



RURAL
COMMUNITY
WELLBEING

SEPTEMBER

20
26

COMMUNITY WELLBEING REPORT

BRUCE COUNTY



PREPARED BY:



RURAL ONTARIO
INSTITUTE

PREPARED FOR: BRUCE COUNTY



RURAL
COMMUNITY
WELLBEING

ABOUT

ROI has developed a dashboard that displays wellbeing indicators for communities across Ontario. The dashboard was developed in collaboration with project partners, including the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and EcoCanada.

The dashboard development and indicator selection were informed through engagement with a focus group of rural data champions whose involvement was integral to this process.

ROI's [Community Wellbeing Dashboard](#) improves access to data and evidence for local decision making. The information on the dashboard and in this report can help communities:

- establish baselines
- identify priorities for change and research
- share stories and celebrate successes
- reveal data gaps for decision making
- monitor progress over time in future reports

This report was prepared using indicators and data from ROI's Community Wellbeing Dashboard. See the [website](#) for definitions, data sources, and references.



Building
**vision, voice
& leadership**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI), [Mitacs](#) and the [University of Guelph's School of Environmental Design and Rural Development \(SED RD\)](#) have partnered on a two-year postgraduate internship training program. Through this multi-year partnership, a team of master's and PhD students supports ROI's work on rural data and leadership development. The program gives graduate students hands-on experience while advancing innovation and data-driven decision-making in rural Ontario.

Mitacs partners with Canadian academic institutions, private industry and government to deliver research and training programs related to industrial and social innovation.

The University of Guelph's SEDRD brings together academic fields focused on creating strong communities in Canada and around the world. Its six programs span Landscape Architecture, Rural Planning and Development, Capacity Development and Extension, and Rural Studies. Through these fields, SEDRD reflects the interdependent roles that planners, leaders, communicators, landscape architects, citizens and politicians play in building strong, authentic communities.

To learn more about this partnership, please visit <https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/mitacs-partnership>

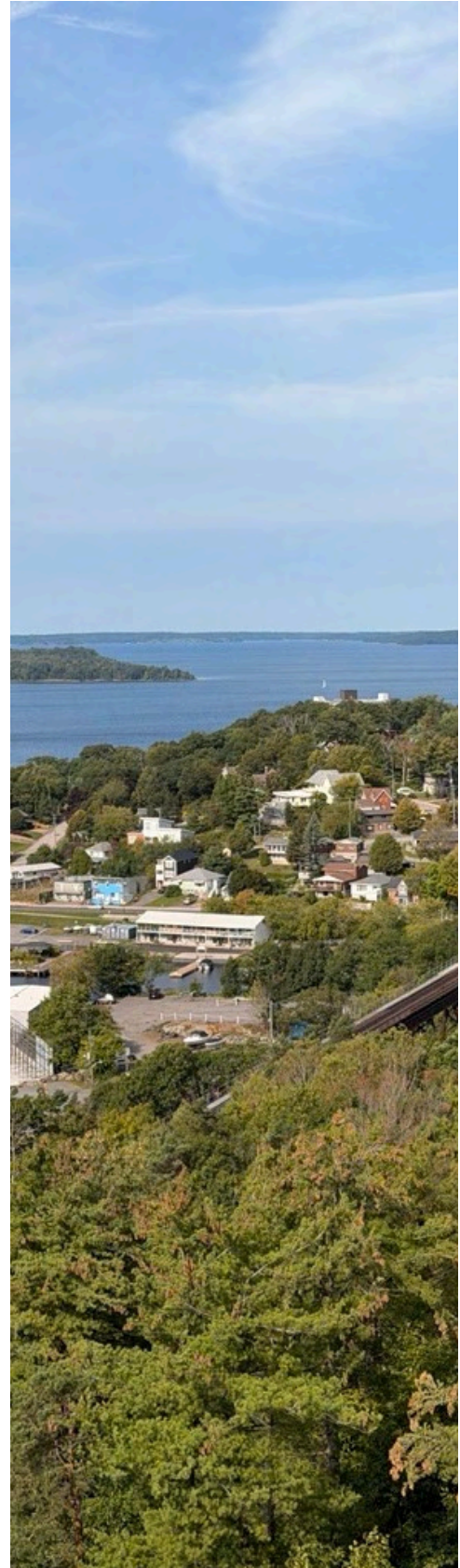


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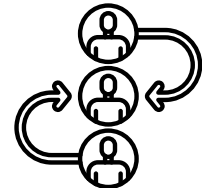
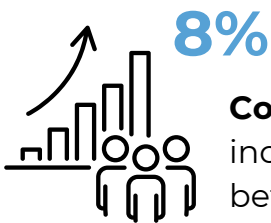
SUMMARY

In 2021, Bruce County had a population of 73,396. The four largest communities, Saugeen Shores, Kincardine, Brockton, and South Bruce Peninsula, accounted for 64% of the population.



In 2021, there were **74 economically dependent people per 100 working aged people** in Bruce County.

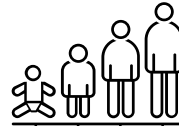
74:100



Community population increased by 8% between 2016-2021.

Bruce County Median Age

48



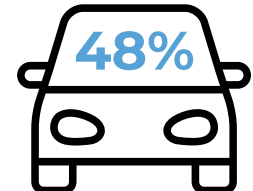
In 2021, the **median age** in Bruce County was 48.

11% of households in Bruce County earned a **low income** in 2021.



11%

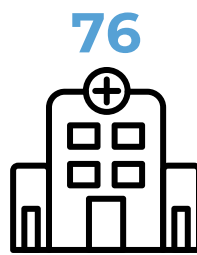
In 2021, **48% of residents** in Bruce County **commuted to work locally**.



In 2023, 80% of households in Bruce County had access to broadband internet with 50/10 Mbps and 0.1% of households had no internet service at all.



80%



76

Bruce County has 76 health facilities; 32 of which are pharmacies, 9 licensed long-term care homes, and 6 hospitals.



88%

In 2021, 88% of people aged 25-64 had a high school diploma and 63% of people had achieved some post-secondary education.

There are 5 arts and cultural facilities in Bruce County. 2 of these are museums, 2 are libraries archives and 1 is miscellaneous – Music & Performing Arts.

5





BRUCE COUNTY

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

COMMUNITY LOCATION, TYPE AND CLASSIFICATION

The census division of Bruce County is located in Western Ontario. This community is made up of eight lower tier municipalities and a first nation community. Local services are delivered through the County.

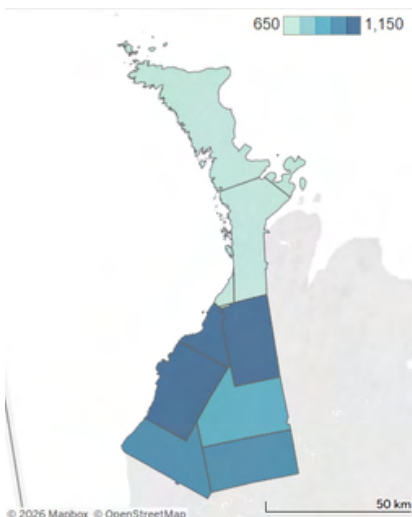
All eight municipalities in Bruce County are classified as rural.

POPULATION

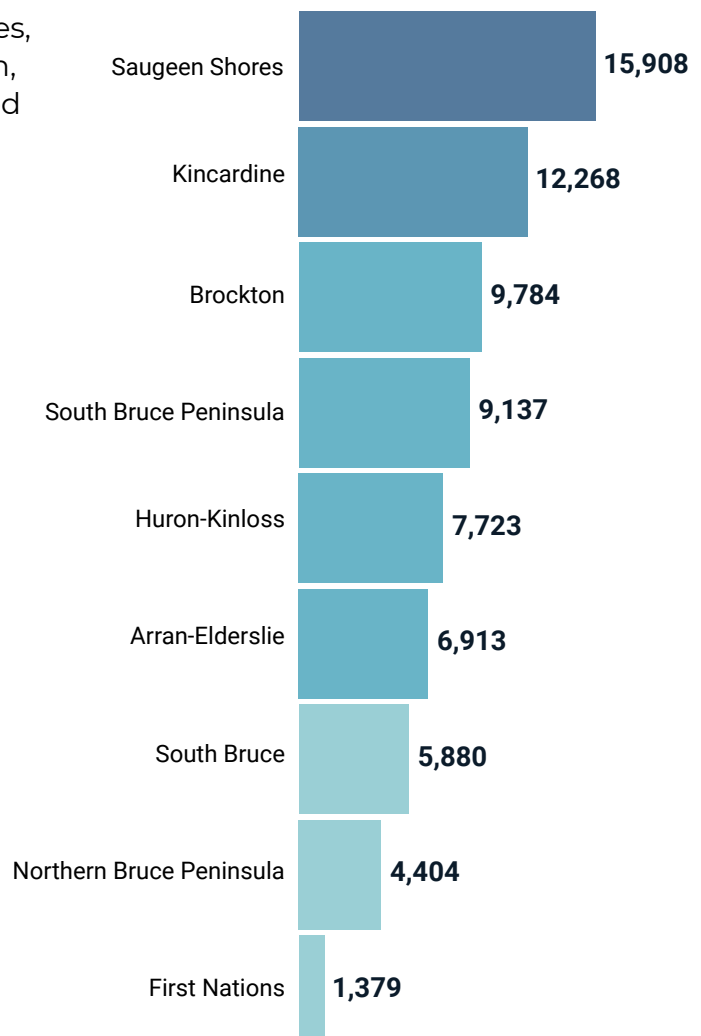
In 2021, Bruce County had a population of 73,396. The four largest communities, Saugeen Shores, Kincardine, Brockton, and South Bruce Peninsula, accounted for 64% of the County's population.



Bruce County



DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR: 2021 POPULATION





POPULATION DENSITY

In 2021, Bruce County had a population density of 18 people per square kilometre, higher than the rural Ontario average of three people per square kilometre. Saugeen Shores, Kincardine, and Huron-Kinloss have the highest population density in the county.

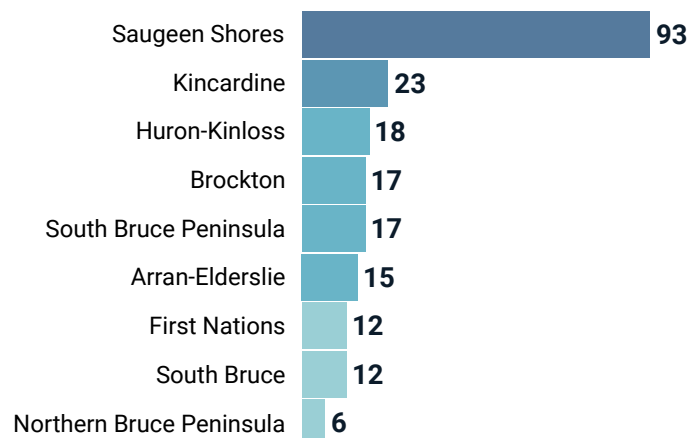
Northern Bruce Peninsula is the largest municipality in Bruce County accounting for approximately 19% of the area but is also the least densely populated and has the second smallest population of the county.

By comparison, Saugeen Shores has the highest population and is the most densely populated community in Bruce County. It is also the smallest community, accounting for approximately 4% of the total land area.

18 people per km²

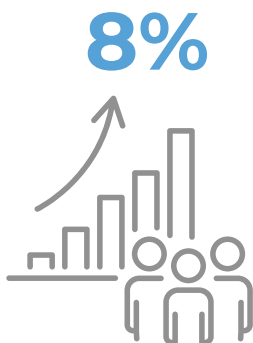


DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR: POPULATION DENSITY



POPULATION CHANGE

Between 2016 and 2021, the population of Bruce County increased by 8%. In comparison, the population of rural Ontario grew by 5%.



Saugeen Shores	16%	South Bruce	4%
Northern Bruce Peninsula	10%	Brockton	3%
Huron-Kinloss	9%	Arran-Elderslie	2%
South Bruce Peninsula	9%	First Nations	-17%
Kincardine	8%	Rural Ontario	5%



POPULATION DEPENDENCY RATIO

In 2021, Bruce County had 74 economically dependent people for every 100 working-age residents. Northern Bruce Peninsula, South Bruce Peninsula, and Huron-Kinloss recorded the highest dependency ratios in the region. For comparison, the ratio for rural Ontario was 66.

74:100



Northern Bruce Peninsula	97	Kincardine	70
South Bruce Peninsula	81	Brockton	69
Huron-Kinloss	79	South Bruce	65
Arran-Elderslie	74	First Nations	57
Saugeen Shores	73	Rural Ontario	66

MEDIAN AGE

In 2021, the median age in Bruce County was 48.0. Northern Bruce Peninsula, South Bruce Peninsula, and Saugeen Shores had the oldest median age in the region. Overall, the County's median age is close to the rural Ontario average of 50.



**Bruce County
Median Age
48**

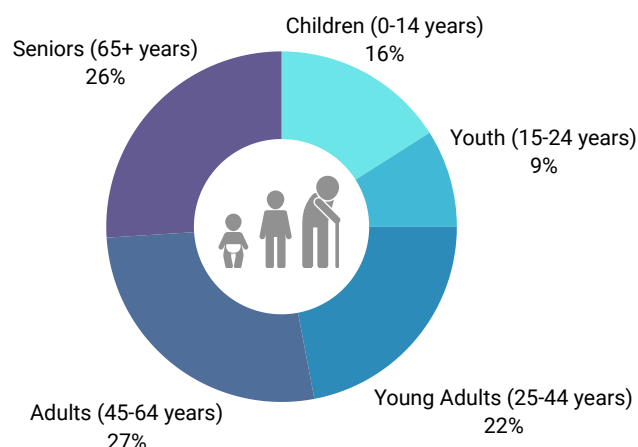
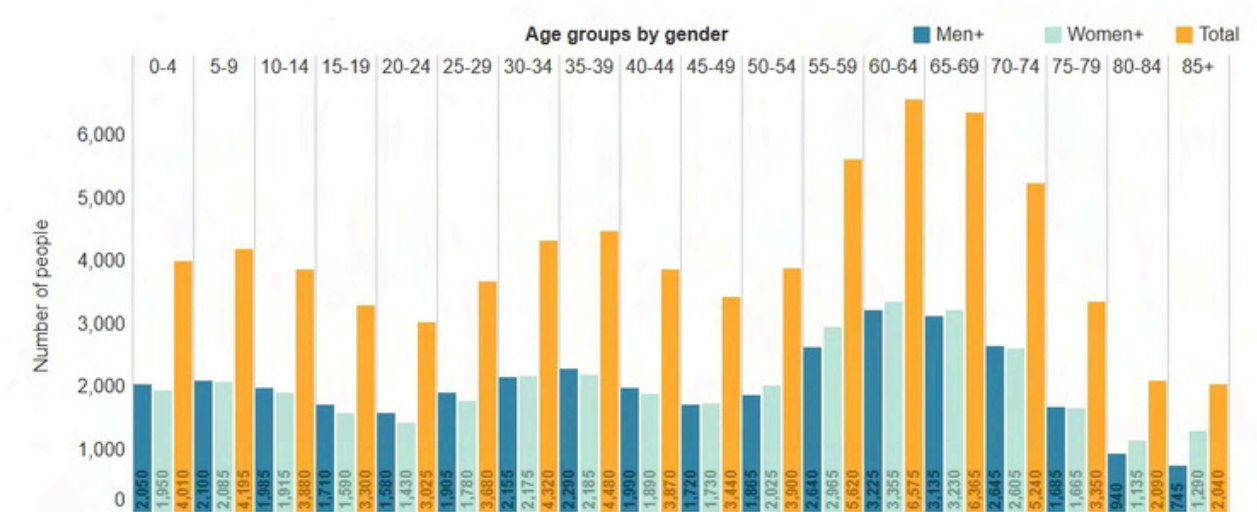
Northern Bruce Peninsula	61.6	Kincardine	44.4
South Bruce Peninsula	56.8	First Nations	42.5
Saugeen Shores	46.8	Arran Elderslie	42.0
Huron-Kinloss	46.0	South Bruce	41.2
Brockton	44.8	Rural Ontario	50.0



AGE DISTRIBUTION

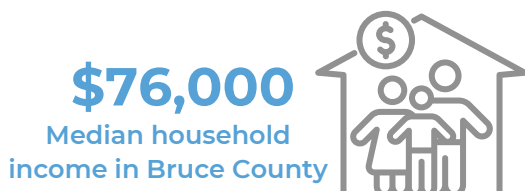
In 2021, 27% of Bruce County's population were adults aged 45-64. Northern Bruce Peninsula, South Bruce Peninsula, First Nations, Brockton, South Bruce, Huron-Kinloss, and Kincardine had the highest proportions in this age group. By contrast, only 22% of residents were young adults aged 25-44, with Saugeen Shores, Kincardine, and Arran-Elderslie recording the largest shares. Children, youth, and seniors together accounted for 51% of the population.

BURCE COUNTY AGE GROUPS

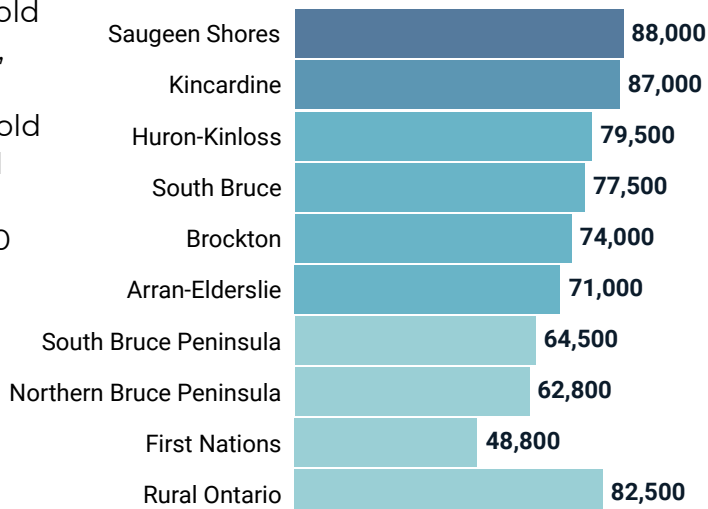


MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

In 2020, the median after-tax household income in Bruce County was \$76,000, slightly less than the rural Ontario average. The highest median household incomes were in Saugeen Shores and Kincardine, each with an estimated median household income of \$88,000 and \$87,000.



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (\$)





TOP EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRIES

In 2024, the leading employment sectors in Bruce County were utilities, construction, and retail trade. By comparison, retail trade was also a top employer across rural Ontario.

TOP 3 EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN THE COUNTY



Utilities

6,718
JOBS

\$71,494
Average wage



Construction

5,752
JOBS

\$71,222
Average wage



Retail Trade

4,104
JOBS

\$71,494
Average wage

TOP 3 EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN RURAL ONTARIO



Health Care &
Social Assistance

163,740
JOBS

\$55,565
Average wage



Retail Trade

127,661
JOBS

\$55,554
Average wage



Manufacturing

124,511
JOBS

\$55,441
Average wage

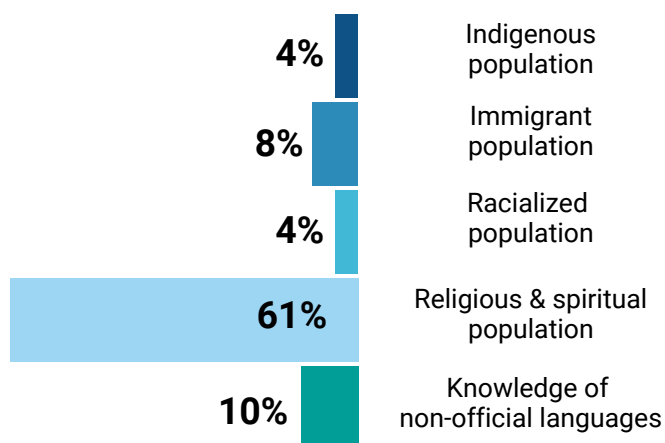
POPULATION DIVERSITY

In 2021, Bruce County had low population diversity, which is consistent with communities in the region and with rural communities in general. In contrast, urban communities in Ontario had much higher levels of population diversity.

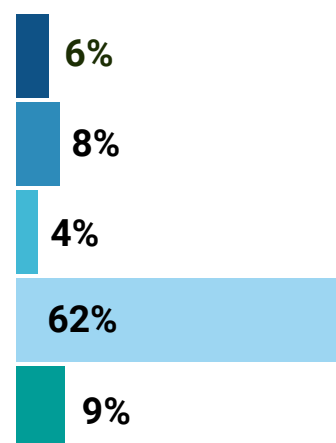
Low
Population
diversity



BRUCE COUNTY



RURAL ONTARIO

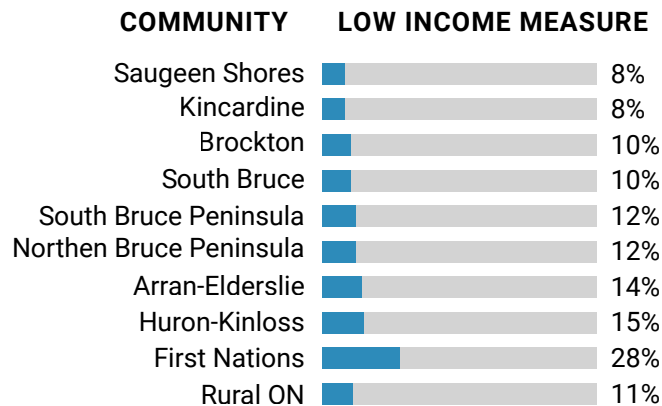




ECONOMICS

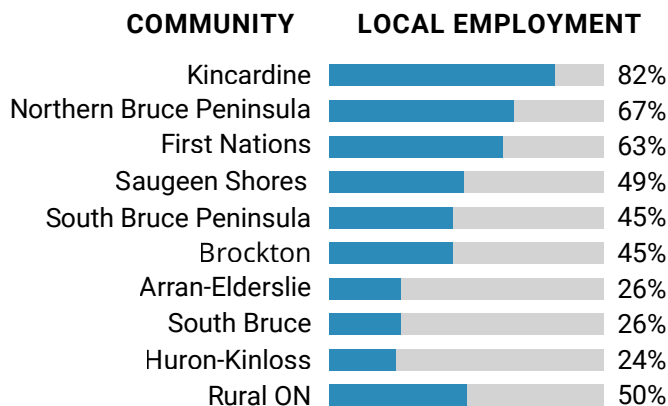
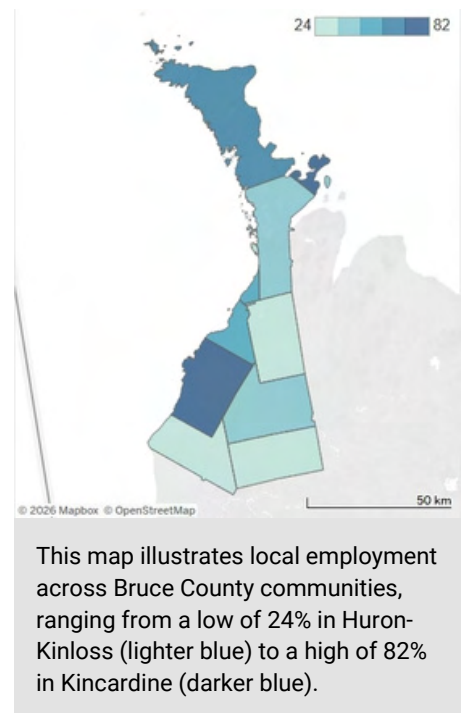
LOW-INCOME MEASURE

In 2020, the proportion of low-income households (Statistics Canada's after-tax Low-Income Measure, LIM-AT) in Bruce County was 11%, the same as the rural Ontario average.



LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

In 2021, 48% of Bruce County residents commuted to work locally. Kincardine, Northern Bruce Peninsula, and First Nations communities had the highest proportions of local commuters. Overall, local employment in the County is consistent with the rural Ontario average of 50%.



INTERNET

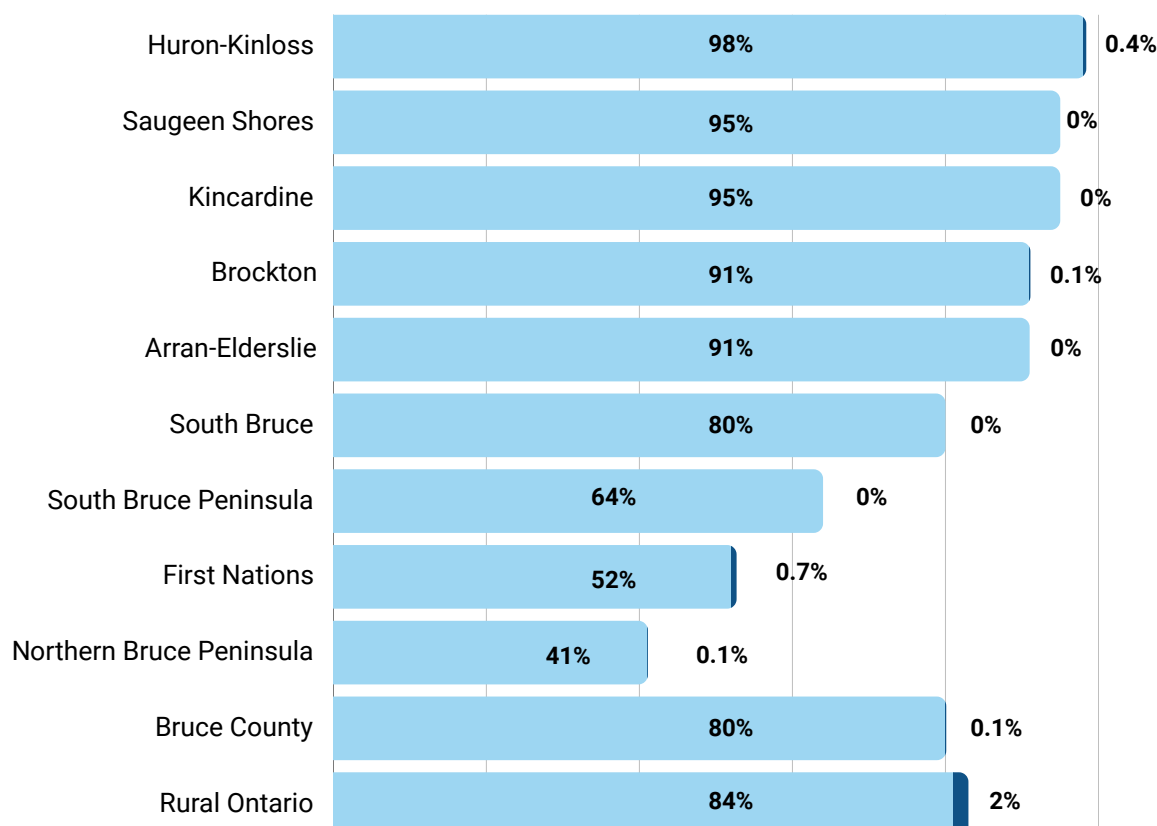
In 2024, 80% of dwellings in Bruce County had access to broadband internet with 50/10 Mbps speed, only slightly lower than the average of 84% in rural Ontario.

Only 1 community has less than 50% of dwellings covered by broadband internet, and 6 have 80% or more dwellings covered by broadband.

0.1% of dwellings in Bruce County do not have access to internet services. The communities with the highest proportion of dwellings without internet are First Nations communities (0.7%) and Huron Kinloss (0.4%).

PERCENTAGE OF DWELLINGS WITH BROADBAND DATA AND WITHOUT INTERNET

-  Proportion of dwellings with 50/10 broadband data
-  Proportion of dwellings with no internet





HOUSING

CORE HOUSING NEED

In 2021, 5% of households in Bruce County were in core housing need, which is slightly lower than the rural Ontario average of 7%.

South Bruce Peninsula	6%	Arran-Elderslie	4%
Huron-Kinloss	5%	Northern Bruce Peninsula	3%
Kincardine	5%	South Bruce	2%
Saugeen Shores	5%	First Nations	No data
Brockton	4%	Rural Ontario	7%

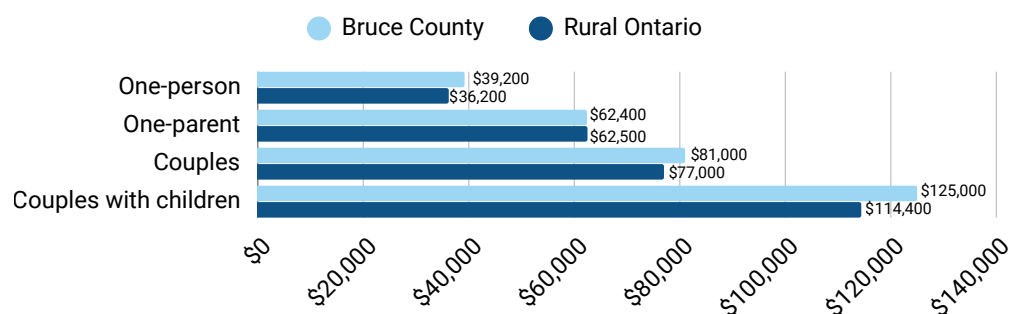
HOUSEHOLD TYPE

In 2021, two person households accounted for 41% of all households in Bruce County. Compared to rural Ontario, the county has a slightly higher proportion of one and two person households and a lower proportion of households with three to four persons and the same proportion of 5 or more persons, indicating a greater prevalence of smaller household sizes.

	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons or more
Bruce County	29%	41%	12%	11%	7%
Rural Ontario	28%	40%	14%	12%	7%

The median after-tax income levels in one-person, one-parent, and couples household types in Bruce County are similar to the average values in rural Ontario. However, households with couples and children, the median income is \$10,000 higher in Bruce County than Rural Ontario.

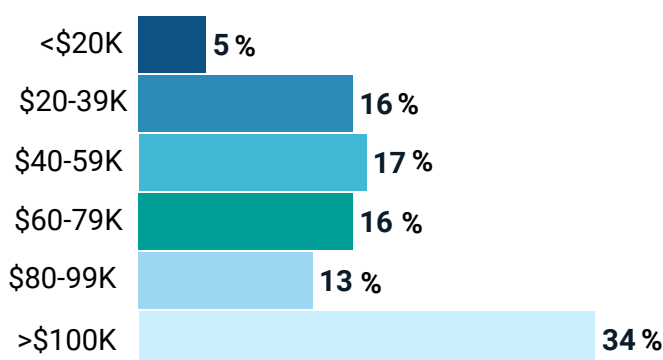
MEDIAN AFTER-TAX INCOME FOR HOUSEHOLD TYPES IN 2020



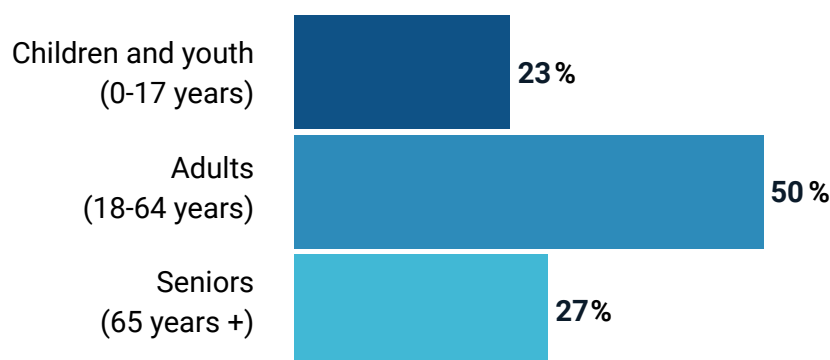
HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Bruce County has a median individual income of \$38,000, a median household income of \$76,000, and 11% of households in low income (source: 2021 Statistics Canada Census Profile). The two accompanying charts provide context on how income and low income are distributed locally: the after-tax household income distribution shows that 21% of households fall below \$40,000 (5% under \$20,000 and 16% at \$20,000–\$39,999), 33% are between \$40,000 and \$79,999 (17% at \$40,000–\$59,999 and 16% at \$60,000–\$79,999), 13% are in the \$80,000–\$99,999 range, and 34% are above \$100,000; meanwhile, among individuals identified as being in low income, adults aged 18–64 make up the largest share (50%), followed by seniors 65+ (27%) and children and youth 0–17 (23%).

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION AFTER TAXES



DISTRIBUTION OF LOW INCOME INDIVIDUALS BY AGE GROUP





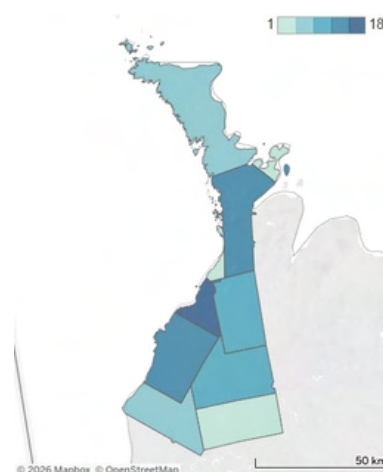
HEALTH

NUMBER & TYPE OF HEALTH FACILITIES

Bruce County has a total of 76 health facilities. Saugeen Shores, South Bruce Peninsula, and Kincardine are the communities with the highest number of health facilities, each with over 10 health facilities.

The remaining 6 communities all have at least one health facility, but each has fewer than 10.

Communities	Number of health facilities (2023)
Saugeen Shores	18
South Bruce Peninsula	12
Kincardine	12
Arran-Elderslie	9
Brockton	8
Huron-Kinloss	7
Northern Bruce Peninsula	5
South Bruce	4
First Nations	1



Below is a breakdown of the types of health care facilities in Bruce County. The County has 12 different types of health care facilities, but no one community has all 12, the community with the greatest variety was South Bruce Peninsula with 10 types of facilities.

Health Facility	Number in Bruce County
Pharmacy	32
Licensed Retirement Home	9
Family Health Team	7
Long-Term Care Home	6
Licensed Lab and Specimen Collection Centre	6
Hospital	6
Mental Health and Addiction Organization	3
HIV AIDS and Hep C Program	2
Community Support Service	2
Seniors Active Living Centre	1
Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic	1
Indigenous Primary Health Care Organization	1

WAIT TIMES FOR LONG TERM CARE

There are no long-term care homes in Arran-Elderslie, First Nations communities, and South Bruce. Bruce County's long-term care system consists of 6 homes ranging in size from 40 to 160 licensed beds. Most of the long-term care spaces are in the more populated communities like Saugeen Shores and Brockton. In 2022-23, people waited an average of 123 days for a long-term care space in the county, which represents a 64% increase from the previous year. In the county, there are 26 long term care spaces for every 100 people aged 85 and over, which is similar to the ratio for rural Ontario ratio of 28 to 100.

MEDIAN NUMBER OF DAYS WAITED TO MOVE INTO A LONG-TERM CARE HOME (2022/23)

Community	Wait Time (days)
Northern Bruce Peninsula	284
Kincardine	166
Brockton	98
South Bruce Peninsula	78
Huron-Kinloss	59
Saugeen Shores	50
South Bruce	No data
First Nations	No data
Arran-Elderslie	No data
Bruce County	123

20
23

9%
INCREASE
IN CALLS

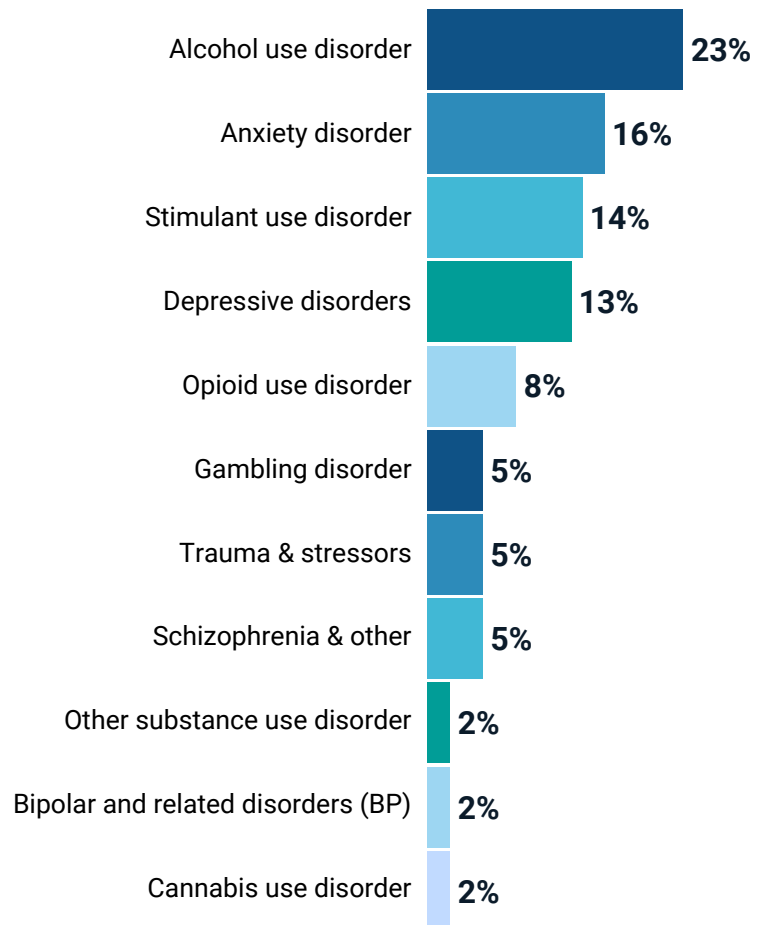


NUMBER OF CALLS FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES & REASONS FOR CALLING

ConnexOntario is a government agency that improves access to services for mental health and substance use. People may call [ConnexOntario](#) for themselves, or on behalf of someone else, such as a family member, friend, or patient.

In 2023, a total of 173 calls were made, increasing by 9% in 2022 where 159 calls were made. Most of the county saw a decrease in calls, however, Saugeen Shores, First Nations, and Arran-Elderslie all saw a significant increase in the number of calls. In 2023, the most common reasons for calling ConnexOntario were alcohol use disorder, anxiety disorder, and stimulant use disorder.

MOST COMMON REASONS FOR CALLING CONNEXONTARIO IN 2023





SOCIETY

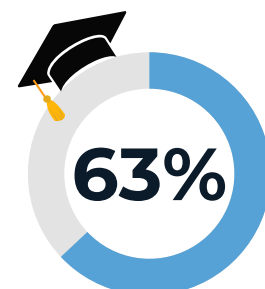
NUMBER & TYPES OF ARTS & CULTURE FACILITIES

There are a total of five arts and cultural facilities in Bruce County. Northern Bruce Peninsula, South Bruce Peninsula, Brockton, Kincardine, and Saugeen Shores each account for one facility. Two of these facilities are libraries and archives (South Bruce Peninsula and Brockton); two are museums (Northern Bruce Peninsula and Saugeen Shores), and one falls under the miscellaneous category – Music & Performing Arts (Kincardine).

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ACHIEVED

In Bruce County in 2021, 63% of people aged 25 to 64 had achieved some level of post-secondary education and 88% of people had at least a high school diploma. Saugeen Shores, Kincardine Huron-Kinloss, and Northern Bruce Peninsula had the highest proportion of the population with a post-secondary education, with a share of at least 60%.

The distribution of highest education for this age group shows that 31% held a college, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma, 26% reported high school as their highest credential, 21% had a bachelor's degree or higher, 9% held an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, 2% had a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and 10% reported no certificate, diploma, or degree.

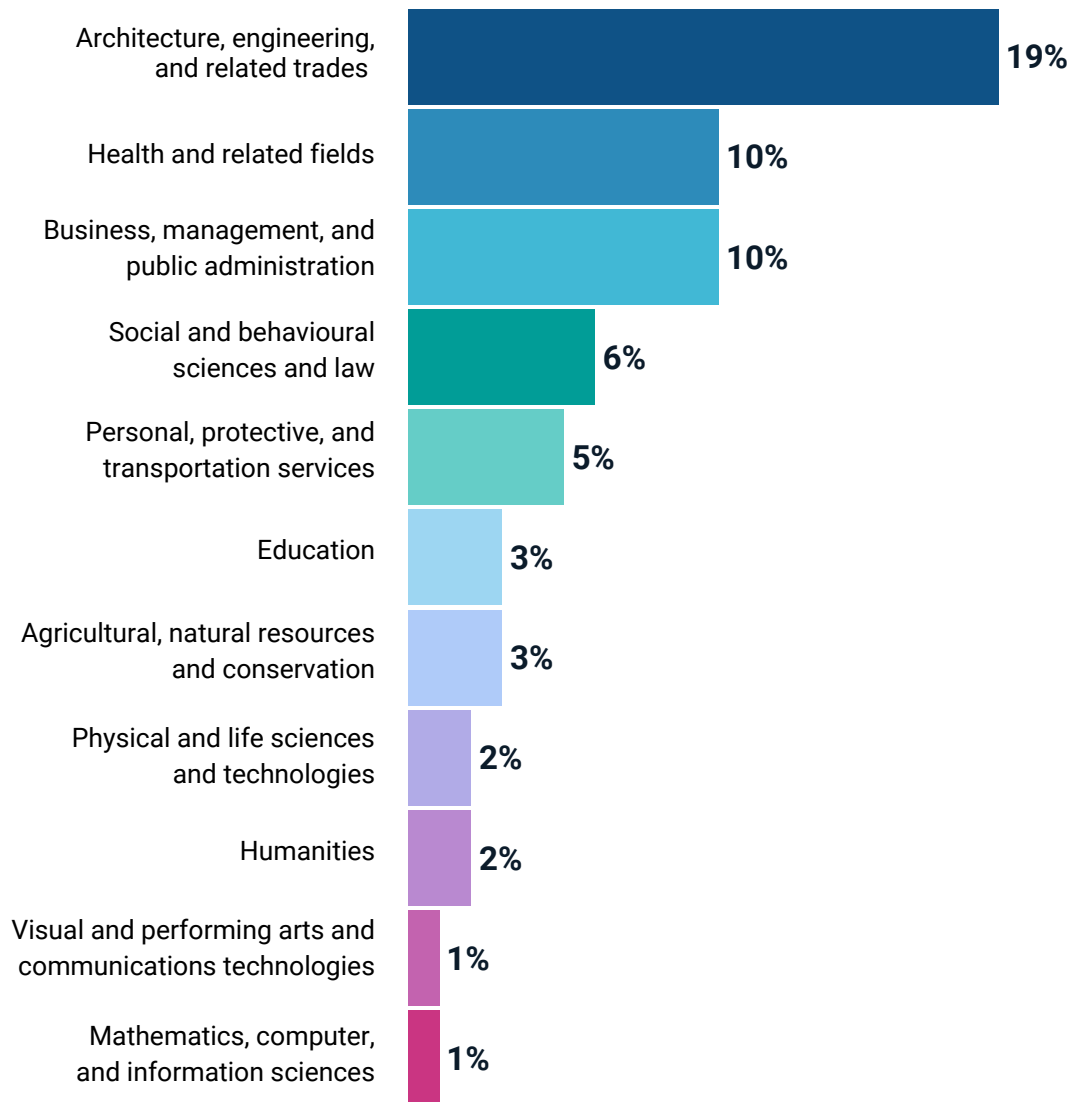


of Bruce County residents have post-secondary education

Community	Post Secondary Education
Saugeen Shores	75%
Kincardine	72%
Huron-Kinloss	63%
Northern Bruce Peninsula	60%
South Bruce Peninsula	56%
Brockton	56%
Arran-Elderslie	55%
South Bruce	52%
First Nations	48%
Rural Ontario	58%



MAJOR FIELD OF POST-SECONDARY STUDY (BRUCE COUNTY, AGES 25-64)





ENVIRONMENT

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

Ecological Footprint is the area needed to support the human consumption of ecosystem goods and services. It is 6.6 Gha/capita in the Bruce County, which is slightly higher than the rural Ontario value of 6.3.

Community	Ecological footprint (global hectares per capita)
Saugeen Shores	7.7
Kincardine	6.7
South Bruce Peninsula	6.5
Brockton	6.4
South Bruce	6.3
Huron-Kinloss	6.3
Northern Bruce Peninsula	6.2
Arran-Elderslie	6.2
First Nations	4.2
Bruce County	6.6
Rural Ontario	6.3

The ecological footprint is influenced by factors such as population size and growth, dwelling types and sizes, income, and commuting patterns. The carbon component accounts for about 64% of Bruce County's ecological footprint, meaning it is largely driven by the consumption of carbon-intensive goods and services by public administrations, private organizations, and households. The county is a large, low-density area with amenities spread out, making it a more car reliant community, and personal transportation consumption accounts for 24% of the county's ecological footprint. The proportion attributed to each type of consumption is somewhat similar to the proportion of rural Ontario as well as for overall Ontario.

HOUSEHOLD SUBCATEGORIES OF CONSUMPTION



24%

**Personal
Transport**



23%

Services



22%

Food



18%

Housing



13%

Goods

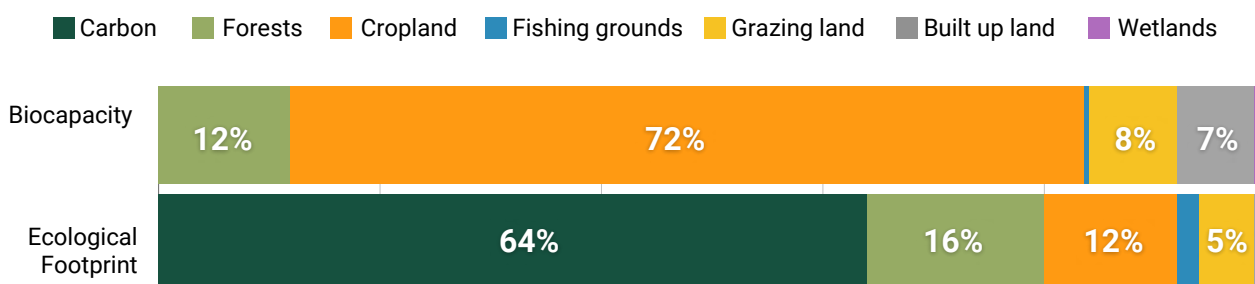


BIOCAPACITY

Biocapacity is the ecosystem supply of goods and services in the community. In Bruce County, the biocapacity is higher than the ecological footprint, meaning there is a biocapacity surplus. Cropland accounts for 72% of the bio productive space. Unlike other communities, some of the more densely populated areas in the county have a higher biocapacity than less densely populated areas. For example, Huron-Kinloss has a population density of 18 people per square kilometre and a biocapacity of 24.0 Gha/capita and South Bruce Peninsula has a population density of 17 people per square kilometre and a biocapacity of 10.1 Gha/capita.

Community	Biocapacity (Gha/capita)	Population density (no. People per km)
South Bruce	30.2	12
Northern Bruce Peninsula	25.6	6
Huron-Kinloss	24.0	18
Brockton	18.8	17
Kincardine	16.6	23
Arran-Elderslie	14.6	15
South Bruce Peninsula	10.1	17
First Nations	9.9	12
Saugeen Shores	2.4	93
Bruce County	15.1	18
Rural Ontario	31.4	3

COMPONENTS OF ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT & BIOCAPACITY





BIOCAPACITY BALANCE

Biocapacity balance is calculated as the difference between a community's biocapacity and its Ecological Footprint.

The biocapacity balance in Bruce County is 8.4 Gha per capita, compared to 25.1 Gha per capita in rural Ontario. All communities in Bruce County have a positive biocapacity balance except Saugeen Shores with a balance of -5.3.

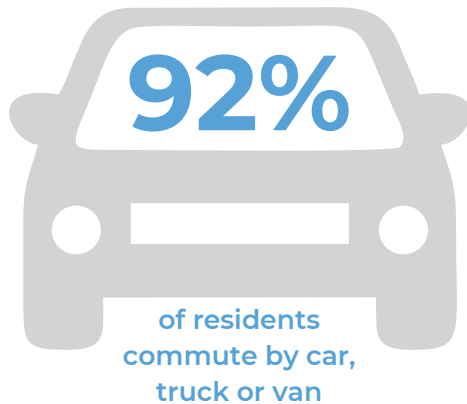
Communities	Biocapacity balance (Gha/capita)
South Bruce	23.8
Northern Bruce Peninsula	19.4
Huron-Kinloss	17.7
Brockton	12.4
Kincardine	9.9
Arran-Elderslie	8.4
First Nations	5.7
South Bruce Peninsula	3.5
Saugeen Shores	-5.3
Rural Ontario	25.2



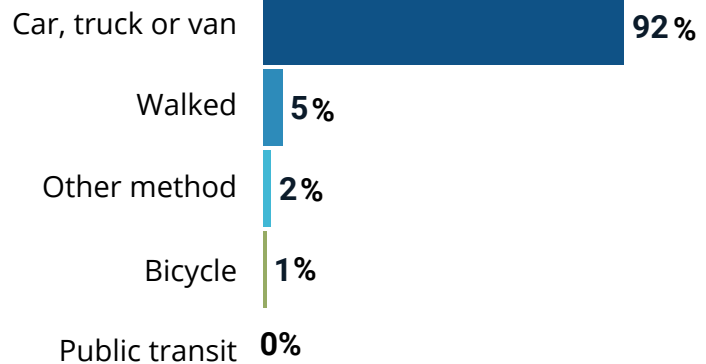
DURATION OF COMMUTE

In Bruce County, 92% of residents commute by car, truck, or van, and of all the communities in the county more than 86% of residents commute by vehicle. This is consistent with the overall value for rural Ontario.

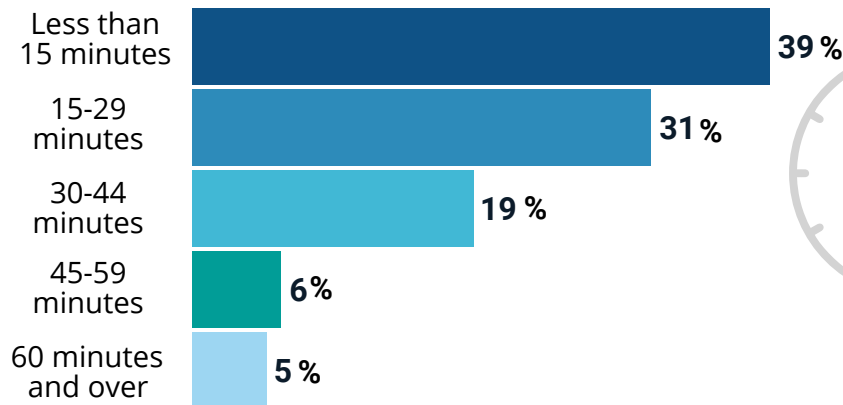
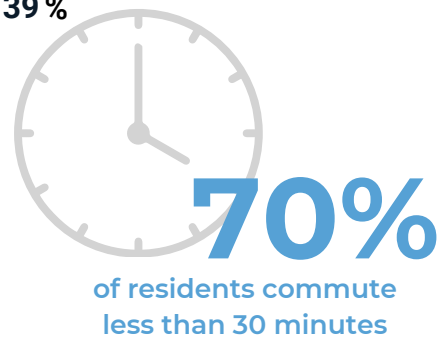
BRUCE COUNTY



MODE OF COMMUTING



DURATION OF COMMUTE



More than half of the residents in Bruce County have a commute of less than 30 minutes. 11% of residents have a long commute of over 45 minutes, which is slightly lower than the rural Ontario average. This makes sense considering the economic opportunities within the county, particularly in the utilities sector.

CONTACT US

Recommended citation

Community Wellbeing Report for Bruce County. Prepared by the Rural Ontario Institute. September 2026.

Questions and Comments?

Contact the Rural Ontario Institute for more information.

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