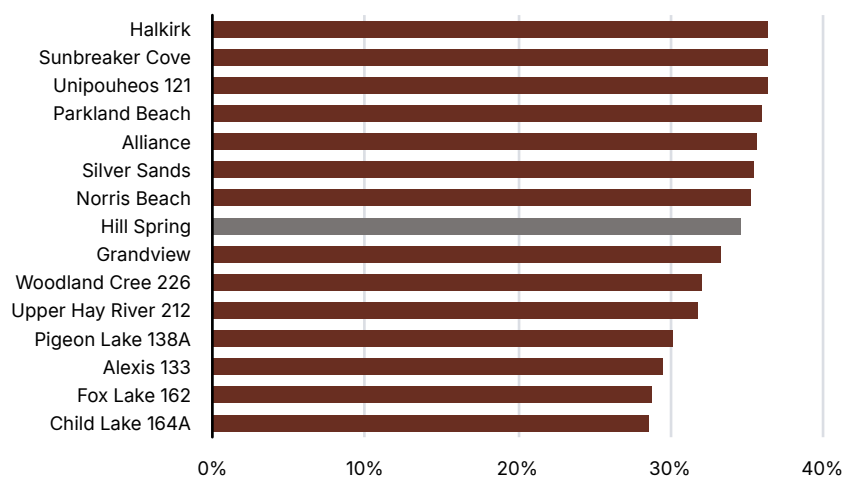


**Figure 7.1:** Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed or actively looking for work. It helps indicate the level of labour market engagement. (Hill Spring, 2011-2021)<sup>1</sup>

Hill Spring's labour force participation rate has trended downward across the last three census points, showing a clear easing in labour market engagement among the working-age population. In 2011, the rate stood at 44.8%, before slipping to 42.9% in 2016 and then to 34.6% in 2021. The decline was modest between 2011 and 2016, at 4.2%, but much sharper over the following five years, when the rate fell by 19.4%. That later drop accounts for most of the change in the period shown. The pattern points to a smaller share of residents either working or seeking work in 2021 than earlier in the decade.



Hill Spring's labour force participation rate was 34.6% in 2021, marking a clear decline from 42.9% in 2016 and 44.8% in 2011. The series shows a steady downward trend rather than short-term volatility. Compared with nearby places, Hill Spring sits at the low end. In 2021, it was below Cardston County at 68.1%, Nanton at 64.2%, and Claresholm at 52.6%. The gap suggests much lower labour market engagement than most peers in the comparison set.

**Figure 7.2:** Comparison of Labour Force Participation Rate with other locations (Hill Spring, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

# Labour Force Status

In Hill Spring, 80 people were not in the labour force in 2021, the largest group. That was up from 75 in 2016, while employed residents fell from 45 to 40 and unemployment dropped to zero.

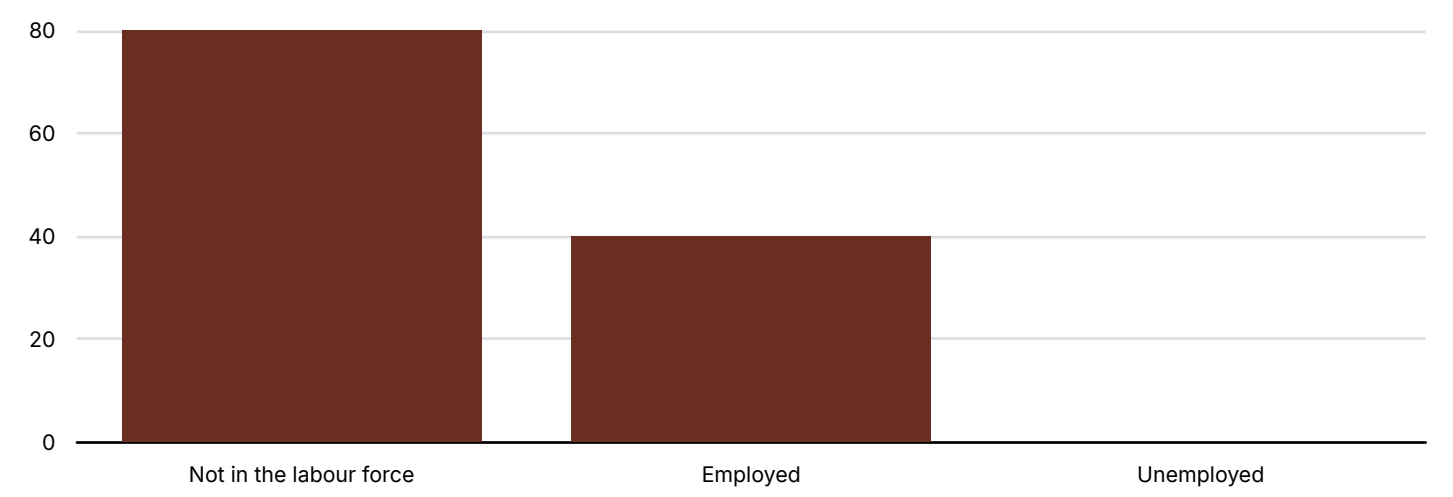
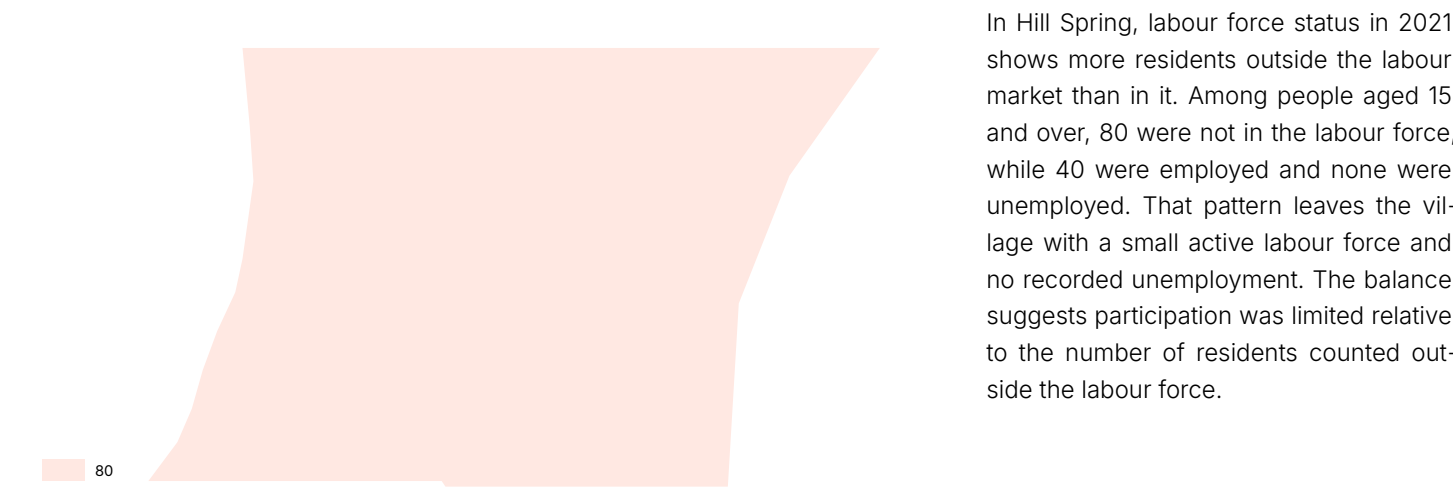


**Figure 8.1:** Shows whether residents are employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force. It helps indicate how people are participating in the labour market. (Hill Spring, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

In Hill Spring, labour force status in 2021 shows a small working-age population with most residents not participating in the labour force. Among people aged 15 years and over, 80 were not in the labour force, while 40 were employed and none were unemployed. The pattern is clear: non-participation was twice the employed count, and there were no unemployed residents recorded. With only these figures, the data suggests a labour market profile shaped more by absence from the labour force than by unemployment.



In Hill Spring, labour force status in 2021 shows more residents outside the labour market than in it. Among people aged 15 and over, 80 were not in the labour force, while 40 were employed and none were unemployed. That pattern leaves the village with a small active labour force and no recorded unemployment. The balance suggests participation was limited relative to the number of residents counted outside the labour force.

**Figure 8.2:** Distribution of Largest Group: Labour Force Status - Not in the labour force (Hill Spring)<sup>1</sup>

# Work Activity

In Hill Spring, did not work remained the largest group at 70 people in 2021, down 17.65% from 2016. Worked part year and/or part time rose to 35, while full-year full-time fell to 20.

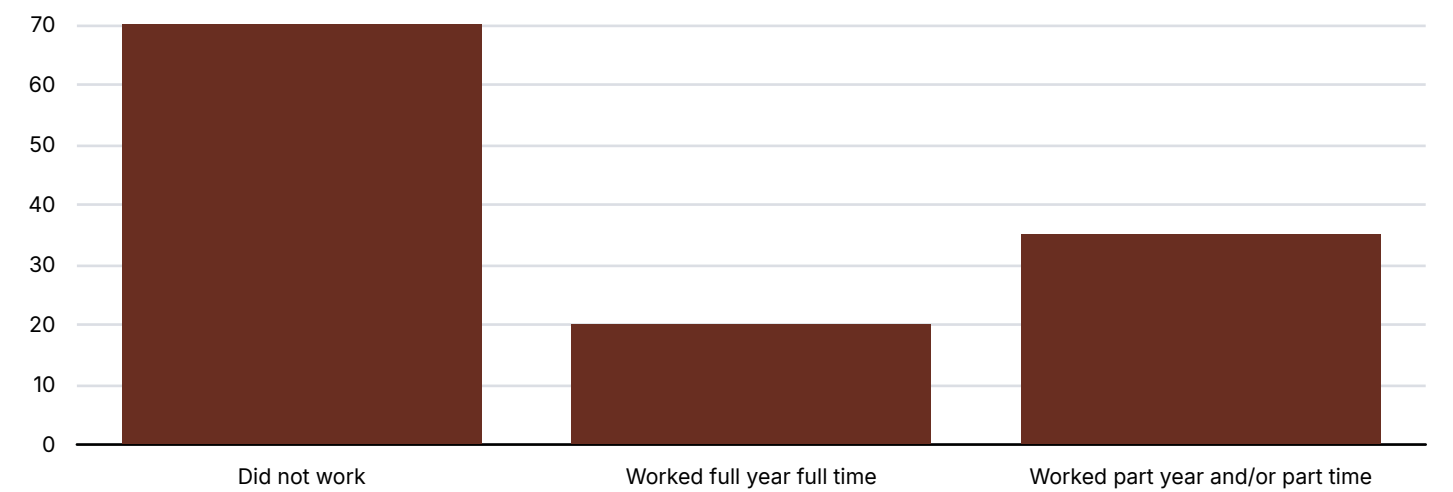


**Figure 9.1:** Shows the amount of work activity people had during the reference period. It helps indicate attachment to work over the year, not just at a single point in time. (Hill Spring, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

In Hill Spring, work activity in 2021 points to a small population with mixed attachment to employment over the year. Among people aged 15 years and over, 70 did not work, 35 worked part year and/or part time, and 20 worked full year full time. The five-year changes show different directions within that pattern. The number who did not work fell by 17.6%, while those who worked part year and/or part time rose by 40.0%. Full-year full-time work declined by 33.3%. That mix suggests a shift away from continuous full-time work toward more limited work activity, although the data do not show why.



In 2021, Hill Spring’s work activity for people aged 15 and over was split mainly between those who did not work and those with some work attachment. Seventy people did not work, 35 worked part year and/or part time, and 20 worked full year full time. Compared with five years earlier, part-year work rose 40%, while full-year full-time work fell 33.3%.

**Figure 9.2:** Distribution of Largest Group: Work Activity - Did not work (Hill Spring)<sup>1</sup>

# Employed Residents by Occupation

Business, finance and administration occupations were the largest group in Hill Spring in 2021, at 15 people, up 50% from 2016. Arts, culture, recreation and sport accounted for 10 people.

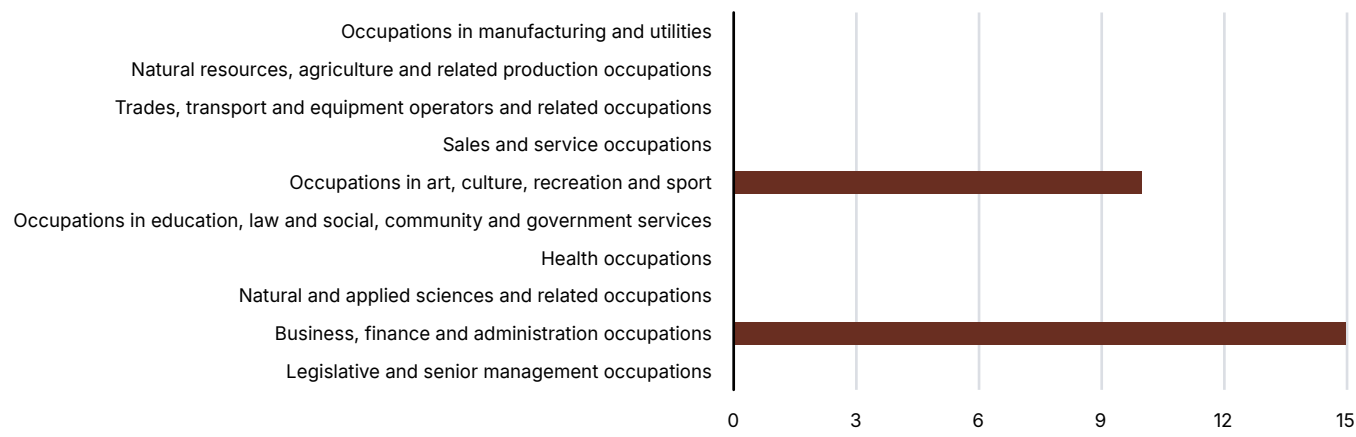


**Figure 10.1:** Shows the occupations held by employed residents. It helps indicate the community's skill mix and the kinds of work people do. (Hill Spring, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

Hill Spring's employed residents were concentrated in a very small set of occupations in 2021, with several categories reporting no workers at all. Within the labour force aged 15 and over, business, finance and administration occupations had 15 people, and occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport had 10. The only category showing clear recent growth was business, finance and administration, up 50% over five years. By contrast, legislative and senior management occupations, education, law and social, community and government services, sales and service, and trades, transport and equipment operators each fell to zero, a 100% decline from five years earlier. That mix points to a narrow occupational profile rather than a broad spread across the labour market.



In Hill Spring, employed residents in 2021 were concentrated in a narrow set of occupations. Business, finance and administration occupations accounted for 15 people, while occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport accounted for 10. Most other occupation groups were not represented. The five-year change shows business, finance and administration occupations rose by 50, while several categories fell to zero. This points to a small, limited occupational mix.

**Figure 10.2:** Distribution of Largest Group: Occupation - Business, finance and administration occupations (Hill Spring)<sup>1</sup>

## 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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