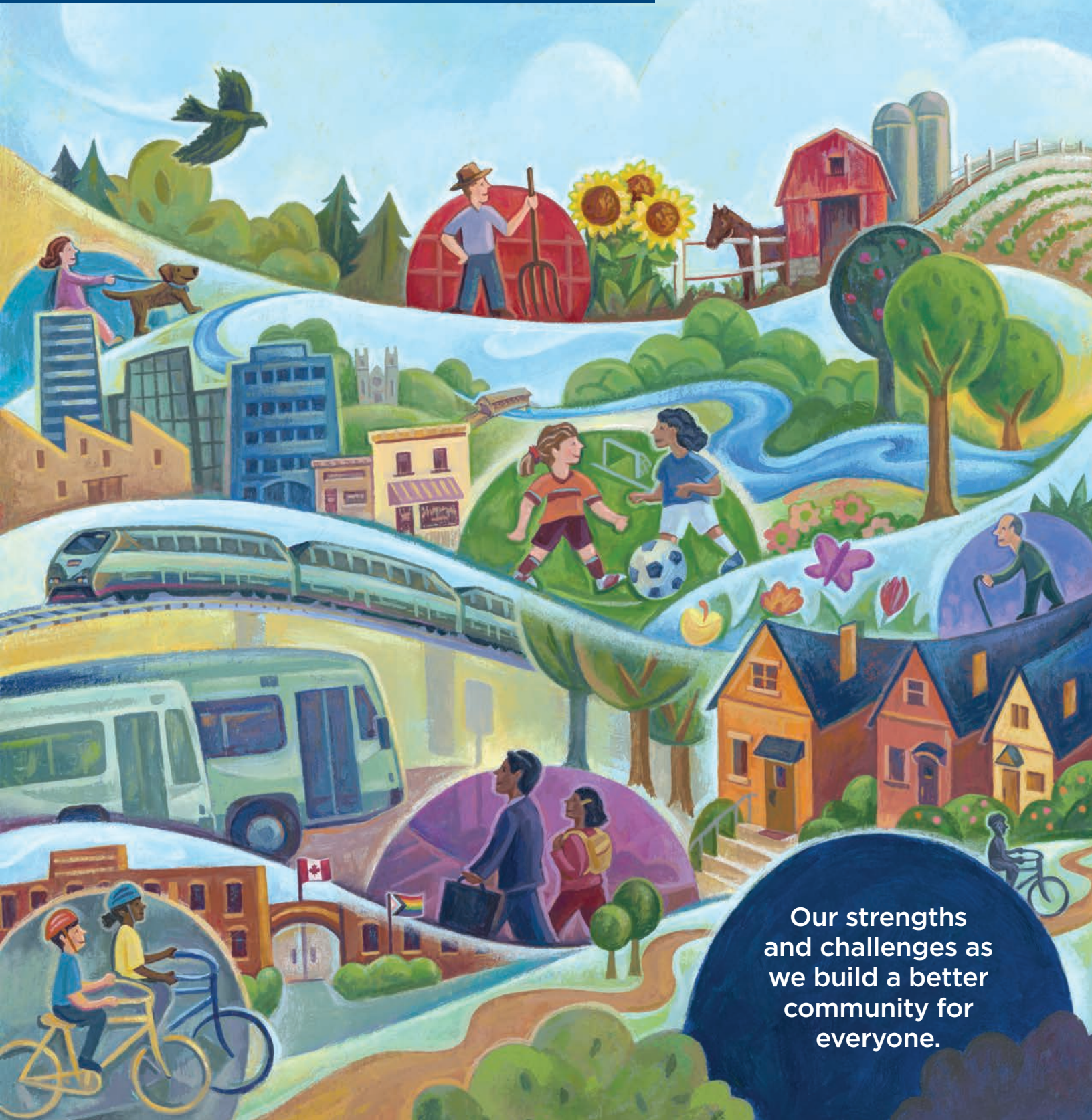


GUELPH & WELLINGTON COUNTY'S

VitalSigns®

Report | 2023



Our strengths
and challenges as
we build a better
community for
everyone.

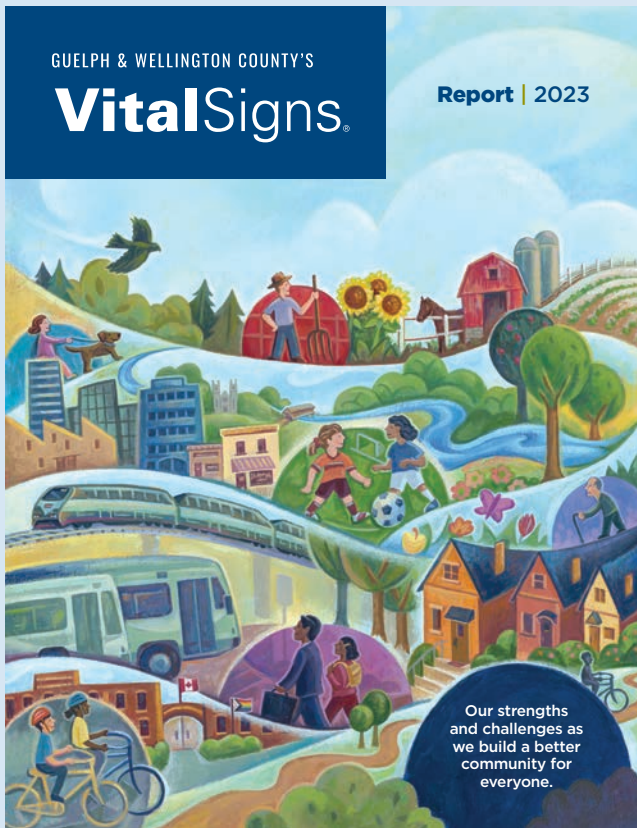


Illustration on cover and throughout report by Sean Kane.

Thank you
to everyone
who helped
make Guelph
& Wellington
County's Vital
Signs® possible.

Land Acknowledgement

Guelph and Wellington County are situated on treaty lands and the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Attiwonderonk, Haudenosaunee, Petun and Wendat peoples. We recognize that many of the challenges our community faces today come from the history of colonialism and its enduring institutions, practices and ways of living. We must reshape these institutions and practices to repair harms and make our community a more inclusive and just place for everyone.

Guelph & Wellington County's Vital Signs® is a collaboration between the Guelph Community Foundation and Toward Common Ground.



Toward Common Ground

Supporting Sponsor:



Thank you to everyone who helped make Guelph & Wellington County's Vital Signs® possible.

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Guelph & Wellington County's Vital Signs® Planning Committee

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Vital Signs® is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs® is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada.

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Welcome

Welcome to Guelph & Wellington County's 2023 Vital Signs®, a snapshot of well-being in our community. Using local data, this report highlights our strengths and points to the challenges that our community faces.

Guelph & Wellington County's Vital Signs® is an invitation to learn about our community and engage in an important conversation:

What will we do to make our community a better place for everyone?

Data for Guelph & Wellington County's Vital Signs® comes from local, provincial and national sources. Wherever possible, data specific to Guelph and Wellington County are presented separately.

This report is not a comprehensive look at everything that can or should be measured. Nor does it represent the experiences of all individuals and groups in our community. Quantitative data collection methods sometimes systemically exclude certain groups of people and do not capture stories. Rather, Guelph & Wellington County's Vital Signs® is a springboard for conversation and action. Impactful change will come from engaging with everyone in our community in meaningful ways.

For references, data sources and more information, visit www.guelphcf.ca/vital-signs



The UN Sustainable Development Goals represent a shared vision for a just, sustainable and prosperous future. The issue areas in Guelph & Wellington County's Vital Signs® span multiple Sustainable Development Goals which are noted throughout this report. Efforts to address these issues support broader work toward a more sustainable future for all.

Introduction

Everyone in our community should have what they need to be healthy and thrive. But challenges and inequities within our social, built and natural environments mean that not everyone does.

Issue areas

- 01** Resilience
- 02** Community belonging
- 03** Culture and recreation
- 04** Livable incomes and decent work
- 05** Decent and affordable homes
- 06** Getting around
- 07** Our natural environment

We all have a responsibility to work together and build a better, more equitable community in which everyone can thrive.

**We all do better—
when we all do better.**



Our community is made up of the people and spaces around us.

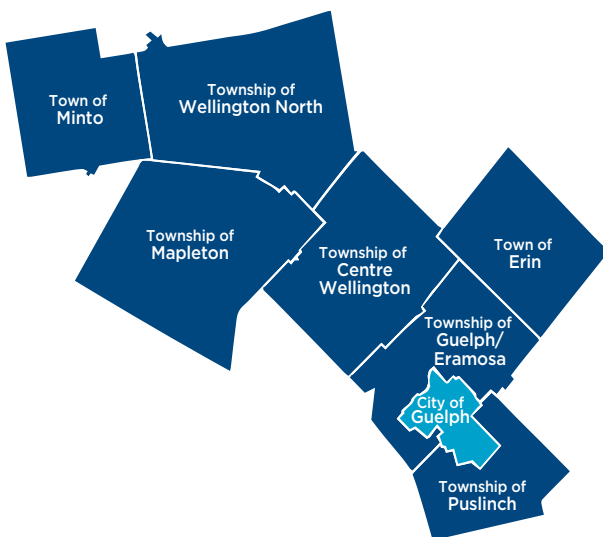
- Natural environment**
Landscapes, weather and all living things.
- Built environment**
Human-made physical features.
- Social environment**
Relationships, institutions and cultures.
- Everything in our community is connected to our well-being**

Our community

Our community is made up of many unique individuals, each with their own experiences and worldviews. Recognizing, respecting and celebrating this diversity helps us work together for a better, more equitable community for everyone.

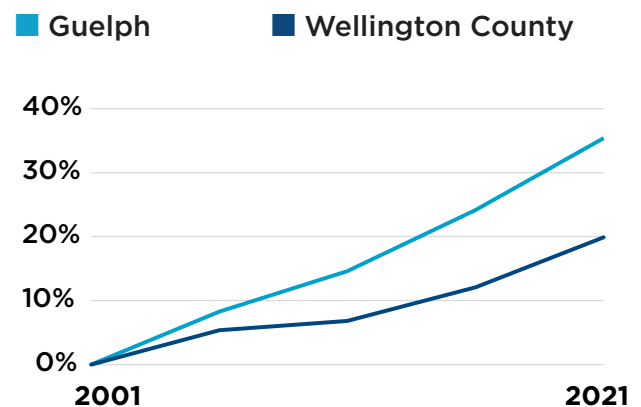
Population

- **Guelph refers to the City of Guelph.**
Population: 143,740
- **Wellington County is made up of seven municipalities.**
Population: 97,286



Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

The populations of both Guelph and Wellington County are growing—but Guelph’s population is growing at a faster rate.



Source: Statistics Canada (2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2021a, 2022)

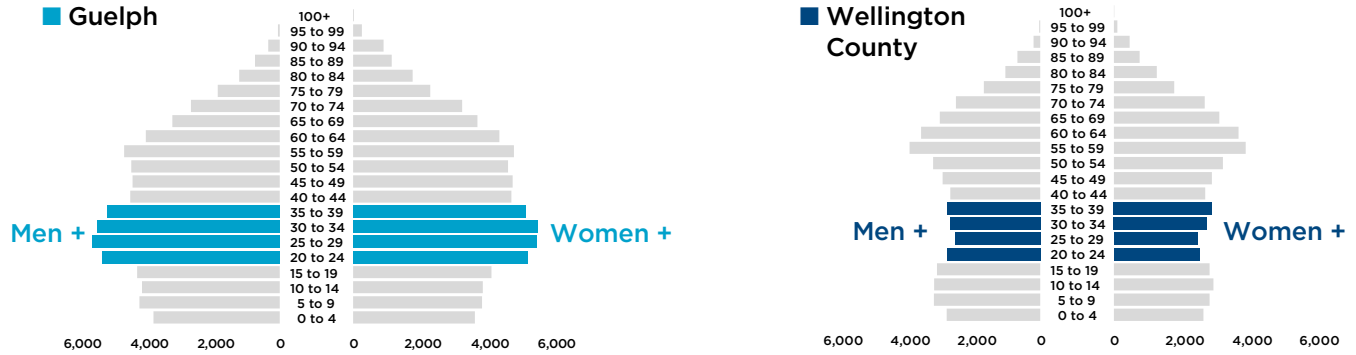
The older adult population is growing in both Guelph and Wellington County—and **the youth population is decreasing.**

Note: Older adults include people age 65 years and older. Youth includes people age 24 years and younger.

Source: Statistics Canada (2021a, 2022)

Age and gender

In 2021, Guelph's population had a greater proportion of young adults (age 20 to 39 years) than Wellington County's population.

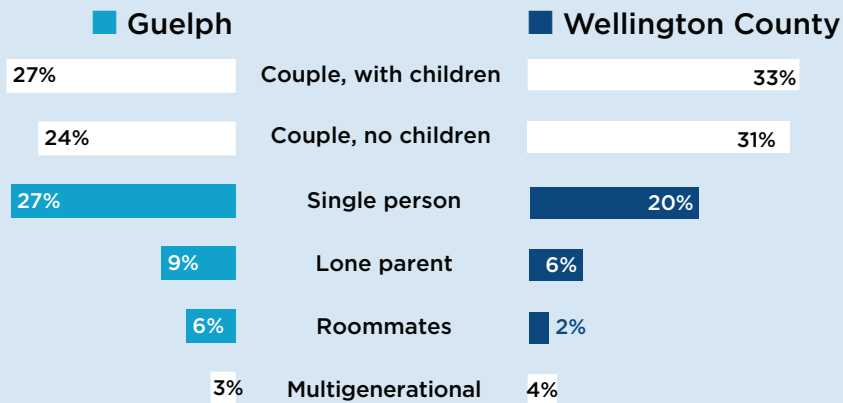


Men+ includes people who identify as male and some non-binary persons (people who do not exclusively identify as men or women).
 Women+ includes people who identify as female and some non-binary persons.

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Households

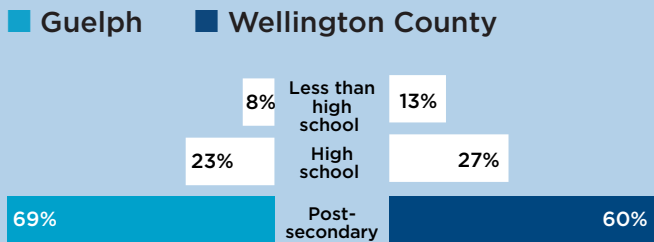
In 2021, most households in Guelph and Wellington County were made up of married or common-law couples. Guelph had a greater proportion of households made up of single people, lone parents and roommates than Wellington County.



Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Education

In 2021, most people in Guelph and Wellington County age 25 years and older had a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree. Very few people had not completed high school.



Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Post-secondary students

In Fall 2021, nearly **30,000 students** were enrolled at the University of Guelph—including almost **1,800 international students** from 140 countries.

While not all students move to Guelph to attend university, many do.

Source: University of Guelph (2022)

The University of Guelph has **121 one-bedroom** and **218 two-bedroom rental units** available for students with families.

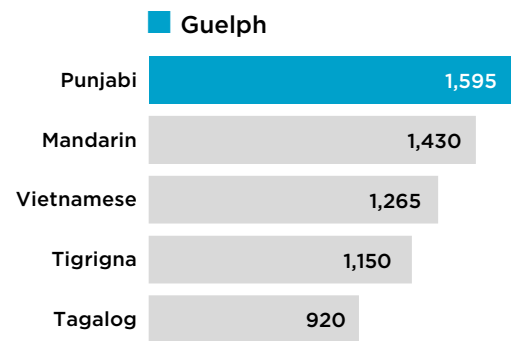
It's not just single students that join our community—some students also move to Guelph with their families.

Source: University of Guelph (n.d.)

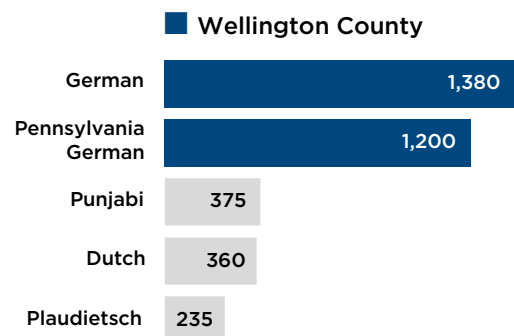
Language

In 2021, **22,000 people** in Guelph and **6,600 people** in Wellington County predominantly spoke languages other than English at home.

In Guelph, among those that predominantly spoke a language other than English, Punjabi was the most common language and was predominantly spoken by 1,600 people.



In Wellington County, among those that predominantly spoke a language other than English, German and Pennsylvania German were the most common languages and were predominantly spoken by 2,600 people.



Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Immigrants

In 2021, about 2 in 10 Guelph residents and 1 in 10 Wellington County residents were immigrants.

Guelph



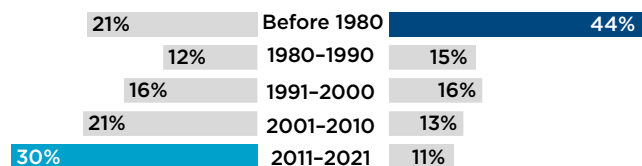
Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Wellington County



Most immigrants in Guelph arrived in Canada in the last 10 years whereas most immigrants in Wellington County arrived before 1980.

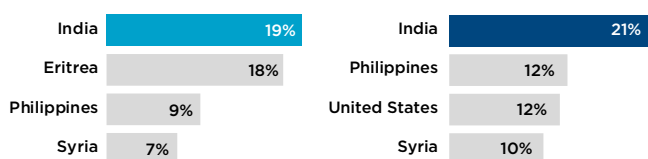
Guelph Wellington County



Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Among immigrants who arrived in the last 5 years to our community, India was the most common place of birth.

Guelph Wellington County



Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Indigenous Peoples

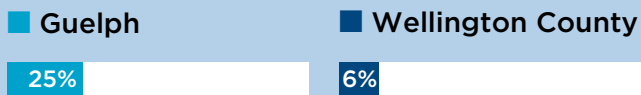
In 2021, **2,200 people** in Guelph and **1,600 people** in Wellington County identified as Indigenous.

“Indigenous” means the original people from a particular place. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples include three distinct groups—First Nations, Inuit (Inuk) and Metis.

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Racialized groups

In 2021, the proportion of people belonging to racialized groups in Guelph was much greater than in Wellington County.



People belonging to racialized groups include those who are not white and not Indigenous.

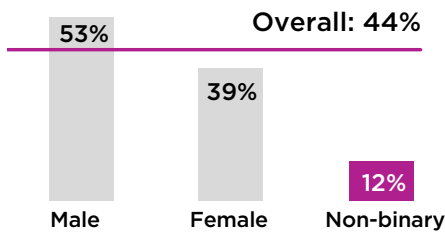
Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

01 Resilience

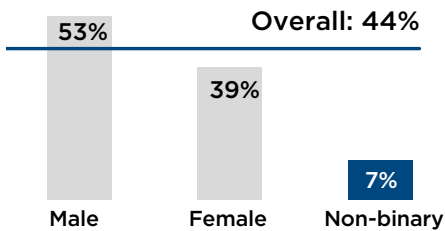
We all face challenges in life. Resilience is our capacity to maintain our well-being through difficult or stressful times.¹ And it's dependent on relationships with one another and having safe, stable environments and equitable opportunities to live, play and learn.² While resilience can be strengthened at any age, the best time to build the basis of resilience is at a young age.³

In 2022, less than half of youth in our community reported high positive mental health scores. Only a small proportion of non-binary youth reported high positive mental health scores.

■ Guelph



■ Wellington County



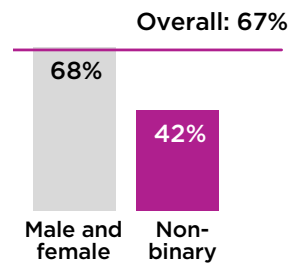
Positive mental health is a measure of resilience. Being able to form strong relationships and meaningful connections. Having positive self-image and self-worth. Experiencing a sense of belonging. And having the skills to cope with stress in healthy ways.

Source: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2022)

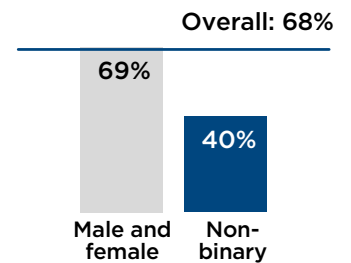
Supportive, nurturing relationships are essential to building resilience—and we all have a role in making positive connections with the children and youth in our lives.

In 2022, two-thirds of youth in our community reported having a supportive family relationship. A smaller proportion of non-binary youth reported having a supportive family relationship compared to males and females.

■ Guelph

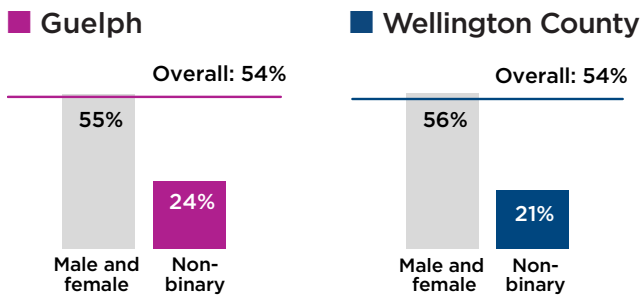


■ Wellington County



Source: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2022)

In 2022, half of youth in our community reported feeling connected to their peers. A smaller proportion of non-binary youth felt connected to their peers compared to males and females.



Source: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2022)

In 2022, **9 in 10** youth in our community reported having at least one adult in their lives they could talk to about their problems.

Source: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2022)

2,500 children & youth in **Guelph** lived in a low-income household in 2021. That's roughly 100 classrooms of students.

1,800 children & youth in **Wellington County** lived in a low-income household. That's roughly 72 classrooms of students.

Living with low-income is stressful, which makes it even more difficult to overcome new or different challenges.

Note: Low income is based on the low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT).

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)



Everyone in our community should have access to the right supports and resources to be resilient and maintain their well-being through difficult or stressful times. But challenges and inequities throughout our community mean that not everyone does.

We all do better—when we all do better.



02 Community belonging

Belonging is the sense of being part of something bigger than our individual selves. It's feeling like we matter. And it's supported through mutually respectful and caring relationships with each other.⁴

In 2021, people in our community reported having experienced discrimination against many aspects of their identities.

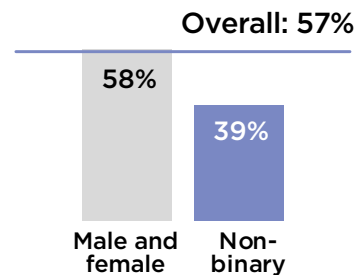


Discrimination is unfair or harmful treatment because of someone's identity. Experiences of discrimination can make people feel as though they do not belong in their community.⁵

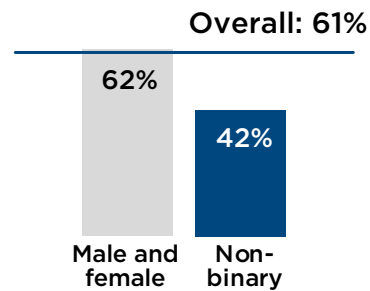
Source: Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (2022a, 2022b)

In 2022, over half of youth in our community reported feeling that their neighbours cared about them. A smaller proportion of non-binary youth felt their neighbours cared about them compared to males and females.

■ Guelph



■ Wellington County



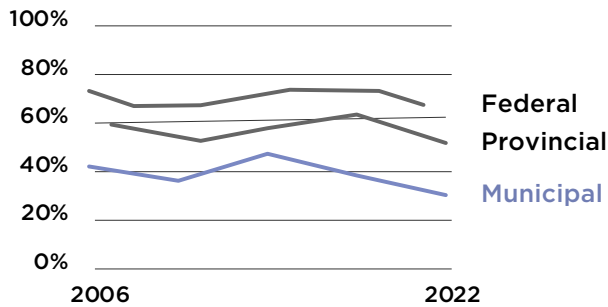
Source: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2022)

Discrimination affects some people in our community more than others. In 2021, a greater proportion of Indigenous Peoples, immigrants and racialized people reported experiences of discrimination compared to white non-immigrants.

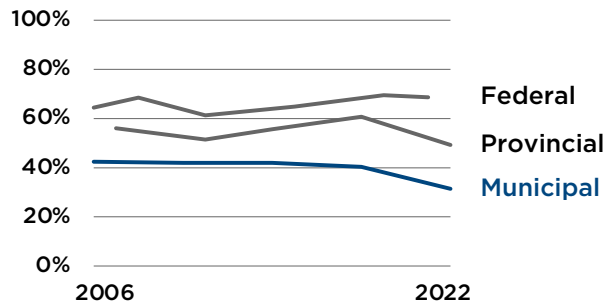
Source: Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (2022a, 2022b)

Voter turnout in our community is consistently lowest for municipal elections.

Guelph



Wellington County



When we feel like we belong in our community, we tend to be more engaged in actions and decisions that affect us all.

Note: Wellington County voter turnout shows the average turnout across all County townships and ridings.

Source: Association of Municipalities of Ontario (2022); Elections Canada (2022); Elections Ontario (n.d.)



Everyone in our community should feel welcome and like they belong. But challenges and inequities like discrimination mean that not everyone does.

We all do better—when we all do better.



03 Culture and recreation

Cultural and recreation activities draw people from different backgrounds together and help us build relationships with each other. They are opportunities to learn, understand and appreciate our differences. And they enable us to express our identities and see ourselves represented in public spaces.

In Guelph, 9 in 10 people live within a 10-minute walk of a public park. In rural areas of Canada like Wellington County, 8 in 10 people live within a 10-minute walk of a public park.

■ Guelph



■ Wellington County



Public spaces like parks, trails and community centres enable us to participate in cultural and recreation activities.

Source: City of Guelph Parks (2022); Statistics Canada (2021b)

In 2021, there were **267,000** visits to **Guelph** libraries and **104,000** visits to **Wellington County** libraries. That's as many as each person in Guelph visiting the library twice and each person in Wellington County visiting once.

The library is a place where people go to learn and connect with others—no library card needed.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (2022)

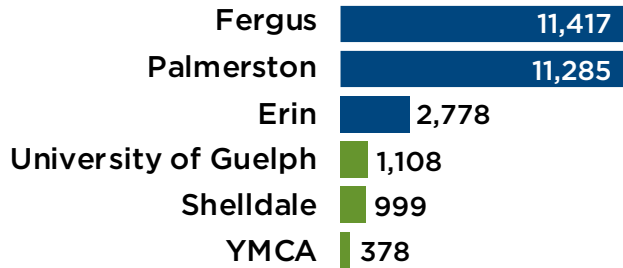
Each **Guelph** library card holder borrows an average of **35** physical and electronic materials every year.

Each **Wellington County** library card holder borrows an average of **40** physical and electronic materials every year.

A variety of materials like books, music, games, technology and hobby items are accessed through the library.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (2022)

In 2022, there were 1,900 youth drop-in visits to Grove Hubs in Guelph and 19,000 youth drop-in visits to Grove Hubs in Wellington County.



The Grove Hubs are welcoming places for youth in our community to connect.

Note: The Guelph hubs opened mid-2022 and offered fewer drop-in programs than the Wellington County hubs.

Source: The Grove Hubs (2023)

In 2022, **890 children** in our community received financial support from the Children’s Foundation of Guelph and Wellington to participate in **1,245 activities** like arts programs, sports and camp.

Source: Children’s Foundation of Guelph and Wellington (2023)

In 2021, only **2% of people** in our community worked in jobs related to culture and recreation.

Culture and recreation touches each of our lives. But the sector is small and relies on significant contribution from volunteers, community organizations and financial supports.

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)



Everyone in our community should have equitable opportunities to participate in cultural and recreation activities. But challenges and inequities like the cost of participation and resource limitations mean that not everyone does.

We all do better—when we all do better.



04 Livable incomes and decent work

When we don't get a livable income from our jobs or income supports, it's hard to meet our basic needs and participate fully in our community. Ensuring decent work—safe, productive jobs that pay fair wages and protect workers' rights⁶—for everyone who wants to work is part of making sure that everyone has a livable income.

In 2021, **11,600** people in **Guelph** and **6,800** people in **Wellington County** lived with low income.

A single person with an income of \$27,462 (after tax) would be living with low income. A household of four people with a combined income of \$54,924 (after tax) would be living with low income.⁷

Note: Low income is based on the low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT).

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

In 2020, 3 in 20 households in Guelph and 2 in 20 households in Wellington County did not have enough money to afford food.

■ Guelph



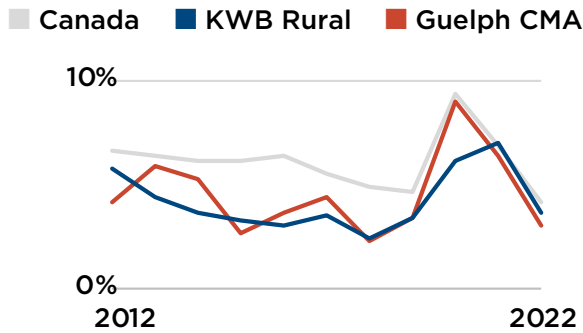
■ Wellington County



Low incomes and high living costs make it hard to afford basic needs like rent, hydro, transportation and food.

Source: Our Food Future, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health and Toward Common Ground (2021)

The unemployment rate in our community is among the lowest in Canada.



Most people in our community who are able and want to work have a job.

Note: The Guelph census metropolitan area (CMA) includes the City of Guelph, Guelph/Eramosa Township and Puslinch Township. The Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie (KWB) Rural Economic Region includes the rural areas within Kitchener, Waterloo and Barrie regions—which includes Wellington County.

Source: Statistics Canada (2023a, 2023b)

The **Living Wage** in our community is **\$19.95 per hour**. The minimum wage in Ontario falls short at \$15.50 per hour.

A Living Wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to meet their basic needs.⁸

Source: Ontario Living Wage Network (n.d.-b); Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (2023)

Less than 1% of businesses in our community are Certified Living Wage Employers.

Source: Ontario Living Wage Network (n.d.-a); Statistics Canada (2023c, 2023d)



Everyone in our community should have a livable income. But challenges and inequities like unjust economic policies mean that not everyone does.

We all do better—when we all do better.



05 Decent and affordable homes

A home means different things to different people. It may mean living in a house with family. It may mean renting an apartment with roommates. It may mean living in a long-term care home or permanent supportive housing. Whatever home means, we all need a decent and affordable place to call home.

In 2021, 2 in 20 households in Guelph and 1 in 20 households in Wellington County lived in homes that required major repairs, were overcrowded or cost more than 30% of their income.

■ Guelph



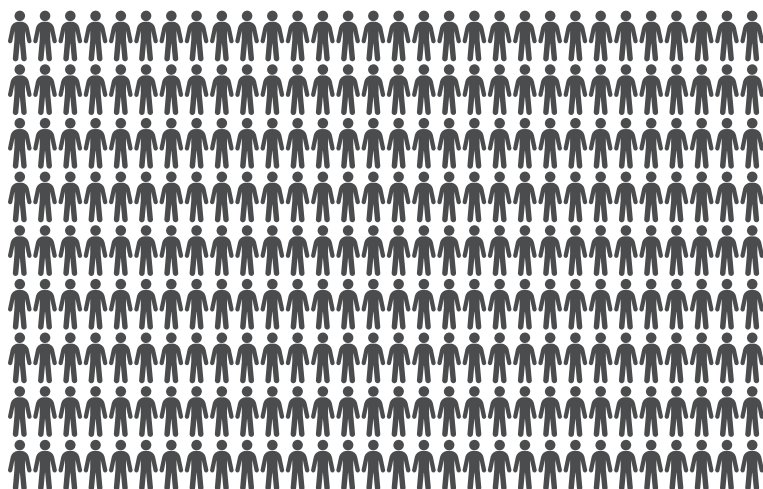
■ Wellington County



When our homes need repairs, hazards like defective electrical wiring or crumbling staircases can cause injury. When our homes are overcrowded, it can harm our relationships and mental health. And when our homes are expensive, it makes it hard to afford other things like food, child care or hydro.

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

On October 21, 2021, at least **270 people** in our community were experiencing **homelessness**.

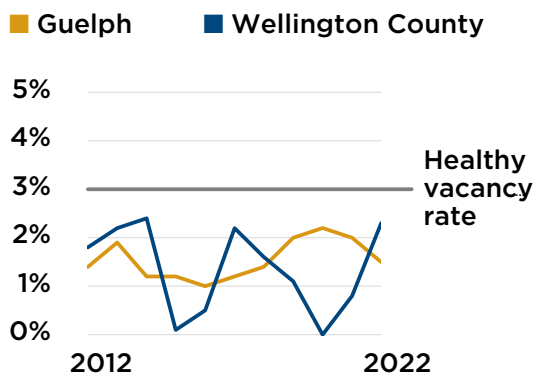


A sudden increase in pressure from a life event—like losing a job, a relationship breakdown or a health crisis—can push people into homelessness: sleeping on friends’ couches and floors, living in crowded or unsafe places, sleeping in cars or even being out on the street.

Source: County of Wellington Housing Services (2022)



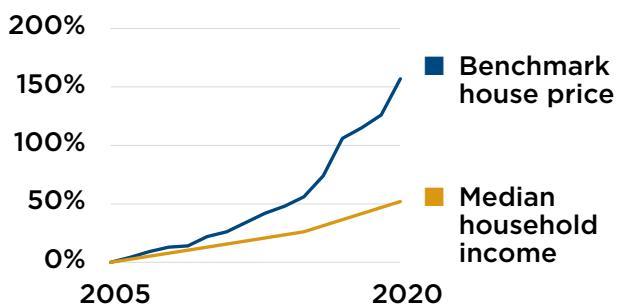
The rental vacancy rate in our community is consistently below the target of a healthy rental market.



Limited rental options make it difficult to find a decent, affordable home that meets our individual needs.

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (n.d.-a, n.d.-b)

Home prices in our community have outpaced local incomes.



Rising home costs, low wages and insufficient income support mean that affordable home ownership has been pushed out of reach for many.

Note: The benchmark house price is the annual average of all benchmark house prices in Guelph and surrounding communities. The median household income is the median after-tax household income for Guelph and Wellington County.

Source: Statistics Canada (2008, 2018, 2019b, 2022); The Canadian Real Estate Association (n.d.)



Everyone in our community should have a decent and affordable home. But challenges and inequities like rising home costs, low vacancy rates and poverty mean that not everyone does.

We all do better—when we all do better.



06 Getting around

We all have places to go. And we should all be able to get there conveniently, safely and sustainably.

The **walk score in Guelph is 40 (out of 100)**, meaning that most errands require a car.

The more rural an area is, the lower the walk score. **Drayton's walk score is 25** and **Alma's is 0**, meaning that almost all errands require a car.

Our community is not walkable. The places we need to go—like work, school, grocery stores, medical appointments and parks—are too far apart to easily walk to all of them.

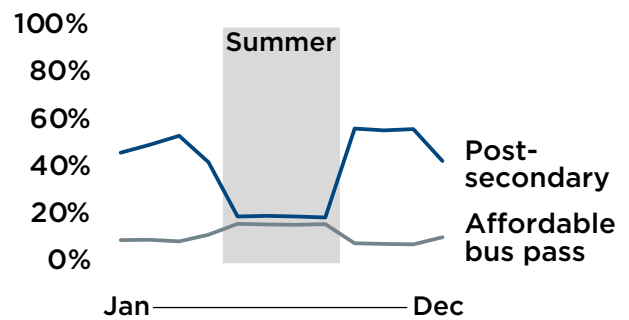
Source: Walk Score (n.d.)

In Guelph, only **31%** of arterial and collector streets have **cycling infrastructure**. There is no cycling infrastructure on streets in Wellington County.

Active transportation like walking, cycling, roller blading and skateboarding are healthy and sustainable ways of getting around—but we need safe routes to choose these modes of transportation.

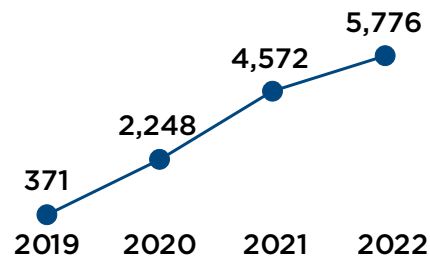
Source: City of Guelph Transportation (2022)

Post-secondary students make up over half of Guelph Transit ridership during Fall and Winter semesters. Affordable bus pass holders make up another 10% of ridership.



Source: City of Guelph Transit (2023)

Ride Well is a ridesharing service that provides shared transportation within Wellington County.⁹ Since its first trip in October 2019, ridership has been steadily increasing.



County of Wellington Economic Development (2023)

About **1 in 3** people in **Guelph** travel outside of the City to work. In **Wellington County, 2 in 3** people travel outside of their municipality to work.

We need convenient, safe and sustainable ways of traveling to other communities, too.

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)

Buses and trains are more sustainable than personal vehicles—but there are not many transit options connecting us to other communities.



There is a direct GO train route between Kitchener and Toronto, with a stop in Guelph along the way. However, most trips run east-bound (toward Toronto) in the morning and westbound (toward Kitchener) in the late afternoon or evening. Options are limited for off-peak and counter-peak travel—and on weekends.

Mount Forest



Guelph

The Guelph Owen Sound Transportation bus travels between Mount Forest and Guelph twice each day—once in the morning and once in the afternoon. While there are stops in Arthur, Fergus and Elora, people living outside of those towns may have barriers getting to the bus stop.

Source: City of Owen Sound Transit (n.d.); GO Transit (n.d.)



Everyone in our community should be able to get around conveniently, safely and sustainably. But challenges and inequities within our current neighbourhood design and transportation systems mean that not everyone does.

We all do better—when we all do better.



07 Our natural environment

Landscapes, weather and all living things—including humans—make up our natural environment. And all these things work together to sustain life in our community.

There are currently 58 species at risk in our community.



When a species disappears from our natural environment, it creates a ripple effect threatening all other species.

Source: City of Guelph (n.d., 2014); Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (n.d.)

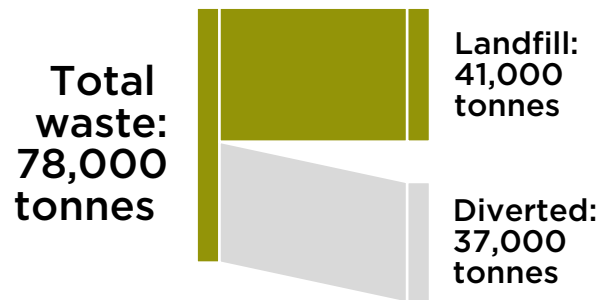
In 2022, the City of Guelph planted **16,400 trees and shrubs** with the help of community volunteers.

In 2022, the County of Wellington distributed over **156,000 trees** as part of the Green Legacy Programme^{OM}.

The main threats to biodiversity are loss of habitat, overhunting and overfishing, invasive species, pollution and climate change.¹⁰ Expanding our canopy of healthy, mature trees is one way our community is taking action to conserve biodiversity.

Source: City of Guelph Forestry and Sustainable Landscapes (2023); County of Wellington (2023)

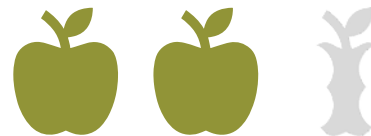
About 78,000 tonnes of household waste is collected by the City of Guelph and County of Wellington each year. Only half is diverted from landfill.



Our community generates a lot of waste and it's challenging to deal with it in a sustainable way.

Source: City of Guelph Solid Waste Resources (2021); County of Wellington Solid Waste Services (n.d.)

Two-thirds of household food waste in our community is avoidable—meaning it could have been eaten.

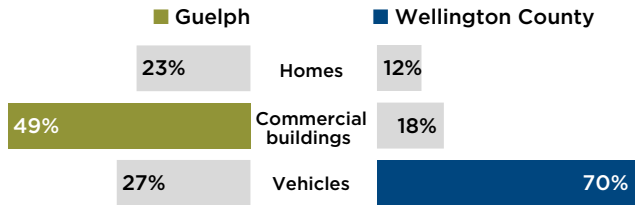


Much of our waste comes from single-use products and packaging—but we also throw away things that are still useful.

Source: Dillon Consulting & Metabolic (2021)



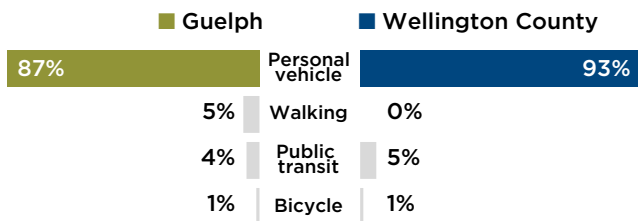
The major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in our community are from burning fossil fuels for electricity, heat and transportation. In Guelph—an urban setting with lots of industry—commercial buildings contribute the most emissions. In Wellington County—a rural setting where places are spread farther apart—transportation contributes most emissions.



Greenhouse gas emissions contribute to climate change.

Source: City of Guelph Energy and Climate Change (2022); County of Wellington (2020)

In 2021, most people in our community used a personal vehicle to get to work—either as a driver or passenger.



One way to reduce emissions is by changing how we travel—walking, rolling, taking public transit and driving zero-emission vehicles.

Source: Statistics Canada (2022)



We have a shared responsibility to take care of our natural environment. But right now, our actions are hurting the environment which jeopardizes our chances of a sustainable future.

We all do better—when we all do better.



We all do better— when we all do better.



Our community is made up of the people and spaces around us.

- Natural environment
- Built environment
- Social environment
- Everything in our community is connected to our well-being

Everyone in our community should have what they need to be healthy and thrive. But challenges and inequities within our social, built and natural environments mean that not everyone does.

We all have a responsibility to work together and build a better, more equitable community in which everyone can thrive.

These are a few examples of the many things you can do. Think about how you can make an impact and try something!

Learn. Take time to learn more about our community's strengths and the challenges we face.

Volunteer or donate. Share your time or other resources with a cause that is working to build a better community for everyone.

Be a voice, champion or ally. Speak up and amplify others' voices to raise awareness about the challenges our community faces and what we can all do to create change.

What will you do to make our community a better place for everyone?

For more information, visit
www.guelphcf.ca/vital-signs