

Non-profit organizations in rural and small town Canada, 2021

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In 2021, more than 135,000 non-profit organizations (NPOs) were active in Canada. While the overall number of active NPOs in Canada remained relatively stable from 2020 to 2021 (+0.9%), the number of those operating in rural and small town (RST) areas dropped by 2.6%.

Still, over one in five active NPOs (21.8%) remained located in RST areas in Canada in 2021. These NPOs employed over 444,000 people (+3.8% from 2020) and earned \$27.0 billion in total revenue (+15.6% from 2020).

These results are sourced from the "[Rural Canada Non-Profits, 2021](#)," database, which provides information on the counts, revenue, employment and activities of active NPOs in RST areas in Canada in 2021. RST areas are those outside census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs), while those within CMAs and CAs are considered urban. The Rural Canada Non-Profits database defines active NPOs as organizations that operate for a purpose other than profit and report revenues or employment for the reference year.

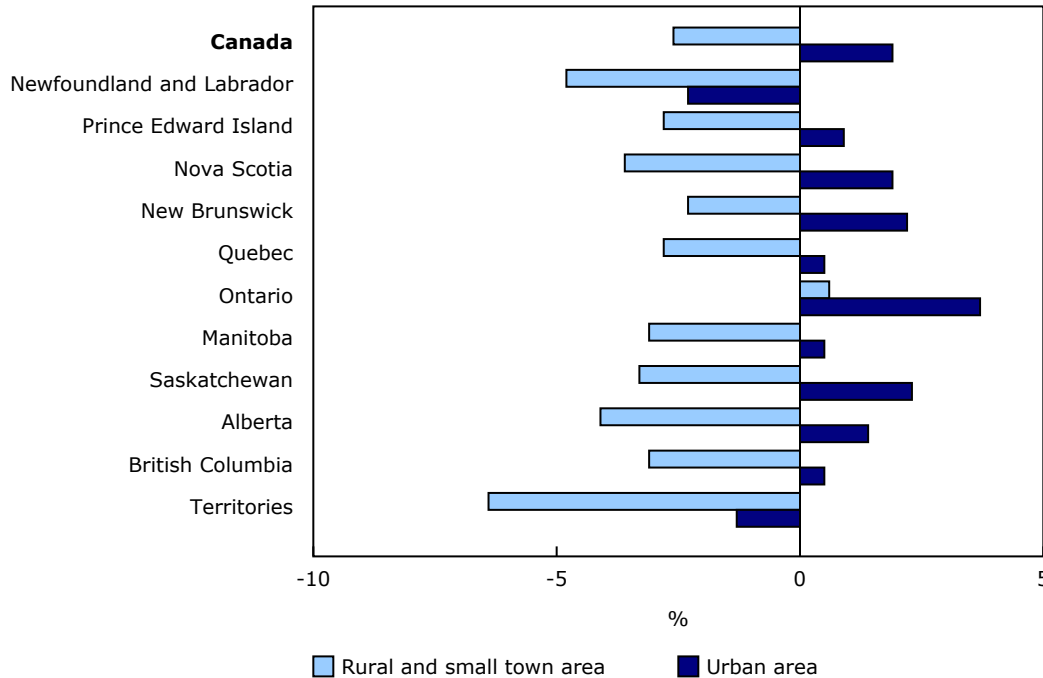
Number of active non-profit organizations decreases in rural and small town Canada from 2020 to 2021

The overall number of active NPOs in RST areas decreased nationally by 2.6%, down from 30,357 in 2020 to 29,572 in 2021. The most significant year-over-year reduction in the number of active NPOs was observed in the territories (-6.4%), Newfoundland and Labrador (-4.8%) and Alberta (-4.1%). Meanwhile, the number of active NPOs in RST areas in Ontario held relatively steady, with a 0.6% increase over this period.

By comparison, the number of active NPOs in urban areas of Canada increased by 1.9%, rising from 104,022 in 2020 to 105,968 in 2021. The most significant growth in the number of active NPOs in urban areas occurred in Ontario (+3.7%), Saskatchewan (+2.3%) and New Brunswick (+2.2%).



Chart 1
Annual change in the number of active non-profit organizations in Canada, by province and territory and by rural and small town area and urban area, 2020 to 2021



Note(s): The territories include the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Nunavut does not include an urban area.
Source(s): Table 45-10-0083-01.

Active NPOs in RST areas of Quebec (24.5%), Ontario (19.3%), Alberta (11.8%) and British Columbia (10.0%) accounted for almost two-thirds (65.6%) of the total share of all active NPOs in RST areas in 2021. Similarly, active NPOs in urban areas of Ontario (38.2%), Quebec (23.2%), British Columbia (15.3%) and Alberta (10.5%) collectively made up the largest share of all NPOs in urban areas, at 87.3%.

Active non-profit organizations in rural and small town Canada increase total revenues from 2020 to 2021

In 2021, active NPOs in Canada generated nearly \$328.0 billion in revenues, an 8.2% increase from 2020 (\$303.1 billion). Active NPOs in RST areas accounted for 8.2% of the 2021 total, up 15.6% from \$23.4 billion in 2020 to \$27.0 billion in 2021. Active NPOs in urban areas also experienced gains in revenue (+7.6%), increasing from \$279.7 billion in 2020 to \$300.9 billion in 2021.

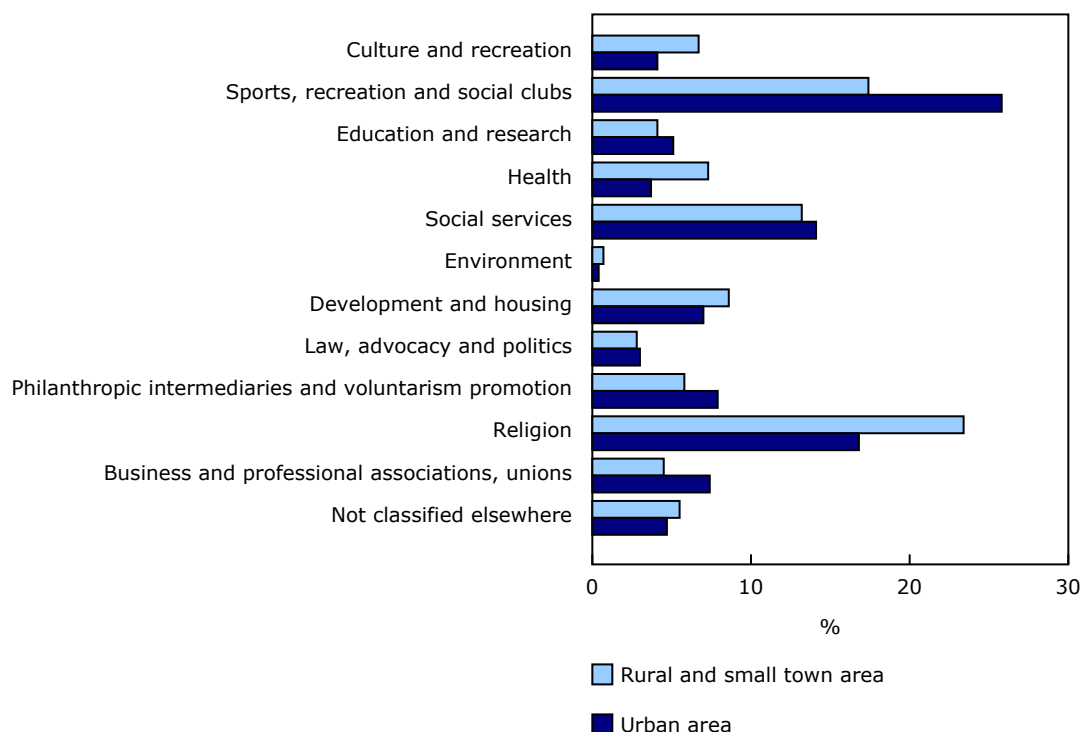
Employment in active non-profit organizations across rural and small town Canada increases from 2020 to 2021

Although active Canadian NPOs employed more than 3.5 million people combined in 2021, this was down 0.8% from 2020. Active NPOs in RST areas, comprising 12.6% of all non-profit employees, saw their number of employees grow from 428,111 in 2020 to 444,267 in 2021 (+3.8%). By comparison, active NPOs in urban areas experienced a decline in employment (-1.4%), down from 3,136,450 employees in 2020 to 3,091,747 employees in 2021.

Most common non-profit organization activities in rural and small town Canada

In 2021, nearly one in four active NPOs (23.4%) in RST areas of Canada were engaged in religious activities, followed by those engaged in sports, recreation and social clubs (17.4%) and in social services (13.2%). Similarly, the predominant activities for active NPOs in urban areas were in sports, recreation and social clubs (25.8%), religion (16.8%) and social services (14.1%). The proportion of active NPOs representing each International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations activity group has remained relatively stable since 2019, across both RST and urban areas of Canada.

Chart 2
Share of active non-profit organizations in Canada, by International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations activity and by rural and small town area and urban area, 2021



Note(s): Shares are calculated as the ratio of the number of non-profit organizations (NPOs) by International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations (ICNPO) activity group to the total number of NPOs in rural and small town areas of Canada or urban areas of Canada. Nunavut does not include an urban area. Data for the ICNPO activity group nine, international activities, are not available. For more information, see the Metadata and user guide.
Source(s): Table 45-10-0085-01.

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Note to readers

The "[Rural Canada Non-Profits, 2021](#)," database is derived from Statistics Canada's [Business Register \(BR\)](#). The BR serves as a comprehensive list of businesses in Canada, providing detailed information, including address, non-profit or for-profit status, industry, and Canada Revenue Agency tax filings and tax returns data. BR data undergo monthly updates. Non-profit organizations retained in the Rural Canada Non-Profits (RCNP) database were active during the reference year under consideration and reported revenues or employment.

Data are available by geographical level (Canada, province or territory, rural and small town area or urban area), International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations activity group and [North American Industry Classification System](#) code.

Rural and small town areas are those outside census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs), according to the [2016 Statistics Canada Standard Geographical Classification](#). Areas inside CMAs and CAs are considered urban.

Detailed information can be found in the RCNP database [Metadata and user guide](#).

Available tables: [45-10-0083-01](#) to [45-10-0085-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [1105](#).

The "[Rural Canada Non-Profits, 2021](#)," database and the [Metadata and user guide](#) are now available.

The [Rural Canada Non-Profits: Interactive Dashboard](#), which is part of *Statistics Canada – Data Visualization Products (71-607-X)*, is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).