

What Statistics Say About Our Home

There are so many ways to know home. Denman Islanders wanting to learn more about where we live can kayak around the island, educate themselves on First Nations' relationships to this land, observe the wildlife, talk to their neighbours, take in the visual art, music and poetry of residents, dive into the ocean, visit the museum, sit silently in the forest, and more.

And then there are statistics. Although numbers are not, for most of us, as engaging as some of the activities above, they do provide relatively objective insights which can be interesting, and also useful.

Statistics are the main ingredients in the Islands Trust's new *State of the Islands Interim Report*, developed this August to tell us something about the environmental and socio-economic realities in the 13 island areas of the Island Trust region. This initial report will be fleshed out once 2016 census results are in. For now, here's a selection of statistics about the region we call home:

Demographics: The median age in the Islands Trust area today is 12 years older than it was 20 years ago, and 13 years older than the rest of BC today. Here's a bit more detail:

- The median age in the Trust area in 1991 was 42.9; in 2011 it was 55.
- In 2011, the Trust area's population of 65+ was 26% compared to only 15.7% across BC.
- In 2011, the Trust area population had only 15% youth (ages 0 – 18), compared to 22% 20 years earlier and BC's 2011 rate of 20.4%.
- The overall population of the Trust area grew approximately 36% from 1991 to 2011 (while the BC population grew 34%), although during that time Denman's population decreased slightly.

Transportation: We love to complain about ferry fares. It looks like the facts back us up:

- Since 2003, the cost of BC Ferries to our communities has grown three times faster (92%) than Consumer Price Index (CPI, a way of measuring inflation, has risen (30%).
- Since 2003, ferry fares are 40% higher than they would be if CPI were a determining factor.

Property: These statistics come from BC Assessment's land title information.

- Between 1978 and 2005, the number of parcels (folios) in the Trust area doubled from 11,000 to 21,500.
- The proportion of properties owned locally has increased from 10% in 1978 to 52% in 2016.

Carbon sequestration in forests: Our forests provide the environmental service of storing carbon, keeping it out of the atmosphere. Apparently, they do so extremely well.

- On average, forests in the Islands Trust area store 82% more carbon per hectare than forests in the rest of the Coastal Douglas-fir zone.

- The Trust area, as a whole, sequesters 109,506 tones of carbon per year, which equates to about 40,241 passenger vehicles per year.
- Denman Island sequesters 9,872 tones/year, equivalent to about 2085 passenger vehicles per year.

Protected areas: We humans can provide some balance to the considerable footprint we leave by creating protected areas in the form of parks, ecological reserves, watershed protection areas, nature reserves and conservation covenants on private lands. With more than 65% of the Trust area in private land ownership, there is tremendous need to create protected land where complex ecosystems can flourish undisturbed.

- Between 2004 and 2016, protected areas in the Trust area grew from 13% to 17.8% of the land base. This change represents an addition of over 3,760 ha of protected land.
- Of all the local trust areas, Denman Island had the biggest growth in protected areas during this period with an increase from 5% to approximately 24% – 981 ha in total.

Docks: Docks offer convenient access to the water for enjoyment, recreation and transportation, but they also can have negative environmental impacts such as blocking and leaching wood preservatives into the water over time.

- There are approximately 1275 docks (not including ferry terminals) in the Trust area, but only two of these are on Denman Island.

For another set of interesting statistics, you might want to have a look at the results of the State of the Islands telephone poll (<http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/connect/share-your-ideas/surveys-polls/>), which asked island residents questions about their feelings, positive and negative, about where they live. And in the meantime, I'm sure you will be exploring other wonderful ways to know more deeply the place we call home.