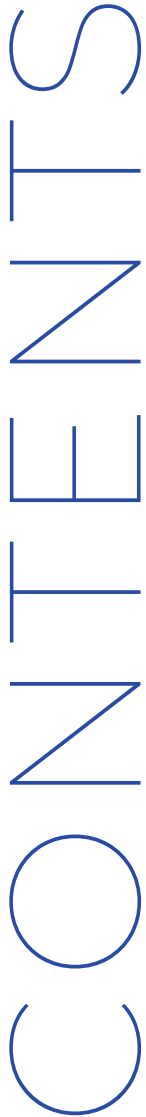


Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Toronto **Environmental Scan**

2025



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Works Cited

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto commissioned the Centre for Organizational Effectiveness to produce environmental scan reports for each of the regions of the Archdiocese of Toronto to assist in the strategic plan development of Catholic Charities. Anchored by Catholic Social Teachings, which provides the shared understanding of how faith engages with the world, these documents provide a current overview of the people 'in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

The Social Determinants of Health review include:

- Low Income and Food Insecurity
- Education and Employment
- Housing and Homelessness
- Health, Mental Health, and Addiction
- Newcomers and Immigration
- Community and Belonging: Civic Engagement, Recreation, Racism, Crime & Violence
- Age: Children and Youth, and Seniors
- Environment

We invite member agencies, parishes and partners to review to review the information through an open heart, inviting the Holy Spirit to enter into the journey of discerning how your gifts, and your resources can continue to support the people of Toronto in living life abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS: DATA HIGHLIGHTS

North Region encompasses York Region, Simcoe County and Mulmur (Dufferin County). Where available, Statistics Canada census data for these were combined to provide as full a picture as possible of the population in the area. Canadian Community Health Survey data and Ontario Marginalization Index data is available for Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and for York Regional Health Unit.

he social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These determinants are key factors influencing health outcomes and health disparities among populations. They include various social, economic, environmental and cultural factors that can either promote or hinder individuals' health and well-being. [i]

i. World Health Organization, "Closing the gap in a generation"










Indicates that the stat for the region is higher than Ontario







Indicates that the stat for the region is the same as Ontario



Indicates that the stat for the region is lower than Ontario

SDOH Area	North Region Highlights (York Region, Simcoe County, Mulmur).	Compared to Ontario
Low Income (based on After-Tax Low Income Cut Off – After-Tax LICO)	<p>4.3% live with low income in 2020; 4.4% of children and youth age 0 to 17 live with low income.</p> <p>3.3% of adults age 65 and older live with low income.</p> <p>16% of families fall in the bottom 20% of income compared to families across Canada</p>	  
Food Insecurity	<p>16% of York Region households and 16% of individuals were food insecure in 2022.</p> <p>17% of Simcoe-Muskoka households and 23% of individuals were food insecure in 2022.</p>	 
Employment and Education	<p>64% of the population age 15 and older was working or looking for work in 2021 (participation rate)</p> <p>The unemployment rate was 12%.</p> <p>8% of the population age 25 to 64 has not obtained a high school certificate, diploma or degree.</p>	 

SDOH Area	North Region Highlights	Compared to Ontario
Housing and Homelessness	<p>19% of dwelling are rented.</p> <p>45% of tenants live in unaffordable housing</p> <p>27% of tenants live in core housing need – their housing may be unaffordable, overcrowded and/or in need of major repair and they cannot afford to move.</p>	
Health	<p>65% of York Region residents age 12 and older report having very good or excellent health.</p> <p>60% of Simcoe-Muskoka residents report having very good or excellent health</p>	
Mental Health and Addiction	<p>66% of York Region residents age 12 and older report having very good or excellent mental health.</p> <p>63% of Simcoe-Muskoka residents report having very good or excellent mental health.</p> <p>13% of York Region residents age 12 and older and 20% of Simcoe-Muskoka residents report heavy drinking at least once a month.</p>	
Newcomers and Immigration	<p>38% is immigrant or non-permanent resident.</p> <p>43% identify as a visible minority</p>	
Belonging	<p>70% of York Region residents age 12 and older</p> <p>73% of Simcoe-Muskoka residents have a strong sense of belonging to their local community.</p>	
Age	<p>22% of the population are under age 20 in 2021. This is projected to decrease to 20% by 2034.</p> <p>18% are age 65+. This is projected to increase to 23% by 2034.</p>	

SUMMARY OF AREAS WITH HIGHEST MARGINALIZATION

The following table summarizes analysis of the Ontario Marginalization (ON-Marg) Index maps produced by Public Health Ontario. These maps are based on Statistics Canada 2021 data. The ON-Marg shows differences in marginalization within a region. ON-Marg applies to areas, not individual people. The maps in this report show patterns of marginalization at the Dissemination Area (DA) level. A DA is a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more adjacent blocks with an average population of 400 to 700 people. The maps can be used to help identify areas that may need more resources or supports.

Simcoe County has developed a 2021 Census online Mapping Tool which may be a used to complement the information in this report (gisportal.simcoe.ca/arcgis/apps/sites/#/county-of-simcoe-data-portal/pages/2021-cesus-tool). York Region has mapping tools which show where community resources can be found (<https://ww4.yorkmaps.ca/>).

In Simcoe County, areas with highest marginalization include parts of Orillia, Barrie, Bradford West Gwillimbury, New Tecumseth, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Midland, Penetanguishene and Ramara.

In York Region, areas with highest marginalization can be found throughout the region particularly Richmond Hill, Markham, Vaughan and Newmarket.

Marginalization Dimension	Highest Marginalization
Material Resources – this relates closely to poverty and refers to the inability of individuals and communities to access and attain basic material needs relating to food, housing, clothing and education.	<p>Simcoe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Much of Orillia• Throughout Barrie• Parts of Midland, Wasaga Beach, Collingwood, Penetanguishene, Midland, Ramara <p>York:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Much of Armadale and Milliken• Parts of Newmarket and Richmond Hill• Small areas in Woodbridge and Vaughan

Marginalization Dimension

Racialized and Newcomer Populations – this relates to area-level concentrations of people who are recent immigrants and/or visible minority populations. These areas may experience high levels of racialization and xenophobia.

Age and Labour Force – this measure relates to the impacts of disability and dependence. It refers to area-level concentrations of people without income from employment including children, older adults, adults whose work is not compensated and/or those unable to work due to disability. It may also be connected to the economic vitality of the community and the ways that infrastructure and resources are allocated.

Highest Marginalization

Simcoe County has 5 areas that have high concentrations of newcomers and racialized populations. They can be found in:

- Bradford, Barrie, Alliston.

York Region has many areas with high concentrations of newcomers and racialized populations. They can be found in:

- Southern part of York Region
- Aurora
- Newmarket
- Stouffville

In **Simcoe**, areas with high concentrations of people without income from employment include:

- Along the coast of Georgian Bay
- Parts of Alliston, New Tecumseth, Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ramara
- Parts of Barrie and Orillia
- Coldwater, Elmvale, Stayner, Creemore

In **York**, areas of highest marginalization can scattered throughout the following communities:

- Markham, Richmond Hill, Woodbridge, Vaughan
- Aurora, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville
- King City

Marginalization Dimension

Households and Dwellings – this measure relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness. Stable neighbourhoods promote cohesive communities which provide a positive, socially supportive environment that promotes resiliency, mental health and wellbeing.



Highest Marginalization

In **Simcoe**, areas where there may be less family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness include:

- Areas in Collingwood, Midland, Penetanguishene
- Parts of Orillia, Barrie, Ramara
- Stayner, Coldwater, Borden, Bradford

In **York**, areas of highest marginalization are scattered throughout the following communities:

- Vaughan
- Richmond Hill
- Newmarket
- Aurora
- Woodbridge



ACTIONABLE IDEAS BY SDOH

There are many parish social ministries with a pastoral lens across the Toronto region and Catholic Charities funded organizations that are already providing services within each SDOH. Following are some examples of social actions for consideration as well as examples of work being done. Where partnerships are possible, they are encouraged in order to have greater collective impact. The list of agencies supported by Catholic Charities is found following this table.

SDOH	Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options	Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options
Low Income & Food Insecurity	<p>Volunteer within the St. Vincent de Paul program in your parish</p> <p>Within the network of food programs, determine the gaps and develop a food program for marginalized populations</p> <p>Consider being a living wage employer. Paying staff at least \$26.00/hr. (Toronto), \$26.00/hr (Peel Region), \$21.30/hr (Waterloo-Dufferin-Guelph-Wellington), \$26.00/hr (York Region), \$23.05/hr (Simcoe County), \$21.65/hr (Durham)</p> <p>Tap into local food networks, to volunteer in places that address food insecurity</p> <p>Develop a community garden and work with the local network for its distribution</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p> <p>Coordinate outreach speakers to learn about the work on local agencies</p> <p>Partner with local agencies to run parish-based wellness groups for seniors</p> <p>Coordinate a parish effort to fundraise for meal programs, clothing drives, furniture drives, coats for kids, cribs for kids, and Christmas and easter gifts</p>	<p>Support poverty reduction strategies - such as advocating for policies that address income inequality, improve social safety nets, and promote economic opportunities for all residents. For example, the Toronto Food Policy Council, Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy</p> <p>Develop a knowledge base about the work of local agencies and make referrals to meal programs, emergency shelter, mental health (211), counselling, groups, supports offered in other languages</p>

SDOH

Education & Employment

Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

Work with your local Catholic elementary school to:

- Grow community gardens and provide some produce to local food insecurity programs
- Provide a free-tutoring program for students with parishioners/volunteers providing the expertise
- Determine the digital needs of students and create ways to address them (to close the digital gap)
- Provide opportunities for youth and newcomers to gain experience at your workplace

Provide a parish-based binder/bulletin board with job opportunities to encourage parishioners to hire parishioners

As employers, consider ways to provide quality employment

Work with post-secondary schools such as St. Micheal's College to support students living in poverty

Find out what free government employment agencies are in your area and develop a connection to them so that referrals to the agency can be easier

Offer space for education programs such as: parent classes, afterschool programs, and employment clinics

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)

Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

Continue to advocate for strong, inclusive Catholic education

Work with employment agencies to improve pathways between your organization and employment services

Partner with organization like Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto to advocate against labour exploitation



SDOH

Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

Housing & Homelessness

Link with an organization that supports people experiencing homelessness, and learn ways to support their ministry and refer people to them

Consider whether you can have a tenant (such as a post-secondary student) in your home to alleviate the housing challenges

Volunteer with an organization that supports people experiencing homelessness such as the Felix Centre and Good Shepherd Ministries

Find ways to support young people that may be living alone and whose housing may be at-risk

Refer French speakers to Centre d'Accueil Heritage for supports

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)

Form connections with transitional housing services

Participate and/or coordinate educational opportunities for the community such as Symposium on Homelessness

Build a partnership to innovative solutions such as supporting wrap around care for transition housing

Increase your presence at planning tables focused on addressing homelessness and building supportive and affordable housing



SDOH

Health, Mental Health & Addiction

Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

Start or continue to promote meditation and centering prayer

Start or continue a health/walking programs in your parish to promote health & well-being

Start or continue to support Alcoholics Anonymous, Substance Abuse Anonymous programs or other related substance use support groups

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)

Volunteers visiting agency clients and /or help with activities and programming

Connect with organizations such as St. Elizabeth Health to learn how to support their work providing end of life care for vulnerable populations

Use parish spaces to offer wellness programs such as exercise classes

Promote activities organized by parishioners, for example, walks/hikes, bike rides, pickle ball

Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

Consider focusing resources to support the health, mental health, and addiction needs of people (e.g., having counsellors, social workers, parish nurses, training staff on Mental Health First Aid)



SDOH	Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options	Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options
Newcomers & Immigration	<p>Work closely with Office of Refugees Archdiocese of Toronto and other cross cultural service agencies to determine how you/parish can support their work, for example through Refugee Committee work</p> <p>Host conversation circles to increase English language proficiency</p> <p>Partner with agencies such as RCJ Refugee Centre and Becoming Neighbours to host volunteer/ internship mentoring opportunities of newcomers</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p> <p>Support for connecting individuals served by Catholic Charities funded agencies to various newcomer communities</p>	<p>Continue/develop a plan to sponsor refugees as a parish</p> <p>Develop staff skills to better serve newcomers and immigrants</p> <p>Review hiring practices to ensure inclusive hiring practices are used</p>
Community & Belonging	<p>Continue with your volunteer engagement and develop new strategies to reach and involve younger parishioners</p> <p>Find ways to engage youth and seniors toward community belonging and decreasing isolation, for example hosting seniors' and other wellness group on behalf of Catholic Charities funded agencies</p> <p>Organize potluck dinners with speakers to encourage groups (women, seniors, parents, youth) to come out and meet each other</p> <p>Work with organization such as L'Arche Day break to support inclusivity for persons with disabilities</p> <p>Consider the Truth & Reconciliation Commission and ways in which you can incorporate some recommendations in your life</p> <p>Educate your team and community about the issues of human trafficking</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p>	<p>Create policies regarding equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination</p> <p>Consider ways your organization/parish can be involved in the work of anti-human trafficking</p> <p>Develop a plan toward Truth & Reconciliation</p>

SDOH

Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

Children & Youth

Consider after school programs for children

Enhance your youth ministry programming and connect with the Office of Catholic Youth

Connect with Covenant House to find best ways to support their ministry

Develop an understanding of the issues facing young parents and ways to support them

Fundraise for programs such as Angel foundations for learning

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies such as Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (see full list below)

Offer use of space for camps, programs, and events hosted by Catholic Charities funded agencies

Promote multigeneration socialization for example "Learn to Crochet" evenings

Youth evening that connects with schools to make blankets for the homeless

Consider a plan to develop daycare programs at the parish

Consider ways to hire a coordinator of youth ministry

Consider ways to serve children and youth in your organization



SDOH	Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options	Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options
Seniors	<p>Social programs for seniors such as knitting clubs, prayer groups, brunches with young adults</p> <p>At-home visiting programs for seniors</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies such as Mary Centre, and Silent Voice (see full list below)</p> <p>Partner with local agencies to run parish-based wellness groups for seniors</p> <p>Refer French speakers to Centre d'Accueil Heritage for supports.</p> <p>1-1 or small group supports for seniors with disabilities</p> <p>Plan weekend away religious pilgrimages for seniors in your community</p>	<p>Develop a plan to build long term care homes</p> <p>Work with others toward joint advocacy to improve seniors care and services</p> <p>Consider ways to serve seniors in your organization</p>
Environment	<p>Create green space for your community such as shared garden spaces for young parent families</p> <p>Consider ways to decrease plastic use</p> <p>Develop carpool programs / Take public transit to church</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p> <p>Make commitments in your parish such as using fairtrade coffee, non-disposable dishes, less paper products, etc.</p>	<p>Develop an environmental sustainability plan to decrease your environmental foot print</p> <p>Partner with organization like Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto to advocate again climate change and promote environmental justice</p>

CATHOLIC CHARITIES FUNDED AGENCIES

Organization	Website	Phone number
Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto	https://torontoccas.org/	416-395-1500
Catholic Community Services of York Region	https://ccsy.org/	905-770-7040
Catholic Crosscultural Services	https://www.cathcrosscultural.org/	416-644-0816
Centre d'Accueil Heritage	https://www.caheritage.org/	416-365-3350
CFS Counselling & Wellness	https://cfssc.ca/	705-726-2503
CFS Durham County	https://www.cfsdurham.com/	905-725-3513 (Oshawa Office)
CFS Peel-Dufferin	https://cfspd.com/	905-450-1608 ext. 112
CFS Toronto	https://www.cfstoronto.com/	416-921-1163 (Central Toronto Office)
Covenant House	https://covenanthousetoronto.ca/	416-598-4898
Houses of Providence - Unity Health	https://unityhealth.to/clinics-services/cardinal-ambrozic-houses-of-providence-long-term-care/	416-285-3742
Journey Home Hospice – Saint Elizabeth Health Care	https://journeyhomehospice.ca/	647-348-4490
Mary Centre	https://www.marycentre.com/	416-630-5533 (Toronto/ York Region Office)
Rosalie Hall	https://www.rosaliehall.com/	416-438-6880
Rose of Sharon	https://roseofsharon.com/	905-853-5514
Society of Sharing	https://societyofsharing.org/	416-413-0380
Silent Voice	https://silentvoice.ca/	416-463-1104
St. Bernadette's Family Resource Centre	http://www.stbernadettesfrc.org/	416-654-9810
St. Michael's Homes	https://www.stmichaelshomes.org/	416-926-8267
Vita Centre	https://vitacentre.org/	905-502-7933

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of North commissioned the Centre for Organizational Effectiveness to produce environmental scan reports for each of the region of the Archdiocese of Toronto. Anchored by [Catholic Social Teachings](#), which provides the shared understanding of how faith engages with the world, these documents provide a current overview of the people the North Region.

We invite member agencies, parishes and partners to review the information through an open heart, inviting the Holy Spirit to enter into the journey of discerning how your gifts, and your resources can continue to support the people of Toronto in living life abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

As you likely already know, there are many needs that the people of the North Region experience on a daily basis. Reviewing and understanding the context of these needs can become overwhelming. Where do we begin? What do we focus on? What is our call? Our prayer is that this focused information, inclusive of what others are doing, may provide crucial information in refocusing and prioritizing your social prioritizing social services with a pastoral lens. The world is ever-changing and we are called to respond to its current social needs. Examples of what might be possible within each social determinant of health are provided in the Executive Summary.

We are aware that there is so much good that you, your parish, your organization, your region and the Archdiocese are already doing. This gives us hope and energy to forge ahead. The great work of the people of the Archdiocese of Toronto has not yet been capture in this report. In 2024, sessions will be facilitated to review the information in these reports and together add examples of the work the regions are doing.

Pope Francis' often speaks about the social determinant of health: education, employment, environment, working with those that are most marginalized, experiencing

homelessness, refugees and immigrants – his call to solidarity and action is unwavering. It is through this lens that we invite you to prayerfully review the report



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH – A COMMUNITY PROFILE

The social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These determinants are key factors influencing health outcomes and health disparities among populations. They include various social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors that can either promote or hinder individuals' health and well-being.^[iii]

The Archdiocese of Toronto is divided into 4 regions: Central, East, West, and North. For each of these areas the following Social Determinants of Health were considered:

- Low Income and Food Insecurity
- Education and Employment
- Housing and Homelessness
- Health, Mental Health, and Addiction
- Newcomers and Immigration
- Community and Belonging: Civic Engagement, Recreation, Racism, Crime & Violence
- Age: Children and Youth, and Seniors
- Environment

iii. World Health Organization, "Closing the gap"

EACH COMMUNITY PROFILE

The North Region Community Profile draws from many different sources to provide readers with an overview of what the East Region looks through the lens of the social determinants of health. The report includes a large amount of information. The goal is not to overwhelm but for readers to feel empowered. To help with this, the document is organized as follows for each social determinants of health area listed above:

1. Community characteristic data from Statistics Canada Census Profile and Public Health Ontario's reporting of the Canadian Community Health Survey.
2. Further contextual understanding based on a summary of community documents reviewed for this project. Sources include Public Health documents, Community Wellbeing resources, United Way, Community Foundations, Municipal government, Social Planning Councils, and Local Immigration Partnerships
3. Reflection questions to discern what is new information, relevant information, and call to action



It is important to note that this report is not exhaustive. It does not include all of what is occurring within each SDOH area. The information is provided to provide context, relevant statistics and examples. It is hoped that this document will be used by member agencies, diocesan ministries, parishes and volunteers to grow awareness and education as well as identify and discern ways to respond to local needs.

Additional information is provided in the Appendix. In the Appendix, there are maps that visualize and explore the geographic distribution of marginalization. Ontario Marginalization (previously Social Determinants of Health) maps are produced by Public Health Ontario using Statistics Canada Census data.

To give an example of how these maps can be used, “the TCDSB Research Department uses ON-Marg to understand the socio-demographics of both school communities and the neighbourhoods in which students are living to support and resources schools equitably. For example, using the material deprivation index, we provide additional funding to schools where the school population is characterized by a high proportion of students living with socioeconomic stress according to the neighbourhoods they live in.”[iv]

Data Limitations

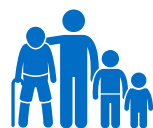
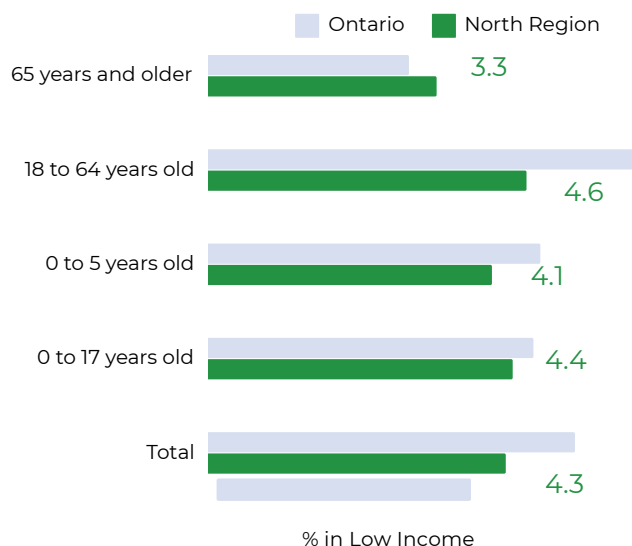
In conducting this Environmental Scan the data collected had the following data limitations. Statistic Canada data is specific to the Archdiocese boundaries. The Canadian Community Health Survey Data follows the health region boundaries which do not always match the Archdiocese boundaries. The community documents were reviewed to the lowest level of geography possible but in many cases this included areas not covered by the Archdiocese. For example, data for Simcoe and Muskoka counties are often intertwined and difficult to separate, therefore Muskoka data is included despite it not being part of the Archdiocese.

iv. NEW qtd. in Matheson, F. et. al. Ontario Marginalization Index

Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

LOW INCOME

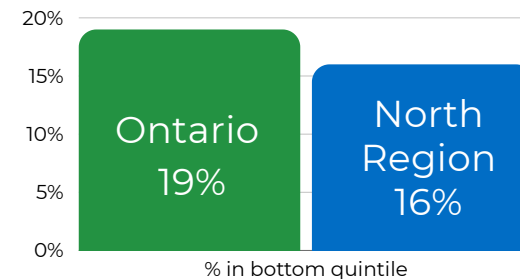
Overall, 4.3% of North Region residents live with low-income (after-tax LICO, 2020), the same as Ontario.



16% of families in lowest income group

16% of families in North Region fall in the lowest 20% income group compared to all families across Canada (2020).

% of families with income in the bottom 20% group



Within the North Region, York Region's low-income rate of 5.1% is higher than Simcoe County (2.8%) and Mulmur (2.2%).

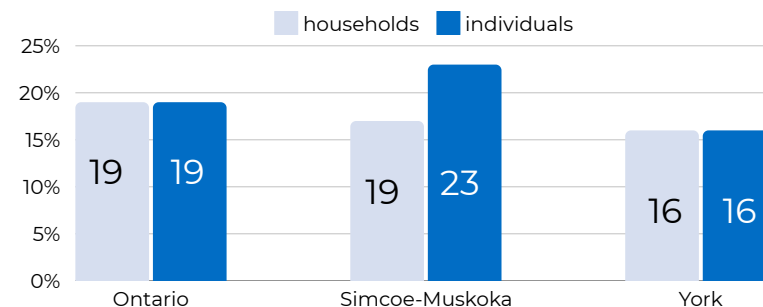
FOOD INSECURITY

17% of Simcoe-Muskoka households and 23% of individuals were food insecure in 2022

16% of York Region households and 16% of individuals were food insecure in 2022

These rates are similar to Ontario and to the year before.

% who are food insecure



The Material Resources Marginalization map at the end of this report shows the geographic distribution of factors connected to poverty.

Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

LOW INCOME

Income influences access to resources and opportunities and overall well-being. Food insecurity is a measure of not being able to afford basic needs. Those struggling to afford food are also struggling to pay for other basic living costs like rent, childcare, and medications.

Groceries in rural areas can be more expensive, with less choice for those living on low income.

In York region racialized populations and recent immigrants have been disproportionately affected by economic instability [1]



Simcoe-Muskoka’s labour market includes high rates of seasonal employment, part-time employment and a significant number of individuals who are self-employed with. **Just under 50% of those employed in Simcoe-Muskoka are employed either part-time or for part of the year which results in lower income.**[2]

1.York Region, Food insecurity in York Region: The 2023 Nutritious Food Basket
2.Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs"
3. Ontario Living Wage Network. "Rates"
4. Benzeval & Whitehead, "Who lives in low income in Simcoe Muskoka?"

\$26.00

York Region Living Wage

The 2024 living wage for the Greater Toronto Area is \$26.00 per hour this include York Region

\$23.05

Simcoe County Living Wage

The 2024 living wage for Simcoe County is \$22.75 per hour and in Muskoka it is \$23.05 per hour

The living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic expenses and participate in the community.[3]

Of total Simcoe-Muskoka income, nearly one-quarter (21%) goes to those who make up the richest 10% of the population, while just 3% goes to the population who make up the poorest 10%.

21% of **TOTAL income** goes to the richest 10%

Self-rated health status increases with higher levels of income. Nearly **three-quarters (72%)** of the Simcoe-Muskoka population ages 12 years and over **in the highest income group rated their health as excellent or very good** compared to **only about half (53%) of the population in the lowest income group.**[4]

FOOD INSECURITY

5,972 Good Food Boxes packaged and shared in Simcoe-Muskoka

9,809 Freshly prepared meals provided to community members

7,167 Breakfasts served

538 Staff-led hours in our collective gardens^[5]

York Region Food Network (YRFN) emphasizes the impact of food insecurity on community health and well-being. They note that food insecurity not only affects physical health but also mental health and social cohesion^[6]



The 2023 Nutritious Food Basket Report by York Region indicates that food insecurity remains a persistent challenge, exacerbated by rising costs and economic pressures^[7]

In 2023, the Nutritious Food Basket survey indicated that it costs...

\$1,225.74 monthly for a family of four

\$445.95 a single-person household to purchase basic nutritious groceries.^[8]

LOW INCOME

York

In York Region, low-income statistics and related programs highlight significant challenges and efforts to support vulnerable populations. Several programs and initiatives are in place to assist low-income families in York Region:

- **Social Housing and Rent Assistance:** York Region offers various housing programs, including subsidized housing and rent-geared-to-income options, to help make housing more affordable for low-income residents.^[9]
- **Employment and Financial Assistance:** The Ontario Works program provides financial assistance and employment support to those in need. It helps residents cover essential living expenses while they seek employment opportunities.^[10]

5. York Region food NetworkYork Region food Network

6. York Region, Food insecurity in York Region: The 2023 Nutritious Food Basket

7. Community Foundation of Canada, 2023National Vital Signs Report

8. Staff, M., "One in five households in Simcoe Muskoka..."

9. York Region, (2022, July 28). Statistics and data

10. York Region, (2022, July 28). Statistics and data

- **Salvation Army York Region:** Salvation Army York Region provides emergency assistance, including food banks, clothing, and financial support for utilities and rent. They also offer various community programs to support low-income families.
- **Women's Centre of York Region (WCYR):** Women's Centre of York Region offers programs for women, including financial literacy workshops, entrepreneurship training, and personal development courses. These programs empower women to achieve financial independence and personal growth.
- **United Way Greater Toronto (serving York Region):** United Way Greater Toronto funds and supports a variety of programs aimed at reducing poverty, supporting mental health, and increasing access to housing and employment services.

These efforts demonstrate a comprehensive approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by low-income residents in York Region but despite the various programs available to support low-income residents in York Region, there are still significant gaps in services. These gaps highlight areas where additional support and resources are needed to effectively address the challenges faced by low-income individuals and families:

- Many low-income individuals rely on emergency services for dental care due to the lack of affordable regular dental services. Although some programs exist, there are still gaps in affordable health and dental care for low-income residents, especially for those who do not qualify for provincial assistance programs like Ontario Works or ODSP.^[11] This may change as the federal program is implemented.

- Low-income households often lack access to necessary technology and internet services, which are crucial for education, job searching, and accessing online services. This digital divide exacerbates socio-economic disparities. Studies indicate that access to technology is a significant barrier for low-income families, impacting their ability to engage in remote learning and other online activities.^[12]
- Public transportation options are limited, especially in more rural areas of York Region. This lack of reliable and affordable transportation makes it difficult for low-income residents to access jobs, healthcare, and other essential services. The York Region Transportation Master Plan highlights the need for improved transit services to better serve underserved communities.^[13]
- A report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives lists York Region as having some of the highest childcare fees in Canada, making it difficult for low-income families to afford quality childcare. This impacts parents' ability to work or pursue education, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty.^[14]

Simcoe Muskoka

Simcoe Muskoka is committed to advancing income stability for residents by addressing urgent needs while striving towards more sustainable solutions that focus on social inclusion and life stabilization supports.^[15]

In Simcoe Muskoka, a significant portion of the population faces economic challenges. According to the United Way Simcoe Muskoka, over 51,000 people in the region live in poverty, highlighting the extent of economic hardship in the area.^[16] The Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit states that income is a critical determinant of health, influencing access to healthcare, education, housing, and nutritious food. Individuals with lower incomes experience higher rates of chronic diseases and have a lower life expectancy.^[17]

10. Community Foundation of Canada, 2023National Vital Signs Report

11. Community Foundation of Canada, 2023National Vital Signs Report

12. York Region, Transportation Master Plan

13-14. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Study reveals highest and lowest child care fees in Canadian cities.

15. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan"

16. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, homepage

17. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

Efforts to address these issues include programs and initiatives led by organizations like the United Way Simcoe Muskoka, which focus on poverty reduction and social inclusion. These initiatives aim to improve food security, mental health, housing, and income stability through collaborative projects involving various sectors.^[18]

Overall, the key challenges for low-income individuals in Simcoe Muskoka include income stability, access to affordable housing, and sufficient food security. Addressing these gaps requires ongoing community collaboration and targeted interventions.

Several non-profit organizations in Simcoe Muskoka offer programs aimed at addressing the needs of low-income residents. These programs focus on various aspects such as education, employment, health, and social services. Here are some key non-profit programs:

- **United Way Simcoe Muskoka:** United Way Simcoe Muskoka funds and supports various community initiatives that address poverty, food security, mental health, and housing stability. They also run the Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy, which aims to reduce poverty through collaborative community efforts.
- **Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit:** Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit offers programs that address the Social Determinants of Health, including initiatives to improve access to healthcare, support healthy child development, and promote mental health. They provide resources and support for low-income families to ensure they receive necessary health services.
- **Empower Simcoe:** Empower Simcoe provides services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Programs include community participation supports, employment services, and family support services. They aim to empower individuals to live fulfilling lives and achieve greater independence.

These non-profit organizations play a vital role in supporting low-income residents of Simcoe Muskoka by providing essential services and resources that help improve their quality of life and economic stability. Addressing these gaps is crucial for ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to improve their economic situations and overall quality of life.

- **Affordable Housing:** Despite various housing programs, there is still a significant shortage of affordable housing options. Many low-income families face long wait times for subsidized housing and struggle to find affordable rental units.^[19]
- **Mental Health Services:** Access to mental health services is limited, particularly for low-income individuals who may not have comprehensive health insurance. Long wait times and a shortage of affordable mental health professionals exacerbate this issue.^[20]
- **Transportation:** According to the Simcoe County Transportation Master Plan public transportation options are limited, especially in rural areas. This lack of reliable and affordable transportation makes it difficult for low-income residents to access jobs, healthcare, and other essential services.^[21]
- **Health and Dental Care:** Many low-income individuals lack access to affordable health and dental care. Services provided through provincial programs often do not cover all necessary treatments, leaving gaps in care.^[22]
- **Digital Divide:** Access to technology and the internet is crucial for education, job searching, and accessing services. Low-income families often lack the resources to obtain necessary technology and reliable internet connections, exacerbating social and economic disparities.^[23]

18. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, homepage

19. Housing – Simcoe County

20. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

21. Transportation Master Plan – Simcoe County

22. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

23. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, homepage



FOOD INSECURITIES

York

Food insecurity in York Region is a pressing issue affecting approximately 25,000 households, with only a quarter of those utilizing emergency food services. Rising food costs, economic pressures, and insufficient access to food resources exacerbate the problem. Organizations like the York Region Food Network (YRFN) are working to address this through community programs such as the Good Food Box, Good Food Markets, and educational initiatives. Despite these efforts, significant gaps remain, including limited utilization of available services and broader economic barriers that hinder access to nutritious food.

The following are examples of non-profit work being done to address food insecurity in York region:

- **Inn From The Cold:** Inn From The Cold provides emergency shelter, meals, and supportive services for people experiencing homelessness. They also offer outreach programs to help people transition from homelessness to stable housing.
- **York Region Food Network (YRFN):** York Region Food Network offers programs to enhance food security, including community gardens, the Good Food Box program, and community kitchens. These initiatives provide affordable, nutritious food and promote food literacy.
- **Advocacy and Education:** YRFN advocates for systemic changes to address food insecurity and educates the community about sustainable food practices. They conduct food skill classes to help individuals learn new cooking techniques and better utilize available food resources.^[24]

24. York Region Food Network

25. York Region, "Statistics and data"

Despite various efforts to mitigate food insecurity in York Region, significant service gaps persist, particularly in areas such as limited utilization of emergency food services, rising economic barriers, and the need for broader systemic support beyond immediate food aid.[25]

Addressing these gaps requires coordinated efforts between local government, non-profits, and community stakeholders to ensure that all residents of York Region have access to sufficient and nutritious food.

Simcoe Muskoka

Food insecurity is a significant issue in Simcoe Muskoka, affecting many low-income households who struggle to afford nutritious food consistently.

Several factors contribute to food insecurity in the region, including high living costs, low wages, and limited access to food resources in rural areas. Here are some key aspects and programs addressing food insecurity in Simcoe Muskoka:

- **High Cost of Living:** The cost of living in Simcoe Muskoka, including housing and utilities, leaves little room for food expenses. Many families must choose between paying rent and buying groceries.[26]
- **Low Wages and Employment Insecurity:** Many residents work in low-paying jobs or face employment insecurity, making it difficult to consistently afford healthy food.[27]
- **Limited Access in Rural Areas:** Rural parts of Simcoe Muskoka often have limited access to grocery stores and fresh food markets, exacerbating food insecurity.[28]

- **Simcoe County Food Security Framework:** This initiative focuses on improving food security through community gardens, food banks, meal programs, and partnerships with local farmers to increase access to fresh produce.[29]
- **Good Food Box Program:** Good Food Box program offers fresh fruits and vegetables at a reduced cost. Boxes are available monthly and can be ordered through various community hubs across Simcoe Muskoka.
- **Food Banks and Community Kitchens:** **Multiple food banks and community kitchens across Simcoe** Muskoka provide emergency food relief and opportunities for residents to learn cooking skills and nutrition education. For example, the Barrie foodbank.

Some foodbanks operate seasonally, often from September to April, while others are open regularly. Gaining access to healthy and affordable food can be a challenge for many rural residents. Access to food may be limited by financial constraints or other factors, such as transportation challenges. Rural shoppers may have to rely on more expensive and less nutritious food, such as those found at convenience stores or gas stations.

The rising cost of food also impacts food banks and their ability to keep shelves stocked with adequate food. This coupled with a drop in annual donations results in many operational challenges for food banks. In addition, many food banks across Simcoe Muskoka have seen an increase, in the number of households relying on their services. According to the Hunger Counts 2023 Report by Food Banks Canada, food bank visits across Canada have increased coinciding with the highest rates of general inflation in 40 years and the cost of essentials such as food, shelter, and transportation.[30] As the purchasing power of households continues to drop, more households, including those in higher income brackets, are experiencing food insecurity.[31]

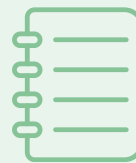
26. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

27. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, homepage

28-29. "food security" – Simcoe County.

30. Food Banks Canada, "Hunger Count 2023"

31. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs"



Reflections

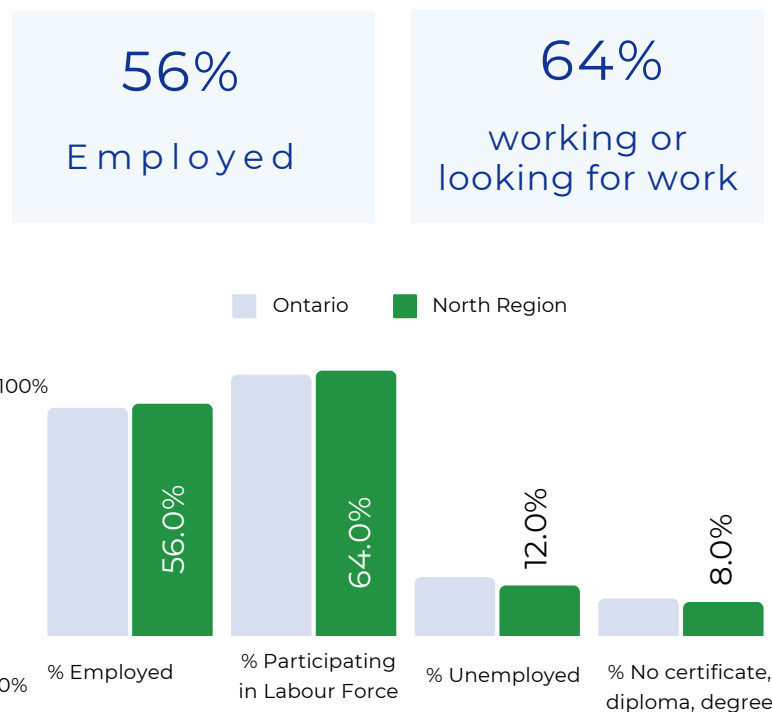
What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

In 2021, education and labour force statistics for the North Region were similar to Ontario's. Just over half (56%) of the population age 15 and older was employed, two-thirds (64%) were working or looking for work, and 12% of those in the labour force were unemployed. Just over 8% of the population age 25 to 64 has not obtained a high school certificate, diploma or degree.



32. Committee of the Whole Planning and Economic Development, "Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner."
 33. Committee of the Whole Planning and Economic Development, "Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner."
 134. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan", 29

Education and employment are factors contributing to two dimensions of marginalization: Age and Labour Force and Material Resources. Maps showing how the patterns of these dimensions of marginalization across the city are provided at the end of this report.

Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

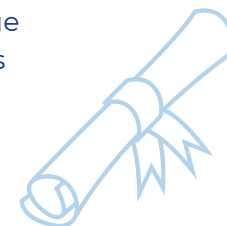
EDUCATION



73% of York Region's working age population (aged 25-64) have a postsecondary education, the second highest in the GTHA next to Halton Region (78%)^[32]

46.6% of York Region residents have **completed a university degree** (bachelor or higher); and **26.5%** of residents have a **completed a college/trades/university diploma** ^[33]

In Simcoe Muskoka - higher percentage of people who identified themselves as being Aboriginal reported having no certificate, diploma or degree (20%) as compared to the overall Simcoe Muskoka population (12%)^[34]



In Simcoe-Muskoka approximately 87% of individuals aged 25 to 64 have completed at least a high school education. However, the rate of post-secondary education completion is lower. About 56% of this demographic hold a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. [35]



The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB) operates **41 elementary schools** and 9 secondary schools in Simcoe-Muskoka.[36]



The York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) serves over **54,000 students** across **85 elementary schools** and **16 secondary schools** in York Region.[37]

EMPLOYMENT

43%

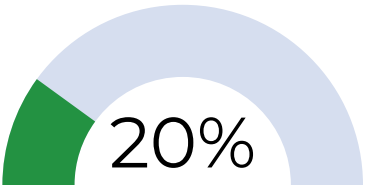
of working adults in York region reported being in precarious employment[38]



Business closures from COVID-19 led to unusually high unemployment rates (reaching a peak of 13.7%)[39]

There is a dependence on government assistance
- employment opportunities that offer comparable or higher income and stability are lacking in York Region.[40]

Simcoe Muskoka's labour market includes high rates of seasonal employment. Simcoe Muskoka's largest occupations are more likely to have non-standard employment arrangements and lack access to benefits, paid leave and a suitable work environment.[41]



20% of the Greater Toronto Area's STEM and business graduates reside in York Region, indicating a strong talent pool for high-skill jobs [42]

35. Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit. Health Stats home.
36. Wikipedia contributors. (2021, November 21). Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.
37. York Catholic District School Board
38. York Region, "Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region", 25
39. York Region, "Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region", 30
40. York Region, "Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region", 25
41. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs", 4
42. York Region, "York Region employment grew..."

EDUCATION

York

York Region's education system, managed by the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) and the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB), serves a diverse student population with a focus on inclusivity and excellence. Both school boards emphasize mental health support, equity, and inclusive education, with specialized programs such as the Centre for Black Student Excellence and initiatives for Indigenous education

The York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) is dedicated to providing a comprehensive education that includes religious education, alternative education, continuing education, co-operative education, student assessment, and equity in the curriculum.

YCDSB supports a variety of programs and services aimed at enhancing student learning and well-being, such as French Immersion, International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and specialized programs like the High Performer Athlete (HPA) program.



Additionally, the board offers extensive support services including mental health and well-being initiatives, special education, and newcomer reception services.^[43]

The York Catholic District School Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) was created with the support of our community. It will guide the Board from 2023-2028.^[44] The plan describes the following strategic commitments:

- **Catholic Faith:** Nurture faith formation and relationships with Christ
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Build and sustain an equitable, inclusive and accessible learning and working environment
- **Student Achievement:** Enrich and improve student learning so that excellence in achievement and engagement is possible for all
- **Well-Being:** Promote and nurture the social-emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of all members of the YCDSB

York Region offers several options for post-secondary education, including partnerships with colleges and universities, specialized training programs, and adult education opportunities. Key institutions include Seneca College and York University, which provide a range of degree programs, diplomas, and certificates.

Seneca College operates several campuses in the region, offering programs in business, technology, health sciences, and more. The college also provides continuing education courses and pathways for mature students and those seeking career changes.

York University, while primarily located in Toronto, extends its services to York Region through YSpace in Markham, which supports entrepreneurs and offers community-focused educational events. The university provides undergraduate, graduate, and professional development programs in a wide array of disciplines.

^[45]

43. York Region, "Statistics and data"

44. York Catholic District School Board

45. York Catholic District School Board, "The York Catholic District School Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan"

York Region Educational Services (YRES) is a non-profit organization established in York Region, Canada. YRES specializes in providing online and in-person educational services for learners of all ages, including K-12, adults, and seniors. YRES offers language-based programming in English, French, STEAM and career development. By partnering with organizations and school boards, YRES accumulates resources, hosts guest speakers, and supports learners in York region and beyond.[46]

Simcoe Muskoka

The North Simcoe's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2021-2025 outlines the county's commitment to ensuring everyone in community has a clear pathway to education. This will be done by:

- Increasing the number of skilled trade people that train and remain in the community
- Aligning training opportunities
- Breaking down barriers to education
- Increasing education outreach and engagement strategies with youth, women, those with disabilities, and Indigenous communities[47]

Education in Simcoe Muskoka is supported by several school boards, each providing a range of programs and services tailored to student needs. The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) and the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB) are the primary education providers in this region.

The SCDSB operates a variety of programs aimed at enhancing student achievement and well-being. These include special education services, mental health supports, and diverse learning opportunities such as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) and Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM). The board emphasizes environmental initiatives and equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts, reflecting its commitment to creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students.[48]

The SMCDSB offers programs that blend academic learning with community service and faith-based education. Notably, they have introduced a Personal Support Worker (PSW) program that allows students to graduate with both a high school diploma and PSW certification, addressing local workforce needs and providing students with immediate employment opportunities. This program includes practical components like CPR certification and elder abuse training, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for their roles in the community.[49]

SMCDSB oversees a comprehensive educational network that includes both elementary and secondary schools across the Simcoe and Muskoka regions. The board operates 41 elementary schools and 9 secondary schools, offering a wide range of programs to support student success, including special education, ESL/ELD programs, and initiatives for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education.[50]

The SMCDSB is committed to creating an inclusive environment that meets diverse student needs, including resources for parents and students who are new to Canada, and a focus on Truth and Reconciliation for Indigenous communities.[51]

Both school boards provide extensive adult and continuing education programs, which include ESL classes, night school, and summer learning programs. These offerings cater to a wide demographic, including recent immigrants and adults seeking to upgrade their skills or complete their high school education.[52]

Higher education opportunities in Simcoe Muskoka are robust, with institutions offering diverse programs to meet the needs of the community. Notably, Georgian College, which has campuses in Barrie, Orillia, and Owen Sound, provides a wide range of certificate, diploma, and degree programs across various fields such as health, technology, business, and the arts.

46. YRES, "About - York Region Educational Services"

47. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan", 7

48. Simcoe County District School Board

49. Education News Canada, "Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board - Graduating Students can be Qualified PSWs"

50. Wikipedia contributors. (2021, November 21). Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.

51. Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

52. Continuing Community Education

Georgian College is also known for its partnerships with local industries, facilitating co-op and internship opportunities that help students gain practical experience and enhance their employability. Additionally, the region is home to Lakehead University's Orillia campus, which offers undergraduate and graduate programs in disciplines like environmental sustainability, education, and social work. This campus emphasizes a personalized learning environment with smaller class sizes and a focus on interdisciplinary studies.

The region is working to address gaps in educational attainment, particularly among adults and underrepresented groups. Initiatives include expanding access to adult education and vocational training programs, such as those offered by the SMCDSB. These efforts aim to improve employment opportunities and support the local economy by providing residents with the skills needed for in-demand jobs.^[53]

EMPLOYMENT

York

York Region has shown significant economic growth, with employment reaching over 615,760 jobs in 2022. This represents a 4.7% increase from the previous year, reflecting the region's dynamic economic environment and robust job market.^[54] The region maintains a competitive unemployment rate, reflecting its economic vitality and the diversity of job opportunities across various sectors. The local labor force is estimated at 700,000 people. York Region's GDP stands at \$71.8 billion as of 2023, underscoring its significant contribution to the overall economy of the Greater Toronto Area.^[55]

This economic landscape makes York Region a thriving area for both businesses and workers, characterized by steady growth and a rich array of job opportunities across diverse industries. 64% of York Region's population is in the labour force. The top five industries for employment were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (12% labour force participation), Retail Trade (11%), Healthcare and Social Assistance (9%), Finance and Insurance (8%), and Manufacturing (8%).^[56]

The percentage of York Region residents close to retirement age (55 to 64) is 14.2% in 2021, compared to just 4.4% in 2001. York Region's aging population is a factor that may lower the labour force replacement ratio and participation rate of its resident labour force in the years to come. York Region will be competing with other municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and Ontario for migrants to maintain labour force growth, in alignment with federal immigration targets, and it is important that the Region remains an attractive destination for residents, workers, and businesses.^[57]

In York Region, several programs and initiatives support employment for residents, focusing on various needs and barriers faced by job seekers.

- **360°kids:** 360°kids runs several employment programs specifically targeting youth. Programs like Base 4 Success (B4S) and Specialized Training for Employment Program (STEP) help young people develop the skills needed to enter the labor market. These programs address various barriers, including discrimination, mental health challenges, and risks of homelessness.
- **Job Skills:** Job Skills offers employment services, including job search assistance, resume workshops, interview preparation, and training programs. They help individuals enhance their skills and find meaningful employment.

53. Education News Canada, "Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board - Graduating Students can be Qualified PSWs"

54. York Region, "York Region employment grew..."

55. York Link, Key economic indicators for Toronto Area's York Region.

56. Committee of the Whole Planning and Economic Development, "Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner."

57. Committee of the Whole Planning and Economic Development, "Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner."



- **Yorkworks Employment Services:** Yorkworks provides a wide range of employment resources, including job search support, training programs, and connections to potential employers. Yorkworks aims to build a skilled workforce by offering tailored support to both job seekers and employers.
- **CMHA York Region & South Simcoe:** The Canadian Mental Health Association provides an employment program for individuals aged 16 and over who are dealing with mental health challenges. This program offers one-on-one support, job search assistance, and skills development to help clients overcome barriers to employment.

These programs collectively aim to reduce unemployment and underemployment in York Region by addressing specific barriers and providing tailored support to individuals seeking employment.

Despite the availability of numerous employment support programs in York Region, there are notable gaps that need addressing to ensure comprehensive support for all job seekers.

- **Support for Technological Skills Development:** While there are general employment programs available, there is a significant gap in targeted support for developing advanced technological skills. With the rapid evolution of technology and the increasing demand for tech-savvy employees, there is a need for specialized training programs that focus on digital literacy, coding, and other high-tech skills.
- **Comprehensive Mental Health and Employment Integration:** Many job seekers face mental health challenges that significantly impact their ability to secure and maintain employment. There is a need for ongoing mental health support alongside job training and placement services to ensure that these individuals receive the holistic support necessary for long-term employment success.^[58]
- **Support for Mid-Career Transitions:** Many existing programs focus on youth or entry-level job seekers. There is a gap in services tailored to individuals who are mid-career and looking to transition into new fields or roles due to industry changes or personal circumstances. These individuals often require different types of support, such as career counseling specific to mid-career changes, advanced skills training, and networking opportunities that align with their level of experience and career goals.^[59]

Addressing these gaps could enhance the effectiveness of employment support programs in York Region, ensuring that all job seekers, regardless of their specific circumstances or career stages, receive the comprehensive support they need to succeed in the labor market.

58. CMHA York Region & South Simcoe Employment Program (16+)
59. Employment Ontario York region

Simcoe Muskoka

Simcoe Muskoka's employment landscape is characterized by a mix of industries with varying demands. The region sees a relatively high rate of unemployment in some areas, with challenges in finding stable and well-paying jobs. Local labor market plans emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address these disparities and support workforce development.^[60]

The Simcoe Muskoka region faces a variety of employment challenges, particularly related to precarious employment and its impact on the workforce. As of recent reports, the region's labor market has shown signs of significant shifts and challenges. Those in precarious jobs often earn significantly less than their full-time counterparts, sometimes up to 29% less for the same work. This wage disparity can lead to financial instability, increased stress, and limited access to benefits like healthcare and pensions.^[61]

The *North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (2021)* states that the region is committed to putting a plan in place to improve equity, access, and quality of services that support employability and employment outcomes for residents' Job Creation. Further it is committed to being a preferred destination for new business development as we continue to celebrate what we do best, while being open to new possibilities, new industries, and new partners.^[62] In this report community and stakeholder perspectives were collected and revealed that in regards to employment and the workforce the community were concerned about the retirement of baby-boomers and gap of experienced workers, the perceptions of skilled trades and the need to change as does how and who trades are marketed to in order to make the pathway to skilled trades easier, and lastly they identified that increased digitization requires a wider range of skills.^[63]

Several programs and initiatives aim to support employment and address these challenges in Simcoe Muskoka:

- **Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board:** This organization produces annual labor market planning reports that provide critical insights into employment trends, occupation demands, and workforce demographics in the region. These reports are designed to inform and guide local stakeholders, including businesses, educational institutions, and policy makers, to address labor market challenges effectively.^[64]
- **Poverty and Social Inclusion Projects:** United Way Simcoe Muskoka spearheads multiple collaborative projects aimed at reducing poverty and enhancing social inclusion. These projects involve partnerships with over 30 organizations from various sectors to tackle issues such as food security, mental health, housing, and income stability.^[65]
- **Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP):** LEAP provides financial assistance to low-income households to help manage utility costs, thereby reducing the financial burden on individuals and families facing employment instability.
- **Georgian College:** As a major post-secondary institution in the region, Georgian College offers a variety of programs that support skills development and career readiness. These include diploma and degree programs, as well as specialized training in fields such as healthcare, technology, and business.
- **Simcoe Muskoka Literacy Network:** Simcoe Muskoka Literacy Network offers adult education and literacy programs aimed at improving essential skills. Programs include literacy and essential skills upgrading, soft skills training, and preparatory courses for further education or employment. These services are crucial for adults looking to enhance their employability and secure better job opportunities.

60-61. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan", 25-29

62. Simcoe Muskoka Skillforce, Labour Market Information

63. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, homepage

64. Bruce. (2024, February 27). Labour Market Information

65. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, homepage

- **Employment Ontario York Region:** Although focused on York Region, this program also serves residents in neighboring areas, including Simcoe Muskoka. It offers comprehensive employment services such as job search assistance, resume writing workshops, interview preparation, and connections to training programs. These services help job seekers improve their employability and find stable employment.[66]
- **Dress for Success Orillia and Barrie:** Dress for Success Orillia and Barrie helps low-income women by providing professional attire, career services, and development tools. Their goal is to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing support and resources to help them secure employment.



66. Employment Ontario York region



Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

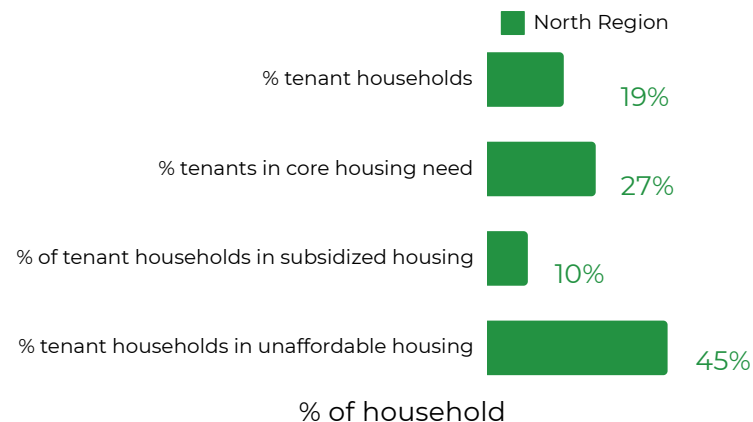
Compared to Ontario, fewer households rent (19%) and more renter households are in core housing need (27%). Households with core housing need live in an unsuitable (overcrowded), inadequate (in need of major repair) or unaffordable dwelling and cannot afford alternative housing in their community.

Within the Region:

- Simcoe has more renters (22%).
- York Region has more tenant households in core housing need (28%).
- York Region has more tenant households in housing that is unaffordable (47%).

In 2016, about 32% of bedrooms in the North Region were empty. This equals almost 600,000 with 44% of these being in Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill. [67]

Housing tenure and household mobility are two SDOH factors contributing to the Households and Dwellings dimension of marginalization. This dimension relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness.



Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

HOUSING

82% of households in York Region were occupied by owners, the highest rate of homeownership in the GTHA. In comparison
68% of the total households in Ontario and
65% in Canada were owner occupied [68]

67. Census Mapper, Empty Bedrooms (Canada Census 2021), censusmapper.ca/maps/3516#8/44.657/-77.390

68. Committee of the Whole Planning and Economic Development, "Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner."



In 2021, only 18% of total households in York Region were occupied by renters (this includes primary and secondary rental units). This is the lowest proportion of renter households in the GTHA [69]

32% of all households in York Region spent more than 30% of their income on housing in 2021[70]

49% of all households in Simcoe Muskoka spent more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities and 21% spent more than 50% of their income.



The 2023 Second Home Study in Simcoe Muskoka highlighted that 96.7% of second homes are located on waterfront properties, reflecting the area's appeal for seasonal and recreational use. The survey also indicated that a considerable portion of these homeowners are planning to convert their second homes into permanent residences in the future.[71]

HOMELESSNESS

Average length of time that people in Simcoe Muskoka experienced homelessness is 282.74 days or 8.14 months[72]

600

Households waiting for Subsidized Housing

In 2022 there were more than 600 households on the waitlist for various forms of supportive Housing in Simcoe Muskoka [73]

389

INDIVIDUALS
EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS IN
YORK REGION

In York Region, 14% are youth, ages 16-24 [74]



In Simcoe-Muskoka in 2021 **53% self-identified as chronically homeless**, meaning being homeless for longer than six months in the past year, compared to 45% in 2018 and 33% in 2016.[75]

69. Committee of the Whole Planning and Economic Development, "Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner."73.

70. York Region, "Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region 2022-2026".

71. Municipality of Muskoka, "Muskoka's 2023 Second Home Study"

72. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs."

73. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs."

74. York Region | The Homeless Hub

75. York Region and United Way, "I Count - York region's homeless count"

Indigenous peoples continue to be overrepresented among individuals experiencing homelessness in York Region. In 2021, 12% self-identified having Indigenous identity or ancestry. By comparison, less than 1% of the overall York Region population report Aboriginal identity [76]



York Region has seen an increase in the number of households accessing homelessness prevention and housing stability services to **1,979 individuals in 2022 compared to 1,852 in 2021** [77]

9% youth aged 16 to 24 homeless in Simcoe

In Simcoe County, in the first 3 months of 2024, youth aged 16 to 24 made up 9% of the total homeless population with a total of 89 youth using shelter services at least once. This is an increase from 79 in 2023 [78]

HOUSING

Ontario Strategy

The United Way 2024 report, *Bringing Affordable Housing Home: An Action Plan* for housing stability in Ontario, makes the following recommendations for improving housing across Ontario:

1. **Land & Assets:** Federal, provincial, and municipal governments make surplus lands and assets available to non-profit and co-operative housing providers to grow deeply affordable and supportive housing options across Ontario.
2. **Investments:** Federal, provincial, and municipal governments increase investment in and improve greater access to financing for the development of affordable and deeply affordable homes across Ontario.
3. **Incentives:** The provincial government, in partnership with municipal governments, provides development incentives that prioritize non-profit housing organizations and establishes flexible programs that maximize the community housing sector's capacity to compete in the housing market effectively.
4. **Preservation:** The provincial government, in partnership with federal and municipal governments, provides consistent and predictable long-term funding to preserve existing deeply affordable housing and supportive housing options offered by the community housing sector.
5. **Supports & Protection:** All levels of government provide housing stabilization and eviction prevention supports and strengthen tenant protections to help renters access and maintain affordable and secure homes.
6. **Indigenous Housing:** The federal and provincial governments address and prioritize persistent housing and homelessness challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples through a dedicated strategy, programs and supports developed and implemented in partnership with Indigenous leaders, diverse Indigenous communities, housing providers, and all levels of government.
7. **Collaboration & Partnerships:** The federal and provincial governments coordinate housing strategies, plans and programs with municipal governments while promoting cross-sector collaboration and resource sharing.

76. York Region and United Way, "I Count - York region's homeless count"

77. Passage House Town of East Gwillimbury, "Housing Solution A place for everyone 2022 Progress Report."

78. County of Simcoe Data Portal. Shelter System Flow. Comparison. gisportal.simcoe.ca/arcgis/apps/sites/#/county-of-simcoe-data-portal



York

Consultations with community participants of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region 2022-2026 identified factors impacting housing affordability: mortgage rates, energy costs, household incomes, job stability, and affordable housing options. The report details how housing system leave many residents in precarious housing situations (e.g., living in inadequate or unaffordable units), cost of rents is out of reach for many people, particularly those who rely on government supports, finding affordable housing is difficult, and waitlists for community housing are long.

Consultations with community participants of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region 2022-2026 identified factors impacting housing affordability: mortgage rates, energy costs, household incomes, job stability, and affordable housing options.

York Region has a diverse housing landscape, characterized by both challenges and initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of its residents. As of recent data, York Region's average house price was approximately \$1.1 million, reflecting the high cost of living in this area.^[79] This high cost makes housing affordability a significant concern for many residents.

To tackle housing challenges, York Region offers several programs and initiatives:

- **Subsidized Housing:** Programs provide financial assistance to low-income families to help them afford rent. Applications for subsidized housing can be submitted through York Region's housing services.
- **Rent and Utility Assistance:** Financial aid is available to help residents struggling to pay rent and utility bills, ensuring they can maintain stable housing^[80]
- **Emergency and Transitional Housing:** For individuals facing immediate homelessness, York Region offers emergency shelters and transitional housing options to provide temporary relief and support.

Despite these initiatives, gaps still exist:

- **Limited Affordable Housing:** The demand for affordable housing far exceeds the supply, leading to long wait times for subsidized housing.

79-80. York Region, "Statistics and data"

- **Supportive Housing Needs:** There is a shortage of supportive housing for individuals with special needs, including mental health and addiction services.
- **High Housing Costs:** The general high cost of housing in York Region continues to be a barrier for many residents, particularly those with low and moderate incomes, making it difficult to secure and maintain affordable housing.[81]

These gaps highlight the ongoing need for enhanced and expanded housing solutions to better support the diverse population of York Region.

York Region offers several housing programs aimed at assisting residents with their housing needs, particularly those facing financial challenges. Here are some key programs:

- York Region Rent Assistance Program provides financial assistance to help low-income families and individuals afford their rent. Eligible applicants can receive monthly rent subsidies to reduce their housing costs.
- Transitional Housing offers temporary housing with support services to help individuals move towards permanent housing. Transitional housing provides a stable environment while residents work on achieving long-term housing stability.
- Home Ownership Program assists low to moderate-income residents in purchasing their first home. It offers down payment assistance loans, which are interest-free and repayable upon the sale of the property.
- Housing Stability Program (HSP) provides financial aid for rent and utility arrears to prevent eviction and maintain housing stability. This assistance is available to eligible low-income households facing temporary financial crises.

These programs collectively aim to provide comprehensive support to York Region residents, addressing various aspects of housing needs from emergency assistance to long-term stability.

Simcoe Muskoka

The Simcoe Muskoka Community Profile highlights that housing affordability remains a critical issue, with many residents struggling to find affordable rental options. The demand for subsidized housing is high, leading to long waiting periods of up to 4 to 10 years for rent-geared-to-income units.[82]

In Simcoe Muskoka, the real estate market has seen substantial fluctuations. As of May 2023, the median sale price for residential properties was \$772,000, reflecting a 22.6% increase from the previous month. The median sale price for waterfront properties was \$1,300,000, which is a 2.5% increase compared to May 2022. Despite these price increases, the total dollar volume of sales has decreased by 35% from January to May 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.[83] The overall housing market in the Lakelands region, which includes parts of Simcoe and Muskoka, has shown an increase in listings and a slight year-over-year increase in residential sales. However, there has been a notable median price decline for non-waterfront properties, while waterfront properties have seen price corrections due to high prices deterring potential buyers.[84]



81. York Region, "Statistics and data"

82. Muskoka District, "Social housing"

83. Stephanie, "Muskoka Real Estate market update May 2023"

84. Wex, "Muskoka seeing increased listings and a significant number of price corrections"

Simcoe Muskoka is committed to addressing the need for housing that is affordable and attainable and to support people so that they remain housed - some of the ways this will be done:

- Increasing the capacity to best utilize available tools and support the development of affordable/ attainable housing
- Increasing information sharing opportunities
- Aligning work with current federal, provincial, and local homelessness support access systems[85]

In response to community participants who identified that “Everyone needs a place to call home” and “Housing stability is key”[86] the county highlighted that Housing First required three kinds of service supports:

- Housing with support to help clients find housing, move in, and maintain their housing
- Clinical supports that provide or facilitate access to health and social care to clients
- Complementary supports such as assistance with finding employment, volunteer work or accessing training[87]

In Simcoe Muskoka, there are several housing programs designed to support individuals and families facing housing challenges:

- The Simcoe County Housing Services provides a range of affordable housing options, including social housing, rent supplements, and affordable rental housing programs. They also manage emergency shelters and support services for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- The Social and Community Investment Fund (SCIF) is another initiative that funds community-based programs addressing poverty and housing needs.[88]

- The District Municipality of Muskoka offers affordable rental units set at 20% below market rates. These units are available in various locations such as Bracebridge and Gravenhurst and are income-tested for eligibility. Additionally, the municipality provides programs for affordable homeownership and home repair funding to assist low-income residents in maintaining stable housing.

Despite these programs, gaps remain, particularly in the availability of affordable housing for low-income families and individuals with specific needs, such as seniors and those with disabilities. The demand for affordable housing often exceeds supply, leading to long waitlists. Additionally, there is a need for more comprehensive support services that go beyond housing, addressing issues like mental health, employment, and accessibility to technology.

HOMELESSNESS

York

According to recent data, there were 389 individuals experiencing homelessness in York Region as of the latest count. 14% are youth, ages 16-24. This figure includes a mix of people experiencing chronic, episodic, and sheltered homelessness, with a substantial portion staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing facilities.[89]

York Region's homelessness problem is driven by various factors such as mental and physical health issues, family crises, job loss, and rising housing costs. The region is actively working on these issues through its 10-year housing and homelessness plan, which aims to provide better support and resources for those in need.[90]

85. Warner, “North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan”, 7

86. Warner, “North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan”, 45

87. Warner, “North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan”, 44

88. Housing – Simcoe County.

89. York Region | The Homeless Hub

90. York Region | The Homeless Hub

York Region is in the process of developing a Homelessness Service System Plan, that will inform the next 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.[91]

The 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone, aims to address and prevent homelessness through a comprehensive approach. The plan focuses on increasing the supply of affordable housing, providing support services to maintain housing stability, and preventing homelessness by addressing its root causes. Key strategies include building new affordable housing units, enhancing support services, and fostering partnerships with community organizations to ensure a coordinated response to homelessness.[92]

York Region has implemented several programs to address homelessness, providing a range of services aimed at prevention, support, and long-term solutions.

- **Blue Door Support Services:** Blue Door offers emergency and transitional housing, along with wraparound services including case management, advocacy, and support with housing searches and employment. They also run seasonal programs like Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold, providing overnight emergency housing and essential services during the cold months
- **Housing Stability Program:** This program helps low-income individuals and families at risk of homelessness to maintain their housing through financial assistance for rent and utilities, and by providing referrals to other community supports and services.
- **Inn From the Cold:** Inn from the Cold operates an emergency shelter and a housing stability program to assist homeless individuals in securing permanent housing. They also offer employment services and health care support to help clients transition to stable living situations.

These programs collectively aim to provide immediate relief and long-term solutions to homelessness in York Region focusing on addressing the root causes and offering comprehensive support systems.

The York Region Youth Homelessness Prevention and Housing Stabilization Strategy uses a collective impact approach. There are more than 30 organizations, individuals and young people involved in this strategy from across different sectors. The main goal of this collaborative work is to shorten or prevent the experience of homelessness for youth in York Region through better alignment of services. The initiative looks at structural and system barriers, housing opportunities, youth leadership as well as early intervention strategies to prevent youth homelessness and school disengagement. In 2020, 360°kids began working with York Region District School Board to implement the Upstream project. The success of this initiative provided a foundation to continue to advance a youth homelessness prevention agenda in this municipality.

In response to youth homelessness, York Region has developed various programs aimed at providing shelter, support, and resources. Initiatives like the Youth Wellness Hub offer a range of services, including counseling, educational support, and life skills training to help youth experiencing homelessness transition to stability and independence. Additionally, organizations like 360° Kids provide emergency housing, outreach programs, and long-term support to address the multifaceted needs of youth experiencing homelessness in the region.

Programs aimed at addressing youth homelessness in York Region include initiatives like the Home Now program, which provides rental assistance and case management to help young people secure and maintain housing. Additionally, the Youth Shelter program offers emergency and transitional housing specifically for young individuals, along with access to essential services such as education, employment training, and mental health support.

91. Passage House Town of East Gwillimbury, "Housing Solution A place for everyone 2022 Progress Report."

92. Anderson, Local public health units launching new viral activity dashboards

Simcoe Muskoka

Simcoe County has implemented several initiatives to address homelessness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they integrated public health, mental health, addictions, housing services, and paramedic services through weekly meetings with emergency homeless shelter providers. This collaboration aimed to improve access to critical services for homeless individuals and families. Additionally, the County of Simcoe's Paramedicine Services provided on-site health support at shelters, which has continued due to successful funding acquisition. They also initiated a project to coordinate discharge planning from institutional settings to prevent homelessness.



93. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs."

In 2021 the Simcoe Muskoka, along with community partners, conducted the second biannual Homeless Enumeration and Point-In Time Count. While these surveys only represent a small subset of those served through the District of Muskoka's housing and homelessness prevention program the results demonstrate the stark reality of those facing homelessness in Muskoka.^[93]

The District of Muskoka operates various programs to support individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. These include the Muskoka Housing Support Fund, which helps with rent, utility bills, and other necessities. They also offer case management services to help individuals find accommodations and access necessary supports. Additionally, there are emergency shelters and mental health support services available to assist those in crisis situations.

- **Simcoe County Homelessness Prevention Strategy:** The Simcoe County Homelessness Prevention Strategy focuses on preventing homelessness by addressing its root causes through coordinated efforts with various stakeholders. The strategy includes increasing access to affordable housing, improving support services, and enhancing community collaboration.
- **Housing First Program:** Implemented in Simcoe Muskoka, the Housing First Program approach prioritizes providing permanent housing to homeless individuals without preconditions, followed by supportive services tailored to their needs. This model has been shown to improve housing stability and overall well-being.
- **Emergency Housing Solutions:** The region has developed emergency shelters and transitional housing programs to provide immediate relief to those experiencing homelessness. These facilities offer not only shelter but also access to essential services such as healthcare, counseling, and employment assistance.

Housing First Program: Implemented in Simcoe Muskoka, the Housing First Program approach prioritizes providing permanent housing to homeless individuals without preconditions, followed by supportive services tailored to their needs. This model has been shown to improve housing stability and overall well-being.

•Emergency Housing Solutions: The region has developed emergency shelters and transitional housing programs to provide immediate relief to those experiencing homelessness. These facilities offer not only shelter but also access to essential services such as healthcare, counseling, and employment assistance.

Example Programs:

- **David Busby Centre:** Located in Barrie, the David Busby Centre provides a drop-in center offering various services to homeless individuals, including meals, clothing, shower facilities, and access to healthcare and social services. The center also runs outreach programs to support those living in precarious housing situations.
- **Youth Haven:** This organization specifically addresses the needs of youth experiencing homelessness in Simcoe County. Youth Haven offers emergency shelter, transitional housing, and support programs focusing on education, employment, and life skills development. Their goal is to help young people achieve independence and stability.
- **The Lighthouse Shelter:** Situated in Orillia, The Lighthouse Shelter offers emergency housing and support services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The shelter provides meals, clothing, and access to social services, helping residents transition to more stable housing solutions.
- **Salvation Army Housing Programs:** The Salvation Army operates several housing programs across Simcoe Muskoka, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and supportive housing services. These programs aim to provide immediate relief and long-term support to help individuals regain stability.



- **Orillia Youth Centre:** The Orillia Youth Center offers various programs aimed at supporting at-risk youth, including drop-in services, counseling, educational support, and recreational activities. The goal is to provide a safe and supportive environment for youth to develop skills and build a better future.

Despite these efforts, there are still notable gaps in services for addressing homelessness in Simcoe Muskoka:

- **Affordable Housing:** There is a significant shortage of affordable housing units, making it difficult for low-income individuals and families to find stable housing.
- **Mental Health and Addiction Services:** Limited access to comprehensive mental health and addiction services can hinder efforts to support individuals experiencing homelessness.

- **Long-term Support:** While emergency and transitional housing options are available, there is a need for more long-term support programs that help individuals maintain housing stability and achieve independence.

These initiatives and programs demonstrate the ongoing efforts in Simcoe Muskoka to address homelessness and support vulnerable populations. However, continued investment and collaboration are essential to fill existing gaps and create a more robust support system for those in need.

Youth homelessness in the Simcoe Muskoka region is a significant concern. Youth Haven, the only youth shelter in Simcoe County, serves approximately 1,000 teens annually, with 80% of these youths fleeing domestic violence, neglect, or abuse . The United Way Simcoe Muskoka administers the Reaching Home program, which supports various projects aimed at reducing homelessness, including those specifically targeting youth.

In Simcoe Muskoka, efforts to combat youth homelessness include providing immediate shelter, long-term housing solutions, and various support services such as mental health care and educational programs. Despite these initiatives, the region still faces challenges in fully addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness, indicating a need for continued and enhanced support programs.



Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

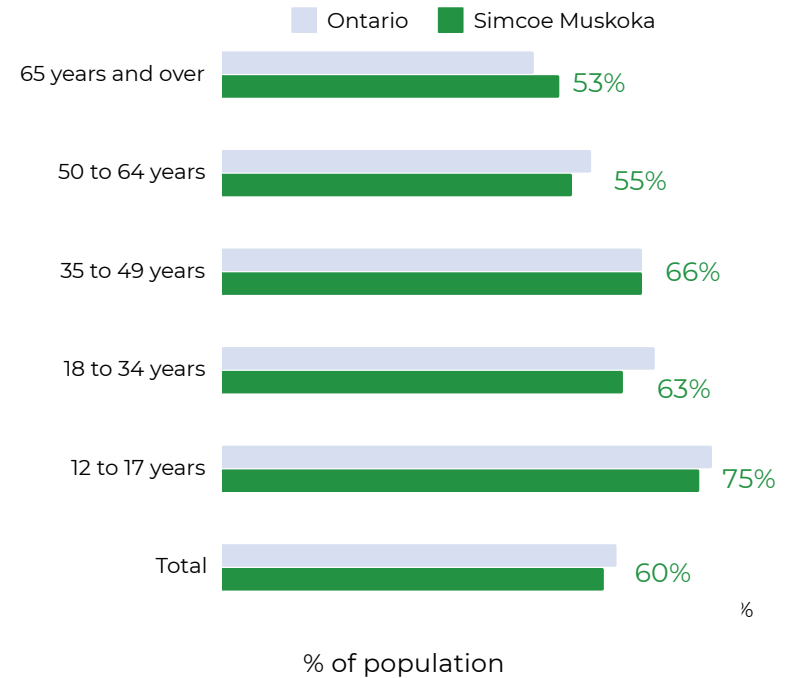
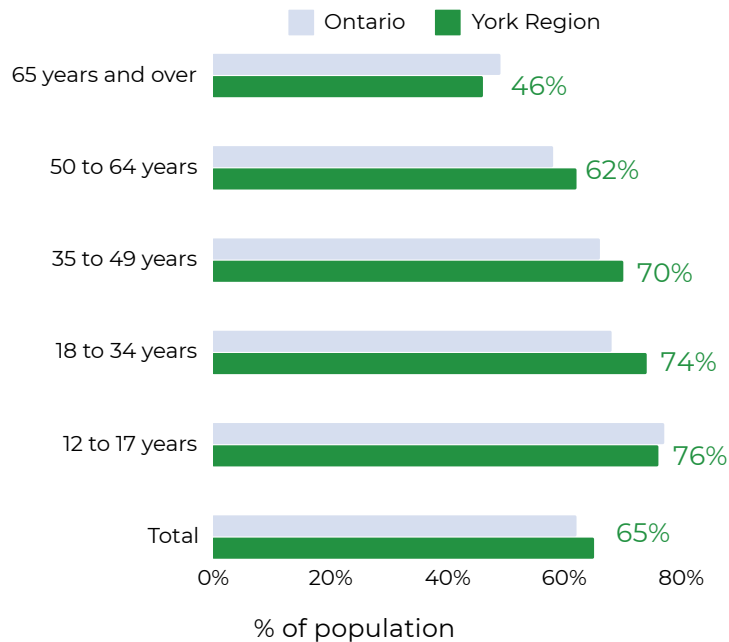
What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

HEALTH

More people living in York Region report having good health compared to those living in Simcoe-Muskoka except for those aged 65 and older.

- 65% of York Region residents aged 12 and older report having very good or excellent general health.
- 60% of those in Simcoe-Muskoka report good health.

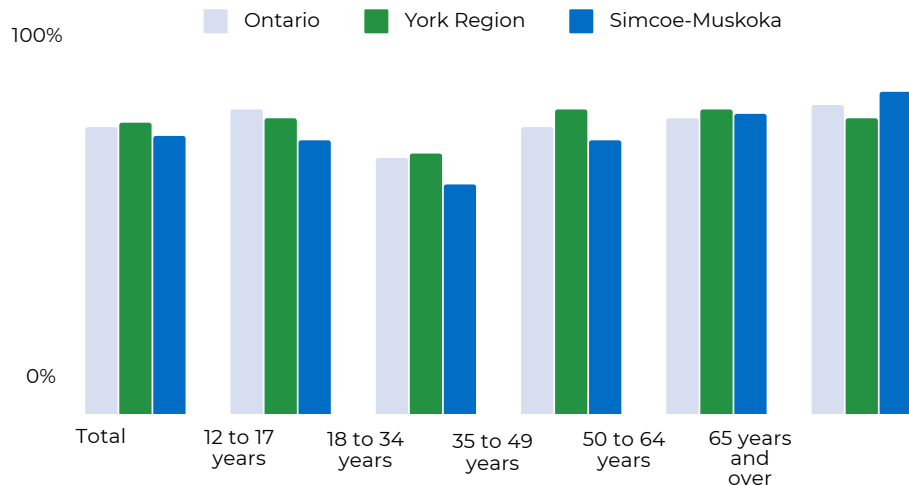


MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

More people living in York Region report having good mental health compared to those living in Simcoe-Muskoka except for those aged 65 and older.

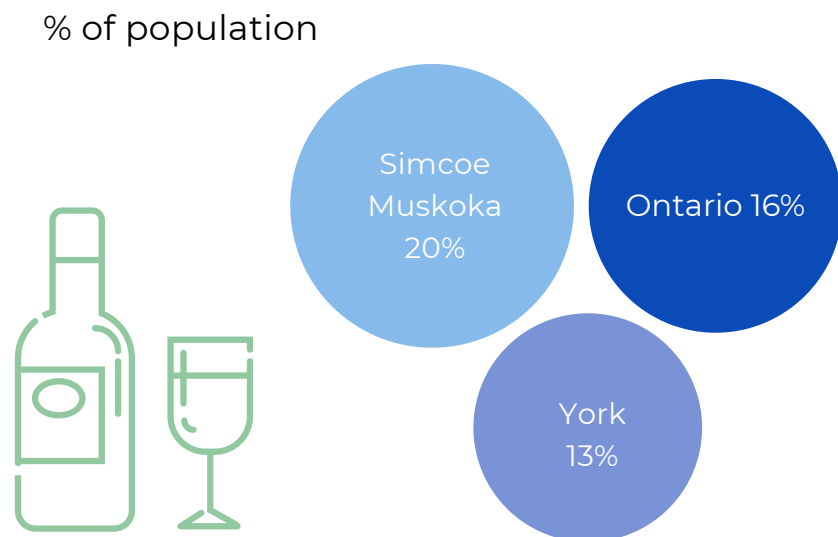
- 66% of York Region residents aged 12 and older report having very good or excellent mental health, fewer than in 2017/18.
- 63% of those in Simcoe-Muskoka report good mental health.





Heavy drinking rates are lower in York Region compared to Simcoe-Muskoka and similar to Ontario.

- 13% of York Region residents report heavy drinking.
- 20% of Simcoe-Muskoka residents report heavy drinking.



Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

HEALTH



Many families and individuals in Simcoe Muskoka wait several years for access to ongoing primary care services.[94]

York Region has a diverse and growing population, with a **significant number of seniors and young families**. This demographic shift **increases the demand** for healthcare services, particularly for chronic disease management and maternal and child health services.[95]

Tobacco-Free Living Program - York Region

In 2021 Tobacco-Free Living program in York Region partnered with the public health to produce a multi-media campaign to raise awareness about the health risks associated with youth vaping. The campaign delivered more than 36 million impressions and generated more than 8,750 unique web page views, exceeding corporate benchmarks for engagement.[96]

1,500
on waitlist for
long-term beds

Currently, the waitlists for long-term care beds in the area is more than 1,500 individuals.[97]

94. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs."

95. York Region, "Statistics and data"

96. York Region, "York Region Public Health: Activities and Innovations 2022"

97. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs."

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

2020- York Regional Police Mental Health Support Team responded to **7062 MH-related calls** (40% increase from 2016)[98]

In York Region Between 2011-2020 **opioid-related harms increased** - 5.5 deaths per 100,000 population versus 2.3 deaths in 2011)[99]



STUDENT CONSIDERED SUICIDE

A 2019 survey of students in Simcoe Muskoka indicated that 20% of students in grades 7-12 had seriously considered suicide in the past year, a figure that has been rising over time. Moreover, less than half of these students rated their mental health as excellent or very good[100]

Since the pandemic began, the Simcoe Muskoka region has seen a **75% increase in opioid-related deaths**, with 323 fatalities reported in the first 25 months of the pandemic[101]

98.. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan"

99. . Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan"

100. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, "Youth Mental Health in Simcoe Muskoka"

101. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, "Overdose awareness"

HEALTH

York

In York region the Central Health Promotion Team relaunched Public Health Matters - Public Health's e-bulletin - that provides timely and critical information and resources on public health topics to family doctors, specialists, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals, and had been paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. Public Health Matters has now increased in frequency and implemented editorial changes that have earned accolades in building productive relationships with its audience.

The Nursing Practice program implemented the first ever Public Health Women's International Day panel event, which showcased human-centered leadership approaches for creating an equitable work environment.[102]

The Healthy Living division initiated the Partner Engaged Assessment of Community Health (PEACH)[103] project to better understand the health of York Region communities. Engaging health care professionals and community organizations on the health status and needs of communities to help inform Public Health programs.

- **The Sexual Health Clinics program** increased access to sexual health services by adding a virtual nurse clinic and running a campaign to promote the no-cost, safe and inclusive sexual health services offered at five locations across York Region. This included a targeted campaign for residents of Georgina about the services offered at The Link and the expansion of services to include HIV PrEP to protect individuals from contracting HIV.

102.York Region, "York Region Public Health: Activities and Innovations 2022"

103. York Region, "York Region Public Health: Activities and Innovations 2022", 16

- **The School Services team** re-envisioned the Healthy Schools program to promote the physical, mental, social and spiritual health of the whole school community. Integrated nutritionists developed more comprehensive topic coverage, realigned the geographic distribution of staff to reduce costs and time spent driving, and introduced French language nurses to meet the needs of the French Language Services Act. The Healthy Schools Program was delivered to 213 schools across four school boards. As a result of Public Health initiatives, 48% of participating schools reported an increase in student understanding of mental health.
- **The Tobacco-Free Living program** partnered with the Health Protection division to produce a multi-media campaign to raise awareness about the health risks associated with youth vaping. The campaign delivered more than 36 million impressions and generated more than 8,750 unique web page views, exceeding corporate benchmarks for engagement. As a result, Public Health has seen a marked increase for in-service and information requests related to youth vaping from schools and school boards.
- **The Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction program**, in partnership with York Region Police (YRP), set up a pilot program with support from the Ontario Naloxone Program within the Ministry of Health to address the ongoing drug poisoning crisis. The program involved community distribution of life-saving naloxone by YRP with support and training provided by Public Health. Public Health presented information on harm reduction, stigma and the pilot project to more than 60 officers. Twenty-seven officers were trained on naloxone distribution and 28 naloxone kits were distributed to the community. [104]

104. York Region, "York Region Public Health: Activities and Innovations 2022", 16

105. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan", 28

106. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs."

107. Muskoka Community Foundation, "Vital Signs."

Simcoe Muskoka

North Simcoe Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2021-2025 details a plan committed to improving health by nurturing social connectedness through opportunities to enhance social engagement and strengthen social relationships.[105]

The Simcoe Muskoka and area healthcare services cover a catchment area of over 5,000 square kilometers, including communities in Muskoka and East Parry Sound. This region has a permanent population of just over 81,500. Access to healthcare is challenged by transportation issues, seasonal population fluctuations, and the many rural communities outside of Simcoe Muskoka's main centers. Long waitlists for primary care providers are a significant problem, with many families and individuals waiting several years for ongoing primary care services. The exact number of unattached patients is unknown, but it is evident that current primary care resources do not meet the population's demands. The district of Muskoka urgently needs more primary care providers and support for primary care teams to ensure effective early health intervention and reduce unnecessary hospital use.

The predicted population growth and the upcoming retirement of primary care providers are expected to exacerbate these challenges, making retention and recruitment of primary care providers in Muskoka critical priorities.[106]

Additionally, the increasing senior population places extra stress on the healthcare system, as many conditions they present could be managed outside hospitals with appropriate community care support. The waitlist for long-term care beds in the area exceeds 1,500 individuals, with only 492 beds available. This results in a ratio where every long-term care bed corresponds to three people waiting, sometimes for up to five years.[107]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

York

York Region offers a variety of mental health programs to support individuals of all ages facing mental health challenges. These programs, often run by local organizations and health services, aim to provide comprehensive care, including counselling, crisis intervention, and community support. Here are some key mental health programs in York Region:

- **York Support Services Network (YSSN):** YSSN offers case management, crisis response, and peer support services for individuals with mental health issues and developmental disabilities.
- **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) York and South Simcoe:** Provides a wide range of mental health services, including counseling, housing support, and wellness programs.
- **Mackenzie Health:** Mackenzie Health offers mental health and addiction services, including inpatient and outpatient care, psychiatric consultations, and community programs.
- **Southlake Regional Health Centre:** Provides comprehensive mental health services, including emergency psychiatric care, outpatient programs, and community support.
- **Family Services York Region (FSYR):** FSYR offers counseling and community support services for individuals, couples, and families dealing with mental health issues.
- **360° Kids:** 360° Kids supports homeless and at-risk youth with various services, including mental health counseling, housing support, and life skills training.
- **Krasman Centre:** Krasman Centre is a peer-support organization offering a range of mental health services and resources.

These programs provide essential services to support mental health and well-being in York Region, offering accessible and comprehensive care to meet the diverse needs of the community.

York Region faces significant gaps in mental health services, particularly in providing comprehensive and integrated care. One major gap is the fragmentation of services for individuals with concurrent disorders, such as those experiencing both mental health issues and substance use disorders. These individuals often do not receive adequately integrated care, leading to unmet needs and poorer health outcomes. Additionally, there is a lack of culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate mental health services for diverse populations, including newcomers and ethnic minorities.^[107]

Efforts like the York Region Mental Health Community Care Hub aim to address some of these gaps by providing 24/7 crisis support and a range of services under one roof. However, there remains a need for more targeted services, particularly for marginalized communities and those with complex needs. By addressing these gaps, York Region can improve its mental health support system, ensuring more timely, accessible, and effective care for all residents.^[108]

Simcoe Muskoka

The *North Simcoe Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2021-2025* described a commitment to mental health and addictions (MHA) that improve equity, access and quality of MHA services across the continuum for all residents:

- Increasing client and family engagement
- Increasing knowledge, skills, understanding and capacity around harm reduction and trauma-informed approach
- Building capacity for people to self-manage their mental well-being
- Promoting positive mental health strategies that help employers support employees^[109]

107-108. CMHA York Region & South Simcoe, "MHA Community Care Hub"

109. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan", 8

4 Pillars	Community and Stakeholders Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Improving quality 2.Expanding existing services 3.Implementing innovative solutions 4.Improving access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand on what is working well • COVID-19 made things significantly worse • MHA is linked to other areas of risk • Social Isolation is on the rise • Stigma persists • Equity, availability, access and quality of MHA services across the region vary

Indigenous Health Circle in Simcoe Muskoka undertook community consultations which resulted in the development of an Indigenous Led Opioid Strategy and Action Plan for North Simcoe Muskoka[i] in the first nine months of 2021, 132 confirmed and probable opioid-related deaths in Simcoe Muskoka, more than 33% higher than in the first nine months of 2020. The Strategy Goals of this report included:

- **Prevention Pillar:** increase knowledge and skills in addressing the harms associated with opioid misuse, engage target population in the development of educational resources and health promotion initiatives, collaborate on implementation of evidenced-based initiatives that address root causes of opioid misuse, support the procurement, development and dissemination of patient resources that can be used by health care practitioners in the education of appropriate use of opioids, including alternatives to opioid therapy.
- **Treatment/ Clinical Practice Pillar:** Increase awareness of existing resources for treatment, provide educational opportunities for health care providers on the topics of treatment, tapering of prescription opioids, opioid agonist treatment, non-opioid pain management, facilitate local mentorships between addiction medicine and primary care, improve access to interdisciplinary chronic pain treatment.

- **Harm Reduction Pillar:** Increase awareness of harm reduction strategies for people who use illicit and prescription opioids, increase Naloxone distribution, increase access to overdose prevention sites (OPS) and supervised consumption, decrease barriers in the 911 response to an opioid overdose for people who use drugs.
- **Enforcement Pillar:** Increase communication across law enforcement agencies, reduce the supply of illicit opioids in the Simcoe and Muskoka areas through a cohesive enforcement strategy sites (SCS) in the region.
- **Emergency Management Pillar:** Foster ongoing, comprehensive situational awareness for the Simcoe and Muskoka Emergency Response Committee of current issues related to opioid abuse, misuse, and addiction, enable surveillance for the timely alerting about, and response to, opioid overdose outbreaks, Support timely coordinated communications among key stakeholders and to the public.
- **Data and Evaluation Pillar:** Develop and implement a comprehensive cross-sector framework to gather and disseminate evidence to support the other pillars and the Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy Steering Committee.
- **People with Lived/ Living Experience Pillar:** Incorporate the expertise of the people with lived/living experience of substance use throughout the work of SMOS.[111]

Mental Health Programs in Simcoe Muskoka:

- **Simcoe Muskoka Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Day Program:** This program is a collaboration between Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre and the Simcoe County District School Board. It focuses on addressing both academic and mental health needs for students, helping reintegrate them into the academic community while developing effective strategies to address educational gaps.

110. Warner, "North Simcoe: Community Safety and Well-Being Plan", 34

111. Eisener, et al, Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy: A Report on Actions 2018-2022

- **CMHA Muskoka-Parry Sound:** The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) branch in Muskoka-Parry Sound offers integrated mental health and addiction services.
- **Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care:** Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care specializes in comprehensive psychiatric care for individuals with complex mental health needs. Offers inpatient and outpatient services, forensic psychiatry, and specialized programs for concurrent disorders.

These initiatives are aimed at improving access to mental health services for different age groups and addressing the unique challenges faced by residents in Simcoe Muskoka.

The Simcoe Muskoka Opioid Strategy (SMOS) focuses on multiple priorities to address this crisis, such as expanding Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) options and integrating people with lived experience into policy development. The region also emphasizes the importance of harm reduction and decriminalization to reduce the stigma associated with drug use and improve health outcomes.^[112]



112. Simcoe Muskoka Drug Strategy.



Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

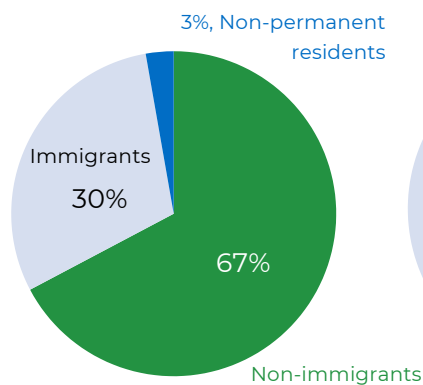
50%

YORK REGION'S
POPULATION IS AN
IMMIGRANT OR NON-
PERMANENT RESIDENT

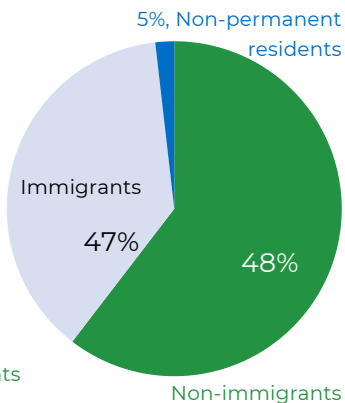
The North Region has more immigrants and non-permanent residents compared to Ontario with most living in York Region. Immigrants and non-permanent residents make up:

- 33% of Ontario's population
- 50% of York Region's population
- 17% of Simcoe County's population
- 14% of Mulmur's population

Ontario



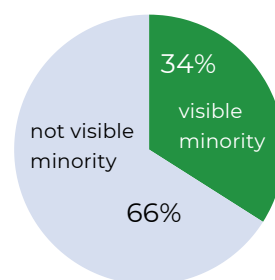
North



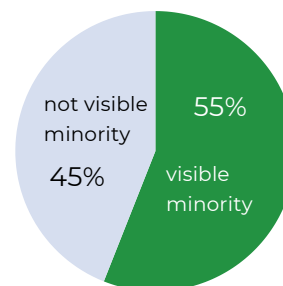
43% of the population living in North Region self-identifies as a visible minority, more than across Ontario. Within the Region, visible minorities make up:

- 55% of York Region
- 12% of Simcoe
- 8% of Mulmur

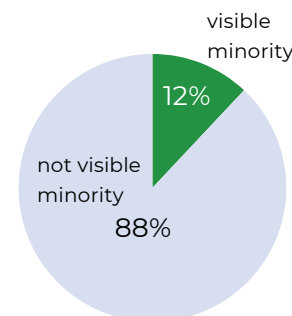
Ontario



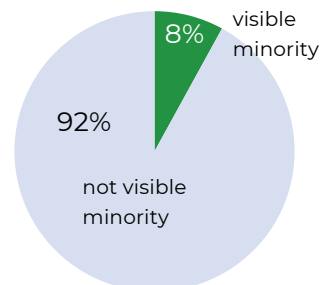
North York



Simcoe



Mulmur



The Racialized and Newcomer Populations map at the end of this report shows the areas where there are higher and lower concentrations of newcomers and non-white, non-Indigenous populations.

Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

The **top five languages spoken by new immigrants in York Region** are: English, Mandarin, Chinese, Farsi and Russian.^[113]

In 2021:
13% residents reported a non-official mother tongue in Simcoe Count.
^[114]



47.8% OF YORK REGION BORN OUTSIDE OF CANADA

According to Census 2021 about 47.8% (557,025) of York Region residents were born outside of Canada - the second highest proportion in Ontario, behind Peel Region.^[115]

Resources and information about newcomers and immigration in Toronto is divided into 4 quadrants: North, South, East, and west, each with their own Local Immigration Partnership (LIP). LIPs conduct research to identify potential barriers for newcomers and then work through its partnership to remove them so newcomers can fully participate in the economic, social, cultural, and recreational life of the community.

York

York Region is home to a diverse population of immigrants and newcomers, and there are numerous programs and services designed to support their integration and well-being. Here are some specific examples:

- **Welcome Centres in York Region:** Welcome Centres are located in Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan. These Centres offer a range of services, including language training, employment support, settlement services, and cultural orientation. For instance, the Markham South Welcome Centre offers English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, job search workshops, and assistance with navigating the healthcare system. For example, the Welcome Centre in Richmond Hill provides specialized programs such as the Newcomer Information Program, which helps immigrants understand Canadian culture and systems.
- **Catholic Community Services of York Region (CCSYR):** CCSYR offers settlement services, language training, family counseling, and mental health support tailored for immigrants and refugees. For example, the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program offers free language classes to help newcomers improve their English skills, which are essential for integration and employment.

¹¹³ York Region Local Immigration Partnership, 2017-2021 York Region Newcomer Strategy

¹¹⁴ Simcoe County Local Immigration Partnership, Simcoe County LIP Community Settlement Strategy

¹¹⁵ E. W. S., Workforce Planning Board of York Region

- **Job Skills** provides employment and training services to help immigrants find suitable employment. This includes job search assistance, resume writing workshops, and skills training. The "Bridge to Employment" program helps internationally trained professionals get their credentials recognized and find employment in their field.
- **York Region District School Board (YRDSB)** also provides Settlement Services. YRDSB Settlement Services offers settlement support within schools to help newcomer students and their families adjust to the Canadian education system and community life. Settlement workers in schools (SWIS) provide one-on-one support to newcomer students and parents, helping them understand school policies, access community resources, and navigate the education system.

York Region Newcomer Strategy focuses on improving the coordination of services and supports for newcomers through collaboration between agencies, municipalities, and community groups. The strategy includes initiatives like the "Inclusive Communities Partnership," which works to create welcoming and inclusive community spaces for newcomers. There are a number of Community Initiatives that help newcomers including:

- **Multicultural Events:** York Region hosts events such as the Markham Cultural Festival and the Newmarket Multicultural Festival, celebrating the diverse cultures within the community and promoting social cohesion.
- **Local Libraries:** Libraries in York Region, such as the Vaughan Public Libraries, offer resources including language learning tools, cultural programs, and information sessions for newcomers. For example, the "Library Settlement Partnerships" program places settlement workers in libraries to assist newcomers with information and resources on various aspects of Canadian life.

The York Region Local Immigration Partnership (York LIP) is a collaborative community initiative that aims to enhance the integration and settlement of immigrants in York Region. This partnership brings together various stakeholders, including local governments, community organizations, service providers, and newcomers, to address the needs and challenges faced by immigrants. Key Objectives of York LIP are:

- **Coordination and Collaboration:** Facilitate better coordination among service providers to ensure immigrants have seamless access to the services they need.
- **Community Planning:** Develop and implement strategic plans to address the needs of immigrants in areas such as employment, education, health, and social services.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhance the capacity of community organizations and service providers to deliver effective programs and services for immigrants.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** Promote understanding and awareness of immigration issues and the benefits of diversity within the community.

The work of the York Region Local Immigration Partnership is crucial in creating a welcoming and inclusive community for immigrants. By addressing the barriers that newcomers face and providing targeted support, York LIP helps immigrants to successfully integrate, contribute to the local economy, and enrich the social and cultural fabric of York Region.

Simcoe Muskoka

The County of Simcoe LIP evaluated the progress of the development of welcoming communities based on recommendations in the report. Formal progress reports were published in 2016 and 2020. Accomplishments achieved during the 10 years following the first settlement strategy, included:

- The launch of an immigration website, containing over 300 pages of online content to attract, integrate and retain newcomers to the region.
- The development of welcoming immigrant hubs through the local system of public libraries, providing over 30 additional points of access in Simcoe County.
- Increased investment supporting additional English language training programs; the development and rollout of a Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program; new Francophone language training and settlement services; and the successful launch and growth of the Immigrant Job Finding Club.
- The development and growth of the annual #ITSTARTS campaign to reduce racism and discrimination in Simcoe County.
- The development of an annual Newcomer Recognition Awards ceremony with award categories aligning with the goals of the Community Settlement Strategy.^[116]

In Simcoe County, several programs and services are available to support immigrants and newcomers, facilitating their integration and enhancing their quality of life. Here are some key programs:

- **YMCA Immigrant Services:** YMCA Offers comprehensive settlement services including help with forms, arranging interpreters, providing information on social services, healthcare, education, and housing. They also offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and employment counseling.
- **Immigration Simcoe:** Immigration Simcoe provides a range of services for newcomers including settlement support, language training, and employment services.
- **Bradford Immigrant & Community Services (BICS):** BICS Offers settlement services, language training, and community integration support.
- **Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board (SMWDB):** SMWDB Provides labor market information and connects newcomers with employment opportunities.

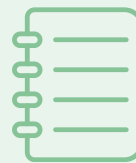
Muskoka, known for its picturesque landscapes and vibrant tourism industry, has a smaller immigrant population compared to urban centers. However, the region has seen a gradual increase in newcomers, contributing to its cultural and economic diversity. Newcomers to Muskoka often face challenges such as limited access to specialized services, employment opportunities, and transportation. However, initiatives are being developed to enhance support for immigrants, including community integration programs, employment assistance, and efforts to improve access to essential services.

The District of Muskoka is actively working to better understand and support its immigrant and newcomer population through initiatives such as the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP). The LIP aims to identify the unique needs of newcomers, recognize service gaps, and assess the community's readiness to embrace new residents. This includes helping newcomers find employment, access healthcare, improve language skills, and feel integrated into the community.

YMCA Immigrant Services in Simcoe/Muskoka provides a variety of support services for newcomers, including English language training, settlement assistance, and employment counseling. These services are designed to help immigrants adapt to life in the region by providing information on social services, housing, healthcare, and education.

Catholic Community Services of York Region offers a variety of services to help newcomers integrate into Canadian society. These include individual assessments, assistance with government forms and applications, preparation for the Canadian citizenship test, and information sessions about life in Canada.

¹¹⁶ Simcoe County Local Immigration Partnership. Simcoe County LIP Community Settlement Strategy



Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

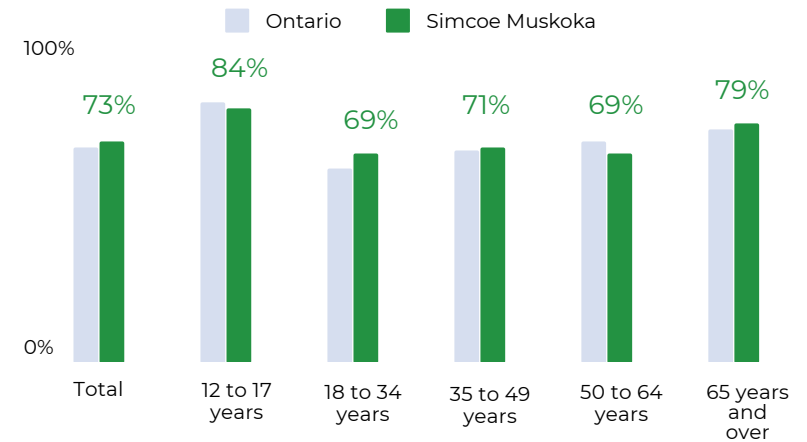
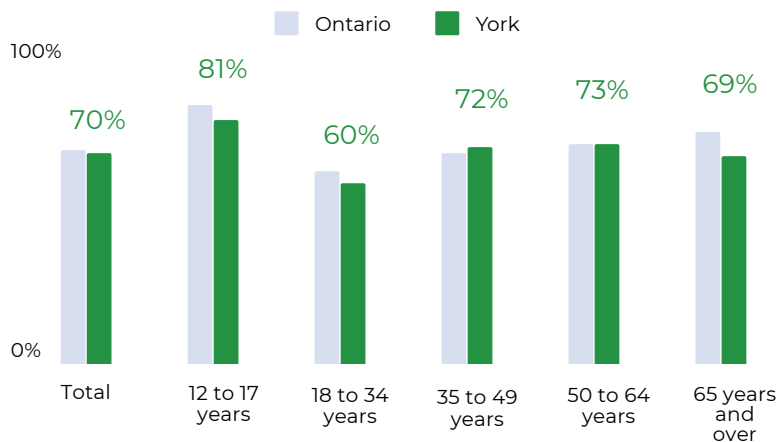
What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

SENSE OF BELONGING, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, RECREATION, AND SAFETY

Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

70% of York Region's and 73% of Simcoe Muskoka's population age 12 and over have a strong or very strong sense of belonging to their local community, similar to Ontario. Comparing sense of belonging by age group - fewer adults age 65 and older in York Region have a strong sense of belonging compared to Simcoe Muskoka and Ontario.



Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

TRUTH AND TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

York

York Region has been actively engaged in Truth and Reconciliation initiatives, reflecting a commitment to the Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The region has recognized the importance of this work through various activities and statements. York Region officially acknowledges the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30. This day is dedicated to honoring the survivors of residential schools, their families, and communities.^[117]

¹¹⁷ York Region, York Region recognizes National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

York Region Council has been involved in ongoing discussions and reports regarding their progress on the TRC Calls to Action. In a recent meeting, they reviewed their advancements in various areas, including public health and community services, underscoring the regional commitment to reconciliation efforts.^[118]

The York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) is committed to the principles of Truth and Reconciliation and has implemented several initiatives to support this cause. These initiatives include educational programs, events, and resources aimed at fostering understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures and histories among students and staff. The board also participates in Orange Shirt Day, which is part of the broader movement to educate Canadians about the history and lasting impacts of residential schools. In addition to these events, the YCDSB integrates Indigenous perspectives into its curriculum throughout the school year. This includes lessons and activities that cover various aspects of Indigenous cultures, histories, and contributions to Canadian society. The board also works closely with Indigenous communities and organizations to ensure that their educational content is accurate and respectful.^[119]

The YCDSB has also established committees and advisory groups focused on equity and inclusivity, which include the promotion of Indigenous education. These groups provide guidance and support for implementing truth and reconciliation initiatives across the board's schools. ^[120]

Simcoe Muskoka

In Simcoe Muskoka, several initiatives and programs focus on Truth and Reconciliation efforts, particularly involving Indigenous communities. Here are some key highlights:

- **United Way Simcoe Muskoka:** The organization actively supports the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30. They are committed to honoring Indigenous Peoples and elevating their voices within the community. United Way offers various culturally specific services through 211 Ontario, which include counseling, health, legal, educational, and crisis services tailored for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.
- **Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions:** SMFC works closely with Indigenous communities to address the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They focus on child welfare, education, and health. Their programs are designed to support Indigenous youth, especially those at risk of homelessness, through partnerships like the #Orangedoor project with Home Depot
- **Lakehead University:** Lakehead University's Orillia campus in Simcoe County plays a significant role in advancing Truth and Reconciliation. The university offers a series of intercultural modules developed by the President's Council on Truth and Reconciliation, aiming to educate the community on reconciliation and Indigenous perspectives. They have dedicated staff members, like Indigenous Initiatives Coordinators, who focus on embedding the TRC's Calls to Action in their work and supporting Indigenous students.

These efforts collectively aim to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for Indigenous communities in Simcoe Muskoka, addressing historical injustices and promoting cultural awareness and reconciliation.

The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board actively promotes educational events and activities that honor Indigenous history and culture. This includes observing significant days such as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day), Treaties Recognition Week, Louis Riel Day, Red Dress Day for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, National

118. York Region's Ongoing Progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action

119. York Catholic District School Board. York Catholic District School Board.

120. York Catholic District School Board. York Catholic District School Board

Indigenous History Month, and National Indigenous Peoples Day. The board incorporates the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada into their curriculum. This includes resources and activities that educate students about the history and ongoing impacts of residential schools, as well as the broader contributions and cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

York

York Region, Ontario, offers a variety of civic engagement programs and partnerships aimed at enhancing community involvement and support.

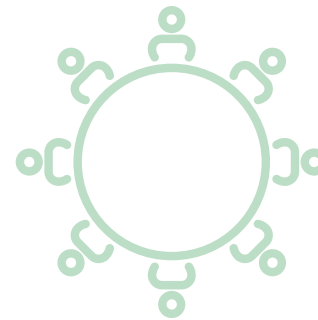
The York Region Community Investment Fund (CIF) supports numerous local initiatives that foster community engagement and support for vulnerable populations. For example, the Inn from the Cold Inc. provides case management to help residents maintain housing, and the John Howard Society offers comprehensive supports for individuals and families involved with the justice system.^[121]

York University plays a significant role in fostering civic engagement through its partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and government entities. These collaborations aim to create positive changes within the community, support local entrepreneurs, and provide training and employment opportunities for students.^[122]

Overall, these programs and partnerships illustrate York Region's commitment to fostering civic engagement, supporting vulnerable populations, and promoting sustainability through collaborative efforts with various Inter-eholders.

¹²¹ York Region, Data
¹²² Partnerships | York University

Simcoe Muskoka



In Simcoe Muskoka, several initiatives and programs focus on civic engagement and community support. The United Way Simcoe Muskoka (UWSM) is actively involved in distributing funds to local charities, helping them adapt and continue their services. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UWSM distributed over \$1.7

million to 61 local organizations, supporting vital services ranging from mental health and addiction services to youth mentorship and emergency food programs.

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka offers numerous programs aimed at youth engagement, such as the Youth Leadership Development Program. This initiative has assisted thousands of young people in gaining leadership skills, securing employment, and even starting small businesses. The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka also runs the Youth Gambling Awareness Program and the Youth Justice Program, providing essential support and education to reduce re-offending rates among youth.

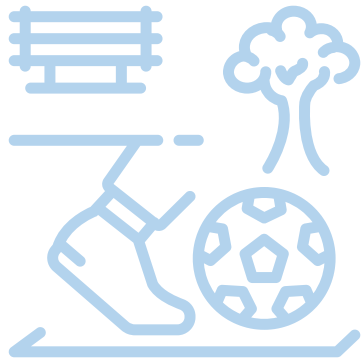
Moreover, the Muskoka District has a robust volunteer network, facilitating various community projects and services. Opportunities range from short-term event volunteering to long-term commitments, and cover diverse areas like senior support, crisis response, and animal services. These programs collectively enhance civic engagement by empowering residents, especially youth, and providing necessary resources and support to vulnerable community members.

RECREATION

York

York Region offers a variety of non-profit recreation programs aimed at enhancing community well-being. One key initiative is the PLAY program, which provides subsidies for youth to participate in leadership training and recreational activities. This includes certifications in aquatic leadership, babysitting courses, and counselor training, helping to build skills and confidence in young participants.

Additionally, the Ontario government supports various non-profit organizations in York Region through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's capital grants. These grants help improve infrastructure and expand community programs, including those focused on physical health and social inclusion.



Non-profit organizations such as the Schwartz Reisman Centre, Reena Foundation, and DANI also receive funding to upgrade facilities and offer more accessible recreational and support services for individuals with disabilities.

[123]

Simcoe Muskoka

Simcoe Muskoka offers a diverse range of recreational programs. For youth and families, the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka provides sports, swimming lessons, and day camps.

Municipalities like Barrie and Bracebridge also offer youth programs, after-school activities, and family-friendly events.

Adult fitness programs are available at the Bracebridge Sportsplex and Gravenhurst Centennial Centre, which offer fitness classes, personal training, and senior

programs. Community organizations like Collingwood YMCA and Muskoka Yoga Studio also provide group fitness classes and wellness workshops.



Arts and culture programs are hosted by Simcoe County and Muskoka libraries, including arts and crafts workshops and book clubs. The Muskoka Arts & Crafts organization and MacLaren Art Centre offer art classes and exhibitions.

Outdoor activities are plentiful, with Orillia and Huntsville offering guided canoeing, kayaking, and hiking. Adventure companies like Liv Outside and Muskoka Paddle Shack provide guided paddling trips and outdoor skills workshops. There are also many opportunities for indoor and outdoor sports for all ages, for example, recreational centers in Orillia and Georgian Bay Township provide adult sports leagues like basketball and pickleball. Senior programs at Gravenhurst and Barrie Senior Centers include fitness classes and social events. Organizations like Muskoka Seniors and Simcoe County Services offer wellness programs and support for seniors. Special interest programs include environmental education from Muskoka Conservancy and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, and tech literacy and coding workshops from Barrie Public Library and Muskoka Innovation Network.[124]

These programs highlight the rich recreational opportunities in Simcoe Muskoka, promoting an active and engaged community.

123. York Region. Assistance for Non-Profits.

124. Thompson, J. Georgian, YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka announce unique Community Innovation Network - Georgian College

SAFETY (DISCRIMINATION, CRIME & VIOLENCE)

York

The Regional Municipality of York is committed to a welcoming and inclusive community where diversity is celebrated and where everyone can develop to their full potential, participate freely in society and live with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination.^[125] The Region has a diversity calendar to help raise awareness about faith, cultural, and other significant dates throughout the year. The Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group (MDIG) developed the Inclusive Language Guide as a collective action to collect inclusive language recommendations of various trusted sources into one document. York Region is a member and co-chair of MDIG.^[126]

Amid a worsening homelessness crisis in York Region, service and advocacy organizations are raising concerns about the larger impact the crisis can have on marginalized communities. Though there has been progress, members of the community are still asked to leave their homes due to a 2SLGBTQIA+ identity and are disproportionately represented within the homeless community and homeless population because of that. York Region homelessness organization that work with youth, 360°kids', Chief Operating Officer, Bonnie Harkness stated that there are a high number of LGBTQ kids in their programs. Black youth also face discrimination in housing, particularly black males, Harkness said, with some landlords having an unfair perception that they are more dangerous.^[127]

Example programs in York Region that focus on combating discrimination and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion

- **York Regional Police (YRP) - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Bureau:** This unit focuses on preventing and investigating hate crimes, providing support to victims, and educating the community on recognizing and reporting hate crimes.
- **York Region School Boards:** Provides mandatory professional development for staff on anti-racism and cultural competency, ensuring that educators are equipped to handle and address issues of discrimination in schools.
- **York Region Inclusion Charter:** A collective commitment by various stakeholders, including municipalities, police, school boards, and community organizations, to work together to promote inclusion and equity.^[127]
- **York Region Centre for Community Safety:** YRCCS provides comprehensive support services, including counseling, legal assistance, and emergency housing, for victims of violence and discrimination. Conducts workshops and educational programs to raise awareness about discrimination and support available to victims.

Crime in York Region, while generally lower compared to larger urban centers, remains a significant focus for law enforcement and community organizations. Proactive policing strategies, community engagement, and crime prevention programs play crucial roles in maintaining public safety and reducing criminal activities across the region. For the most current and detailed crime statistics, consulting the York Regional Police reports and official municipal sources is recommended. Increasingly, cybercrime and fraud are areas of concern. YRP conducts investigations into online scams, identity theft, and other digital crimes affecting residents and businesses.

The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region is a long-term tool to enhance safety and well-being through proactive, targeted, and community-driven actions. The Plan was developed in consultation with residents, community organizations, local municipalities, York Regional Police and other interest holders.

^{125.} York Region, "Diversity and inclusion."

^{126.} York Region, "Diversity and inclusion."

^{126.} Quigley, "How discrimination impacts York Region's housing crisis."

^{127.} York Region, "York Region marks five years of the Inclusion Charter"

Six strategic objectives form the framework for the Plan, supporting key activities and local actions that steer the Plan toward achieving its goal of enhancing safety and well-being. Through Community Action Tables and other collaborative initiatives, the Plan brings partners together, strengthens community capacity to lead, leverages data and existing community strengths, prioritizes preventative initiatives, and bridges gaps where they exist.

Human trafficking is a significant concern in York Region, facilitated by its proximity to major transportation routes and urban centers like Toronto. Victims, often vulnerable populations such as newcomers, youth, and those in precarious situations, are exploited through forced labor and sexual exploitation. In recent years, York Region has seen significant efforts to combat human trafficking, resulting in several notable statistics. In 2022, there were over 1,300 incidents related to human trafficking reported to the police in Ontario, with York Region being one of the significant hotspots due to its location and accessibility.^[128]

York Regional Police have been actively involved in numerous operations aimed at rescuing victims and arresting traffickers. In 2021, their efforts led to the identification and assistance of 31 human trafficking victims and the arrest of 55 individuals related to these crimes.^[129] Additionally, Victim Services of York Region provides ongoing support and crisis intervention for victims, highlighting the region's commitment to addressing this critical issue, for example the [Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#) and the [York Region Centre for Community Safety](#) provides support and resources for victims of domestic violence and abuse. Services include counseling, legal support, and safety planning to help individuals rebuild their lives.

These efforts aim to raise awareness, prevent trafficking, and provide vital support to survivors in York Region.



Simcoe Muskoka

Discrimination is a reality in Muskoka, as it is across the country. Community health surveys have shown that Indigenous and racialized residents report higher levels of perceived discrimination, particularly in healthcare and employment settings. 37% of survey respondents reported having experienced discrimination themselves in the past five years living in Muskoka (with 12 describing discrimination as a customer or client of the District Municipality). The top five reasons for this discrimination were sex, age, sexual orientation, political beliefs and race/skin colour. Diverse community members reported being more wary in Muskoka than in a larger, more diverse setting.^[129] 51% of Simcoe Muskoka residents are female and tend to have more childcare responsibilities, are less likely to work full time, earn less than men regardless of type of job and experience more discrimination in the work place.^[130]

128-129. York Region, "Statistics and data"

129. Kindness, Justice and Inclusion Consulting Collective, "Muskoka Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-racism Project: Interim Report on Findings from the Community of Muskoka."

130. Gender simcoemuskokahealth

In Simcoe Muskoka, various programs and initiatives have been implemented to combat discrimination and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Here are some notable programs:

- **Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit:** Aims to reduce health disparities by addressing Social Determinants of Health, including discrimination.
- **YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka:** Offers programs aimed at empowering youth from diverse backgrounds through leadership training, employment opportunities, and mentorship.
- **Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB):** Comprehensive strategies to promote inclusivity and equity in schools, including anti-racism education, cultural competency training for staff, and student support services.
- **Simcoe County Local Immigration Partnership (SCLIP):** [SCLIP](#) focuses on integrating newcomers into the community through various initiatives. Facilitates networking opportunities and cultural exchange between newcomers and local residents to foster understanding and inclusion.
- **Community and Legal Aid Services Programme (CLASP):** [CLASP](#) provides legal assistance and community support services to marginalized groups facing discrimination. Offers free legal advice and representation on human rights issues, housing disputes, and employment discrimination.

Municipalities like Barrie, Orillia, and Bracebridge have implemented diversity and inclusion plans that include training for municipal staff, support for multicultural events, and policies aimed at reducing discrimination in municipal services.

In the Simcoe Muskoka region, recent crime statistics indicate several trends. In Muskoka, there was a notable 68% increase in serious crimes, categorized as Part 3 infractions, between 2021 and 2022. These are more severe offenses that typically involve a court summons. In contrast, traffic offenses have reached record lows, with Part 1 infractions, which are less serious and usually result in fines or tickets, decreasing by 37%.^[131]



In the Southern Georgian Bay area, recent reports highlight multiple arrests related to ongoing investigations and outstanding warrants. This suggests active police efforts in tackling crime in the region, particularly in North Simcoe.^[132]

Overall, these statistics reflect a mixed landscape of crime in Simcoe Muskoka, with significant increases in serious offenses alongside decreases in minor traffic violations. Efforts to manage these issues include enhanced enforcement and addressing backlogs in the court system post-pandemic.^[133]

Human trafficking remains a significant issue in the Simcoe Muskoka region. Recent efforts have been made to address and combat this problem through various community and institutional initiatives. For example, the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has developed comprehensive protocols aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of sex trafficking and educating staff, students, and parents on how to identify and respond to potential trafficking scenarios.^[134]

^{131.} J. Huntsville Doppler, "Statistics show an increase in more serious crimes in Muskoka"

^{132.} Staff, M.Southern Georgian Bay OPP arrest several wanted people. muskoka411.com

^{133.} Huntsville Doppler, "Statistics show an increase in more serious crimes in Muskoka"

^{134.} Amundson, Q, "Simcoe Muskoka board develops trafficking protocols" The Catholic Register

^{135.} Amundson, Q, "Simcoe Muskoka board develops trafficking protocols" The Catholic Register

^{136.} Human Trafficking - SMFC.

Statistical data highlights the severity of the issue. In 2021, Barrie, the central city in the region, reported 11 cases of human trafficking, equating to 4.2 incidents per 100,000 population, which is significantly higher than the national average of 1.4 incidents per 100,000 population.[135]

To combat this, various local organizations, such as [Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions](#), are actively collaborating with community partners to provide support and care for trafficking survivors, raise awareness, and implement early intervention strategies. These efforts include the development of screening tools, family-based care models, and partnerships with local police and social services to better address and prevent human trafficking in the region.[136]

North Simcoe Victim Services: [North Simcoe Victim Services](#) provides immediate emotional and practical support to victims of crime and tragic circumstances. Services include crisis intervention, counseling, and referrals to community resources. Their support helps individuals navigate difficult situations and access necessary services.



Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

AGE: CHILDREN AND YOUTH, AND SENIORS

Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

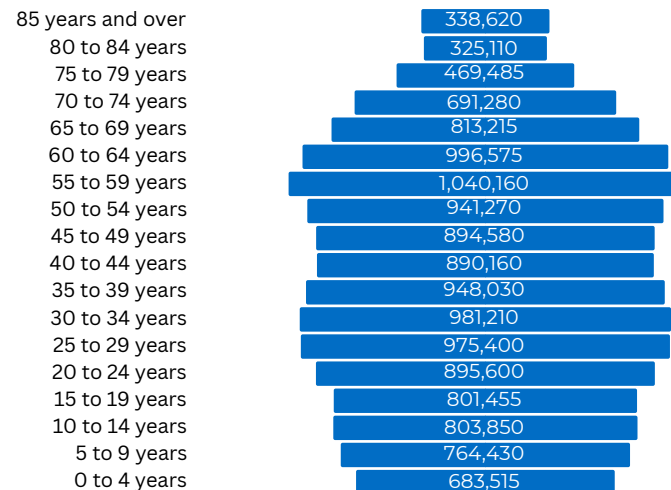
Age is a significant social determinant of health, influencing an individual's well-being and access to resources across the lifespan. Addressing age as a social determinant of health requires policies and interventions that promote healthy aging, support economic security, combat ageism, and ensure equitable access to healthcare and social services across the lifespan. By addressing the diverse needs of individuals at different stages of life, communities can promote health equity and improve overall population health.

North Region's age distribution is similar to Ontario.

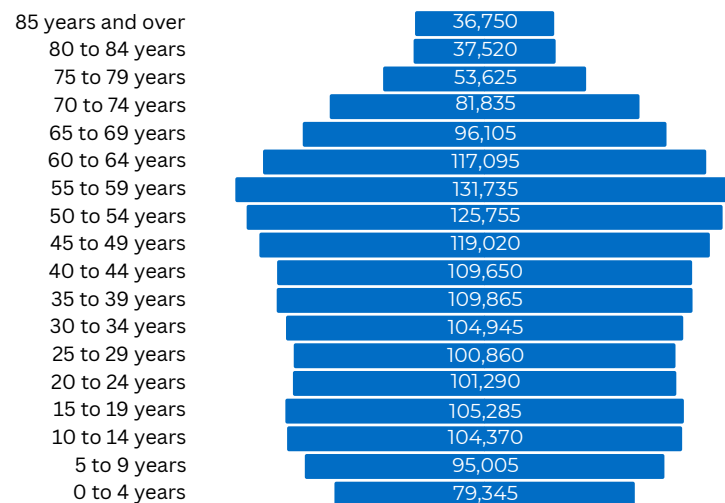


Within the Region: Mulmur and Simcoe County have more older adults (20% of total population) compared to York Region (17%).

Across Ontario, **children and youth** make up **22%** of the total population and **adults 65 and older** make up **19%** of the total population. **Adults age 20 to 64** make up **60%** of the population.



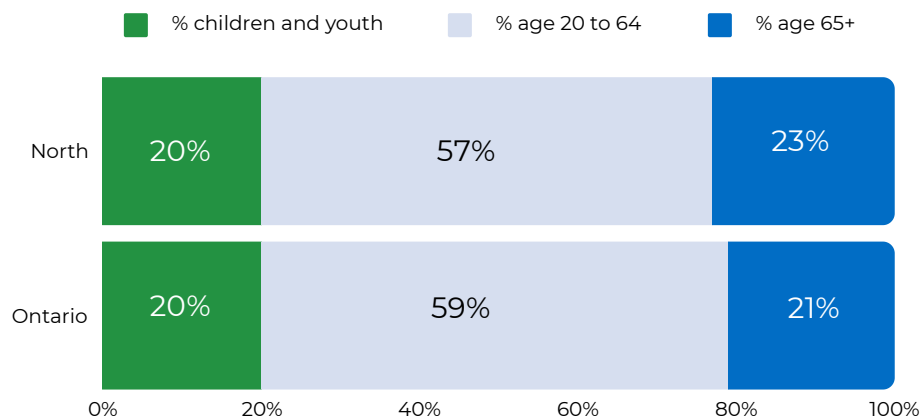
In North Region, **children and youth** make up **22%** of the total population and **adults age 65 and older** make up **18%** of the total population. **Adults age 20 to 64** make up **60%** of the population.



Population in 10 years

Ministry of Finance population projections for North Region forecast that, by 2034, there will be more older adults aged 65 and older (23% of the population) and fewer children and youth aged 0 to 19 (20%). The proportion aged 20 to 64 (the working age population) will decrease to 57% of the population.

Across Ontario, children and youth are projected to decrease to 20% of the population and older adults increase to 21% of the population. [137]



Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1 in 3 report symptoms linked to mental distress

27% of children and youth feel sad or hopelessness for long periods of time and 1 in 3 report symptoms linked to mental distress [138]

In 2021 - 6,665 children from birth to age 12 were **recent immigrants** [139]



10% of children aged 12 years and under (15,835 children) were living in low income (based on Low Income Measure – LIM) [140]

10% Living in Low-income



12% of Black children aged 12 years and under (640 children) were living in low income [141]

137. Ministry of Finance Projections, July 2023

138. Muskoka Community Foundation, Vital Signs

139-142. Children's Services, "Child Care and Early Years: Service System Plan 2024-2027"



14% OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND 12%
OF VISIBLE MINORITY CHILDREN LIVING
IN LOW INCOME

The Indigenous 12 years and under population was 1,055 children. 14% (150) were living in low income [143]



Food4Kids Muskoka focuses on combating food insecurity among children by providing weekend food bags to students in need. The program, which started in September 2023, has rapidly expanded and now serves nearly 200 students across several schools in the region. They aim to increase this number to 400 by the end of 2024[144]

York

The York Region Child Care and Early Years: Service System Plan 2024-2027 Aims to continue building a child care and early years systems that prioritizes the needs of the community.[145] The plan identifies the following priority areas:

- Ensuring that service providers have the data needed to provide quality programming
- Effective coordination between partners across the service system to support the needs of children and families
- Ensuring that parents, caregivers, and professionals have the knowledge and capacity to support child development
- Creating a responsive system that reflects the needs of children, families and the community
- Ensuring that children are included and have access to services[146]
- The Child and Family Health division of York Public Health supports healthy child development from pre-conception to school transition, and oral health for children, youth and seniors.

The Child and Family Health division's five program areas include:

• **Children and Youth Dental:** Provides oral health screening for children and youth ages 0-17 years to identify urgent, restorative and preventive dental needs.

- **Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC):** Provides eligible families within formation, support and connections to community resources through a home visiting service. The program connects parents to a Public Health nurse and a family visitor. Social workers and dietitians offer additional supports for families as needed.

143. Children's Services, "Child Care and Early Years: Service System Plan 2024-2027"144. Reisler, "Food4Kids Muskoka hoping to feed 400 hungry students by end of 2024"

145. Children's Services, "Child Care and Early Years: Service System Plan 2024-2027"
146. Children's Services, "Child Care and Early Years: Service System Plan 2024-2027"

- **Health Connection–Child and Family Health:** Supports clients through telephone, live messaging (eChat), email, text messaging and video conferencing with questions or concerns about their own health, or that of their family, about preparing for pregnancy, prenatal health, breastfeeding, infant health, mental health, family violence, and parenting support for children up to school entry. Registered nurses provide breastfeeding support, assess maternal mental health and make recommendations and referrals to internal and external programs to help clients adjust to parenthood.
- **Healthy Growth and Development:** Delivers health promotion interventions to help infants and children zero to six years of age achieve the healthiest possible start in life. By supporting and promoting optimal infant and young child nutrition, perinatal mental health, and healthy pregnancy, parenting and resilience building, children are provided a strong foundation that decreases adverse childhood experiences and improves lifelong physical and mental health.^[148]
- **York Region Children's Aid Society:** York Region CAS provides protection services, support programs, and resources for children and families in need. They offer assistance with housing, education, and basic necessities to low-income families.
- **Educational Support:** Initiatives such as the Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY) program offer subsidized recreational activities for children from low-income families, promoting physical and mental well-being.^[149]

York Region provides a variety of services and resources for children and youth, focusing on health, early development, and support for special needs. The region has robust programs for early childhood development, including intervention services for children with developmental delays and neonatal follow-up programs for those at higher risk due to birth complications.

One notable service is the Early Intervention Services program, which supports children from birth to school entry with developmental challenges. This includes assessments, monitoring, and early intervention strategies delivered by a multidisciplinary team. The region also offers specialized programs like the Autism Spectrum Disorder Sibling Monitoring Program, which targets early identification and intervention for siblings of children diagnosed with autism.

York Region's commitment to children's health is evident in its comprehensive data collection and analysis, which guides the planning and delivery of these services.^[150] For more detailed information on specific programs and resources, you can visit the York Region official website.

Young parents living in shelters in York Region have access to various support services aimed at helping them transition to more stable living situations. Key organizations and programs provide essential resources:

- **Blue Door:** Blue Door - Giving Hope A Home operates emergency and transitional housing projects, offering dedicated support for vulnerable populations, including young parents. Their developments, such as Passage House and Beaverton Transitional Supportive Housing, provide housing and access to services designed to help residents achieve permanent housing. Blue Door also runs INNclusion, a program specifically for 2SLGBTQ+ youth, which includes young parents.
- **360°kids:** 360°kids is focused on at-risk and youth experiencing homelessness, 360°kids offers a comprehensive suite of programs, including emergency housing, counselling, and long-term housing support. Their initiatives like the Home Base Drop-In Center and transitional housing programs provide critical resources and stability for young parents as they work towards independence. The organization also assists with employment, education, and well-being services, ensuring holistic support).

148. York Region, "York Region Public Health: Activities and Innovations 2022", 8

149. York Region, "Statistics and data

150. York Region, "Child Care and Early Years Service System plan"

- **York Region's Housing Stability Programs:** York Region provides financial assistance for rent, mortgage payments, and utilities through various programs. These are available to individuals already receiving benefits from Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), as well as to those who are not. These programs aim to prevent homelessness and stabilize housing situations for vulnerable families, including young parents.

These organizations and programs collectively offer a range of services, from immediate emergency housing to long-term support, helping young parents in York Region move towards stable and independent living conditions.

Simcoe Muskoka

In the Simcoe Muskoka region, statistics indicate significant challenges faced by children and families. Approximately one in six children in Muskoka experiences food insecurity, meaning they are unsure where their next meal will come from.^[151]



To support children and youth, Simcoe-Muskoka offers various services such as managing early learning and child care system, providing subsidies and support for families and child care providers. Initiatives like the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement aim to reduce child care fees significantly by 2025, making it more affordable for families.^[152] These efforts reflect ongoing initiatives to address the broader socio-economic challenges affecting children and families in Muskoka, highlighting the need for continued support and community engagement to improve living conditions and access to essential services.

Examples of Community Resources for Children and Families:

- **Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Muskoka:** Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Muskoka provides mentoring programs that link a youth/child with a role model in the community to talk and share experiences of growing up - they go on regular outings where relationships can develop
- **Child Care Fee Subsidy - The District of Muskoka:** to help reduce cost of child care expenses for low to modest income families residing in Muskoka
- **Boys and Girls Clubs of North Simcoe:** BGCNS These clubs offer after-school programs, recreational activities, and leadership development opportunities for children and youth. Programs are designed to provide a safe and supportive environment where young people can learn, grow, and build positive relationships.
- **Children's Foundation of Muskoka:** Children's Foundation of Muskoka provides grants to meet the recreational, cultural, medical, and emotional needs of children in Muskoka (through camps, sports, dance, recreation, music lessons or providing basic necessities like beds and clothing)- grants provide opportunities to youth

¹⁵¹ One in six children in Muskoka experiencing food insecurity: United Way, Huntsville Doppler

¹⁵² Children - early years and child care

- **Children's Services Community Facilitator:** Facilitator helps by connecting families with medical, dental, developmental, behavioural and other therapeutic services; obtains important documentations (like birth certificates, health cards); can link parents to supports and resources; problem solves other unique challenges
- **Community Living Huntsville:** Community Living Huntsville for families with children who are between the ages of 18 months and 6 years old - provide personalized services to support the overall development of a child (developmental screenings, home programming, can help families advocate for their children in childcare/school settings)
- **Community Living South Muskoka:** Community Living South Muskoka provides a Resource Teacher program; responsible for planning, developing, and implementing support plans for children ages 2-6 with special needs and their families, in their home, licensed child programs and community settings
- **EarlyON Muskoka:** EarlyON Muskoka programs that offer parents, caregivers, children and families a friendly spot to meet and share with one another
- **HANDS Thefamilyhelpnetwork.ca:** HANDS Thefamilyhelpnetwork.ca provide services to child/youth and their families - Infant Development, Autism Services, Behavioural Services
- **Healthy Smiles Ontario:** Healthy Smiles Ontario program for kids who do not have access to any form of dental coverage



Healthy Babies Healthy Children is a program designed to help children in Ontario have a healthy start in life. Public Health Units across Ontario complete a Healthy Babies Healthy children (HBHC) Screen with families with newborns. HBHC identifies seven different risk indicators.^[153] Compared to Ontario, York Region and Simcoe-Muskoka have fewer infants born to families with risk factors for healthy child development compared to Ontario. Risk factor rates in York Region are lower than in Simcoe-Muskoka.

% of infants in families with:	Simcoe-Muskoka	York Region	Ontario
Parent or partner with mental illness	21.6%	6.3%	20.6%
Infants with families in need of newcomer support	3.7%	1.2%	3.7%
No designated primary care provider for mother and/or infant	3.6%	0.8%	5.1%
Infants with families who have concerns about money	2.8%	0.7%	3.7%
Infant's mother is a single parent	2.8%	1.0%	3.0%
Involvement with Child Protection Services	2.1%	0.4%	2.3%
No OHIP number for mother	1.3%	3.1%	2.7%
Parent or partner with disability	0.9%	0.3%	1.0%

151. One in six children in Muskoka experiencing food insecurity: United Way, Huntsville Doppler

152. Children - early years and child care

153. Public Health Ontario. Risk Factors for Healthy Child Development Snapshot. PHU (2015 to 2022). 29 September 2023. www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Reproductive-and-Child-Health/Healthy-Child-Development.

SENIORS

As of 2023, approximately **28.6% of Muskoka's population is aged 65 and over**. This demographic trend aligns with the broader aging pattern in Canada, but the proportion of seniors in Muskoka is notably higher than the national average of 19%^[154]

By 2051 - close to **1 in 4** (23%) of York Region residents will be aged 65+^[155]



Housing affordability is a bigger issue for seniors who are living in renter households, **47% of seniors spending 30% or more of household income on shelter**

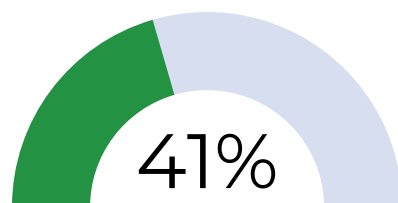
MORE THAN 14,000 SIMCOE MUSKOKA RESIDENTS OVER THE AGE OF 65 ARE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA^[158]

97% About 97% of Seniors live in private dwellings within the community ^[156]

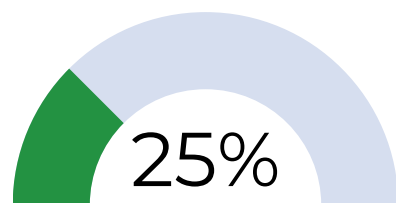
York

Seniors in York Region enjoy a diverse and supportive community tailored to their needs. With a population of over 250,000 seniors, this demographic is actively engaged in various activities and services designed to enhance their quality of life. York Region offers numerous senior centers, recreational programs, and health services, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for older residents. The region's commitment to aging in place is reflected in its infrastructure, including accessible public transportation and senior-friendly housing options. Cultural diversity enriches the senior experience, with opportunities to participate in multicultural events and connect with peers from similar backgrounds. Overall, York Region fosters a vibrant and caring environment where seniors can thrive and continue to contribute to the community.

For the first time, the number of seniors now exceeds the number of children in York Region. By 2051, close to one in four (23%) York Region residents will be over the age of 65.



41% YORK REGION SENIORS LIVE WITH A DISABILITY^[157]



1 IN 4 OF THOSE EXPERIENCING LOW-INCOME IS A SENIOR

145. Muskoka (District Municipality, Canada) - Population statistics, charts, map and location.
155-157. 2022 to 2027 - York Region Plan to Support Seniors: Navigating Forward Together
158. Hart, "Ensuring North Simcoe Muskoka seniors remain safe..."

While many seniors remain healthy, active and connected to their communities, over time some will require additional supports and age-friendly services across the broader health and social care continuum. The 2022 to 2027 - York Region Plan to Support Seniors: Navigating Forward Together identifies the following priorities areas:

- Keep Seniors Healthier, Longer: Providing seniors and caretakers information to help them improve physical activity and social connectedness and prevent chronic disease
- Supporting Seniors to Live in Age-Friendly Complete Communities: Better integrate services for seniors
- Connecting Seniors and Caregivers to Right Programs and Services at Right Times: Improve system navigation for seniors
- Improving Coordination, Organization and Planning of Services For Seniors: Collaborate on and support strategic improvements for the overall system supporting seniors (p.9)
- Guiding Principles - Plan is Built on: Evidence-based decision-making

York Regional Police has dedicated senior safety officers who work closely with trained social workers to ensure the well-being of seniors in York Region through crime prevention, education and personal safety awareness. These members provide crime prevention sessions, in-service training and visit seniors in their homes, in addition to hosting Seniors Academy and Seniors Day events.^[159]



159. York Regional Police, Vulnerable people and seniors.

York public health unit provides programs that support seniors such as:

- **Seniors Dental:** Provides dental services through the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP). OSDCP is an Ontario wide program that provides free dental care to eligible low-income seniors who are 65 years of age or older. Eligible clients are supported over the phone with program enrollment and OSDCP related questions, including oral health teaching and promotion. Dental care and treatment services are provided internally across four York Region dental clinics and through referral to community dentists, denturists and dental specialists.^[160]
- **Community & Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS):** CHATS provides a range of services for seniors, such as transportation, caregiver support, wellness programs, and social activities. These services help seniors maintain their independence and improve their quality of life.
- **Family Services York Region (FSYR):** Family Services York Region provides counseling, mental health services, and family support programs. They offer assistance for individuals dealing with mental health issues, family conflicts, and personal challenges.

Seniors in York Region face significant challenges related to social isolation, which can lead to detrimental effects on their mental and physical health. Initiatives like "Let's Chit Chat" aim to combat this by providing virtual social interactions and support for seniors in retirement and long-term care residences. Additionally, York Region's strategic plans emphasize increasing community engagement and accessible services to support isolated seniors. Local organizations are also active, offering programs and grants to address social isolation and promote well-being among the elderly population.^[161]

160. York Region, "York Region Public Health: Activities and Innovations 2022", 9

161. Region, Y. (2022b, October 5). Renewing our plan to support seniors.

Simcoe Muskoka

As of recent data, seniors aged 65 and over make up a significant portion of the population in the Simcoe Muskoka region. In Simcoe County alone, this demographic accounts for 19.4% of the population, reflecting an aging community that necessitates tailored services and programs.^[162] Key health statistics indicate that seniors in Simcoe Muskoka face various challenges, including chronic diseases and the need for enhanced healthcare services.^[163] In response, local authorities and organizations have developed comprehensive community health and support programs to address these needs.^[164] For example, *The Town of Midland's Age-Friendly Community Plan* *Age-Friendly Communities*^[165] identified 8 key themes (foundations) of community life that can become more age-friendly:

- 1.Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- 2.Transportation
- 3.Housing
- 4.Respect and Social Inclusion
- 5.Civic Participation and Employment
- 6.Communication and Information
- 7.Community Support and Health Services
- 8.Social Participation

In Simcoe Muskoka, social isolation among seniors is a significant issue, exacerbated by the pandemic. Efforts to combat this include initiatives by organizations like the United Way Simcoe Muskoka and North Simcoe Muskoka Specialized Geriatric Services (NSM SGS). United Way focuses on addressing social inclusion through various community projects, such as matching seniors with others who share common interests and providing hybrid support services to maintain connections despite physical distancing.^[166] NSM Specialized Geriatrics has developed programs to

engage seniors through recreational activities and community partnerships, including the creation of activity kits and art initiatives to foster engagement and reduce isolation. These efforts highlight the region's commitment to improving the well-being of its older population by promoting social interaction and community involvement.

In Simcoe Muskoka, there are several programs designed to support seniors and enhance their quality of life. The District of Muskoka offers the WISE Mobile Active Living Centre, which provides free programs focusing on health education, wellness, social activities, and fitness for seniors aged 55 and over. These programs are designed to promote aging in place and are available across various locations in Muskoka.^[167]

Another key initiative is the SMART (Seniors Maintaining Active Roles Together) exercise program by VON Canada. This program offers group exercise classes tailored to seniors to improve their strength, balance, and mobility. The classes are conducted both in-person and virtually, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Additionally, the program includes fall prevention education to help seniors maintain their independence.



These programs collectively support the physical, mental, and social well-being of seniors in Simcoe Muskoka, fostering a community where older adults can thrive independently.

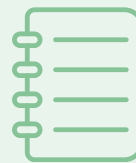
¹⁶². Health Stats home

¹⁶³⁻¹⁶⁴. Health Stats home.

¹⁶⁵. Jodi Ball, J Consulting Group, and County of Simcoe, "Town of Midland: Age-Friendly Community Plan. Town of Midland"

¹⁶⁶. United Way Simcoe Muskoka, homepage

¹⁶⁷. Seniors Programs and Services, District of Muskoka



Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

In December 2020, the Muskoka District Council officially declared a Climate Emergency^[168]

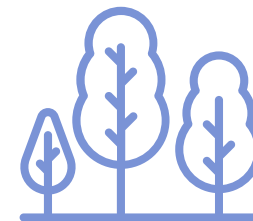


MUSKOKA IS KNOWN FOR ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THAT INCLUDES A MIX OF ROCKS, TREES AND WATER. WITH OVER 1000 LAKES, 10 PROVINCIAL PARKS, 10 CONSERVATION AREAS AND 1 NATIONAL PARK^[169]



Currently **48 species are listed as at risk in Muskoka** that include: American Bumblebee, Monarch Butterfly, Massasauga Rattle Snake, and Bald Eagle^[170]

York Region planted Plant over 1.7 million trees in the past 24 years and is recognized as a Tree City of the World^[171]



In York Region In 2023, the regional council awarded a contract for a state-of-the-art biofuel facility to further support its climate change action plan and its **goal to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050**^[172]

York

York Region is actively engaged in various environmental initiatives and has set significant goals for sustainability. The region has committed to several capital projects, with substantial investments aimed at improving environmental outcomes. For example, York Region has an integrated waste management strategy that includes a robust green bin program, where organic waste is processed into renewable biogas, compost, and fertilizer. In 2023, the regional council awarded a contract for a state-of-the-art biofuel facility to further support its climate change action plan and its goal to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.^[173]

¹⁶⁸. Muskoka's climate action.

¹⁶⁹⁻¹⁶⁹. Muskoka Community Foundation, Vital Signs

¹⁷⁰⁻¹⁷³. York Region, "Greening strategy

Additionally, York Region is focused on water conservation and quality through its long-term water conservation strategy. This strategy aims to ensure sustainable water use and maintain high water quality standards across the region. Air quality is another priority, with measures in place to monitor and improve both indoor and outdoor air quality.^[174]

York Region also emphasizes environmental stewardship through its Greening Strategy, which includes community projects aimed at creating a healthy built environment, conserving water, and managing waste effectively. This strategy involves local residents in sustainability initiatives, promoting a greener community.^[175]

York Region's Greening Strategy creates and maintains healthy natural environments that foster sustainable communities now and for the future. It outlines programs and activities such as tree planting, stewardship, education and conserving natural lands with a focus on partnering with local organizations and residents through the following action areas:

- Environmental Land Protection and Preservation
- Community Stewardship and Education
- Enhancement and Rehabilitation
- Innovation and Knowledge

The Greening Strategy Refinement survey was conducted online from October 13 to November 3, 2021. It was promoted through various channels including Region e- newsletters, web advertising, social media and print media. 96% of respondents indicated it is very important for York Region to invest in protecting and enhancing its natural environment. Respondents shared further comments and ideas about York Region's Greening Strategy; many of these comments related to a desire for improved communication and promotion of York Region's existing programs and concerns about the impact of urban sprawl on our natural environment and farmland.^[176]

According to the Green Strategy, ways to help with environmental efforts in York Region:

- Participate in Waste Diversion Programs: Use the green bin for organic waste and recycle properly to reduce landfill use
- Join Community Cleanups: Engage in local cleanup events to help maintain clean parks and water bodies
- Use Sustainable Transportation: Opt for public transit, carpooling, biking, or walking instead of driving alone
- Conserve Water: Practice water-saving techniques like fixing leaks and using efficient fixtures
- Reduce Energy Consumption: Implement energy-efficient practices at home, such as using LED bulbs and insulating your home
- Support Local Environmental Groups: Volunteer with or donate to local conservation and environmental organizations
- Practice Sustainable Landscaping: Use native plants in your garden to support biodiversity and reduce water use
- Engage in Climate Action Initiatives: Participate in regional climate change programs and initiatives

These actions collectively contribute to a healthier and more sustainable York Region. For more information, visit York Region's official website.

96%

INDICATED IT IS VERY IMPORTANT
FOR YORK REGION TO INVEST IN
PROTECTING AND ENHANCING
ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.^[176]

^{174-175.} ork Region, "Greening strategy"

^{176.} Civic Plan, York Region Greening Strategy Refinement What You Said Report.

Simcoe Muskoka

The Simcoe Muskoka region faces several environmental challenges and has implemented various initiatives to address them. One significant issue is the prevalence of blue-green algae blooms in local water bodies, such as Little Lake in Midland. The Muskoka Watershed Council engages in integrated watershed management to protect and enhance the health of the Muskoka River watershed. They conduct research, provide educational resources, and advocate for sustainable watershed governance. [177]

The effects of climate change in Simcoe Muskoka are being identified and are already having significant impacts on Muskoka. Trends such as the duration of winter ice cover on lakes, changes in air temperature, patterns of precipitation, and the link between storms and floods are an indicator of climate change. While these changes seem small, over a long period of time, without significant interventions the impacts on Muskoka's environment will be severe. [178] Climate action is a priority in Simcoe Muskoka, with the establishment of the Simcoe Muskoka Climate Change Exchange (CCE) to support mitigation and adaptation strategies. This includes goals for significant greenhouse gas reductions by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Additionally, local groups like the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed are engaged in innovative projects, such as using wood ash to restore calcium levels in damaged forests and lakes.

Keeping forests intact is key to supporting diverse wildlife, biodiversity, and CO2 storage. Simcoe Muskoka's natural cover faces increased pressure from development and tourism activity that may result in habitat loss and a fragmented landscape. [179]

According to the 2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card, Muskoka area lakes continue to have excellent water quality, however there are areas of concern. As Muskoka experiences the effects of

climate change local waterways become more vulnerable to multiple stressors that include invading species, changes in precipitation, temperature, runoff, and evaporation. [180]

Here are several ways to support environmental work in Simcoe Muskoka provided by the Muskoka Watershed Council: [181]

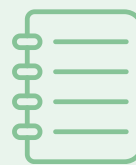
- **Volunteer for Local Environmental Groups:** Engage with organizations like the Muskoka Watershed Council, which focuses on watershed health and conservation efforts
- **Participate in Climate Action Programs:** Join initiatives such as the District of Muskoka's Climate Change Strategy, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to climate impacts
- **Advocate for Integrated Watershed Management:** Support policies and programs that promote the health of local watersheds through integrated management approaches
- **Reduce Personal Environmental Impact:** Minimize the use of pollutants, such as road salt and fertilizers, to protect water quality and local ecosystems. Opt for native plants in landscaping to support biodiversity
- **Support Sustainability Initiatives:** Engage with municipal sustainability efforts, such as Orillia's Climate Future and the City of Barrie's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, which outline local commitments to climate action
- **Combat Invasive Species:** Clean boats and equipment to prevent the spread of invasive species and report sightings of invasive plants or algae blooms to local authorities

These actions can significantly contribute to preserving the environment in Simcoe Muskoka. For more detailed information, you can visit local environmental organization websites and municipal sustainability plans.

117. Local Climate Groups & Initiatives – Climate Action Muskoka.

178-180. Muskoka Community Foundation, Vital Signs

181. 2023 Report Card - Muskoka Watershed Council.



Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

PATTERNS OF MARGINALIZATION

Public Health Ontario produces [maps](#) visualizing four dimensions of marginalization based on social determinants of health factors. This section of the report provides background on the different dimensions, lists the SDOH factors incorporated in each dimension and shows the patterns of marginalization across Toronto for each dimension. The maps are images produced from the Ontario Marginalization Index tool.

Dimensions of marginalization include:

- **Material Resources:** closely related to poverty
- **Racialized and Newcomer Populations:** areas with high concentrations may experience discrimination and xenophobia
- **Age and Labour Force:** these are areas with high concentration of people without income from employment due to age, disability and/or not participating in the labour force
- **Households and Dwellings:** relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness



Material Resources

The Material Resources dimension of Marginalization is closely connected to poverty and refers to the inability for individuals and communities to access and attain basic material needs relating to housing, food, clothing, and education.

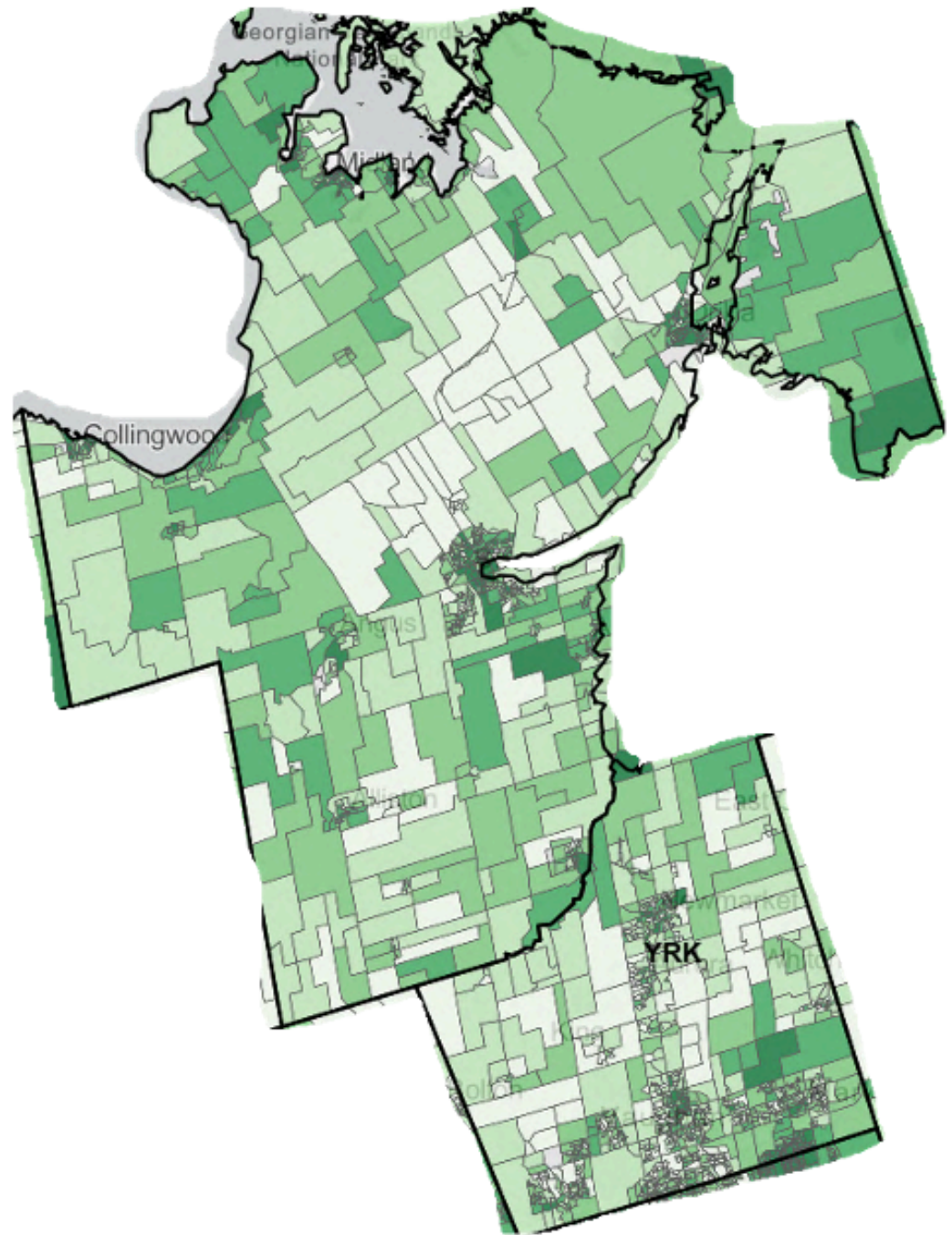
Factors in this measure include:

- % of population age 25 to 64 without a high school diploma
- % of families that are lone parent
- % of total income that is from government transfer payments
- % of population age 15+ who are unemployed
- % of population considered low-income (LICO)
- % of households living in dwellings in need of major repair

Darkest areas on the map have highest marginalization.

In Simcoe, areas of highest marginalization can mostly be found in the following areas:

- Much of Orillia
- Throughout Barrie
- Parts of Midland, Wasaga Beach, Collingwood, Penetanguishene, Port O'Neill and Ramara
- In York, areas of highest marginalization can mostly be found in the following areas:
 - Much of Armadale and Milliken
 - Parts of Newmarket and Richmond Hill
 - Small areas in Woodbridge and Vaughan



Racialized and Newcomer Populations

This dimension measures the proportion of newcomers and/or non-white, non-Indigenous populations. These communities may experience higher levels of racialization and xenophobia.

Factors in this measure include:

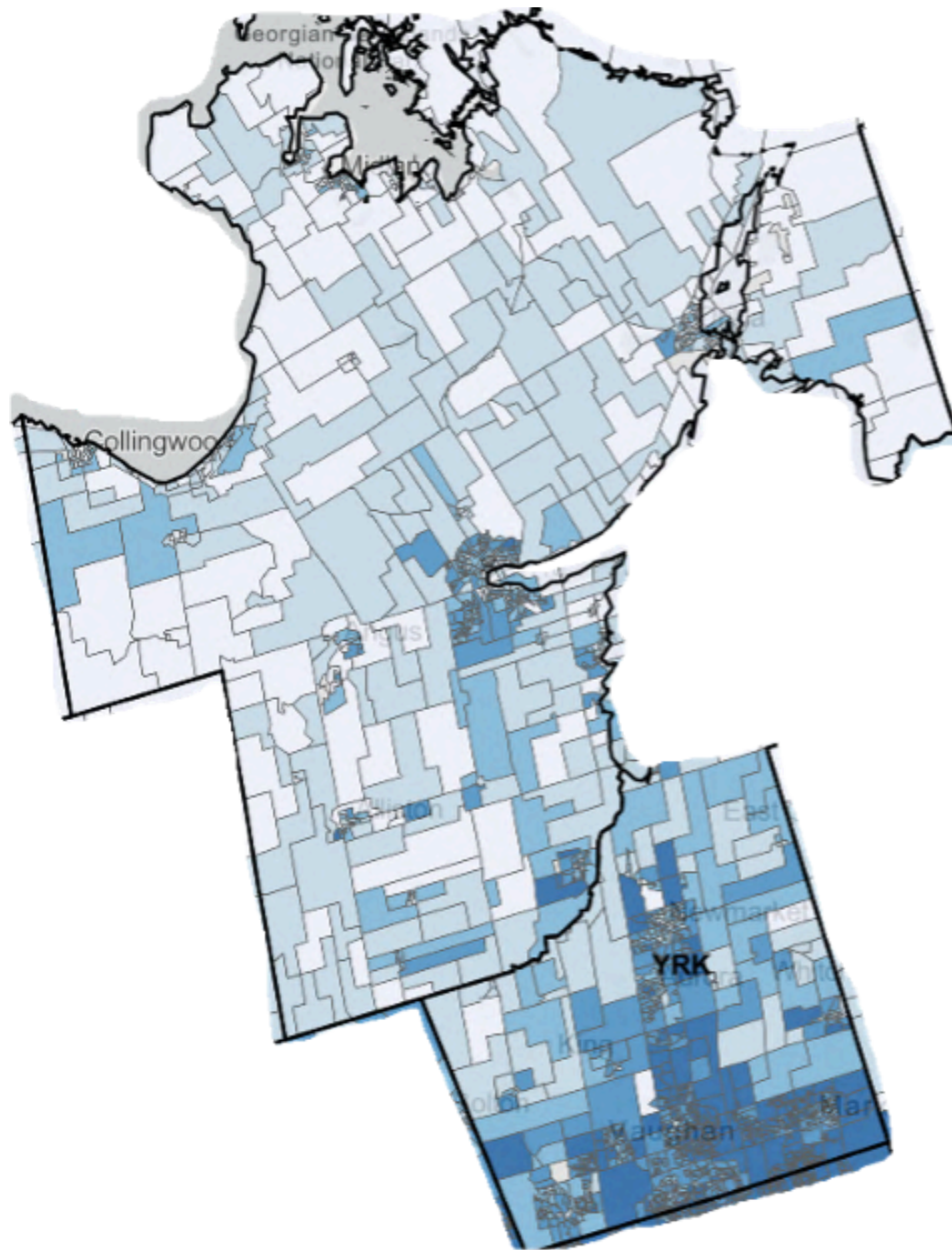
- % of population who are recent immigrants (arrived in last 5 years)
- % of population who self-identify as a visible minority

Darkest areas on the map have highest marginalization. In Simcoe, there are only 5 areas that have high concentrations of newcomers and/or non-white, non-Indigenous populations:

- Bradford (3 areas)
- Barrie
- Alliston

Many areas with high concentrations of newcomers and/or non-white, non-Indigenous can be found in York Region, including:

- Southern part of York Region
- Aurora
- Newmarket
- Stouffville



Age and Labour Force

This dimension relates to area-level concentrations of people who don't have income from employment, including older adults, children, and/or those unable to work due to disability. Areas of high marginalization are areas with relatively high concentrations of people who don't have income from employment.

Factors in this measure include:

- % of population age 65+
- Dependency ratio (total population 0 to 14 and 65+/total population 15 to 64)
- % of population not participating in the labour force

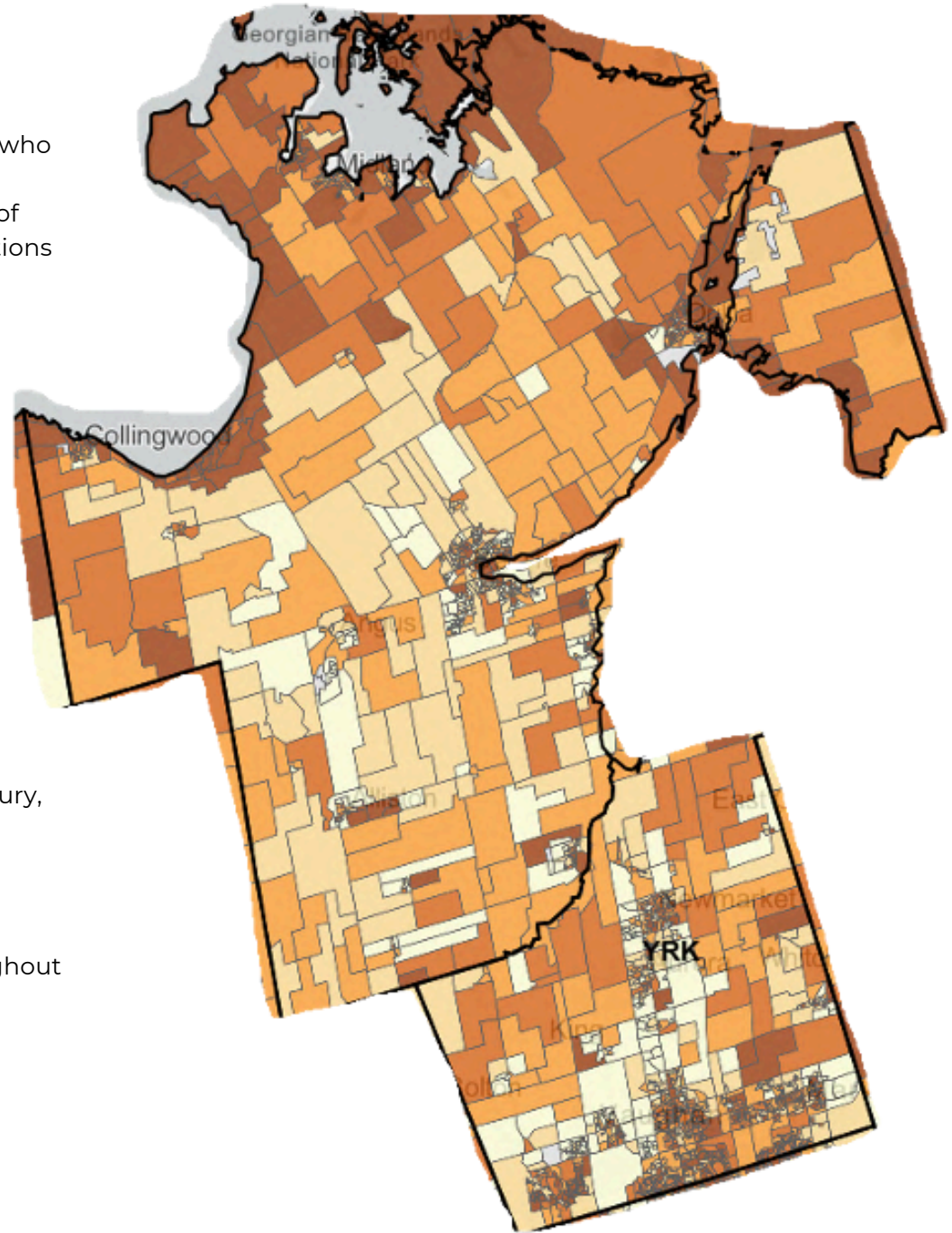
Darkest areas on the map have highest marginalization.

In Simcoe, areas with high concentrations of people without income from employment include:

- Along the coast of Georgian Bay
- Parts of Alliston, New Tecumseth, Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ramara
- Parts of Barrie and Orillia
- Coldwater, Elmvale, Stayner, Creemore

In York, areas of highest marginalization can be scattered throughout the following communities:

- Markham, Richmond Hill, Woodbridge, Vaughan
- Aurora, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville
- King City



Households and Dwellings

This dimension relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness and is based on measures of the types and density of residential accommodations and family structure characteristics.

Factors in this measure include:

- % of population living alone
- % of population that are not youth (i.e. younger than 5 and older than 15)
- Average # of persons per dwelling (relates to crowding)
- % of dwellings that are apartment buildings/neighbourhood density
- % of population who are single/divorced/widowed
- % of dwellings that are not owned/i.e. renters
- % of population who moved during the past 5 years (mobility)

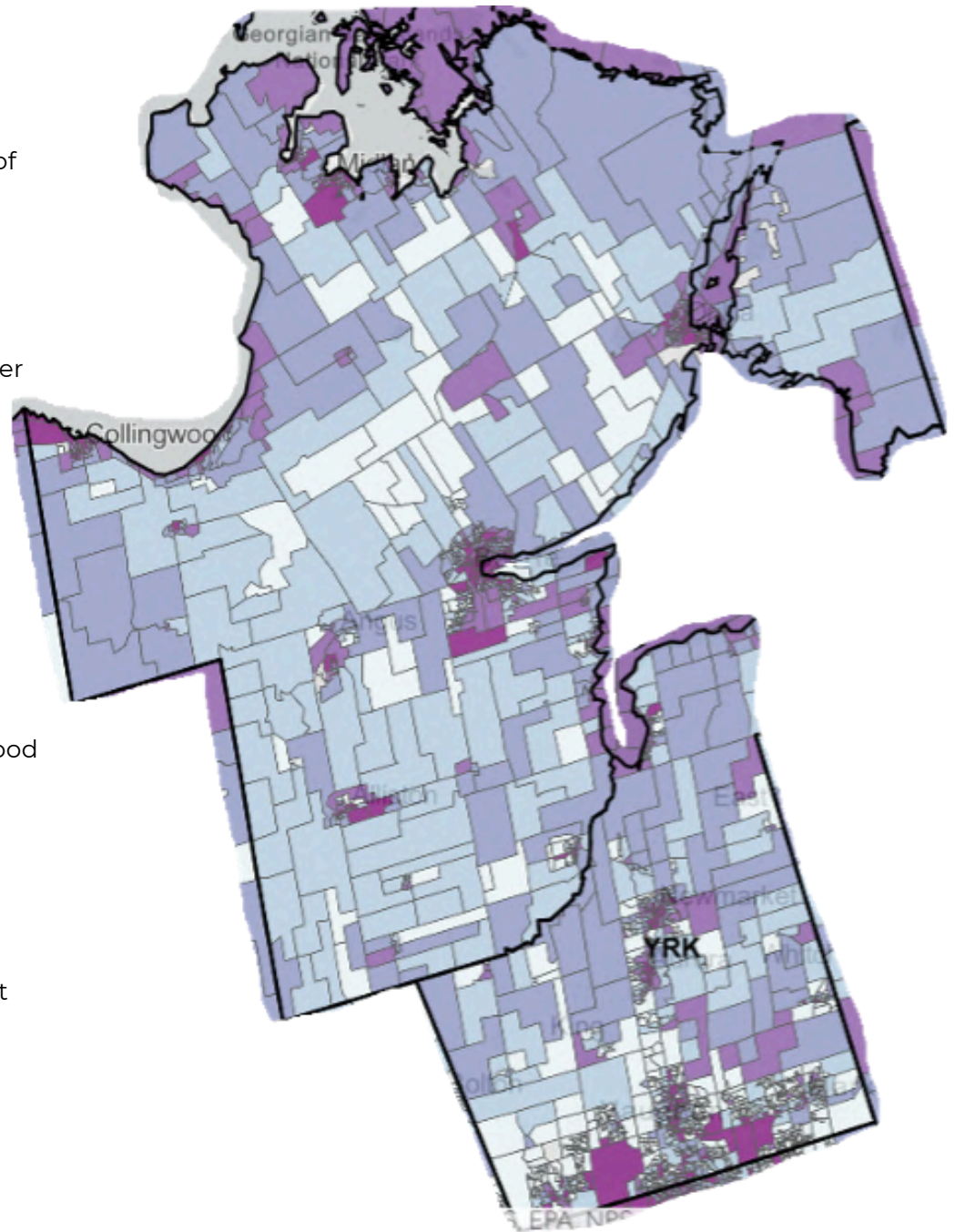
Darkest areas on the map have highest marginalization.

In Simcoe, areas where there may be less family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness include:

- Areas in Collingwood, Midland, Penetanguishene
- Parts of Orillia, Barrie, Ramara
- Stayner, Coldwater, Borden, Bradford

In York, areas of highest marginalization are scattered throughout the following communities:

- Vaughan
- Richmond Hill
- Newmarket
- Aurora
- Woodbridge



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