

Community Wellbeing is:

A community's capacity to fulfill the needs of its residents so that they can thrive

The Community Wellbeing Survey

The Population Health Analytics Lab

We investigate factors that contribute to population health and health inequities. Our goal is to support meaningful community and health system change through innovative, data-driven approaches.

How do Ontarians define the wellbeing of their communities?

We conducted a survey asking questions across a wide range of topics, from social connection to local leadership. We hoped to gain a fulsome understanding of what matters to Ontario communities.

We also wanted to see how perspectives differed across Ontario's diverse populations. **These learnings will help inform on-going planning to strengthen community wellbeing in Ontario.**

What aspects of community matter to Ontario residents?

We designed survey measures to identify key services, amenities, and values that are significant to Ontario communities. **Our measures focused on the following topics:**

Social Connection



Community Belonging
Trust in Neighbours and Safety
Civic Participation
Discrimination

Services and Amenities



Satisfaction with the Environment
Services and Amenities
Barriers to Accessing Services
Health and Healthcare

Community-Based Decision Making



Satisfaction with Local Leadership
Civic Engagement
Democratic Participation
Overall Community Satisfaction

Who we spoke to:

We administered The Community Wellbeing (CWB) Survey in Fall 2021 in four Northern and Southern Ontario communities: **Greater Sudbury, Peel, Thunder Bay, and Toronto**

We conducted recruitment using social media, email blasts, and word of mouth

In total, 398 respondents completed the survey

Most respondents lived in their community for 5 or more years (80%)

How does this work inform community initiatives?

Understanding these priorities can help inform how local planning can:

- (1) produce evidence-informed policy decisions that reflect community needs
- (2) provide sustained and collectively experienced benefits to all community members
- (3) help negotiate the interests of multiple community stakeholders

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Part 1: Social Connection

Belonging

64% of participants experienced a **strong sense of community belonging**

Trust and Safety



When asked *how likely do you think your wallet would be returned to you if it were found by neighbours?*, **more than 65% of respondents thought that it was likely that their wallet would be returned to them**

People's feelings of safety from violence were divided, with **18% feeling very safe** and **17% feeling not safe at all**

Axes of Social Connection



11 out of 20 Ontario residents experienced **discrimination** in their community

- **Racism** (17%) and **ageism** (13%) were the most common forms of discrimination
- Other forms of discrimination were towards **gender** (11%), **ethnicity and culture** (10%), **disability** (7%), and **sexual orientation** (6%)

Antidiscrimination

- Most Frequented Civic Organizations**
1. **Sports and recreation** (18%)
 2. **Community service** (17%)
 3. **Arts and hobbies** (11%)

The majority of respondents (56%) did not participate in civic organizations and **more than one third** (38%) said they were less involved in their community during the COVID-19 pandemic

Participation

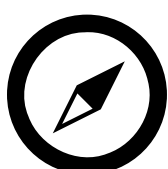
Community Belonging Across Groups

In order to thrive in one's community, one must have the opportunity to belong and participate. We observed key differences in community belonging:



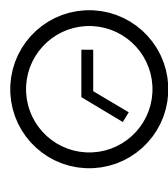
Gender

Men were nearly two-times as likely to report a very strong sense of community belonging when compared to women (26% vs. 14%)



Region

Respondents from Toronto and Peel were slightly more likely to report a very strong sense of community belonging when compared to respondents from Greater Sudbury and Thunder Bay (19% vs. 15%)



Time Lived in Community

Participants who had lived in their community for ≥ 5 years were two-times as likely to report a very strong sense of community belonging when compared to those who lived in their community for < 5 years (19% vs. 9%)

Thoughts on social connection:

"I feel very connected, I see people walking down the street that have been here as long as I have"

"I feel like I belong when going to regular places and having people remember your name"

Key Takeaways

1. As community participation was low amongst respondents, **initiatives that facilitate social connection and shared purpose** should be high priorities for community wellbeing (e.g., establish places of gathering, support community-oriented activities)
2. Local governments should emphasize building **relationships** and **social/cultural connections** in their planning initiatives, particularly for those communities that may be excluded or marginalized from community activities/organizations
3. **Discrimination was experienced by the majority of residents** and was felt across a wide array of social identities, indicating the necessity of antidiscriminatory practices

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Part 2: Services and Amenities

The CWB survey asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the services and amenities that exist in their communities. While these amenities could be publicly accessible facilities or services (e.g., public transportation, schools, etc.), they could also refer to commonly shared needs that are required to live (e.g., housing, medical services, etc.).



Participants were most satisfied with:

1. Access to shopping (77%)
2. Quality of schools (68%)
3. Medical services (61%)



Participants were least satisfied with:

1. Housing (41%)
2. Older adult services (37%)
3. Public transportation (32%)

Cultural Safety of Healthcare

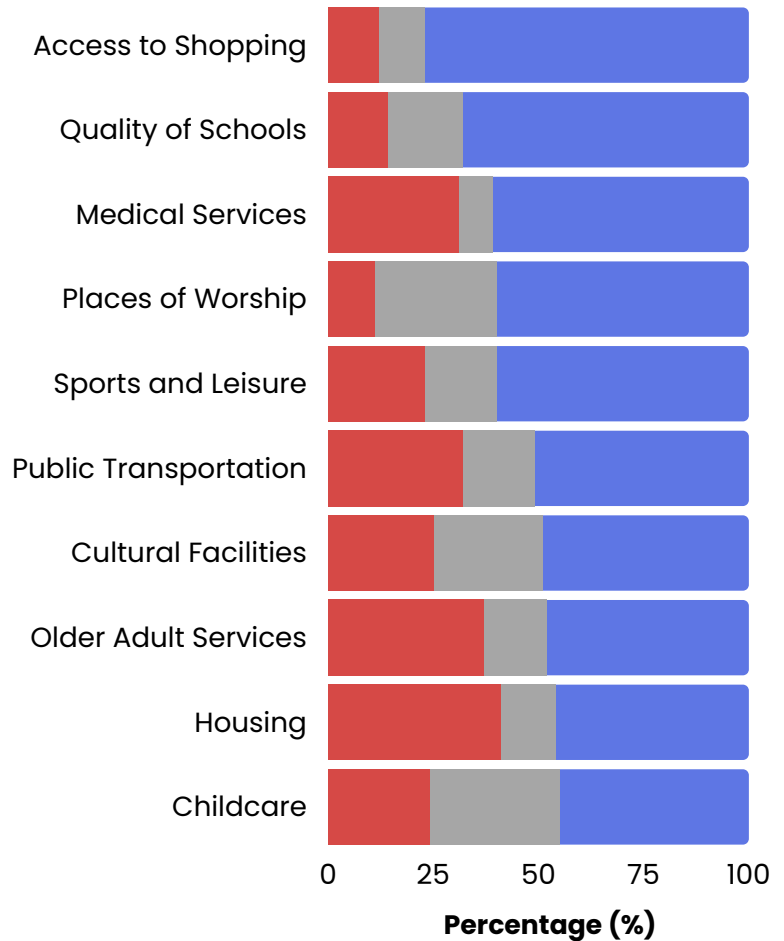
Cultural safety refers to whether health care services were offered in the patients' first language as needed, or whether the approach in care respected and was tailored to align with their cultural values, needs, and practices

Perspectives towards cultural safety were mixed:

1. Excellent - 13.6%
2. Very good - 22.9%
3. Good - 22.6%
4. Fair - 14.3%
5. Poor - 11.8%

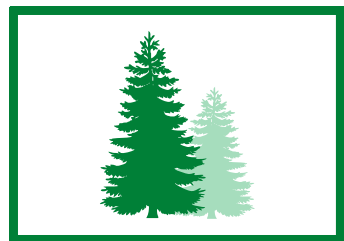


Proportion of participants who were satisfied (blue), neutral (grey), and dissatisfied (red) with community amenities and facilities

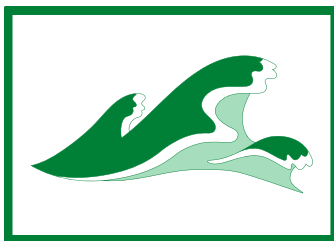


The Environment of the Community

Residents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with the environment of their communities. Environmental indicators included: **greenspace, water, air quality, walkability, and traffic**



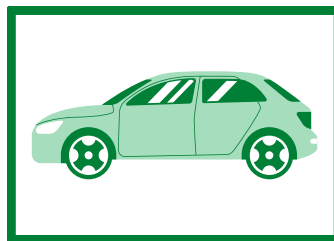
Greenspace was the environmental indicator that residents were most satisfied with (82%)



Water & Air were deeply valued, with 80% of residents being satisfied with their access to quality water and 72% with their community's air quality



Walkability (i.e., how well the community is built to support walking and active transportation) was mostly satisfactory for 66% of residents

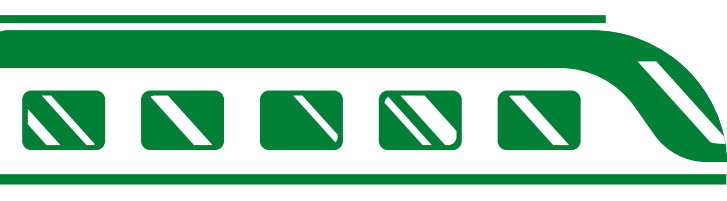


Traffic was satisfactory for less than half of residents sampled (43%), making it the least satisfied environmental indicator

Key Takeaways

1. The quality and availability of **housing, older adult services, and public transportation** are key concerns for Ontario residents
2. Participants were most satisfied with the three environmental indicators that reflected natural environments (water, air, and greenspace) - more so than traffic and walkability
3. Commonly expressed recommendations for public amenities included: **reduced cost of public services, more places of gathering and participation, housing, improved advertising for public services, improved public transit, and culturally-accessible services**

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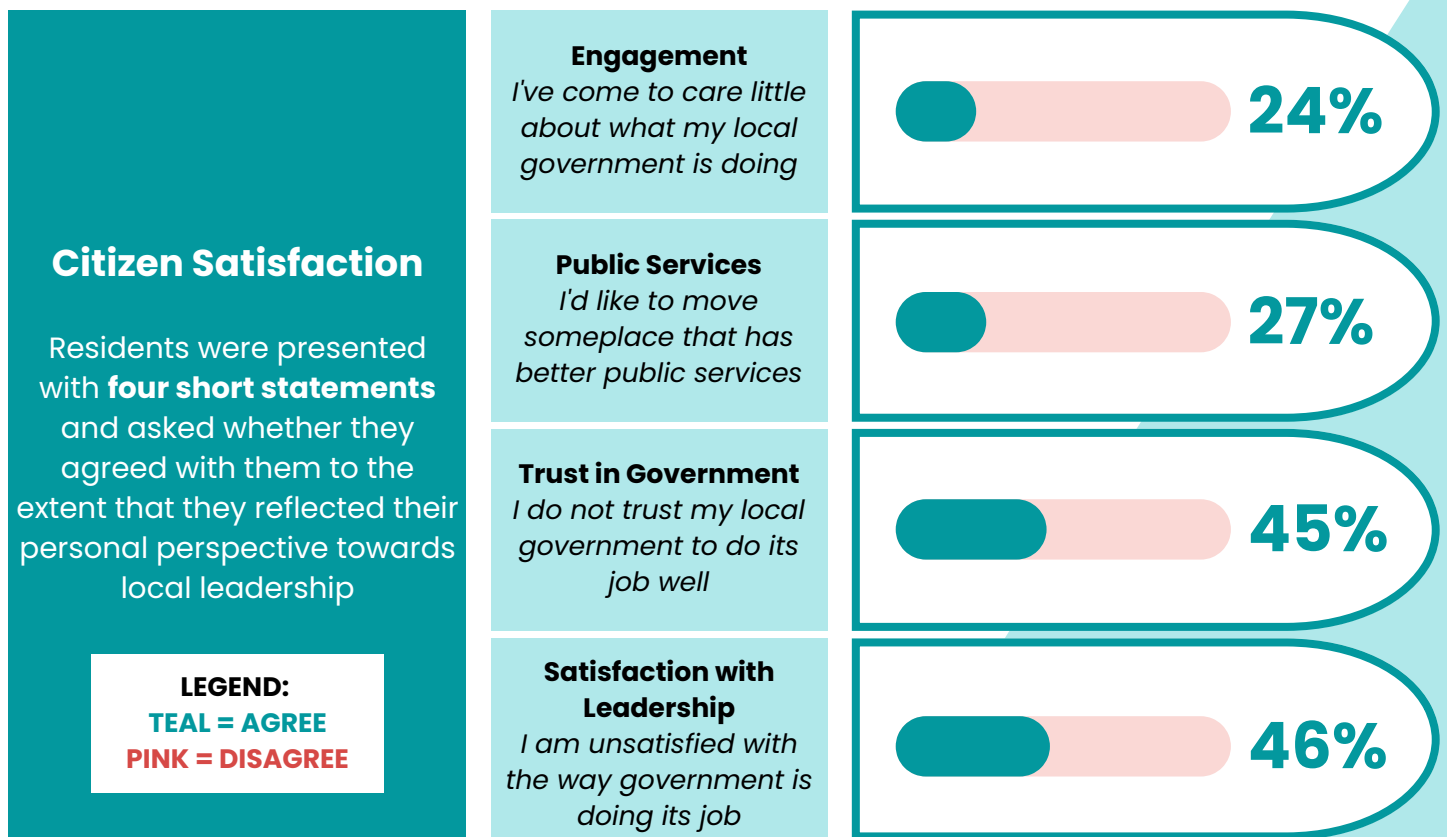
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Part 3: Community-Based Decision Making

Last, we wanted to capture residents' perspectives on leadership in their community and to reflect on whether their interests and priorities were considered in local decision-making. **An aim of this section was to evaluate to what extent participants felt enabled or limited in participating in local decision-making.**



Democratic engagement was high amongst respondents, with **81%** stating that they **voted in their community's previous municipal election**

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION

Residents were asked to share *how the conditions of their community have changed in the past* and to anticipate *how they will change in the future*. **Perspectives changed across different sociodemographic groups:**



ACROSS AGE: Younger participants (<45 years) were more likely to state that the conditions of their community improved in the past (12%) and will continue to improve into the future (27%) when compared to older participants (5% and 13%, respectively)



ACROSS RACE AND ETHNICITY: Racialized respondents stated that community conditions have improved in the past and will continue to into the future (13% and 26%, respectively), more so than White respondents (7% and 17%, respectively)



ACROSS GEOGRAPHY: Residents from Northern cities (Thunder Bay and Greater Sudbury) reported that their communities were less desirable, with 33% stating that their community was not very or not at all desirable, compared to 15% of residents from Southern cities (Peel and Toronto)

Key Takeaways

1. **The majority of residents cared about what was going on in their local government**, indicating an opportunity for collaboration between decision-makers and residents
2. Many residents felt **dissatisfaction** and a **lack of trust** towards their local government when it came to community decision making
3. Optimism towards community conditions and satisfaction differed greatly amongst subcommunities, with **older respondents** and **residents from Northern cities** viewing their communities as **getting worse with time** and **being less desirable**

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