

RURAL WELLBEING

Education

HIGHLIGHTS

- A large majority of the rural population aged 25 to 64 has achieved a high school diploma.
- More than half of the rural population aged 25 to 64 has a post-secondary education.
- Many of the rural communities with the highest proportion of people with a post-secondary are in Southwestern Ontario.
- The most common field of study in rural communities is architecture, engineering, and related studies.

Overview - What do social statistics tell us?

Census data helps us understand our communities and the people who live in them. This factsheet presents statistics for the highest level of education achieved. We examine the differences across municipalities in Ontario to explore rural and urban trends.

For interactive maps and data visualizations, see the Society Dashboard.

Date source:

Statistics Canada. 2022. Census Profile. 2021 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316- X2021001.

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.

Rural: any municipality outside of census metropolitan areas.

Urban: any municipality within a census metropolitan area.

For details about ROI's rural classification, please visit our website.



Definitions

Post-secondary education: The proportion of people aged 25-64 with some post-secondary education, including an apprenticeship, college diploma or certificate, university certificate, bachelor's degree or higher in 2021.

High school diploma: The proportion of people aged 25-64 with a high school diploma in 2021.

Table 1. Overview of statistics for rural and urban areas.

Geography	2021 Population aged 25-64	Proportion of people aged 25-64 with a high school diploma	Proportion of people aged 25-64 with post-secondary education
Rural	1,221,975	86%	58%
Urban	6,389,145	91%	70%
Ontario	7,637,385	90%	68%

Overview

Across both rural and urban communities, a majority of people aged 25-64 have a high school diploma (Table 1). More than half of people aged 25-64 in both rural and urban communities have some post-secondary education. However, in urban communities the greatest number of people achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher (41%) whereas in rural communities the greatest number of people achieved a College, CEGEP, or non-university certificate (31%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Highest level of post-secondary education achieved.

	Rural	Urban	Ontario
Highest level of education achieved	**Proportion of population aged 25-64**	**Proportion of population aged 25-64**	**Proportion of population aged 25-64**
College, CEGEP, or non-university certificate	31%	22%	24%
Bachelor's degree or higher	18%	41%	37%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate	8%	4%	5%
University certificate below bachelor level	1%	3%	2%
High school diploma or equivalency certificate	30%	22%	23%

There are no significant differences between the proportion of people in each field of study between urban and rural communities (Table 3). However, the largest proportion of people in rural communities studied architecture, engineering, and related studies compared to urban communities where the most common field of study is business, management, and public administration. The least common areas of study in rural communities are mathematics, computer and information sciences, humanities, physical and life sciences and technology, visual and performing arts and communications technology, and agriculture, natural resources and conservation.

Table 3. Major field of post-secondary study for people aged 25-64.

	Rural	Urban	Ontario
Major field of study	**Proportion of population aged 25-64**	**Proportion of population aged 25-64**	**Proportion of Population aged 25-64**
Business, management and public administration	10%	16%	15%
Architecture, engineering and related studies	13%	12%	12%
Social and behavioural sciences and law	7%	10%	10%
Health and related fields	10%	9%	9%
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	2%	4%	4%
Humanities	2%	4%	4%
Personal, protective and transportation services	5%	3%	4%
Education	3%	3%	3%
Physical and life sciences and technology	2%	3%	3%
Visual and performing arts and communication technologies	2%	3%	3%
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	2%	1%	1%

Most of the rural communities with a higher proportion of people with a post-secondary degree are in Southwestern Ontario (Table 4). Urban communities with higher proportions of people with a post-secondary education are also in Southwestern Ontario, with many in the Greater Toronto Area (Table 5).

Table 4. Rural communities with the highest proportion of individuals with a post-secondary education.

Community	Number of people with a post-secondary education	Proportion of population aged 25-64
Thornloe	40	89%
Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional	630	77%
Deep River	1,515	76%
Hilton	120	75%
Saugeen Shores	5,955	75%
Lucan Biddulph	2,245	74%
The Blue Mountains	3,370	74%
Prince	380	73%
Pelee	95	73%
Kincardine	4,390	72%

Table 5. Urban communities with the highest proportion of individuals with a post-secondary education.

Community	Number of people with a post-secondary education	Proportion of population aged 25-64
Oakville	93,095	84%
Richmond Hill	88,110	79%
Waterloo	48,870	79%
Aurora	26,200	77%
Middlesex Centre	7,350	77%
Milton	54,345	77%
Ottawa	417,415	77%
Burlington	73,715	76%
Pelham	6,415	75%
LaSalle	12,555	75%

Summary

Education is important for a community's health and economic and social wellbeing. Having access to education can improve physical and mental health. Access to education creates more opportunities for stable employment, financial security, and social success which is often associated with higher levels of self-reported health. Additionally, people often make friends and develop social professional networks in their studies, improving social connections. Low-income households and communities without educational institutions or childcare often have more limited opportunities for education. By looking at these indicators, it can highlight which communities need more investment in education and the resources that allow people to access education.

This factsheet was prepared by the Rural Ontario Institute. Questions about data sources and comments or feedback can be directed to **facts@ruralontarioinstitute.ca.**

This factsheet complements ROI's Community Wellbeing Dashboard. Factsheets provide insight and analysis of rural facts and trends featured in the dashboards.

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