

- X** Eleven key issues
- X** Twenty-four pages
- X** One community snapshot



Building a
Strong Future



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Domains

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SIMCOE COUNTY'S

VitalSigns

Methodology

Intended as a long-term initiative, Simcoe County's **VitalSigns** is a community report card that gives a snapshot of quality of life and community vitality in several domains. **VitalSigns** builds on partnerships with a broad range of community members and organizations who contributed their time, skills and expertise to this project. These reports help communities make connections between issues and trends in different areas. The findings are presented in a reader-friendly format.

Community Engagement

Goals

- to highlight areas of need to encourage further dialogue and response from institutions, public leaders, charitable organizations and citizens
- to encourage cross-sector, holistic thinking about the overall vitality of our region and provide impetus for cross-sector initiatives
- to build community capacity through shared knowledge for improved decision-making

Community leadership group

A total of 20 key organizations and collaborative groups provided insight and recommendations to ensure Simcoe County's **VitalSigns** report is an effective vehicle for showing the trends and social disparity issues that exist and/or are emerging in our region within key quality-of-life areas.

Research

Vireo Research was commissioned to ensure the indicators for Simcoe County's **VitalSigns** were relevant, accurate and comprehensive.

Sourcing

The majority of data was retrieved from Statistics Canada via **VitalSigns** Canada. Both publicly available and specially requested data were taken into consideration. Due to changes in survey methodology and content, 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) estimates may not be directly comparable to estimates produced from the 2001 and 2006 census long forms. In some cases, such comparatives are made in this report and we caution the reader.

Whenever possible, data for the entirety of Simcoe County was used. Occasionally, Barrie (Census Metropolitan Area) or Muskoka data is used. City and township data was also provided by **VitalSigns** Canada. Additionally, the **VitalSigns** project team engaged community partners to understand their perspectives on the data.

The data report and related sources are available upon request.

Indicator and data selection

Indicators were selected and prioritized based on the following guidelines:

- understandability and measurability
- availability, ease of use, and cost of collection
- currency and relevancy
- Comprehensiveness of data: ensuring all of Simcoe County would be well-represented, or different communities within the county could be compared

2014 report highlights

Introduction

Simcoe County continues to grow, and with that growth comes new strength (e.g., an increased labour force) and new challenges — including an increased elderly population and decreasing share of youth residents.

Learning

Simcoe County and Muskoka are making progress in levels of education achieved.

Getting started

Unemployment rates among newcomers remain higher than for non-immigrants. Youth unemployment still challenges our region; and the number of young adults living in the parental home far exceeds provincial and national rates.

Environment

In Simcoe Muskoka, mean maximum temperatures are rising, while annual precipitation levels are decreasing. We also enjoy some of the province's most vibrant streams, lakes and wetlands.

Health

Simcoe Muskoka has better access to doctors than many living elsewhere in Canada, and is keeping pace with provincial and national rates in many other domain areas; however local rates for heavy drinking, obesity and food insecurity are higher than those comparables.

Housing

There is an affordable-housing crisis in Simcoe County. The issues are complex and no one organization can solve them alone.

Arts & culture

Simcoe County's vibrant arts and culture sector is growing, with employment in cultural occupations, number of artists, and electronic library usage on the rise.

Gap between rich & poor

Simcoe County Low Income Measure after-tax rates are generally better than Ontario and national averages. However, wealth is unequally distributed, leading to pockets of poverty and inequality for children and elders across Simcoe County.

Safety

Statistics in Midland, Orillia and Collingwood exceed provincial data averages in safety indexes. Overall, the rates are trending downward. The City of Barrie was named the safest city in Canada in 2014.

Getting around

Diverse transportation challenges are faced by many communities in Simcoe County. In Barrie, public transit usage is lower than national and provincial rates. However, community partners are working hard to address challenges.

Belonging & leadership

Volunteerism and voter turnout keep pace or exceed provincial and national rates. Our sense of belonging and satisfaction, however, trail provincial and national levels. Charitable giving varies.

Work

The percentage of Simcoe County residents earning a living wage is higher than the provincial and national rates. Unemployment is also higher. A trend shows employment levels are growing slower than they are both provincially and nationally.

A Canadian initiative with a Simcoe County focus



On behalf of the Huronia Community Foundation and its Board of Directors, I am proud to present the first "Simcoe County's VitalSigns" to our community. I want to thank Community Foundations Canada for providing the template and the guidance to create this report in Simcoe County.

This landmark report is as broad in its scope as our grants to the community. By doing, this we hope to offer a small insight into the key issues that need attention. By understanding these challenges, we find new opportunities for positive change and a pathway to building a stronger and healthier community for everyone.

This report is a collaborative effort between United Way Greater Simcoe County and Vireo Research with our office. We thank all those stakeholders who offered insight into the issues and CSC CHIGAMIK CHC for its financial support to make this a reality. We hope you find it insightful and useful in planning your organization's work to make our region a better place for all.

Barbara Jones

Board President, Huronia Community Foundation



At United Way Greater Simcoe County (UWGSC), we prioritize opportunities to increase our knowledge about our regional communities, in order to serve them better.

On behalf of the UWGSC board, staff, volunteers and community partners, I'd like to thank Huronia Community Foundation for inviting us to collaborate on the premiere edition of Simcoe County's VitalSigns. We are pleased to present this snapshot of our region's vitality. At UWGSC, we have already begun using this valuable data to better invest our resources where they're most needed to empower our region's residents.

Your feedback is welcome, encouraged and, indeed, vital.

Michelle Cellucci

Board Chair, United Way Greater Simcoe County

Introduction

Getting to know Simcoe County

446,063: Population

Simcoe County's population in 2011 was 446,063. This was a 5.7% increase from 422,204 in 2006. This represents 3.5% of the provincial population and keeps pace with the national growth rate of 5.9%.

16.1%: Proportion of youth (under 15)

On July 1, 2013, youth and children younger than 15 in Simcoe County constituted 16.1% of the total population. This was a 23.3% decrease from 2001's 21%. This proportion keeps pace with a national rate of 16.1% and the provincial rate of 16.2%.

16.5%: Proportion of seniors (65+)

On July 1, 2013, seniors in Simcoe County constituted 16.5% of the total population. This was a 22.4% increase from 12.8% in 2001. The 2013 proportion was 7.3% higher than the national proportion of 15.3% and 7.9% higher than the provincial proportion of 15.2%.

92: People per square km (density)

Simcoe County covers a large geographic area and includes a mix of both urban and rural communities. The overall population density of Simcoe County is 92 people per square kilometer. There are a wide range of population densities in the communities throughout Simcoe County. These range from more densely populated areas such as the City of Barrie with 1,754 people per square kilometer, to more rural areas such as the Township of Ramara which has approximately 22 people per square kilometer. Varying population densities presents diverse transportation challenges throughout our communities.

41.8: Median age

At 41.8 years, the median age in Simcoe County in 2011 increased by 2 years from a median age of 39.8 in 2006. The 2011 age was 1.2 years higher than the national level (40.6 years) and 1.4 years higher than the provincial level (40.4 years).

\$69,044: Median income of families

In 2011, the Simcoe County's median family income was \$69,044. This was \$2084 lower than the provincial median (\$71,128), and \$2000 higher than the national median income (\$67,044).

16%: Single-parent families

In 2011, 16% of families in Simcoe County were headed by single parents, up 2.3 percentage points from 13.7% in 2001. The 2011 proportion of families was 0.3 percentage points lower than the national ratio of 16.3% and 0.7 percentage points lower than the province's proportion of 16.7% at the same time.



Learning

Simcoe County and Muskoka are making progress in levels of education achieved.

11.1% of Barrie residents have not completed high school

In 2011, 11.1% of Barrie residents (aged 15+) had not completed high school. This represents 2.4% more than the provincial average.

In 2011, 10.3% of Muskokans aged 15+ had not completed high school – a figure that has been decreasing steadily since 2001, according to census data comparisons (please see page 2 for methodology details).

These 2011 rates compare to 8.7% of Ontarians aged 15+ who have not completed high school.

49.9% of Simcoe County residents have completed post-secondary education

In 2011, 49.9% of Simcoe County residents had completed post-secondary education, a figure that has been rising steadily since 2001. Despite this movement, Simcoe County continued to trail the provincial rate of 54.6% in 2011.

Barrie leads the 2011 regional statistics with a 50.7%, but still comes in below the provincial numbers of the same year.

79% high school graduation rate

In 2005, the Ontario Ministry of Education set a target to increase provincial graduation rates to 85% by 2011. Simcoe County District School Board's (SCDSB) overall five-year graduation rate has shown gradual improvement to 79% in 2012-2013 (up from 71% in 2005-2006). However, more females than males graduate within five years, with the gap varying from a high of 9% to 6% most recently. (All school boards have data for graduation rates and we chose to use SCDSB as a sample of the population).

Aboriginal educational attainment

In 2011, 72.8% of Muskoka's Aboriginal population aged 15+ held at least one certificate, diploma or degree, up from 66.7% in 2006. In 2011 Muskoka ranks below the provincial average of 77.6%, but above the national average of 71.1%.

In 2011, 81.2% of Barrie's Aboriginal population aged 15+ held at least one certificate, diploma or degree, up from 75% in 2006. Barrie ranks well above the provincial and national averages.

How you can help...

- Become a mentor or a tutor for a child or youth
- Read to your children every night for 20 minutes
- Offer co-operative education and summer work opportunities for youth
- Support after- school & outreach programs in your community

What the community is doing...

Big Brothers Big Sisters' In-School Mentoring Program has a 65-69% success rate in Simcoe County of children and youth doing better in school (better grades and better attendance) as a result of a match with a caring adult.

Simcoe County District School Board and various other boards have instituted a variety of proactive strategies to improve graduation rates, including increasing programs available in high schools and enhancing outreach to individual students.

Getting Started: New Arrivals

The number of newcomers is growing, and more are finding work in Simcoe County. However, their unemployment rates remain higher than those of non-immigrants.

Net migration

In 2011, 0.7% of the population (or 3,170 persons) in Simcoe County had lived outside the province within the previous year. Also in 2011, 2.6% of Simcoe County residents reported living outside the province within the last 5 years.

Settlement patterns in Simcoe County differ from other areas of Ontario. The number of immigrants arriving directly to Simcoe County from their country of origin is modest in comparison with other metropolitan areas, such as the Greater Toronto Area. Most newcomers choose to reside in Simcoe County as a secondary or tertiary pathway. Population growth projections for the Simcoe County area indicate the majority of population growth will be attributed to intraprovincial migration – or Ontario residents moving here from another part of Ontario.

Languages spoken

In 2011, 107 non-official mother tongues were reported in Simcoe County. In the same year, 93.8% of the Simcoe County's population spoke English most often at home, a rate that is 29.7% higher than the national rate of 64.1%, and 15.6% above the provincial rate of 78.2%.

In 2011, 0.8% of Simcoe County spoke French most often at home; with the remainder speaking other languages at home, including Chinese, Punjabi, Spanish, Arabic, Tagalog, Italian, German, Farsi or an Aboriginal language.

Visible minorities

In 2011, 4.7% of the population in Simcoe County was classified within a visible minority, up 36.2% from 3% in 2001, according to census data comparisons (please see page 2 for methodology details).

Immigrant unemployment rate

In 2011, the unemployment rate of recent immigrants (i.e., those entering the country within the last five years) was 13.6% in Simcoe County; 61.9% higher than the non-immigrant rate of 8.4%. In Barrie, the rate is 11.4%; 34.1% above non-immigrant rate of 8.4%. Both rates are better than the provincial average for unemployment among recent immigrants: 14.6%.

Proportion of immigrants

In 2011, the foreign-born county population consisted of 50,915 persons or 11.6% of the total population. In 2011, the foreign-born population of Barrie was 22,350 persons or 12.1% of the total population.



How you can help...

- Mentor a new Canadian
- Hire an internationally trained immigrant to work in their field of expertise
- Refer questions to the telephone hotline 211
- Plan to incorporate interpretation and translation supports for immigrants requiring language supports
- Refer newcomers to immigration.simcoe.ca for more than 300 pages of local community information and supports

What the community is doing...

The Simcoe County Local Immigration Partnership (SCLIP) develops settlement strategies for newcomers. These strategies bring together and support service delivery to local newcomers, while promoting positive relationships, opportunity, and use of local resources effectively. SCLIP, Community Settlement Strategy provides a blueprint for community engagement. SCLIP, Welcoming Communities Framework provides practical ideas for the general public, broader public sector, employers and New Canadians to support successful integration and retention of immigrants living in Simcoe County.

Getting started: youth

Youth in Simcoe County are more physically active than the provincial average. Youth unemployment, however, continues to challenge our region; and the number of young adults living in the parental home exceeds national rates.



81.3% Youth who are physically active

In 2013, 81.3% of youth aged 12-19 indicated that their leisure time was spent being physically active or moderately active, in comparison to the provincial average of 70.5%.

Youth crime

With 1,954 per 100,000 youth 12-17 years of age charged in 2013, the Barrie youth crime rate was 20.1% below the national average and 2.2% above the provincial average. The 2013 rate decreased 28.9% from 2,749 per 100,000 in 2012, and 46.7% from 3,663 per 100,000 in 2006.

Youth unemployment

In 2011, Barrie's youth unemployment rate for ages 15-24 was 21.4%; higher than the 2006 rate of 14.6%. The 2011 unemployment rate was also higher than the provincial (20.2%) and national (16.6%) rates.

49.9% Young adults aged 20-29 living in the parental home

In 2011, 49.9% of young adults aged 20-29 lived in the parental home in Simcoe County. The proportion was 15.8% above the national rate (42%), and 1.4% below the provincial rate (50.6%).

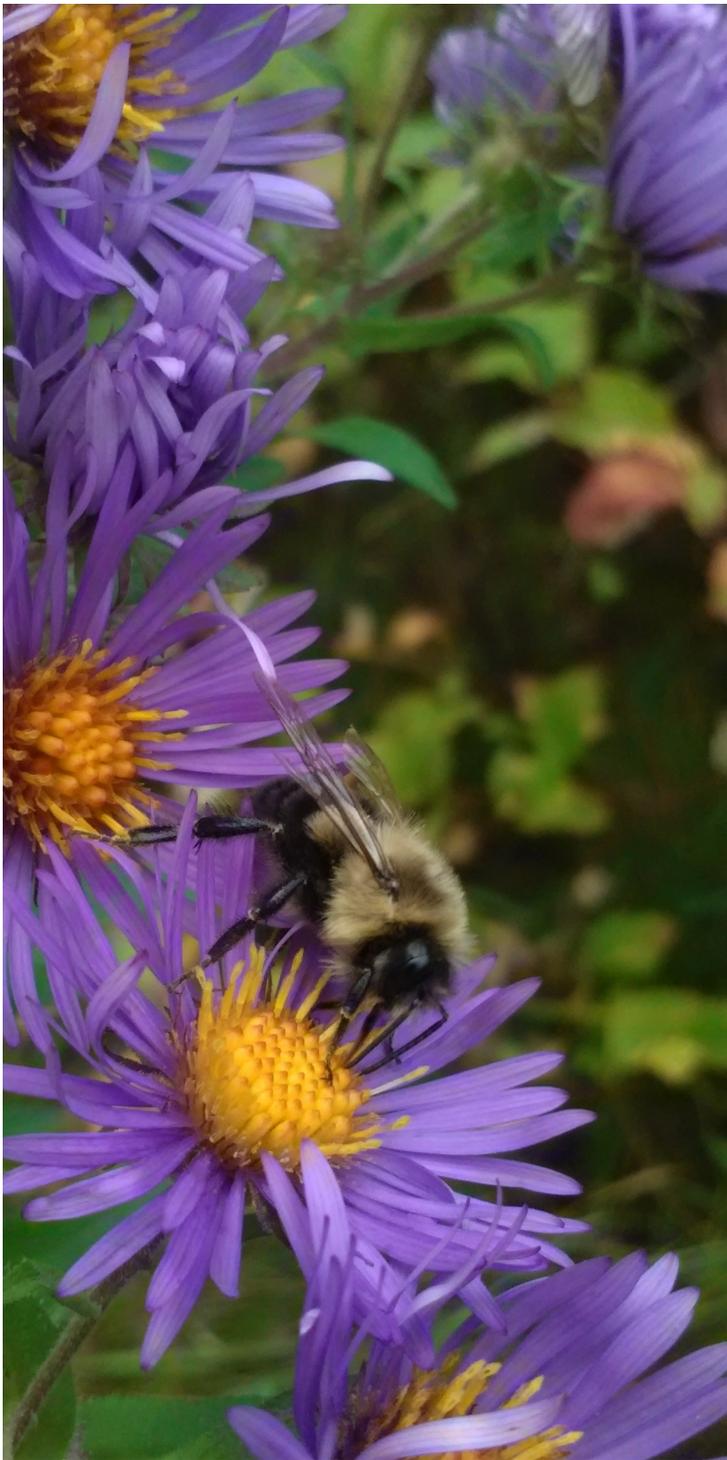
How you can help...

- Hire or mentor a young adult
- Provide volunteer opportunities for youth
- Contact your local employment service provider to access its programs/support
- Direct youth to volunteer centres in their areas
- Sponsor youth events, sports and activities

What the community is doing...

Simcoe-Muskoka Transition Age Youth (TAY) System of Supports (SoS) Partnership (TAY SoS), is a collaborative of agencies who work with youth (14-28) in Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka. TAY SoS, originally called the Simcoe Muskoka Service Collaborative, undertook developing a system of care specifically for transition age youth in their communities.

Achievements to date include training more than 200 service providers in the community-based and evidence-supported Transition to Independence Process (TIP) model. TAY SoS has also created strong substructures which include a TIP Community of Practice, a Youth Engagement Working Group, an Evaluation Working Group and four local TIP Model Site Trainers to sustain this system change. TAY SoS will continue to engage in collaborative community planning to focus and build on the creation of a comprehensive integrated system of supports to assist transition-aged youth and their families through the transition to adulthood.



Environment

In Simcoe Muskoka, mean maximum temperatures are on the rise; precipitation totals are decreasing.

Annual precipitation

In the Simcoe-Muskoka, 912.1mm of precipitation fell in 2013, an increase of 4.9% since 2011's 869.1mm.

The average annual precipitation for available years from 2001 through 2013 was 918.9mm, a decrease of 179.9mm from the 1971-to-2000 per-year average of 1098.6mm across the same geography.

Air quality — Barrie

In 2009, only 29% of Barrie households were aware of an advisory of poor air quality in their area, compared to 59% in 2007.

Households in 2009 were also less likely than in previous years to change their routines based on an air-quality advisory. In that year, 62% of households reported an awareness of an air quality advisory and made no change to their routine, compared to 48% in 2007.

How you can help...

- Reduce, reuse and recycle
- Turn off your car engine if idling for more than 10 seconds
- Conserve water by using a rain barrel
- Don't pour anything down storm drains
- Purchase and install bird and bat boxes
- Plant native trees, shrubs and wildflowers
- Dispose of fishing bait away from water bodies
- Regularly maintain your septic system
- Carpool to work

Mean, maximum & minimum temperatures

Within the Simcoe-Muskoka in 2013, the hottest month had a mean maximum temperature of 26.3° Celsius.

In comparison, the 1971-2000 regional mean maximum temperature was 24.8° Celsius in the hottest month.

In 2013, Simcoe-Muskoka had a mean minimum temperature of -15.7° Celsius in the coldest month.

In comparison, the 1971-2000 mean minimum temperature of -15.8° Celsius in the coldest month.

Georgian Bay Water Levels

The long-term mean water level for Lake Huron-Michigan from 1918-2013 is 176.4 m.a.s.l., which represents an average from gauges spread across both lakes. Current data for September shows that levels are slightly above the long-term average for the month (176.50 m.a.s.l.), and are the highest they've been in 15 years (176.51 m.a.s.l.), following a prolonged period of low-water levels. To complement the gauge in Collingwood, the Canadian Hydrographic Service installed a gauge in Midland Bay in 2009 so that levels can be accurately monitored in South-Eastern Georgian Bay.

279.4: liters of water per day

In Simcoe County in 2009, 279.4L of water were consumed per capita per day. This rate is 24.2% higher than the provincial average of 225L per capita; and has decreased by 13.4% from 2006.



Environment: water

Simcoe County houses some of the province's most vibrant streams, lakes and wetlands. These waterways provide a home for wildlife and aquatic species, and water for residential, agricultural and commercial use.

Grades ranging A to D: surface water quality – Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA)

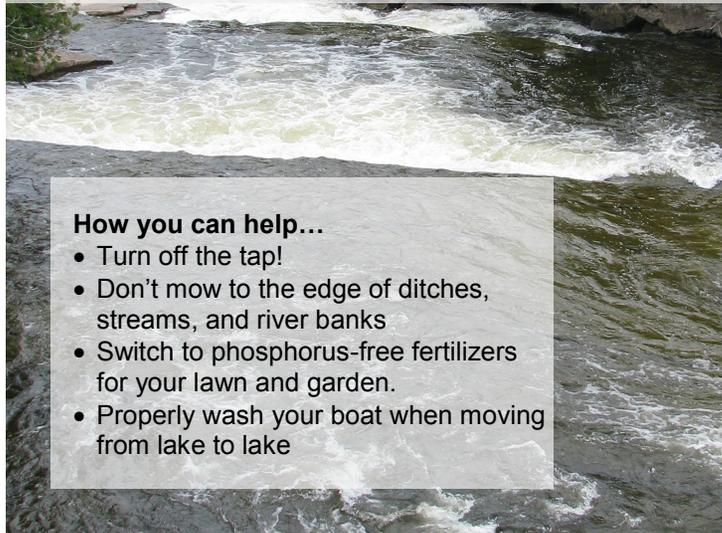
Streams that flow through areas with healthy forest and wetland cover – such as those on the Niagara Escarpment – are generally healthy (“A”). Streams that drain highly urbanized or intensively farmed lowland areas are often unhealthy. Innisfil Creek is the NVCA’s most degraded watercourse system (“D”), and impacts from this system extend downstream into the main Nottawasaga River. Studies have confirmed that high nutrient (phosphorous) loading is the most significant water quality issue within the watershed. Run off from agricultural and urban lands contributes to these high loads. Landowner and community volunteers are implementing stewardship actions aimed at reducing nutrient inputs and restoring stream health.

Grades ranging A to D: surface water quality – Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA)

The lowest grades (C to D) for surface-water quality occurred in the subwatersheds more heavily impacted by human activity, such as those in Barrie and in Ramara Creeks. According to the LSRCA report card, land uses contribute phosphorus to watercourses and can cause changes to stream habitat. The healthiest water quality (receiving a grade of A) was found in the Hawkestone Creek subwatershed (between Barrie and Orillia) as it has the highest level of natural cover.

Severn Sound water quality

Severn Sound was listed as an Area of Concern in 1985 by the International Joint Commission, and following the development and successful implementation of a Remedial Action Plan, was delisted in 2003. Water quality in Severn Sound has improved since the 1970s, in response to phosphorus control strategies such as: sewage treatment plant and private septic system upgrades, improved stormwater management, shoreline naturalization, and rural stewardship actions to control non-point nutrient sources. Tree planting is a core stewardship activity, with close to 300,000 trees planted in the watershed to date. Stream ecosystem health is generally good, and has been stable since monitoring began. Stewardship projects target specific areas needing improvement.



How you can help...

- Turn off the tap!
- Don't mow to the edge of ditches, streams, and river banks
- Switch to phosphorus-free fertilizers for your lawn and garden.
- Properly wash your boat when moving from lake to lake

What the community is doing...

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority works closely with all levels of government, landowners and community groups to protect, restore and manage the natural resources of the Nottawasaga Valley using innovative watershed management.

The LSRCA works year-round with many community and government partners to provide the best scientific information about the watershed's health and to support programs for its protection and restoration.

The Severn Sound Environmental Association (SSEA), as a Joint Services Board, along with its municipal, provincial, federal and agency partners, provides ongoing support for restoration and stewardship projects in the watershed. The SSEA also continues to monitor water quality in the Sound and its watershed to track changes in water quality, detect new problems and ensure that environmental health is maintained.

All three of these agencies are working together with stakeholders to complete a Source Protection Plan that will protect the area's municipal water supplies.

Health

Simcoe Muskoka has better access to doctors than many living elsewhere in Canada, and is keeping pace with provincial and national rates in many other domain areas; however local rates for heavy drinking, obesity and food insecurity are higher than those comparables.

93.5%: Residents with access to a doctor

In 2011, 93.5% of North Simcoe Muskoka patients have access to a medical doctor, as compared to 91.1% of Ontarians and 84.9% of Canadians

Additionally, 93.6% of North Simcoe Muskoka residents have a regular doctor, as compared to 91.2% of Ontarians and 84.5% of Canadians

6.8%: Low birth-weight rate

The 2012-2013 rate of low birth-weight babies is 6.8% for the North Simcoe Muskoka region compared to a provincial rate of 6.6% during the same period.

Perceived life stress

In 2013, 25.8% of the population aged 15+ in Simcoe-Muskoka reported experiencing quite a lot of stress on most days. The 2013 level is 2.2% higher than the provincial level of 23.6% and 2.8% above the national level of 23%.



20.6% Obesity

In 2013, the obesity rate for the population aged 18+ in Simcoe-Muskoka was 20.6%, which was 9.6% higher than the national average of 18.8%; and 15.1% higher than the provincial average of 17.9%.

22.3% Heavy drinking

In 2013, 22.3% of the population aged 12+ in Simcoe-Muskoka consumed five or more drinks on one occasion at least once a month in the previous year.

The 2013 Simcoe-Muskoka rate is 18% higher than the national rate (18.9%) and 30.4% above the provincial rate (17.1%).

Food security

In 2011, 8.4% of Simcoe-Muskoka households were moderately or severely food insecure.

This rate was 7.7% above the national rate (7.8%) and 9.1% above the provincial rate (7.7%).

How you can help...

- Prepare meals according to the Canada Food Guide
- Check out local fitness programs in your area
- Make family time active – walk, bike, ski and swim



What the community is doing...

The North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network funds 75 health-service organizations that work together to create a more effective client/patient centred approach to health. The three community health centres (CHCs) in the county are community governed and respond to the needs of their respective communities with health promotion, community development strategies and with primary care. Typically, CHCs support the most vulnerable within our communities.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Healthy Communities Partnership Team works with community partners across Simcoe County and District of Muskoka to:

- reduce risks to good health and improve community health outcomes through the development and implementation of healthy public policies
- increase collaboration between networks, community leaders, and decision-makers involved in healthy eating and physical-activity policy development.
- increase the quantity and impact of sustainable local and regional policies that effectively support residents to make healthy eating and physical-activity choices where they live, work, play and study.

Housing: affordable housing & homelessness prevention

In Simcoe County there is an affordable housing crisis.

Housing Affordability

In Simcoe County, the proportion of households spending 30% or more of their income on rent was 47.2% in 2011; 7.1 percentage points higher than the national average (40.1%).

The proportion of home owners spending more than 30% of income on shelter costs (mortgage payment, electricity, heat, water and other municipal services, property taxes and condominium fees) was 22.3%, 3.8 percentage points higher than the national average of 18.5%

2013 Emergency Homelessness Shelter Findings:

Of the 1289 applicants who used an emergency homeless shelter in 2013, 390 (30%) were between the ages of 16 to 24.

Single applicants represented the largest proportion of shelter stays. Overall, 12% entered with a family and 78% of those entered with children.

The overall average length of stay per applicant in 2013 was approximately 12 days, however the average length of stay for families was closer to 18 days.

In 2013, 128 (or 10%) applicants to the shelter system suggested that they had recently been released from an institution in Simcoe County. The largest portion (10%) of those indicated they came from a correctional facility, 21% suggested that they had been released from a hospital, and 8% from addiction treatment centers.

Of the 1,289 applicants to the shelter system in 2013, 48% suggested that they received a monthly income. Their average monthly income was \$926.34.

Housing Stability:

The Housing Retention Fund (HRF) is a County of Simcoe program designed to provide financial assistance to qualifying households in the form of a last month's rent, rent and mortgage arrears, and emergency energy arrears or utility reconnections.

The Rent Bank program assisted 3,468 households, including 1,031 households with children, with average assistance per household \$750.17

The Emergency Energy program assisted 991 households, including 614 households with children, with average assistance per household \$724.53. Trends in 2013 indicate the average household assistance is up significantly for Emergency Energy Assistance.

The County of Simcoe's Rent Supplement and Housing Allowance programs have assisted 230 households with rents for 5-10 years. \$6.6 million has been used since 2008 with an average of \$270 per month per household which has increased affordability.

The County of Simcoe's Rental and Supportive program has created 442 new affordable rental units since 2004, with an additional build of 86 affordable units for seniors starting in 2014.

The County of Simcoe's Homeownership program has assisted approximately 300 households since implemented in 2008.

The County of Simcoe's Ontario Renovates program introduced in 2013 has assisted 36 households to make necessary repairs and renovations that also includes funding for secondary/garden suites. It is anticipated that this \$1.8 million program will assist an additional 100 households.

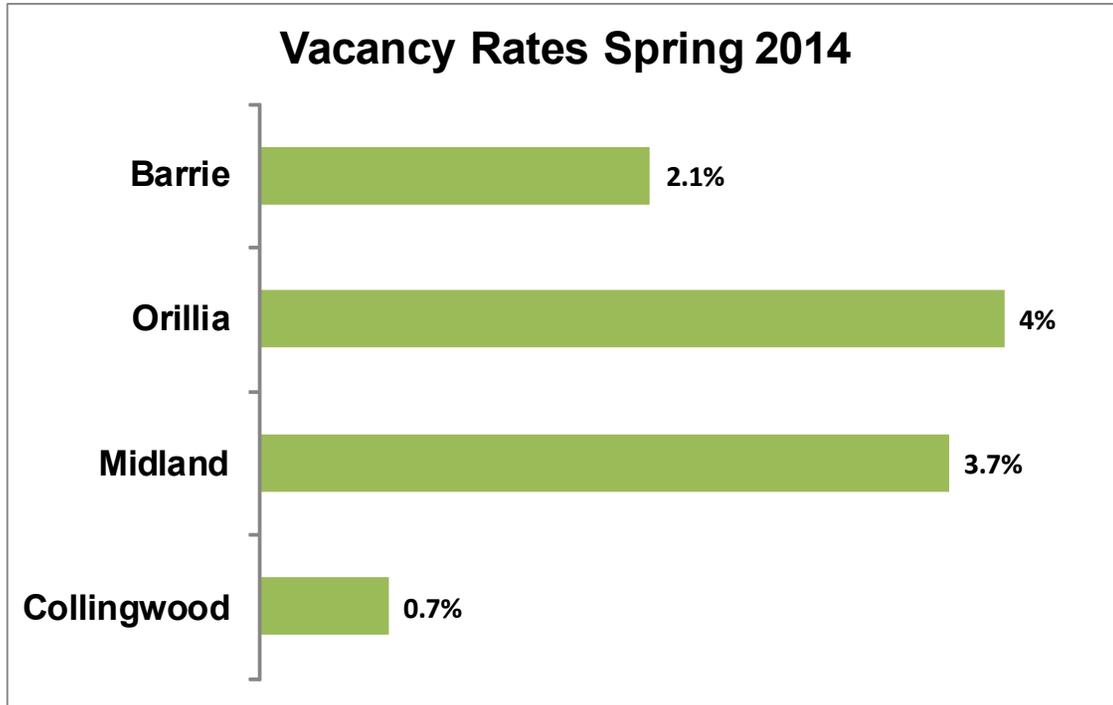
What the community is doing...

Housing Our Future: Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy The need for stable affordable housing continues to grow throughout Simcoe County as we continue to be one of the fastest growing regions in the province. The County of Simcoe has taken action to address the need for more affordable housing by: Approving the Housing Our Future: Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy to help guide and set clear targets and priority actions that will assist the County of Simcoe and its municipal and city partners in ensuring adequate, affordable, and appropriate housing for all residents, including a target to increase the supply of affordable housing by 2,685 units over the next 10 years.

Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness (SCATEH) is a county-wide non-profit coalition of 70+ individuals and organizations undertaking three core activities: coordinate the system of care to end homelessness; advocate for client access to systems by seeking policy change to support ending homelessness; and raising awareness of homelessness in Simcoe County.

Housing: community profile

Vacancy rates in Simcoe County remain low, and vary throughout the region.



Vacancy rates – the high and low

Orillia has the highest vacancy rate within Simcoe County for total private apartment vacancy rates.

Collingwood has the lowest vacancy rate within Simcoe County for total private apartment vacancy rates.



How you can help...

- Support the development of affordable housing in your neighborhood
- Volunteer at a shelter or emergency-support agency
- Be a champion of safe, accessible and affordable housing
- Support a coordinated system of care
- Contact Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness for more info:
<http://www.scateh.com>

What the community is doing...

WIT (Whatever It Takes) is a project of the North Simcoe Chapter of the Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness. The intent of the WIT Project is the development of a strategy that provides for “one-stop” access to the full continuum of support services that might be required to serve people who are homeless or vulnerable to the risks of poverty and homelessness. They are carrying out this vision through strong inter-agency communication, partnering, collaboration, and efficient use of services. They are currently working on a secure electronic portal that will support a common referral and communication system between agencies so that the clients they serve do not fall between the cracks and are able to obtain the services they require.



Housing: Barrie

Barrie's high housing costs are out of reach for low income earners, resulting in an increased demand for affordable housing. Also, more young people are in need of housing that better aligns to their income level.

Average rent as a proportion of median family income

In 2012, Barrie's average annual rent for a two-bedroom apartment was 15.7% of the median pre-tax family income.

The Barrie rate was 11.3% higher than the 2012 national average of 14.1%, and 5.4% lower than the provincial average of 16.6%.

Ratio of average housing prices & median family income

In 2012, Barrie's ratio of the average residential price to the median pre-tax income for a family was 3.78, which is 0.7% higher than its 2011

level of 3.75. The 2012 level was 22.6% lower than the national average of 4.88.

Proportion of youth wages spent on a one-bedroom apartment

In 2013, the proportion of wages of fully employed Barrie residents aged 15-24 spent on the rent of a one bedroom apartment was 36.9%, up 2.8% from 35.9% in 2009.

4.5%: Proportion of dwelling units requiring major repair

In Barrie, 4.5% of dwelling units were in need of major repair in 2011. The Barrie proportion was 31.8% below the Ontario level of 6.6%; and 39.2% below the national rate of 7.4%.

What the community is doing...

The City of Barrie developed an Affordable Housing Strategy in 2014. Some of the recommendations contained in the strategy are: amending existing Second Suites policies, new policies regarding the purchase and sale of city lands for affordable housing, and the addition of new policies — including affordable housing in Community Improvement Plans. These recommendations will start to address the housing crisis.

Barrie Pathways places those impacted by homelessness at the centre of service and support of their member organizations to achieve the highest potential for each individual they serve working towards mitigating homelessness in the community.

The group has recently purchased a facility which will serve as a community hub for those impacted by homelessness.



How you can help...

- Construct a second suite or garden suite in your home
- Provide housing for an at-risk senior
- Support the City of Barrie Affordable Housing Strategy

Arts & Culture

Simcoe County is increasingly developing a vibrant arts and culture sector with employment in cultural occupations, number of artists, and electronic library usage on the rise.

2.5%: Employment in cultural occupations

In 2011, 2.5% of the experienced labour force is employed in arts, culture, recreation and sport in Simcoe County, and 2.7% in Barrie.

These rates are similar to both the provincial percentage of 3.1% and the national rate of 2.9%. Additionally, this represents an increase of 39.1% in Simcoe County and 54.8% in Barrie from 2001.

Number of artists

In 2011, artists represented 0.4% of the experienced labour force in Simcoe County and in Barrie.

These rates are similar to both the provincial percentage of 0.6% and the national percentage of 1%. This represents an increase of 37.5% in Barrie since 2001.



Library usage

As Libraries continue to reach out to their residents and respond to their changing needs and expectations, annual Library circulation statistics continue to remain stable, while electronic usage (visits and resources) has more than doubled for almost all libraries throughout Simcoe County. In 2012 there were 76,700 electronic visits in Collingwood, 114,500 in Midland, 874,800 in Barrie, 389,700 in Innisfil, 155,300 in Orillia and 55,700 in New Tecumseth.

How you can help...

- Learn to play a musical instrument
- Join a gallery or museum
- Visit a library
- Participate in cultural events



What the community is doing...

The Town of Midland is undertaking a cultural study and the Brookside Music Association is undertaking an Arts and Culture Study in 2014.

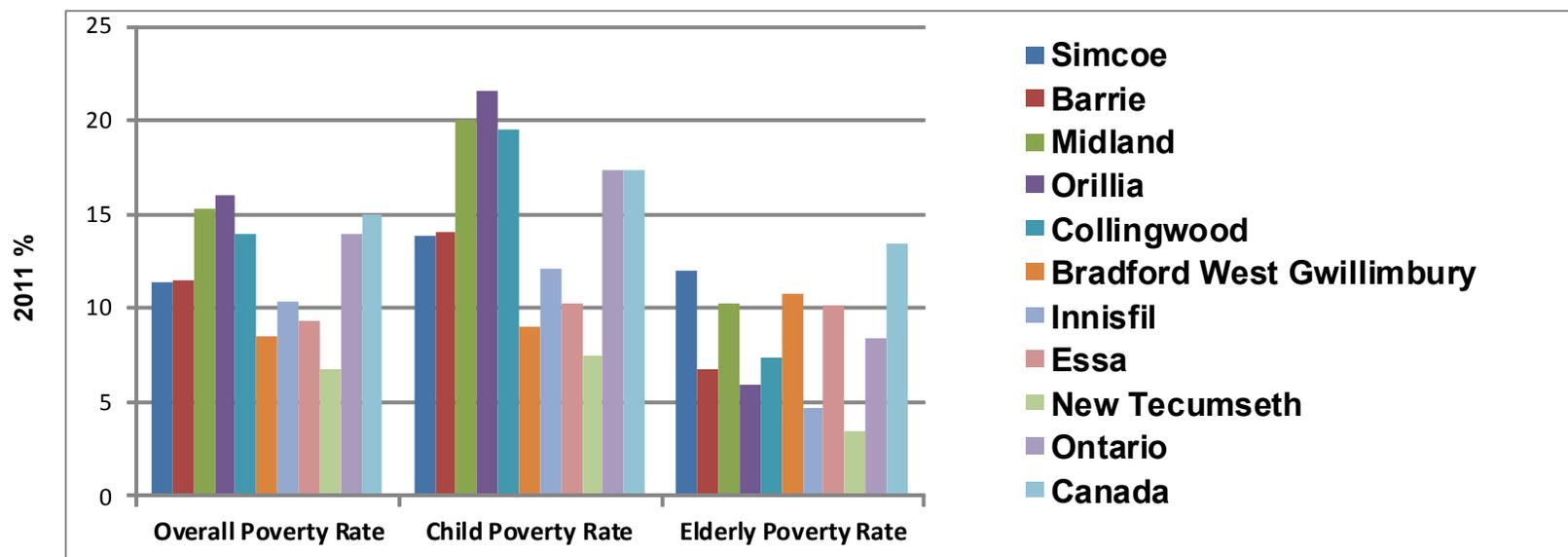
In 2006, the City of Barrie completed Barrie's Plan for Culture which outlines a strategy for building a strong cultural sector in Barrie, one that will greatly enhance the quality of life of residents and contribute to the economic development of the community.

Libraries are creative hubs, vital living spaces and meeting places where residents engage and build their community. They enrich lives by improving and breaking down barriers to traditional and digital literacy, inspire lives through lifelong learning, support economic well being, and expand horizons through the provision of a wide variety of print and electronic collections, services and programs for all ages and abilities. Libraries enhance educational and employment opportunities and provide free access to computers and the internet. Libraries keep history alive by being stewards of local and family history. A library has something for all.

Gap between rich & poor: Simcoe County

Simcoe County poverty rates are generally better than provincial and national averages. However, wealth is unequally distributed, leading to pockets of poverty and inequality for children and elders across Simcoe County.

2010 Low income after tax rates



11.3%: individuals in Simcoe County were classified as low income (overall poverty rate) in 2011 based on the Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT). Orillia (at 15.9%) and Midland rank higher than provincial (13.9%) and national (14.9%) rates.

13.8%: children 18 years and under in Simcoe County were classified as low income (child poverty rate) in 2011 based on the LIM-AT. Orillia (at 21.5%), Midland (at 20%) and Collingwood (at 19.4%) all rank higher than the provincial and national rate (of 17.3%).

11.9%: seniors 65+ in Simcoe County were classified as low income (elderly poverty rate) in 2011 based on the LIM-AT. Bradford West Gwillimbury (at 10.7%), Essa Township (10.1%) and Midland (10.2%) all rank higher than the provincial rate (8.3%) but still fall below national levels (13.4%).

How you can help...

- Hold a food drive
- Encourage youth to finish school
- Plant a community garden
- Support local children's charities

What the community is doing...

Organizations across the region are working with individuals and families in a coordinated fashion to assist each individual/family in reaching their goals.

Activities include preventing eviction and the resulting instability; skill development, child and parent resources, advocacy, accessing health and counselling services and community engagement through recreation, arts and volunteering.

Gap between rich & poor: community profile

The poverty rate of single-parent families is higher than provincial and national rates in Midland, Collingwood and Orillia.

Poverty Rate of Single-Parent Families NHS 2011 (LIM), Current Dollars After Tax



Single-parent poverty is highest in Midland and Collingwood.

Barrie rate is lower than provincial and national rates.

For every 100 families, this represents 4.1 more families in Collingwood and Midland that are experiencing poverty compared to provincial rates.

How you can help...

- Support your local food bank, Christmas Cheer, and school supplies drives
- Support local charities
- Understand the issues and get involved



What the community is doing...

In Simcoe County there are a growing number of service providers who are interested in working collectively to reduce poverty locally. The County of Simcoe and a number of local planning tables, networks and organizations are already engaging in poverty reduction work.

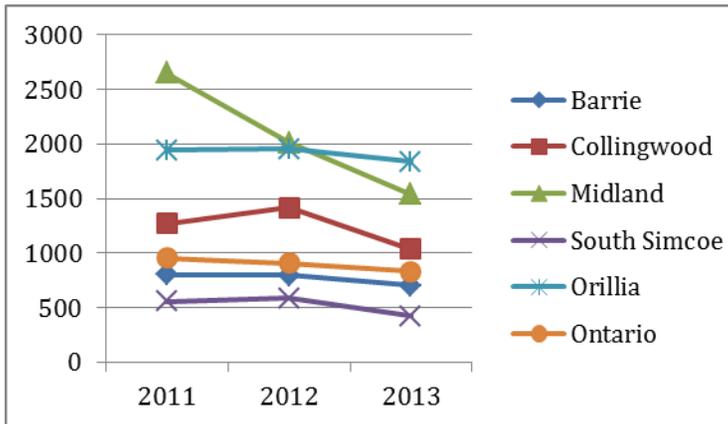
The emergence and development of a Simcoe County Poverty Reduction Strategy is under development to help focus on priority areas.

The YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka provides financial assistance to more than 11,100 children and families in Simcoe County to ensure they have access to healthy activities, recreation and sport. Their youth services office provides the Young Entrepreneurs program across Simcoe County and provides employment experiences for unemployed youth. They have more than 400 youth age 12-18 engaged in youth leadership including exchange programs, volunteer experiences and formal learning.

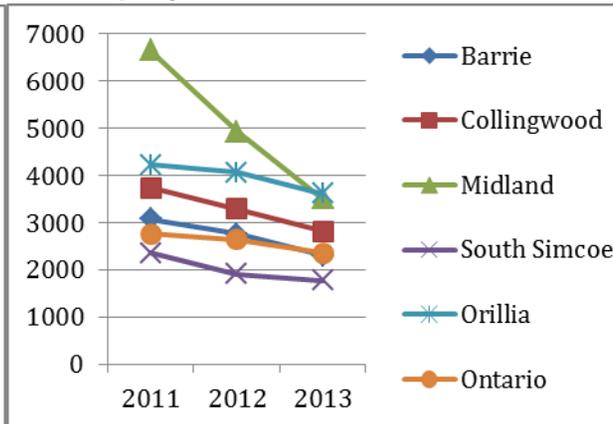
Safety: Simcoe County

Statistics in Midland, Orillia and Collingwood exceed provincial data averages in safety indexes. Overall the rates are trending downward.

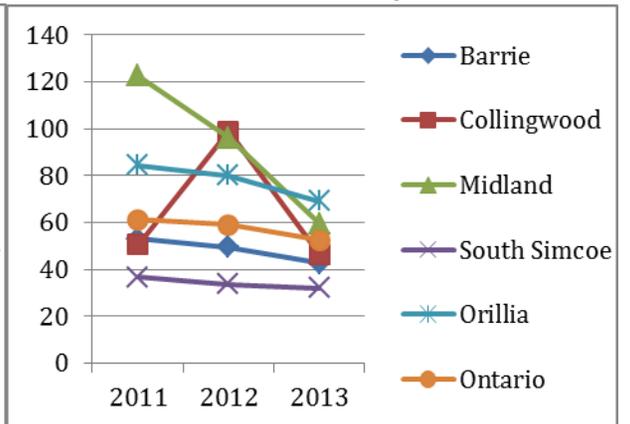
Total Violent Criminal Code Violations Per 100,000



Property Crime Violations Per 100,000



Overall Crime Severity Index



Total violent criminal code violations, property crime violations and overall crime severity index rates are highest in Midland, Orillia and Collingwood. Over the last three years, many of the rates are above or equal to provincial levels. Overall, the rates are trending downward.

How you can help...

- Become a partner by attending the monthly Community Table Meeting
- Join the Orillia Community Action Network (O-CAN) on LinkedIn
- Educate and engage others to contribute to the Full Circle of Community Safety

What the community is doing...

The Orillia OPP Detachment's Community Mobilization Unit is leading a charge to engage human-service agencies and local leaders in helping to resolve problems facing the community.

By engaging community partners and utilizing a foot-patrol strategy, the OPP can identify underlying social issues that contribute to criminality, and ensure problems such as addiction, employment and mental health are being dealt with by the appropriate agency. "Helping Change Lives, One Door at a Time"





Safety: Barrie

Named Canada's safest city in 2014, the City of Barrie and many community partners have much to celebrate.

Violent crime rate

At 38.6 in 2013, the Violent Crime Severity Index in Barrie was 47.6% below the national figure (73.7) and 37.6% below the provincial figure (61.9). The level decreased 12.7% from 44.2 in 2012.

Overall crime rate

At 4,233 crimes per 100,000 persons in 2013, the overall crime rate in Barrie was 29.1% below the national average (5,968 crimes per 100,000), and similar to the provincial average (4,189 crimes per 100,000). The rate decreased 14% from 4,920 crimes per 100,000 in 2012, and decreased 40.3% from 7,085 crimes per 100,000 in 2006.

Sexual assault rate

At 60.6 crimes per 100,000 persons in 2013, the sexual assault rate in Barrie was equal to the national average, and 6.9% above the provincial average (56.7 crimes per 100,000). The rate decreased 1.1% from 61.3 crimes per 100,000 in 2012, and decreased 7.2% from 65.3 crimes per 100,000 in 2006.

Criminal code traffic rate

At 181 crimes per 100,000 persons in 2013, the traffic crime rate in Barrie was 53.3% below the national average (388 crimes per 100,000) and 21.7% below the provincial average (232 crimes per 100,000). The rate increased 3.3% from 176 crimes per 100,000 in 2012.

What the community is doing...

Barrie is the safest city in Canada in 2014. Barrie's community is engaged in keeping the public safety.

How you can help...

- Volunteer with a community service agency
- Get to know your neighbours
- Become part of the neighbourhood watch
- Educate yourself and your children on personal safety

Great partnerships with different organizations like Canadian Mental Health Association of Simcoe County, and resources like Barrie Pathways; and the Vulnerable Persons Registry are additional tools that will help officers deal with non-criminal calls going forward.



Getting Around

Diverse transportation challenges are faced by many communities in Simcoe County. This report illustrates the importance of public transportation. In Barrie, public transit usage is lower than national and provincial rates. However, community partners are working hard to address challenges.

Key findings from a 2012 community research survey by the Community Transportation Project Steering Committee include:

- Many people from vulnerable populations are utilizing transportation services;
- Many people require additional support along with transportation, such as wheelchair and/or accompaniment;
- Service is required in a large geographic area;
- Availability and access to services needs improvement;
- There is a lack of awareness of transportation services;
- Resources in the system are insufficient.

7.6km Median commuting distance

In 2006, the median commuting distance to work was 7.6km in Barrie. The median commuting distance in 2006 is the same as the national median (7.6km) and 12.6% below the provincial median (8.7km).

20.4 Minutes median commuting time

In 2011, the median commuting time to work was 20.4 minutes in Simcoe County. This figure is similar to the national median (20.5 minutes) and the provincial median (20.8). In 2011, the median commuting time to work was 20.6 minutes in Barrie. The median commuting time in 2011 for Barrie is similar to national and provincial rates.

Mode of transportation between home and work

In 2011, 4.6% of workers used public transportation to get to work in Barrie. The percentage of workers using public transportation in Barrie in 2011 is 7.4% below the national proportion (12%) and 9.4% below the provincial proportion (14%).

In 2011, 3% of workers used public transportation to get to work in Simcoe County. The percentage of workers using public transportation in Simcoe County in 2011 is 9% below the national proportion (12%) and 11% below the provincial proportion (14%).

Destination of Simcoe County workers

73% of work trips destined for Simcoe originate from within Simcoe County, while 51% of Simcoe residents travel to neighbouring regions. Not surprisingly, the City of Barrie, York Region and the City of Toronto are the three geographic areas to which most Simcoe residents travel for out-of-County work given their proximity to Simcoe County and the employment opportunities available.

How you can help...

- Carpool
- Use Public Transit
- Participate in transportation studies

There are currently two inter-municipal transit linkages in Simcoe County that connect public transit service between municipalities: Collingwood-Wasaga Beach, and Barrie-Angus-Base Borden. A feasibility study for a transit link between Penetanguishene and Midland is currently underway. Planning for transportation services across the region has been identified as a local priority.

As part of the new Barrie Transit system, The City of Barrie and Essa Townships signed an agreement to extend service on Route 90, connecting Barrie with Angus and CFB Borden.

What the community is doing...

Belonging & leadership

Volunteerism, life satisfaction, sense of belonging and voter turnout keep pace or exceed provincial and national rates.

64.6% Voter turnout

In 2011, voter turnout in Simcoe County was 64.6%. This figure is 5.4% higher than the national level (61.1%) and 4.8% higher than the provincial level (61.5%).

The voter turnout increased 7% from 60.1% in 2008.

89.8% Life satisfaction: percentage (aged 12+): satisfied and very satisfied

In 2013 in Simcoe-Muskoka 89.8% of survey respondents said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall life.

The 2013 level is similar to the national average of 91% and the provincial average of 90.0%.

47% Volunteer rate

In 2010, the proportion of residents in Barrie who volunteer was 47%. This figure keeps pace with provincial and national averages of 47%.

66.8% Population 12 and over reporting a strong or somewhat strong sense of community belonging

In 2013 in Simcoe-Muskoka, 66.8% of people aged 12 and over reported a strong or somewhat strong sense of community belonging.

The 2013 level was similar to the national average of 65.9% and the provincial average of 67.7%.



What the community is doing...

Volunteerism is an important tool for community building. A new initiative is set to bring together many of the volunteer centers in Simcoe County to support the growth and development of a culture of volunteerism.

How you can help...

- Vote!
- Volunteer in your community
- Participate in a charity or fundraising event

Objectives are increasing the number of people volunteering, while ensuring that community members are effectively matched with community agencies, with the ultimate goal of increased community engagement and connections through volunteerism.

Belonging & leadership

Charitable giving is a good indicator for an individual's sense of belonging and connectedness to the community. In Simcoe County, charitable giving varies throughout the region.

Charitable donations 2011

Community	Average donor age	Average \$ donation by ages 0-24	Average \$ donation by age 65+ years	Charitable donations median (\$)
Barrie	53	480	2,050	250
Collingwood	59	580	2,450	300
Midland	59	210	1,520	230
Orillia	59	320	1,670	300
Simcoe	55	410	1,860	250
Ontario	53	440	2,260	320
Canada	53	430	2,000	260

Charitable donations – highs & lows

In comparing the regions of Simcoe County, Collingwood ranks highest in average donation across both age categories. Collingwood is also tied with Orillia for highest median charitable donation.

Midland ranks lowest in average donation across both age categories and has the lowest median donation. Midland is also in a three way tie with Collingwood and Orillia for highest average donor age at 59.

20.5%: Charitable donors as a proportion of tax filers

In 2012, 20.5% of tax filers in Barrie were also charitable donors. This figure is 1.9% lower than the national level of 22.4% and 3% lower than the provincial level (23.5%).

The percentage of tax filers making charitable donations decreased 3.3% from 21.2% in 2011.



How you can help...

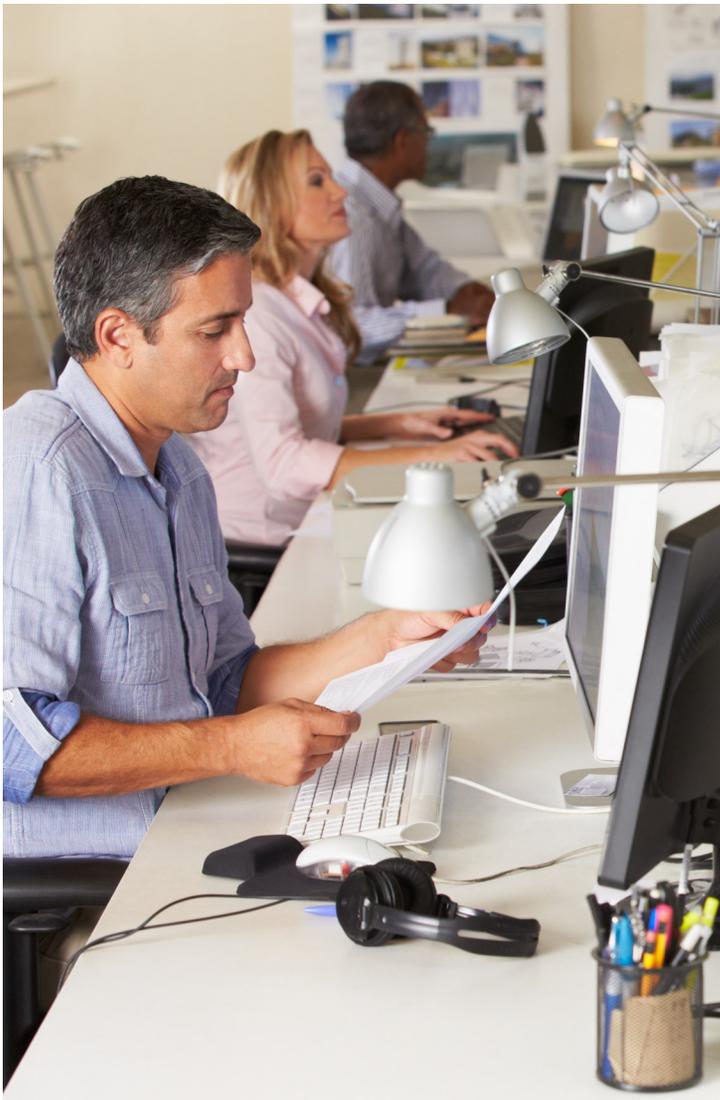
- Donate to a local charity
- Consider a legacy or planned gift
- Sponsor a special event



What the community is doing...

Funders ensure donor dollars are directed where they are most needed in the community. Through collaboration, funders work together to avoid duplication of services.

Georgian College has professional training for fundraisers to ensure best practices are being implemented.



Work

The percentage of Simcoe County residents earning a living wage is higher than the provincial and national rates. Unemployment is also higher. A trend shows employment levels are growing more slowly than they are both provincially and nationally.

60.4%: Employment rate

Simcoe County's employment rate at 60.4% keeps close pace with both the provincial (60.1%) and national (60.9%) rates. At 63.4% in 2011, Barrie had an employment rate 3.9% higher than the national rate and 5.2% higher than the provincial rate.

8.4%: Unemployment rate

In 2011, the unemployment rate in Simcoe County and Barrie was 8.4%. This was above the national level (7.8%), but keeps pace with the Ontario provincial level (8.3%).

Median earnings

In 2011, median annual earnings for full-time year-round workers in Simcoe County were \$48,694, above the national median (\$47,868), and below the provincial median (\$50,116). At \$49,941, Barrie is 4.3% higher than the national median and 0.3% lower than the provincial median.

0.5%: Employment growth rate

Between 2006 and 2011, Simcoe County experienced a 0.5% increase in employment. This growth rate was 3.1 percentage points below the national rate (3.6%) and 1.7 points below the provincial rate (2.2%).

In the same time period, Barrie experienced a 1.2% increase in employment. This growth rate was 2.4 percentage points below the national rate, and 1.0 percentage points below the provincial rate.

34.2%: Not earning a living wage

In 2011, 34.2% of all earners in Simcoe County were not earning a living wage (i.e., had an annual income less than \$20,000). This was 1.8 percentage points below the national level and 1.4 percentage points below the provincial level. The number of earners with an income of less than \$30,000 was 49% of all income earners, 1.1 percentage points below the national level and 0.3 percentage points above the provincial level.

How you can help...

- Pay your employees a living wage
- Utilize the Regional Employment Website
- Contact your local Employment Service provider to access their programs/support

What the community is doing...

Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board (SMWDB) in partnership with the County of Simcoe is creating a Regional Employment Website to give one-stop access to employers and job seekers for their employment needs. As well, the SMWDB is developing an Employability Skills training program to empower job seekers to better meet employers' expectations and compete in today's job market.

In 2013, the City of Barrie created the Invest Barrie portfolio, which combines several departments to focus on growing business in Barrie and creating jobs. The City also partnered in hosting the Train in Trades Expo, which showcased local manufacturers and connected residents with the skilled trades opportunities available in Barrie.

Acknowledgements

Community engagement groups

Barrie Police Service
Barrie Public Library
Centre de santé communautaire
CHIGAMIK Community Health Centre
Collingwood Public Library
Community Connection/211Central East Ontario
Community Reach
Community Transportation Project Steering Committee
County of Simcoe
City of Barrie
Georgian College

Georgian Triangle & Orillia Housing Resource Centre
Innisfil Public Library
Midland Public Library
North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network
Orillia OPP Detachment
Simcoe County Data Consortium
Simcoe County District School Board
Simcoe County Local Immigration Partnership
Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board
MCA of Simcoe Muskoka

Special thanks

Big Brothers Big Sisters Barrie
Barrie Pathways
Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness
Simcoe-Muskoka Transition Age Youth System of Supports Partnership (TAY SoS)

Vital Signs Project Team

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Page 6: Getting Started

Isabel Fernandes & son
Courtesy of Isabel Fernandes

Page 8: Environment

Bumblebee
Courtesy of SSEA

Page 10: Health

Walking Trail
Courtesy of Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

Page 10: Health

Farmers Market
Courtesy of Corey Templeton

Pages 11&12: Housing

Courtesy of County of Simcoe

Page 13: Housing

Burton Avenue Mobile Homes
Courtesy of Michelle Hotchin

Page 14: Arts & Culture

Little Girl Reading
Courtesy of Barrie Public Library

Page 17: Safety: Simcoe County

OPP Orillia Detachment Community Mobilization Unit members
Courtesy of Sara Carson/Packet & Times

Page 18: Safety: Barrie

Barrie Mayor Jeff Lehman and Barrie Police Chief Kimberly Greenwood
Courtesy of Barrie Police

Page 20: Belonging & Leadership

Tom Oldershaw, Ride4Busby
Courtesy of Colette Mesdag

Special thanks to Patricia Copeland for Simcoe County photos from her personal collection



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