

How are Oxford County Residents Really Doing?

A report on wellbeing in Oxford County

Prepared by:

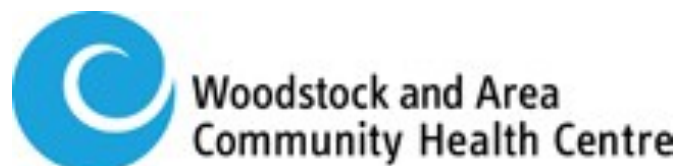


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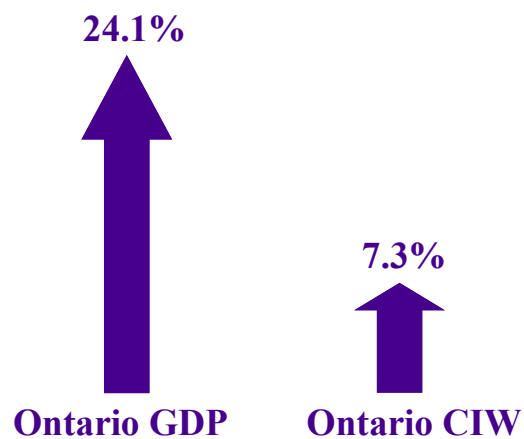


Canadian Index of Wellbeing



The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) is a framework that allows for tracking and reporting on overall quality of life. Traditionally, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the monetary value of all the final goods and services produced within a country in a year, or other given period of time, has been used as an indicator of a country's standard of living. However, GDP was never designed nor intended to be used in this way. The GDP fails to capture wellbeing in the broad sense that the CIW does.

When comparing the GDP per capita in Canada, and wellbeing as measured by the CIW from 1994 to 2010, it is observed that while GDP grew by 28.9%, the CIW only rose by 5.7%.¹ Similarly, over the same time, while the GDP in Ontario has increased by 24.1%, wellbeing as measured by the CIW in Ontario has only increased by 7.3%.² It is clear that GDP does not tell us the whole story about quality of life.



The CIW uses eight domains to provide a complete picture of wellbeing. The eight domains are: *community vitality*, *democratic engagement*, *education*, *environment*, *healthy populations*, *leisure and culture*, *living standards*, and *time use*.

Overall improvements in wellbeing, or in specific domains does not necessarily mean positive outcomes in all areas. In fact, they often mask complex challenges.



This report will provide an outline of each of the eight domains using local data to provide a snapshot of wellbeing in Oxford County. It is important to note that we were unable to provide historical comparisons in most cases. Feedback from the community on each of the domains has also been included.

Community Vitality



“Vital communities are those that have strong, active, and inclusive relationships among people, private, public, and non-governmental organisations that foster individual and collective wellbeing.”²

A vital community also has the ability to strengthen these relationships so that the community can create, adapt, and thrive in a changing world, in ways that are inclusive and respectful of the needs and aspirations of diverse communities.³

Ontarians have seen their community vitality improve every year since 2000, with an overall growth of 15.4% between 1994 and 2010 (compared to Canada who saw an increase of 10.3% over the same time).³

15.4%



Ontario

10.3%



Canada

The connection Oxford County residents feel to their community varies, with some identifying poor connection as having a significant negative impact on their lives

There has been little change since the 2008 Social Report that indicated that some members of our community feel isolated.⁴ A series of community conversations hosted by United Way in 2013 revealed that many residents of Oxford County do not feel a strong sense of belonging. People “are concerned that there are many barriers to belonging, and that their community is not open to addressing these barriers.”⁵ In the same year, the Tillsonburg Transportation working group identified transportation as a significant barrier to participation in the community.^{6,7}

Decrease in crime rates in Oxford County

Overall, between 2010 and 2012, major crimes (including assault, auto theft, etc.) in Oxford County have decreased by 2.5%.⁸ However, crimes within this category, including sexual assault, break and enter, theft under, and impaired driving have increased in the same time frame. Additionally, drug related crimes increased 19.8% from 2010 to 2012, although there was a dip in rates between 2010 and 2011.⁸

Decrease in crime rates in Woodstock

Between 2010 and 2013, property-related crimes (including break and enter, thefts, possession of stolen goods, frauds, etc.) decreased 21%. In the same time frame, violent crimes (including assaults, sexual assaults, robbery, threatening, etc.) decreased 10%.⁹

Slight increase in the number of people reporting hours of unpaid work

In 2006, 74% of Oxford County residents reported that they completed hours of unpaid work, including caring for children and seniors.¹⁰ This is an increase of 2% from 2001.¹¹ In both years, slightly more than half of this work, 52%, was completed by women. It is unknown the current levels of unpaid work in Oxford County, as this question was removed from the 2011 National Household Survey, which replaced the mandatory long-form census.

In 2011, 98.4% of survey respondents indicated that they felt very safe or safe in their community³⁰

A telephone survey was completed with 383 Oxford County residents: 118 respondents were from East Zorra-Tavistock, Norwich, and Blandford Blenheim, 62 from Zorra and South-West Oxford, 85 from Ingersoll, and 118 from Tillsonburg.⁸

"In Tillsonburg a recent survey by the Youth Advisory Committee showed that most high school students felt unsafe. The number one reason given for feeling unsafe was drugs."
Community Member

We don't know...

We were unable to locate the following indicators from the CIW framework in the community vitality domain:

- Percentage who feel safe walking alone after dark
- Percentage with six or more close friends
- Percentage reporting participation in organised activities
- Percentage who feel that most or many people can be trusted

We also know that...

Community members and agencies across Oxford County are mobilizing to increase the sense of belonging among all residents. On January 17, 2014, United Way Oxford held a community workshop in Ingersoll where they shared the results of their community conversations, and planted the seeds for exploring opportunities of a County collaboration that would work to enhance the overall sense of community belonging.

A group of Oxford County agencies hosted a two-day Belonging Coffee Chat on May 13 and 14, 2014, which also included a presentation and facilitated conversation by Dr. Michael Unger, an international expert on resiliency. Follow-up activities from these events are on-going.

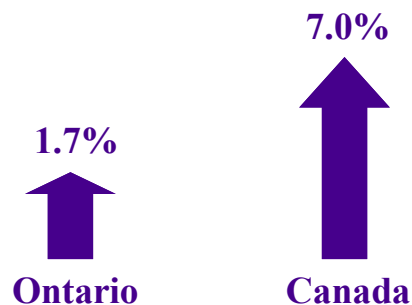
Democratic Engagement



“Democratic Engagement is the state of being involved in advancing democracy through political institutions, organisations, 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; governments build relationships, trust, shared responsibility, and participation opportunities with citizens; and democratic values are sustained by citizens, government, and civil society at a local, national, and global level.”²

A healthy democracy needs citizens who feel their votes count, who are informed, who participate, debate, and advocate. It needs governments, at all levels, to be transparent, inclusive, consultative, and trustworthy.²

Democratic engagement in Ontario dipped from 1994 to 2004, then saw improvements in 2005, which have since stagnated.² Between 1994 and 2010, Ontario saw a small increase of 1.7%, well below the increase seen in Canada of 7.0%.²



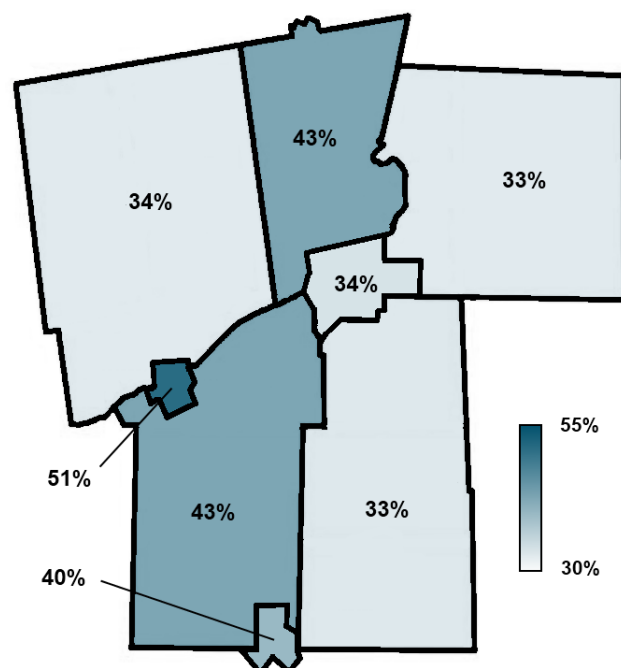
Female representation in government is low across the County

Political representation at the provincial and federal levels are both male in Oxford County. The percentage of women in municipal government varies across the County. In no areas is there equal representation. Only two areas, Blandford-Blenheim and Zorra, have a female mayor. County council, Zorra, and Norwich boast a 40% representation. Woodstock, Ingersoll, and East-Zorra Tavistock have 28.6% female representation, followed by Blandford-Blenheim with 20%. Tillsonburg and South-West Oxford have the lowest female representation, at 16.7% and 14.3%, respectively.

“Why should I vote? It’s not going to make a difference.”

Community Member

Voter turnout at the 2010 municipal election was low across Oxford County



In most areas of Oxford County, less than half of registered voters voted in the 2010 municipal election.

The highest voter turnout was in Ingersoll, with 51%. In comparison, the lowest voter turnout was seen in Blandford-Blenheim, and Norwich, each with 33%, followed closely by Woodstock and Zorra at 34%.

The number of registered voters in 2010, in each area, is listed below.

Location	Number of Registered Voters (2010)	Percentage Voter Turnout in 2010 (%)
Zorra	6,135	34
East Zorra-Tavistock	4,869	43
Blandford-Blenheim	5,807	33
Woodstock	25,949	34
Ingersoll	8,690	51
South-West Oxford	5,454	43
Tillsonburg	11,850	40
Norwich	7,500	33

Source: Zorra Township, East Zorra-Tavistock Township, Blandford-Blenheim Township, City of Woodstock, Town of Ingersoll, Wouth-West Oxford, Town of Tillsonburg, Norwich Township (12)

We don't know...

We were unable to locate the following indicators from the CIW framework in the democratic engagement domain:

- Percentage with a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in government
- Percentage that strongly agree it is every citizen's duty to vote in elections
- Percentage that are not interested in politics at all
- Percentage reporting being very/fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada
- Net Official Development Aid as a percentage of Gross National Income

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 adult age.”²

Education prepares children and adults to function in various societal contexts, and plan and adapt to future situations.¹³

In Ontario, education is the strongest contributor to wellbeing. The only domain in Ontario to exceed the GDP, from 1994 to 2010, the education domain increased by 36.0% (while GDP increased by 24.1% in the same time frame).² The same trend is observed in Canada (overall increase of 36.2%).

36.0%



Ontario

36.2%



Canada

In 2013, 21.4% of 0-5 year old children in Oxford County had access to regulated child care spaces.¹⁴

In Oxford County, during the 2011-2012 school year, 2.6% of kindergarten children were identified as having Multiple Challenge Indicators on the Early Development Instrument (EDI).

This means that 2.6% of children fell into the lowest 10% on 3 of the 5 EDI domains, or 9 of the 16 EDI sub-domains in their neighbourhood. The higher this number, the more vulnerable the area in terms of child development.¹⁴

High school graduation rates are increasing

From 2005 to 2012, the four-year graduation rate at London District Catholic School Board increased 6%. From 2005 to 2011, the five-year rate increased 4%.¹⁵ In 2012, 89% of students were graduating within four years, and in 2011, 94% were graduating in five years.¹⁵

During the same time, the four-year graduation rate at Thames Valley District School Board increased 11%. From 2005 to 2011 the five-year graduation rate increased 9%.¹⁵ In 2012, 71% of students were graduating within four years, and in 2011, 86% were graduating in five years.¹⁵

***"Young adults
are moving
away to obtain
education and
are not coming
back."
Community
Member***

Of the total population aged 15 years and over in Oxford County, 24.9% do not have a high school diploma¹⁶ (compared to 18.7% in Ontario).¹⁷

The graduation rates of Woodstock's four high schools are shown below.¹⁸ The high school graduation rates in Ingersoll and Tillsonburg are unknown.

High School	Percent Graduation Rate after Four-Years (2010-2011) (%)	Percent Graduation Rate after Five-Years (2011-2012) (%)
St. Mary's High School	87%	95%
Huron Park Secondary School	70%	90%
Woodstock Collegiate Institute	76%	85%
College Avenue Secondary School	61%	83%

Source: Woodstock Sentinel Review (18)

Fewer individuals in Oxford County between 25 and 64 have a university degree, compared to Ontario

In Oxford County, in 2011, 13% of 25 to 64 year olds reported having a university certificate, diploma, or degree at the bachelor level or above.¹⁶ This is compared to 29% of Ontarians who have the same level of education.¹⁷ Due to the change from the mandatory long-form census to the National Household Survey, we cannot compare this rate to previous years.

We don't know...

We were unable to locate the following indicators from the CIW framework in the education domain:

- Ratio of students to educators in public schools
- Average of five social and emotional competency scores for 12 to 13 year olds
- Basic knowledge and skills index for 13 to 15 year olds
- Percentage of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores explained by socio-economic background

Environment



“The environment is the foundation upon which human societies are built. On a broader level, it involves prevention of waste and damage while revitalising the quality and sustainability of all our resources.”²

The environment is the basis of our health, our communities, and our economy. Despite its fundamental importance 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.²

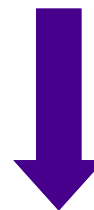
Overall, the environment domain decreased by almost 2.0% in Ontario between 1994 and 2010. While this outcome is better than the national decline of 7.8%, the trends observed in Greenhouse Gas emissions and ground level ozone are far from what we need to address climate change challenges.²

Ontario



2.0%

Canada



7.8%

A data challenge...

The CIW framework uses the following indicators to measure the environment domain:

- Ground level ozone (population weighted in parts per billion)
- Absolute Greenhouse Gas emissions (megatons of carbon dioxide per year)
- Primary energy production (petajoules)
- Water yield in southern Canada (cubic kilometres)
- Ecological footprint
- Viable Metal Reserves Index
- Canadian Living Planet Index
- Marine Trophic Index

These indicators are not available at the local level, with the exception of primary energy production, which we know in Oxford County is nuclear.¹⁹

What we do know in Oxford County...

- In 2006, the [Oxford Natural Heritage Study](#) was conducted. It examined the state of land and water resources of the County and provided a set of recommendations to conserve and enhance those features.
- There has been a history of citizen engagement and action on environmental issues in Oxford County, dating back to at least the 1970s.
- A decrease in garbage tonnage and an increase in recycling have expanded the life expectancy of the landfill site at the Oxford County Waste Management Facility in Salford by 30 years.
- Since 2006, garbage tonnage to the landfill has decreased by 50,000 tonnes.

"The cost of bag tags can make it hard to do the environmentally friendly thing with your garbage."

Community Member

Environmental groups in Oxford County...

Oxford County Trails Council, www.oxfordcountytailsCouncil.ca

A community-based, non-profit organization working for the development, coordination, linking, preservation and use of trails in Oxford County.

Woodstock Environment Advisory Committee,

www.informationoxford.ca/index.php/business/detail/112570

Established to provide Woodstock City Council with direct citizen input on environmental matters.

Oxford People Against the Landfill (OPAL), www.opalalliance.ca

A group of concerned residents and business owners who are actively advocating against a proposed landfill located adjacent to Ingersoll, Centreville, and Beachville.

Oxford Green Watch, www.oxfordgreenwatch.org

Partnering with OPAL, this group is currently fighting the landfill proposal. A history of citizen action is included on their website.

Friends of Pittock, www.friendsofpittock.ca

This organization proactively encourages the identification and setting aside of lands where protection and restoration can occur to make the existing natural heritage system more complete through local restoration plans.

Stewardship Oxford, www.windsorsex.cioc.ca/record/OXF1152

Promotes sustainable approaches to natural resource management in Oxford County.

Ducks Unlimited, Oxford Chapter,

www.informationoxford.ca/index.php/business/detail/113024

Conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl.

Transition to Less Waste, www.transitiontolesswaste.org

A grassroots organization dedicated to reducing the ecological footprint of Oxford County.

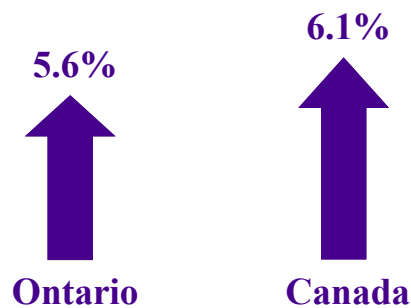
Healthy Populations



“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 as well as health care quality, access, and public health services.”²

This domain captures both the health status of the population, as well as factors that influence health. A broad definition is used because lifestyle and behaviour is constrained and shaped by broader social factors such as food price and distribution, home construction and location, transportation designs, how accessible health care and recreational services are, and how we interact with the natural environment.²

A worrying decline in the health of Ontarians during the late 1990s and early 2000s, was followed by an increase and stabilization during the late 2000s. An overall increase of 5.6% from 1994 to 2010 was observed, slightly below the 6.1% national gain. The indicators reveal contradictory trends, with some seeing a significant decrease, and others significant increases.²



Oxford County residents self-reported health has remained fairly stable since 2009.

In 2009, 61.6% of Oxford County residents aged 12 years and over rated their health as very good or excellent.²⁰ There was a similar rate in 2011/2012 of 60.4%.²¹

In the 2011/2012 year, 6.2% of Oxford County residents aged 12 and over self-reported that they had diabetes.²¹

Overall, Oxford County residents live long lives

The life expectancy, or the number of years a person is expected to live at birth in Oxford County is 80.3 years.²²

In 2012/2013, 9.4% of Oxford County teens aged 12 to 19 reported themselves as daily or occasional smokers.²³

***"Seniors left
without benefits
really struggle
health wise."
Community
Member***

Less than half of Oxford County residents are getting flu shots

In Oxford County, in 2011/2012, 39% of individuals aged 12 years and over reported getting immunized against influenza less than one year ago.²¹

We don't know...

We were unable to locate the following indicators from the CIW framework in the healthy populations domain:

- Average remaining years expected to be lived in good health, average Health Adjusted Life Expectancy (HALE)
- Percentage rating patient health services as excellent or good
- Percentage with probable depression

We also know that...

- In 2009, 7% of Oxford County residents perceived their mental health as either fair or poor.⁵ Particularly interesting is that more women (9.3%) in Oxford County perceived their mental health as fair or poor than men (3.6%).²⁰
- In 2009, fewer Oxford County residents eat fruits and vegetables at least five times per day than Ontario residents (40.5% vs. 44.1%).²⁰
- In 2009, residents of Oxford County smoked more than Ontario residents (23.2% vs. 18.6%).²⁰
- In 2009, residents of Oxford County were exposed to more second hand smoke at home than Ontario residents (9.3% vs. 5.3%).²⁰
- In 2009, more Oxford County residents reported being "heavy drinkers" than Ontario residents (26.5% vs. 21.2%).²⁰
- In 2009, Oxford County residents were less active than Ontario residents (51.8% vs. 49.3%).²⁰



Healthy Communities Oxford Community Picture Report 2011

Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services
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Leisure & Culture



“By participating in leisure and cultural 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, they help to fully define our lives, the meaning we derive from them, and ultimately, our wellbeing.”²

This is true throughout our lives and for all social groups, all ages, and both genders. The impact of participation in leisure and cultural activities is even greater for people in marginalized groups, such as people living with disabilities, those living in poverty, and minority populations.²

Leisure and culture is the only domain in Ontario other than the Environment to see an overall decline since 1994, falling by 5.9% (a national decline of 7.8% was also observed).² Positive trends include greater participation in physical activity and slightly longer vacations. However, decreasing engagement in social leisure and the arts, lower rates of volunteerism, and declining household spending in the domain are of growing concern for our wellbeing.²

Ontario



5.9%

Canada



7.8%

Less than half of Oxford County residents participate in physical activity lasting over 15 minutes

In 2009, 48.2% of Oxford County residents participated in physical activity lasting over 15 minutes.²⁰

“Cost and transportation are a barrier to many.”

Community Member

We don't know...

We were unable to locate the following indicators from the CIW framework in the leisure and culture domain:

- Average percentage of time spent on the previous day in social leisure activities.
- Average percentage of time spent on the previous day in arts and culture activities.
- Average number of hours in the past year volunteering for culture and recreation organisations.
- Average attendance per performance in past year at all performing arts performances.
- Average visitation per site in past year to all National Parks and National Historic Sites.
- Average number of nights away per trip in the past year on vacation trips to destinations over 80 km from home.
- Expenditures in past year on culture and recreation as percent of total expenditures.

We also know that...

- In 2007, 56.2% of Oxford County residents indicated that they had used recreational trails in Oxford County in the previous 12 months.²⁰
- Across Oxford County, as of February 2014, more than 12,900 individuals had memberships at fitness and wellness centres, that's more than 12% of the population.²⁴ These numbers do not include individuals who participate in organized fitness through other organizations, such as yoga clubs, sports leagues, dance schools, and skating or gymnastics clubs. In reality, the percentage of the population participating in organized fitness is likely much higher.
- The Woodstock Art Gallery, Oxford County's largest municipal public gallery, saw 15,570 visitors, 3,036 children participating in programs, and 1,520 volunteer hours completed in 2013.²⁵ For more information: www.woodstockartgallery.ca. Art centres can also be found at the Tillsonburg Station Arts Centre, and Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre.
- Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, and Woodstock all have active theatre organizations.
- The County is home to many museums, including: Beachville District Museum, Drumbo & District Museum, Princeton and District Museum, Ingersoll Cheese & Agricultural Museum, Oxford County Museum School, South Norwich Historical Society: Station Museum, Annandale National Historic Site, and Woodstock Museum.

Oxford Creative Connections is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in Oxford County through the preservation and advancement of arts and culture. For more information: www.oxfordcreativeconnections.com

Artists of Oxford is a support network for professional artists in the region. Hosting two to three shows each year, they are dedicated to awareness, appreciation, and support of the arts. For more information: www.artistsofoxford.wordpress.com

Oxford Historical Society preserves and promotes the history of Oxford County. For more information: www.oxfordhistoricalsociety.ca

Living Standards

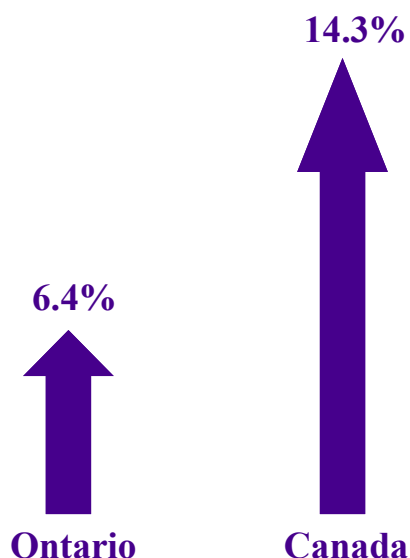


“The Living Standards domain examines Canadians’ average and median income and wealth, distribution of income and wealth including poverty rates, income fluctuations, and volatility, and economic security, including labour market security, housing security, and security provided by the social safety net.”²

This domain tracks not only the capacity of the Canadian economy to grow, but more importantly, its capacity to transform economic growth into stable current and future income streams for Canadians.² Economic growth does not automatically translate into better living standards for all Canadians.²

From 1994 to 2010, Ontario saw fluctuations in living standards. Between 1994 and 2007, Ontarians saw an overall increase of 29.2% - almost matching the growth in GDP at 29.5%. Following the recession of 2008, there was a sharp drop of 22.7% in just three years.²

Overall, from 1994 to 2010, there was an increase of 6.4%. This overall increase masks the decrease in Ontario’s economic security over the same period. Canada saw an increase in the living standards domain of 14.3%.²



The median household income in Oxford County is \$63,180.²⁶

11.7% of individuals living in Oxford County are considered to be living with low income.²⁷

The percentage of Oxford County residents aged 15 years and over employed is 63%.¹⁶

We don't know...

We were unable to locate the following indicators from the CIW framework in the living standards domain:

- Ratio of top to bottom quintile of economic families, after tax
- Scaled value of Centre of Living Standards (CSLS) economic security index
- Percentage of labour force with long-term unemployment
- Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) index of employment quality
- Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) housing affordability index

"We're really about to struggle as a society. We're going to grow poverty in Oxford County unless we do something about it."

Community Member

We also know that...

- 6.1% of Oxford County residents aged 15 years and over are unemployed.¹⁶
- One in 14 households in Oxford County do not meet Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation standards for adequacy, affordability, and/or suitability, and they cannot afford the median rent of alternative acceptable housing.²⁶
- In Oxford County, the cost of living has increased since 2009 with increases in hydro (27%), food (9%), and transportation (13%).²⁶
- From 2007 to 2011, the average monthly rent in Oxford County increased 12%.²⁶
- An average, single, full-time worker earning minimum wage, renting a one-bedroom apartment, would have to spend 36% of his or her income on rent.²⁸
- 68% of Oxford County residents receiving Ontario Works were spending more on shelter than what was covered on their shelter allowance. A single recipient of ODSP receives \$479/month for shelter, while the average market rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$645.²⁸
- The average rent in Woodstock is \$881, the third-highest in western Ontario. This spring, Woodstock had a critically low vacancy rate of 1.8%. A balanced acceptable rate for a community is 3%.²⁸
- There are 1,429 social housing units in Oxford County. More than 1,200 households are on the waiting list for rent geared-to-income units.²⁸
- 15% of home owners in Oxford County are experiencing an affordability problem.²⁶

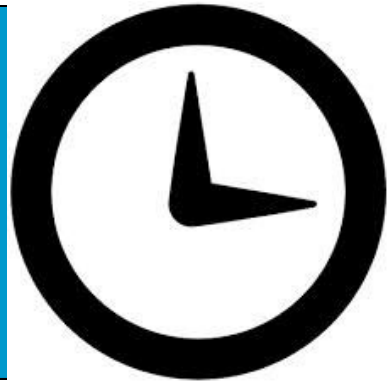
The **Oxford Poverty Action Coalition** “strives toward eliminating poverty by increasing awareness and sensitivity to the needs of those affected by poverty and to advocate for positive social, economic, and political change in a manner that is empowering and inclusive.

Subcommittees: Food Secure Oxford, Community Voices, Policy Watch, and Oral

Health. The group recently released a [video](#) which shares the thoughts of a diverse group of community members on poverty in Oxford County. Website: www.spcoxford.ca/opac



Time Use



“Time use measures 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.”²

It considers the length of our work week, our work arrangements, our levels of time pressure, and the time we spend in leisure and volunteerism. Balance is an important part of time use, and we must balance the numerous activities that are critical for our wellbeing.

Between 1994 and 2010, Ontario saw a small increase of 1.1%. The overall trend suggests that Ontarians—and all Canadians—have not made much progress finding work-life balance. The small increase masks some important changes in this domain. Fewer people are working more than 50 hours per week, and increased access to flexible work hours has assisted many Ontarians in achieving greater balance in their lives. However, there has been an increase in the number of people feeling pressed for time, more women are providing unpaid care to older adults, and there is more time being spent commuting to work.²

1.1%
↑
Ontario

1.2%
↑
Canada

In 2006, 18.8% of Oxford County residents aged 15 years and older reported doing unpaid work caring for seniors²⁰

The median commuting duration for Oxford County residents aged 15 years and over is 15.7 minutes¹⁶

We don't know...

We were unable to locate the following indicators from the CIW framework in the time use domain:

- Percentage of labour force participants working more than 50 hours per week
- Percentage of 20 to 64 year olds reporting high levels of time pressure
- Percentage 65 years and older reporting daily active leisure activities
- Percentage 65 years and older reporting annual formal volunteering activities
- Percentage of individuals working for pay with flexible work hours
- Percentage 3 to 5 year olds read to daily by parents

We also know that...

- 39.1% of Oxford County residents aged 15 years and older reported doing unpaid work caring for children in 2006.²⁰
- 75% of Oxford County residents who are participating in the labour force are working full-time hours.¹⁶
- Participation in Seniors Centres in Oxford County: 538 at South Gate Centre in Woodstock, 610 at Tillsonburg Senior Centre, and 560 at Ingersoll Services for Seniors.²⁹
- Oxford County has more perceived high stress levels than Ontario residents, as self-reported in 2009 (26.7% vs. 24.3%).²⁰

"Shift work and farming impacts our available time. Many of the manufacturing companies here have mandatory overtime."
Community Member

With an average of 36 postings per month at the **Oxford Volunteer Portal**, a centralized system, there are many opportunities to volunteer in Oxford County.

For more information: www.workinoxford.ca

The **Volunteer Network of Oxford** is dedicated to sharing resources by providing support and educational opportunities to professionals working with volunteers. The committee is comprised of volunteer managers and staff from various non-profit agencies located within Oxford County. All of the organizations who belong to the network rely on volunteers for their day to day operations.



For more information: www.informationoxford.ca/index.php/business/detail/113011

Let's Talk!

Leisure & Culture



In 2009, 48.20% of Oxford County residents participated in physical activity lasting over 15 minutes.

Environment



Ontario's primary source of power generation is nuclear power.

Healthy Populations



In 2011/2012, 60.4% of Oxford County residents aged 12 years and over rated their health as very good or excellent.

Education



13% of 25 to 64 year olds report having a university certificate, diploma, or degree at the bachelor level or above.

Time Use



In 2006, 18.8% of people aged 15 years and older reported doing unpaid work caring for seniors.

Living Standards



11.7% of individuals living in Oxford County are considered to be living with low income.

Democratic Engagement



Average voter turn out for municipal elections in Oxford County in the most recent municipal election was 38.9%.

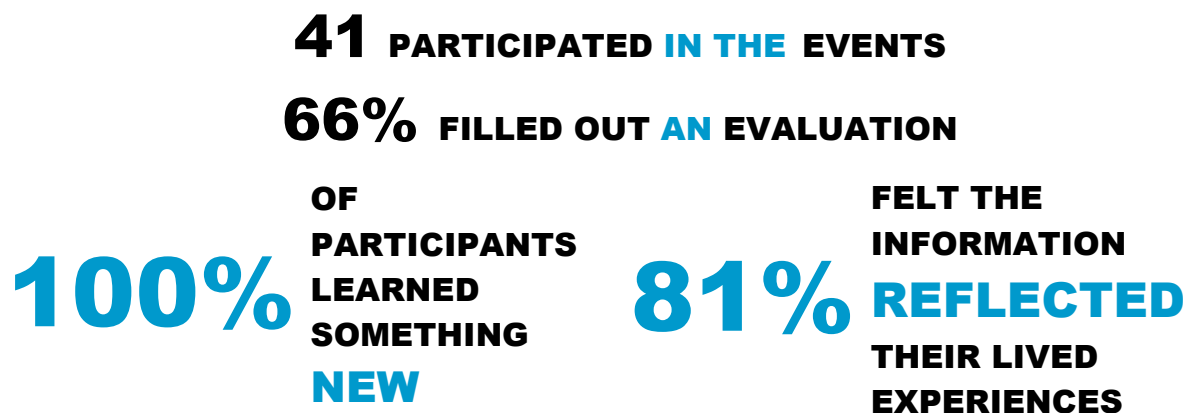
Community Vitality



From 2010 to 2012 in Oxford County major crimes decreased 2.5%. From 2010 to 2013 there was a 10% decrease in violent crimes in Woodstock.

Let's Talk!

Community discussions were held in Woodstock on May 27, 2014, Ingersoll on May 30, 2014, and Tillsonburg on June 6, 2014. Over lunch, the details of this report were shared, and facilitated discussions on each domain followed.



OF THE EIGHT DOMAINS, PARTICIPANTS RANKED THE TOP THREE
NEEDING ACTION IN OXFORD COUNTY AS:

HEALTHY POPULATIONS
LIVING STANDARDS
EDUCATION

OF THE EIGHT DOMAINS, PARTICIPANTS FEEL OXFORD COUNTY
NEEDS THE MOST IMPROVEMENT IN:

LIVING STANDARDS
HEALTHY POPULATIONS
EDUCATION

Interestingly, much of the discussions reflected around different domains than were selected through ranking in the evaluation process. In Woodstock, there was a lot of concern with living standards, particularly affordable housing, and democratic engagement. Ingersoll participants discussed challenges with environment and democratic engagement. In Tillsonburg, the discussion was fairly equal across domains, however, living standards and democratic engagement stood out as two areas that participants were concerned about.

Let's Talk... Democratic Engagement

Although participants did not select democratic engagement as one of the top three domains that either needed the most improvement, or needed action taken in Oxford County, there was consistent feedback at all three locations that residents lack confidence in the political system, and are not happy with the current state of affairs. Residents spoke about not feeling as though they have a voice, feeling disillusioned with the system, and not feeling as though their vote matters. Some talked about the challenges in encouraging people to speak out. One community member commented that our leaders use efficiency as their guideline, which removes power from the community and centralizes it within a few.

***"People feel
disempowered.
Decisions are made
behind closed doors.
This is a general
attitude."***

Community Member

***"Segments of our
population are
being silenced or
disenfranchised."***

***Community
Member***

Residents also talked about a lack of trust in our leaders. Many indicated that they feel as though politicians only want their vote, offering false promises in return. One community member said, "Candidates are always willing during elections to answer questions, but after it is impossible to get a meeting." Additionally, some felt as though our leaders don't use accessible language, "You can sit and listen to what politicians have to say without really knowing what they're saying. Use of language is very important."

Residents also talked about the unequal representation of our community when decisions are being made. Not everyone's voice is represented. One community member commented that the common voice is the voice of "older white men." Others feel as though the voices of people living in poverty are too often stifled.

The discussion in Ingersoll highlighted challenges with democratic engagement, but interestingly, this area had the highest voter turnout in the 2010 municipal election, and the community has rallied together to oppose the proposed landfill adjacent to Ingersoll, Centreville, and Beachville. It is clear that even in areas where citizen action is organized, residents are feeling frustrated by the way decisions are made at the local, provincial, and federal levels.

Let's Talk... Living Standards

Living standards were a significant concern to participants, particularly in Woodstock and Tillsonburg. While shared opinion was that the County has been doing well when it comes to spending on housing, participants still consider affordable housing as a significant challenge. The downgrading of services from the province to the municipality was concerning to residents, and the expectation that this will continue was seen as frightening by many.

***"Access to
affordable
housing is
non-existent."***

***Community
Member***

In Woodstock, participants noted that one bedroom apartments have disappeared. Participants in Tillsonburg reported that options for housing are slim in that area. The importance of housing was discussed, residents sharing the ripple effects that impact the other domains of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, “When people’s basic needs are being met, the rest of the things (e.g. education, employment) fall into place.” Residents feel as though we need housing specific for youth, concerned that there is nowhere for them to turn.

“We’re dealing with couch surfing families, not just individuals.”
Community Member

“When you live in an apartment and can’t keep up with rent, you can’t afford groceries.”
Community Member

Community members commented on the unacceptable wait list for rent geared-to-income housing in Oxford County, “A few years ago when the wait list was only a year long we thought that was bad, now we look back and say, wow, those were the good old days. What does that say about our society? A wait list should be unacceptable.”

Residents also spoke about transportation challenges, youth unemployment, minimum wage sitting below the poverty line, an increase in precarious work, inadequate social assistance rates, access to affordable food, and unaffordable hydro costs.

Some participants were not aware of the living standards concerns discussed by others. One commented that, “I did not know about this. I am baffled. I am wrong.” Another said, “Things are worse than I thought.” And, another described the situation as “scary”. These comments fit well with sentiments from others that we need more data, and more community education on these issues.

Let’s Talk... Healthy Populations

While ranked as a high priority by participants, there was less focus on healthy populations during discussions. Ingersoll participants shared concerns about losing their local hospital, indicating that they had already lost their local public laboratory.

Tillsonburg residents cited their local hospital as a strength, and indicated that there were excellent health care options in the area.

Other concerns around healthy populations included:

- Wanting to see an increase in residents getting immunizations
- Seniors without benefits
- Cost of home care supports and services
- The impact of underemployment on stress and health
- Diabetes as a concern
- Doctors appointments viewed as too short
- Needing increased supports for low income individuals to access services for fitness and mental health

“There is no funding increase at the hospital, but everything else goes up in cost. The cuts that are made end up at private clinics.”
Community Member

Let's Talk... Education

Similar to healthy populations, while education was a top three priority for participants, the discussion around this domain was limited. The main theme within education, was concerns about young people moving away for education, and not returning to Oxford County to work. Residents commented that we need to focus on attracting those young graduates back to our community.

Participants were concerned that the indicator within this domain tracked university degrees, but not apprenticeship or college diplomas. Additionally, participants feel that we should not be excluding those who receive a GED, the high school equivalency, from high school graduation rates.

"I didn't think that I would be able to go to school until this program [Livingston Centre literacy program]."

Community Member

Other challenges included:

- Rural school closures
- The amalgamation of the Oxford County School Board with Elgin, London, and Middlesex in 1998. Participants feel that as part of a larger school board, policies do not always align with local priorities.
- Lack of education on what it really means to be part of the wider community
- Concern about pending cuts in adult education
- Concern about pending cuts of educational assistants in schools

Let's Talk... Time Use

One of the bottom two domains in terms of priorities to participants as indicated by ranking in the evaluation, time use did not garner much discussion. Barriers to time balance identified by

"There is a trend of everything being scheduled. All activities become to-do instead of enjoy-to-do."

Community Member

participants included: the difference in commuting time for those with and without personal transportation, mandatory overtime at manufacturing plants in the community, shift work and farming impacting available time, individuals on social assistance spending too much time navigating the system, the impact of living standards on how time can be used, and individuals who are self-employed feeling obligated to work overtime.

Participants would like to see local businesses focusing more on work-life balance, and to have more understanding that obligations other than work, for example, medical

appointments, need to take place during business hours. Additionally, participants would like social service agencies to understand the time demands placed on those receiving social assistance, and make changes where possible to alleviate some of the time pressure. "When living on low income, there is not a lot of free time."

Let's Talk... Leisure and Culture

Participants identified many strengths within this domain in Oxford County. Numerous festivals, sports activities, community centres, museums, trails, seniors centres, theatre and arts groups, and libraries were discussed. Barriers included lack of transportation, cost of some

"Winning in sports has become part of our culture. It takes the fun out of it."
Community Member

activities, and lack of community consensus on what investments should be made in this domain.

Particular to Ingersoll, participants identified the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre as an asset to the community. On the other hand, participants feel as though Ingersoll is a great place for youth under the age of 15, but that between the ages of 15-23, there is "not so much to do." One community member commented that, "It [Ingersoll] is a difficult place to be in that age range."

There was also some discussion about whether organized sports can be counted as leisure time, but that barriers to unorganized sports continue to increase.

Let's Talk... Community Vitality

Work that is being carried out by various agencies and community members on community belonging was shared. Participants showed an interest in building a sense of community from the ground up. The idea that an individual who doesn't get involved in the community won't feel belonging was mentioned, and was followed by some of the barriers to getting involved, including: transportation, stigma, anxiety, fear of judgement, lack of time, and lack of communication. One community member commented that those with higher time pressures often are not able to become involved in the community in the way that they would like.

Participants in Tillsonburg expressed wanting more options for youth activities, specifically mentioning the Fusion Centre in Ingersoll as a goal. There was also some discussion that Tillsonburg could do a better job at making young families feel welcome, with some feeling that the focus is always on the senior population.

"I started to feel more like I belonged once I retired."
Community Member

There was a lack of confidence in the OPP and Woodstock Police crime statistics, with many questioning if the shown decreases in crime could be trusted. Additionally, while an OPP telephone survey showed that most who responded feel safe in the county, a community member in Tillsonburg shared that a survey of high school students by the Youth Advisory Committee in Tillsonburg showed that most high school students felt unsafe. The number one reason why students said they felt unsafe was due to drugs.

Church involvement was mentioned by several community members as having a positive influence on the community. One community member commented that a lot of time is put into the community through the churches.

Let's Talk... Environment

Environment was a very important topic to Ingersoll participants, which is likely related to the pending mega-landfill proposal that would sit adjacent to Ingersoll, Centreville, and Beachville. Concerns about water quality, air quality, and the impact each has on our health was discussed. Participants expressed a lack of trust in corporations making decisions that impact the environment and health of our community. Barriers discussed included: highly political topics may become removed from public forums (e.g. media and schools), downgrading of water quality monitoring to the municipality in 2013 before municipalities were prepared, companies being responsible for sending air quality data to the Ministry of Environment, and lack of access to the reporting of air and water quality data. An overall theme was that decisions are not made transparently and the community wants more say in decisions related to the environment.

"The original plan was a park at the proposed landfill site. I'd like to see that instead of a landfill."

Community Member

There was also discussion around the cost of garbage bag tags as a barrier to some community members. In some areas of the county the cost of the bag tags has increased, making it more problematic for those on low income. Tillsonburg participants also commented that the lack of large item pick-up is a barrier to some, as people without a personal vehicle are unable to access the transfer station.

Let's Talk... Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Some participants felt it was very challenging to select one of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing's (CIW) eight domains over another, stating that they are all important and interrelated. It was agreed that community work must always address all domains, as the domains work together to increase community wellbeing.

"The CIW framework provides a broad overview, and allows you to start to form a bigger picture of your community."
Community Member

There was a general consensus that the CIW is a tool that could inform the community about pressing issues. Community members talked about creating spaces to talk about these issues between community members, local agencies, and our government representatives. It was stressed that our local councils need to be aware of the real issues that are impacting Oxford County residents.

It was suggested by some community members that we have become desensitized to the injustices we see in our community, and that by continuing to use the CIW framework, we can continue to have discussions and make change through action.

The majority of participants agreed that using the CIW framework was useful in our community, and would like to see its use continued.

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