



FORT MACLEOD

Economic Report

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Executive Summary

Fort Macleod presents a mixed local economy in which a concentrated employment base sits alongside softer labour market engagement and a business community that remains modest in scale. By 2021, both the employment rate and labour force participation rate had moved down from 2016, indicating a smaller share of residents was working or actively engaged in the labour market. At the same time, the number of employed residents still exceeded the number outside the labour force, and unemployment remained comparatively small in absolute terms. The picture is not one of abrupt disruption, but of a community where labour market participation has weakened while employment continues to rest on a few clear pillars.

That structure is especially visible in Fort Macleod's sector mix. Educational services dominates local employment by a wide margin, far ahead of every other sector, while health care, manufacturing, retail, and construction form a much smaller second tier. Employment across sectors is uneven, with some categories posting strong short-term gains and others dropping sharply, reinforcing the sense of a local economy shaped by a large institutional core and more volatile activity around it. The business base shows a similar pattern. Establishment counts recovered slightly in 2025 after recent declines, but remained below earlier peaks and below their level five years earlier. The mix is broad, though clearly tilted toward agriculture and property-related activity, and it is overwhelmingly made up of very small firms, especially businesses without employees. Larger employers exist, but they are few, leaving the local business landscape dominated by owner-operated and small-scale enterprises.

Fort Macleod's income picture adds another layer to this mixed profile. Household incomes in 2021 were spread across a wide range, with the strongest representation in middle and upper-middle brackets and notable growth in higher-income households over five years. Individual incomes, however, remained concentrated much lower in the distribution, with the largest groups in lower and middle bands and relatively few residents at the top end. Work activity reflects that same unevenness: many residents worked full time for the full year, but the largest single group did not work during the period. Fort Macleod emerges as a town with a defined employment core, a small and fluctuating business base, and income patterns that are stronger at the household level than for individuals.

Employment Rate

Fort Macleod’s employment rate fell to 51.5% in 2021, down 3.9% from 53.6% in 2016. The five-year decline reflects a smaller share of the labour force employed.

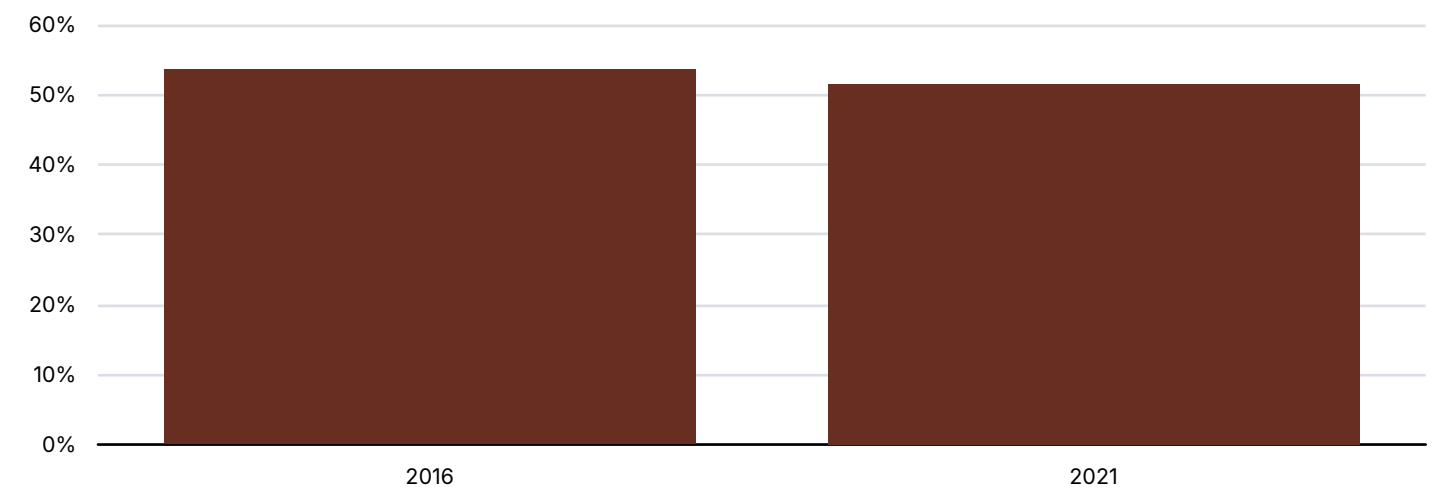
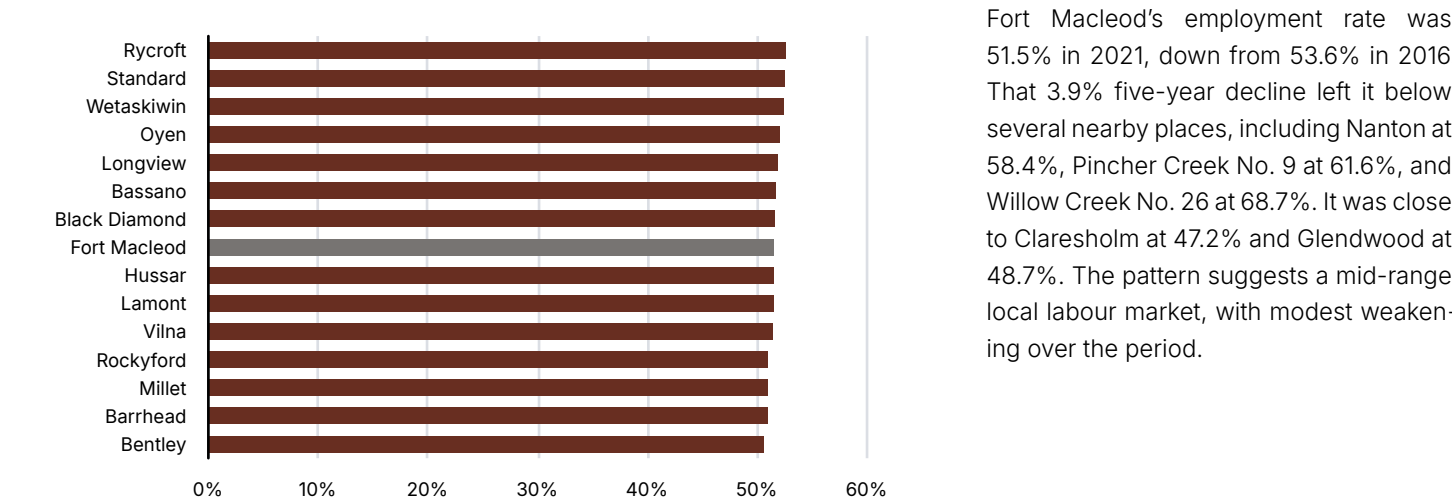


Figure 1.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed. It helps indicate overall labour market health and how fully local talent is being used. (Fort Macleod, 2016-2021)¹

Fort Macleod’s employment rate edged down over the 2016 to 2021 period, showing a modest softening in labour market participation within the working-age population. The measure is 53.6% in 2016 and 51.5% in 2021, a decline of 2.1 percentage points. The longer-term change is negative, with a 3.9% drop over five years. With only two time points available, the dataset points to a small but clear downward trend rather than sharp volatility. This pattern suggests that a slightly smaller share of the labour force aged 15 years and over was employed in 2021 than in 2016.



Fort Macleod’s employment rate was 51.5% in 2021, down from 53.6% in 2016. That 3.9% five-year decline left it below several nearby places, including Nanton at 58.4%, Pincher Creek No. 9 at 61.6%, and Willow Creek No. 26 at 68.7%. It was close to Claresholm at 47.2% and Glendwood at 48.7%. The pattern suggests a mid-range local labour market, with modest weakening over the period.

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

Business Establishments

Fort Macleod had 726 business establishments in 2025, up 1.4% from 2024. The count remained below 2023's 814 and 2022's 855, and was 8.0% lower than five years earlier.

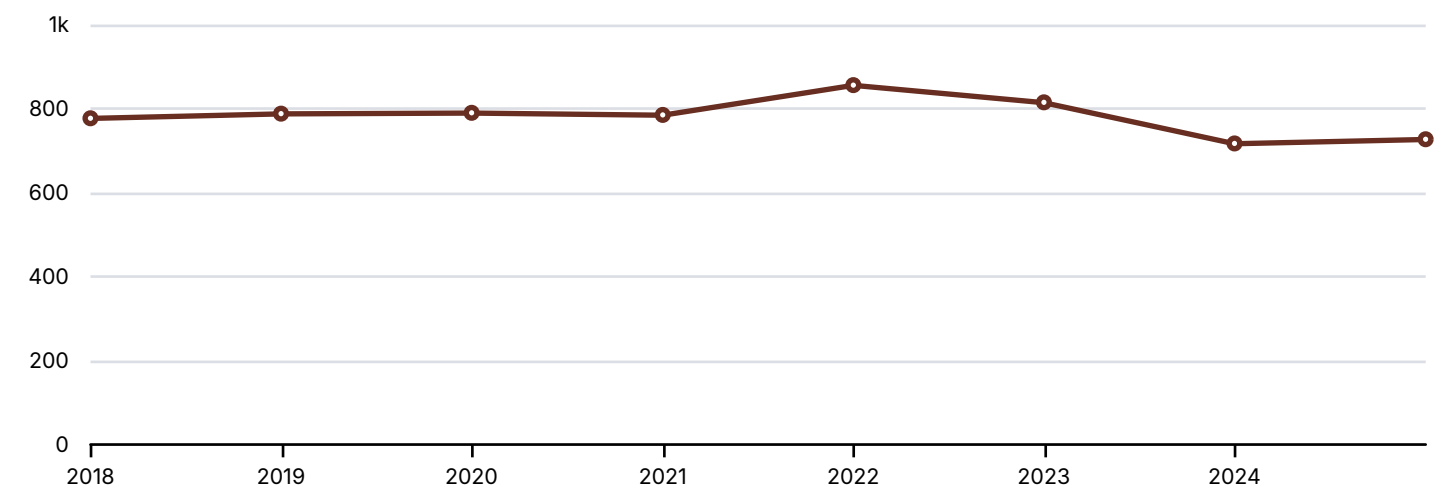
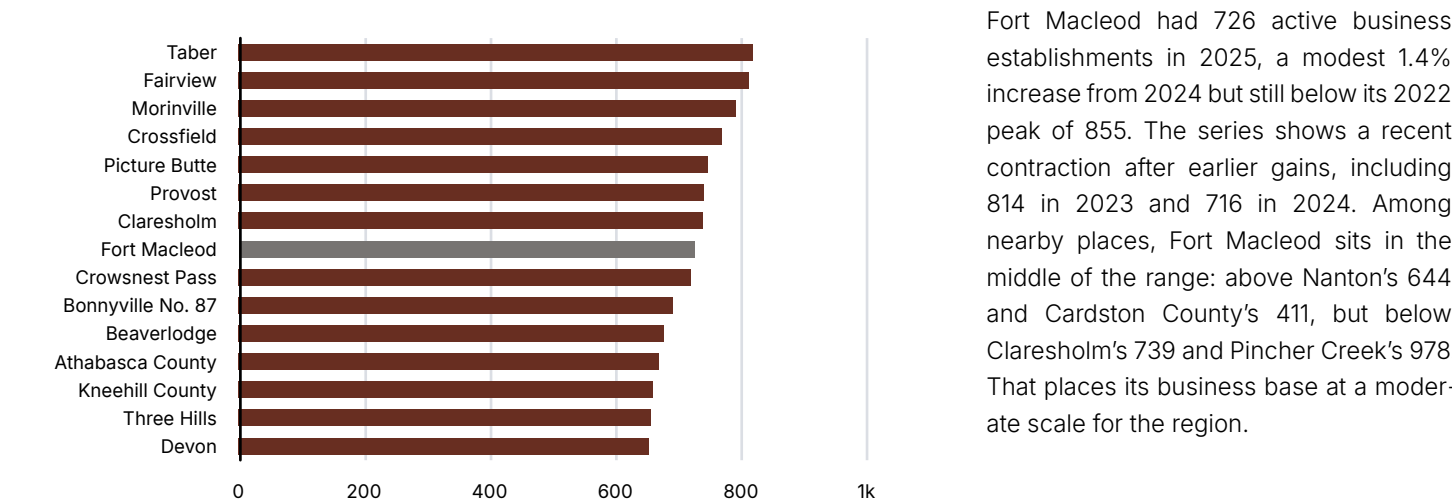


Figure 2.1: Shows the total number of active business establishments in the area, including those without employees. It helps indicate the scale and diversity of the local business base. (Fort Macleod, 2018-2025)²

Fort Macleod had 726 active business establishments in 2025, showing a business base that has eased from its recent high but remained above its 2018 level. The series has moved unevenly over time, with modest gains through 2020, a small dip in 2021, and a sharp rise to 855 in 2022. The next two years reversed that increase. Establishments fell to 814 in 2023 and then to 716 in 2024, before edging back up by 1.4% in 2025. The 5-year change in 2025 was -8.0%, while 2024 recorded -12.0% year over year. The pattern suggests a small local business base with short-term volatility rather than steady growth.



Fort Macleod had 726 active business establishments in 2025, a modest 1.4% increase from 2024 but still below its 2022 peak of 855. The series shows a recent contraction after earlier gains, including 814 in 2023 and 716 in 2024. Among nearby places, Fort Macleod sits in the middle of the range: above Nanton's 644 and Cardston County's 411, but below Claresholm's 739 and Pincher Creek's 978. That places its business base at a moderate scale for the region.

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

Employment by Sector

Educational services remained the largest employer in Fort Macleod in 2025 at 1,450 people, up 2.8% from 2024 but down 2.2% over five years. Health care reached 353, up 41.2%.

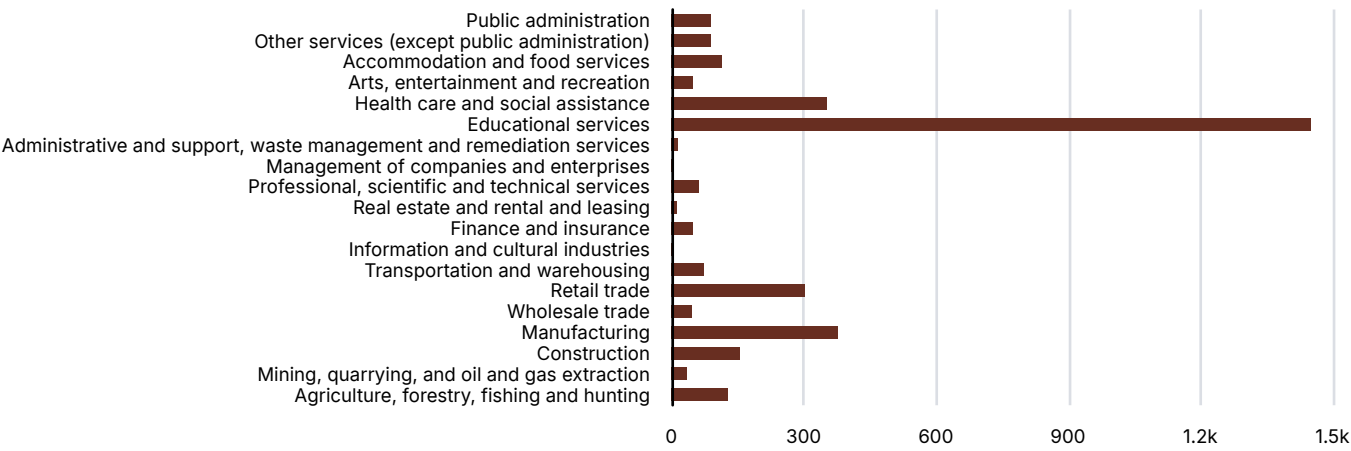
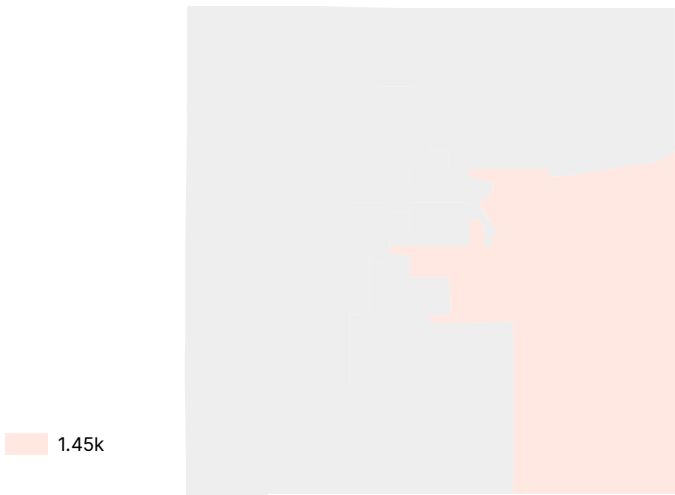


Figure 3.1: Shows how employment is distributed across industry sectors. It helps indicate which sectors account for the largest share of local jobs. (Fort Macleod, 2025)³

Fort Macleod’s employment base in 2025 is concentrated in educational services, with 1,450 workers, far ahead of other sectors. Health care and social assistance follows at 353, while manufacturing has 379 but fell 39.1% over one year despite a 1.3% gain over five years. Retail trade employed 302, and construction 155. By change, professional services rose 72.2% in one year, while wholesale trade dropped 60.8%. The mix suggests a locally uneven employment structure, with a large education core and several smaller sectors showing sharper short-term movement than long-term trend.



In 2025, Fort Macleod’s employment by sector was led by educational services, with 1,450 jobs, far ahead of every other sector. Health care and social assistance followed at 353, manufacturing at 379, and retail trade at 302. Construction had 155 jobs, while public administration and other services each had 90. The structure is heavily concentrated in education, with a smaller second tier of services and goods-producing work.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Naics - Educational services (Fort Macleod)³

Establishments by Sector

Fort Macleod’s business base remained led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 177 establishments in 2025. Construction followed at 65, while real estate and rental and leasing reached 94, up 11.9% from 2024.

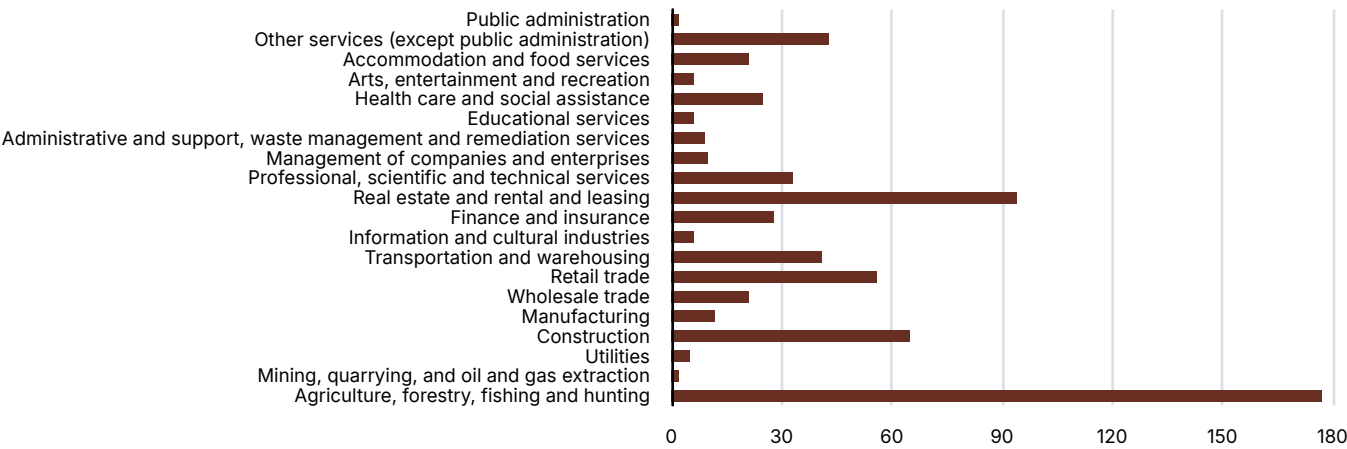
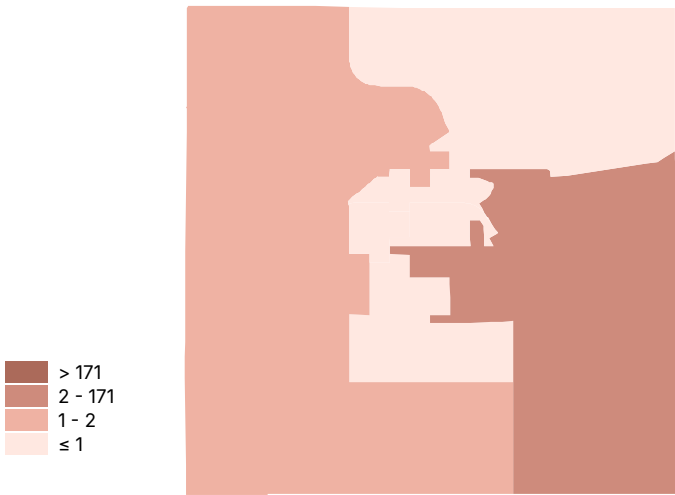


Figure 4.1: Shows how business establishments are distributed across sectors. It helps indicate the sector mix of the local business base. (Fort Macleod, 2025)²

Fort Macleod’s business base in 2025 is led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 177 establishments, far ahead of real estate and rental and leasing at 94 and construction at 65. Retail trade accounts for 56 establishments, while other services and transportation and warehousing also remain significant. Recent change is mixed: real estate rose 11.9% from a year earlier, professional services increased 17.9%, and mining doubled from a very small base, while manufacturing fell 20% and administrative services dropped 25%. Several sectors remain below their five-year levels.



Fort Macleod’s business base in 2025 is led by agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, with 177 establishments, followed by real estate and rental and leasing at 94 and construction at 65. Retail trade has 56, and other services account for 43. The mix is broad but clearly tilted toward primary and property-related activity.

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

Establishments by Size

Fort Macleod’s establishments remained concentrated among firms without employees, at 515 in 2025, up 2.6% from 2024 but 9.7% below 2020. The 100 to 199 employee group rose to three, up 50% year over year.

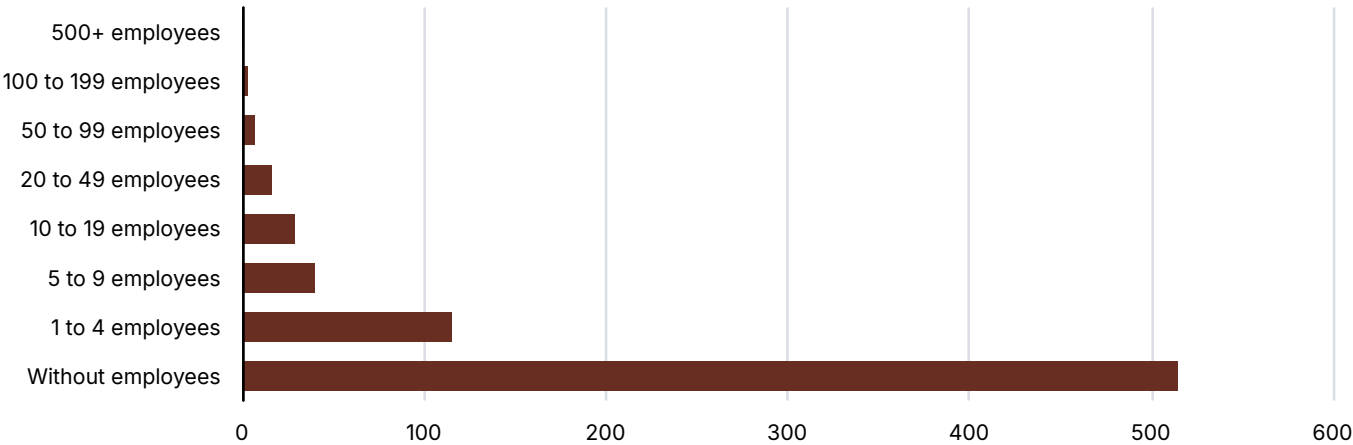
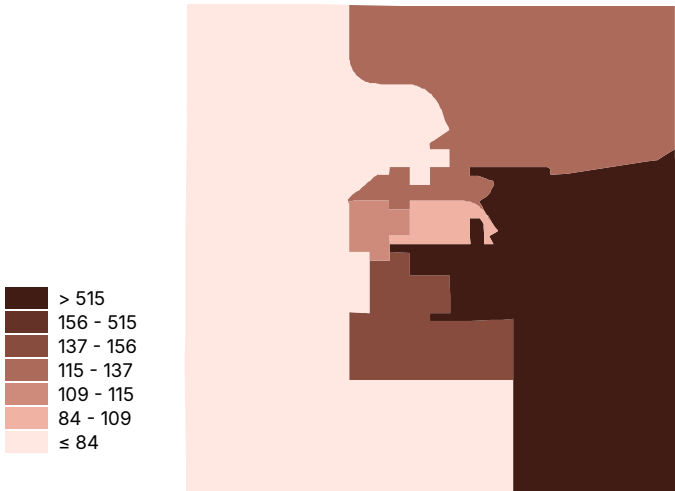


Figure 5.1: Shows how businesses are distributed by number of employees. It helps indicate whether the local economy is dominated by very small, small, or larger firms. (Fort Macleod, 2025)²

Fort Macleod’s business base in 2025 is heavily weighted toward very small establishments. Firms without employees account for 515 businesses, far more than any other size group, while 1 to 4 employee businesses add another 115. The larger size classes are much thinner: 40 businesses have 5 to 9 employees, 29 have 10 to 19, and 16 have 20 to 49. At the top end, there are 7 businesses with 50 to 99 employees, 3 with 100 to 199, and 1 with 500 or more. Recent change is mixed. No-employee businesses are up 2.6% over the past year, while 100 to 199 employee firms rose 50%. By contrast, the 20 to 49 group fell 15.8%.



Fort Macleod’s business base is heavily weighted toward very small establishments. In 2025, 515 businesses had no employees, far more than the 115 with 1 to 4 employees. Only 56 establishments had 10 or more workers, and just one had 500 or more. The mix suggests a local economy dominated by owner-operated firms and a small number of larger employers.

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

Household After-Tax Income

Fort Macleod’s largest household income group in 2021 was \$70,000 to \$79,999 with 130 households, up 44.4% from 2016. The \$150,000 and over group rose 72.7% to 95 households.

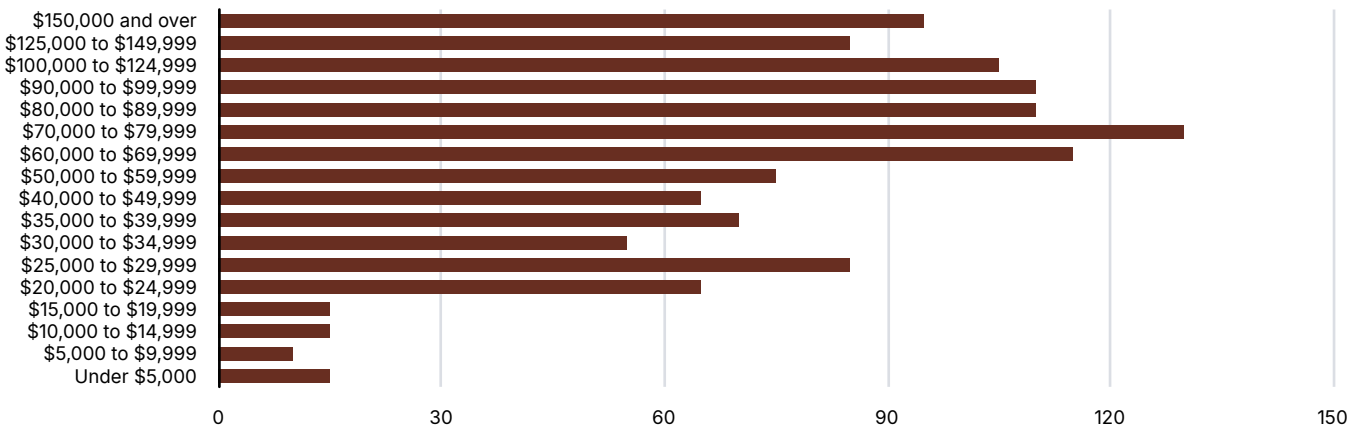
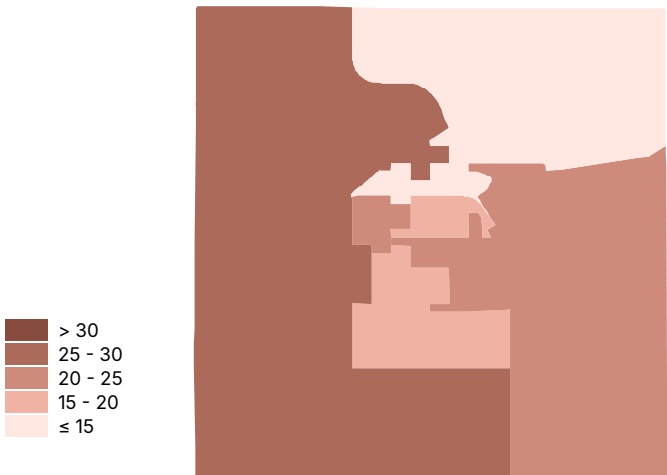


Figure 6.1: Shows household income after taxes across income groups. It helps indicate the resources households have available for day-to-day living after taxes are paid. (Fort Macleod, 2021)¹

In 2021, Fort Macleod’s household after-tax income profile was spread across a broad range, with the largest counts in the middle and upper-middle brackets. The biggest group was households earning \$70,000 to \$79,999, at 130 households, followed by \$60,000 to \$69,999 with 115 and both \$80,000 to \$89,999 and \$90,000 to \$99,999 with 110 each. Higher-income brackets also showed strong movement over five years: \$150,000 and over rose 72.7%, and \$125,000 to \$149,999 increased 54.5%. Lower brackets generally declined over the same period, including a 66.7% drop in the \$15,000 to \$19,999 group. The pattern suggests a shift toward stronger representation in the higher-income ranges.



In 2021, Fort Macleod’s private households were spread across many income bands, with the largest counts in the \$70,000 to \$79,999 group at 130 households and \$60,000 to \$69,999 at 115. Lower-income bands remained present, but several higher-income groups also grew over five years, including \$150,000 and over, up 72.7%.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Income Group Household - \$70,000 to \$79,999 (Fort Macleod)¹

Individual After-Tax Income

Fort Macleod’s largest income group in 2021 was \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 1,065 people. Counts then fell across higher brackets, reaching 70 people in the \$125,000-and-over group.

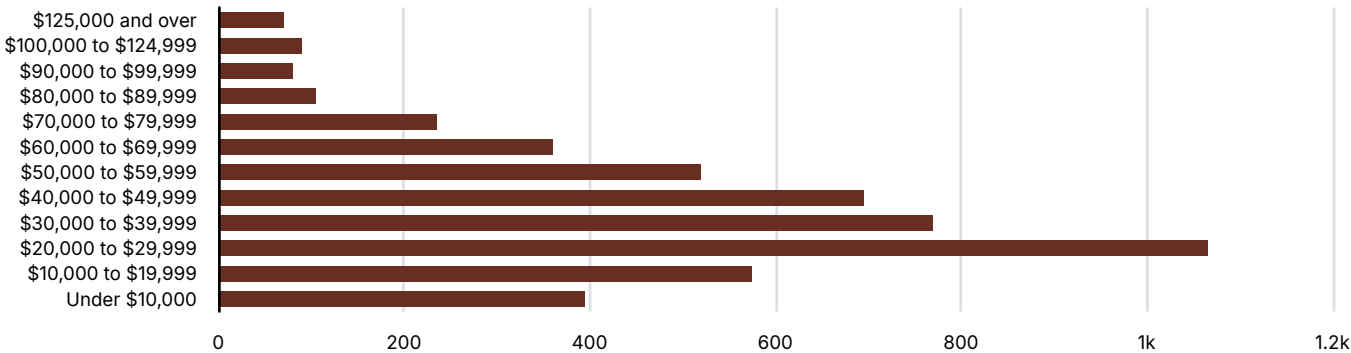


Figure 7.1: Shows individual after-tax income across income groups. It helps indicate the level of disposable income people have after taxes are paid. (Fort Macleod, 2021)¹

In 2021, Fort Macleod’s individual after-tax income profile was concentrated in the lower and middle ranges for residents aged 15 and over in private households. The largest group was \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 1,065 people. Another 575 were in the \$10,000 to \$19,999 range, and 395 were under \$10,000. At the upper end, 345 people were at \$80,000 or more, including 70 at \$125,000 and over. The distribution suggests a modest income profile, with fewer residents in the highest brackets than in the lower ones.

In Fort Macleod, individual after-tax income in 2021 was concentrated in the lower-to-middle ranges for people aged 15 and over in private households. The largest group was \$20,000 to \$29,999, with 1,065 people. Another 575 people were in the \$10,000 to \$19,999 band, and 770 were in \$30,000 to \$39,999. Together, those three bands accounted for most of the distribution. Below \$50,000, counts remained much larger than in higher brackets. Only 70 people were at \$125,000 and over. The pattern points to a distribution centered on modest incomes rather than the upper end.



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

Individual Employment Income

Fort Macleod’s largest income group in 2021 was under \$5,000, with 440 people. Counts were also high in \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 415 and \$30,000 to \$39,999 at 400, then declined above \$70,000.

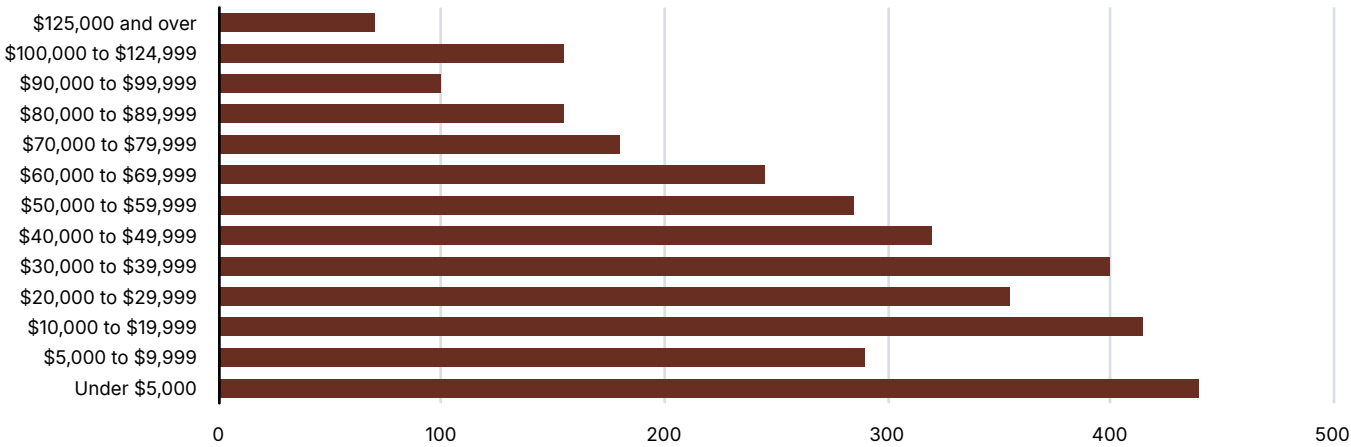
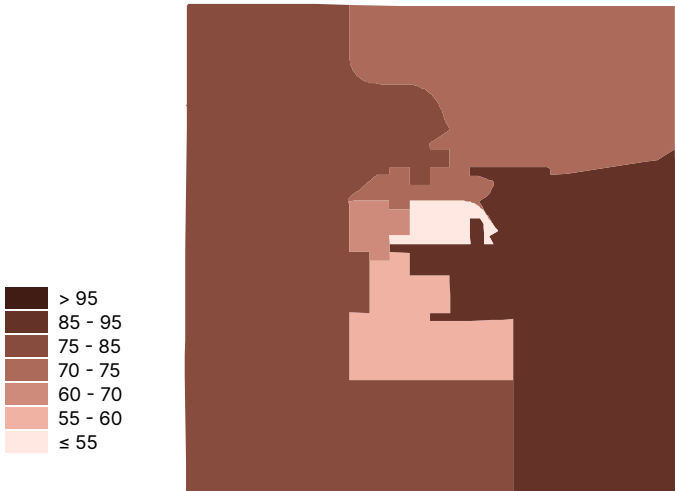


Figure 8.1: Shows individual employment income across income groups. It helps indicate how earnings from work are distributed among residents. (Fort Macleod, 2021)¹

In 2021, Fort Macleod’s individual employment income profile was concentrated in the lower and middle ranges, with the largest counts below \$20,000 and a steady taper as income rises. The distribution suggests a broad spread of earnings rather than a strong concentration at the top. The biggest groups were under \$5,000 at 440 people, \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 415, and \$30,000 to \$39,999 at 400. Counts then fell to 245 in the \$60,000 to \$69,999 band and 70 at \$125,000 and over. The pattern is gradual rather than abrupt, with each higher bracket generally holding fewer people than the one before it.



In Fort Macleod, individual employment income in 2021 was concentrated in the lower and middle ranges. The largest group was under \$5,000, with 440 people, followed by \$10,000 to \$19,999 at 415 and \$30,000 to \$39,999 at 400. Fewer residents were in higher brackets, with 70 at \$125,000 and over.

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

Labour Force Participation Rate

Fort Macleod’s labour force participation rate was 55.2% in 2021, down from 58.0% in 2016. The five-year change was -4.8%, showing lower labour market engagement over the period.

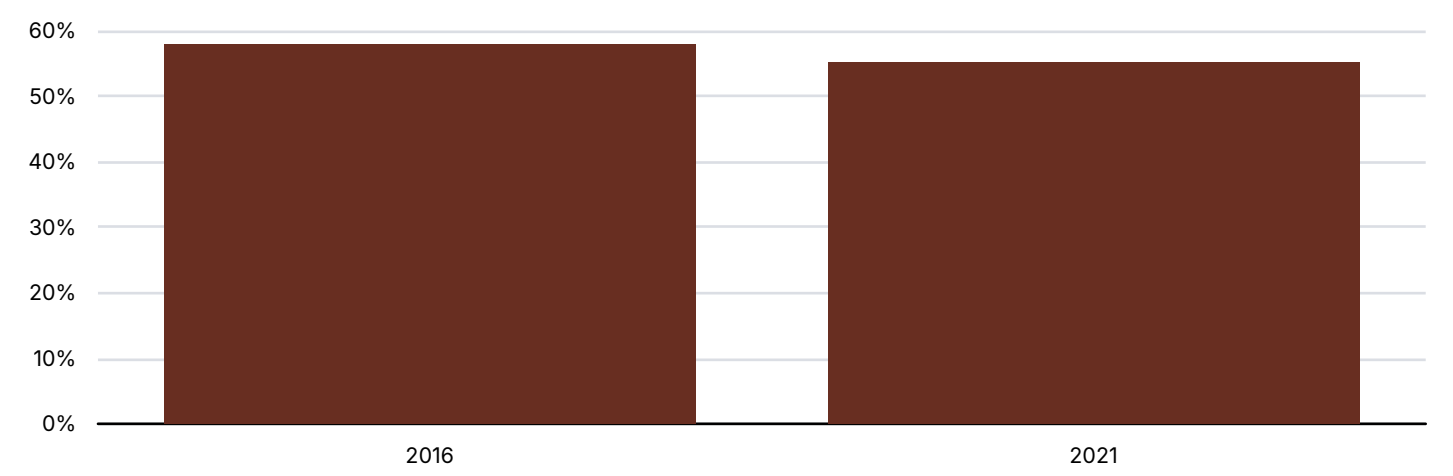
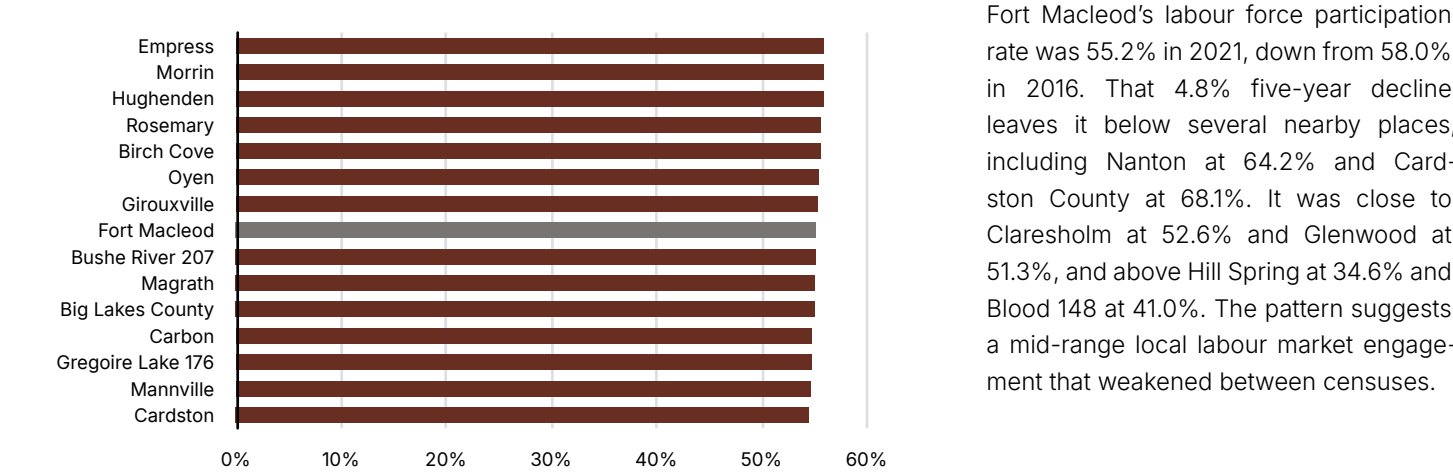


Figure 9.1: Shows the share of the working-age population that is employed or actively looking for work. It helps indicate the level of labour market engagement. (Fort Macleod, 2016-2021)¹

Fort Macleod’s labour force participation rate was 55.2% in 2021, down from 58.0% in 2016. The five-year change of -4.8% points shows a modest decline in the share of the total population that was employed or looking for work. With only two time points provided, the main story is the recent downward movement rather than a longer trend. The 2021 figure suggests a lower level of labour market engagement than five years earlier, but the dataset does not show whether that change has continued beyond 2021. This is a clear case of softening participation over the period measured.



Fort Macleod’s labour force participation rate was 55.2% in 2021, down from 58.0% in 2016. That 4.8% five-year decline leaves it below several nearby places, including Nanton at 64.2% and Cardston County at 68.1%. It was close to Claresholm at 52.6% and Glenwood at 51.3%, and above Hill Spring at 34.6% and Blood 148 at 41.0%. The pattern suggests a mid-range local labour market engagement that weakened between censuses.

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

Labour Force Status

In Fort Macleod, employed residents remained the largest group at 1,335 in 2021, up from 1,275 in 2016. Those not in the labour force rose to 1,165, while unemployed residents fell to 90.

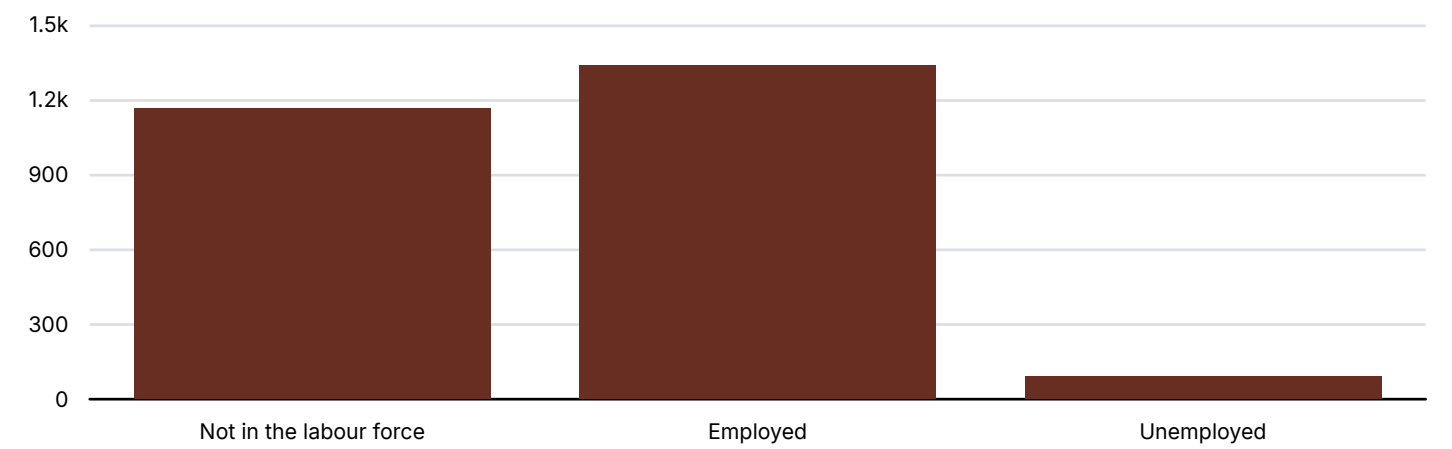


Figure 10.1: Shows whether residents are employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force. It helps indicate how people are participating in the labour market. (Fort Macleod, 2021)¹

In 2021, Fort Macleod’s labour force status shows a workforce that was more active than inactive, but with a sizeable share outside the labour market. Among residents aged 15 and over, 1,335 people were employed, 90 were unemployed, and 1,165 were not in the labour force. Employment was the largest category by a clear margin, while unemployment was small in absolute terms. The gap between employed residents and those not in the labour force was 170 people. With only one year of data, no time trend can be assessed here. The figures provide a snapshot of participation and employment at that point in time, but they do not show whether conditions were improving or weakening.



In Fort Macleod, labour force status in 2021 shows a fairly balanced working-age population, with more residents employed than outside the labour force. There were 1,335 employed people, 1,165 not in the labour force, and 90 unemployed, all among residents aged 15 and over. That mix suggests a community with a substantial employed base, but also a large group not participating in the labour market. The pattern is measured rather than extreme, with unemployment remaining a small share of the total.

Figure 10.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Labour Force Status - Employed (Fort Macleod)¹

Work Activity

Fort Macleod’s largest work-activity group in 2021 was people who did not work, at 1,185, up 37.0% from 2016. Full-year full-time workers rose to 815, while part-year or part-time workers fell to 590.

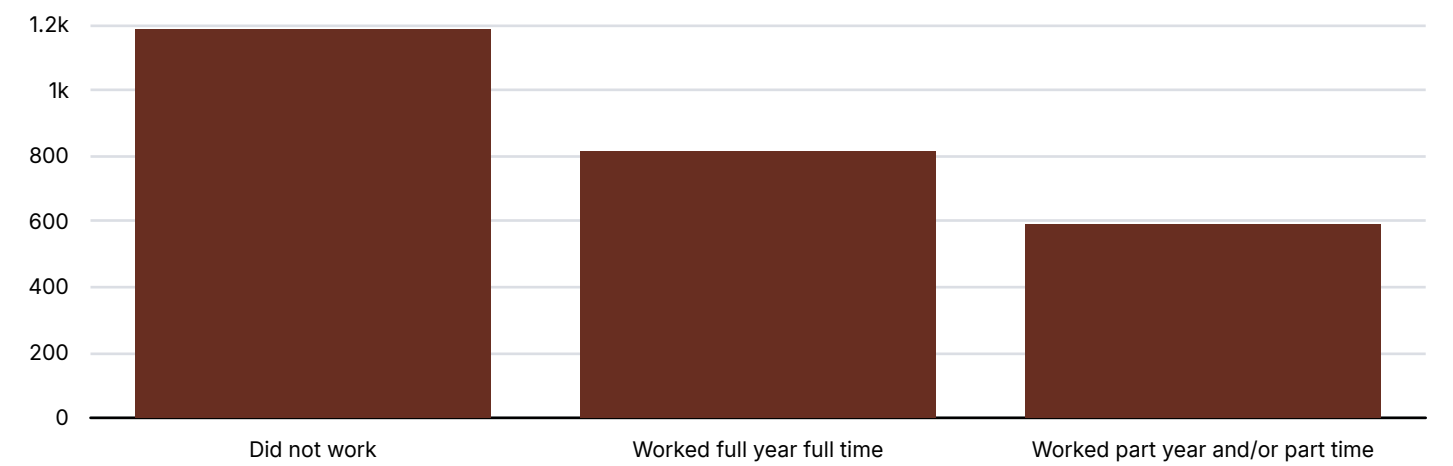


Figure 11.1: Shows the amount of work activity people had during the reference period. It helps indicate attachment to work over the year, not just at a single point in time. (Fort Macleod, 2021)¹

In Fort Macleod, work activity in 2021 was split across three clear patterns among the population aged 15 years and over. The largest group did not work during the reference period, at 1,185 people, up 37.0% over five years. Another 815 people worked full year full time, a 5.2% increase. The smallest group, 590 people, worked part year and/or part time, down 20.3% from five years earlier. The data suggest a shift toward fewer people in intermittent work and more people either not working or working full time. Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profile.



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

Employed Residents by Occupation

Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations became the largest group in Fort Macleod in 2021 at 425 people, up 57.4% from 2016. Sales and service followed with 370 people.

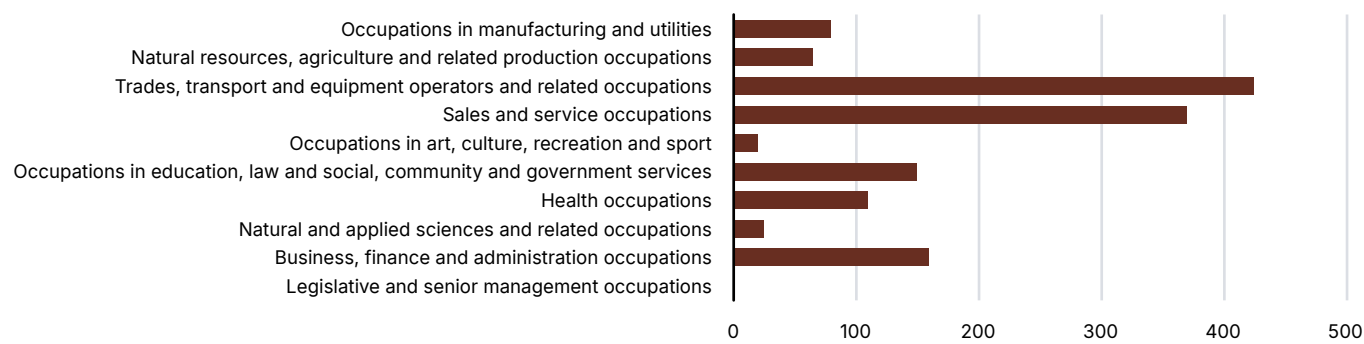


Figure 12.1: Shows the occupations held by employed residents. It helps indicate the community's skill mix and the kinds of work people do. (Fort Macleod, 2021)¹

Fort Macleod’s employed residents in 2021 were concentrated in a few occupations, with trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations leading at 425 people. Sales and service occupations followed at 370, while business, finance and administration accounted for 160. The strongest five-year growth was in trades-related work, up 57.4%, and natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations, up 44.4%. By contrast, legislative and senior management occupations were recorded at 0, and health occupations fell 33.3%.

In Fort Macleod, employed residents in 2021 were concentrated in a few occupations, led by trades, transport and equipment operators and related jobs. That category had 425 people, more than any other group. Sales and service followed at 370 people, while business, finance and administration accounted for 160 and education, law, social, community and government services for 150. Health occupations stood at 110, and manufacturing and utilities at 80. Over five years, trades rose 57.4%, while health fell 33.3%. The profile suggests a workforce tilted toward hands-on and service roles, with smaller shares in management and science-related occupations.



Figure 12.2: Distribution of Largest Group: Occupation - Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (Fort Macleod)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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