

STRAIT REGION'S  
**VitalSigns**<sup>®</sup>



# WELCOME TO VITAL SIGNS

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NOVA SCOTIA



Vital Signs® is a community checkup conducted by community foundations across Canada, measuring the vitality of our communities and identifying significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life.

Vital Signs® is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada, with special thanks to the Toronto Foundation for developing and sharing the Vital Signs® concept.

For more information visit:

**[www.communityfoundations.ca/  
initiatives/vital-signs/](http://www.communityfoundations.ca/initiatives/vital-signs/)**

This report was coordinated by the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia (CFNS), an action centre for philanthropy. CFNS provides knowledge and support for communities, charities, and citizens to realize their potential.



## THROUGH OUR WORK, WE AIM TO INSPIRE NOVA SCOTIANS TO GATHER, GIVE, AND GROW.

### **Gather:**

We act as a convener and facilitator, bringing people and communities together in many different and exciting ways, such as our annual Inspired Conversations Series, various funds, Vital Signs® initiatives, and much more. We work with private donors, businesses, communities, and charitable organizations to build the financial and social capital our communities need, both today and tomorrow.

### **Give:**

We support more than 80 funds that together support people, projects, and progress in communities across the province. We promote charitable giving and facilitate effective philanthropy for strategic impact on the issues and causes that matter to our communities.

### **Grow:**

We build the financial assets that make things possible. We pool gifts, large and small, for greater growth to provide a sustainable source of funding for charities, scholarships, and grants to other community projects.

#### ✓ Address:

806-1888 Brunswick Street Halifax, NS B3J 3J8

#### ✓ Tel. 902-490-9916

Web: [cfns-fcne.ca](http://cfns-fcne.ca)





## A MESSAGE FROM OUR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

**The Strait Region Society for Children, Youth, and Families (SRSCYF) is a concerned citizen roundtable and advocacy group focused on the healthy growth, development, and welfare of children, youth, and families in Antigonish, Guysborough, Inverness, and Richmond Counties. Under a mandate from the Department of Community Services, SRSCYF serves as a Child Welfare Board, providing feedback on the changing factors that influence well-being and suggesting ways to improve.**

The Mission of SRSCYF advocates for action in the following five areas:

**· Fostering a Supportive Community Environment**

that understands that the personal actions of all community members contribute to the growth and development of healthy children, youth, and families.

**· Celebrate, Connect and Strengthen**

existing community actions and services to ensure that the important work already being done to improve the lives of children, youth, and families continues.

**· Develop Personal Skills**

through intentional and deliberate development of all community members through learning opportunities, experiences and relationships that empower children, youth, and families to grow and develop.

**· Reorient Services**

by advocating and promoting coordination of resources and services available to children, youth, and families and increasing collaboration and engagement amongst families, service providers, and community resources.

**· Advocate for Public Policy**

that supports and enables/empowers communities to support the healthy growth and development of children, youth, and families in all areas (determinants of health) that directly impact the ability to “live full and abundant lives”.

The essential and reciprocal relationship of the healthy growth and development of children, youth, and families and of sustainable, resilient, and thriving communities require a shared understanding of the challenges our communities must address. To facilitate this shared understanding, we partnered with the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia to leverage their expertise and experience in conducting a Vital Signs® report to take the pulse of our communities and support for children, youth, and families.

Thank you to all those who attended the community conversations and supported the Vital Signs® project with time, information, and financial resources.

We hope that this report serves as an “At A Glance” information source to stimulate vital conversations among community members, support the important work that is being done, and reinforce efforts and investments needed to ensure all children, youth, and families not only survive but THRIVE in our Strait Region communities.

*- Strait Region Society for  
Children, Youth, and Families.*

# AT A GLANCE

The Strait Region Vital Signs® report was developed to foster community awareness, engage readers in strengthening supportive conversations, and inspire actions that ensure all children, youth, and families can access the vital resources they need to not only survive but thrive in our communities.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THE STRAIT REGION VITAL SIGNS® REPORT WAS IDENTIFIED AND LEAD BY THE STRAIT REGION SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES WHO ENVISION AND ADVOCATE FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1. Every child deserves to be loved
2. Every child deserves to be seen, heard, valued, included, and loved by many adults in their families, neighbourhoods, schools, programs, and communities
3. Every child deserves a home with a safe place to sleep, utilities, food, and clothing
4. Every child deserves to grow up in safe and healthy communities
5. Every child deserves access to high quality health care
6. Every child deserves to be ready for school
7. Every child deserves great schools with smart, motivated, caring teachers
8. Every child deserves access to high quality opportunities to explore and express themselves via art, music, sports, recreation, drama, and writing
9. Every child deserves access to high quality support programs and services

The Strait Region is an exceptional place for people to grow and develop healthy, thriving families and community members. In this report, we will explore the Strait Region's successes, opportunities, and challenges through seven key factors:

1. Community Belonging
2. Economy, Income, and Employment
3. Housing
4. Food Security and Healthy Eating
5. Transportation and Communication
6. Health and Wellness
7. Growth and Development



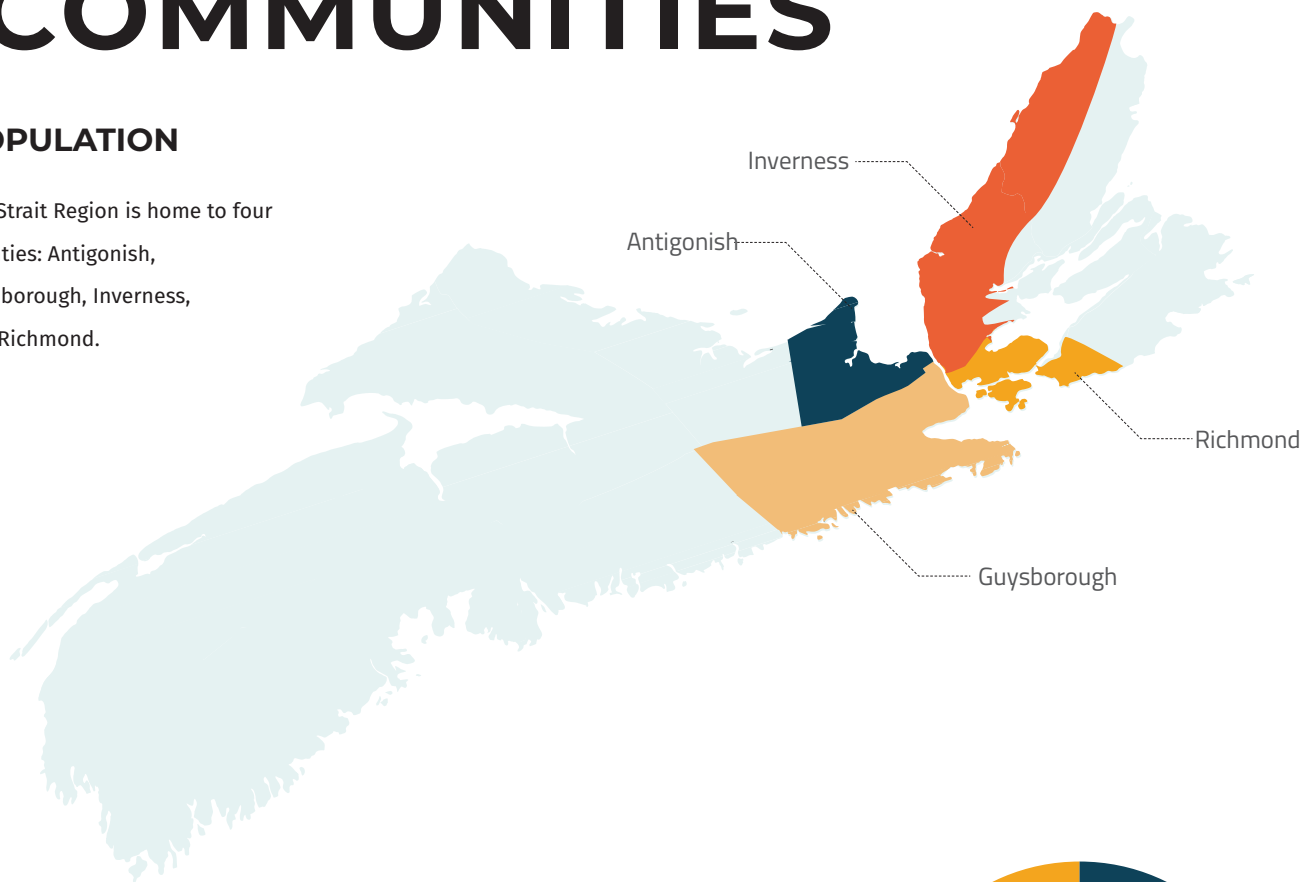
(Adapted from *Parent, Teacher, Mentor, Friend: How Every Adult Can Change Kids' Lives* by Peter L. Benson)

# 2019

## THE STRAIT REGION: OUR COMMUNITIES

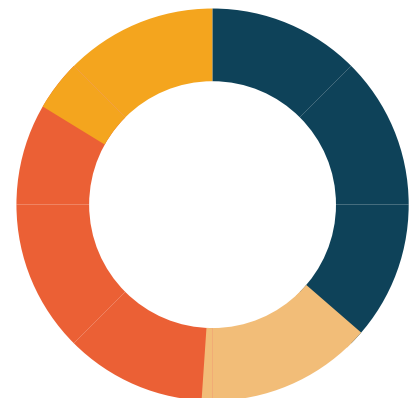
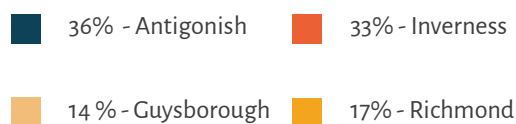
### POPULATION

The Strait Region is home to four counties: Antigonish, Guysborough, Inverness, and Richmond.



### STRAIT REGION POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Population: According to the 2016 Census\*, the Strait Region is made up of 53,125 people.



\*Sources – For additional information regarding sources used in this report, please refer to the Strait Region Vital Signs® Source Document located at: [cfns-fcne.ca/en/vitalsigns](http://cfns-fcne.ca/en/vitalsigns)

# RESIDENTS

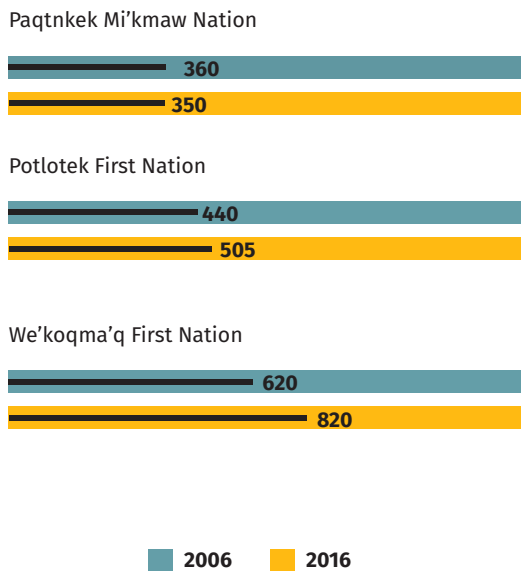
**ALL OF NOVA SCOTIA IS A PART OF MI'KMA'KI, THE HOMELAND OF THE MI'KMAQ PEOPLE.**

**MORE THAN HALF OF VISIBLE MINORITY RESIDENTS IDENTIFY AS BLACK.**

## MI'KMAW COMMUNITIES

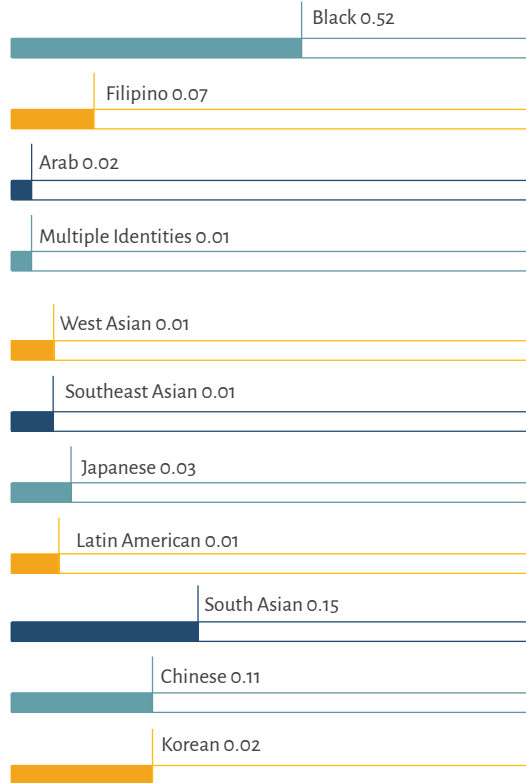
There are three Mi'kmaw communities in the Strait Region: Paq'tnkek Mi'kmaw Nation, Potlotek First Nation, and We'koqma'q First Nation. Indigenous populations across the country are growing at a faster rate than their non-Indigenous counterparts, and this largely remains true for the Strait Region.

### Population of Mi'kmaw communities

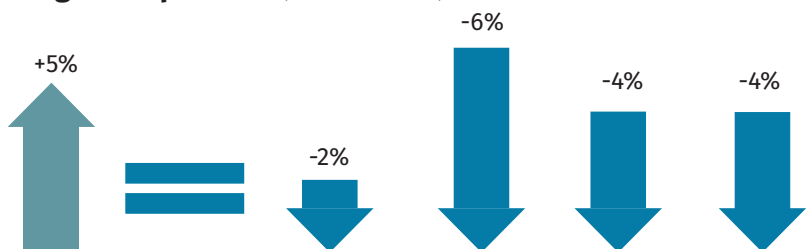


## VISIBLE MINORITIES

Three percent of Strait Region residents (1,425 people) identify as visible minorities with more than half of visible minority residents identifying as Black.



### Change in Population (2011 - 2016)



## POPULATION DECLINE

Canada Nova Scotia Antigonish Guysborough Inverness Richmond

Between 2011 and 2016, the population of the Strait Region declined.

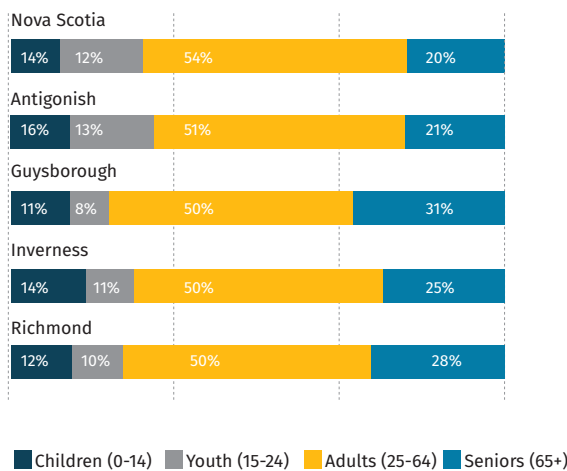
The provincial population remained about the same, while the national population increased by 5% over the same period. Changes in population affect people of all ages from school closures to employment opportunities.

## AGE OF POPULATION

An aging population and youth outmigration are pressing concerns facing rural parts of Nova Scotia and the Strait Region echoes that reality.

All four counties have higher percentages of seniors than the provincial rate and three of the four counties show lower percentages of youth than the province as a whole.

### Age Groups



## MOVING TO THE STRAIT REGION

With the overall population of the Strait Region in decline, having people move to our communities is important for maintaining and growing our population. Between May 2015 and May 2016, 2,165 people moved to the Strait Region from within Nova Scotia, across Canada, and around the world.

### Making the Strait Region Home

Moved from...	Antigonish	Guysborough	Inverness	Richmond	Strait Region
Within NS	585	160	350	205	1300
Outside NS	260	100	240	85	685
Outside CAN	95	0	50	35	180
<b>Total</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>2165</b>





# PERSONAL ASSETS AND ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**LIONS QUEST CANADA – THE CENTRE FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IS PLEASED TO CONGRATULATE THE STRAIT REGION SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES ON THE STRAIT REGION VITAL SIGNS® REPORT. WHEN WE TAKE CARE OF OUR COMMUNITIES, WE TAKE CARE OF OUR KIDS, AND WHEN WE TAKE CARE OF OUR KIDS, WE TAKE CARE OF OUR COMMUNITIES.**

#### **FAMILIES:**

Healthy families are foundational to young people's growth, learning, and well-being. Family relationships build strong social and emotional strengths that children and youth use throughout their lives. But not all families are able to provide the foundational supports for growth and development nor should they be expected to do it alone.

#### **SCHOOLS:**

Relationship-centred schools that are safe, caring, and highly engaging not only contribute to students' academic success, but also to their social and emotional well-being. School educators, support staff, service partners, and community members assist in expanding awareness of issues, and intentionally devote time to establishing the essential building blocks of development for children, youth and families.

#### **COMMUNITY ASSETS:**

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach that recognizes the strengths, gifts, talents, and resources of individuals and communities, and helps communities to mobilize these for sustainable growth and development. We say it takes a village to raise a child, so villagers need to be equipped with their own assets - especially formal and informal associations (human, social, financial, natural, and physical) – to be successful in helping children and youth thrive.

Lions Quest Canada – The Centre for Positive Youth Development has supported schools and communities for over 30 years to promote collaboration and ensure everyone understands the critical roles families, schools, and communities play in developing the experiences, opportunities, skills, and qualities that help children and youth make responsible and healthy choices. Established in 1988 in Cambridge, Ontario, Lions Quest is dedicated to providing leadership knowledge and resources to develop healthy, capable young people of strong character by producing and disseminating innovative, effective, and well-researched programs, products, training, and services for youth, parents, educators, and community leaders. **For more information visit: [lionsquest.ca](http://lionsquest.ca)**

# COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

## FOSTERING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY FOR ALL.

**FROM CORPORATIONS TO CREDIT UNIONS, SERVICE CLUBS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS, PEOPLE LIVING IN THE STRAIT REGION ARE WELCOMING, ACTIVE, AND GENEROUS IN FOSTERING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY FOR ALL.**

A thriving community makes sure that everyone feels at home, recognizes the strengths, gifts, and resources of its people, and helps communities to mobilize and build on these for sustainable development. The Strait Region is fortunate to have community members readily willing to lead and invest their time in formal and informal associations that mobilize community assets, strengthen social relationships, and form local initiatives to support and serve children, youth, and families.

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## SENSE OF COMMUNITY BELONGING

**Belonging is a human need, just like food, water, or shelter. These important relationships not only include family and personal friends, but also the wider groups and communities we belong to.**

The rate of community belonging is higher in the Strait Region (part of the Eastern Health Region) than in Nova Scotia or Canada as a whole.

**68%**

CANADA

**75%**

NOVA SCOTIA

**81%**

EASTERN HEALTH  
REGION

**Somewhat/Very Strong Sense of Community Belonging**

## LGBTQ+

**We all deserve to feel positive about our identity and empowered by our community.**

Six schools in the Strait Region (CSAP and SRCE) are registered members of the Gay Straight Alliance/Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) Network. GSAs are student-led school clubs that support LGBTQ+ youth and their allies. They provide safe spaces for youth and are sites for community advocacy.

### LANGUAGES

One of the ways our community is diverse is in the number of languages we speak! Our community members speak more than 40 languages.

#### Top Languages Spoken – Language/Number of Speakers

##### Antigonish

English/17,735  
 French/570  
 Dutch/120  
 Mi'kmaq/75

##### Guysborough

English/7,250  
 French/130  
 German/70  
 Dutch/10

##### Inverness

English/13,870  
 French/2,085  
 Mi'kmaq/540  
 German/95

##### Richmond

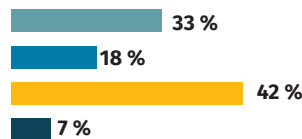
English/6,490  
 French/1,845  
 Mi'kmaq/200  
 German/90

### IMMIGRATION

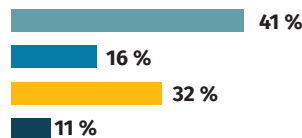
With rates of community belonging so high, it's not surprising that people from around the world have chosen to call the Strait Region home. More than 2000 members of the Strait Region community are immigrants, with children under 14 and adults between 25 and 44 making up the largest newcomer groups.

#### Age at Immigration

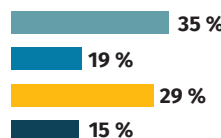
##### Antigonish



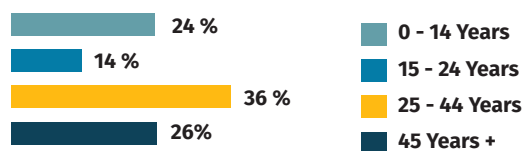
##### Guysborough



##### Inverness



##### Richmond



**IN NOVA SCOTIA, THE NEED FOR A CHILD ADVOCATE OR CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THOSE WORKING WITH AND FOR CHILDREN. THE STRAIT REGION SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES SUPPORTS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH A POSITION IN OUR PROVINCE AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE RIGHTS, INTERESTS, AND WELL-BEING OF ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH.**

## MUNICIPALITIES

**Our Municipal Governments provide vital services to our communities and help each of us to feel like we belong.**

Through infrastructure projects, diverse engagement opportunities, and programs for all ages, our municipalities actively try to bring our communities together. Municipal governments are responsible for areas and services such as libraries, recreation, parks, community water systems, tourism, playgrounds, emergency services, roadways, and parking.



## MUNICIPAL RECREATION PROGRAMS INCLUDE...

**After the Bell, The BaM Program, Girls on the Move, Go!, Healthy Hearts Exercise Group, JumpStart, Making Tracks, Mountain Mudders, Red Cross Swimming, Walkabout Programs, and Zumba.**



## HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY?

***Call 211 or visit [ns.211.ca](http://ns.211.ca) to be connected with your local services!***



## DID YOU KNOW?

### IMMIGRANT SUPPORT

The Antigonish Guysborough Immigrant Support Program (AGISP) is a free service provided through the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association and is funded by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration. AGISP offers a variety of programs and services including support groups and housing assistance for newcomers. In 2018/2019, up to 140 community members accessed services through AGISP in person, by phone, or online.

### L'ARCHE

Building relationships and understanding each other's gifts is all part of the process of ensuring that everyone truly belongs. L'Arche Antigonish has 5 homes (Covenant, Emmaus, Hope, Dixie, and Jubilee) and 1 supervised apartment for people with intellectual disabilities. L'Arche residents participate in the daily tasks of creating a home together: preparing meals, washing dishes, cleaning, taking responsibility for personal care, and managing individual finances. Together, residents learn about each other's uniqueness and differences and how these can enrich our lives together.



# SUPPORT SPOTLIGHT:

## A MESSAGE FROM DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE FEDERATION OF FOSTER FAMILIES OF NOVA SCOTIA

When children need guidance or a loving home, foster families are there to give them their kind, loving, and nurturing attention. When you open your home to a child in your community, you help them stay in their home community, in their school, and with their friends. Your care, attention, and time are all it takes to give a child a stronger future.

Right now, there are 28 foster families in the Strait Region – but more are needed. We're asking Nova Scotians from Inverness, Richmond, Antigonish, and Guysborough counties to *be there for children in care*.

Becoming a foster parent is one of the most rewarding things you can do. And we can help you do it. We're here to provide the training, resources and support you need. Open your heart. Open your home. You can do this.

### ALTERNATIVE FAMILY CARE

Alternative Family Care helps prevent children from coming into the care of the province by providing financial assistance to extended family members and other caregivers to support children's needs. For more information, visit [novascotia.ca/coms](http://novascotia.ca/coms) or contact your local **Department of Community Services office:**  
**902-863-3213 (Antigonish),**  
**902-533-4007 (Guysborough),**  
**902-625-0660 (Inverness/Richmond).**

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**IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT, WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT [FOSTERCARE.NOVASCOTIA.CA](http://FOSTERCARE.NOVASCOTIA.CA) TO FIND OUT ABOUT AN UPCOMING INFORMATION SESSION. TO ALL FOSTER PARENTS FROM THE STRAIT REGION – THANK YOU FOR BEING THERE. YOUR LOVE, TIME, AND ATTENTION MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE FOR THE YOUNG PERSON IN YOUR CARE.**

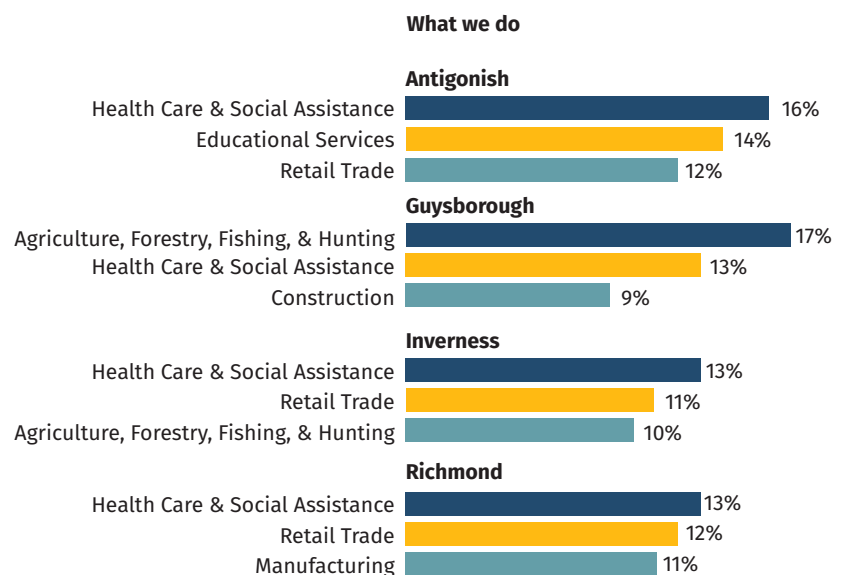
# ECONOMY INCOME & EMPLOYMENT

## THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROVIDE DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO WORK, CONNECT, AND GROW.

Having stable employment and income help people put down roots in a community, develop personally and professionally, find the time and resources to care for their health, and invest in their families and communities.

## INDUSTRIES

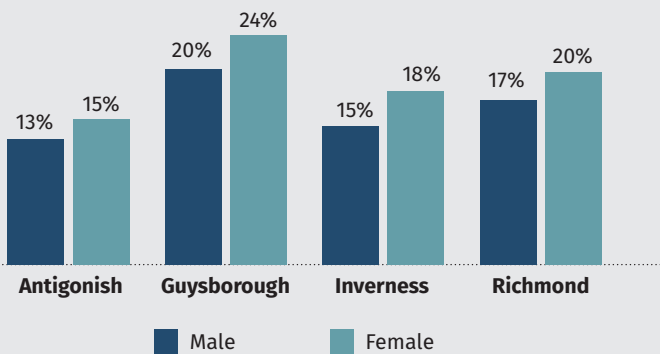
Work in the Strait Region is as diverse as the communities themselves! Some industries are more commonly associated with low pay and minimum wage (such as retail trade or agriculture) and have high concentrations of youth and part-time workers. Here are the top three employment industries in each county.



## LOW INCOME & GENDER

Living on a low income is particularly prevalent among women. In all four counties, the low income rate is higher among women than men.

LOW INCOME RATE



## LOW INCOME

Many residents of the Strait Region live on less than the median income of their counties. Statistics Canada uses a Low Income Measure – After Tax, which accounts for the financial needs of families and households of varying sizes.

### Number of Low Income Residents by County

**2,625**  
ANTIGONISH

**1,640**  
GUYSBOROUGH

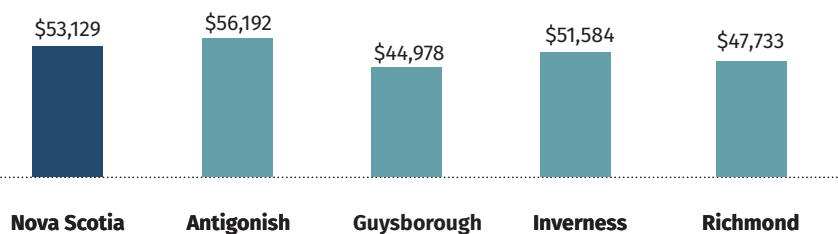
**2,590**  
INVERNESS

**1,510**  
RICHMOND

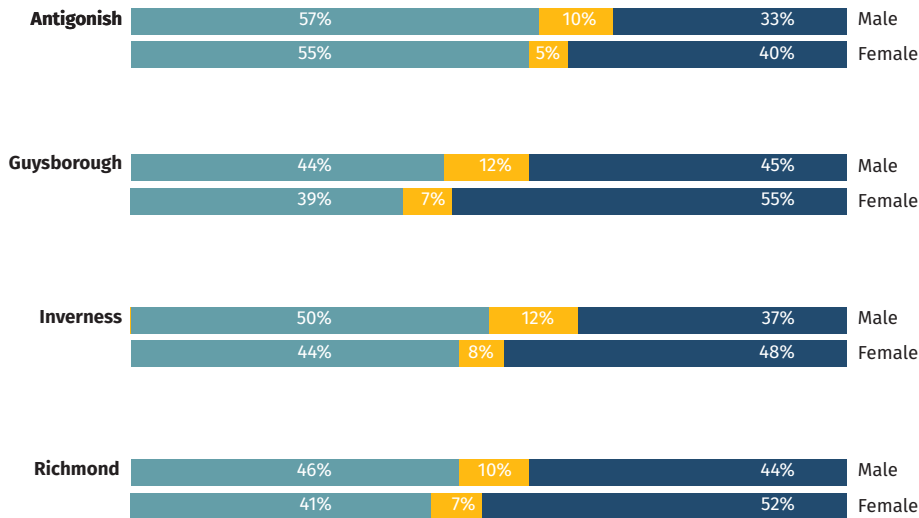
## INCOME

Employment and income are two of the strongest determinants of health and are essential markers of the wellness of a community. With the exception of Antigonish, all three other counties in the Strait Region have median after-tax household incomes below the provincial level.

Median After-Tax Income of Households



### LABOUR FORCE STATUS



### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

While many sectors do a solid job of employing members of their communities, unemployment is a key issue facing the Strait Region. Inverness has the highest rates of unemployment in the region.



### CHILD POVERTY

In order for children and youth to lead safe and empowered lives, it is important that they have the resources they need to succeed. Poverty is one of the leading causes of poor mental and physical health, making the reality of childhood poverty in the Strait Region a concerning one.

#### CHILDREN LIVING IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

**1 IN 6**  
Antigonish

**1 IN 4**  
Guysborough

**1 IN 5**  
Inverness

**1 IN 5**  
Richmond



## LIVING WAGE VS. MINIMUM WAGE

**A living wage is one that covers the actual costs of living and raising a family. This accounts for typical costs of living including shelter, childcare, and food.**

In 2016, the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition calculated that a living wage for two adults with two children living in Antigonish County was **\$17.30** an hour per adult in the household, assuming each parent works 35 hours a week for 52 weeks each year.

This is considerably higher than minimum wage in the province, which is \$11.55 an hour for experienced workers and \$11.05 an hour for inexperienced workers.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR YOUTH (15 - 24)

**19%**

Antigonish

**28%**

Guysborough

**23%**

Inverness

**38%**

Richmond

## DID YOU KNOW?

The age group most affected by unemployment in the region is youth between 15 and 24 years old.

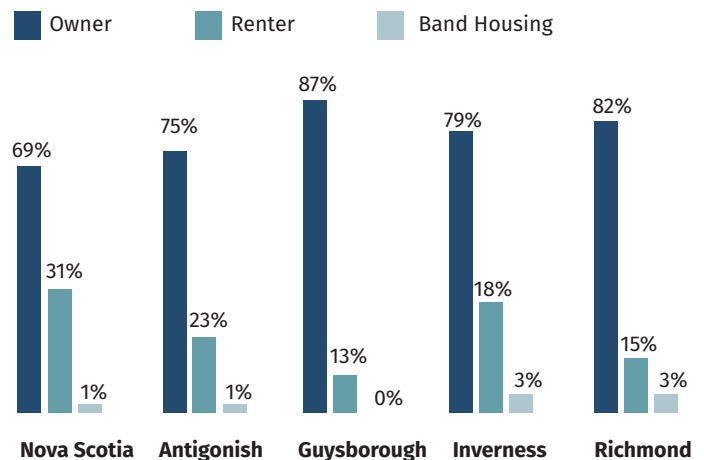
# HOUSING

HOUSING IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT. HOWEVER, MANY PEOPLE IN THE STRAIT REGION CANNOT FIND AN AFFORDABLE, SAFE, COMFORTABLE PLACE TO LIVE AND SLEEP.

## OWNERS AND RENTERS

Most people in the Strait Region own their own homes. In all four counties, rates of homeownership are higher and rates of renters are lower than the provincial rate.

Habitation by Housing Type



**9<sup>TH</sup>**  
**ANTIGONISH**

**2<sup>ND</sup>**  
**GUYSBOROUGH**

**14<sup>TH</sup>**  
**INVERNESS**

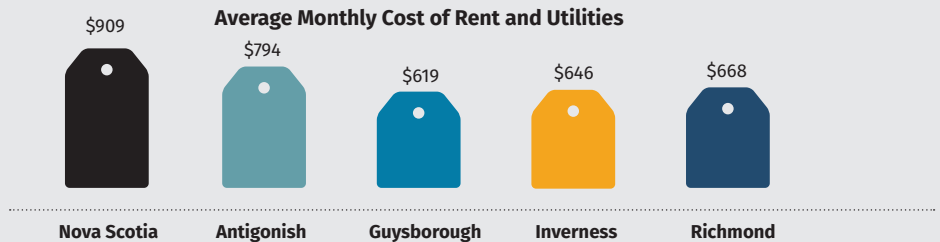
**6<sup>TH</sup>**  
**RICHMOND**

**RENTAL HOUSING**

The Canadian Rental Housing Index uses supply and affordability data from the 2016 Census to measure the health of rental housing across Canada. This measure only accounts for monthly rent costs and availability of rental units, but in rural areas where public transportation options are limited, additional considerations should be given to the location of rental units. Of the 18 counties, how do Strait Region communities rank compared to the rest of the province?

**RENTAL HOUSING COSTS**

Of the four counties, it is most expensive to rent in Antigonish and least expensive to rent in Guysborough.



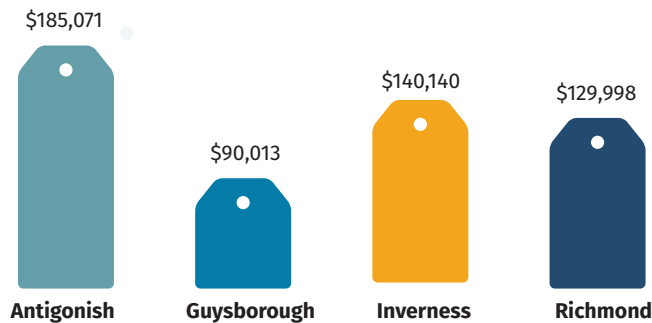
**DID YOU KNOW?**

Housing Nova Scotia offers assistance to low-income homeowners who need to make major repairs to their homes. In 2017, 1,530 low-income homeowners across the province received financial support to improve the safety and function of their houses.

**AVERAGE PURCHASE PRICE OF A HOME**

With rates of homeownership so high in all four counties, it's valuable to understand the affordability of homeownership in the region.

**Owner-Estimated Median Value of Dwellings**



## UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing is considered to be unaffordable when people have to spend more than 30% of their income on shelter costs.

### People Living in Unaffordable Housing

**1,330**  
Antigonish

**485**  
Guysborough

**1,040**  
Inverness

**545**  
Richmond

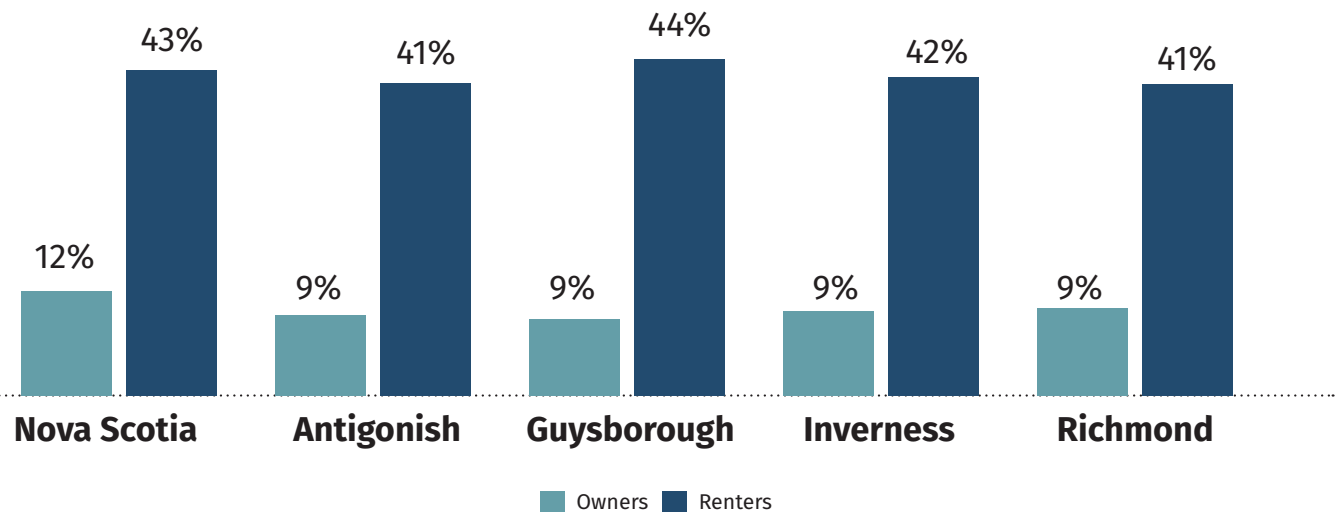


## DID YOU KNOW?

Creating more affordable housing options is crucial. For example, the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society is a volunteer-run charity organization that has been working to bring affordable housing to Antigonish since 2014. They have created a multi-family complex with 14 apartments for Antigonish residents living on low-incomes.

There are programs available across the region that provide limited financial assistance to residents in emergency heating situations. EnergyAssist is a provincial program that links people with the assistance they need while the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund, for example, provides similar assistance to people in Antigonish County. In 2017 alone, 105 households were supported through the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund.

### Rate of Unaffordable Housing by Housing Type



## OWNERS AND RENTERS IN UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING

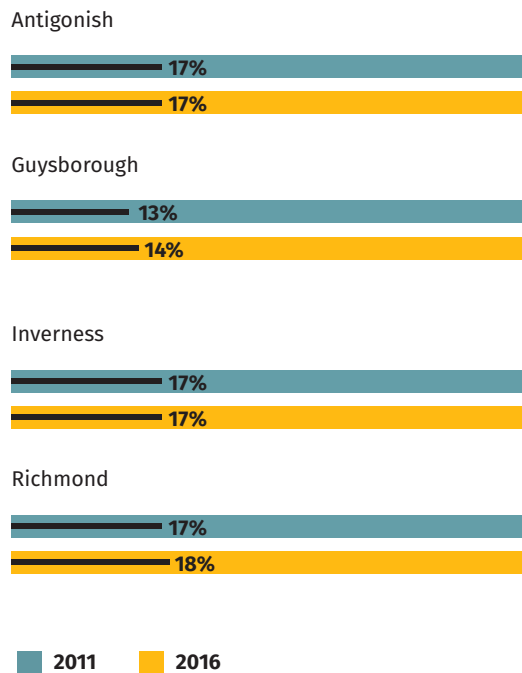
Renters in the region have the hardest time finding affordable housing. In all four counties, renters are almost five times more likely to be living in unaffordable housing than people who own their own homes.

**WHILE HOUSING IS A KNOWN ISSUE IN THE REGION, THERE ARE NO RELIABLE ESTIMATES FOR THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN THE STRAIT REGION.**

**SINGLE-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS**

Finding affordable housing can be particularly challenging on one income. Between 2011 and 2016, the percentage of single-parent households in all four counties stayed the same or increased with women heading over 74% of single-parent households in every county of the Strait Region.

**Percentage of Households with a Single Parent**

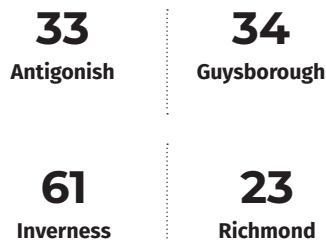


**PUBLIC HOUSING**

**Public housing supports low-income earners in finding safe and affordable housing for families.**

Public housing gives priority to survivors of family violence, those whose homes have been condemned, or those who need to live near a hospital.

**PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS IN THE STRAIT REGION**



**SHELTERS**

**For some, affordability is only part of the challenge; safety is a concern as well.**

The Transition House Association of Nova Scotia supports four shelters in the Strait Region that provide protection, safety, shelter, and basic necessities to women and children breaking away from family violence: Leaside Transition House, Naomi Society, Tearmann House, and We'koqma'q Family Healing Centre.

# FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTHY EATING

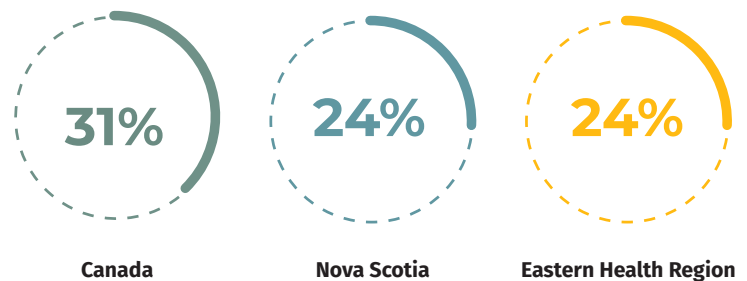
Food security means having reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable and healthy food. When people are food insecure, they are at a higher risk for serious growth and development, health, economic, and social problems, including learning difficulties, chronic disease, stress, depression, and social isolation.

The Food Action Research Centre, or FoodARC, has noted that despite being rich in food resources, Nova Scotia has the highest rate of food insecurity of all the Canadian provinces.

## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of healthy eating, and reduce the risk of many diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers.

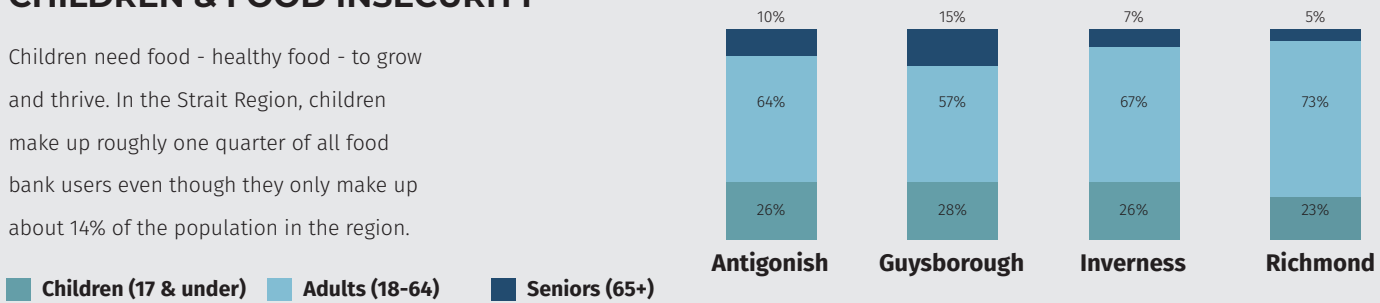
Percentage of population eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day



## CHILDREN & FOOD INSECURITY

Children need food - healthy food - to grow and thrive. In the Strait Region, children make up roughly one quarter of all food bank users even though they only make up about 14% of the population in the region.

Food Bank Use by Age Group



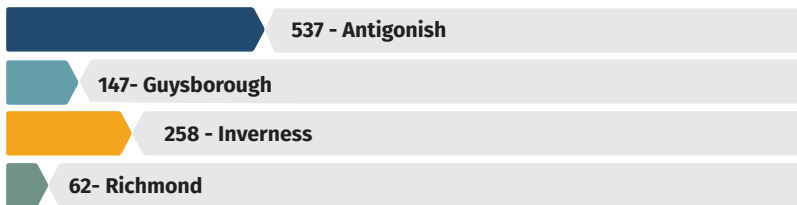
■ Children (17 & under) ■ Adults (18-64) ■ Seniors (65+)

## FOOD BANKS

Between 2008 and 2016, food bank usage in Nova Scotia increased by 41%.

There are six food banks in the Strait Region that are supported by Feed Nova Scotia: Antigonish Community Food Bank, Guysborough & Area Food Bank Society, Isle Madame Food Bank, Port Hood Food Bank, Port Hawkesbury Food Bank Society, and St. Francis Xavier University Student Food Resource Centre. However, there are many other organizations in the region that offer emergency food support.

People Served at Food Banks (March, 2018)



## THE NATIONAL NUTRITIOUS FOOD BASKET

The National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB) is a grocery list of approximately 60 food items that represent a healthy, balanced diet. Foods in the NNFB are minimally processed, easily found in grocery stores, and eaten by most Canadians in amounts that make up a balanced diet. The cost of the NNFB varies across the province, and is typically higher in rural areas than in urban centres.

Monthly NNFC Cost for a Household of 4

**\$935.11**

Nova Scotia

**\$964.98**

Strait Region

## SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS

When there's not enough food at home, schools can play an essential role by providing food to kids. Breakfast programs are offered by CSAP and SRCE schools; in the 2018-2019 school year, 95% of SRCE schools served breakfast 5 days per week, feeding **2,538 students each day**.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Rural households are especially vulnerable to food insecurity due to a lack of accessible or reliable transportation, which can prevent access to food.

Having breakfast at school helps children to perform better academically, have fewer office referrals, attend class and be on time, and participate and concentrate in class.

# TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATION

Many of our communities are rural and remote and getting around can be a major obstacle. Some people in our region must travel outside their communities for everyday needs such as employment, going to school, buying groceries, seeing a doctor, or participating in recreational activities.

---

## COMMUTING

People living in the Strait Region view transportation as a key issue in their communities. Commuting times vary across the region with Guysborough county facing the longest commute times with an average of 26 minutes.

### Average Commute Time to Work

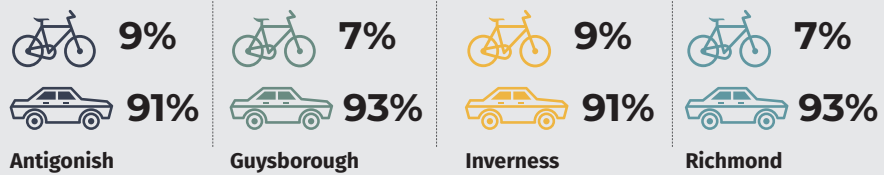
<b>19</b> minutes	<b>26</b> minutes	<b>19</b> minutes	<b>23</b> minutes
Antigonish	Guysborough	Inverness	Richmond



## GETTING AROUND

In rural areas where essential services and amenities are farther apart, having access to transportation is essential. In the Strait Region, most people use cars to get to work.

### Modes of Transport to Work



Automobile    Transit, walking, or biking

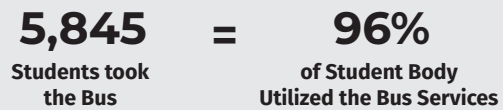
## TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

With median household incomes lower than the provincial rate in three of the four counties in the Strait Region, not everyone can afford to own a car. Lack of available and affordable transportation leads to missed employment opportunities, educational experiences, health appointments, social gatherings, and everyday activities.

## SCHOOL BUS USE

School buses are valuable for a number of reasons. For families without a car, they are an essential means of transport to school. For the environment, having fewer cars on the road means reduced emissions.

### SRCE School Bus Use 2018/2019



## INTERNET

While transportation is used as a way to physically connect people, the Internet is also a means of connecting people for education, employment, searching for housing, finding a partner, and more. Relocation for families, particularly those who are self-employed, would be challenging in areas with poor Internet service.

	Canada	Antigonish	Guysborough	Inverness	Richmond
Avg. Download	41.2 Mbps	11.01 Mbps	3.45 Mbps	3.32 Mbps	15.54 Mbps
Avg. Upload	17.5 Mbps	4.24 Mbps	1.31 Mbps	0.86 Mbps	2.26 Mbps

**Nationally, 7 in 10 Internet users say they would be unlikely to purchase a home in an area that didn't have high-speed Internet, making Internet speed an essential consideration for community growth.** Poor Internet in rural areas places even greater pressures on already limited affordable housing options in densely populated towns and villages. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission has determined that all Canadians should have access to Internet speeds of at least 50 Mbps (megabits per second) for downloads and 10 Mbps for uploads.



## DID YOU KNOW?

There are two community transit options in the Strait Region: Antigonish Community Transit (ACTS) and Strait Area Transit (SAT).

Medical appointments are a recurring theme among transit users. One ACTS user noted that "This changed my life. I couldn't attend medical appointments and was desperate. This service is amazing." Another community member is only able to travel to the Strait Richmond Hospital for dialysis appointments three times a week because of Strait Area Transit. Having affordable transportation alternatives is not a luxury, it's a necessity.

# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A community's strength and resilience depend on the physical and mental health of the people who live, work, and play there. Research has found that health is impacted by social determinants such as income, education, shelter, food, sustainable resources, and equity.

*The Strait Region is part of the Eastern Health Region of the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA). Much of the data used to talk about health in the Strait Region comes from data accounting for the Eastern Health Region as a whole.*

## FAMILY PHYSICIANS

As of August 2019, 4,176 people of the Eastern Health Region aged 12 and over were without a family doctor. With a declining and aging population, the Strait Region needs to have health care support to attract new families and to support older adults.



## DID YOU KNOW?

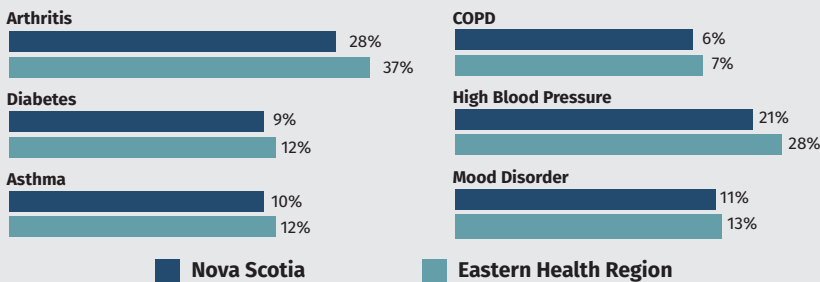
One of the strongest non-medical factors that affect health is income. In 2015, only 15% of low-income residents in the Strait Region reported good health, compared to 38% of high-income residents.

## CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Healthy communities focus on quality of life. One of the biggest health challenges facing the Strait Region is the rate of chronic conditions. Chronic conditions require long-term care and treatment and can have a significant impact on a person's daily routines and quality of life. Family members

are also influenced by the chronic health problems of a loved one with impacts on emotions, relationships, sleep and health, work and study, finances, social life, and time. When chronic care and support become the focus of the family instead of growth and development, we become absorbed with surviving not thriving.

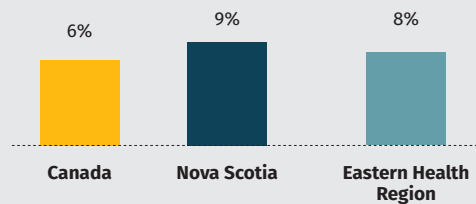
### Rates of Chronic Conditions



## MENTAL HEALTH

Wellness is a combination of both physical and mental health. While the majority of Strait Region residents report very good or excellent mental health, 8% of residents report fair or poor mental health, which is higher than the national rate.

### Self-Perceived Mental Health, Fair or Poor

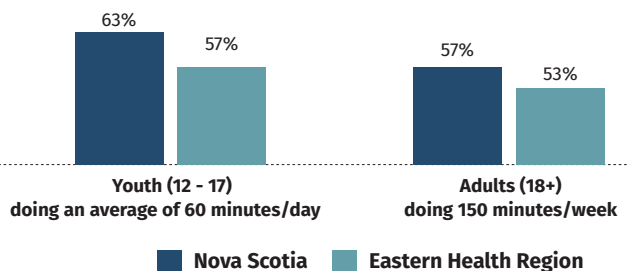


## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**Health is about more than just treating illness – it's also about maintaining wellness. Children need to be active every day to promote their healthy physical and mental growth and development.**

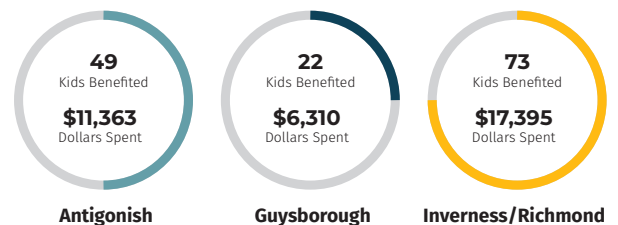
Kids who establish healthy lifestyle patterns at a young age will carry those patterns and benefits with them for the rest of their lives. Rates of physical activity in the Strait Region are lower than the province as a whole.

### Getting Enough Exercise



## KIDSPORT

It is important to encourage children and youth to connect with others, be active, and discover new opportunities. Sports can be a positive outlet for youth to do this, but the cost of sports is often a major barrier. In the Strait Region, there are three chapters of KidSport, which provide confidential financial assistance for registration fees and equipment to kids aged 18 and under.



# NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

When children, youth, and families need support for their health, they turn to the health care system. In Nova Scotia, we have Public Health, which is specifically designed to promote and protect health and prevent disease and injuries so that we can all live healthier lives.

Everyone has a role to play in public health – working together to change the social and physical environments where we spend time, and to address root causes such as the social determinants of health and inequities in our society. Public Health helps our communities to better understand infectious diseases, vaccinations, healthy eating, tobacco and

alcohol use, pregnancy and childhood development.

For more information about Public Health programs and services, visit:

**[novascotia.ca/dhw/publichealth/](https://novascotia.ca/dhw/publichealth/)**

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**TO CONTACT THE GENERAL INQUIRIES LINE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN  
THE EASTERN HEALTH REGION, CALL 902-563-2400.**

## SUPPORT SPOTLIGHT



# GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Thriving communities offer members of all ages abundant, affordable, and flexible opportunities to learn in a range of environments. Families, school communities, and community organizations share responsibility for the growth and development of all children and youth.

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## FAMILIES

A child's earliest experiences have the greatest impact on their development. From prenatal development to adulthood, parental and family support is vital to the growth and development of our community members. Children are part of families and therefore what impacts the family also impacts the child (e.g. poverty, unemployment, housing, stress, etc.).

## DAY CARE

For many families, day care is a necessity. Day cares can positively impact children, youth, and their families by acting as caring, encouraging environments for young people to grow. There are 13 provincially licensed childcare centres in the Strait Region.

### Childcare Facilities in the Strait Region

**8**

Antigonish

**3**

Inverness

**2**

Richmond

## PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAM

In the Strait Region, there are currently 18 schools that offer the Pre-Primary Program at CSAP and SRCE schools. The Pre-Primary Program is a free program for four-year-olds in the province and is offered in the school setting, which helps children to transition into Primary the following year. Based on the experience of other jurisdictions, participation

in school-based early learning programs is typically high, reaching children and families who might not otherwise be able to access other early learning and childcare programs.



### DID YOU KNOW?

There are a number of adult education programs in the Strait Region including The Antigonish County Adult Learning Association (ACALA), Guysborough County Adult Learning Association (GALA), and The Richmond County Literacy Network. Adult learning programs can help you develop your literacy skills, prepare you to write the GED, or help you find a job.

**733**

Students

**N/A**

Students

**6089**

Students

**N/A**

Students

**169**

Employees

**25**

Employees

**983**

Employees

**9**

Employees

Conseil Scolaire Acadien  
Provincial (CSAP)

Mi'kmawey School

Strait Regional Centre for  
Education (SRCE)

We'koqma'q Mikmaw  
School

## SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

The Strait Region's school communities provide every child with access to smart, motivated, caring teachers, support staff, community partners, and services. In the Strait Region, almost 7,000 students are mentored and cared for by more than 1,000 employees. Schools in the Strait Region are hubs and are vital in offering children, youth, and families with opportunities to belong to a healthy growth and development community.

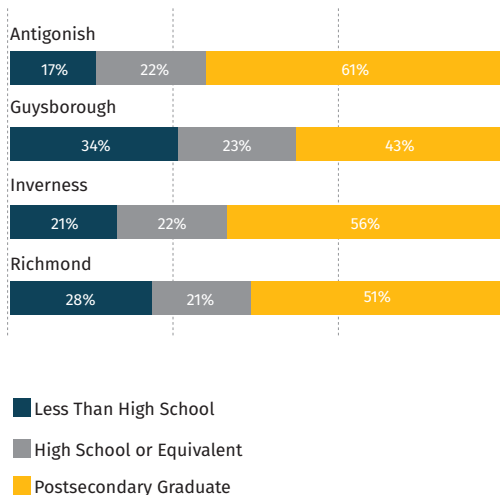
## GRADUATION RATE

Young people and their families in the Strait Region have shown a dedicated commitment to learning. **The graduation rate for students in the Strait Regional Centre for Education is 97% - the highest in the province.**

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Levels of educational attainment vary across the region. Antigonish has the highest rate of postsecondary graduates while Guysborough has the highest rate of adults with less than a high school education.

### Highest Level of Education Obtained



## LIBRARIES

Libraries are a key community player in providing opportunities for lifelong learning. The Strait Region is served by two regional library systems.

### Eastern Counties Regional Library

**21% Membership of Population**  
**57,000 In-Person Visits**  
**93,000 Materials Borrowed**  
**10,300 Hours of public computer use**  
**900 Programs**  
**150 Summer Reading Club Activities**

### Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library

**28% Membership of Population**  
**351,000 In-Person Visits**  
**272,000 Materials Borrowed**  
**61,500 Hours of public computer use**  
**2,640 Programs**  
**370 Summer Reading Club Activities**

## DID YOU KNOW?

### There are four postsecondary campuses in the Strait Region:

- **Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) Strait Area Campus** is home to the Nautical Institute, Transport Canada's approved marine training program, and offers more than 30 diploma and certificate programs.
- **St. Francis Xavier University** is one of Canada's oldest universities and is consistently ranked as one of the best undergraduate universities in the country. StFX brings in students from around the world with more than half of its student body coming from outside of the Atlantic provinces.

- **Université Sainte-Anne has two campuses** in the Strait Region. The Saint-Joseph-du-Moine campus offers college and university programs in the fields of Health, Arts, Administration, Education, and French as a second language. The Petit-de-Grat campus offers Bachelor programs in Social Work and Education, as well as five types of college certificates.

# NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development works to ensure that children in their early years have a positive start to school, that students benefit from a quality primary to 12 education, and that teachers, school boards, and community partners collaborate to increase overall student achievement and success.

Schools in our communities act as essential hubs. All SRCE and CSAP schools are members of SchoolsPlus/ÉcolesPlus, which brings a range of mental health services and other health programs together with mentoring, social work, homework support and justice services

into schools where children, youth and families can easily access them.

Families can access SchoolsPlus either through a referral from the principal and school Program Planning Team, or from service providers, students, and families contacting their school's SchoolsPlus Facilitator. To find out more about SchoolsPlus in your community, visit [www.ednet.ns.ca/schoolsplus/](http://www.ednet.ns.ca/schoolsplus/)

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**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SCHOOLSPLUS IN YOUR COMMUNITY,  
VISIT [WWW.EDNET.NS.CA/SCHOOLSPLUS/](http://WWW.EDNET.NS.CA/SCHOOLSPLUS/)**



# WHICH ISSUE WILL YOU TAKE ON?

## COMMUNITY BELONGING

People living in the Strait Region are welcoming, active, and generous in creating a strong sense of community belonging. Be there for kids in care, offer support through alternative care, utilize municipal services, programs, and facilities, and make sure everyone feels at home in the Strait Region.

1

2

## ECONOMY, INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

Support local business and new business ideas, advocate for a living wage, and connect our educated youth and skilled community members with growing local, meaningful employment opportunities.

## HOUSING

Advocate for affordable housing options in areas where people who do not own a car can get to work, school, and essential services for their families.

3

4

## FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTHY EATING

Understand food insecurity by learning about the National Nutritious Food Basket, support and donate to your local food banks, and advocate for more transportation alternatives so people in rural areas can access healthy food.

## TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATION

Support public transit options in our communities and demand widespread cell phone coverage and high speed Internet access especially in rural areas.

5

6

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Engage in personal and family-focused regular physical activity, speak up and engage in efforts to recruit and retain family physicians for all community members, and call for better supports for families coping with chronic conditions.

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

A "village" of support is needed to ensure the success of all children, youth and families. Acknowledge, celebrate, and engage with parents/families, schools, and community to provide the foundation of growth and development for all.

7

# QUALITY OF LIFE

# 211 NOVA SCOTIA

Don't know who to contact? If you dial 211 or visit [ns.211.ca](http://ns.211.ca), they can help you connect with community services, income/employment support, health care, recreation opportunities, legal matters, consumer services, mental health and substance abuse services, environmental issues, public health, safety, education, housing, transportation, food, and more.

# THE PROCESS

## LOCAL DATA

Vital Signs® reports employ a community-based research strategy in order to determine community priorities and highlight community strengths. Wherever possible, this report has drawn information from local data, such as strategies and action plans from municipalities and data from local business and non-profit organizations. The report also draws extensively from the most recently available data from national and provincial sources, such as Statistics Canada and the Government of Nova Scotia, to provide a high-level snapshot of community vitality on a wide variety of indicators. For additional information regarding information sources, please refer to CFNS's Vital Signs® Source Document located at [cfns-fcne.ca/en/vitalsigns](http://cfns-fcne.ca/en/vitalsigns)

## LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Vital Signs® is an evidence-based report that is used to measure community well-being, start conversations with local leaders, and identify trends to help communities act on priorities such as poverty, food insecurity, youth unemployment, and more. The goal of Vital Signs® is to offer a readable and engaging report that encourages dialogue and action from all segments of a community, including citizens, non-profit organizations, institutions, and political leaders.

The researchers connected with community members to seek their perspectives for this project and they supported the identification of priority areas, collected data, and provided final edits to the report. Representatives from the Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families and many community partners played a key role in providing high level recommendations and advice to ensure this report addressed the priorities and needs of the community, and were instrumental in achieving the community outreach and engagement goals of Vital Signs®.

## CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

### **The reader should keep in mind the following:**

- Throughout the process, Strait Region community members identified issues they would like to see addressed in the report. Unfortunately, not all these issues are addressed in the report due to data availability and space limitations.
- This report uses secondary data from multiple sources over various years. Data was collected using multiple survey methods for many geographic catchment areas. The researchers made every effort to ensure that the data used in the report was comparable, and to be explicit regarding the parameters of the data.
- In some instances, data was unavailable for one or more of the four counties in the Strait Region, but it was felt that the available data was still valuable. The researchers were explicit about when a county was not included.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Irene MacLeod**, Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families  
**Doreen Beaton**, Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families  
**Robert Proctor**, Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families  
**Amanda Mombourquette**, Strait Area Chamber of Commerce  
**Linda Beaton**, Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families  
**Marion Graham**, Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families  
**Brenda MacEachern**, Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families  
**Monica Ryan**, Strait Region Society for Children, Youth and Families  
**Gord Cunningham**, Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University  
**Annette Kehoe**, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)

## THANK YOU

to participants from the following  
**Community Conversations:**

Antigonish (May 15, 2018)  
 Mabou (June 12, 2018)  
 Guysborough (August 23, 2018)  
 Port Hawkesbury (October 26, 2017)  
 Louisdale (June 11, 2018)  
 Port Hawkesbury (June 4, 2018)

## PROJECT TEAM

**Emma Cruddas**, Program Manager, CFNS  
**Caitlin Stonham**, Editing and Review Support, CFNS

## THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY SPONSORS:





COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CANADA

**VitalSigns.**



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
FONDATION COMMUNAUTAIRE  
OF NOVA SCOTIA  
DE LA NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE

**CYF STRAIT  
REGION**  
Society for Children, Youth & Families

