

GREY BRUCE'S

# Vital Signs<sup>®</sup>

2026

taking the pulse of our community



*Measuring indicators of wellness in  
Grey and Bruce Counties including*

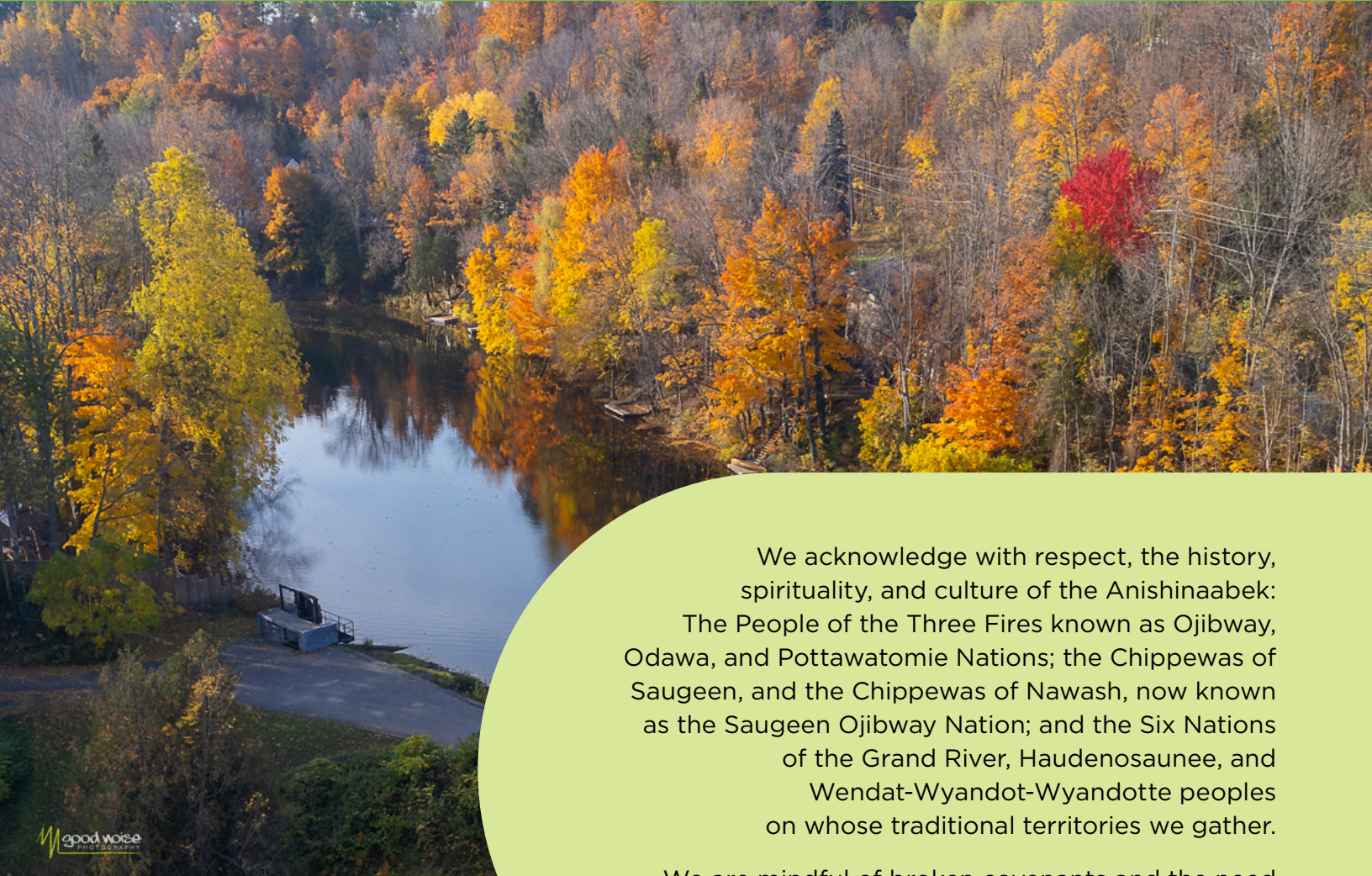
**Community & Belonging  
Living Standards  
Housing  
Health & Wellness  
Recreation & Learning  
Environment & Climate**



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
GREY BRUCE

We're here for good.

# We acknowledge the traditional stewards of these lands



 good wise  
PHOTOGRAPHY

We acknowledge with respect, the history, spirituality, and culture of the Anishinaabek: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations; the Chippewas of Saugeen, and the Chippewas of Nawash, now known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation; and the Six Nations of the Grand River, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat-Wyandot-Wyandotte peoples on whose traditional territories we gather.

We are mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive for justice in all our relations. May we all, as Treaty People, live with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with all its peoples.

# ABOUT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GREY BRUCE

Established in 1994, Community Foundation Grey Bruce enhances community vitality by fostering open discussion about local need, sharing knowledge, and growing endowments to provide strategic granting and support to a wide range of non-profit organizations. Our vision is that everyone in Grey Bruce benefits from a vital, healthy, and resilient community.



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
GREY BRUCE

We're here for good.

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# contents

About Community Foundation Grey Bruce . . . . .	1
About Vital Signs. . . . .	2
A Message from Community Foundation Grey Bruce . . . . .	3
What We Learned . . . . .	4
Data and Diversity. . . . .	5
Sustainable Development Goals. . . . .	6
Community and Belonging . . . . .	8
Living Standards . . . . .	12
Housing . . . . .	16
Health and Wellness . . . . .	20
Recreation and Learning . . . . .	24
Environment and Climate . . . . .	30
What Can I Do? . . . . .	34
Contact Us . . . . .	35
Thanks and Acknowledgements . . . . .	36



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CANADA

# about **VitalSigns**.®

Vital Signs is a community check-up conducted by Community Foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities, identifies significant trends, and supports action on issues that are critical to our quality of life.

Special thanks to the Toronto Foundation for developing and sharing the Vital Signs concept and Community Foundations of Canada for supporting a coordinated national Vital Signs initiative.



For more information about Vital Signs across Canada, visit:

[communityfoundations.ca/initiatives/vital-signs](https://communityfoundations.ca/initiatives/vital-signs)



## A MESSAGE FROM COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GREY BRUCE



Community Foundation Grey Bruce (CFGB) produced its first **Vital Signs** report in 2016. Since then, we have relied on data and knowledge of community wellbeing in our granting and ongoing conversations with fund holders.

Strategic granting comes from a base of knowledge. We are proud to share that in 2025, CFGB granted over **\$1 million** (up 57% since 2016) to address the priorities highlighted in **Vital Signs**. We are also actively engaged in building our **Next25 Fund** with non-restricted resources that allow CFGB to act on rapidly changing community needs as they arise.

Our first report was followed by two **Vital Focus** reports: the first on Youth (2018) and the second on the Housing Crisis (2023). We know that these reports are only as good as the action they inspire.

A prime example of this is our collaboration with the Social Finance and Housing Learning Circle, convened by The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay. The circle has embraced a “whole community approach” to finding ways to build community wealth with local investment, addressing housing needs as well as protecting the long-term sustainability and resilience of our region.

Further demonstrating our commitment to action this year, CFGB announced that it would be establishing a new Community Development Corporation addressing and prioritizing affordable housing – another progressive step informed by community knowledge.

The last decade has moved quickly. From the vital calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to the challenges of a global pandemic, our community has changed. We’ve seen a huge shift towards digital communication and AI, unprecedented economic upheaval, and a growing population drawn to Grey Bruce’s natural beauty and balanced lifestyle.

The change isn’t showing up yet in the reports and data available to us. But we see it as we go about our daily lives at work, school, running errands, enjoying recreation, and participating in cultural activities. Grey Bruce is no longer a secret; it is a region in transition. That is why this work matters more than ever.

**Vital Signs** is more than a report. It’s a shared community effort. Thank you for engaging with our findings and for being part of the journey toward a more just, resilient, and connected Grey Bruce.


Rick Hill, Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Hill'.


Stuart Reid, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Reid'.


# What We Learned




Since 2016, the cost of a **single detached home** in Grey Bruce has almost **doubled**.



According to the Ontario Living Wage Network, the calculated **living wage** required in Grey Bruce is one of the **highest in Ontario**, yet **wages are below** provincial averages.




Grey Bruce has an **ageing population** with a higher proportion of residents **65+**.




**School age enrolment is up** significantly in the past ten years.



**Diversity** in the population has increased with migration but remains predominantly **white and English-speaking**.




Young people in Grey Bruce have **low** rates of **physical activity** but **high** rates of **screen time** and the **highest** rate of **underage drinking** in Ontario.



**Drinking, smoking, and obesity** rates all trend higher than provincial averages.



Grey Bruce scores in first place in Ontario for **self-reported mental wellness** and in second place for **adult physical activity**.



Access to a **family physician** is a primary challenge for families in Grey Bruce.





## UNDERSTANDING OUR DATA

# BGDISC

Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative



Vital Signs relies on the census from Statistics Canada for data at a county and local level. To support this and ensure we are reflecting what is happening in our smaller communities, CFGB also works to find reliable local data wherever possible.

In Vital Signs, we are proud to use reports created right here in our region. These include information on the Social Determinants of Health, the local labour market, climate change, and the environment.

Our **“Community Grants in Action”** stories show how Foundation grants support local charities and not-for-profits. These organizations are working every day to improve the quality of life across Grey Bruce.

Throughout the report, you will also see featured stories called **“Partner Perspectives”**—insights from respected community leaders who reviewed the data through the lens of their lived and professional experiences. Their insights help interpret the findings, highlight emerging challenges, and connect the numbers to what is happening on the ground in Grey Bruce.

Each issue area in the report is supported by statistics from trusted sources. You can view the full list of data sources and indicators in the Vital Signs Report on our website at [www.communityfoundationgreybruce.com](http://www.communityfoundationgreybruce.com)

You can also visit Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BGDISC) at [www.bgdisc.ca](http://www.bgdisc.ca)

BGDISC is run by a group of not-for-profit, social service, government, health, and education organizations. Together, they share important local rural data to help guide programs, policies, funding decisions, and services across the region.

## DATA AND DIVERSITY

Data is based on averages and summaries, and as such, it may not reflect everyone’s experience. That is why we include stories alongside the numbers to help provide context and highlight the experiences of vulnerable people in our community.

Vital Signs reports frequently lack comprehensive data on Indigenous communities. While Vital Signs aims to reflect community health, the data provided by mainstream sources (such as Statistics Canada) often underrepresents Indigenous populations, particularly those living on reserve.

Key reasons for the absence or underrepresentation of Indigenous data include:

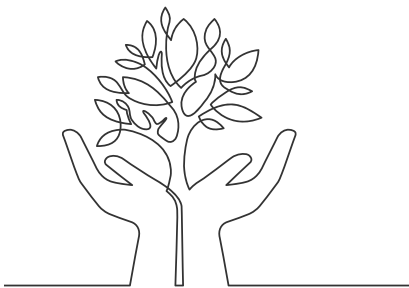
- Systemic Exclusion and Data Quality
- Lack of Indigenous Data Sovereignty
- Historical Misuse of Data
- Small Sample Sizes
- Geographic and Remote Challenges
- Distinction Between On-and Off-Reserve

Community Foundation Grey Bruce pledges to work towards support of Indigenous-led research, creating indicators of wellbeing that are culturally safe and relevant, celebrating abundance and positive facts rather than deficits.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a shared global framework for building a better, more sustainable future.




Adopted by countries around the world, the Goals set out a common vision for reducing poverty, protecting the environment, strengthening communities, and improving quality of life. For Community Foundations, the SDGs provide a way to connect local work to a broader global agenda.

While our focus is Grey Bruce, the challenges we address—**housing, health, economic opportunity, climate change, and inclusion**—are part of larger worldwide issues. The SDGs help place our local efforts within this global context and offer a shared language for measuring progress.

The SDGs are organized around five key pillars: **people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnerships**. Sustainable development cannot focus on one issue alone; it requires balanced progress across all areas. The SDGs also acknowledge that inequality exists in every community, including our own. They are designed to be implemented in all countries, with action happening **at the community level**. Clear targets and indicators are used to track progress and help ensure that no one is left behind.



An aerial photograph showing a multi-lane road stretching from the foreground into the distance. The road is flanked by green fields, dense forests, and some residential buildings. In the far distance, a town or city is visible under a blue sky with light clouds. A light green speech bubble is overlaid on the top right of the image.

*On the following pages, we will explore the key Vital Signs focus areas and response, with the SDGs at the forefront of our efforts.*

# COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

Community and Belonging examines the shifting demographics of population reflecting emerging trends, citizen engagement, belonging and leadership, including donation of time and money, and participation in local groups or initiatives.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Grey Bruce still has a higher proportion of seniors than many other parts of Ontario; however, the population has shifted in important ways since our Vital Signs report in 2016.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on local demographics. As more people began working remotely, some left the Greater Toronto Area and moved to smaller communities like ours. Seasonal residents chose to stay year-round, and rural living became a more realistic option for many Ontarians. There has been an increase in the number of refugees, immigrants, and international students to the region, beginning with the sponsorship of Syrian families (who have largely remained in the area), and recruitment strategies that have attracted international students and skilled immigrant workers.

As a result, Grey Bruce has become more diverse in language and culture. Some towns and rural areas are growing quickly. New “bedroom communities” are forming, where residents commute or work remotely. These communities may not yet have the strong neighbour-to-neighbour connections that long-established towns often have.

At the same time, how people get their news has changed. Online sources and social media are replacing traditional local journalism. Across the region, the number of daily newspapers and other local media outlets is declining.

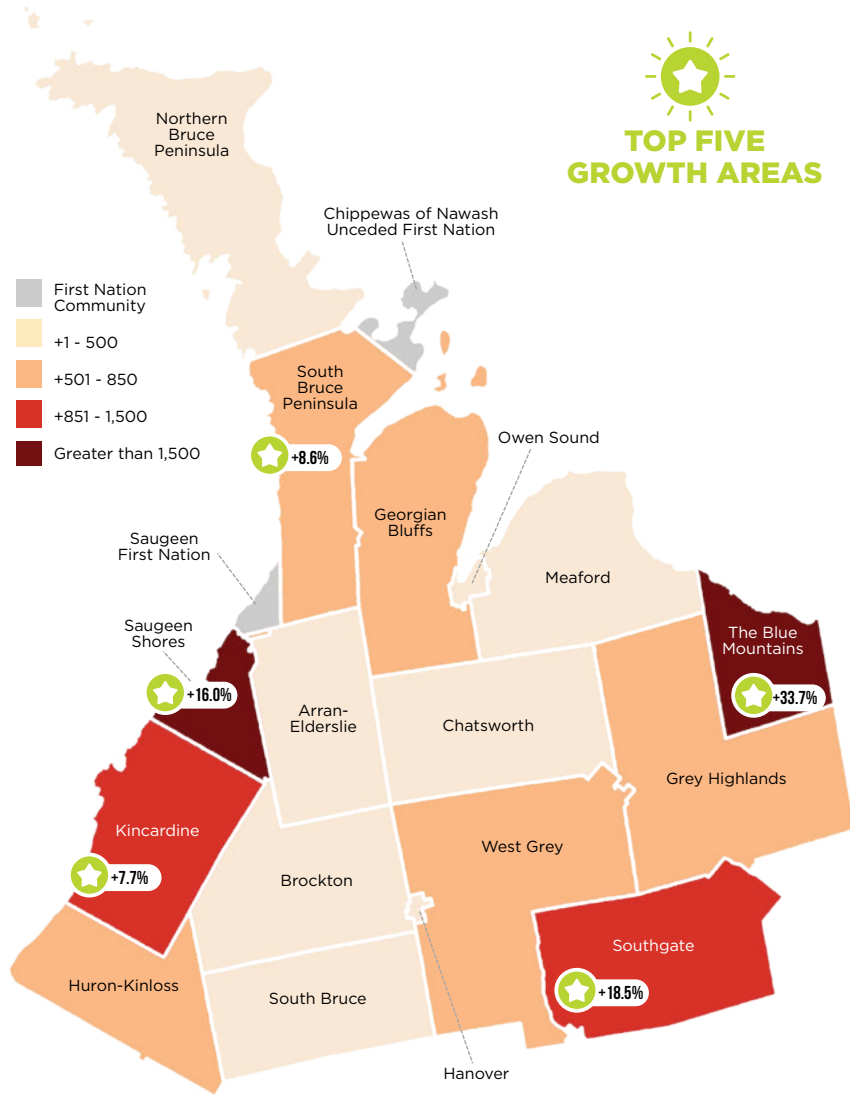
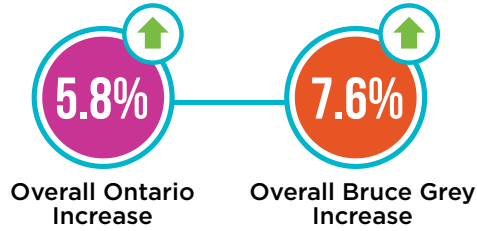
There are also signs that trust in government is weakening. Many young people in Grey Bruce report low interest in politics and civic participation.



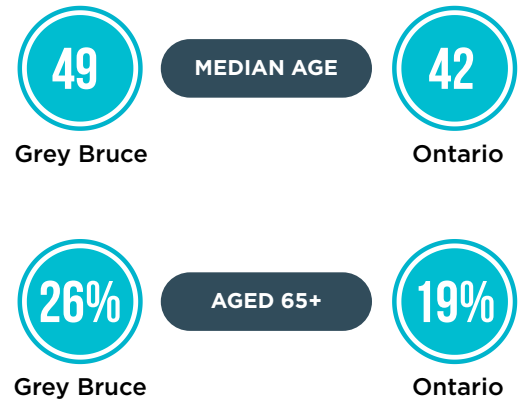
## POPULATION GROWTH

According to the last census, Grey Bruce showed a greater population increase than the Province.

Much of the growth is centralized in certain municipalities of the region.




Bruce and Grey counties have a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 65+ compared to the Ontario average.



## URBAN LIVING

**47%** of Grey Bruce residents live in urban areas  
**vs**  
**83%** across Ontario

Owen Sound is the only city in Grey Bruce and is home to **12%** of the population 

Grey Bruce Public Health (2025)

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*“Belonging happens when people are connected and engaged in their communities. High wellbeing scores for neighbourhood liveability and environmental quality suggest strong connections. However, a lower sense of community belonging reveals social gaps, raising questions about inclusion, barriers, and how local leadership could engage citizens to strengthen connection and belonging.”*

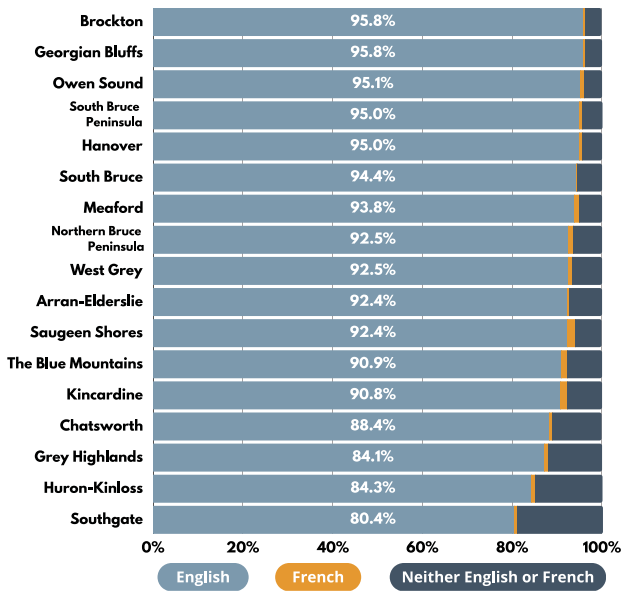


#### Colleen Purdon

Founding member of *Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce* and the One World Festival. A Grey Bruce resident since 1986, she has led local, provincial and national work on rural issues and gender-based violence.

## KNOWLEDGE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The languages spoken at home vary across Grey Bruce.



Statistics Canada 2016 Census.

## LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

Grey Bruce is home to a diverse range of languages.



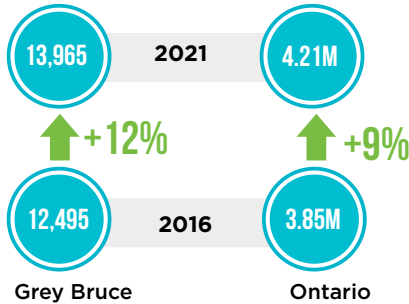
Statistics Canada 2016, 2021 Census.

## IMMIGRATION

Despite representing a smaller portion of the population compared to Ontario overall, the region continues to experience steady growth in immigration.

### PERCENT OF POPULATION (2021)

Immigrants in Grey Bruce **8%**      Immigrants in Ontario **30%**



Statistics Canada 2016, 2021 Census.

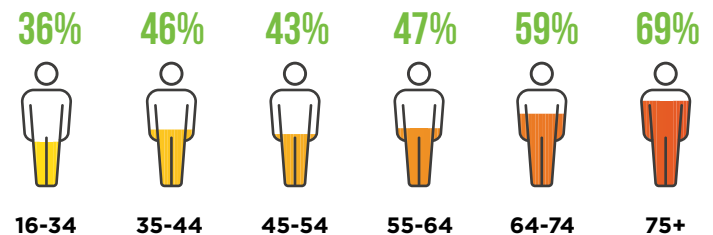
The most common countries of origin for recent immigrants (2016 -2021), based on number of people, include:

- |                      |                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. India <b>+195</b> | 4. UK <b>+85</b>            |
| 2. USA <b>+115</b>   | 5. Philippines <b>+55</b>   |
| 3. Syria <b>+100</b> | 6. Pakistan <b>+35</b>      |
|                      | 7. China <b>+30</b>         |
|                      | 8. Jamaica <b>+25</b>       |
|                      | 9. Mexico <b>+25</b>        |
|                      | 10. South Africa <b>+20</b> |

Statistics Canada 2016, 2021 Census.

## INTEREST IN LOCAL POLITICS

Interest in local politics varies, with a general trend of greater engagement among older residents.



Canadian Index of Wellbeing "Wellbeing in Bruce and Grey Counties" (2018)

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*"Grey-Bruce Wellbeing scores help communities to use our strengths (neighbourliness and networks of personal relationships) to bolster civic participation, improve relationships between citizens and governments and enhance education, physical health and life balance: our strengths are our best tools, and these include arts & culture, education & lifelong learning, and community connections."*



**Joan John**

Municipal Councillor in *The Township of Southgate* and the Founder of *JunCtian Community* Initiatives, serving Southgate and Grey County with inclusivity and community empowerment.



## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS IN ACTION

Since 2020, CFGB has managed the permanently endowed Southgate Community Fund that supports projects by charities and non-profits in the Southgate area. Since 2023, the Southgate Fund has distributed **Neighbourhood Small Grants** (NSG) of \$500 to support grassroots initiatives and help residents create stronger, more connected communities. NSGs are intentionally open to informal groups of neighbours, not just registered organizations, because great ideas and community leadership can emerge from anywhere.

In 2025, the **Rainbow Dance Party** transformed the L.E. Shore Memorial Library in Thornbury into a vibrant, inclusive community gathering space in celebration of Pride. The event brought together families, children, youth, seniors, and community members of all ages and backgrounds for a joyful, family-friendly celebration of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. The library lawn was filled with colour, music, and connection, reinforcing the library's role as a welcoming community hub where everyone belongs.

In 2025, Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce received funding for **Everyone Belongs: Connections and Dialogue for Inclusive Communities**, a project to train facilitators, pilot workshops, engage diverse citizens and build belonging, inclusion and community action. Through consultation with Indigenous Elders, facilitator training, and three pilot workshops, participants will build understanding, form new connections, and create local action plans. This initiative provides a practical, positive way to strengthen community ties, address barriers such as racism and isolation, and foster inclusive communities where everyone belongs.

## WELLBEING SCORES

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing, in partnership with the University of Waterloo, conducted a study measuring wellbeing across the region. This is how Grey Bruce scored:



80+%

Environmental quality of neighbourhood  
Neighbourhood as a place to live



71-80%

Access to parks/recreation opportunities  
Financial situation  
Mental wellbeing  
Personal relationships  
Work situation



61-70%

Access to arts/cultural opportunities  
Balance of activities in daily life  
Leisure time  
Physical wellbeing  
Way I spend time  
Sense of belonging to this community



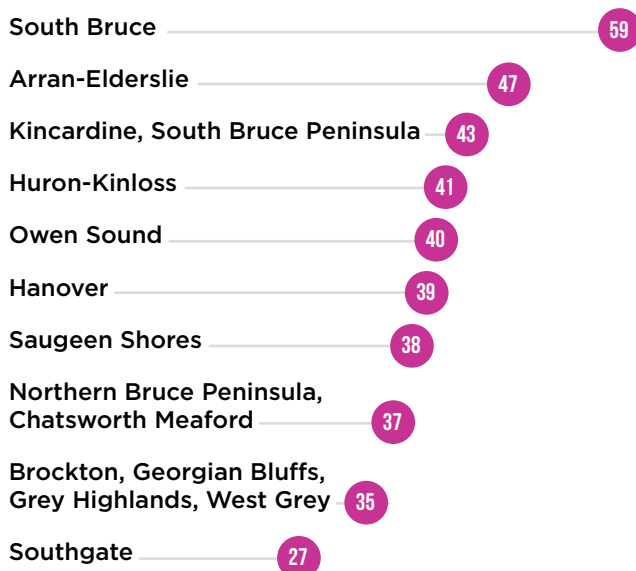
50-60%

Access to educational opportunities  
How well democracy is working  
Local government responds to community needs

Canadian Index of Wellbeing "Wellbeing in Bruce and Grey Counties" (2018)

## MUNICIPAL VOTER TURNOUT

% of eligible voters voting:



Association of Municipalities of Ontario (2022)

# LIVING STANDARDS

Living Standards refers to the distribution of wealth and economic security, including employment opportunities, housing and homelessness, poverty, food security, and transportation.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Even for those who are housed and employed, making ends meet in Grey Bruce is a growing challenge.

Limited regional transportation means most residents must own and maintain a vehicle—a significant expense that compounds the pressure of high housing costs.

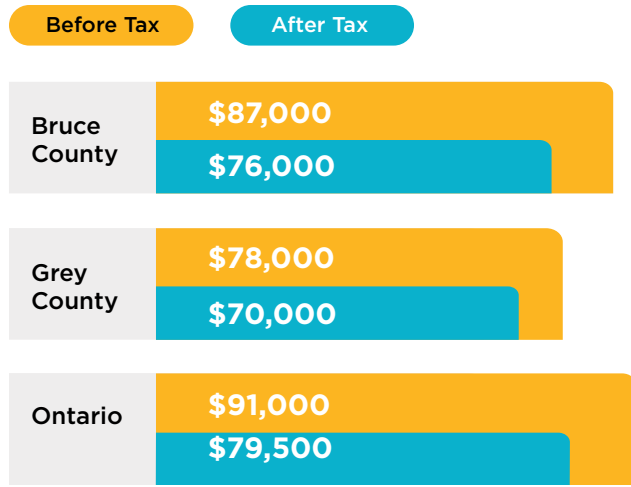
Together, these factors drive the region's estimated living wage to the second highest in Ontario, trailing only the Greater Toronto Area.

And while unemployment rates are low, many available jobs don't pay enough to close the gap, leaving median household incomes well below the provincial average.



## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median household income in Grey Bruce falls below the Ontario average.



Statistics Canada 2021 Census

## LIVING WAGE

The Living Wage is the hourly rate a full-time (40 hours/week) worker needs to make ends meet where they live, including essentials such as housing, food, childcare, transportation, clothing, modest community participation, and the impact of taxes, transfers, and benefits.

Despite the lower median household income, Grey Bruce has the second highest living wage in the province.



Ontario Living Wage Network (2025)

## ACCESS TO FOOD



**18%** of Grey Bruce households experienced food insecurity (2012-2023)

Grey Bruce Public Health (2025)

## COMMUTING TO WORK

Who works from home?



**42%** vs **12%**  
Blue Mountains vs Owen Sound

Who commutes locally?

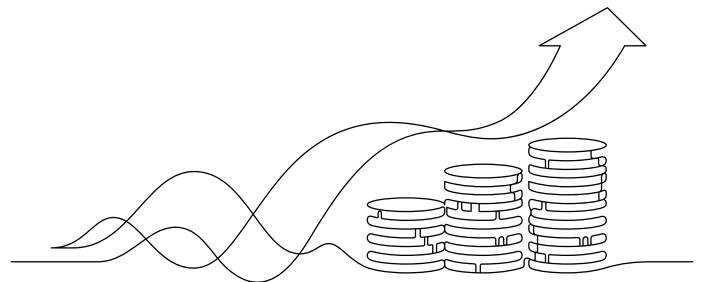


**82%** vs **14%**  
Kincardine vs West Grey

Most common long commutes:

**29%** Southgate vs **24%** Grey Highlands vs **23%** West Grey

Statistics Canada 2021 Census



### Jill Umbach

Coordinator of the **Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force** and **Grey Bruce Children's Alliance**. She is a single mother raising her family in Owen Sound, Ontario.

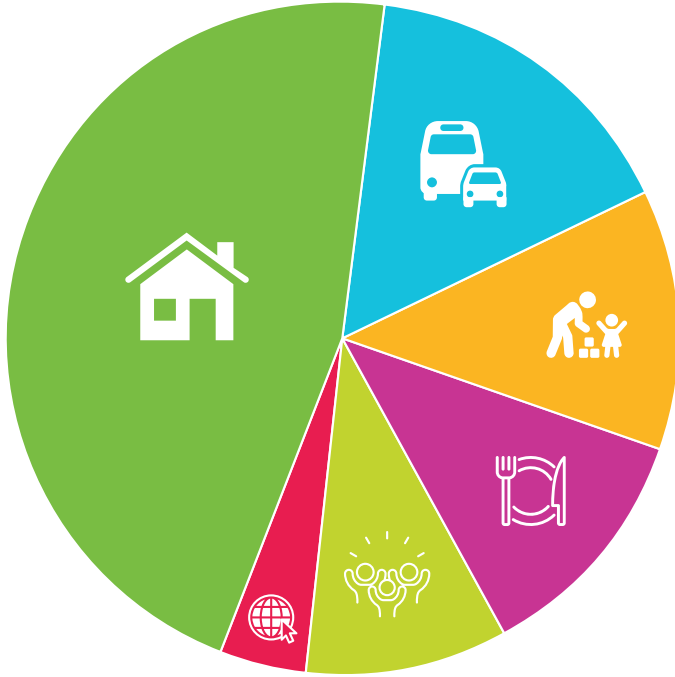


### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*"Income inadequacy is at the heart of persistent poverty in Bruce and Grey Counties. Working families struggle to stay housed and feed their kids. Housing and transportation costs make the Grey Bruce living wage the second highest in the province. Having a job that pays a low wage—women in Grey Bruce earn on average \$32,000/year, 31.3% less than a man at \$42,000/year—shows the growing gap between minimum wage and the actual cost of living."*

## AVERAGE MONTHLY EXPENSES

Shelter is the largest monthly expense for individuals in Grey Bruce, making up nearly half of the total \$3,260 monthly budget. Transportation costs are also significantly higher than in the GTA, adding to the region’s unique cost-of-living profile.



**Shelter**  
**\$1,662**  
 vs. \$2092 (GTA)

**Food**  
**\$368**  
 vs. \$345 (GTA)

**Transportation**  
**\$484**  
 vs. \$182 (GTA)

**Other Misc**  
**\$306**  
 vs. \$291 (GTA)

Includes toiletries and personal care, furniture, household supplies, laundry, school supplies and fees, bank fees, minimal recreation and entertainment.

**Child Care**  
**\$461**  
 vs. \$678 (GTA)

**Cell & Internet**  
**\$81**  
 vs. \$78 (GTA)

Ontario Living Wage Network (2025)

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*“The number of students attending our programs has remained the same from (2024–2025), but food costs have increased by 75% in just one year. Many of our youth arrive hungry, making food an essential part of our programs. Rising food expenses are placing a significant strain on our budget.”*



#### Jenny Hanley

Founder and Executive Director of *The Hanley Institute*. A proud advocate for community and youth, supporting them through compassion, education, connection, and empowerment.





## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS IN ACTION

Owen Sound Hunger and Relief Effort received a capital grant in 2025 to support **Emergency Preparedness - Keeping OSHaRE Open**, which ensures that vital food programs remain available during power outages and emergencies. This project will equip OSHaRE with an on-demand generator capable of powering the entire facility, including kitchen equipment, refrigeration, heating and cooling, and lighting. By maintaining uninterrupted service, this project strengthens food security and protects essential community resources during times of crisis.

The Warton Propeller Club received funding to support a project called **Connected Living: Promoting Health, Lifelong Learning, and Social Engagement** that delivered wellness, social, and educational programs, alongside meal support, to empower seniors and community members in Grey Bruce, enhancing their health and connection. Across twelve bi-weekly sessions, participants engaged in educational workshops on topics like fraud prevention, health, and hospice care, while enjoying shared hot meals and social activities.



good voice  
PHOTOGRAPHY

# HOUSING

Housing and homelessness are top of mind in any discussion of wellbeing in Grey Bruce. Affordable housing and addressing homelessness are major considerations in providing community health, economic vitality, and reducing public costs on health care and emergency services.

## THE BIG PICTURE

In Grey Bruce, the average home price far exceeds what a typical household earns, putting ownership out of reach for many residents. One in three renters spends more than 30% of their income on housing, leaving less for basic needs like food, utilities, and transportation.

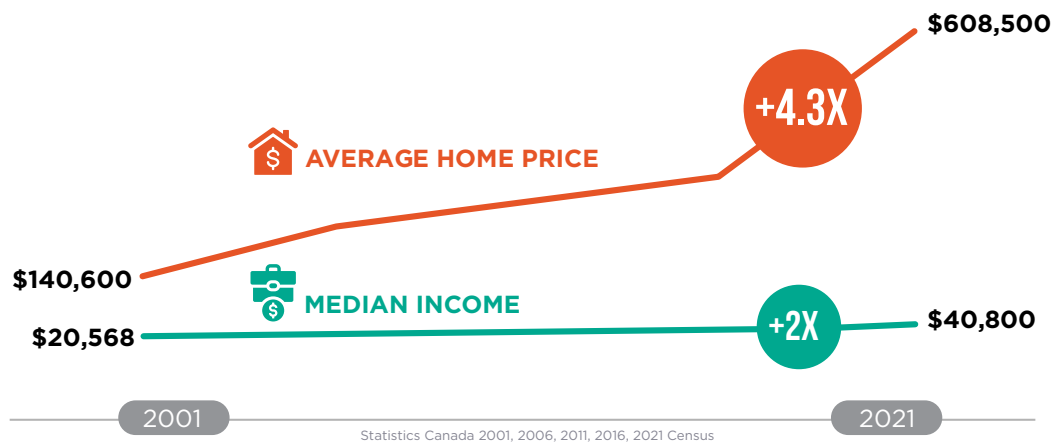
Affordability is further complicated by location: many lower-cost housing options sit outside town centres, away from employment, services, and support systems.

For too many residents, finding stable, affordable housing depends not just on income, but on access to reliable transportation.



## AVERAGE HOME PRICE VS MEDIAN INCOME

There is a growing gap between housing costs and earnings in the region.



## HOMELESSNESS

**170** households in Grey Bruce were experiencing active homelessness in 2024.

Grey Bruce Public Health (2025)

## RENTAL VACANCY

Rental vacancy rates are far below the healthy benchmark of 3%.



Grey County



Bruce County

<https://povertytaskforce.com/housing/>

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE



*“A safe and affordable place to call home is the foundation for a better life. It strengthens families, creates opportunities, and fosters strong, thriving communities. More needs to be done to improve housing affordability across Grey and Bruce.”*

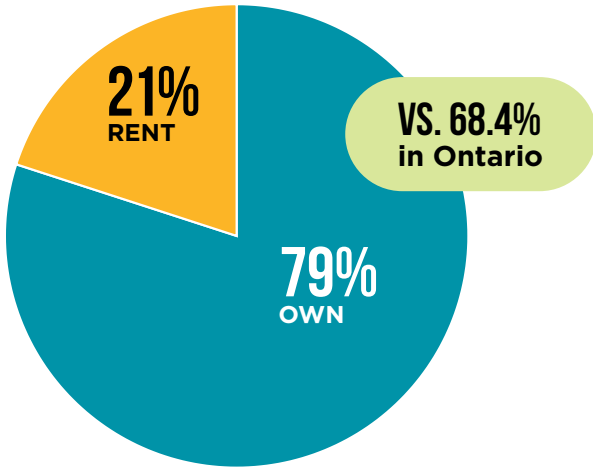
**Greg Fryer**

Executive Director of **Habitat for Humanity Grey Bruce**, providing a pathway to affordable homeownership.



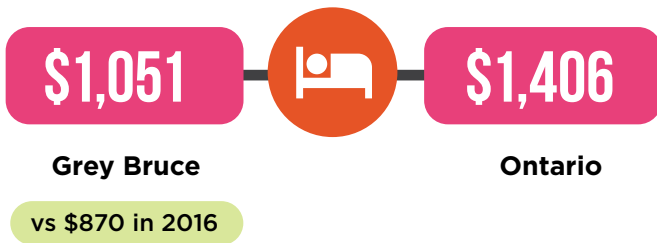
## HOUSING ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

As of 2021, the rental-to-ownership ratio has remained stable (vs. 2016).



Grey Bruce Public Health: 2021

Rental costs in the region have increased since 2016, but remain below the provincial average.



Bruce County: "Exploring Options and Opportunities for Home Sharing in Bruce County" (2021)

**1 of 3** ... rental tenants pay rent that exceeds 30% affordability.

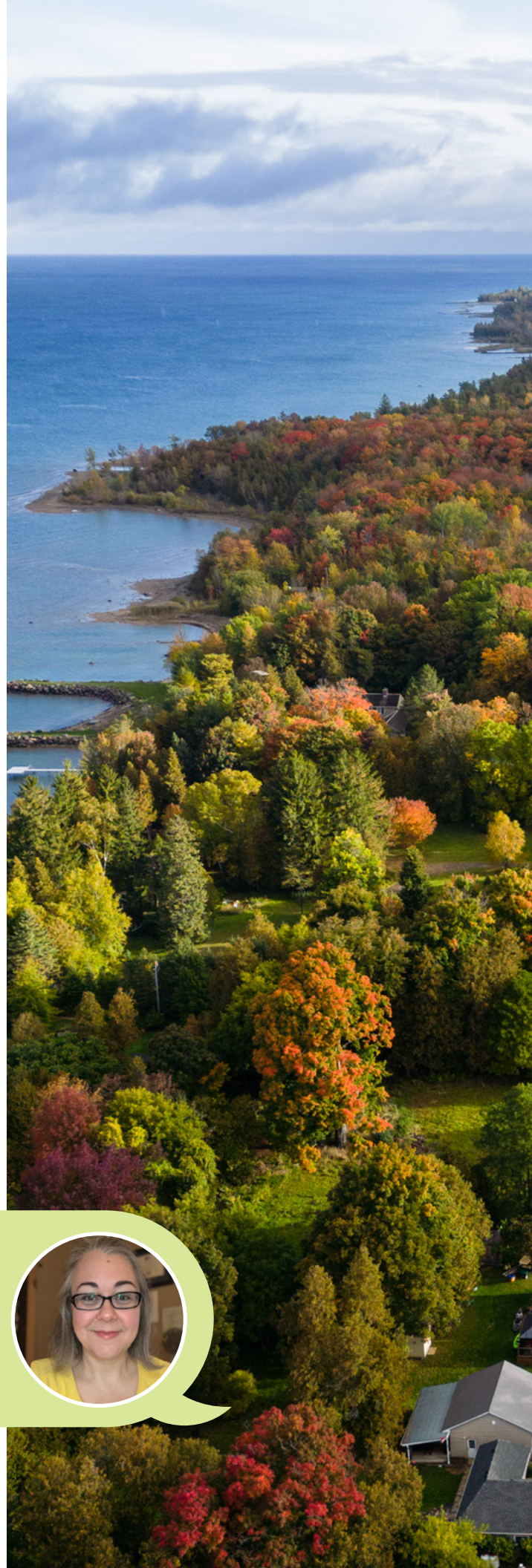
Statistics Canada 2021 Census

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*"A varied and balanced housing supply is essential to community and individual well-being. All levels of government, community partners, industry, and residents have a role to play in shaping the housing system to meet our needs."*

**Liz Buckton**

Senior Policy Planner with **Grey County**, working to align planning tools, processes, and incentives to support local housing creation and to advance the County's **Housing Action Plan**.





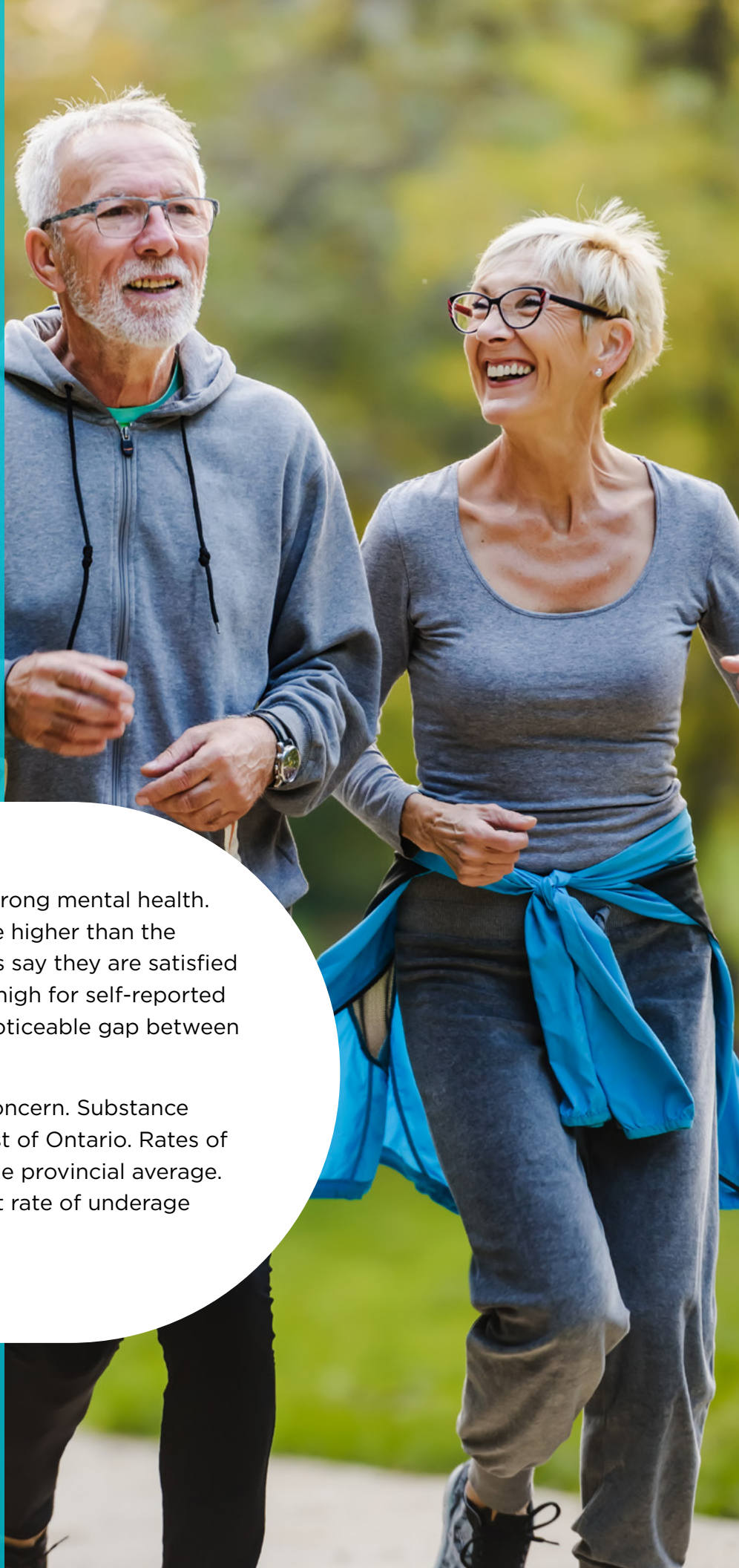
**Helping Youth in Transition** is a multi-year project that addresses the needs of youth, 16 to 24 years of age, facing homelessness in Grey Bruce, through a rent supplement, along with counselling and mentoring to ensure the best outcomes. YMCA Youth in Transition Services delivers the supplement as well as wrap-around services, mentoring, and transitional supports that have the potential to significantly change the life trajectory of participants. The project aims to lend dignity and autonomy to youth in transition.

**A Good Night's Sleep Bruce County** is a project led by the YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce which supports individuals transitioning from homelessness into stable housing by providing new beds and basic bedding. This initiative will supply mattresses, frames where needed, and bedding to youth and adults who are moving into housing across Bruce County. By addressing a critical gap in the housing transition process, this initiative strengthens living standards and supports successful, sustainable exits from homelessness.

In 2025, Maam Wiim Win Native Homes established a project called **Cultivating Connection and Culture**; a shared garden initiative at the new affordable housing triplex in Owen Sound designed to support Indigenous resident wellness, food security, and cultural connection. The garden includes wheelchair-accessible and child-friendly raised beds, standard beds for food growing, culturally significant trees, and traditional medicines such as sweetgrass and sage.

# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health and Wellness includes both the physical and mental health of the population and includes access to services and the promotion of healthy living.



## THE BIG PICTURE

Overall, people in Grey Bruce report strong mental health. Self-reported mental health ratings are higher than the provincial average, and many residents say they are satisfied with their lives. Grey Bruce also ranks high for self-reported physical activity. However, there is a noticeable gap between men and women in activity levels.

At the same time, there are areas of concern. Substance use rates are high compared to the rest of Ontario. Rates of obesity and smoking are also above the provincial average. In addition, Grey Bruce has the highest rate of underage drinking in the province.



## STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Health and wellness in Grey Bruce reflect both strengths and challenges, with higher levels of physical activity alongside elevated rates of substance use and chronic health concerns, compared to provincial trends.



**15%**  
saw a mental health professional  
in the past year (*Ontario: 15%*)



**56%**  
of adults get enough physical  
exercise (*Ontario: 49%*)



**37%**  
(18+) have a BMI that classifies  
them as obese (*Ontario: 30%*)



**23%**  
drink heavily on a regular basis  
(*Ontario: 17%*)



**6%**  
reported being diagnosed with  
chronic bronchitis, emphysema,  
or chronic obstructive pulmonary  
disease (COPD) (*Ontario 3%*)



**25%**  
used cannabis in the past year  
(*Ontario: 21%*)



**13%**  
Ontario students (Grades 7-12)  
reported using e-cigarettes/  
vapes in the past year  
(*Grey Bruce data unavailable*)



**16%**  
smoke daily or occasionally  
(*Ontario: 11%*)

Grey Bruce Public Health, "Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Strategic Planning Session" (2024), Grey Bruce Public Health, "Health Status Report" (2022) Canadian Community Health Survey Statistics Canada (2023-2024)



### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*"While Grey Bruce ranks among Ontario's leaders in physical activity and self-reported mental health, the data reveal a concerning pattern of elevated substance use and obesity rates — suggesting that strong overall wellness indicators are being offset by persistent and high-risk health behaviours."*

#### Carolyn Letourneau

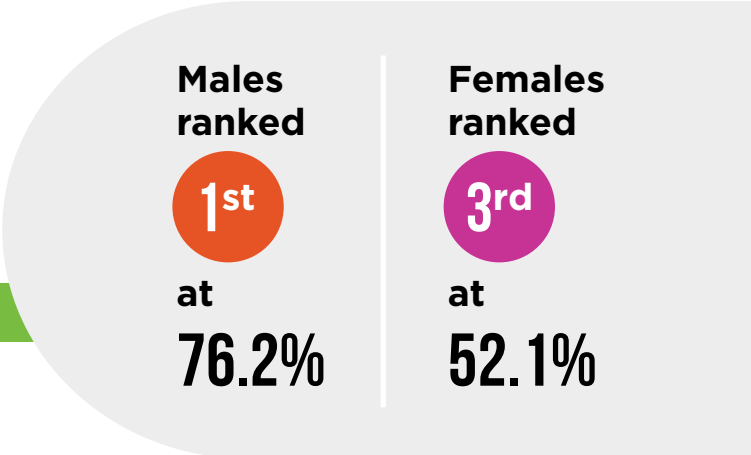
Executive Director of **Beaver Valley Outreach**, bringing over 25 years of experience in the non-profit sector and a strong commitment to advancing community impact through strategic partnerships, sustainable growth, and compassionate service.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Grey Bruce ranks highest in Ontario for residents reporting “very good” or “excellent” mental health. From 2019 to 2021, men’s self-reported mental health improved while women’s declined, though both remain among the top three across all public health units.

### #1 SCORE

Across all Public Health Units in Ontario at 64.8% for Males and Females combined in 2021.



Public Health Ontario (2021)

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*“Leading Ontario in reported positive mental health, Grey Bruce demonstrated how coordinated partnerships and an upstream prevention approach strengthens protective factors and creates healthier, more resilient communities.”*

**Alexis Cook**

Coordinator of the *Grey Bruce Community Safety and Well-Being Plan* and a passionate advocate for health and well-being, championing collaborative, community approaches that strengthen prevention, resilience, and access to care.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Grey Bruce ranks 2nd in Ontario for residents exceeding the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. Men consistently report higher activity levels than women, ranking 1st overall, while women rank 14th, reflecting a persistent gap in physical activity between genders.

### Above Recommended Physical Activity



### Zero Physical Activity

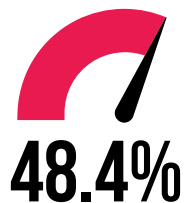


Public Health Ontario (2021)



## YOUTH: ALCOHOL

In 2019, the region had the highest rate of underage alcohol use among public health units.

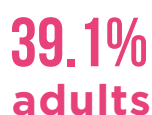


Per 100,000  
Self-Reported  
Underage Drinking

Public Health Ontario (2021)

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Grey Bruce ranks 5th highest in Ontario for adult alcohol consumption.



drink 3+  
standard drinks  
per week.

Public Health Ontario (2021)

## ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE



patients do not have access to  
primary care in Grey Bruce

Grey Bruce Primary Care Master Plan, 2026-2029

In 2025, Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Bruce North Huron was able to bring its **Wellness Packages for Youth** project to life: a meaningful initiative focused on promoting the physical and mental wellbeing of young people in our community. Each package included recreational gift cards that allowed Bigs and Littles to enjoy one-on-one outings together—experiences that may not otherwise have been accessible.

In 2025, GMAN C.A.R.E.S. Incorporated supported **Early Intervention for Youth with Eating Disorders: Piloting FREEDcan** in Grey Bruce, bringing early-stage, evidence-based eating disorder services to Grey Bruce youth, and improving access, care pathways, and culturally inclusive support. A key component is an online portal offering rapid access to care navigation, self-management tools, peer support, and early interventions.

In 2025, M’Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre received a grant to support the **Bundles of Care** project supporting Urban Indigenous folx upon their release from custody by providing essential and culturally meaningful items that promote successful reintegration. The project also engages Elders to provide guidance and connection at the time of release. By addressing immediate needs and reducing barriers linked to poverty, housing instability, stigma, and health risks, this initiative promotes safer reintegration and strengthens community connections.

*“This phone is a lifeline for me. It allows me to reconnect with family members who don’t even know that I am out yet. When I was released, I didn’t know how I was going to get started or afford the basic things I needed ... receiving a backpack filled with essential items means more than people realize. It provides not only items, but also a sense of care, dignity, and a starting point during a tough and overwhelming transition.”*

—Bundles of Care Package Recipient

# RECREATION AND LEARNING

Recreation and Learning includes opportunities to participate in or attend arts and culture events, sporting events, outdoor recreation activities, and to support and promote the local arts community. Learning focuses on the promotion of lifelong learning as well as access to higher education.



## THE BIG PICTURE

Regional pride is an important part of life in Grey Bruce. Local culture and recreation activities bring families and neighbours together and help strengthen community connections. Data shows high levels of satisfaction and participation in local cultural and recreational facilities and events.

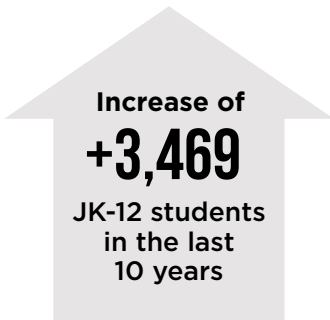
The arts and culture sector, including festivals and community events, is strong. It not only enriches community life but also contributes to the local economy.

Demographic changes show growth in the number of school-aged children. As a result, new schools are being planned or built to meet increasing demand.

At the same time, Grey Bruce continues to have a large population of educated retirees. Lifelong learning remains an important part of community life. Like many rural areas across Ontario, Grey Bruce is also seeing improvements in internet connectivity. Investments in rural broadband are helping residents access online services, education, and economic opportunities more easily.



## STUDENT ENROLMENT



Rising enrolment in public and Catholic schools over the past decade reflects a growing school-aged population. Since the 2014/15 school year, enrolment has increased from 20,498 to 23,967 students across the region.



**Historical 10 Year Enrolment Trend**  
Gain of 2,225 Students  
**Blewater District**

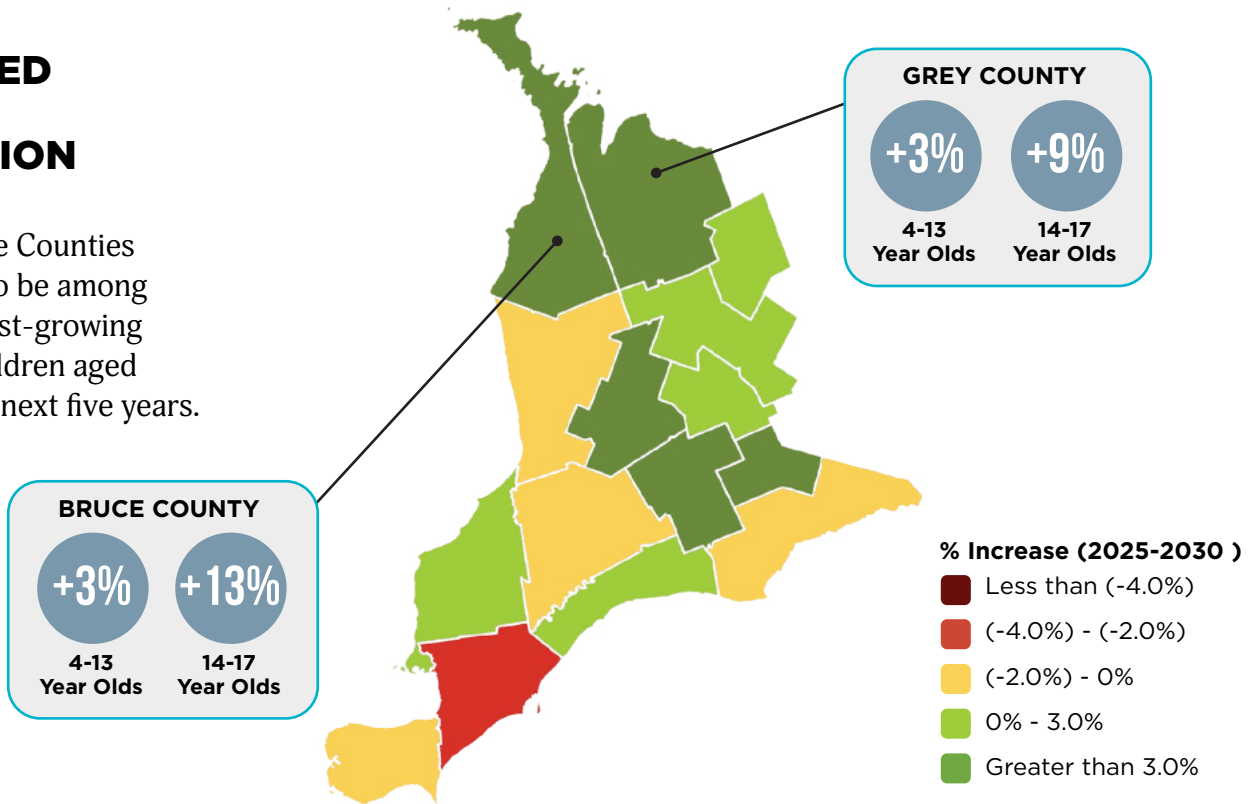


**Historical 10 Year Enrolment Trend**  
Gain of 1,244 Students  
**Bruce-Grey Catholic District**

BWDSB Long-Term Accommodation Strategy (2025), BGCDSB Long-Term Accommodation Plan (2024)

## PROJECTED STUDENT POPULATION

Grey and Bruce Counties are expected to be among Ontario's fastest-growing regions for children aged 4–13 over the next five years.



Ontario Ministry of Finance Population Projections (2025)

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*“Our community plays an essential role in supporting the growing student population. Graduating high school students experience uncertainty about the future and need meaningful opportunities for leadership, volunteer service, co-op placements, and employment, as well as accessible mental health supports.”*



**Melri Wright**  
Co-Executive Director of **Ledge Leadership**, a charitable organization dedicated to the growth and leadership of youth and young adults in Grey Bruce.

## NEW EDUCATION FACILITIES

New schools are being built across the region as enrolment grows in public and Catholic boards.

Bluewater District School Board  
Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board



- New Beavercrest School (Opened 2025)
- New Dundalk School
- New Port Elgin School



- New Owen Sound Secondary School

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND PATHWAYS

Grey Bruce students are embracing hands-on learning.

SAP\_Template 2024-2025 for AC.pdf  
Board Reports - Bluewater District School Board



Grade 6 literacy achievement is strong across the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board.



of schools reaching the 80-100% range on the 2024-25 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments

The Kincardine Record: "Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board marks significant gains in EQAO results", December 2025

## BARRIERS TO LEARNING



In the 2024-2025 school year, there were 30 snow days for students in Grey Bruce, equivalent to missing six weeks of school.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/london/article/snow-days-rapidly-piling-up-in-midwestern-ontario/>

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*"Our region is growing, something not seen at this scale in years. Georgian's Owen Sound campus is vital infrastructure, strengthening pathways, offering wraparound support at every stage. Georgian proudly partners in a community-driven development and innovation ecosystem."*

**Dr. Dave Shorey**

Executive Director, Government Relations, and Community Engagement at **Georgian College**, working with partners across Grey Bruce to strengthen education pathways, workforce development, and community wellbeing.



## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



of the adult population in Grey Bruce has a **high school diploma**



**report having post-secondary education**

Rural Ontario Institute: Wellbeing Dashboard  
Grey Bruce Public Health, 2021 Census Grey Bruce Income Education Labour Report

Among 25- to 64-year-olds in Grey Bruce with post-secondary qualifications, the most common fields of study in 2021 were:

architecture, engineering, and related trades **25%**

business, management and public administration **17%**

health and related fields **17%**


## TOURISM

Tourism plays a significant role in the economy of Grey Bruce.

**5+**  
million  
VISITORS PER YEAR



Approximately  
**\$650**  
million  
IN SPENDING



Bruce County: "Economic Impact of Tourism Report" (2019)  
Grey County: "2019 Value of Tourism Snapshot"

## TOP ATTRACTIONS

Grey and Bruce Counties are known for their diverse attractions, making them a popular destination for travelers.

**Chi-Gmiinh Saugeen Beach**  
400,000 visitors per year. (2022)

**Bruce Peninsula National Park:**  
460,435 visitors per year. (2022)



**Blue Mountain Resort**  
Over 1.5 million visitors per year

**Bruce County & Grey Roots Museums**  
Around 50,000 visitors per year



Government of Canada "Parks Canada Attendance" (2022/23), Bruce County "Museum by the Numbers"

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE



*"It's not surprising that one of the main drivers for tourism in Grey Bruce is the food and beverage industry. Our area has become a premier destination for world-class culinary experiences celebrated by locals and tourists alike."*

**Jesse Wilkinson**

**Founder of Rrampt Magazine**, a local publication for arts and culture in Grey Bruce.



**Grey and Bruce Counties are home to a stunning array of waterfalls:**

- Eugenia Falls (Eugenia)
- Hoggs Falls (Flesherton)
- Indian Falls (Georgian Bluffs)
- Inglis Falls (Owen Sound)
- Jones Falls (Owen Sound)
- Sauble Falls (Sauble Beach)

**Keefer Falls (Annan)**

In 2026, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy acquired with plans to create a 117-acre nature preserve for conservation and public enjoyment.

**Fathom Five National Marine Park** is the “Shipwreck Capital of Canada” and home to some of the best freshwater diving in the world.

**Meaford** has the most arts and cultural facilities (in 2020) at 16; Owen Sound is next with 7.



**TOP PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES**

Top four physical activities with highest participation rates among Ontarians:

Owen Sound online survey top four physical activities:

**1** Walking for pleasure **(81%)**

**1** Adventure activities hiking/camping/boating/skiing **(69%)**

**2** Bicycling **(42%)**

**2** Outdoor fitness running/cycling/cross-country skiing **(69%)**

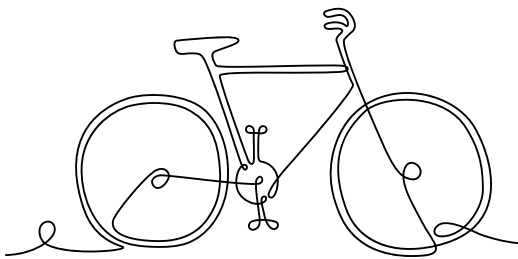
**3** Swimming in pools **(40%)**

**3** Outdoor athletics soccer/tennis/baseball **(65%)**

**4** Aerobics/fitness/aqua-fit/yoga **(38%)**

**4** Indoor fitness exercise classes/yoga **(53%)**

City of Owen Sound Recreation, Parks & Facilities Master Plan: 2018-2028



**PARTNER PERSPECTIVE**

“The region’s distinctive arts and cultural attractions are rooted in its natural environments and given projected demographic shifts, this report motivates forward-looking investment in sustainability, culture, and youth to ensure diversity and continued health and preservation of Grey Bruce ecologies.”

**Jennifer Norman**

Artist, educator, and Executive Director of the *Durham Art Gallery*, West Grey



## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS IN ACTION

**The Girls at Bat** project successfully launched the first-ever dedicated 9U all-girls baseball team in Owen Sound through Owen Sound Minor Baseball. By removing participation barriers and increasing visibility for girls in baseball, the project strengthened confidence, physical activity, and long-term sport participation while laying the foundation for continued growth in female baseball locally.

In 2025, Southampton Arts successfully delivered the **ARTBike** initiative: a mobile, community-based arts program that brought free, firsthand creative experiences directly to public spaces across the community. Through its mobile delivery model, the program encouraged creativity, connection, and engagement in an accessible and welcoming way for children, families, and visitors.

**The Walkerton Clean Water Legacy Fund** was created in 2020 to honour those affected by the E. coli outbreak in 2000 and to celebrate bright, enterprising students in Grey and Bruce counties entering the field of environmental studies or clean water management. This year's scholarship recipient is Chloe Rands of Allenford, who is currently studying Environmental Technology at Centennial College in Toronto. Her goal after graduation is to join a government agency, non-profit or consulting firm focused on sustainable development.

The **Expanding Literacy Initiatives** at the Dundalk Library project strengthens home literacy and digital learning for children and families across the Township of Southgate. By making reading more accessible, engaging, and family-friendly, this project helps close local literacy gaps, supports ESL learners and struggling readers, and empowers caregivers to build daily reading habits that support long-term educational success and child well-being.



### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*“While Grey and Bruce counties are celebrated for their stunning landscapes and recreational opportunities, they are equally remarkable for the vibrant arts community they nurture. In Owen Sound specifically, organizations such as the Georgian Bay Folk Society, the Harmony Centre, the Roxy Little Theatre, the Georgian Bay Centre for the Arts, the Georgian Bay Symphony, and the Sweetwater Music Festival collectively generate over \$5 million in total annual TREIM spending and contribute more than \$4.6 million to the local GDP, attracting over 100,000 visitors each year. This region is a true arts hub, yet it remains undiscovered by much of the province and country.”*



#### Jaret Koop

Operations Manager for the **Georgian Bay Folk Society**, overseeing festival logistics, finances, and volunteer coordination, and has been a working professional musician for over 30 years, including as a member of the Rob Elder Trio and Higher Funktion.

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Environment and Climate defines our lifestyle in Grey Bruce, with naturally beautiful settings, national and provincial parks, and thousands of kilometres of coastline and extensive trails, including the northernmost sections of the Bruce Trail. The Niagara Escarpment has been declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Grey Bruce residents and visitors benefit from year-round access to extensive trail networks and conservation areas. These natural spaces support recreation, tourism, and overall quality of life.

At the same time, climate change and the loss of biodiversity are growing concerns. Local citizen groups and organizations are taking action to protect natural habitats and strengthen environmental stewardship. Our beaches and waterways are major attractions and play an important role in the local economy. Tourism linked to these natural assets is a significant economic driver.

Shoreline communities depend on the health of the Great Lakes. Protecting water quality and shoreline ecosystems is essential to the region's long-term environmental and economic well-being.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



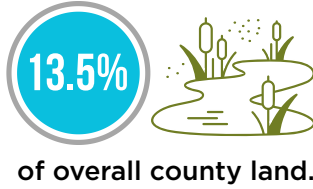
15 LIFE ON LAND



## LAND CONSERVATION AND NATURAL HABITATS

**54,000**

hectares of land conserved in Bruce County.



Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy (Feb 2022)

A vital hub for biodiversity and ecological preservation.



**400+** Species Supported by Bruce Peninsula demonstrating the need for environmental protection.

Government of Canada "Alvars Bruce Peninsula National Park" (2019)

More than half of the total length of the Bruce Trail passes through Grey Bruce.



**450+ km**  
main Bruce Trail

**250+ km**  
of side trails!

www.brucetrail.org

## SPECIES AT RISK & BIODIVERSITY

Grey Bruce is home to a wide range of endangered, threatened, and special concern species.



Species at Risk in Bruce County



Species at Risk on Grey Sauble Conservation Authority lands

Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy (Feb 2022), GSCA "Conservation Area Strategy 2024"



**1.5M**

birds detected from 254 species at Cabot Head, a key migratory stopover and biodiversity hotspot.

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory "Bird Migration at Cabot Head (2002 - 2021)"

Bruce County is home to one of the largest representation of alvars in Ontario (Bruce County)



Government of Canada "Alvars Bruce Peninsula National Park" (2019)



### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*"Georgian Bay froze over this year. As whitefish eggs hatch on the shoals, they will have a blanket of ice to protect them from the waves. That gives me a bit of hope."*

**Natasha Akiwenzie**

Manager of *Bagida'waad Alliance* and a member of *Lac Seul First Nation*.

## BRUCE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

The plan focuses on 4 environmental pillars:

Climate adaptation and mitigation

Stewardship and forest conservation

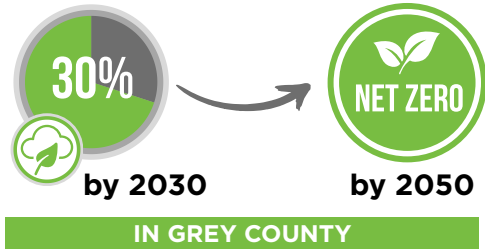
Waste management

Sustainable transportation and mobility

# CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

To mitigate these changes, regional initiatives are underway, such as:

## Lowering Green House Gas Emissions



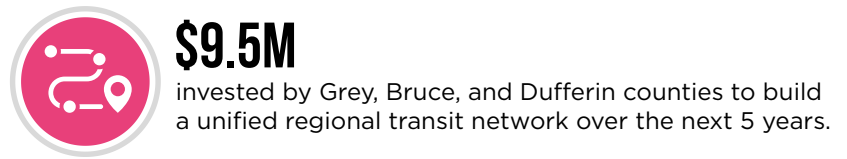
Grey County Climate Change Action Plan (2022)

## Improving Soil Health & Resilience



Grey County: Experimental Acres (2022)

## Investing In Greener Public Transit



Ontario Transit Investment Fund

## Securing Our Shorelines



With major climate risks tied directly to water, Bruce County is prioritizing strategies to manage and safeguard the Great Lakes Basin.

## EV Funding



Grey County: Climate Initiative Snapshot (2025)

## What Can You Do?



Grey County: "Going Green in Grey" (2022)

### PARTNER PERSPECTIVE

*"Instead of personal sacrifice, I see opportunities to multi-solve here for a better quality of life without treating the environment as collateral damage. The tidbit on soil health is a great example—it's climate resilience while also caring about your neighbours, your natural spaces and your food, simultaneously."*

**Leigh Grigg**

Director of *The Sustainability Project*



## IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Shifting climate patterns are expected to bring changes to Grey Bruce.



**+4.7°C**

Increases in annual temperatures by 2080  
(Grey County)



**-33 DAYS**

less days per year below -15°C by 2080  
(Grey County)



**1/25 YRS**

storms replace one in hundred year storms  
(Bruce County by 2050-2080)



**+3.0°C**

increase in annual temperatures of Lake Huron  
(Bruce County by 2071-2100)



**+33 DAYS**

more days per year above 30°C by 2080  
(Grey County)



**+133MM**

of annual precipitation by 2080  
(Grey County)



**+20-40 DAYS**

additional days of wildfire season per year  
(Bruce County by 2040-2070)



**+45-62 DAYS**

additional ice free days on Lake Huron  
(Bruce County by 2071-2100)



## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS IN ACTION

The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation (LHCC) delivered its **Microplastic Collection and Education Program**. LHCC will install LittaTraps in Bruce and/or Grey Counties and deliver education to reduce microplastics, protecting Lake Huron's ecosystems, wildlife, and shoreline communities. LHCC also delivers educational presentations to municipalities, businesses, and residents, raising awareness of microplastic impacts on water, wildlife, and public health.

In 2025, Beaver Valley Destination Stewardship successfully enhanced its Indigenous-led **TWOEYEDS (Tour Workshops of Ecological Youth Energize Destination Stewardship) Project** by expanding collaborations, deepening community engagement, and strengthening opportunities for shared learning across the Beaver River watershed. The goal of the project was to extend Indigenous-led environmental awareness activities by adding collaborators and resources that would allow more meaningful and inclusive community participation.

In spring 2024, the Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association's **Clean Water in a Connected Countryside** launched a project which created and connected a reliable livestock watering system to the internet to improve water quality in the Northern Bruce Peninsula's six streams and shorelines. The upgraded watering systems will directly benefit approximately twenty farm families and around two hundred members of the Barrow Bay community by reducing cattle access to streams, lowering nutrient loading and turbidity, and improving water quality in Little Lake.

# What Can I Do?

## START A CONVERSATION

Talk to your neighbours, friends, and family about Vital Signs. Learn about local impacts on vulnerable people and the total picture of your local story.

## *Pass it on.*

If you have a printed copy of this Vital Signs Report, pass it on to a friend or neighbour and follow up with a chat about their perspectives on the report.

## Find out more.

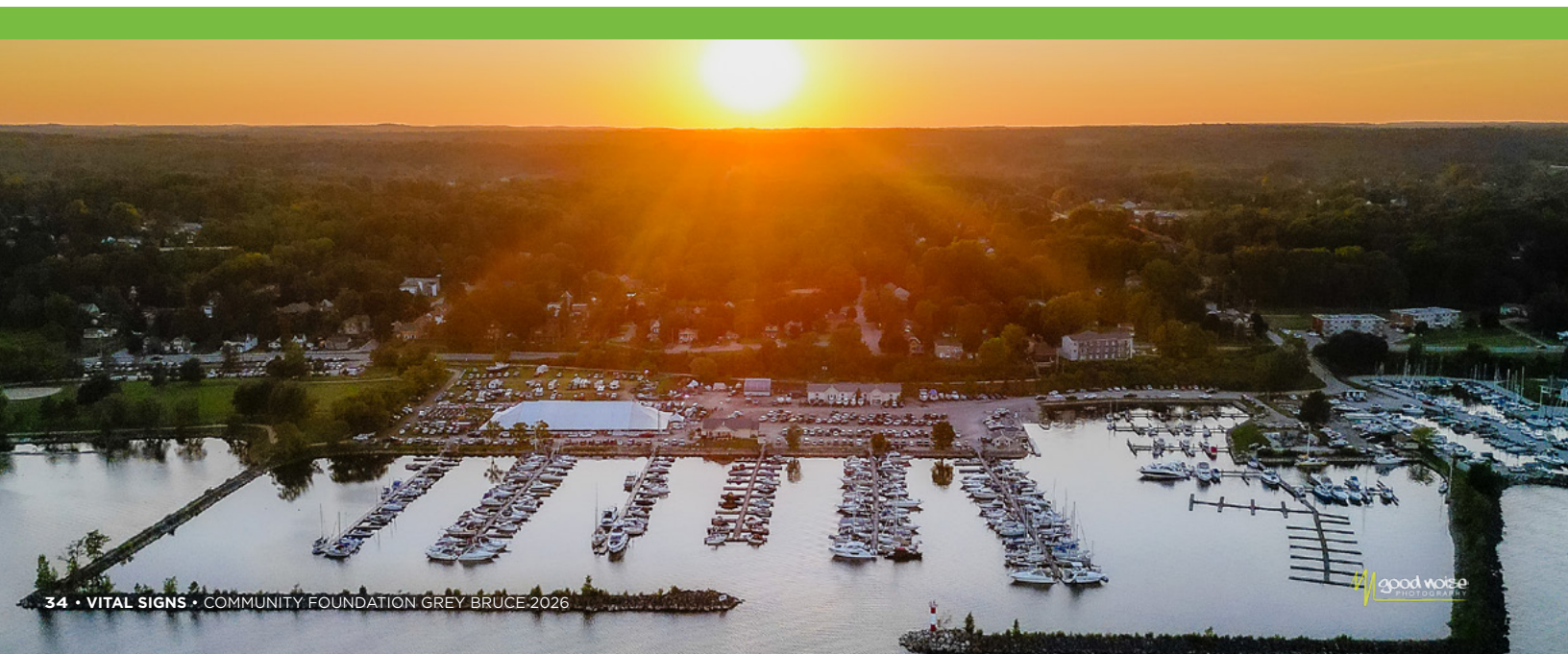
Read blogs, newsletters, and forums held by agencies engaged with change. Follow or “friend” those agencies on social media and share content with your networks.

Seek out more information by attending webinars and talks or by joining a local committee.

## Share your time or resources.

Volunteer, donate, or get involved with local agencies involved with community.

Your donation to the Next25 Fund at the Community Foundation Grey Bruce can have a positive effect on your community.





## CONTACT US

Reach out to the Community Foundation Grey Bruce by phone, email, or sign up for our newsletter on our website:

[www.communityfoundationgreybruce.com](http://www.communityfoundationgreybruce.com)

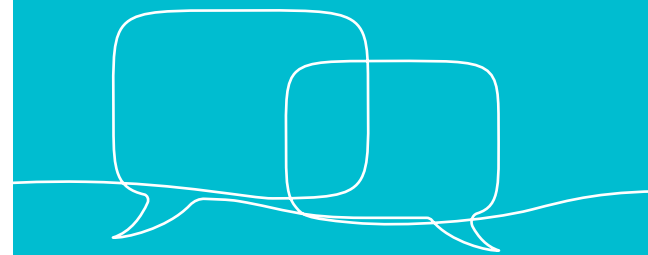
You can also connect with us through Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn. We will keep the conversation on wellbeing rolling along in the months and years ahead.

## Take action.

Support a local event by showing up: whether it's a community celebration, a sporting or cultural event, or a shoreline cleanup. We strengthen our communities by building relationships one person at a time, one conversation at a time.

During an election year, you can write a letter to local candidates to urge policy and action on issues arising in Vital Signs.

In your conversations with others, you can speak out against prejudice or inequity against those who are experiencing housing insecurity.



# Thanks and Acknowledgements



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
GREY BRUCE

We're here for good.

Community Foundation Grey Bruce extends its sincere appreciation to all the organizations and individuals who provided input, guidance, data, and support for the creation of this Vital Signs report.



*Special thanks to the Eva Leflar Donor Advised Endowed Fund and the Next25 Fund for supporting the production of this report.*



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We are thankful to **Watson & Associates Economists Inc.** for turning complex data into a clear story, and to their creative team for making this report a pleasure to read.

We are grateful to **John Fearnall of Good Noise Photography** for contributing imagery to this report. John has worked in photography and video since 1995. Since 2018, he has incorporated drone photography to capture new perspectives of Grey and Bruce Counties, which we are pleased to showcase throughout this report. John's photographs are identified with the Good Noise logo.

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Melri Wright, Ledge Leadership



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COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CANADA

**VitalSigns**®



MAXIMUM  
50  
km/h





COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
GREY BRUCE



We're here for good.

[www.communityfoundationgreybruce.com](http://www.communityfoundationgreybruce.com)