

TIMES COLONIST

Jack Knox: Head to Highlands, where the earnings are good

[Jack Knox](#) / Times Colonist

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The rural, heavily forested District of Highlands has the highest median household incomes in the capital region, according to the census. Photograph By District of Highlands



“We should move to the Highlands,” I said, pausing while stirring the powdered milk. “We would have more money.”

She put down the Kleenex she was darning, looked a little wistful. “Or maybe North Saanich. It would be nice not to have to sell my other kidney.”

Yes, Victoria, there is a big disparity in earnings hereabouts, as reflected in income figures released by Statistics Canada on Wednesday. The findings were based on tax data from 2015.

Highlands, with a median household income of \$103,509, topped the list not only in the capital region, but in all of Vancouver Island.

Next, at \$103,296, was North Saanich (the Monte Carlo of the Peninsula), one of a handful of B.C. communities to hit six figures.

At the other end of the scale was the city of Victoria. Its median household income of \$53,126, one of the lowest among larger B.C. communities, was well below the Greater Victoria figure of \$70,283. Still, it was significantly higher than a decade previous.

It was also higher than Port Alberni, one of just three B.C. cities (the others being West Vancouver and Quesnel) where median earnings — that is, the point where half the households earned more and half earned less — actually dropped between 2005 and 2015.

Those were among the statistical snapshots that, when put together in one big national photo album, showed a shifting Canada — more growth in the resource-rich West, a wide but narrowing gap between men and women.

Among the numerical nuggets:

- Greater Victoria has a slightly lower proportion (13.1 per cent) of people designated as low-income than either B.C. (15.5) or Canada as a whole (14.2). The national rate hasn't changed in a decade.

The capital region numbers range from a low of 5.6 per cent in Highlands to 12.3 per cent in Saanich and 19.8 per cent in Victoria proper.

- When broken into five-year age groups, stats show those Greater Victorians aged 20 to 24 are easily the most likely to be deemed low income, with 22.4 per cent fitting into that category. At the other end of the spectrum, just 9.8 per cent of 70- to 74-year-olds are deemed low income.
- More than 27 per cent of Greater Victorians in single-parent homes were low income, while under six per cent of DINKs (dual income, no kids) fit there.
- Among Greater Victoria male-female couples, both partners made roughly the same amount of money in 33 per cent of the cases. The man earned more in 49 per cent of the couples. The woman brought in more in 18 per cent. Those were close to the national numbers.

Compare that to 1985, when just 8.5 per cent of Canadian women made more than their male partners and only 21 per cent made comparable money. Where just two-thirds of women contributed income to a 1970s couple, it's 96 per cent now.

- The median income of higher-income partners in Greater Victoria was \$63,700. Among the lower-income partners it was \$28,617.
- Across Canada, same-sex couples made more money (\$100,707 for men, \$92,857 for women) than opposite-sex couples (\$87,605).
- Two-thirds of Victoria households contributed to an RRSP, registered pension plan, or tax-free savings account. That's similar to the national rate. Unsurprisingly, the higher your after-tax income, the more likely you are to contribute.
- The number of households in Greater Victoria rose by 11.9 per cent from 145,435 in 2006 to 162,715 in 2016.

Oak Bay was the only one of 13 municipalities where the number dropped, a two-per-cent decline from 7,895 to 7,735.

No surprise that the greatest growth was in the West Shore, including a massive 63.4 per cent jump in Langford, where the number of households rocketed from 8,680 to 14,180.

- The commodity-rich West, including some places in northern B.C., saw more growth than Ontario and Quebec, where the manufacturing sector lagged. However, StatsCan cautions the 2015 tax numbers on which the findings were based were gathered before the full impact of the downturn in the oilpatch was felt.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Victoria Census Metropolitan Area	2005	2015	Change
North Saanich	\$96,480	\$103,296	7.1%
Sidney	\$58,413	\$63,840	9.3%
Central Saanich	\$81,057	\$86,622	6.9%
Saanich	\$70,631	\$77,282	9.4%
Oak Bay	\$85,318	\$93,529	9.6%
Victoria	\$45,985	\$53,126	15.5%
Esquimalt	\$56,364	\$60,424	7.2%
Colwood	\$81,160	\$85,668	5.6%
Metchosin	n/a	\$87,625	n/a
Langford	\$76,007	\$80,331	5.7%
View Royal	\$79,534	\$83,994	5.6%
Highlands	n/a	\$103,509	n/a
Sooke	\$64,660	\$71,296	10.3%
Juan de Fuca (RDEA)*	n/a	\$76,288	n/a
Nanaimo area	\$56,035	\$62,844	12.2%
Comox Valley	\$56,331	\$62,376	10.7%
Port Alberni	\$51,560	\$50,823	-1.4%
Duncan area	\$57,651	\$60,979	5.8%
Parksville/Qualicum	\$56,732	\$63,042	11.1%
British Columbia	\$62,372	\$69,995	12.2%
Canada	\$63,457	\$70,336	10.8%

n/a: not applicable

* Juan de Fuca Regional District Electoral Area (Part 1) includes Malahat, Otter Point, Sherringham, East Sooke, Malahat and Willis Point

SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA