

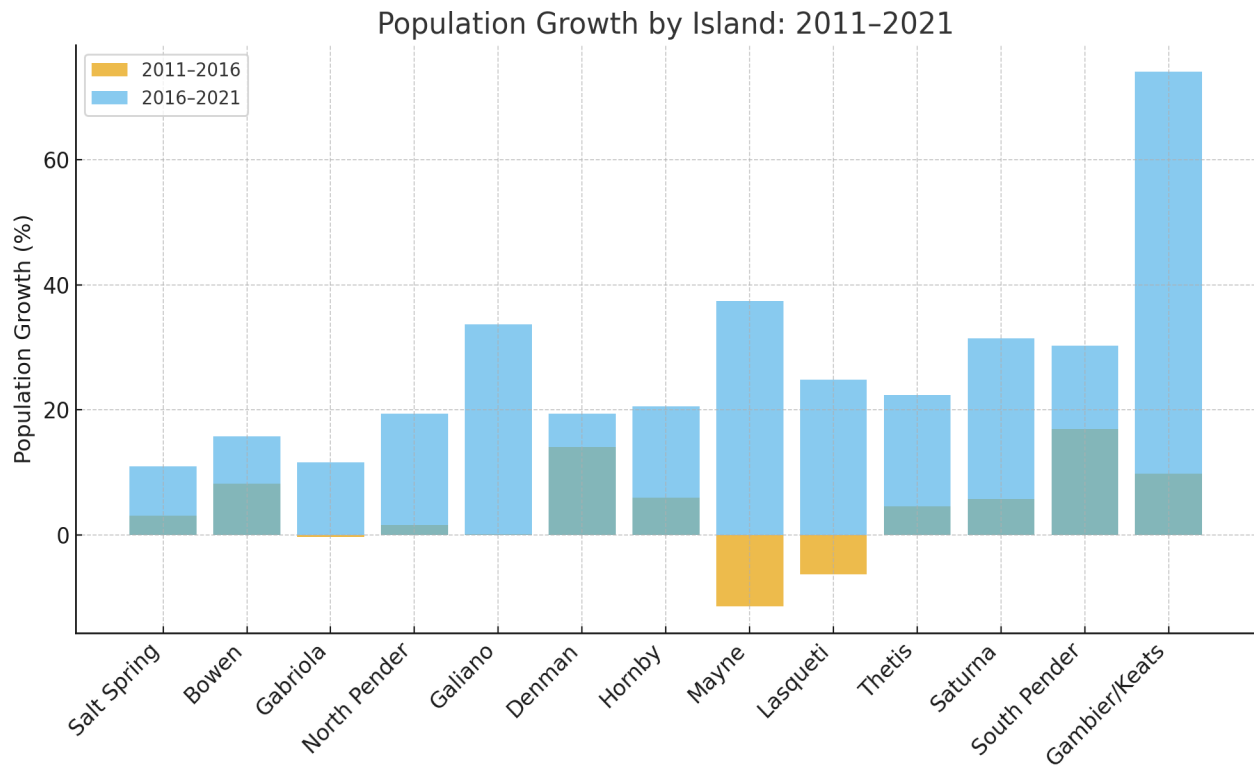
Population Growth in the Islands Trust Area (2011–2021)

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2011, 2016, and 2021

Overview

Between 2016 and 2021, the Islands Trust Area experienced its most rapid period of population growth on record. According to Statistics Canada, the total population rose from 26,218 to 30,512, representing a 27.0% increase over five years—significantly higher than British Columbia’s overall growth of 7.6% and Canada’s 5.2% during the same period.

Island	2021 Census	2016 Census	% Change 2016–2021	2011 Census	% Change 2011–2016
Salt Spring	11,798	10,640	10.9%	10,320	3.1%
Bowen	4,256	3,680	15.7%	3,402	8.2%
Gabriola	4,500	4,033	11.6%	4,045	-0.3%
North Pender	2,467	2,067	19.4%	2,035	1.6%
Galiano	1,396	1,045	33.7%	1,044	0.1%
Denman	1,391	1,165	19.4%	1,022	14.0%
Hornby	1,225	1,015	20.6%	958	5.9%
Mayne	1,304	949	37.4%	1,071	-11.4%
Lasqueti	498	399	24.8%	426	-6.3%
Thetis	476	389	22.4%	372	4.6%
Saturna	465	354	31.4%	335	5.7%
South Pender	306	235	30.2%	201	16.9%
Gambier/Keats	430	247	74.1%	225	9.8%
Total / Average	30,512	26,218	27.0%	25,456	3.0%



Analysis

This ten-year overview shows how growth accelerated sharply after 2016, following a relatively stagnant decade for many islands. Nearly every island saw gains in the 2016–2021 period, contrasting with slower or negative changes from 2011–2016. Smaller islands such as Gambier, Mayne, Galiano, Saturna, and South Pender showed dramatic rebounds, while larger islands like Salt Spring, Bowen, and Gabriola maintained steady upward trends.

Planning Implications

The implications for island communities are substantial: increased strain on water resources and ecological systems; greater demand for housing, infrastructure, and community services; and an urgent need to review and update land-use and density policies within the Islands Trust to balance growth with its 'preserve and protect' mandate.