RURAL COMMUNITY WELLBEING

NOVEMBER 2026

COMMMUNITY WELLBEING REPORT

PERTH COUNTY



PREPARED BY:
ROI RURAL ONTARIO INSTITUTE

PREPARED FOR: PERTH 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 (SEDRD) 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

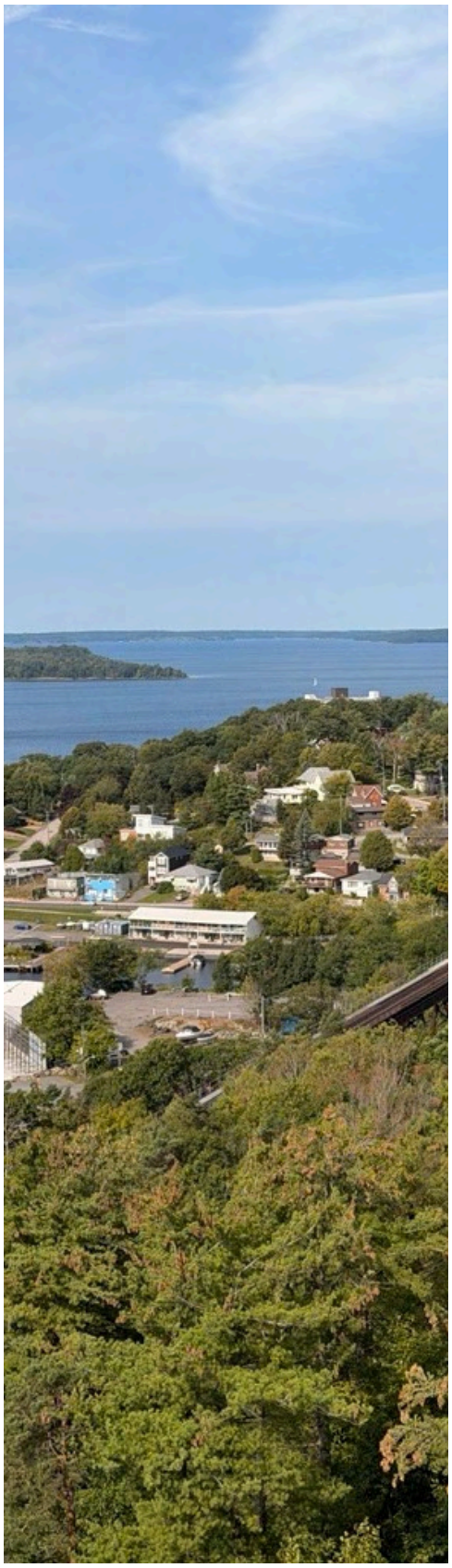


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SUMMARY

In 2021, the communities of **North Perth, Stratford, and Perth East accounted for the large majority** of Perth County population.

In 2021, there were **64 economically dependent people per 100 working-age people** in Perth County.

64:100

6%

Community population increased by 6% between 2016 and 2021.

Median Age

48.4

In 2021, **St. Marys (48.4 years), Stratford (46 years) and Perth South (44.8) years) had the oldest median ages** in the County.

In 2020, 9% of households in Perth County were low income, lower than the rural Ontario average of 11%.

9%

In 2021, **57% of residents in Perth County commuted to work locally,** compared with 50% across rural Ontario.

57%

In 2024, 100% of dwellings in Perth County had access to broadband internet at 50/10 Mbps, compared with 84% across rural Ontario. Only 0.66% of dwellings in Perth South and 0.1% in West Perth had no internet access.

100%

96

Perth County has 96 health facilities, including 35 pharmacies, 12 community support services, 11 licensed retirement homes, 8 long-term care homes and 3 hospitals.

In 2021, 84% of people aged 25-64 had at least a high school diploma, while 56% had achieved some level of post-secondary education.

84%

Perth County has 14 arts and cultural facilities, including 11 libraries/archives, with Stratford accounting for the largest number of facilities. Most museums and galleries are located in Stratford.

14

PERTH COUNTY
COMMUNITY CONTEXT

COMMUNITY LOCATION, TYPE AND CLASSIFICATION

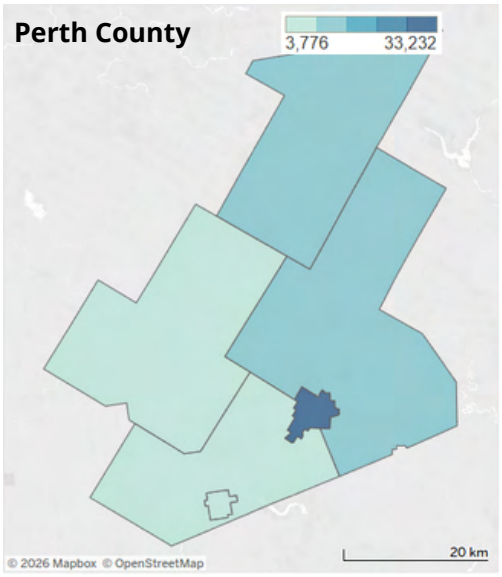
The census subdivision of Perth County is in Western Ontario. This community is made up of 4 lower-tier municipalities and two separated municipalities, the City of Stratford and the Town of St. Marys. Local services are delivered through the County of Perth and the City of Stratford.

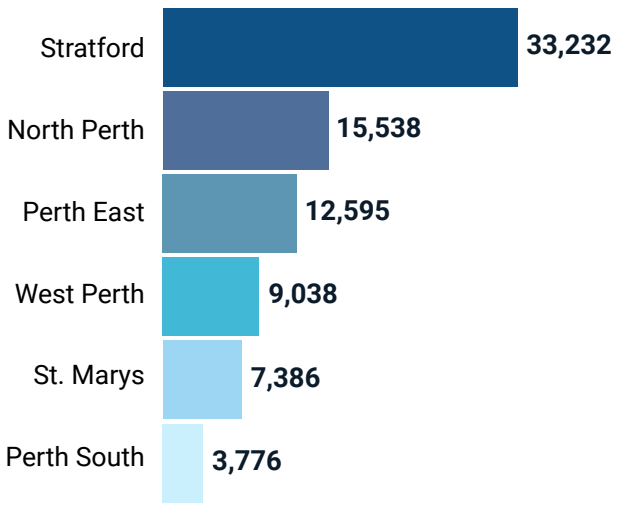
All six communities in Perth County — the Municipality of North Perth, the Township of Perth East, the Township of Perth South, the Municipality of West Perth, The City of Stratford and the Town of St. Marys are classified as rural.

POPULATION

In 2021, the Perth census division had a population of 81,565, including Stratford and St. Marys. The three largest communities, Stratford, North Perth, and Perth East, accounted for the large majority of the census division's population.

81,565
People

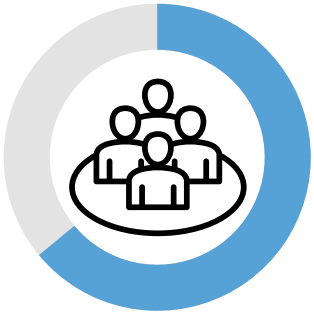




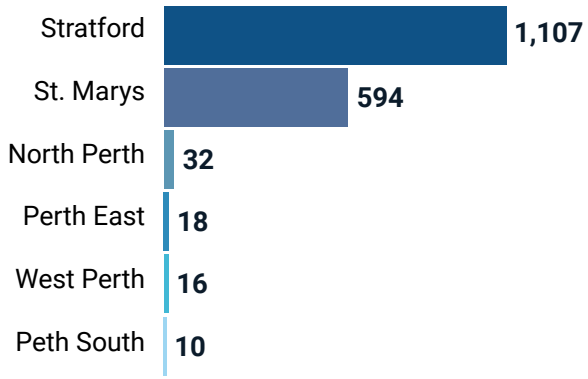
POPULATION DENSITY

In 2021, Perth County had a population density of 37 people per square kilometre, higher than the rural Ontario average of 3 people per square kilometer. Stratford and St. Marys have the highest population densities in the region. Despite being smaller in land area than many surrounding rural municipalities, Perth County's population is concentrated around its more densely populated centres, particularly Stratford and St. Marys.

37 people per km^2

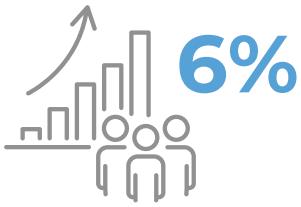


DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR: POPULATION DENSITY



POPULATION CHANGE

Between 2016 and 2021, the population of Perth County increased by 6%. In comparison, the population of rural Ontario grew by 5%.

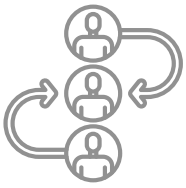


North Perth	**18%**	West Perth	**2%**
Stratford	**6%**	Perth South	**-1%**
Perth East	**3%**	Rural Ontario	**5%**
St. Marys	**2%**		

POPULATION DEPENDENCY RATIO

In 2021, Perth County had 64 economically dependent people for every 100 working-age residents. St. Marys is recorded as having the highest dependency ratio in the region with 69 economically dependent people for every 100 working-age residents. For comparison, the ratio for rural Ontario was 66.

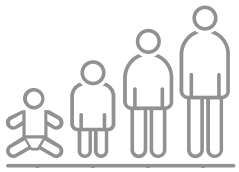
64:100



St. Marys	**69**	Stratford	**62**
North Perth	**66**	Perth South	**56**
Perth East	**64**	Rural Ontario	**66**
West Perth	**63**		

MEDIAN AGE

In 2021, the median age in Perth County was 42.4. St. Marys, Stratford, and Perth South had the oldest median ages in the region. Overall, the County's median age is close to the rural Ontario average of 47.



Perth County Median Age

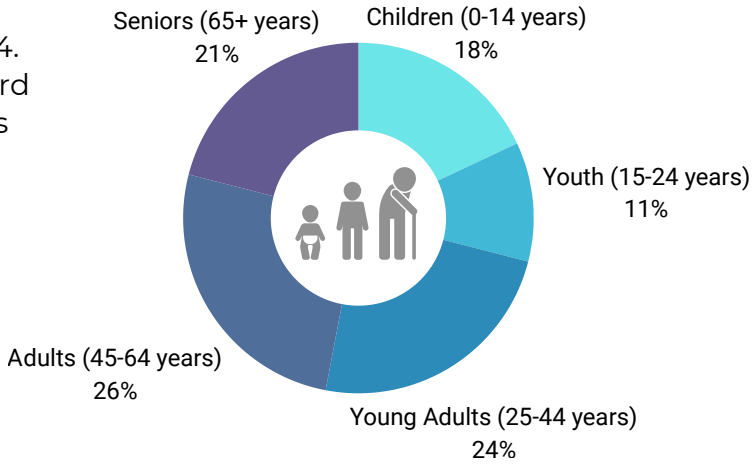
42.4

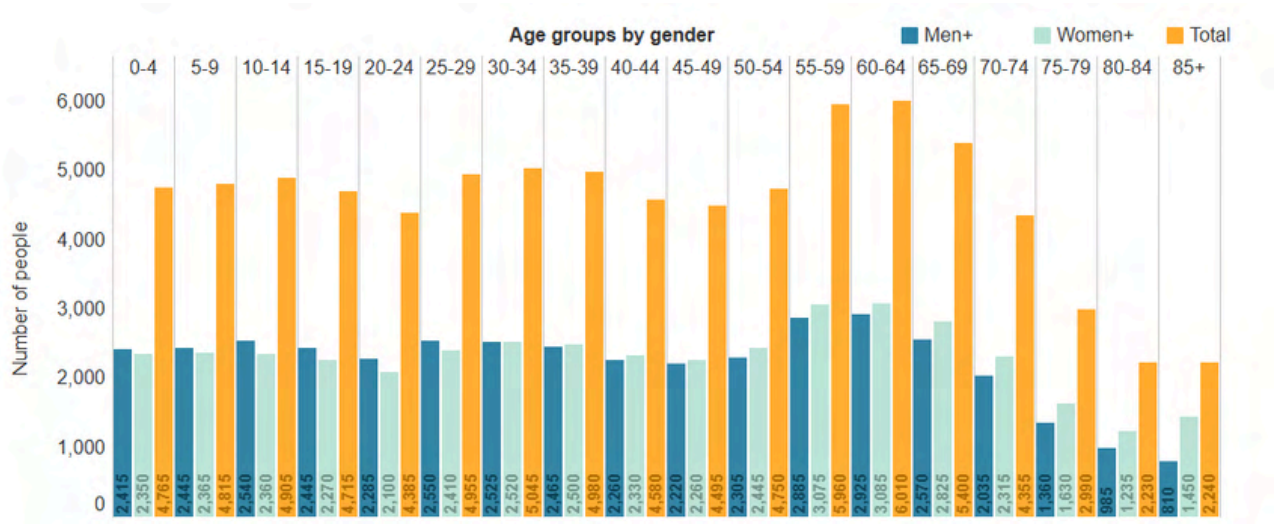
St. Marys	**48.4**	North Perth	**37.6**
Stratford	**46.0**	Perth East	**36.4**
Perth South	**44.8**	Rural Ontario	**47.0**
West Perth	**40.0**		

AGE DISTRIBUTION

In 2021, 26% of Perth County's population were adults aged 45-64. Perth South, St. Marys, and Stratford had the highest proportions in this age group. By contrast, 24% of residents were young adults aged 25-44 years, with North Perth recording the highest share of young adults.

PERTH COUNTY AGE GROUPS



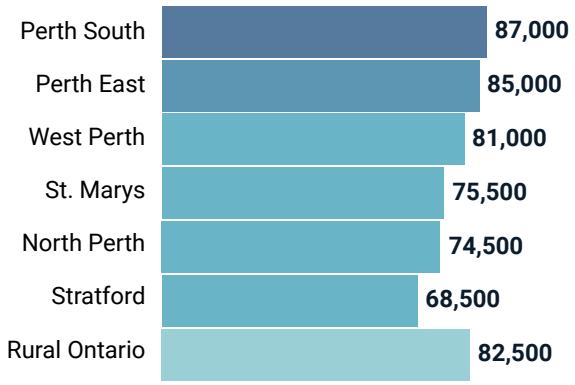


MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

In 2021, the median after tax - household income in Perth County was $74,500, lower than the rural Ontario median of $82,500. The highest median incomes were Perth South, Perth East, and West Perth, each exceeding $80,000.

$74,500
Median household income in Perth County

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME ($)



TOP EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRIES

In 2024, the leading employment sectors in Perth County were manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and retail trade. Similarly, health care and social assistance were also the top employers across rural Ontario.

TOP 3 EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN THE COUNTY

Manufacturing	Health Care & Social Assistance	Retail Trade
11,906 JOBS	**5,783** JOBS	**4,104** JOBS
$53,085 *Average wage*	$53,085 *Average wage*	$53,085 *Average wage*

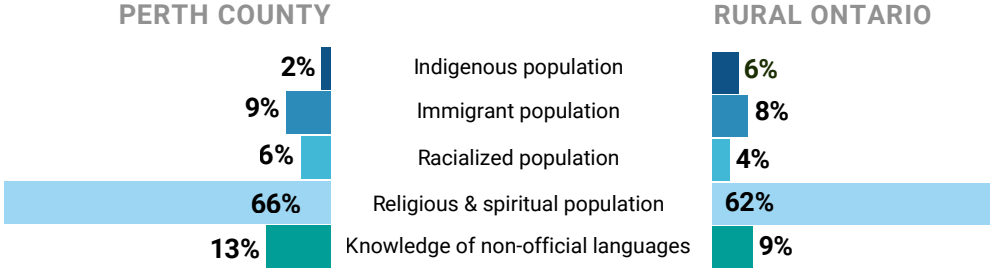
TOP 3 EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN RURAL ONTARIO

Health Care & Social Assistance	Retail Trade	Manufacturing
163,740 JOBS	**127,661** JOBS	**124,511** JOBS
$55,565 *Average wage*	$55,554 *Average wage*	$55,441 *Average wage*

POPULATION DIVERSITY

In 2021, Perth 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



ECONOMICS

LOW-INCOME MEASURE

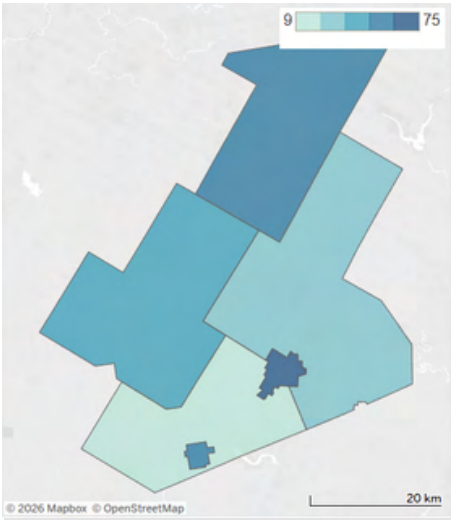
In 2020, the proportion of low-income households (Statistics Canada's after-tax Low-Income Measure, LIM-AT) in Perth County stood at 9%, lower than the rural Ontario average of 11%.

COMMUNITY	LOW INCOME MEASURE
Stratford	10%
Perth East	10%
North Perth	9%
St. Marys	8%
Perth South	7%
West Perth	7%
Perth County	9%
Rural Ontario	11%

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

In 2021, 57% of Perth County residents commuted to work locally. Stratford, North Perth, and St. Marys had the highest proportions of local commuters. Overall, local employment in the County is consistent with the rural Ontario average of 50%.

COMMUNITY	LOCAL EMPLOYMENT
Stratford	75%
North Perth	60%
St. Marys	56%
West Perth	42%
Perth East	28%
Perth South	9%
Perth County	57%
Rural Ontario	50%



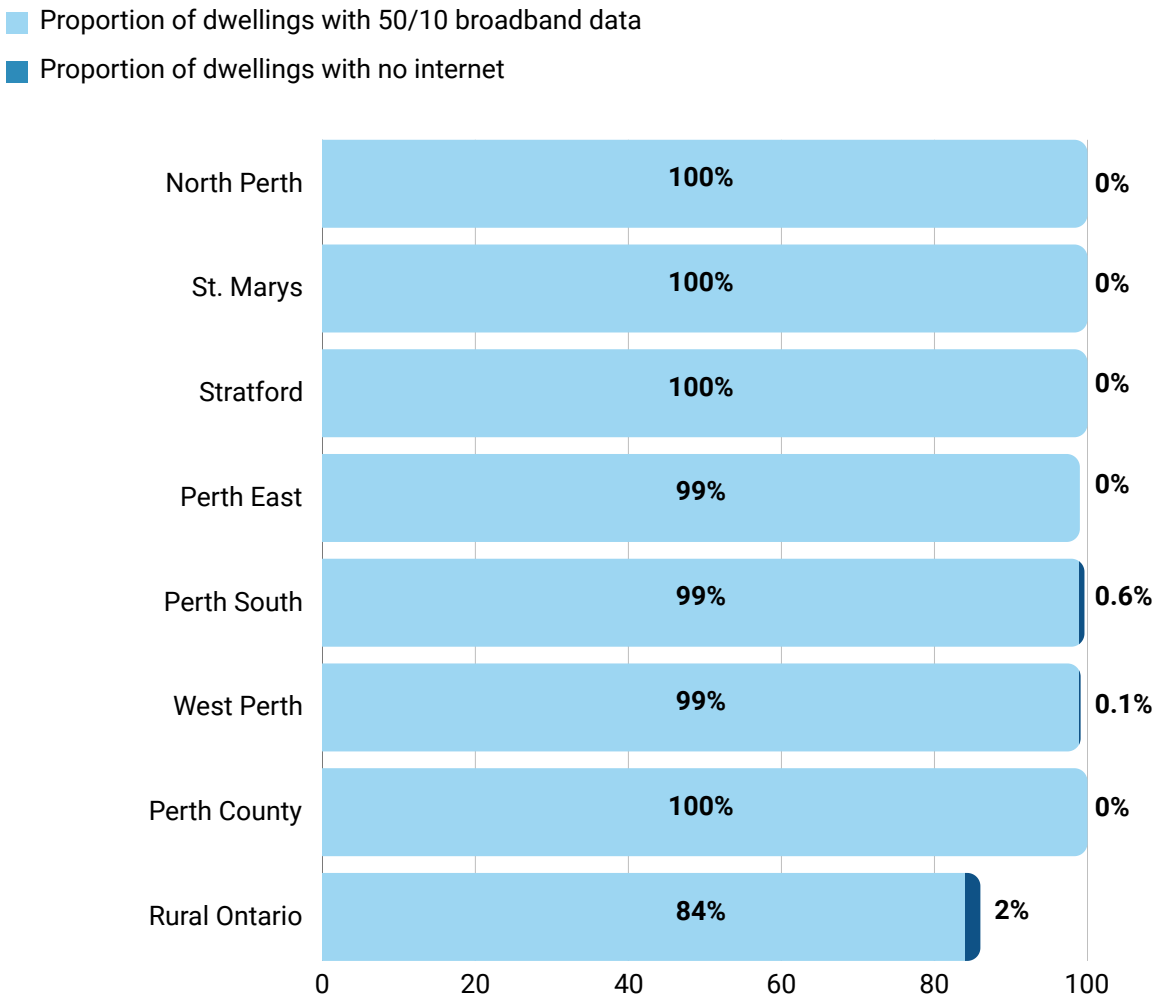
This map illustrates local employment across Perth County communities, ranging from a low of 9% in Perth South (lighter blue) to a high of 75% in Stratford (darker blue).

INTERNET

In 2024, 100% of dwellings in Perth County had access to broadband internet with 50/10 Mbps, higher than the average of 84% in rural Ontario.

All communities in the county have dwellings covered by broadband internet, with only 0.6% without internet in Perth South and 0.1% in West Perth.

PERCENTAGE OF DWELLINGS WITH BROADBAND DATA AND WITHOUT INTERNET



HOUSING

CORE HOUSING NEED

In 2021, 6% of households in Perth County were in core housing need, which is slightly lower than the rural Ontario average of 7%.

North Perth	**7%**	West Perth	**2%**
Stratford	**7%**	Perth County	**6%**
Perth South	**4%**	Rural Ontario	**7%**
Perth East	**3%**		
St. Marys	**3%**		

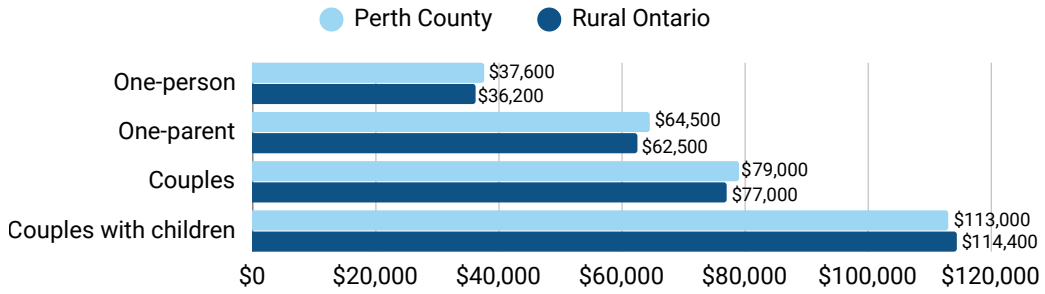
HOUSEHOLD TYPE

In 2021, two person households accounted for 38% of all households in Perth County. Compared to rural Ontario, Perth County has a higher proportion of 5 or more person households, a lower proportion of two and three person households, and the same proportion of one and four person households, indicating a greater prevalence of larger household sizes in the region.

	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons or more
Perth County	28%	38%	13%	12%	9%
Rural Ontario	28%	40%	14%	12%	7%

The median after-tax income levels in one-person, one-parent, and couples household types in Perth County are similar to the average values in rural Ontario. However, households with couples and children, the median income is $1,400 lower in Perth County than Rural Ontario.

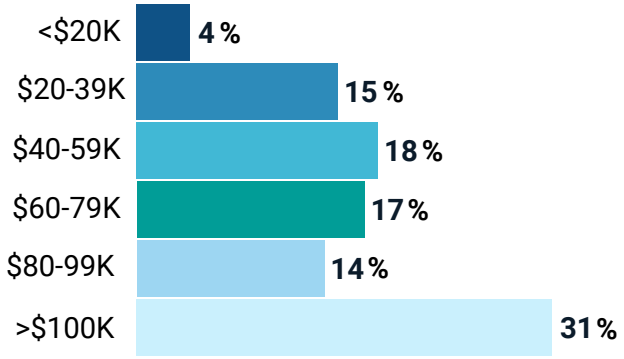
MEDIAN AFTER-TAX INCOME FOR HOUSEHOLD TYPES IN 2020



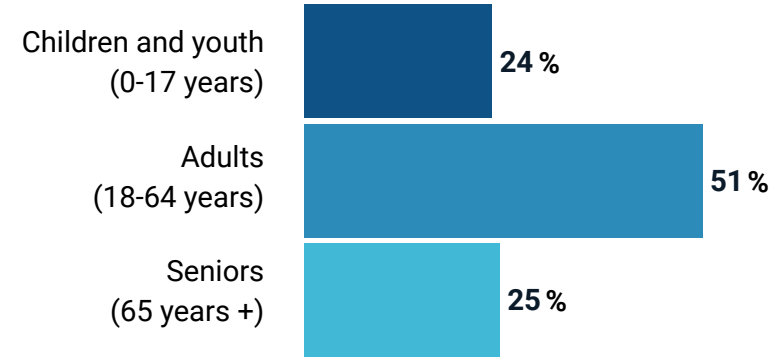
HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Perth County has a median individual income of $38,400, a median household income of $74,500, and 9% 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 19% of households fall below $40,000 (4% under $20,000 and 15% at $20,000–$39,999), 35% are between $40,000 and $79,999 (18% at $40,000–$59,999 and 17% at $60,000–$79,999), 14% are in the $80,000–$99,999 range, and 31% are above $100,000; meanwhile, among individuals identified as being in low income, adults aged 18–64 make up the largest share (51%), followed by seniors 65+ (25%) and children and youth 0–17 (24%).

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRUBUTION AFTER TAXES



DISTRIBUTION OF LOW INCOME INDIVIDUALS BY AGE GROUP

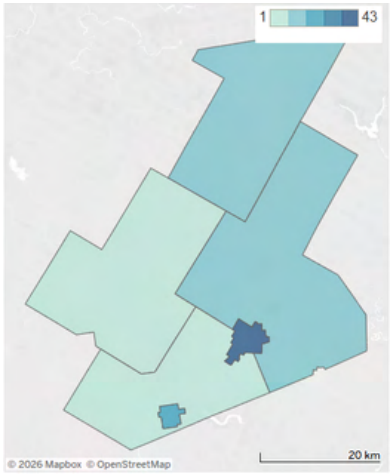


HEALTH

NUMBER & TYPE OF HEALTH FACILITIES

There are 96 health facilities across Perth County. Stratford has the highest number of facilities (see table), while also having the highest population density. North Perth, Perth East, and St. Marys also have over 10 health facilities. The remaining communities including West Perth and Perth South each have at least 1 health facility.

Communities	Number of health facilities (2023)
Stratford	43
St. Marys	18
North Perth	17
Perth East	12
West Perth	5
Perth South	1
Perth	96



Below is a list of the number of health facilities by type in Perth County.

Health Facility	Number in Perth County
Pharmacy	35
Community Support Services	12
Licenced Retirement Home	11
Long-Term Care Home	8
Licensed Lab and Specimen Collection Centre Locations	6
Family Health Team	6
Seniors Active Living Centre	5
Mental Health Addiction Organization	5
Hospital	3
Midwifery Clinic	2
Integrated Community Health Services Centre	2
Public Health Unit Office	1

WAIT TIMES FOR LONG TERM CARE

There are no long-term care homes in Perth South. Perth County's long-term care system consists of 8 homes ranging in size from 52 to 326 licensed beds. Most of the long-term care spaces are in the more populated communities like Stratford, West Perth, and St. Marys. In 2022-23, people waited an average of 130 days for a long-term care space in the county, which represents a 4% decrease from the previous year. In the county, there are 32 long-term care spaces for every 100 people aged 85 and over, similar to the rural Ontario ratio of 28 to 100.

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

Community	Wait Time (days)
Perth East	166
Stratford	152
West Perth	124
North Perth	112
St. Marys	94
Perth South	No data
Perth County	130

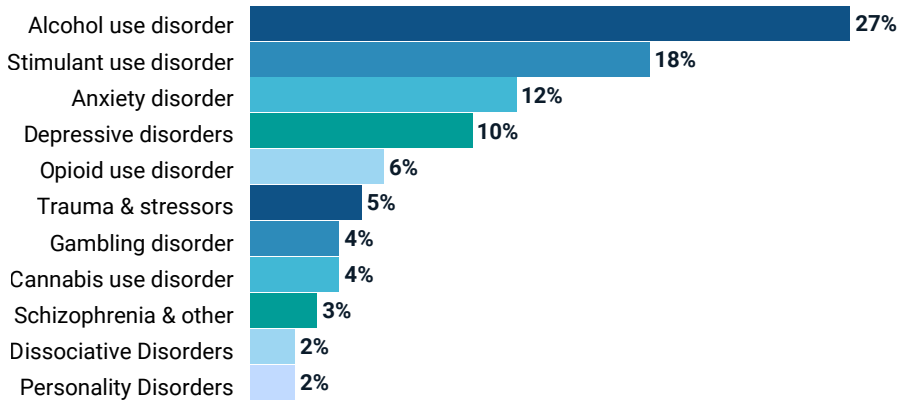
NUMBER OF CALLS FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES & REASONS FOR CALLING

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 275 calls were made, increasing by 76% in 2022 where 156 calls were made. Most communities in the county saw significant increases in calls; however, West Perth had a decrease of 7%. The most common reasons for calling ConnexOntario were alcohol use disorder, stimulant use disorder, and anxiety disorder.

76%
Increase in calls to ConnexOntario in 2023

MOST COMMON REASONS FOR CALLING CONNEXONTARIO IN 2023



SOCIETY

NUMBER & TYPES OF ARTS & CULTURE FACILITIES

There are a total of 14 arts and cultural facilities in Perth County. Stratford accounts for 5 of those facilities. North Perth accounts for 3 facilities, Perth South, and St. Marys each accounting for 2, and West Perth and East Perth each account for 1. Libraries/archives make up 11 out of the 14 facilities with 2 museums and 1 gallery. Most museums and galleries are in Stratford.

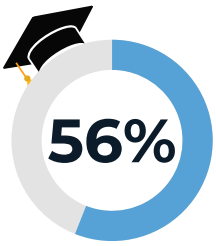
11 Libraries or archives

2 Museums

1 Gallery

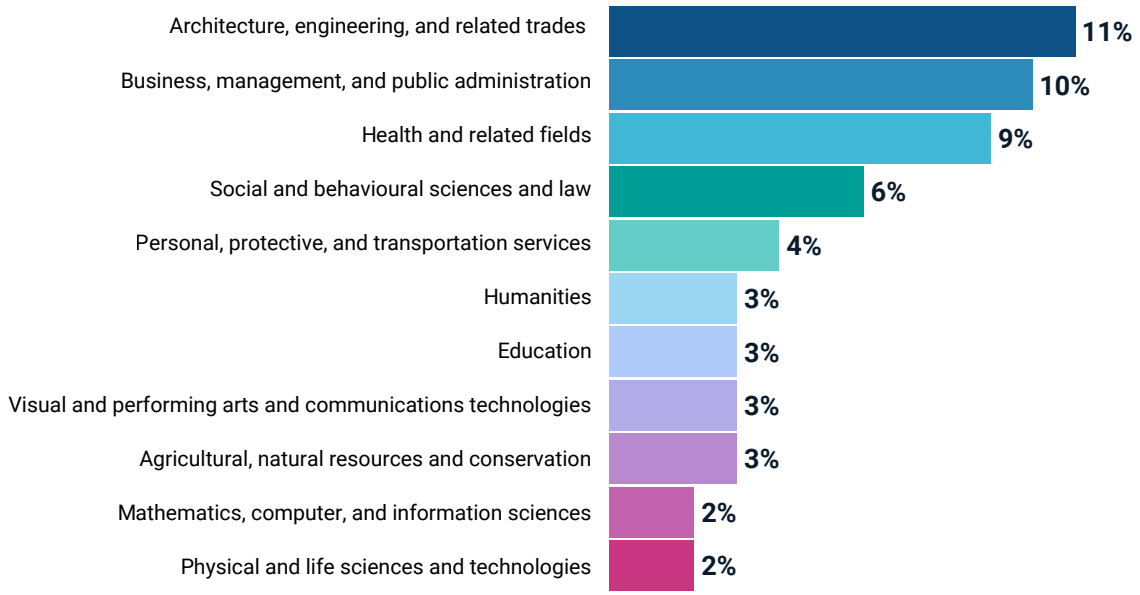
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ACHIEVED

In Perth County in 2021, 56% of people aged 25 to 64 had achieved some level of post-secondary education, and 84% of people had at least a high school diploma. The distribution of highest education for this age group shows that 27% held a college, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma, 30% reported high school as their highest credential, 20% had a bachelor's degree or higher, 7% held an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, 2% had a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and 14% reported no certificate, diploma, or degree.



of Perth County residents have post-secondary education

MAJOR FIELD OF POST-SECONDARY STUDY (PERTH 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 6.4 Gha/capita in the Perth County, which is similar to the rural Ontario value of 6.3.

Community	Ecological footprint (global hectares per capita)
North Perth	8.1
Stratford	6.3
West Perth	5.9
St. Marys	5.8
Perth East	5.7
Perth South	5.6
Perth County	**6.4**
Rural Ontario	**6.3**

The components of the ecological footprint are distributed similarly across communities in Perth County and in rural Ontario. 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 65% of the ecological footprint, meaning it is largely driven by the consumption of carbon-intensive goods and services by public administrations, private organizations, and households. A more detailed analysis of consumption patterns would be needed to identify what contributes most to increasing the ecological footprint.

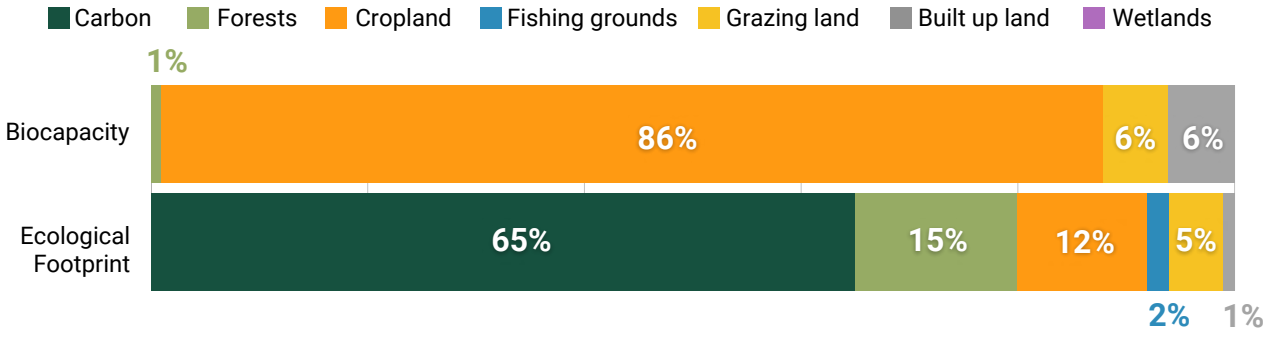
BIOCAPACITY

Biocapacity is the ecosystem's supply of goods and services in the community. Intuitively, the most densely populated areas are the ones with the lowest biocapacity per capita. For example, Stratford has a population density of 1,107 people per square kilometre and a biocapacity of 0.5 Gha/capita, and St.Marys has a population density of 594 people per square kilometre and a biocapacity of 0.7 Gha/capita.

Community	Biocapacity (Gha/ capita)	Population density (people per square kilometer)
Perth South	48.5	10
Perth East	25.8	18
West Perth	15.1	16
North Perth	14.4	32
St. Marys	0.7	594
Stratford	0.5	1107
Perth County	**10.9**	**37**
Rural Ontario	**31.4**	**3**

In more densely populated areas, which are typically communities with smaller land areas, built-up land occupies a larger share of biocapacity. Conversely, in less densely populated areas, built-up land represents only a small portion, while grazing land, cropland (where agriculture is practiced), or forest make up a much greater proportion. In Perth County, Cropland accounts for 86% of the bio productive space.

COMPONENTS OF ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT & BIOCAPACITY



BIOCAPACITY BALANCE

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

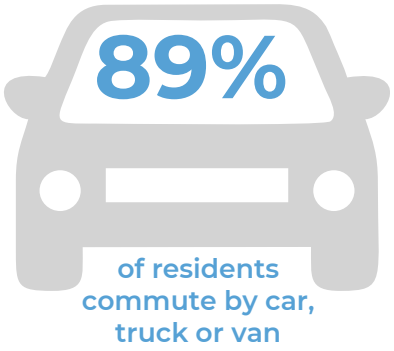
The biocapacity balance in Perth County is 4.5 Gha per capita, compared to 25.1 Gha per capita in rural Ontario.

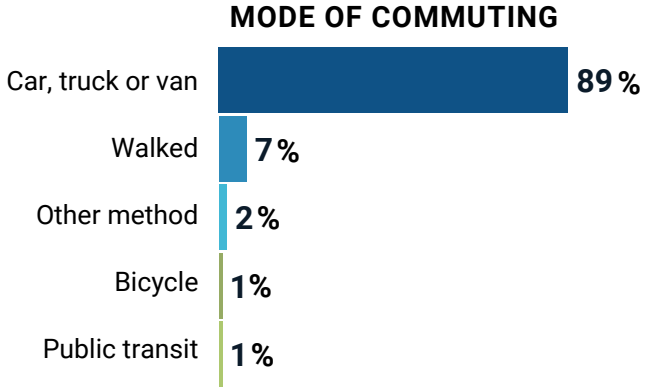
Communities	Biocapacity balance (Gha/capita)
Perth South	42.9
Perth East	20.1
West Perth	9.2
North Perth	6.3
St. Marys	-5.1
Stratford	-5.8
Perth County	**4.5**
Rural Ontario	**25.1**

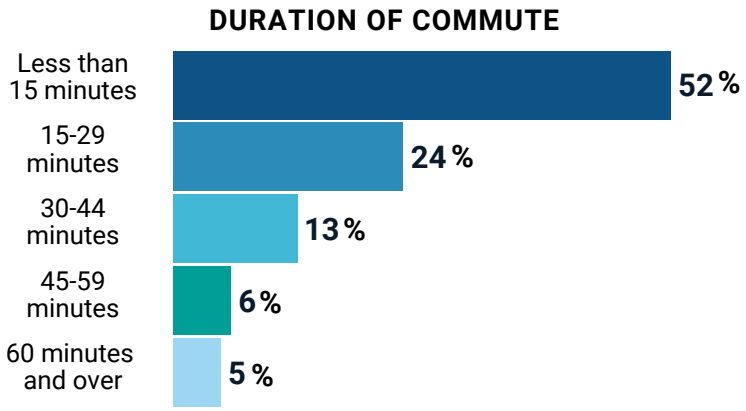
DURATION OF COMMUTE

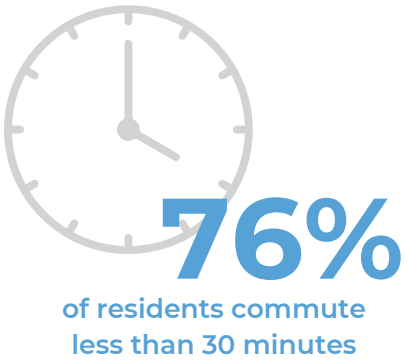
In Perth County, 89% of residents commute by car, truck, or van, and all the communities in the county more than 87% commute by vehicle. This is consistent with the overall value 82% for rural Ontario.

PERTH COUNTY









Most residents in Perth County commute less than 15 minutes to work. County-wide, 11% of residents have a long commute of over 45 minutes, which is slightly below to the rural Ontario average of 16%. The relatively short commute times may reflect the availability of employment opportunities within the county, including the manufacturing and healthcare sectors and retail trade sectors.

CONTACT US

Recommended citation

Community Wellbeing Report for Perth County.
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Questions and Comments?

Contact the Rural Ontario Institute for more information.

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