

A Profile of Wellbeing in Rural Ontario

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Foreword

The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is pleased to share this report prepared by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) at the University of Waterloo.

The reason we commissioned this look at rural wellbeing is that the Institute has partnered with a number of communities undertaking Vital Signs™ and other wellbeing reporting initiatives in their own regions. As we worked alongside local rural stakeholders, and indeed as the University has too, we witnessed the challenge small towns and rural regions experience in finding relevant, timely data for their jurisdictions. Even when they find statistical measures they can use at a relevant level of geography, they are then often benchmarking their circumstances with Ontario or Canadian data rather than data representing their rural counterparts.

The primary purpose of this project, then, was to provide a benchmark on wellbeing for rural Ontario using the indicators in the National and Ontario versions of the CIW Wellbeing Index – and others specific to Ontario – so that local rural reporting efforts have a basis for comparison. This report will not replace the need or the value of local wellbeing reports, but rather paints the backdrop for those seeking to understand how their community is doing relative to rural Ontario as a whole. We think this report makes a real and meaningful contribution to that work.

A secondary purpose was to explore if we could identify “proxy” indicators that were more readily available at local geographies. In some cases, knowledgeable advisors were able to suggest or point to data sources that could stand in for the indicators the CIW has ordinarily relied on for national and provincial scale wellbeing reporting. In a number of areas, for example the Environment domain, this purpose was thwarted for several reasons such as lack of comprehensive coverage, or boundaries used in the collection of data (e.g., health units, educational catchment areas) not matching up. Thus, we know that local stakeholders tracking their own community wellbeing will continue to need to find local data from local partners. Also, the ROI will continue to advocate for better, more accessible rural statistics.

This report is the last in a suite of *Measuring Rural Community Vitality* projects enabled by the financial support of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing over five years. It is important to note that the information and conclusions in this report in no way reflect the position of the Province of Ontario and any errors or omissions are solely the responsibility of the ROI and the CIW.

The participation of a group of advisors was crucial in helping us answer the key question about the potential utility of substitute measures and we thank them for their perspectives and suggestions:

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Jennifer Temmer, Associate, International Institute for Sustainable Development

In addition, we would especially like to thank those people working with the ROI and the CIW who have made significant contributions to the creation of this report: Ryan Deska, Tanya Stuart, and Lissel Hernandez at the ROI, and Lara Schroeder, Christine Holliday, and Linda McKessock at the CIW.

Sincerely,

Norman Ragetlie
ROI Executive Director

Bryan Smale
Director, Canadian Index of Wellbeing

What is Wellbeing?

There are many definitions of wellbeing. *The Canadian Index of Wellbeing* has adopted the following as its working definition:

The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture.

Executive Summary

A movement is underway not only in Ontario and Canada, but internationally that recognizes the value of having accurate, relevant data to assist in decision-making and in the development of policy. “Evidence-based decision-making” is not just a catchphrase. It is a meaningful strategy leading to better community processes and outcomes that can enhance the quality of life of all Ontarians. It helps identify inequities and aids in the creation of innovative solutions to challenges and issues, rather than relying on conventional practices that might not have produced the results we hoped for.

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) recognizes how important data are in helping us understand a complex society — a society that is made up of a number of interconnected systems, which are captured by the domains of the CIW framework — where different sectors, our communities, and our governments interact, influence, and have impacts on the wellbeing of Ontarians. Efforts to improve wellbeing in one system, such as leisure and culture, will inevitably have positive impacts on others such as community vitality, healthy populations, the environment, and ultimately, on the entire community or society. This is a “systems thinking” approach, and a key goal of the CIW is to identify and understand the interconnections among the eight domains and the many factors that comprise them to influence overall wellbeing. This approach leads to greater collaborations and to new and innovative solutions that have collective impact in our communities. At the core of the approach is the evidence.

So, what do we know about the residents of Ontario living in rural areas?

What do we mean by “rural”?

Just as the word “wellbeing” has many meanings so does the word “rural”, but a fuzzy or flexible approach would not work for this project. In order to be able to offer measures of rural Ontario wellbeing, we needed a clearly delineated geography we could use for multiple data sets. For the purposes of this study, statistics for the rural Ontario population are presented solely for residents of Census Divisions (CDs) or occasionally for Health Units (HUs) which contain no Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) as defined by Statistics Canada.

This definition of rural has a narrower meaning than the statistical approach of the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) for its *Focus on Rural Ontario* fact sheet series, which includes as “rural” both the population of CDs that contain no CMAs **plus** a subset of the population of partially non-metropolitan CDs that lives in areas outside CMAs. The reason for choosing the more limited definition of rural as being non-metropolitan CDs is that the data for the partially non-metro rural population would have had to be gleaned from Census Sub-divisions (CSDs) and consequently are often not available at

this level of geography or for many of the indicators used at the national and provincial level by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.¹

Wellbeing in Rural Ontario

Using the definition of rural population as being constituted by the non-metropolitan Census Divisions (CDs) of Ontario, 14.9% of the population live within a geography covering 83.4% of the province's land mass. Clearly, residents of rural areas in Ontario face a number of unique challenges brought on by long distances and low density.

Residents of rural areas are generally older compared to partially non-metropolitan and metropolitan areas in Ontario. Rural Ontario has a much higher percentage of its population aged 50 years and older, a higher median age, and the lowest percentage of population under 15 years of age. A higher percentage of people are married or living common-law and there is a lower percentage of families led by lone parents. Rural areas of Ontario are less ethnically diverse, with the lowest percentage of visible minority populations, and have higher percentages of residents with either English or French as their first language, as well as having a higher percentage with knowledge of both official languages. Rural areas have the lowest employment rate in part because of the lower proportion of individuals 25 to 55 years of age who comprise the core of the labour force. Rural areas have the lowest after-tax median family income compared to metropolitan and partially non-metropolitan areas in the province.

With respect to the eight domains of the CIW, rural residents in Ontario, in contrast to their peers in partially non-metropolitan and metropolitan areas, can be generally characterized in the following ways:

- ✓ **Community Vitality** – feel a stronger sense of belonging to their communities and are somewhat more likely to volunteer for groups or organizations, although they are slightly less likely to provide unpaid help to others who are living on their own. Despite the highest index score on crime severity, a higher percentage of the population feels safe walking alone after dark in their community.
- ✓ **Democratic Engagement** – a higher percentage of the population voted in both the previous federal and provincial elections, although they were much less likely to elect women either to federal Parliament or to the provincial legislature.
- ✓ **Education** – a smaller percentage of rural residents 25 to 29 years of age have graduated high school and a much smaller percentage 25 to 64 years of age hold university degrees. With the exception of citizenship skills, elementary schools in rural areas are less likely to measure students' progress on socio-emotional skills and on the school learning environment. Rural residents spend much less time per

¹ For a full discussion, see Appendix A "The CIW: Methods" and the ROI report, "Rural Ontario Institute's Rural Ontario Census Demography Update 2016". Available at http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/uploads/userfiles/files/Rural%20Ontario%E2%80%99s%20Demography_Census%20Update%202016.pdf

day on average in direct interactions with children, and have less access to regulated centre-based child care spaces.

- ✓ **Environment** – not surprisingly, a considerably higher percentage of the province’s land area under cultivation is found in rural areas, although it still represents only a fraction of the total land area within rural areas, which is not surprising given the expansive northern part of Ontario. A much higher percentage of rural residents are facing “energy poverty” (i.e., more households are spending over 6% of their after-tax income on home energy).
- ✓ **Healthy Populations** – fewer rural residents rate their overall health as very good or excellent, and a higher percentage are living with health-related conditions that can limit their participation in activities. The incidence of diabetes is higher in rural areas and more people are daily or occasional smokers. A smaller percentage of rural residents felt their health care needs were met in the past year and more attributed this to the unavailability of health care in their area.
- ✓ **Leisure and Culture** – slightly more rural residents devoted a higher percentage of their daily time to leisure activities and to arts and cultural activities, and they were much more likely to take advantage of programs offered by their local libraries. They did, however, spend fewer nights away on vacation on average than residents of metro areas.
- ✓ **Living Standards** – despite having the lowest after-tax median incomes as well as the lowest employment rate, a smaller percentage of rural residents are living in poverty, are spending over 30% of their before-tax income on shelter costs, and are moderately or severely food insecure. Perhaps relatedly, fewer rural residents report higher levels of work-related stress.
- ✓ **Time Use** – rural residents have, on average, much shorter daily commutes to and from work, and a smaller percentage have long commutes of 60 minutes or more. Fewer rural residents in the labour force have regular weekday workhours or have flexible workhours, limiting their ability to allocate their time in way they might wish.

Implications

These results provide interesting insights as well as raise intriguing questions concerning the wellbeing of residents living in Ontario’s rural areas. For example:

- ✓ What steps might be taken to improve the health conditions of rural residents? Better access to health services is important and new technologies hold promise for distance medical care, but the social determinants of health and lifestyle factors are arguably also a more important set of factors to be addressed. Might the high levels of unpaid help being provided to others and stronger sense of belonging to community be paths to improving wellbeing and hence overall health?

i ✓ Education is an important factor related to later success in and enrichment of people's lives. Lower high school graduation rates are a concern, but the relative lack of post-secondary education levels in the rural population is largely explained by the migration of young people leaving rural areas to acquire post-secondary education and by the relatively smaller proportion who return for work afterwards. Would creating more opportunities to pursue post-secondary education more locally on satellite campuses or to obtain a trade or an apprenticeship through the colleges be viable alternatives?

These questions are intended to stimulate further conversations concerning the wellbeing of residents in rural areas of Ontario. By reflecting on these and other questions, innovative solutions that could have an impact on many aspects of people's lives can be considered and developed. Our hope is that community leaders and policy makers will have an even greater understanding of the interconnectedness of the domains that define wellbeing in people's lives. Doing so leads more often to strategies that will advance policies, services, and programs for — and with — residents of rural areas and thereby create more interest, awareness, and participation in activities that will enhance their wellbeing.

Why We Need the Canadian Index of Wellbeing

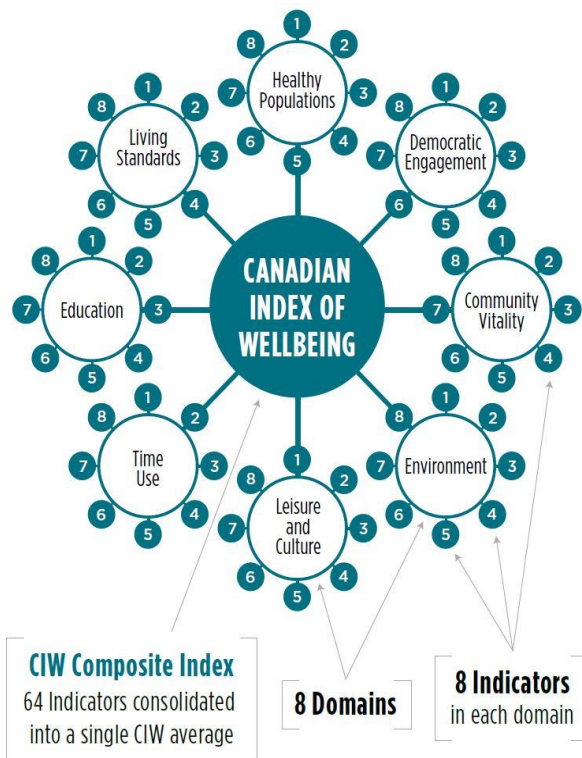
The United Nations and the OECD agree – the true measure of a country’s progress must include the wellbeing of its citizens. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) shifts the focus from solely on the economy to include other critical domains of people’s lives.

Increasingly, citizens and their governments are thinking “beyond GDP” as a measure of our progress and quality of life. Even though Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an important measure of our economic performance, it does not capture those areas of our lives that we care about most like education, health, the environment, and the relationships we have with others. GDP also is not sensitive to the costs of economic growth such as environmental degradation, loss of farmland, or growing income inequality.

Core Values and Domains Identified by Canadians

Since its inception and throughout the development of the CIW, the process has been designed to ensure everyday Canadians hear their own voices and see themselves reflected in the measure.

Figure 1. Canadian Index of Wellbeing Framework



The CIW came about through the combined efforts of national leaders and organizations, community groups, research experts, indicator users, and importantly, the Canadian public. Through three rounds of public consultations, everyday Canadians across the country candidly expressed what really matters to their wellbeing. The process culminated in the identification of core Canadian values – including equity, diversity, sustainability, economic security – and eight domains of life that contribute to and affect the wellbeing of Canadians: *Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Education, Environment, Healthy Populations, Leisure and Culture, Living Standards, and Time Use* (see Figure 1). This framework shifts the focus solely from the economy to other factors that affect quality of life.

- ✓ **Community Vitality** means communities that have strong, active, and inclusive relationships among people, private, public, and non-governmental organizations that foster individual and collective wellbeing.
- ✓ **Democratic Engagement** means being involved in advancing democracy through political institutions, organizations, and activities.
- ✓ **Education** is the systematic instruction, schooling, or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life, and by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adulthood.
- ✓ **Environment** is the foundation upon which human societies are built and the source of our sustained wellbeing. On a broader level, environmental protection involves the prevention of waste and damage while revitalizing our ecosystems and working towards the sustainability of all our resources.
- ✓ **Healthy Populations** considers the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of the population. It examines life expectancy, lifestyle and behaviours, and the circumstances that influence health such as access to health care.
- ✓ **Leisure and Culture** considers how participating in leisure and cultural activities, whether arts, culture, or recreation, contributes to our wellbeing as individuals, to our communities, and to society as a whole. The myriad of activities and opportunities we pursue and enjoy benefit our overall life satisfaction and quality of life.
- ✓ **Living Standards** examines Canadians' average and median income and wealth; distribution of income and wealth including poverty rates, income fluctuations and volatility; and economic security, including the labour market, and housing and food security.
- ✓ **Time Use** considers how people experience and spend their time. It examines how the use of our time affects physical and mental wellbeing, individual and family wellbeing, and present and future wellbeing.

Together, these eight domains provide a more complete picture of wellbeing, incorporating a comprehensive set of the key social, health, economic, and environmental factors contributing to overall quality of life. Teams of nationally and internationally renowned experts then identified eight valid, reliable, and relevant indicators within each domain that are directly related to wellbeing. By integrating the 64 indicators and eight domains and revealing their complex interconnections, the CIW composite index provides a comprehensive portrait of quality of life in Canada.

An ongoing cycle of public engagement, consultation, and refinement is one of the defining characteristics of the CIW. It ensures that the Index is rooted in Canadian values, grounded in community experience, shaped by technical expertise, and responsive to emerging knowledge. The CIW is not a static measure. As new issues emerge and new knowledge, understandings, and data become available, the CIW adapts to strengthen its measure of wellbeing without veering from the values on which it is grounded. Hence, validating and continually improving the CIW is an ongoing process.

The CIW's call to action is to encourage all sectors to be guided by solid evidence, and to empower Canadians to advocate for change that reflects their needs and values. By putting wellbeing at the heart of policy development, funding decisions, program development, and service delivery, we respond to our desire to know, "How can we do better?"

A Profile of Wellbeing in Rural Ontario:

How are we *really* doing?

While economic productivity in Ontario continues to recover, although not as quickly as for Canada overall, the wellbeing of Ontarians has not shown signs of rebounding from the 2008 recession in the same way that GDP has. To help understand this gap, this report provides evidence-based illustrations of the wellbeing of Ontarians in three areas based on their geographies – non-metro (i.e., entirely rural), partially non-metropolitan, and wholly metropolitan. The report will therefore help us better understand the different challenges and opportunities that each area faces, especially residents in non-metro (rural) areas. We hope that everyone working to help improve wellbeing across the province can use the data provided in this report to make more informed decisions when choosing how to focus their efforts.

A Snapshot of Ontario

Demographics²

According to the 2016 Census, Ontario is home to 13,448,494 residents, representing 38.3% of the total population in Canada. This is an almost 5% increase in population from 2011. Newer population projections from Statistics Canada estimate the 2019 population of Ontario to be 14,566,547 – an over 8% increase since 2016.

The median age of Ontarians in 2016 was 41.3 years. Reflecting the ageing of the population, over a third of the province's residents (38.2%) was 50 years of age and older while under one in five (16.4%) was 15 years of age and under. There are approximately three persons per family on average, and of these families, 17.1% are led by a lone parent. In these respects, Ontario's residents are very much like those across Canada overall.

By 2019, the employment rate in Ontario was 61.4%, only very slightly below the national average of 62.0%. However, unlike the slow upward trend nationally, the employment rate in Ontario has remained largely unchanged since the 2008 recession. The unemployment rate in Ontario had decreased to 7.4%, slightly lower than the national rate of 7.7%, and all indications are that this rate is continuing to drop in more recent years. The median after-tax annual family income in Ontario was \$79,531, which is slightly higher than the national figure of \$76,372 per year.

² For consistency, the demographic characteristics reported in this section and in the Appendix are drawn from the 2016 Census of Canada. When available, more recent data from other sources are included (e.g., employment rate from 2019 Labour Force Survey).

Just over one in ten Ontarians (11.2%) reported having knowledge of both English and French, and almost three in ten residents (29.0%) reported that a language other than English or French was their first language. In contrast, many more Canadians report having knowledge of both official languages (17.9%), but fewer report a non-official language as their first language (22.9%).

CIW Domains of Wellbeing in Ontario and Canada

In this section, we provide an overview of wellbeing in Ontario and how it compares to Canada as a whole, based on selected indicators representing each of the CIW's eight domains. These indicators are from the most recent data sources available, primarily for the years 2016 to 2018, with some indicators from earlier years because newer data have yet to be released.

Beyond basic demographic information, the **Living Standards** domain highlights areas where economic risk affects Ontarians' wellbeing. Even though Ontario has a higher after-tax median family income than Canada overall, there is a slightly higher percentage of Ontarians in low income, based on all three different measures of living in low income. According to the Market Basket Measure (MBM), which is now Canada's official measure of persons living in poverty³, 13.9% of Ontario residents and 12.9% in Canada overall are living in low income households. Relatedly, a higher percentage of households in Ontario are spending 30% or more of household

PEOPLE LIVING IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS	Ontario	Canada
Low Income Measure	14.4%	14.2%
Low Income Cut-off	9.8%	9.2%
Market Basket Measure	13.9%	12.9%

income on shelter costs (27.7%) than in Canada overall (24.1%). In addition, a higher percentage of households report moderate to severe food insecurity in Ontario (8.3%), compared to 7.7% in Canada overall. Like other Canadians, almost one-third of workers in Ontario (27.0%) report quite a bit or extreme work stress.

In the **Healthy Populations** domain, Ontarians self-reported overall health is similar to that of other Canadians. About 6 in 10 Ontarians (60.7%) report very good or excellent overall health (60.8% of Canadians overall), and about 7 in 10 Ontarians (69.1%) report very good or excellent mental health (69.4% of Canadians overall). One-third of both Ontarians (32.2%) and Canadians (32.6%) report having an activity or health-related limitation, and slightly more Ontarians have reported being diagnosed with diabetes (7.7%) than all Canadians (7.2%). Somewhat fewer Ontarians (15.3%) are daily or occasional smokers compared to Canada overall (16.0%). More Ontarians are getting immunized against influenza (34.4%) than in Canada overall (32.0%) and a considerably greater percentage of Ontarians (90.1%) have a regular health care provider (84.9% in Canada). More than 1 in 10 Ontarians (10.3%) report that their health care needs were unmet in the past year, which is only slightly lower than the percentage nationally (11.2%). Of those in Ontario whose health care needs have not been met, 8.4% report that the reason was because

³ Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018). *Opportunity for all: Canada's First National Poverty Reduction Strategy*. Cat. no.: SSD-212-08-18E. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>.

health care was not available in their area. This percentage is lower than the national rate (10.0%).

With respect to the **Community Vitality** domain, a slightly higher percentage of Ontarians (70.8%) report a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to their communities than in Canada overall (68.9%). Similar percentages of Ontarians and Canadians (28.8% and 28.4% respectively) participate in unpaid, formal volunteering for groups or organizations with family or friends, neighbours, or colleagues. The majority of Canadians provide unpaid, informal help to others on their own (81.7% in Ontario and 81.0% across Canada). Over one-quarter of households in Canada are occupied by a single individual (28.2%), which is slightly higher than in Ontario (25.9%). Almost 6 in 10 Ontarians believe most people can be trusted (57.3%) compared to just over half of Canadians (53.5%), even though more Ontarians report having experienced discrimination (14.9%) than across Canada as a whole (13.4%). According to the Crime Severity Index, incidence of severe crime is comparatively lower in Ontario (60.0) than across Canada overall (75.0), and is among the lowest of any of the provinces and territories. Relatedly, almost 8 in 10 Ontarians feel safe walking alone after dark (79.2%), which is slightly higher than across Canada (78.7%).

CRIME SEVERITY INDEX

Ontario	60.0
Canada	75.0

The **Leisure and Culture** domain contributes to the wellbeing of Ontarians through their participation in a variety of free time pursuits and access to recreation opportunities. Ontarians report spending on average slightly less of their daily time engaged both in leisure activities (3.7%) than by Canadians overall (4.0%) and in arts and culture activities (1.5% and 1.7% respectively). Over half of Ontarians (54.9%) and Canadians overall (56.0%) report participating in physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week. Turning to the sector that provides many of the leisure pursuits enjoyed by Canadians, similar percentages of people in the labour force in Ontario and across Canada are employed in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry (2.1% and 2.0% respectively).

In terms of **Democratic Engagement**, over two-thirds of Ontarians (67.8%) and Canadians overall (68.3%) turned out to vote in the 2015 federal election, which represents a similarly high turnout as was seen in the previous election in 2011. Just under one-third of Ontario Members of Parliament (MPs) are women (31.4%), which is a better representation than the number of women in the federal Parliament (27.2%). Ontario MPs are spending more on communications (3.4% in Ontario and 3.1% in Canada).

Examined from a life-long perspective, the **Education** domain shows that slightly more Ontarians are participating in education-related activities (4.3%) than Canadians overall (4.0%). With respect to academic achievement, a slightly higher percentage of Ontarians aged 25 to 29 years have a high school diploma (91.9%) than in Canada overall (89.7%). Similarly, a slightly higher percentage of Ontarians 25 to 64 years of age have obtained a university degree (31.9%) than Canadians overall (28.5%). In contrast, a higher percentage of Canadians 25 to 64 years of age have received an apprenticeship or trades certificate (10.8%) than have Ontarians (6.2%).

POPULATION 25 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE WITH A UNIVERSITY DEGREE

Ontario	31.9
Canada	28.5

PEOPLE FEELING HIGH LEVELS OF TIME PRESSURE

Ontario 19.0%

Canada 16.5%

AREA	CENSUS DIVISION
NON-METRO (RURAL)	Algoma
	Bruce
	Chatham-Kent
	Cochrane
	Grey
	Haldimand-Norfolk
	Haliburton
	Hastings
	Huron
	Kawartha Lakes
	Kenora
	Lambton
	Lanark
	Leeds and Grenville
	Manitowlin
	Muskoka
	Nipissing
	Northumberland
	Oxford
	Parry Sound
	Perth
	Prince Edward
	Rainy River
Renfrew	
Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry	
Sudbury	
Timiskaming	
PARTIALLY NON-METRO	Dufferin
	Durham
	Elgin
	Essex
	Frontenac
	Lennon and Addington
	Middlesex
	Niagara
	Peterborough
	Prescott and Russell
	Simcoe
	Thunder Bay
	Waterloo
	Wellington
METRO	Brant
	Greater Sudbury
	Halton
	Hamilton
	Ottawa
	Peel
	Toronto
York	

With respect to **Time Use**, two-thirds of Ontarians (66.7%) and Canadians (67.4%) in the labour force indicate that they have regular, weekday workhours, and just under half also say they have some flexibility in their workhours (45.1% in Ontario and 43.8% in Canada). Yet, about 1 in 5 Ontarians (20.2%) and Canadians (19.3%) say they are working 50 or more hours per week. On average, Ontarians have a slightly longer total daily commute to and from work (28.8 minutes) compared to all Canadians overall (26.2 minutes), and a higher percentage of Ontarians (12.4%) spend an hour or more getting to and from work than do other working Canadians (9.4%). Outside of work, residents of Ontario and across Canada are spending on average more than an hour each day with friends (69.0 and 71.5 minutes per day respectively). Half of both Ontarians (50.3%) and Canadians (49.9%) report getting 7 to 9 hours of good quality, essential sleep each day. Despite these similarities in time use, a higher percentage of Ontarians (19.0%) report feeling high levels of time pressure than residents across Canada (16.5%).

Taking all of these things into consideration, when asked to assess their overall life satisfaction, over 9 in 10 residents of Ontario (93.2%) and of Canada overall (93.1%) report being satisfied or very satisfied with their life.

Wellbeing in Areas of Ontario: Rural (non-metro), Partially non-metropolitan, and Metropolitan Areas of Ontario⁴

Moving to a comparison of the three types of areas within Ontario with an emphasis on understanding wellbeing for residents of non-metro areas – the more rural parts of the province – we begin with a brief demographic profile of each area, highlighting characteristics that make them unique. In the sections that follow, we present the eight domains of the CIW with descriptions of indicators of wellbeing that reflect how well Ontarians are doing within each area.

Three appendices are included that provide more detail on the methods and data sources (Appendix A), the specific indicators for the area and Ontario overall (Appendix B), and a glossary of terms used throughout the report (Appendix C).

In each section focusing on a domain of wellbeing, we compare the indicators for the rural (non-metro) areas with the partially non-metro and metro areas of the province. Such comparisons help us understand how Ontarians living in more rural areas of the province are doing relative to residents living in other areas of the province, and focuses our attention on aspects where we are doing well and where we might choose to direct greater emphasis in planning and allocating resources.

How to use this report

The data in this report, organized by the eight domains of the CIW and including a comprehensive demographic profile, provide users with benchmarks on the

⁴ “Non-metro areas” in Ontario are predominantly rural and shall be referred to as such throughout the report to clearly distinguish them from metro areas (i.e., principally urban) and partially-non-metro areas (i.e., primarily rural, but with urban centres).

wellbeing of Ontarians living in rural (non-metro), semi-rural (partially non-metro), and urban (metro) areas of the province. Use this report for:

Evidence-based decision-making

Gathering data that describes the wellbeing of Ontario residents – from their sense of community to their living standards to their participation in leisure and cultural activities – sets the stage for more evidence-based decision-making in the development of strategies and programs that help all Ontarians progress towards a higher quality of life.

Collaborative action

Collaborative action is made possible and enhanced through the sharing of measures of common interest to multiple sectors in our communities – not-for-profit organizations, services agencies, businesses, and governments – all of which typically have *improving the quality of life* in their mission statements.

Ultimately, this report brings us closer to understanding the challenges faced by rural residents and better prepares us to take action that helps everyone, especially those most marginalized, to thrive.

Wellbeing in Rural Ontario



Demographics

Recognizing the unique socio-demographic profile of the different areas is an important first step in understanding the needs and circumstances of their residents. How many people live here? Are the residents generally younger or older than elsewhere in the province? What do their families look like? How diverse is the population? Answers to these questions allow us to make more informed decisions about the types of programs and services that will best contribute to the wellbeing of the area's residents.

Population

According to the 2016 Census of Canada, Ontario is home to almost 13.5 million people (13,448,494). Newer population projections from Statistics Canada estimate the 2019 population of Ontario to be 14,566,547 – an over 8% increase since 2016. More than half of Ontario's population resides in metro areas (56.1%) and almost another one-third in partially non-metro areas (29.0%), principally in the urban centres. The rest of the province's residents (14.9%) live in rural areas. Even though rural areas represent the smallest proportion of the provincial population, they occupy by far the largest land area — over 750,000 square kilometres — or 83.4% of the total land mass of Ontario.

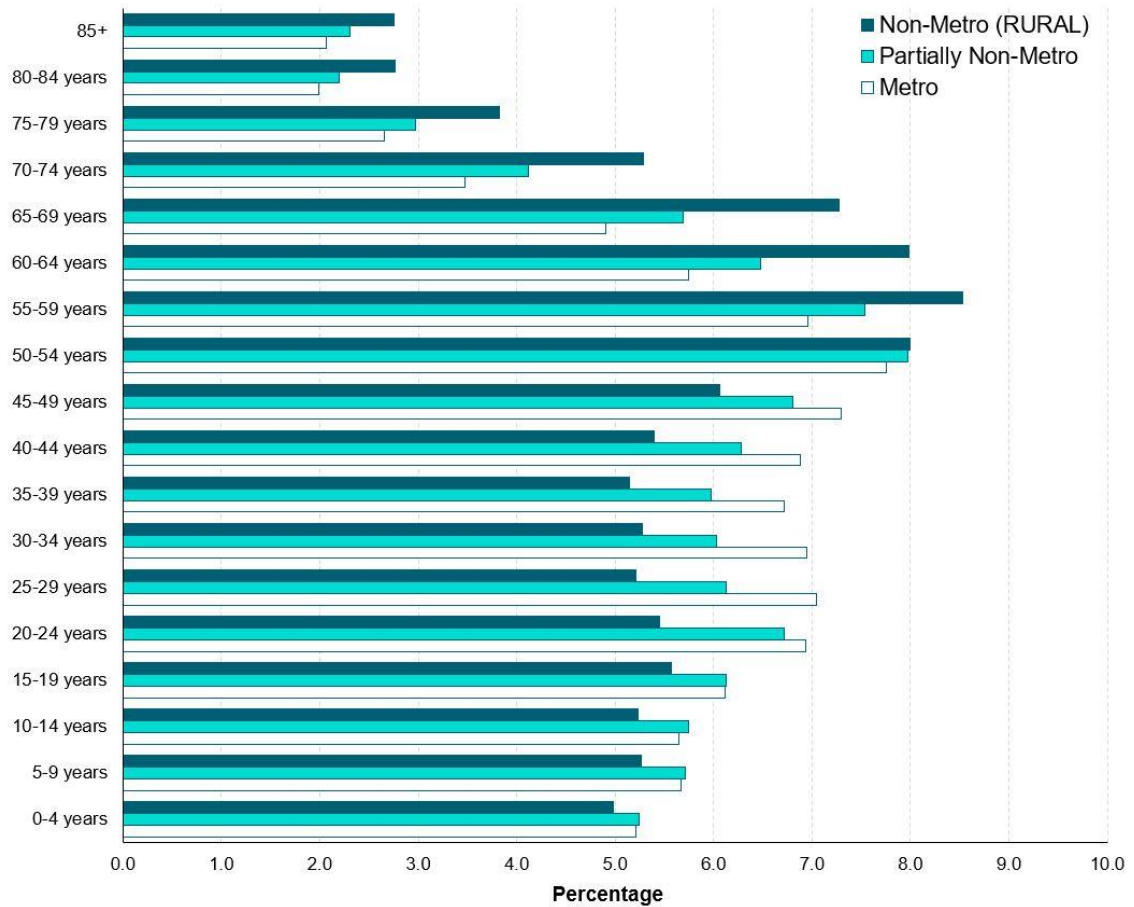
Age

The median age in Ontario is 41.3 years. The population of rural areas is generally older than other areas in the province with a median age of 47.0 years, compared to 42.0 in partially non-metro and 39.8 in metro. Rural areas also have a higher percentage of residents 50 years of age and older (46.4%), compared to almost 4 in 10 residents in partially non-metro areas (39.3%) and just over one-third in metro areas (35.5%).

PEOPLE 50 YEARS OF AGE
AND OLDER

Rural	46.4%
Partial	39.3%
Metro	35.5%

RURAL AREAS IN ONTARIO HAVE MANY MORE RESIDENTS OVER 50 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER



Families

Families in all areas across Ontario have an average of about three persons living in the household, ranging from 2.8 persons per household in rural areas to 3.0 persons in metro areas. About three-quarters of the population in rural areas (75.2%) and partially non-metro areas (73.3%) own their homes. The rate of home ownership drops to two-thirds of the population in metro areas (66.1%), likely due to the higher cost of homes in urban areas.

FAMILIES LED BY LONE PARENT

Rural	14.8%
Partial	16.9%
Metro	17.8%

In Ontario, almost 1 in 5 families are led by a lone parent (17.1%), with the vast majority of those parents being female (80.4%). Comparatively fewer lone parent families are in rural areas (14.8%), with the highest percentage living in metro areas (17.8%) of the province. Similarly, the percentage of lone parent families led by females is lowest in rural areas (76.3%), compared to partially non-metro areas (78.9%) and metro areas (82.1%). Single mothers in rural areas may be fewer in number because they have more limited access to daycare and therefore reduced opportunities to join the labour force; consequently, they might be moving to urban locations to escape these greater challenges. In addition, with lower median incomes in rural areas, families led by women alone are at even greater risk since they earn even less than men.

Employment and Income

Rural areas of Ontario have the lowest employment rate in the province (55.3%), which is almost 5% lower than partially non-metro (60.1%) and metro areas (61.0%). However, both the employment rate and the percentage of the labour force in long-term unemployment (i.e., more than a year), is fairly similar across all three areas (approximately 7.5% and just over 4% respectively). After-tax median family income in rural areas of Ontario (\$71,780) is over \$10,000 per year lower than in metro areas (\$82,914) and more than \$7,000 lower than in partially non-metro areas (\$78,916).

AFTER-TAX MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

Rural	\$ 71,780
Partial	\$ 78,916
Metro	\$ 82,914

Ethnicity and Language

In Ontario, more than one in ten residents (11.2%) report having knowledge of both English and French, with the highest rates in rural (12.3%) and metro areas (12.1%). A smaller percentage of people in partially non-metro areas (8.9%) report having knowledge of both official languages. While almost 1 in 3 Ontarians (29.0%) report having another language as their first language, the percentage is considerably higher in metro areas (41.2%) than in both partially non-metro (16.7%) and especially rural areas (7.1%).

Rural areas have the lowest percentage of visible minorities (2.7%) than any other area of the province and is well below the percentage in Ontario overall (29.3%). In contrast, while significantly more members of a visible minority live in partially non-metro areas (14.5%), metro areas are home by far to the highest percentage of visible minorities (44.0%). Indeed, most new immigrants predominantly arrive and settle in Canada's larger urban centres.⁵

VISIBLE MINORITY POPULATION

Rural	2.7%
Partial	14.5%
Metro	44.0%

Rural areas of Ontario have the highest percentage of people with Aboriginal origins (9.3%), which is almost two and half times higher than for the province overall (3.9%). Fewer Indigenous peoples live in metro areas (2.1%) and slightly more in partially non-metro areas (4.6%).

⁵ Statistics Canada. (2017). *Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry. Available at: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-can-eng.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=CAN&GC=01&TOPIC=7>



COMMUNITY VITALITY

Vital communities are those that have strong, active, and inclusive relationships among people, private, public, and non-governmental organizations that foster individual and collective wellbeing.

Vital communities are able to cultivate and marshal these relationships in order to create, adapt, and thrive in the changing world. They do so by focusing on social relationships and support, including community safety and social engagement, and on social norms and values, including feelings towards others and residents' sense of belonging to their communities.

Social Engagement

POPULATION WITH STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING TO COMMUNITY

Rural	73.4%
Partial	71.4%
Metro	69.9%

Seven in 10 Ontarians (70.8%) report having a somewhat or strong sense of belonging to their communities, which is slightly higher than the national average (68.9%). The percentage is even higher in rural areas where almost three-quarters of residents report feeling a somewhat or strong sense of belonging to their communities (73.4%). The percentage is somewhat lower in both partially non-metro (71.4%) and metro areas (69.9%), but in both instances, still higher than the national average. This stronger sense of belonging suggests that more residents feel supported and are better able to cope and are more resilient when faced with challenging situations, especially in rural areas.

Formal, unpaid volunteering – especially when it is done with family and/or friends – can also contribute to a strong sense of belonging to one's community by providing residents with opportunities to connect with and support others in their communities. It also helps strengthen bonds within families. Just under one-third (28.8%) report unpaid, formal volunteering for groups or organizations with their family and/or friends. The volunteering rate is highest in rural areas (30.6%) and only slightly lower in partially non-metro (29.4%) and metro areas (27.9%).

Social Support

More than 1 in 4 Ontario households are occupied by a single individual (25.9%), which is a growing trend across the province and country⁶. While frequently a matter of choice or circumstance among younger and mid-aged individuals, living alone has an increased risk of social isolation. The percentage of persons living alone is quite

⁶ Tang, J., Galbraith, N., & Truong, J. (2019). Living alone in Canada. *Insights on Canadian Society*, Catalogue no. 75-006-X, Statistics Canada. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00003-eng.htm>

similar across all areas of Ontario, with slightly more households occupied by a single individual in rural areas (27.7%) than in both metro (25.6%) and partially non-metro areas (25.5%).

Nevertheless, more than half of the residents in rural areas (53.2%) report having five or more close friends who provide them with important social support. A similar percentage of residents in both partially non-metro and metro areas also report having five or more close friends (53.0% and 54.2% respectively). Residents in rural metro areas feel a greater sense of belonging even though slightly more live alone, perhaps indicating that they have established more meaningful connections with others in their communities.

Social Norms and Values

While more than one quarter of residents in all areas of Ontario report unpaid, formal volunteering with family or friends for groups or organizations, a much higher percentage are providing unpaid help to others who are living on their own. Eight in 10 residents in all areas are providing such help to others, with a slightly higher percentage in partially non-metro areas (83.8%) compared to metro (80.0%) and rural (79.0%) areas. The rate in Ontario overall (81.7%) is also slightly higher than the national rate (81.0%) of providing help to others.

Just under 6 in 10 residents of Ontario (57.3%) believe that most or many people can be trusted, which is a higher percentage than across Canada overall (53.5%). The percentage is slightly higher in both partially non-metro (59.3%) and rural areas (58.0%) of the province with somewhat fewer residents in metro areas (56.0%) feeling people can be trusted. Building trust can lead to the development of strong interpersonal and community relationships – and build social capital – so the fact that over 40% of residents in all areas do not feel others can be trusted is of concern.

Similarly concerning is the percentage of Ontarians (14.9%) who report having experienced discrimination due to characteristics such as their ethnicity, race, or sexual orientation. Perhaps not surprisingly given the much higher percentage of visible minorities living in metro areas, the percentage of the population who report having experienced discrimination is correspondingly higher in metro areas (16.2%). Discrimination is reported by a smaller percentage of residents living in partially non-metro areas (13.9%) and an even smaller percentage of residents in rural areas (12.1%).

EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

Rural	12.1%
Partial	13.9%
Metro	16.2%

Community Safety

Not only do residents in rural areas of Ontario feel a stronger sense of belonging to their community, a higher percentage also feel safe walking alone after dark (82.4%). This is higher than the provincial rate of 79.2% and also higher than both partially non-metro (79.1%) and metro (78.3%) areas.

CRIME SEVERITY INDEX

Rural	65.3
Partial	62.4
Metro	55.8
Canada	75.0

These perceptions of safety stand somewhat in contrast to official police records of the incidence of severe crime. According to the Crime Severity Index, the incidence of serious crime in rural areas of Ontario in 2018 (65.3) was higher than in both partially non-metro (62.4) and especially metro areas (55.8) – more urban areas that are often assumed to be less safe. Part of this paradox may be because despite the official figures indicating higher crime severity in rural areas, the stronger sense of community by residents in rural areas may be associated with perceptions of greater safety.

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT



Democratic Engagement means being involved in advancing democracy through political institutions, organizations, and activities.

A society that enjoys a high degree of democratic engagement is one where citizens participate in political activities, express political views, and foster political knowledge; where governments build relationships, trust, shared responsibility, and participation opportunities with citizens; and where citizens, governments, and civil society uphold democratic values at local, provincial, and national levels. A healthy democracy needs citizens who feel their votes count, are informed, participate, debate, and advocate. It needs governments at all levels to be transparent, inclusive, consultative, and trustworthy. In essence, political leadership, citizen participation, and communication demonstrate the level of democratic engagement.

Citizen Participation

A higher percentage of people who turn out to vote reflects more democratic engagement and interest in election outcomes. Approximately two-thirds of eligible voters in all three areas of the province turned out to vote in the 2015 federal election⁷ (i.e., 68.6% in rural areas, 67.5% in partially non-metro areas, and 67.7% in metro areas). Even though the overall turnout was similar across all areas, there were marked differences in the census divisions comprising those areas. For example, voter turnout ranged from 61.1% in Cochrane to 77.4% in Ottawa.

Historically, fewer residents vote in provincial elections and this pattern was repeated in the 2018 election. Overall, just under 6 of 10 eligible voters in Ontario turned out to vote (56.7%). As with the federal election, voter turnout was quite similar across all three areas (i.e., 58.4% in rural areas, 56.8% in partially non-metro areas, and 56.0% in metro areas).

Political Leadership

For our democratic and decision-making institutions to fairly represent the values and opinions of all citizens, those bodies should reflect the profile of the people. Yet, even though over half of Ontario's population is made up of women, a much smaller percentage is represented in both the federal and provincial governments. Not quite

⁷ At this writing, official results for voter turnout to the fall 2019 federal election were not available, but unofficial reports place the turnout rate at similar levels to 2015.

WOMEN IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

Rural	17.4%
Partial	24.2%
Metro	40.0%
Canada	27.2%

WOMEN IN PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

Rural	15.4%
Partial	45.5%
Metro	42.9%
Ontario	37.7%

one-third (31.4%) of the current Ontario Members of federal Parliament (MPs) are women. Metro areas have the highest percentage of female MPs (40.0%), which is considerably higher than the percentage of women representing partially non-metro (24.2%) and especially rural areas (17.4%) areas.

With respect to the Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), representation of Ontario women fares slightly better provincially than federally. Overall, over one-third of MPPs are women (37.7%). The highest percentages of female MPPs are in partially non-metro (45.5%) and metro (42.9%) areas with a considerably lower percentage of women representing rural areas (15.4%), which mirrors their representation at the federal level. More work is clearly needed to encourage women to become involved in our governments and remove barriers to their involvement.

Communication

Politicians' investments in communications reflects the strength of the connection between citizens and their local representative in federal Parliament and serves as a means for sharing activities and progress towards goals. With the advent of social media, print materials are relied upon less. Consequently, there has been a steady decline in recent years in MPs' expenses dedicated to this form of communication.

Overall, Ontario Members of federal Parliament used just 3.4% of their total eligible expenses for communications, typically in the form of newsletters or pamphlets mailed directly to householders in their ridings. There was little variation in these expenses across areas of the province with MPs committing between 3.1% (rural areas) and 3.6% (partially non-metro areas) of their expenses to communications of this type.

EDUCATION



Education is the systematic instruction, schooling, or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life, and by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adulthood.

Societies that thrive encourage a thirst for knowledge at every age and stage of life. Education is a process that begins before school age and is reflected in pre-school arrangements such as childcare and early childhood education. It also continues beyond elementary and high school, to college, university, and professional training through apprenticeships. Education continues as lifelong learning. As the world changes, education helps Canadians adapt to new challenges.

Educational Attainment

Obtaining a high school diploma is, for many Canadians, an important first step in entering the workforce. Just over 9 in 10 Ontarians (91.9%) 25 to 29 years of age have a high school diploma. While high school graduation rates are quite high in all areas of the province, they are somewhat higher in the more urbanized parts of the province. There is a higher percentage of high school graduates living in metro areas (93.6%) of Ontario than in rural areas (86.5%), with partially non-metro areas falling in between (90.3%).

Post-secondary education is often associated with higher levels of income, which has a positive influence on health and living standards and provides Canadians with more resources to invest in leisure and culture opportunities. Reflecting a pattern similar to high school graduation rates, Ontarians 25 to 64 years of age who have obtained a university degree are more likely to live in the more urbanized areas of the province. Comparatively few residents of rural areas have a university degree (14.9%), which is not even half the provincial-wide rate (31.9%). The highest percentage of university graduates live in metro areas (40.1%), which is more than two and a half times higher than in rural areas and considerably higher than the 1 in 4 residents of partially non-metro areas (24.1%) with university degrees.

However, more residents of rural areas have followed a different path for post-secondary education – almost 1 in 10 (9.6%) residents 25 to 64 years of age in rural areas have obtained an apprenticeship or trades certificate, which is more than twice as high as the percentage in metro areas (4.7%). The percentage of the population in partially non-metro areas with a trades certificate falls in the middle (7.4%).

Ontarians also are pursuing other forms of education such as attending public lectures, and taking special interest or self-development courses. Less than 1 in 20 Ontarians 25 years of age and older (4.3%) are participating in these other education-related activities. The rate of participation is higher in both partially non-

POPULATION 25 TO 29 YEARS OF AGE COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL

Rural	86.5%
Partial	90.3%
Metro	93.6%

POPULATION 25 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE WITH UNIVERSITY DEGREE

Rural	14.9%
Partial	24.1%
Metro	40.1%

POPULATION 25 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE WITH APPRENTICESHIP / TRADES CERTIFICATE

Rural	9.6%
Partial	7.4%
Metro	4.7%

metro (5.0%) and metro areas (4.6%). Even though the specific rate of participation in rural areas is not available⁸, the figures for the other areas indicate that the rate in rural areas would be considerably below those in both partially non-metro and metro areas.

Regardless of the path taken, participation in education is critical preparation for work as well as for ongoing personal development and its positive impact on our living standards and social networks. Creating more opportunities and encouraging greater participation in all forms of formal and informal education-related activities – especially in rural areas of Ontario – would serve to enhance wellbeing because of their influence in many domains.

Measuring Progress

Elementary schools in Ontario make important contributions to the early development of our children and their preparation for life. The Ontario Ministry of Education added “wellbeing” to its goals for the education system and many schools are now including softer skills such as creativity and social-emotional skills among its key measures of progress.⁹

Among the different indicators of progress being used by Ontario’s elementary schools, most are measuring progress in students’ health or wellbeing (74.6%) and their school learning environment (71.8%). Most schools are also measuring progress in students’ socio-emotional skills with just over 6 in 10 schools (62.9%) providing support for the development of these skills. Related to the role of education in preparing students to be engaged in the democratic process, about 4 in 10 (43.7%) are measuring progress in students’ citizenship skills. Under one-third (31.6%) are measuring progress in creativity.

While there are some variations across areas in Ontario in the percentage of elementary schools that are measuring different aspects of student progress, by and large, they conform to provincial rates. About three-quarters of the schools in all areas are measuring progress in health or wellbeing (i.e., 72.5% in rural, 75.2% in partially-non-metro, and 75.0% in metro areas) and over two-thirds are measuring students’ progress in the school learning environment (i.e., 67.6% in rural, 74.1% in partially-non-metro, and 71.9% in metro areas). Just over one-quarter of elementary schools in partially non-metro areas (27.0%) are measuring progress in creativity among their students compared to 3 in 10 schools in rural areas (30.8%) and over one-third in metro areas (35.3%).

Compared to the overall provincial rates, a smaller percentage of elementary schools in rural areas of Ontario are measuring students’ progress on each aspect with the exception of citizenship skills. In this case, almost half of schools in rural areas (48.4%) are measuring students’ progress in developing citizenship skills, compared to somewhat fewer schools in metro areas (45.3%) and considerably fewer in partially non-metro areas (38.6%). Approximately 2 to 4% fewer elementary schools in rural areas are measuring the progress of their students on other aspects compared to the overall provincial rate.

⁸ Data coverage was not sufficiently high in rural (non-metro) areas for Statistics Canada to release figures.

⁹ People for Education. (2015). *Ontario’s Schools: The gap between policy and reality*. Annual Report on Ontario’s Publicly Funded Schools 2015. Toronto, ON: People for Education.

Child Care

The availability of quality child care, which has expanded in Ontario in recent years, contributes to our pre-school children's social, emotional, developmental, and educational outcomes, especially for children living in lower income families. In Ontario, however, there is a regulated, centre-based child care space for barely 3 in 10 children up to three years of age (29.8%). Availability is highest in metro areas (34.0%) and lowest in rural areas (22.8%) where fewer than 1 in 4 children have access to a child care space in a regulated centre. The availability of child care spaces in partially non-metro areas falls between these two rates (25.2%). Clearly, greater access to child care is needed across the province – and especially in rural areas where distance and transportation might be more acute – because spaces for pre-school children extend the positive benefits derived from quality child care to more children, especially those most marginalized by income or access, and also provide families with more opportunity to allocate their time differently and reach work-life balance.

All children up to 14 years of age benefit in their cognitive, linguistic, and social development from time spent in talk-based interactions with their parents and other important adults in their lives. Across Ontario, parents and adults together spend on average about two hours per day (119.2 minutes per day) interacting with children aged from 0 to 14 years of age. While this amount of time is fairly comparable in both metro (123.7 minutes per day) and partially non-metro areas (128.0 minutes per day), adults in rural areas are spending considerably less time interacting with their children each day, averaging less than an hour and a half each day (86.4 minutes per day).

TIME SPENT INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN 0 TO 14 YEARS OF AGE EACH DAY

Rural	1.4 HOURS
Partial	2.1 HOURS
Metro	2.1 HOURS

Contribution of Libraries

Beyond their traditional role in providing citizens with the content they need to succeed, libraries in our communities have evolved to play a central role as a hub for community development, learning, and sharing. The many instructional programs and services they offer promote literacy, skill development, and access to technology for people of all ages. In rural areas of Ontario where internet coverage is comparatively poorer than in other areas, libraries are an even more important point of access for online interactions, instruction, and services.

Across Ontario each year, public libraries offer an average of 65.2 early literacy and learning library programs per 1,000 children 0 to 6 years of age, and 18.3 other programs per 1,000 children up to 14 years of age. Libraries in rural areas offer more than twice as many of these programs (112.6 and 28.8 per 1,000 children respectively) compared to libraries in metro areas (49.5 and 14.8 per 1,000 children respectively) suggesting they represent an important learning opportunity for rural children. Program offerings by libraries in partially non-metro areas fall in between these two with 71.8 early literacy and learning programs per 1,000 children up to 6 years of age and 19.9 other programs for children up to 14 years.

EARLY LITERACY AND LEARNING LIBRARY PROGRAMS PER 1,000 CHILDREN AGED 0 TO 6 YEARS

Rural	112.6
Partial	71.8
Metro	49.5

Libraries in Ontario provide comparatively many fewer learning-related programs to adults. On average, libraries offer two programs for every 1,000 adults each year related to career support and advice, job help, and skills training. While smaller in number to those programs offered to children, rural areas still offer more than twice as many programs to adults (3.5 programs per 1,000 adults) than in metro areas (1.5 programs per 1,000 adults). The number of offerings in partially non-metro areas again falls between these two areas across the province.

ENVIRONMENT



The Environment is the foundation upon which human societies are built and the source of our sustained wellbeing. On a broader level, environmental protection involves the prevention of waste and damage while revitalizing our ecosystems and working towards the sustainability of all of our resources.

The Environment is the basis for our health, our communities, and our economy. Despite its fundamental importance to human existence and the natural resource wealth it provides to Canada, we often fail to appreciate the various ecosystem services provided by nature that sustain human wellbeing. Indeed, how great is our wellbeing if we cannot breathe the air or drink the water?

Water Quality

The relative abundance of fresh water in the province is a tremendous benefit enjoyed by almost all Ontarians depending, of course, on where they live. The quality of fresh water in Ontario overall, as measured by its pH level, is 8.1, which is slightly alkaline, but well within acceptable limits. Considering only a pH level of 8.0 and not other potential contaminants that may be present in the water, rural areas arguably have the best quality water in the province, although it is still above the ideal level of 7.0 to 7.5 pH. The pH levels are very slightly higher and the same in partially non-metro and metro areas at a pH of 8.2.

Land

In total, there are almost 5 million hectares of land under cultivation in Ontario (4,997,286 hectares), which represents 5.5% of the total provincial land area. The majority of land under cultivation is in rural areas (3,008,766 hectares or 60.2%), with partially non-metro areas accounting for much of the rest (1,639,104 hectares or 32.8%). The remaining 7% of the total land in cultivation is in metro areas around the province (349,416 hectares).

LAND UNDER CULTIVATION WITHIN AREA

Rural	4.0%
Partial	11.9%
Metro	27.2%

Land under cultivation is not evenly distributed, however. Rural areas may have the largest amount of cultivated land in Ontario (i.e., over 3 million hectares), but this represents only 4.0% of the total rural land. In comparison, over one-quarter (27.2%) of the more limited land in metro areas is under cultivation. Just under 12% of the land within partially non-metro areas (11.9%) is under cultivation.

Energy

ENERGY POVERTY HOUSEHOLDS

Rural	41.3%
Partial	28.2%
Metro	22.5%

Even though Ontario's residents have access to a robust energy network, many people struggle to heat and cool their homes and power their lights and appliances and as a result, experience a high energy cost burden. This burden places many Ontarians in *energy poverty*¹⁰ and is characterized by the over one-quarter of households (27.3%) that are spending 6% or more of their after-tax income on home energy. Energy poverty is considerably higher in rural areas where 4 in 10 households (41.3%) are spending over 6% of their household income on energy costs. In comparison, less than one-quarter of households in metro areas (22.5%) and somewhat more in partially non-metro areas (28.2%) are energy poor. These rates across the province are much higher than one would expect. Further, energy poverty is not just associated with low income – many households with moderate incomes may still experience energy poverty. Rural households in particular tend to have older homes than those in more urban areas, and often face higher transmission charges on their utility bills. In addition, rural area home owners often have less access to more cost-effective and efficient means of home heating.

Waste Reduction

The overall waste diversion rate in Ontario, which is the percentage of the total amount of waste that is kept out of landfills, has hovered around 25% and remained relatively unchanged over the last 10 years. About 60% of all waste in Ontario is generated by the industrial, commercial, and institutional sector (e.g., manufacturing, hospitality, offices, construction), yet it diverts only about 10 to 15% of the waste from landfill. In contrast, residential waste accounts for about one-quarter of the provincial total, yet Ontarians are diverting 49.2% of their waste from landfills, mainly through the Blue Box and Green Bin recycling programs, and this rate has been improving in recent years.¹¹

WASTE DIVERSION RATES

Rural	35.7%
Partial	46.4%
Metro	51.5%

Residents of metro areas divert the highest percentage of their waste (51.5%), followed fairly closely by residents of partially non-metro areas (46.4%). Just over one-third of waste is diverted by residents in rural areas of the province (35.7%), and this lower rate has been attributed largely due to the lower availability of targeted recycling programs throughout some parts of rural areas, especially in the north of the province. However, should recycling programs expand across the province, we should expect to see even less waste directed to our landfills, and reduced impacts on the environment.

¹⁰ Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners (CUSP). (2019). *Energy poverty in Canada: A CUSP backgrounder*. Available from: <https://energypoverty.ca/backgrounder.pdf>

¹¹ Government of Ontario. (2017). *Strategy for a waste free Ontario: Building the circular economy*. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer of Ontario. Available from: https://files.ontario.ca/finalstrategywastefreeont_eng_aoda1_final-s.pdf

HEALTHY POPULATIONS



The Healthy Populations domain considers the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of the population. It examines life expectancy, lifestyle and behaviours, and the circumstances that influence health such as access to health care.

Healthy Populations captures both the overall health of the population (“health status”) as well as factors that influence health (“health determinants”). This broad perspective is used because individuals’ lifestyles and behaviours are constrained and shaped by broader social factors such as how food is distributed and priced, how houses are constructed and located, how urban transportation is designed, how accessible health care and recreational services are, and how we interact with the natural environment.

Self-Reported Health

In Ontario, approximately 6 in 10 residents (60.7%) report their overall health as being very good or excellent. The percentage of Ontarians reporting these higher levels of overall health is quite similar across all areas of the province, with only a 3% difference between them. Self-reported overall health is slightly higher in partially non-metro areas (61.9%) and slightly lower in rural areas (58.5%). The percentage is the same in metro areas (60.7%) as the province overall.

SELF-RATED OVERALL HEALTH AS VERY GOOD OR EXCELLENT

Rural	58.5%
Partial	61.9%
Metro	60.7%

Similarly, across Ontario, almost 7 in 10 residents (69.1%) report their mental health as being very good or excellent, with even smaller variations across the different areas (i.e., just under 3% difference). The highest percentage of Ontarians reporting very good or excellent mental health was in metro areas (70.2%) and slightly lower in partially non-metro areas (67.4%), with rural areas falling between (68.1%). What does distinguish Ontarians’ self-reported mental health from their overall health is that almost 10% more people in all areas describe their mental health as very good or excellent.

SELF-RATED MENTAL HEALTH AS VERY GOOD OR EXCELLENT

Rural	68.1%
Partial	67.4%
Metro	70.2%

Approximately one-third of Ontarians (32.2%) aged 12 years of age or older report they experience activity limitations sometimes or often because of a physical or mental condition, or a health problem which has lasted or is expected to last 6 months or longer. The number of people experiencing activity limitations rises to almost 4 in 10 residents of rural areas (38.6%). The percentage is almost as high in partially non-metro areas (35.6%), and in contrast, fewer than 3 in 10 residents of metro areas (28.5%) face activity limitations sometimes or often. The percentage of Ontarians with health-related limitations to their activity is of concern in all areas of the province, but is most acute in rural areas.

Of the many health conditions that people may experience, diabetes is of particular interest because it increases the risk of acquiring other health problems such as

heart disease, blindness and kidney failure. As such, taking steps to minimize the prevalence of diabetes is an important factor in supporting a healthy population. The overall incidence of diabetes (i.e., both Type 1 and Type 2 diagnosed by a health professional) in the population of Ontario is 7.7%, with the highest rate in rural areas (9.0%). The percentage of the population with diabetes in both metro (7.5%) and partially non-metro areas (7.4%) is 1.5% lower, which may appear to be a small difference, but represents a significant number of people.

Taken together, these indicators of the overall health of Ontarians point to some clear health challenges affecting more residents in rural areas than those elsewhere in the province. Ongoing monitoring and action is critical to support rural residents who might be facing serious health-related issues.

Health Care Access

Ontarians' access to a regular health physician, such as a family doctor, is a useful indicator of the capacity and appropriateness of the primary health care system because such access is more effective in sustaining good health than episodic use of emergency care. Similarly, Ontarians must have access to the health care system to ensure their health-related needs are adequately met.

Nine in 10 Ontarians aged 12 years of age older (90.1%) have a regular health care provider such as a family doctor. The provincial rate is relatively consistent across all areas of the province with a slightly higher percentage of the population in rural areas (91.5%) saying they have a regular health care provider than either partially non-metro (90.8%) and metro residents (89.4%). Looked at in another way, however, this rate means that almost 1 in 10 residents do *not* have regular access to a health care provider with whom they can see or talk to when they need normal care or advice concerning their health.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, 1 in 10 Ontario residents (10.3%) report that their health care needs were unmet in the previous year. Again, the percentage of Ontarians who report unmet health care needs is similar across all areas of the province, with a less than 1% difference between them.

However, of those residents of rural areas who report their health care needs were unmet in the past year, more than 1 in 10 (11.4%) indicated that there was a lack of the needed health care in their area. This rate is notably higher than the provincial rate (8.4%) and considerably higher than the percentage of residents in metro areas (7.1%) who reported such health care was unavailable in their area. More residents of partially non-metro areas (10.1%) also reported a lack of needed health care. Certainly, the population size and its concentration in an area, as well as the availability of health professionals, are in part factors; nevertheless, lower levels of access in more rural areas of the province point to health inequities that need to be addressed.

POPULATION REPORTING NOT HAVING NEEDED HEALTH CARE IN THEIR AREA

Rural	11.4%
Partial	10.1%
Metro	7.1%

Health-Related Behaviour

Even though national rates of smoking have been declining, it is widely recognized as a risky health behaviour associated with a variety of illnesses that could otherwise be prevented. By continuing to support strategies for the prevention and reduction of smoking – especially at an early age when such behaviour is typically adopted – helps to ensure better health in later life.

In rural areas of Ontario, 1 in 5 residents aged 12 years of age older (20.0%) report being daily or occasional smokers, which is a higher rate than anywhere else in the province. Daily or occasional smokers represent 17.0% of the population in partially non-metro areas and 13.3% of metro areas. Lower percentages of people smoking in metro areas may be attributable to many urban areas adopting bylaws concerning population health that restrict smoking in public buildings and areas where residents often congregate.

DAILY OR OCCASIONAL SMOKERS

Rural	20.0%
Partial	17.0%
Metro	13.3%

Influenza vaccination can reduce hospitalization and overall mortality, thus higher immunization rates are a stronger indicator of a healthy population. Just over one-third of Ontarians aged 12 years of age older were immunized against influenza in the previous year (34.4%), which has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade. The provincial rate is virtually identical in all areas of the province with a difference of less than 0.5% among them (i.e., 34.4% in metro areas, 34.2% in partially non-metro areas, and 34.6% in rural areas). While immunization rates could ideally be higher, the availability of the flu shot represents a significant population health success.



LEISURE AND CULTURE

By participating in Leisure and Culture activities, whether arts, culture, or recreation, we contribute to our wellbeing as individuals, to our communities, and to society as a whole. The myriad of activities and opportunities we pursue and enjoy benefit our overall life satisfaction and quality of life.

As forms of human expression, leisure and cultural activities help to more fully define our lives, the meaning we derive from them, and ultimately, our wellbeing. This remains true throughout our lives regardless of age, gender, or social group. The impact of participation in leisure and cultural activities is even greater for people in marginalized groups, such as those living with disabilities, living in poverty, or as members of a minority population.

Leisure Participation

In Ontario, residents spend an average of 3.7% of their time on the previous day participating in a wide variety of leisure activities, such as outdoor recreation, reading for pleasure, writing, and listening to music. This amount of daily time devoted to leisure is quite similar across all areas of the province with residents in rural areas spending slightly more (3.9%), and residents in partially non-metro areas spending slightly less (3.5%). Metro residents reflect the provincial average (3.7%).

TIME SPENT IN ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES ON PREVIOUS DAY

Rural	2.5%
Partial	1.6%
Metro	1.2%

For all residents of Ontario, 1.5% of their time on the previous day is spent on arts and cultural activities. Ontarians report spending less time each day in arts and culture activities, such as attending concerts and visiting museums and galleries, than in other forms of leisure activity. These are activities that occur less regularly so the lower rates are not surprising. Perhaps surprisingly, given the more limited accessibility to venues to pursue these opportunities, residents in rural areas of Ontario report the highest percentage of time spent in these activities (2.5%), which is more than twice as high as residents in metro areas (1.2%) and notably higher than residents of partially non-metro areas (1.6%). Engagement with the arts is increasingly seen as an important factor in contributing to positive health and wellbeing outcomes, including marginalized groups,¹² so access to opportunities is critical.

¹² Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019). *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report 67. Copenhagen: World Health Organization (WHO). Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/329834/9789289054553-eng.pdf>

An active lifestyle has numerous physical benefits, and also contributes to positive social and psychological outcomes for participants. Over half of the adult population 18 years of age and older in Ontario (54.9%) report at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week, which is the minimum threshold recommended by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology¹³ for positive health outcomes. This rate of participation in physical activity is quite similar across all areas of the province. A slightly higher percentage of adults in partially non-metro areas (56.0%) report this level of weekly physical activity compared to metro areas (54.6%) and rural (54.0%) areas.

POPULATION PARTICIPATING IN AT LEAST 150 MINUTES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PER WEEK

Rural	54.0%
Partial	56.0%
Metro	54.6%

Taking annual holidays provides important opportunities to relax, to recover from the demands of work, and to spend time with family and friends. Ontarians reported spending on average just under two nights away per vacation trip (1.65 nights away) to destinations at least 80km from home. This suggests that many of these holidays are short “get-aways”.

Library Opportunities

As noted earlier in the Education domain, libraries provide much more than just content to advance people’s education and interests. Indeed, they are important community hubs where people meet, engage in activities, and attend events, thereby strengthening community bonds. The role of libraries as community hubs in more rural areas of Ontario may even be more critical given the comparatively fewer facilities and other opportunities available as well as comparatively poorer internet services.

Overall, the programs and services offered by libraries appear to be most important to residents of rural areas in Ontario who report higher usage and visits than residents of other areas of the province. Approximately 1 in 10 Ontarians make an in-person visit to their local library (99.5 per 1,000 population) and residents of rural areas visit more so (109.8 per 1,000) than their counterparts in partially non-metro (93.5 per 1,000) and metro areas (99.9 per 1,000). Indeed, residents of rural areas are much more likely to attend a wide variety of library programs offered each year (485.1 per 1,000) than Ontarians living in other areas (339.0 in partially non-metro areas and 298.2 per 1,000 in metro areas).

ANNUAL LIBRARY PROGRAM ATTENDANCE PER 1,000 POPULATION

Rural	485.1
Partial	339.0
Metro	298.2

The higher rates of participation by rural residents is in part due to the higher number of offerings provided by libraries, which reflects the need for such opportunities in rural areas that libraries are filling. The number of annual library programs being offered is considerably higher in rural areas, with 34.3 programs per 1,000 population, which is almost two and a half times the number offered in metro areas (14.1 per 1,000) and almost twice the number across Ontario overall (19.0 per 1,000). Libraries in rural areas are also offering more culture days, poetry and story readings, and arts shows (6.0 per 10,000), which is on par with offerings in metro areas (6.1 per 10,000) and many more than libraries offer residents in partially non-metro areas (3.7 per 10,000). While the absolute number of offerings appears to be small, these annuals events and shows represent an important opportunity for making connections and strengthening bonds.

¹³ Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2020). *Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines: An integration of physical activity, sedentary behaviour, and sleep*. Ottawa: CSEP. Available from: <https://csepguidelines.ca/>

LIBRARY INTERNET CONNECTIONS
PER 10,000 POPULATION

Rural	12.6
Partial	7.2
Metro	5.8

In addition, by making free computers and internet connections available in public libraries, greater access to information and resources is provided, especially to people who might otherwise not have it due to financial constraints or limited internet availability. Such access is clearly important in rural areas where the number of internet connections in libraries is almost twice the level of provision (12.6 connections per 10,000 population) as in the province overall – and in partially non-metro areas (7.2 per 10,000) – and more than double the number in metro areas (5.8 per 10,000).

While libraries are important places for people to connect and engage in activities, they do still provide the fundamental service of lending materials, such as books, music, and videos, to residents. Metro areas have the highest circulation number of all library materials (185.4 materials per 1,000 population), while partially non-metro has the lowest (158.4 per 1,000) with rural areas falling in between (170.4 per 1,000). Based on the overall rates of library offerings and program participation, residents of rural areas are demonstrating the broad appeal of libraries to their communities.

Sector Employment

Drawing on the arguments put forth by Richard Florida concerning the value of a “creative class”¹⁴ and how it can lead to a higher quality of community life, employment in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry may reflect the degree to which communities are developing their arts, cultural, and recreational potential.

In Ontario, 2.1% of the population aged 15 years of age and older in the labour force is employed in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry. The percentage of residents is slightly higher in partially non-metro areas (2.3%) and lower in metro areas (1.9%), with employment in rural areas falling in between (2.0%). Much has been made of the draw of the creative class to urban areas, but these rates of employment in the arts and cultural sector suggest that this is not the case – all areas of the province have roughly comparable percentages of people working in this sector. There are, however, some notable differences across the province, with percentages lower in regions such as in Timiskaming (0.9%) and Kenora (1.1%) and much higher in the District Municipality of Muskoka (3.7%) and the Regional Municipality of Niagara. (4.0%), which further challenges the presumed appeal of urban areas.

¹⁴ Florida, R. (2014). *The rise of the creative class – revisited*. New York: Basic Books.

LIVING STANDARDS



Living Standards examines Canadians' average and median income and wealth, distribution of income and wealth including poverty rates, income fluctuations and volatility. It considers economic security, including labour market security, and housing and food security.

Our living standards should reflect our capacity to transform economic growth into stable current and future income streams for everyone. Economic growth does not automatically translate into better living standards. A higher average income, for example, may be achieved at the cost of increased social inequality or greater economic insecurity. In contrast, achieving greater job quality, reducing poverty, and providing basic affordable housing and food security to individuals and families will raise wellbeing for everyone.

Economic Security

As noted in the earlier section on Demographics, rural areas have the lowest employment rate (55.3%), the lowest after-tax median income (\$71,780) of any area in the province, as well as the second highest unemployment rate (7.5%). Rural areas have a long-term unemployment rate equivalent to the province overall. While rural areas generally encounter greater economic insecurity, in some cases there are stark differences between rural communities. The employment rate in rural areas ranges from 44.3% in Haliburton to 67.8% in County of Dufferin, and the unemployment rate ranges from 4.0% in Perth County to 13.4% in Manitoulin District. Nevertheless, it is clear in some areas there are fewer opportunities for a secure and stable job and less access to necessities of life like food and shelter.

Statistics Canada provides three different measures of low income as a proxy for persons living in poverty: the Low-Income Measure, After-Tax (LIM-AT); Low-Income After-Tax Cut-Off (LICO); and the Market Basket Measure (MBM). The federal government has recently mandated the MBM be used as its new measure of low income as part of *Canada's First National Poverty Reduction Strategy*¹⁵. While the definitions and means of determining these three measures differ somewhat (see Glossary in Appendix C), their overall trends over time show similar patterns with the percentages of people living in poverty falling both in Canada and Ontario. Whichever measure is used, more can still be done for the over 10% of Ontarians living in poverty.

PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS IN LOW INCOME BASED ON:

	MBM	LIM-AT	LICO
Rural	10.5	14.1	5.3
Partial	11.4	13.0	7.1
Metro	16.0	15.2	12.4

¹⁵ Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018). *Opportunity for all: Canada's First National Poverty Reduction Strategy*. Cat. no.: SSD-212-08-18E. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>

Within Ontario according to the MBM, a higher percentage of residents in metro areas (16.0%) are living in low income, while the percentages in partially non-metro (11.4%) and rural areas (10.5%) are comparatively much lower. This pattern is also evident when using LICO and LIM-AT. These differences are likely attributable in part to the higher cost of living in most urban areas.¹⁶

EMPLOYMENT RATE

Rural	55.3
Partial	60.1
Metro	61.0

Incidence of low income stands in contrast to both the employment and unemployment rates in the different areas of the province. The employment rate in rural areas (55.3%) is approximately 5% lower than in both partially non-metro (60.1%) and metro areas (61.0%), while at the same time, the unemployment rate is higher in rural areas (7.5%) than in partially non-metro areas (7.1%) and similar to the rate in metro areas (7.6%). Further, long-term unemployment – unemployment lasting longer than a year – is between 4.0% and 4.4% in all three areas. So despite having a smaller percentage of people in low income, the labour force in rural areas face greater employment challenges.

Housing Security

30% OR MORE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON HOUSING

Rural	22.0%
Partial	24.1%
Metro	31.2%

For housing to be affordable, less than 30% of before-tax household income should be spent on housing expenses such as electricity, property taxes, mortgage payments, and rent. Despite considerably lower median incomes, fewer residents in rural areas (22.0%) are spending 30% or more of their household income on shelter costs than residents in partially non-metro areas (24.1%) and especially residents in metro areas (31.2%). Indeed, a much higher percentage of metro area residents are spending 30% or more of their incomes on housing than elsewhere across the country (24.1% nationally). This is perhaps not surprising with a major centre like Toronto where housing costs are among the highest in Canada and the relatively higher cost of living in such urban areas.

Food Security

Food insecurity occurs when nutritious food is not available to people, the amount of food is insufficient, and/or there are barriers to safe and effective food preparation, such as poor drinking water quality or sanitation issues. In Ontario, close to 1 in 10 households (8.3%) report moderate to severe food insecurity. More households in partially non-metro areas (9.4%) report food insecurity than in either rural (8.0%) or metro areas (7.9%) of the province. Nevertheless, close to 10% of households facing food insecurity in Ontario is unacceptable especially when the rate is lower on average across the country (7.7%).

Work-Related Stress

More than 1 in 4 residents in Ontario (27.0%) report quite a bit or extreme work-related stress. This percentage is slightly higher in metro areas (27.8%) than in

¹⁶ Statistics Canada. (2020). *Consumer Price Index by geography, all-items, monthly, percentage change, not seasonally adjusted, Canada, provinces, Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Iqaluit*. Table 18-10-0004-02. Statistics Canada. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb1/en/cv.action?pid=1810000402>

partially non-metro areas (26.3%), and notably higher than in rural areas (24.8%) of the province. Regardless of these small differences and beyond the negative implications of stress for decent work and the nature of the work environment, work-related stress is a major factor in contributing to poor health, so when more than one-quarter of the population is affected, it represents a serious public health concern.¹⁷

¹⁷ Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2018). *Canadian employees report workplace stress as primary cause of mental health concerns*. Ottawa, ON: Health Canada. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/news-article/13522/canadian-employees-report-workplace-stress-primary-cause-mental-health-concerns>



TIME USE

Time Use considers how people experience and spend their time. It means how the use of our time affects physical and mental wellbeing, individual and family wellbeing, and present and future wellbeing. It examines the length of our work week, our work arrangements, our levels of time pressure, and the time we spend with friends and in other free-time activities.

The implicit assumption with Time Use is the notion of *balance*. Most activities are beneficial to wellbeing when done in moderation, but are detrimental when done excessively or not at all. There are only 24 hours in a day, so too much time directed towards one activity can mean not enough or no time at all allocated for other activities that are also critical for our wellbeing. Not only does the amount of time matter, but the pace of and relative control over timing of activities throughout the day can affect overall quality of life.

Time

How much time Ontarians devote each day to certain kinds of activities may be beneficial — or detrimental — to their wellbeing. While some people might have the ability to allocate their time to achieve greater work-life balance, too often, factors beyond their control dictate how that time gets allocated.

Many residents of Ontario are working 50 hours or more each week, well beyond the maximum 35 to 40 hours of most full-time employment, leaving less time each week for other valued activities. Overall, 1 in 5 Ontarians (20.2%) are working 50 hours or more per week, and the percentage is even higher in partially non-metro areas with almost 1 in 4 residents (23.2%) working longer hours. The percentage of residents in rural areas (21.9%) who work longer hours is slightly higher than the provincial average, and the percentage of residents in metro areas (18.3%) is lower, but still notably high.

AVERAGE COMMUTE TIME TO WORK IN MINUTES

Rural	22.1
Partial	25.5
Metro	32.0

On average, Ontarians are spending almost half an hour each day commuting to work (28.8 minutes per day). Over the course of a year, that means they are losing over 10 days to commuting that could be devoted to other activities. Commute times are even longer for metro residents (32.0 minutes), but are considerably shorter for rural residents (22.1 minutes). Residents of partially non-metro areas have commute times (25.5 minutes) that fall between these two, all of which suggests that the more highly urbanized the area, the longer the commute.

Lengthy commute times are linked to lower levels of wellbeing, greater incidence of ill-health, and poorer mental health outcomes.¹⁸ More than 1 in 10 of Ontarians 15 years of age and older who are employed in the labour force commute 60 minutes or more each day to get to work (12.4%). On average, residents in rural areas of the province spend less time per day commuting to work (7.3%), compared to partially non-metro (10.2%) and metro (14.8%) areas. Metro residents are likely facing more traffic and increased use of public transit in their urban areas. Indeed, such traffic congestion is a greater factor in the detrimental effect of commuting on health and wellbeing.¹⁹

PEOPLE IN LABOUR FORCE COMMUTING
60 OR MORE MINUTES PER DAY

Rural	7.3%
Partial	10.2%
Metro	14.8%

Ontarians are spending on average more than an hour per day with friends (69.0 minutes), which represents an important source of ongoing social support. The amount of time is similar across all areas, with the highest in rural (70.4 minutes), followed by metro (69.3 minutes), and partially non-metro (67.8 minutes). While the amount of time being spent with friends is about the same in all areas of Ontario, what is of concern is that this time has been steadily declining over the years, placing valued support at risk.²⁰

Timing

Timing considers when activities occur during the day, and how easy or difficult it might be for Ontarians to schedule activities like work, leisure, meals, or volunteer commitments. The more easily people can control their time, the greater their wellbeing.

Related to aspects of economic security in Living Standards, when people have regular, weekday work hours, it increases the sense of stability and security they feel about their jobs. About two-thirds of Ontarians in the labour force (66.7%) have regular, weekday work hours – such as a regular daytime schedule or shift – which means that one-third of residents do not have the same sense of stability in their jobs. This pattern is relatively similar across all areas of the province with a slightly higher percentage in metro areas (68.1%), followed by partially non-metro (65.2%) and rural (63.4%) areas. The slightly lower percentage of the labour force in rural areas with regular work schedules could be in part attributable to the seasonality of work such as harvesting and planting seasons, and peak periods associated with tourism operations such as marinas and ski hills.

PEOPLE IN LABOUR FORCE WITH
FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS

Rural	38.0%
Partial	41.0%
Metro	48.7%

Similar to the stability afforded regular weekday hours, having some flexibility when people begin and finish their work hours allow them to more easily schedule other activities into their days. Close to half of Ontarians working for pay have flexible work hours (45.1%), with the highest percentage in metro areas (48.7%). A smaller percentage of residents in partially non-metro areas (41.0%) have flexible work hours and only about a third of rural area residents do (38.0%).

¹⁸ Yaropud, T., Gilmore, J., & LaRochelle-Côté, S. (2019). *Results from the 2016 Census: Long commutes to work by car*. Insights on Canadian Society, Catalogue no. 75-006-X, Statistics Canada. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00002-eng.htm>

¹⁹ Hilbrecht, M., Smale, B., & Mock, S. (2014). Highway to health? Commute time and well-being among Canadian adults. *World Leisure Journal*, 56(2), 151-163.

²⁰ Canadian Index of Wellbeing. (2019). *Average daily amount of time with friends (minutes per day)*. Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo. Available at: <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/what-we-do/domains-and-indicators/average-daily-amount-time-friends-minutes-day>

Temporality

Temporality focuses on the natural rhythms associated with time such as our sleep and waking time rhythms, transitions from day to night, and activities associated with the changing of the seasons.

PEOPLE GETTING 7 TO 9 HOURS OF GOOD QUALITY ESSENTIAL SLEEP

Rural	51.0%
Partial	51.0%
Metro	49.7%

Only half of Ontarians report getting 7 to 9 hours of good quality essential sleep (including relaxing, resting, and naps) each day (50.3%), which places a significant percentage of the population at greater risk of harmful health outcomes such as obesity, diabetes, depression, and overall reduced wellbeing.²¹ This percentage of the population getting insufficient sleep is similar across metro (49.7%), partially non-metro (51.0%), and rural (51.0%) areas.

PEOPLE FEELING HIGH LEVELS OF TIME PRESSURE

Rural	16.1%
Partial	15.4%
Metro	21.5%

As well as being one of the significant contributors to lack of sleep, the degree to which people experience chronic stress due to ongoing feelings of time pressure can lead to adverse health and wellbeing outcomes. In Ontario, about 1 in 5 residents from 15 to 64 years of age report high levels of time pressure (19.0%) and the percentage of people feeling greater time pressure is even higher in metro areas (21.5%). A smaller percentage of residents in both partially non-metro (15.4%) and rural areas (16.1%) experience greater time pressure, but the rates are still worryingly high.

²¹ Chaput, J.-P., Wong, S., & Michaud, I. (2017). Duration and quality of sleep among Canadians aged 18 to 79. *Health Reports*, 28(9), 28-33. Catalogue no. 82-003-X, Statistics Canada. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2017009/article/54857-eng.htm>

Appendix A.

THE CIW: METHODS

To create this report on Ontarians' wellbeing, Census Divisions (CDs) were grouped into three different types of geography based on the size and distribution of their populations in order to distinguish rural residents from those living in more urban areas. CDs, which are counties, regions and districts, or "upper tier" municipalities, are comprised of several census sub-divisions (CSDs), which are the incorporated towns or municipalities within the same CD, and these areal units determined the three areas used in this report. *Metropolitan areas* are those CDs designated as census metropolitan areas (CMAs)²² where all of the constituent CSDs are within the metropolitan area. *Partially non-metro areas* are those CDs comprised of CSDs where some are delineated as part of a metropolitan area and some are part of non-metropolitan areas. Hence, partially non-metro areas are CDs with a mix of populations living within both metropolitan and non-metropolitan (i.e., rural) areas. Finally, *rural areas* (or *non-metropolitan areas*) are those CDs where all of its CSDs, and therefore their population, fall outside of a metropolitan area.²³

The most recent data available were taken from three main sources. These sources of data provided demographic characteristics and indicators for each of the eight domains comprising the CIW's framework identified as critical to our overall wellbeing (i.e., community vitality, healthy populations, democratic engagement, the environment, leisure and culture, education, living standards, and time use).

1. **National survey data and other federal sources** — wherever possible, indicators used for the CIW's national index comprising the eight domains are used. The most recent data, principally from Statistics Canada and other federal agencies (i.e., Ministry of Environment and Climate Change; Legislative Assembly of Canada; Elections Canada) are the main sources for creating profiles of wellbeing. Many of the indicators come from national surveys, including the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and various cycles of the General Social Survey (GSS) focused on Time Use; Victimization; Social Engagement; and on Giving, Volunteering, and Participating;
2. **Provincial data sources** — when national data were not available, proxy indicators were identified for several of the domains that were available from provincial agencies and not-for-profit organizations. The agencies from which indicators were drawn included the Government of Ontario's Public Library Statistics; Government of Ontario's Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network; Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture; and People for Education; and

²² A Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) is a grouping of CSDs which has a total population of at least 100,000, of which 50,000 or more live in the built-up urban core. A CMA also includes any neighbouring CSD where more than 50% of those with jobs are commuting to the CMA.

²³ Rural Institute of Ontario. (2017). *Rural Ontario's Demography: Census Update 2016*. A report in the *Focus on Rural Ontario* series. Guelph, ON: Rural Ontario Institute. Available at: <http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/knowledge-centre/focus-on-rural-ontario>

3. **Census of Canada** — primarily for the section describing the demographic characteristics of Ontarians, data have been taken from the most recent Census of Canada (2016), and when possible, updated projections. The Census also provided the means to adapt selected indicators from national and provincial sources to per capita measures thereby allowing for direct comparisons between areas with quite different population sizes.

Data issues

The greatest constraint to providing data on indicators of wellbeing across Ontario was the lack of adequate coverage at the Census Division (CD) level. Even large national surveys conducted by Statistics Canada such as the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the General Social Survey (GSS), once disaggregated to the CD level, might not have provided enough data for the release of viable and reliable measures. For example, indicators used in the national and provincial level reporting of the CIW that could not be reported at the CD level within Ontario included: percentage of people volunteering for a law, advocacy, or political group; feelings of a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the federal parliament; and the average numbers of hours in the past year volunteering for culture and recreation organizations. In each case, Statistics Canada suppressed the data due either to small sample sizes or extreme variability. Further, important indicators for the Environment domain, such as greenhouse gas emissions, air and water quality indices, and other biotic resource indicators, which are often reported nationally, are not available at lower levels of geography (such as CDs).

To supplement national data sources, consultations with ROI's Advisory Group of data experts in the initial data discovery phase of the project identified potential indicators to highlight regional differences on various aspect of wellbeing. For example, data were obtained from: Elections Ontario on voting turnout for the Democratic Engagement domain; People for Education on schools measuring student progress for the Education domain; the Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, and Culture on library statistics for both the Education and the Leisure and Culture domains; and Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners (CUSP) on energy poverty for the Environment domain. With respect to promising data from other sources, the lack of viable coverage at the CD level also was a constraint as was the lack of timely updates. For example, data on the Early Development Index (EDI); the Air Quality Index, and for measures of biotic resources (i.e., fish toxicity) were not available.

In some instances, data – such as from the CCHS – have been compiled based on Ontario's health units, electoral districts, or school boards. In most cases, the geographic boundaries defining these zones are the same as provincial CDs, but in some cases, estimates were made to assign accurate measures to a CD when it did not match the other zone's boundaries. Overall, any error resulting from these estimates was small and randomized; in other words, once the CDs were aggregated to each of the three areas of Ontario, small errors would be minimized.

Finally, most of the data reported here are based on sources for the years 2016 to 2018, such as the CCHS, Elections Canada, and most of the indicators taken from provincial sources. The data from various cycles of the GSS cover the years from 2103 to 2015, and as noted earlier, demographic information comes from the 2016 Census of Canada.

Appendix B.

SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR ONTARIO

DEMOGRAPHICS

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Population	Total population (000s)	2,006	3,904	7,539	13,449	35,152
	Percentage of provincial population	14.9	29.0	56.1	–	–
	Percentage of provincial land area	83.4	15.2	1.4	–	–
Age	Median age in years	47.0	42.0	39.8	41.3	41.2
	Percentage of population under 15 years of age	15.5	16.7	16.5	16.4	16.6
	Percentage of population 50 years of age or older	46.4	39.3	35.5	38.2	38.5
Families	Percentage of population 15 years of age or older that is married or living common-law	61.1	58.1	55.8	57.3	57.6
	Percentage of families led by lone parent	14.8	16.9	17.8	17.1	16.4
	Percentage of lone-parent families led by females	76.3	78.9	82.1	80.4	78.3
Households	Average number of persons per family	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.9
	Percentage of population that owns their homes	75.2	73.3	66.1	69.7	67.8
Language and ethnicity	Percentage of population with English as first language	87.1	81.3	58.8	69.5	58.1
	Percentage of population with French as first language	6.8	3.7	3.9	4.3	21.4
	Percentage of population with another language as first language	7.1	16.7	41.2	29.0	22.9
	Percentage of population with knowledge of both English and French	12.3	8.9	12.1	11.2	17.9
	Percentage of visible minority population	2.7	14.5	44.0	29.3	22.3
	Percentage of population in private households with Aboriginal origins	9.3	4.6	2.1	3.9	6.2
Employment and income ^a	Percentage of labour force employed (employment rate)	55.3	60.1	61.0	61.4	62.0
	Percentage of labour force unemployed (unemployment rate)	7.5	7.1	7.6	7.4	7.7
	Percentage of labour force in long-term unemployment	4.4	4.0	4.4	4.3	4.4
	After-tax median family income	\$ 71,780	\$ 78,916	\$ 82,914	\$ 79,531	\$ 76,372

Note: ^a Data on employment drawn from the most recent Labour Force Survey rather than the 2016 Census of Canada.

COMMUNITY VITALITY

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Social engagement	Percentage of population reporting somewhat or strong sense of belonging to community ^a	73.4	71.4	69.9	70.8	68.9
	Percentage of population reporting unpaid, formal volunteering for groups or organizations with family and/or friends	30.6	29.4	27.9	28.8	28.4
Social support	Percentage of households occupied by a single individual	27.7	25.5	25.6	25.9	28.2
	Percentage of population with five or more close friends	53.2	53.0	54.2	53.7	51.8
Social norms and values	Percentage of population providing unpaid help to others on their own	79.0	83.8	80.0	81.7	81.0
	Percentage of population that believe most or many people can be trusted	58.0	59.3	56.0	57.3	53.5
	Percentage of population reporting experience of discrimination due to their ethnicity, race, or sexual orientation	12.1	13.9	16.2	14.9	13.4
Community safety	Crime Severity Index	65.3	62.4	55.8	60.0	75.0
	Percentage of population who feel safe walking alone after dark	82.4	79.1	78.3	79.2	78.7

Note: ^a Based on Health Units, which approximate census divisions in most instances.

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Citizen participation	Percentage of eligible population that voted in the 2015 <i>federal</i> election	68.6	67.5	67.7	67.8	68.3
	Percentage of eligible population that voted in the 2018 <i>provincial</i> election	58.4	56.8	56.0	56.7	–
Leadership	Percentage of women MPs currently in <i>federal</i> Parliament	17.4	24.2	40.0	31.4	27.2
	Percentage of women MPPs currently in <i>provincial</i> Parliament	15.4	45.5	42.9	37.7	–
Communication	Percentage of total expenses used by MPs to send communications to householders in their ridings	3.1	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.1

EDUCATION

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Educational attainment	Percentage of population 25 years of age and older participating in education-related activities	ND	5.0	4.6	4.3	4.0
	Percentage of population 25 to 29 years of age that have graduated high school ^a	86.5	90.3	93.6	91.9	89.7
	Percentage of population 25 to 64 years of age with apprenticeship or trades certificates	9.6	7.4	4.7	6.2	10.8
	Percentage of population 25 to 64 years of age with university degree	14.9	24.1	40.1	31.9	28.5
Measuring progress	Percentage of elementary schools measuring progress in <i>student health or wellbeing</i> ^b	72.5	75.2	75.0	74.6	–
	Pct. of elementary schools measuring progress in <i>citizenship skills</i> ^b	48.4	38.6	45.3	43.7	–
	Percentage of elementary schools measuring progress in <i>creativity</i> ^b	30.8	27.0	35.3	31.6	–
	Percentage of elementary schools measuring progress in <i>socio-emotional skills</i> ^b	57.6	61.2	66.2	62.9	–
	Percentage of elementary schools measuring progress in <i>school learning environment</i> ^b	67.6	74.1	71.9	71.8	–
Child care	Average amount of time spent in interactive (talk-based) child care with children 0 to 14 years of age (minutes per day)	86.4	128.0	123.7	119.2	123.6
	Percentage of children 0 to 3 years of age for whom there is a regulated/licensed centre-based child care space	22.8	25.2	34.0	29.8	–
Library programs	Average number of early literacy and early learning programs per 1,000 children 0 to 6 years of age	112.6	71.8	49.5	65.2	–
	Average number of other children's programs per 1,000 children 0 to 14 years of age	28.8	19.9	14.8	18.3	–
	Average number of all adult learning programs (i.e., career support and advice, job help, skills training) per 1,000 adult population	3.5	2.3	1.5	2.0	–

Note: ND = Data coverage is not sufficiently good to release figures for rural areas.

^a Based on Health Units, which approximate census divisions in most instances.

^b Based on school boards, which approximate census divisions in most instances.

ENVIRONMENT

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Fresh water	pH levels (based on 14-point scale where 7 is considered neutral) ^a	8.0	8.2	8.2	8.1	–
Land	Area of land under cultivation (000s of hectares)	3,009	1,639	349	4,997	–
	Percentage of land <i>within</i> each area under cultivation	4.0	11.9	27.2	5.5	–
	Percentage of land under cultivation across province	60.2	32.8	7.0	100.0	–
Energy	Energy poverty – percentage of households spending 6% or more of after-tax household income on home energy services	41.3	28.2	22.5	27.3	–
Waster reduction	Percentage of total residential waste diverted by municipalities (includes Blue Box and other materials)	35.7	46.4	51.5	49.2	–

Note: * Pure water is neutral and has a pH level of 7.0. As values fall below 7.0, water is increasingly acidic; as values rise above 7.0, water is increasingly alkaline.

HEALTHY POPULATIONS

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Self-reported health	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older who rate their <i>overall health</i> as very good or excellent ^a	58.5	61.9	60.7	60.7	60.8
	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older who rate their <i>mental health</i> as very good or excellent ^a	68.1	67.4	70.2	69.1	69.4
	Percentage of population of population 12 years of age or older with health or activity limitations sometimes or often ^a	38.6	35.6	28.5	32.2	32.6
	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older with self-reported diabetes ^a	9.0	7.4	7.5	7.7	7.2
Health behaviour	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older who are daily or occasional smokers ^a	20.0	17.0	13.3	15.3	16.0
	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older getting influenza immunization in previous year ^a	34.6	34.2	34.4	34.4	32.0
Health care access	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older with a regular health care provider ^a	91.5	90.8	89.4	90.1	84.9
	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older who reported that their health care needs were unmet in past year ^a	9.9	10.7	10.3	10.3	11.2
	Percentage of population 12 years of age or older who reported that needed health care was not available in their area ^a	11.4	10.1	7.1	8.4	10.0

Note: ^a Based on Health Units, which approximate census divisions in most instances.

LEISURE and CULTURE

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Participation	Average percentage of time spent on the previous day participating in <i>leisure activities</i>	3.9	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.0
	Average percentage of time spent on the previous day participating in <i>arts and culture activities</i>	2.5	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.7
	Percentage of population 18 years of age or older reporting at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week ^a	54.0	56.0	54.6	54.9	56.0
	Average number of nights away on a vacation trip in past year to destinations at least 80 km from home	1.49	1.49	1.84	1.65	1.74
Library opportunities	Number of annual library programs per 1,000 population	34.3	20.8	14.1	19.0	–
	Annual program attendance per 1,000 population	485.1	339.0	298.2	337.7	–
	Number of culture days, poetry and story readings, and arts shows per 10,000 population	6.0	3.7	6.1	5.4	–
	Number of in-person visits to the library per 1,000 population	109.8	93.5	99.9	99.5	–
	Library internet connections per 10,000 population	12.6	7.2	5.8	7.2	–
	Total circulation of all library materials per 1,000 population	170.4	158.4	185.4	175.5	–
Sector employment	Total labour force population aged 15 years of age and over in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry [NAICS]	2.0	2.3	1.9	2.1	2.0

Note: ^a Based on Health Units, which approximate census divisions in most instances.

LIVING STANDARDS

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Economic security	After-tax median income of economic families	\$ 71,780	\$ 78,916	\$ 82,914	\$ 79,531	\$ 76,372
	Percentage of persons in low income:					
	Percentage of persons in low income based on after-tax Low Income Measure (LIM-AT)	14.1	13.0	15.2	14.4	14.2
	Percentage of persons in low income based on after-tax Low Income Cut-Off (LICO)	5.3	7.1	12.4	9.8	9.2
	Percentage of persons in low income based on Market Basket Measure (MBM)	10.5	11.4	16.0	13.9	12.9
	Percentage of labour force employed (employment rate)	55.3	60.1	61.0	59.9	60.2
	Percentage of labour force unemployed (unemployment rate)	7.5	7.1	7.6	7.4	7.7
	Long-term unemployment rate ^a	4.4	4.0	4.4	4.3	4.4
Housing security	Percentage of households with shelter costs 30% or more of before-tax household income	22.0	24.1	31.2	27.7	24.1
Food security	Percentage of households that are moderately or severely food insecure	8.0	9.4	7.9	8.3	7.7
Work-related stress	Percentage of population 15 years of age and older reporting quite a bit or extreme self-perceived work stress	24.8	26.3	27.8	27.0	26.9

Note: ^a Based on Health Units, which approximate census divisions in most instances.

TIME USE

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Time	Percentage of population 15 years of age and over reporting working 50 hours or more per week	21.9	23.2	18.3	20.2	19.3
	Average workday commute time (both ways) for individuals working for pay (minutes per day)	22.1	25.5	32.0	28.8	26.2
	Percentage of employed labour force 15 years of age and over with commuting duration of 60 minutes or more	7.3	10.2	14.8	12.4	9.4
	Average daily amount of time spent with friends (minutes per day)	70.4	67.8	69.3	69.0	71.5
Timing	Percentage of labour force with regular, weekday workhours	63.4	65.2	68.1	66.7	67.4
	Percentage of individuals working for pay with flexible workhours	38.0	41.0	48.7	45.1	43.8
Temporality	Percentage of population 15 years of age or older who report 7 to 9 hours of good quality essential sleep	51.0	51.0	49.7	50.3	49.9
	Percentage of population 15 to 64 years of age reporting high levels of time pressure	16.1	15.4	21.5	19.0	16.5

OVERALL LIFE SATISFACTION

Category	Indicator	AREAS			Ontario	Canada
		Rural	Partial	Metro		
Life satisfaction	Percentage of population 12 years of age and older reporting being satisfied or very satisfied with life ^a	92.6	93.0	93.4	93.2	93.1

Note: ^a Based on Health Units, which approximate census divisions in most instances.

Appendix C.

GLOSSARY

Energy poverty

Energy poverty describes the experience of households that struggle to meet their home energy needs due to cost. When a household spends 6% or more of their after-tax income on home energy costs (e.g., electricity and heating), they are said to be experiencing high home energy cost burdens. Most households spend less than 3% of after-tax income on home energy costs.

Measures of Low Income

Low Income Cut Off (LICO)

Low income cut-off (LICO) is an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family. The approach is essentially to estimate an income threshold at which families are expected to spend 20% more than the average family on food, shelter, and clothing (Statistics Canada, 2015. See: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/2015001/lico-sfr-eng.htm>).

Low Income Measure (LIM)

The low income measure (LIM) is the most commonly used low income measure internationally. LIM is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted household income, where “adjusted” means household needs are taken into account. Adjustment for household sizes reflects the fact that a household’s needs increase as the number of members increases (Statistics Canada, 2015. See: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/2015001/lim-mfr-eng.htm>).

Market Basket Measure (MBM)

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) – now the official measure of low income used by the federal government – is a measure of low income based on the cost of a specific basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living. The MBM includes the costs of food, clothing, footwear, transportation, shelter and other expenses for a reference family of two adults aged 25 to 49 years with two children (aged 9 and 13 years). It provides thresholds for a finer geographic level than the LICO to better reflect, for example, different costs for rural areas in the different provinces. These thresholds are compared to disposable income of families to determine low income status, where disposable income is defined as the sum remaining after

deducting the following from total family income: total income taxes paid; other mandatory payroll deductions (e.g., employer pension plans and supplementary health plans), child support and alimony payments made to another family; out-of-pocket spending on child care; and non-insured but medically prescribed health-related expenses (Statistics Canada, 2015. See: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/2015001/mbm-mpc-eng.htm>).

pH level

pH level is a measure of the acidity of water and therefore its quality. Pure water is neutral and has a pH level of 7.0. As values fall below 7.0, water is increasingly acidic; as values rise above 7.0, water is increasingly alkaline. Changes in the pH level of water are important for the health of many organisms. Most organisms have adapted to life in water of a specific pH and may die if it changes even slightly. Factors that can affect the pH level include in the type bedrock and soil composition over which water flows; the amount of organic material in the water as it decomposes; and the release of chemicals into the water, typically from human sources.

Waste Diversion Rate

The waste diversion rate is the percentage of the total amount of waste material that is kept out of landfills. In other words, the rate represents that part of all waste materials diverted as a percentage of the total amount of waste disposed.

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