



# WATERLOO REGION'S VitalSigns® PRIORITY REPORT

2015

## EXAMINING THE PRIORITIES OF OUR COMMUNITY

# WELCOME

to the eighth edition of Waterloo Region's Vital Signs® (WRVS) – a snapshot of the quality of life in our community. Since 2007, we have strived to inspire civic engagement, provide focus for public debate and connect philanthropic activity with the areas of greatest need. WRVS is a tool for our community to help us understand the most pressing issues facing our region, enable us to work together and focus our resources to tackle these issues.

To access your digital copy of the report or the complete set of data visit: [www.wrvitalsigns.ca](http://www.wrvitalsigns.ca).

### OUR COMMUNITY TOOL KIT



#### VITAL SIGNS... A TOOL FOR KNOWLEDGE

The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation (The KWCF) compiles WRVS reports based on current, reliable and valid statistics, special studies and focus groups comprised of members of our community. Join a host of other local organizations, foundations and government agencies who use WRVS as a tool to understand life in Waterloo Region.

#### VITAL SIGNS... A TOOL FOR CHANGE

The Foundation uses *Vital Signs* to provide direction for the Smart & Caring Grants Program, launched in 2014. This year, 100% of The KWCF's Community Grants were directed towards the top priority area as determined by WRVS: Belonging & Leadership. To further develop the area of belonging, The KWCF produces programming such as Engage!KW, the Centre for Community Knowledge and Random Act of Kindness Day®. Each of these programs enables the residents of our community to connect with one another.

**ONLY TOGETHER  
CAN WE MAKE A  
LASTING DIFFERENCE**

#### VITAL SIGNS... A TOOL FOR ACTION

*Vital Signs* is about building community vitality. It is designed to encourage people to come together, to step up and take responsibility for making our community what we want it to be. A high sense of belonging means nothing if we don't translate our feelings into action. *Vital Signs* serves as a tool to help our community find ways to use their time, talent and treasure to make this community a stronger, more vibrant community for all.

#### OUR FOUNDATION

The community is foremost in our minds at The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation. We continuously strive to improve the quality of life for all citizens in Waterloo Region by building assets to provide lasting support for local priorities, addressing community needs through grant making, educating others about local organizations and programs and providing leadership by bringing people and organizations together to address key issues and opportunities. For more information and ideas on ways to integrate charitable planning into your financial planning, ask your financial advisor to contact us.



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THE KITCHENER  
AND WATERLOO  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

#### COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Community Foundations provide a simple, powerful and highly personal approach to giving. We offer a variety of giving tools to help people achieve their charitable goals. You can make a gift of cash, stocks, bonds, real estate or other assets to your Community Foundation. Most charitable gifts qualify for maximum tax advantage under federal law. Through your Community Foundation, you can support the issues you care about most.



[www.communityfoundations.ca](http://www.communityfoundations.ca)

# THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation wishes to extend our sincerest thanks to the many individuals and organizations that provided information, guidance, statistics or in any way assisted in the creation of this year's report.

We are especially grateful to the dynamic community leaders from our expert panel for their guidance and to our community partners for their support.

#### WATERLOO REGION'S VITAL SIGNS® PROJECT TEAM

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# VITAL SIGNS PRIORITY AREAS

In the 2013 full WRVS report we examined all 11 issue areas as well as an economic context to understand the bigger picture. From that higher, more strategic view we worked with focus groups, our Expert Review Panel and our data consultants to help us understand our community's most pressing issues. In 2014 and 2015, we have taken the time to dive deeper into the four issue areas challenging our community with our WRVS Priority Reports.



#### EXPERT PANEL

**City of Cambridge**  
Robert Hemple

**City of Kitchener**  
Michael May

**Community CarShare**  
Jason Hammond

**Laurier Institute for the Study of  
Public Opinion and Policy**  
Anthony Piscitelli

**Immigration Partnership**  
Tara Bedard

**Region of Waterloo – Public Health**  
Katherine Pigott

**Region of Waterloo – Strategic Planning**  
Lorie Foze

**Social Planning Council of Cambridge  
and North Dumfries**  
Linda Terry

**University of Waterloo**  
Ryan Connell

**UW Propel Centre for Health Innovation**  
Leia Minaker

**Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network**  
Toni Lemon

**Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council**  
Christiane Sadeler

**Waterloo Regional Police Service**  
Shaena Morris

**Wilfrid Laurier University Student Union**  
Chris Hyde

**Woolwich Community Health Centre**  
Denise Squire

*A special thank you goes to the following for their leadership and/or generous financial support in making this year's Waterloo Region's Vital Signs a reality:*



WATERLOO REGION  
**RECORD**



# BELONGING & LEADERSHIP

Our sense of belonging impacts our physical and mental health. When people do not feel they belong to a community, they are less likely to engage with others or feel satisfied with their neighbourhoods, impacting our community as a whole.



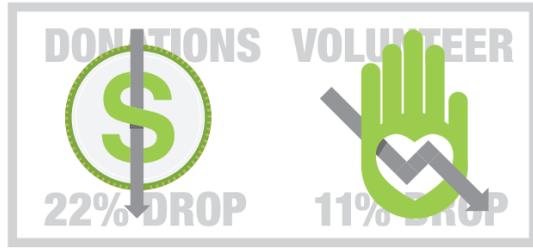
## THE BIG PICTURE

Even though most people in Waterloo Region say they feel like they belong, many are not leading, sharing experiences or actively engaging in making the community better. There are many people in Waterloo Region, who have a lower sense of belonging for a wide range of reasons which have big consequences for us as individuals and for our community.

### OUR LUKEWARM SENSE OF BELONGING IS NOT TRANSLATING INTO ACTION

Fewer people in Waterloo Region are donating (22% drop since 1997) and fewer people are volunteering (11% decrease between 2007 and 2010).

Source: CANSIM table 111-0001, 2013; National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2007 and 2010.



### SOME RESIDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO FEEL A LOWER SENSE OF BELONGING

Populations at risk include: immigrants who have been in Canada between 11 and 20 years; people who identify as: lesbian, gay, bisexual or other-identified (LGBO); people with low incomes; and single parents.

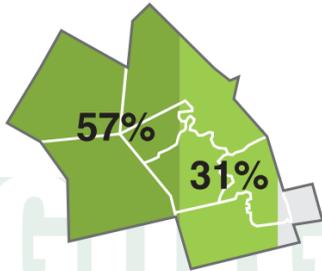
Source: Canadian Index of Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Survey, 2013



### OUR SENSE OF BELONGING IN WATERLOO REGION IS LUKEWARM

Many residents (57%) in the Region report a "somewhat strong" sense of belonging to the community versus a "very strong" sense of belonging (31%).

Source: Region of Waterloo Community Priorities Research, 2015



### A LOW SENSE OF BELONGING IMPACTS US ALL

People reporting a lower sense of belonging are less likely to participate in community events, are less satisfied with their neighbourhood, and are less satisfied with their local government.

Source: Canadian Index of Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Survey, 2013



# ARTS & CULTURE

Arts and culture is one of the most important sectors of community life when it comes to building a sense of belonging. Cultural activities foster economic development and help to ensure that our community is an enriching and vibrant place to live.



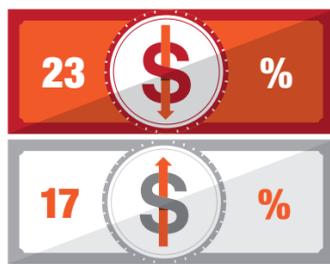
## THE BIG PICTURE

Although most people believe that Waterloo Region is a good place for arts, culture and heritage, many people in Waterloo Region do not see investment in arts and culture as important. In addition, our perception of "arts and culture" opportunities is limited to the traditional facility or event-based activities. Our often overlooked parks and libraries are doing a great job of welcoming people.

### OUR CITIZENS DO NOT FEEL THAT ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT IN CULTURAL FACILITIES IS A TOP PRIORITY

(23% say spend less while 17% say spend more).

Source: Region of Waterloo Community Priorities Research, 2015



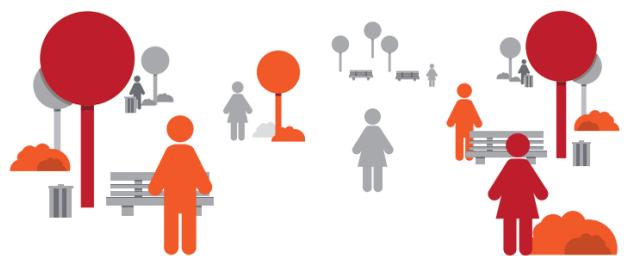
TWO-THIRDS OF RESIDENTS BELIEVE THAT WATERLOO REGION IS A GOOD PLACE FOR ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

Source: Region of Waterloo Community Priorities Research, 2015

### RESIDENTS WITH A LOWER SENSE OF BELONGING AND RESIDENTS WITH LOW INCOMES FIND TRADITIONAL ARTS & CULTURE FACILITIES LESS ACCESSIBLE AND LESS WELCOMING.

This same difference doesn't exist for parks or libraries. 85.8% of those with a lower sense of belonging and 83.2% of those with incomes under \$40,000 used local parks last year.

Source: Canadian Index of Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Survey, 2013



# GETTING STARTED

Getting started is related to how well people in Waterloo Region are able to make important transitions in life. This includes children starting school, young people finding employment after completing school, starting a family and integrating into the community as a new resident. How well we transition and whether we feel supported during this time can impact our success and ultimately the quality of life of our community.



## THE BIG PICTURE

Close to 90% of our citizens feel that Waterloo Region is a great place to raise a family. However, some parents experience a lower sense of belonging. Young people in Waterloo Region are experiencing challenges transitioning into school and the workforce.

### WATERLOO REGION CHILDREN ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE READY TO LEARN

Compared with Ontario, children entering kindergarten in Waterloo Region were more likely to score lower on three of five areas related to readiness to learn (physical health and wellbeing, social competence, and communication and general knowledge vs. emotional maturity and language, and cognitive skills).

Source: A Community Fit for Children Report (2012)



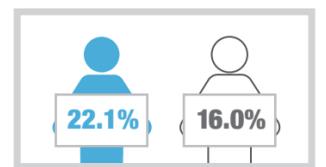
### SINGLE PARENTS ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO REPORT A WEAK SENSE OF BELONGING

Source: Canadian Index of Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Survey, 2013



### YOUTH AGED 15—24 WHO ARE VISIBLE MINORITIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED (22.1%) COMPARED TO YOUTH WHO ARE NOT VISIBLE MINORITIES (16%)

Source: NHS Table 9-012-X2011059, 2011



# HEALTH & WELLNESS

The physical and mental health of our residents contributes to the overall wellbeing of our community. Our health and wellness is impacted by healthy lifestyle choices as well as our economic and social positions, including our sense of belonging.

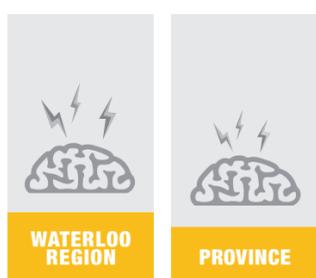


## THE BIG PICTURE

Although we could do better, Waterloo Region residents are more active and make healthier lifestyle choices than the provincial average. There are considerable concerns about our mental health, particularly for middle-aged residents who self-report a lot of stress.

### RESIDENTS OF WATERLOO REGION REPORT RELATIVELY HIGH LEVELS OF STRESS (27% vs. 22% provincially).

Source: CANSIM table 105-0501, 2014



### THE RATE OF SELF-INJURY HOSPITALIZATIONS FOR WOMEN (112) IS MORE THAN DOUBLE THAN MEN (54) PER 100,000 PEOPLE

Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2014



### OUR SENSE OF BELONGING IS TIED TO OUR SATISFACTION WITH MENTAL WELLBEING

Those with a high sense of belonging are 81.8% satisfied vs. 58.2% of those with a weak sense.

Source: Canadian Index of Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Survey, 2013

