



British Columbia's
**Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner**

B.C. communities speak human rights

What Chilliwack said

MARCH 31, 2024

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Agenda

- opening and introductions
- overview of the Baseline Community Briefs
- key human rights issues in our community
- what helps
- next steps

Introduction to the Baseline Community Brief



BCOHRC's mandate

to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring.



Photo: B.C. Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender



Community Briefs overview

How and why were they developed?

- BCOHRC Baseline Project
- human rights issues across B.C.
- research in four communities

What are the goals?

- provide a human rights story in your community
- celebrate community strengths and actions
- offer a snapshot of several significant issues
- inspire action



Community partners

- Chilliwack Community Services
- Mountainside Harm Reduction Society
- Unique Get Together Society
- Chilliwack Society for Community Living

Baseline Community Briefs process

- November 2022 to June 2023
- 8 focus groups and 17 interviews
- 74 individuals
- service providers, clients and people with lived experience
- additional data sources
- snapshot of issues

Key human rights issues and their impacts



Community snapshot

The City of Chilliwack has a population of

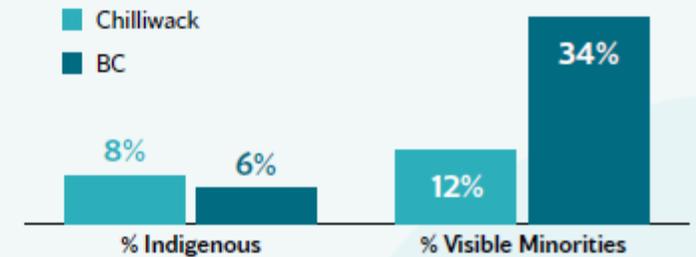
93,203

people⁸ and is rapidly growing at a rate of

11%

which is faster than the provincial rate of 8%. Due to the rise in the cost of living in Metro Vancouver, Chilliwack's population is expected to grow, especially with younger families relocating to the area.

As of 2021 about **8%** of residents were **Indigenous**, **12%** were **visible minorities** and **80%** were **white**. The visible minority population doubled from 2016 to 2021.



Chilliwack has a diverse refugee population including people from Ukraine, Syria and Lebanon.

Today, **Chilliwack is home to major agricultural and food manufacturing industries** and has numerous services to meet the needs of its growing population.



Key areas

- housing
- health
- discrimination and hate
- employment

Human rights issues in housing



- housing crisis
- inequities for Indigenous peoples
- inequities for a diverse spectrum of needs

Key issues in housing



What community members said about the housing crisis

- rising costs
- pressure on the housing market
- barriers to accessing housing
- homelessness
- discrimination in services

Impacts of the housing crisis

“Traditionally, people experiencing homelessness are often thought to be either struggling with substance use or mental health or both. But we are seeing more and more people who are just... they just can’t afford it. They have jobs. They have cars ... but they don’t have a home because either they can’t find one or they can’t afford the one that they can find.”

What community members said about inequities in housing

- Indigenous peoples
- complex care
- youth aging out of care
- short-term housing
- safety for gender-diverse people

Human rights issues in health



- barriers to access
- discrimination
- mental health and substance use

Key issues in health



What community members said about barriers to accessing health care

- staff shortages
- barriers related to transportation
- barriers to navigating pathways
- access to dental care

Impacts of barriers to accessing dental care

“I only had two dentist appointments this year and I’ve already gone through whatever money the disability has for my dentist. They’re like, well if you need another dentist’s appointment, you’re going to have to pay for it. I can barely afford food right now.”

**What community
members said
about
discrimination in
health care**

- anti-Indigenous discrimination
- stereotyping and stigma
- barriers to whole-person care
- delayed care
- interaction with medical staff
- beyond Indigenous cultural and safety training

Discrimination in health care

“Being unhoused is a huge barrier to health care. They go to hospital. They get treated like dogs. [Health care professionals] give you antibiotics or antipsychotics but how are you supposed to take them? Even if you are in a huge crisis, they move you through as quickly as they can. You’re triaged even if you’re ready to kill yourself. People are just not served for health and mental health.”

What community members said about mental health and substance use

- high Indigenous suicide rates
- lack of mental health providers
- toxic drug supply
- limited range of supports

Impacts of limited range of supports

“We need detox beds in every single community. When a person is ready that day, they need to be able to go that day because the next day they could be dead.”



Discrimination and hate



What community members said about groups impacted by discrimination and hate

- Indigenous people
- Black people
- Muslim women
- rise in LGBTQ2SAI+ hate

Rise in LGBTQ2SAI+ hate

“The LGBTQ2SAI+ community is just starting to form and there is a really violent and aggressive pushback against that community formation. I think that it can push some people away from even joining in the benign things like it’s something as simple as going to a youth dance. You get protests, or like, that youth now going becomes a political act. It shouldn’t be a political act. It should just be ‘I’m going to hang out with my friends.’”

Human rights issues in employment



- underemployment
- discrimination
- migrant workers' working and living conditions
- impacts of climate change on migrant workers

Key issues in employment



**What community
members said
about
underemployment**

- immigrants
- people with disabilities

Underemployment

“I managed ten or twelve projects from the United Nations ... but here, I am a laundry attendant. Can you believe that? Because I can't find another job close to my position.”

**What community
members said
about
discrimination in
the workplace**

- Indigenous peoples
- racialized immigrants
- newcomers
- women

Discrimination in the workplace

“Women often get left out of high positions in the workplace ... especially if you’re young. The employer thinks the person has kids ... they take that into consideration, and women are sometimes discriminated against because of that.”

What community members said about migrant workers' living and working conditions

- power imbalance
- substandard conditions
- abuse
- risk of exploitation

Mistreatment of migrant workers

“These guys are just totally powerless in this situation. There is an endless stream of people who want to work in Canada, so if they speak up, if they report, if they injure themselves, they are sent home and told, ‘You’ll never work in Canada again.’ Then their whole livelihood that might be supporting an entire family for the year is gone.”

What community members said about the impact of climate change on migrant workers

- inequitable impacts
- working & living conditions impacts
- inadequate service provider support
- delayed access to flood relief

Impact of climate change on migrant workers

“The migrant workers are in a constant state of emergency. The flood just brought everything to the surface ... and it will only continue each day with climate change getting worse.”

Summary

Housing crisis	Health	Discrimination and hate	Employment
Housing crisis	Barriers to access	Indigenous peoples	Under-employment
Inequities	Discrimination	Black people	Discrimination
	Mental health and substance use	Muslim women	Migrant worker rights
		Rise in LGBTQ2SAI+ hate	

Examples of what helps



Mental health and substance use

- Collaboration to Reduce Stigma
 - Mountainside Harm Reduction Society
 - Chilliwack Community Action Team
 - Shxwhá:y Village

Community member's response

“I feel like there should be a lot more like peer-led organizations and things like [Mountainside] rather than someone that doesn't have lived experience ... so, they can empathize with you more, more compassion, more equality.”

Anti-LGBTQ2SAI+ hate

- Queer Cafés

Migrant workers' rights

- Dignidad Migrante

BCOHRC resources

- Baseline Community Briefs from other communities
- Baseline recommendations database
- Baseline microsite
- human rights educational resources
- BCOHRC reports



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Thank you

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more resources or find us on
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