



*together we*

**THRIVE**



Durham's Vital Signs Report 2023



Durham Community Foundation





# Inaugural Report on the Vitality of Our Community



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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg inhabited these lands for thousands of years before colonization. Durham Community Foundation respects these lands are the traditional and treaty territories of the Nations covered under the Williams Treaties, including the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, and the Chippewa Nations of Georgina Island, Beausoleil and Rama.

Durham Community Foundation honours the privilege to live on these lands. We recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of these lands and waters.

Participating in reconciliation, we commit to continuing to learn from Indigenous values and knowledge, collaborate, and celebrate our human connection. We shall continue to build meaningful relationships and explore new opportunities to support healing and reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in Durham.



## Thank You for your Wisdom

Durham Community Foundation is grateful for the support of many individuals and organizations that contributed to this report. All opinions and interpretations in this report are the opinions, interpretations, or perspectives of the editor and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any organizations or people we acknowledge here.



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To the many individuals who provided data, feedback, edits, perspectives and opinions, and helped us access research, thank you for your expertise. Your input was crucial to the quality of this report.



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## What it takes to THRIVE

**Vivian Curl, Executive Director**

Durham Community Foundation seeks to understand Durham Region in a way like no other organization. Understanding leads to making a real difference in how people in our community live their lives. Our first Vital Signs® report captures not only how people are living but also how they could be living – for the better.

Vital Signs® shines a light on what we are learning about Durham Region. It is dynamic. It is constantly changing. It changes fast, given the pace of today's world and especially coming out of the pandemic. Learning often involves some kind of struggle. That need not deter us. Struggle can create growth and reveal powerful discoveries about possibility.

Durham Community Foundation spent the last year researching, collaborating, and synthesizing data gleaned about developments in our community. We are particularly grateful to the nonprofit community with whom the Foundation collaborates so deeply. Their leadership, shared insights and wisdom from their lived experience, helped to provide important context to understanding the data.

I am proud to share this report so you can understand your community, including its changes, challenges and connections. Importantly, to understand what they mean for you, your life, and your future.

Durham Community Foundation undertook Vital Signs® in the spirit of discovery.

### What have we learned?

Durham Region is amazingly resilient while it is experiencing significant challenges. It is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. With growth comes complex and interconnected community issues. For example, unprecedented increases in housing prices coupled with a shortage of housing, growing food insecurity, mental health challenges,

stark risks for partners experiencing abuse and their children including an intimate partner violence epidemic, and an opioid crisis.

Despite the many challenges, we are encouraged by how the Region and municipalities, in tandem with nonprofits, are rallying to address homelessness. Additionally, the coordinated effort among the Region, police, and nonprofits to enhance the safety of parents experiencing abuse and their children. Despite the concerns in our community, we celebrate the positive impacts that a highly educated and skilled newcomer community is bringing to Durham. We are also inspired by the resiliency of children and youth who are maintaining strong academic performance despite the recent challenges of the pandemic.

There is much more, so please read on to learn about how your community is evolving. By shining a light on the issues – and what is working – we have the best chance at making the Region even stronger.

This report is comprehensive. It lets you know what's going well and what needs to improve. It involves the insights and wisdom from the lived experiences of community members, philanthropists, business leaders, and governmental representatives. All the people – like you – who make Durham, Durham.

We hope that Vital Signs® encourages you to deepen your understanding of your community and play an instrumental role in determining its future. Be bold in your actions and have impact. Volunteer when and where need exists. Give and donate as you are able. Advocate with your family, neighbours, friends, and co-workers. You are more powerful than you know. You CAN help to create the community you want.

**Our invitation to you: Read. Reflect. Discuss. Act. Thrive!**

Gratefully,

*Vivian Curl*

Executive Director

# How Vital Signs® is Organized

Durham Community Foundation is a proud member of a national consortium of community foundations across Canada. Community foundations lead Vital Signs®, a national program coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada (CFC). The goal of Vital Signs® is to leverage the considerable knowledge, real time insights, and community connections of local community foundations to gauge the vitality of our communities. We seek to answer: how are we doing?

Doing so enables community foundations to determine the most impactful ways to deploy resources, investments, and donations to improve the quality of life and enable people to thrive.

**To learn more about this powerful philanthropic movement, please visit:**

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





# How Vital Signs® is Organized



## Which Communities in Durham Region Do We Serve?

The “Durham” in Durham Community Foundation refers to these municipalities, who we are privileged to serve: Ajax, Brock, Clarington, Oshawa, Pickering, Scugog, Uxbridge, and Whitby.

## Why Create a Vital Signs® Report for Durham Region?

Creating Vital Signs® helps us build community. When we connect with people, organizations, business leaders, and government, we share and learn together. Our goal is to shine a light on the vitality of Durham Region today, so we have a measuring point to compare for future success.

Durham Community Foundation is going further by discovering how the lives of residents in the Region are improving. Further, how to leverage that information to keep enhancing our shared quality of life.

The community, government, charitable organizations, and businesses benefit from the data and insights in Vital Signs® by learning where they are needed most and how to serve their communities best.



# How Vital Signs® is Organized



## How is the Data Applied in the Vital Signs® Report?

Data has been collected from Statistics Canada, other population surveys, the Region, local municipalities, and regional and municipal nonprofits. While we have made our best efforts to gather meaningful data that represents the entirety of Durham, some important data is only available for the Oshawa census metropolitan area (CMA) which includes Whitby, and Clarington. Pickering and Ajax are part of the Toronto CMA, so data for that CMA would be more representative of Toronto than Durham. To deepen our understanding, we also sought out first-hand wisdom and insights from key leaders and subject matter experts in Durham.

## What is the Community Foundation Network of Canada?

There are 201 community foundations in the country. The national body, Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) governs this high impact network of foundations. CFC supports local community foundations to create Vital Signs® reports with coordination, engagement, data collection, and reporting. All this information helps the community foundation network understand key social trends, best practice solutions, and impact making.

## How is Your Vital Signs® Report Organized?

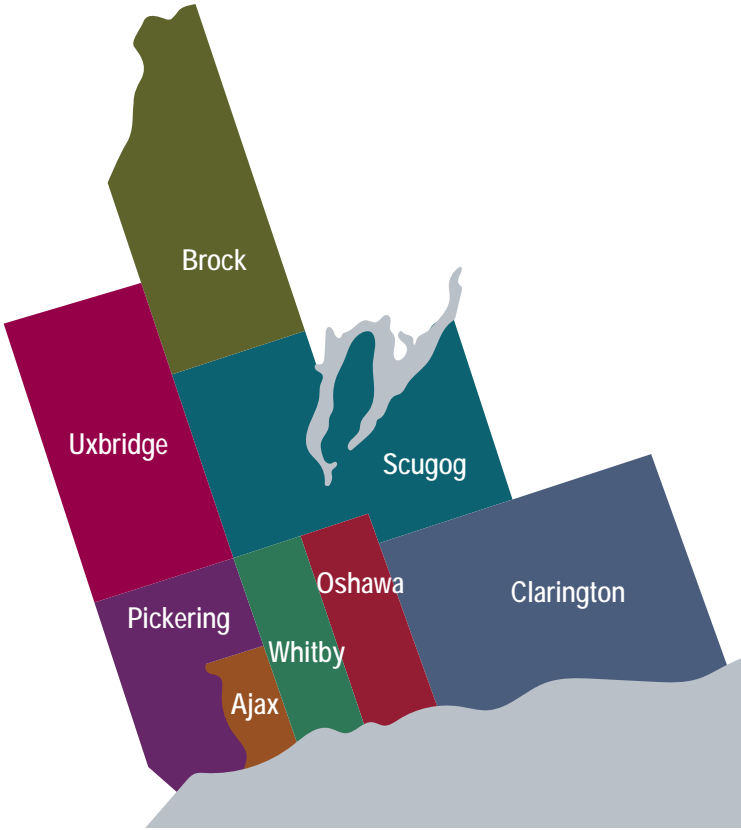
Vital Signs® is organized by the following eight areas of community vitality:



Each of these areas is organized as an individual section in which we explore current trends, challenges, and opportunities as they relate to the quality of life in Durham. We also offer action steps we can take to leverage current strengths and assets to optimize our ability to thrive.



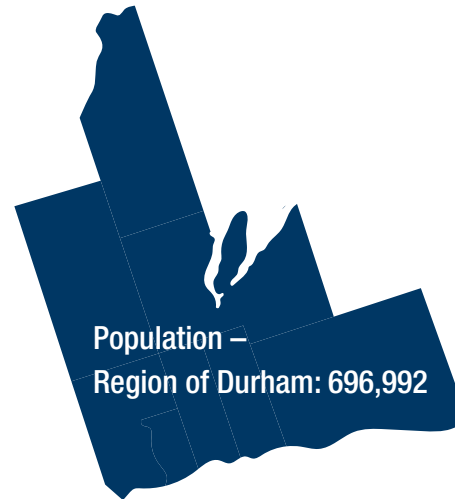
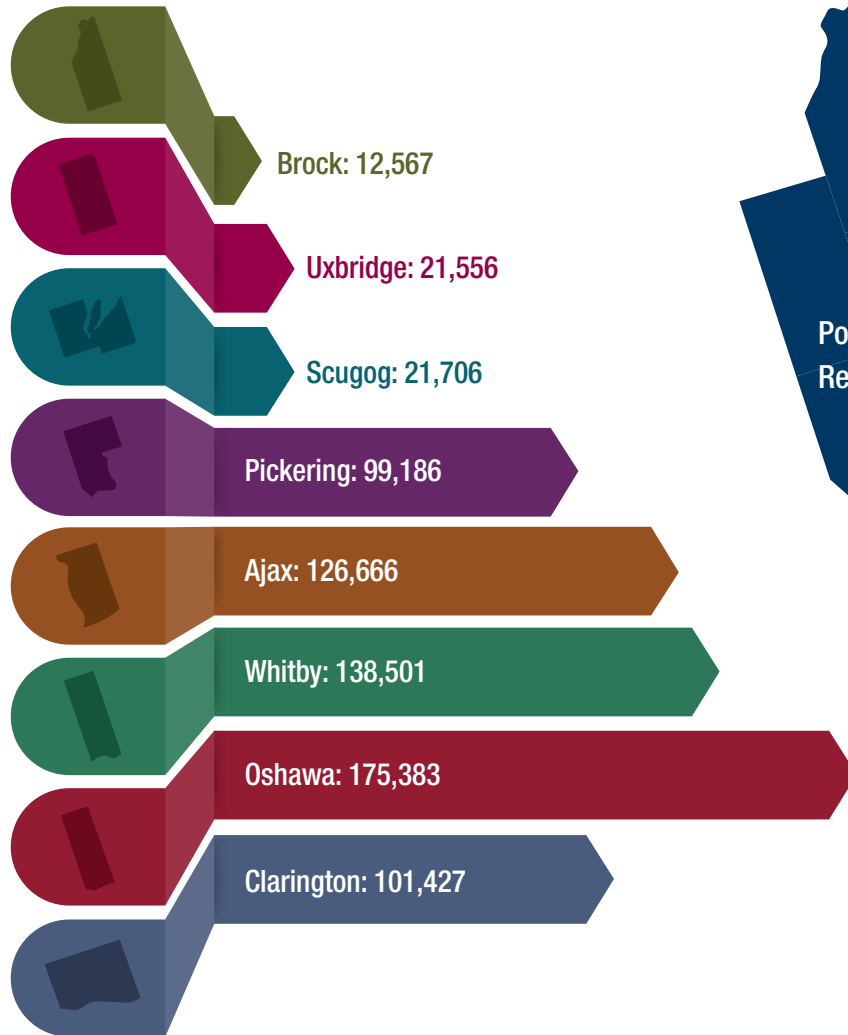
# Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



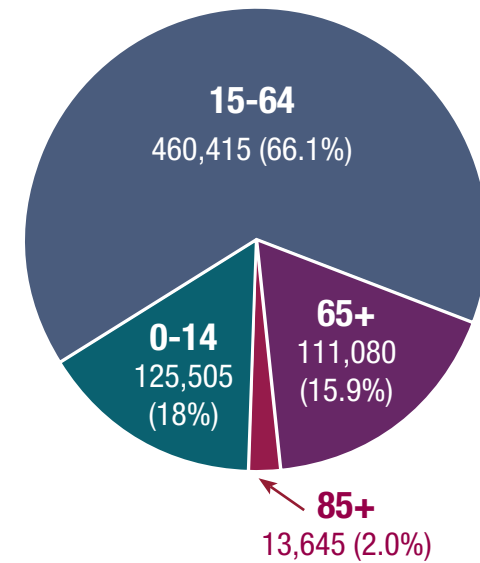
# Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



## Population<sup>2</sup>



## Population by age group



Average age: 40.2

Median age: 40.0

Education levels: 67.1% of population aged 25 to 64 have post-secondary education

Average after-tax income for one-person household: 48,520

Average after-tax income for two-or-more person households: \$117,600

## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community - **Community**



### Understanding Our Community

Like many large Canadian communities, Durham is challenged by population growth and significantly increasing diversity. It is now the 19<sup>th</sup> fastest growing Canadian census division for populations exceeding 100,000.<sup>4</sup> Canada's population grew nearly twice as much as any country within the G7. Durham's population growth rate of 7.9% between 2016 and 2021 outpaced Canada – and the G7.

The story of growth is more than numbers. It is about increasing diversity, growing populations of seniors and children, and an increasingly educated population.

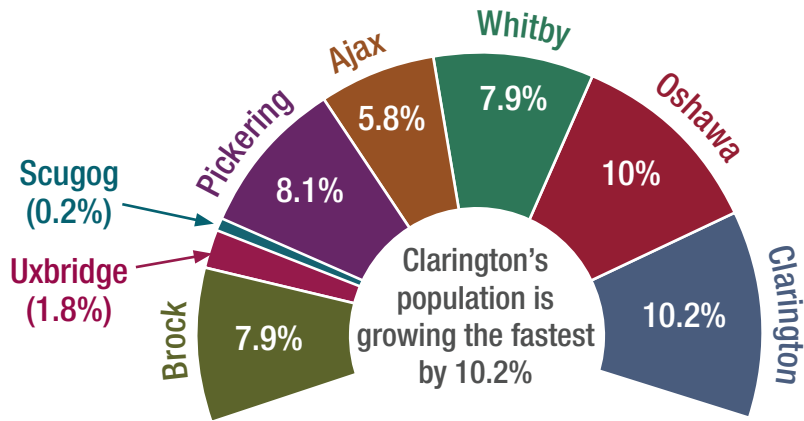
**Durham Region grew faster than Canada and the G7<sup>3</sup> and became more diverse.**



Community

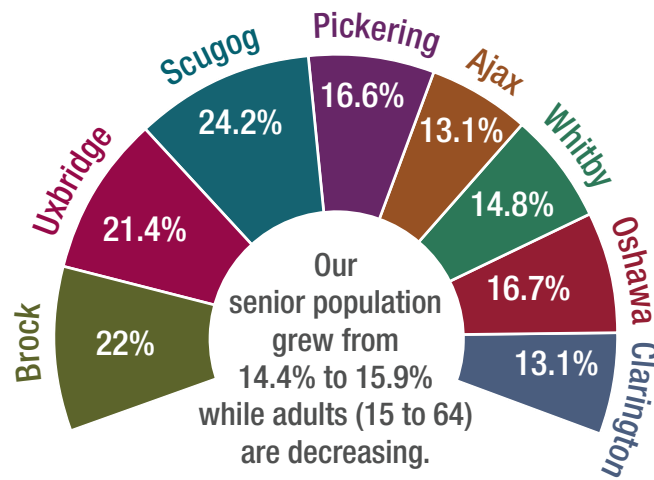
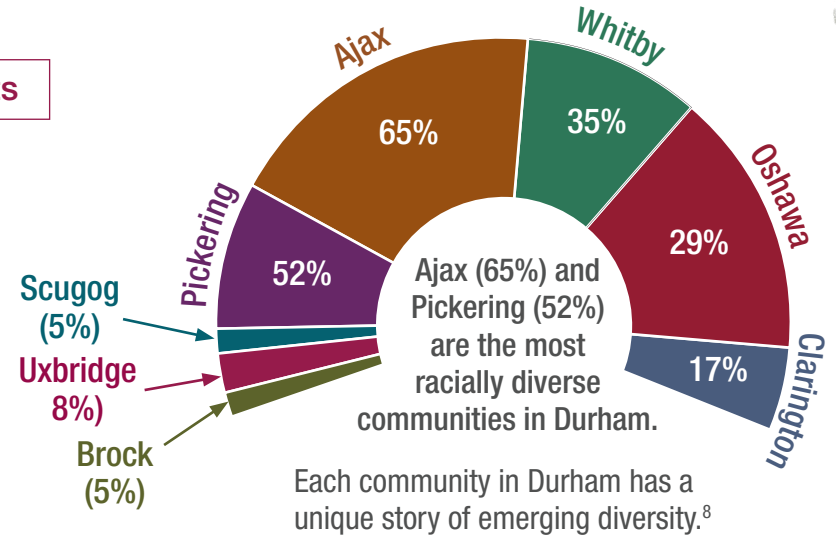
## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### Defining Insights



Each community in Durham has a unique story of population growth.<sup>5</sup>

From 2019 to 2020, Oshawa Whitby Clarington CMA's growth rate was the highest of all census metropolitan areas in Canada.<sup>6</sup>



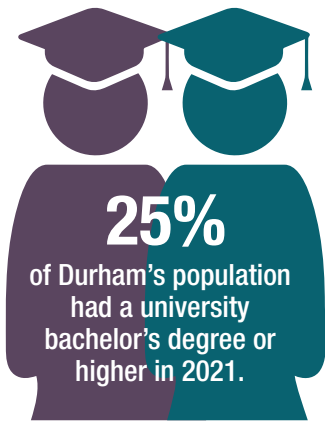
#### Percentage of population 65+<sup>12</sup>

The baby boom population is the largest age group in Canada. They are living longer too. Increases in the aging population will continue until the 2060's. Pressures on health care and supports for seniors, due to an aging population, are greatest in North Durham which includes Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge.<sup>11</sup>

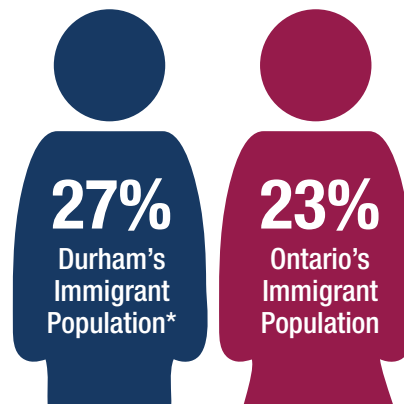
## Defining Insights



Durham Region became more diverse, enriching the cultural tapestry of our community. From 2016 to 2021, most (86%) new residents calling Durham home moved from other parts of Ontario, while 10.5% came from abroad.<sup>7</sup>



From 2016 to 2021, the Region's university educated population increased by five percentage points, in large part due to newcomer communities with advanced education.<sup>13</sup>



27% of Durham's population are immigrants, up from 23.6% in 2016 (similar to Ontario's percentage, which is 23% immigrants).<sup>9</sup>

**73% of Durham's recent growth is from immigration<sup>10</sup>, as is the case with most populations in Canada.**

## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



### What Creates a Thriving Community

People are social beings. We gather and naturally find strength in numbers and groups. How we gather, where we gather, and what we do when we gather matters because thriving communities are gathering communities.

“Placemaking” identifies and optimizes our community's assets.<sup>14</sup> Looking forward, thriving regions will be those with high energy neighbourhoods and business areas, cultural and recreational attractions, unique senses of place, preserved natural areas, profound pride in their local character, and products and food. We can create a vibrant Region through open collaboration with our citizens.<sup>15</sup>



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### Progress Report

#### Strong Community Development:

Durham's growing population, sustained growth in the birth of children, increasing diversity, and high education levels forecast the potential for strong community development.

#### Social Support:

A key enabler for successful communities is to provide social supports for newcomers, seniors, and children which enables them to thrive and contribute to the community. Government, businesses, organizations, donors, and volunteers are helping to address their needs. Nonprofits require additional funding to better support these populations.

#### Support for Nonprofits:

During the pandemic, Durham Community Foundation and many funders across Canada provided unrestricted funding (donations that can be used for purposes for which the charity determines are most important, based upon the aims and objectives of its governing documents) to charities to enable them to address new and extreme community needs. By and large, nonprofits are well-governed organizations with competent boards of directors, and well regulated by the CRA. We put our full faith into their expertise to determine how to best respond to community needs, where to deploy resources, and to be nimble in doing so. The Foundation encourages all levels of government, including Regional and municipal, businesses, and individuals to support nonprofits' operational needs by giving unrestricted funding.

#### Giving and Volunteering:

We are encouraged by the Region of Durham's recognition that the nonprofit sector is important for healthy and vibrant communities across Durham. We echo their open appeal to the community to support the sector by giving financially and volunteering to local organizations. We hope that in due course the Region will also provide a dedicated, unrestricted fund that enables local nonprofits to apply for operational funding to sustain organizational health and resilience.







### For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- All funders join both Durham Community Foundation and the United Way of Durham Region in providing unrestricted funding to nonprofits to empower these organizations to optimize their ability to meet existing and emerging community priorities.
- Embrace the richness and benefits of diversity, which includes reflecting diversity and embedding equity and inclusion in our organizations, policies, programs, and services.

*“Being a social enterprise structured charity historically assured our sustainability and growth, but COVID changed that. We have the skills and ability to do great things for child scientists. Unrestricted funding would provide critically needed funding to ensure these bright young minds ultimately lead Durham’s growing science hub.”* **Cindy Adams, Scientists in School**

### For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability to mental health and consider giving non-perishable items to food banks.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Be an influencer and encourage family, neighbours, friends, and co-workers to better understand the connections between mental and physical health.

*“Providing unrestricted funds is critical to support an organization’s ability to achieve its overall mission. This type of funding is flexible and allows organizations to allocate funds towards self-identified organizational priorities in order to develop and strengthen their programs, services and internal systems.”*  
**Cindy Murray, United Way of Durham Region**



## Understanding Civic Engagement and Belonging in Durham

Durham Region would not have grown and thrived economically, culturally, and philanthropically without a proud history of civic engagement and sense of belonging. In our post-pandemic world, Durham – like communities everywhere – has emerged to witness new stressors on its social infrastructure. It represents a new and urgent call to action to reconnect in meaningful ways with family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, and our wider community.

*The story of our post-pandemic world is more than social stressors. It's about our charitable and nonprofit sector, donating and volunteering, and civic participation – all of which represent a powerful opportunity to collectively envision our future well-being.*

Durham inspired to re-capture its history of engagement and participation.





Defining Insights

945 vital registered charities serve Durham Region.

Each community in Durham has a unique array of registered charities:<sup>16</sup>

Oshawa - 246	Uxbridge - 55
Whitby - 173	Scugog - 45
Pickering - 130	Brock - 42
Ajax - 128	Mississaugas of Scugog Island - 1
Clarington - 125	



Registered charities provide vital and critical services such as emergency food relief, shelter, education and mentoring, religious services, culture and arts activities, sports and recreation, health care, mental health, and community support. They are also one of the largest employers in Durham Region.<sup>17</sup>

Financial pressures on nonprofits combined with increased needs.<sup>18,19</sup>

88% of Durham's nonprofits saw an **increase in operational costs** in 2023 versus the previous year.



**68% experienced staffing challenges** with recruitment and/or retention between April 1, 2022-March 31, 2023, with staff burnout a significant barrier for many



**55% scaled back programs or services** in 2022 and 12% discontinued some programs entirely. In 2023, a further 39% scaled back programs or services and 22% noted waitlists have increased.



**64% reported a decrease in revenue** in the first year of the pandemic with 40% experiencing at least a significant 25% decline. Between April 1, 2022-March 31, 2023, 24% saw an increase in revenue of 1% to 24%; however, 31% saw no change and 28% saw a continued decrease. In 2023, 61% of nonprofits expected finances to remain the same and 22% thought they would worsen.



**69% faced an increase in demand for their services** in 2022 versus before the pandemic. In 2023, that figure increased to 82%. 31% nonprofits believe they are unable to meet the increased demand, 46% believe they are somewhat able to meet demand, and 23% can meet the demand.



Covid-19 devastated many of the Region's nonprofits, resulting in **program cutbacks, closures, and bigger waitlists** at a time when their assets, skills, and services were needed the most. Nonprofits are still feeling the effects.



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



**Significant downward trend for donating and volunteering.**

52% of the Region's nonprofits reported a post-pandemic decline in donations in the last year as one of the factors that were financially challenging the organization.<sup>21</sup>

From 2010 to 2019, the percentage of people claiming charitable donations dropped in Durham Region 20% (from 25% to 19.8%).<sup>22</sup>

52% reported a loss of volunteers in 2023.<sup>23</sup>



### Defining Insights

Municipal elections across the region:  
Declined to 24% in 2022 from 30% in 2018

Provincial election: declined to 43% in 2022 from 59% in 2018.

Federal election: Declined to 59% in 2021 from 67% in 2019.

The Municipal and Provincial elections experienced their lowest-ever voter turnouts.

**Voter turnout has declined in Durham:<sup>24</sup>**

### What Builds Civic Engagement and Belonging

To believe we truly belong, people need to feel welcomed, and they need to be able to trust.

Durham Region prioritizes community vitality through its Durham is Our Home campaign, which seeks to create a sense of belonging for all citizens.<sup>25</sup>

As the Region grows, becomes more diverse, and evolves, it is critical to be the “welcomer” as much as to feel welcomed. Belonging invites people to engage and create a thriving Durham through individual, organizational and/or political engagement, which benefits everyone. Belonging positively affects physical health, mental health, and self-worth. Believing in oneself often leads to believing in community due to a personal connection to its offerings, and how one can shape it.<sup>26</sup>

Durham Community Foundation is committed to “Belongingness,” creating a community where everyone feels they belong. The idea that everyone in Durham feels accepted so they can truly engage. Best practices suggest community engagement is about guiding principles rather than a standard framework. Principles that see all community members being informed, consulted, involved, and empowered.<sup>27</sup>

Progress Report

The hallmarks of community belonging, including giving, volunteering, and voting are declining.

We recognize the impacts of society-wide challenges on community engagement. For example, social and economic inequality, and the impacts of our colonial history and systemic racism and discrimination. As the community returns to a new post-pandemic norm, and as society continues to deepen its awareness and take action to address inequality, we are hopeful Durham can reclaim its history of community participation, philanthropy, and civic engagement.



A key enabler for success is discovering the obstacles to engagement through genuine consulting with all community groups and utilizing their insights to create more meaningful involvement.

Deeper and broader community engagement is required, especially considering population growth, Durham's diversity, and demands on nonprofit organizations. Nonprofits, government, and funders are monitoring, assessing, and strategizing ways to capitalize on individuals returning to neighbourhoods and workplaces: additionally, innovative ways to re-ignite engagement.



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



### Vital Steps We Can All Take

#### For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- Rebuild a culture of participation, volunteering, and giving in your organization.
- Enhance your organization's connections to local nonprofits through giving and volunteering.
- Celebrate what it means to be part of a community and its links to your success.



*"There has never been greater need – or opportunity – to volunteer. You could change the world of another person. We welcome you!"*  
**Jayne Harper, Volunteer, Durham Alliance Outreach**

#### For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Be an influencer and encourage family, friends, neighbours, and co-workers to get involved!
- Understand the issues in your community and vote so your voice is heard.



### Understanding Housing in Durham Region

## Making Durham home and creating places to live.

Across Canada, population growth is outpacing housing availability, and Durham Region is no different. It is a reminder of the desirability of living here and the satisfaction of making a life in this community. Yet, as more newcomers arrive and longer-term residents look for places to live, they face challenges unlike the Region has ever experienced before.

*The story of housing is more than looking for a place to live in Durham Region. It's about population growth outpacing housing completions as well as higher than average increases in home prices, and rent costs, homelessness, shelters operating at capacity, and a desperate need for social housing. In short, it's about if people can make a home in Durham. It also speaks to the Region being one of the most sought after places to live and how we as a community create livability.*



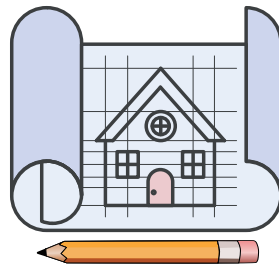
## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



### Defining Insights

#### HOUSING COMPLETIONS: 89,900 new homes needed in Durham Region by 2031.<sup>28</sup>

Oshawa CMA, which includes Whitby and Clarington became the fastest growing metropolitan area in Canada in 2019/2020.<sup>29</sup>



The Institute for Smart Prosperity estimated that by 2021, Durham had an existing **shortage of 39,900 new homes.**<sup>30</sup> This is the third highest shortage of homes in Ontario.

Durham Region needs to build **84,000 new homes** over the next decade to hit housing targets.<sup>143</sup>

#### HOUSING PRICES: Since 2005, Durham Region's home prices grew by 314% through July 2023, much higher than the Canadian average of 223%.

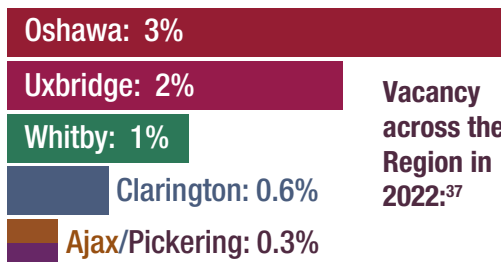
As housing becomes more expensive, the more challenges emerge for those in need of affordable housing.



In recent years, **the cost of buying a home in Durham grew more than nearly any other community on earth.** In 2005, a typical home cost 3.2 times median household income compared to today's costs of 8-9 times median income (composite home prices in July 2023 were \$992,900<sup>32</sup> while median income as of the 2021 Census was \$107,000).<sup>33</sup>

Even as home prices dropped over the first nine months of 2022, **rising interest rates led to a 22% increase in average monthly mortgage payments** from January to September 2022.<sup>34</sup>

#### RENT COSTS AND VACANCIES: Rent soared by 84% for vacant and 46% for occupied two-bedroom apartments from 2013 to 2022.<sup>35</sup>



Since the pandemic, rents accelerated. Vacancy rates improved modestly in 2022 in Oshawa, Whitby, and Clarington CMA, but remain low in most of Durham. Families particularly are struggling to find larger units.<sup>36</sup>



## Defining Insights

### HOMELESSNESS:

Being without a place to call home doubled between 2018 and 2021, and three times more were living on the street or in an encampment.<sup>38</sup>



Homelessness increased in Durham Region with marked shifts:<sup>39</sup>

**Homelessness is now longer term.** 57% were chronically unhoused in 2021, a significant increase from 38% in 2018.

**Homeless individuals are older.** In 2021, 34% were 50 and older compared to 17% in 2018.

**Many homeless individuals receive government benefits.** 41% disability benefit, 39% welfare/social assistance, 10% seniors' benefits.

The top support and/or service needs among those struggling with homelessness is affordable housing at 90%.

The risks of being homeless are disproportionate for these populations:

**Indigenous Peoples:** represent 18% of the homeless yet only 2% of the general population.

**Former Foster Care/Youth Group Home Residents:** represent 23% of the homeless compared to 1% of the general population.

**2SLGBTQI+:** represent 9% of the homeless compared to 4% of the general population 15 and older.

## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

3

Housing



### SHELTERING:

Durham Region's shelter occupancy surpassed 90% throughout 2021 and 2022.<sup>40</sup>



The demand for shelter and Durham's major response to it reveal the urgency of addressing homelessness now:

**1,446 people accessed housing-focused shelters in 2022.**<sup>41</sup>

**60% accessed shelters for the first time,** illustrating how many more people are becoming homeless.

### SOCIAL HOUSING:

8,284 people were on the waitlist for rent-gear-to-income (RGI) in 2022 housing, with less than 5,000 RGI units available in Durham.<sup>42</sup>



The demand for shelter and Durham's major response to it reveal the urgency of addressing homelessness now:

**The current rental housing supply in Durham Region is limited: Almost 37% of renters are in core housing need, mostly due to affordability.**<sup>43</sup>

**It is anticipated wait times could become longer.**<sup>44</sup> People considered non-priority applicants wait more than six years to gain access to subsidized housing. Priority applicants (such as victims of gender-based violence) waited an average of 1.7 years.<sup>45</sup>



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



### Progress Report

#### What Enables Everyone to Have a Place to Call Home

A roof over one’s head is a primary need for survival. It is as elemental as it is obvious. Yet, Ontario is experiencing a housing affordability and supply crisis.<sup>46</sup> It will take a concerted and collaborative effort among the “development sector” (three levels of government, private sector, and nonprofits) to provide access through affordability, diversify the housing mix, and increase supply.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps it is a fact that needs to be more deeply appreciated: affordable housing leads to profound social and community impacts. Top among them, enhanced tax generation, new jobs, economic development, increased job retention and productivity, and improved abilities to address inequality. When we make affordable housing a reality, we create a powerful link to employee recruitment, productivity and retention, all of which can enable a community’s economic ability to thrive.<sup>48</sup>

A key enabler for success could be implementing the recommendations in Canada’s National Housing Strategy, which incorporates housing advocacy positions of municipalities as well as a meaningful collaboration amongst developers and nonprofits.<sup>49</sup>

**Durham Region is experiencing a housing crisis, which worsened through and after the pandemic. The Region is starting to make investments, though far more is needed:**

Durham’s homelessness sector made it possible for 219 individuals and families to find new homes in 2021, 114 of whom were previously chronically homeless.<sup>50</sup>

In 2014, Durham Region set a goal to create 1,000 new affordable housing units by 2024. As of June 2022, 466 are completed and 170 in development. Up to 1,285 units were identified for future development, which could surpass the initial target if all are developed. While this is still below meeting the needs of 8,000+ applicants,<sup>51</sup> it is a step in the right direction and provides a crucial opportunity to gain invaluable knowledge about what is working to create the plan to ensure all people can have a home in Durham.



**RGI housing has remained largely unchanged over the last 15 years in the face of dramatic growth in need;**<sup>52</sup> however, awareness of the issue and resolve to address it are growing in the development sector.



### For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- Prioritize increasing the supply of affordable housing options and shelter space.
- Advance innovative solutions already available in Durham.
- Assess and build capacity to serve populations overrepresented among the homeless (Indigenous Peoples, older adults, former foster care/ youth group home residents, and 2SLGBTQI+).

*“Increased mortgage rates have led to people you would never have imagined now seeking food support for their families. These people could be your neighbours, yet you would never know their quiet struggle. Community support can literally enable a family to keep their home.”*

**Ben Earle, Feed the Need in Durham**

### For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability to support organizations that provide shelter, support services, mental health services, and emergency food providers.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Advocate for affordable housing in your community and the development of livable communities with diverse housing options in your community.

*“The homelessness crisis is more complex than funding and shelter. I have resources, love, and the will to help my son. His schizophrenia causes him to “choose” homelessness and the protection of his human rights trumps my legal right to help him as a mother.”*

**A concerned mother in Durham**



### Understanding Health in Durham

There appears to be a connection between Durham's challenges with growth, sense of belonging, housing affordability, impacts of the pandemic, and mental health. Moderate to severe depression affects marginalized groups disproportionately. Additionally, emergency food sources are needed more than ever. Similar to Durham's housing challenges, it is paradoxical that as Durham grows, large groups of people experience diminished hope and a lack of resources to adequately nourish themselves.

*The story of Durham's health is more than a single diagnosis or where to find the next meal. It's about the pervasiveness of moderate to severe depression, higher rates of depression among women, low-income individuals, youth, and 2SLGBTQI+ residents, the use of food banks outpacing Ontario, especially children, and backlogs in medical services caused by the pandemic. It speaks to the great need to understand how Durham got to this place and discovering how to thrive in health.*



## Defining Insights



### MENTAL HEALTH:

Depression is a serious concern and has sharply risen during the pandemic in Durham Region.



**25% of residents in Durham reported moderate to severe symptoms of depression between 2021 and 2022 (sample size 600).**

Rates were higher among those 18 to 40. This challenge mirrors the wider Canadian mental health experience. Source: Mental Health Research Canada data with analysis by contributors.<sup>53</sup> Data does not necessarily reflect the opinions of MHRC.

**Women, younger people, and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals also experienced higher rates of depression.<sup>54</sup>**

**Residents with less than \$30,000 in household incomes (47%)**

had 3.5 times higher rates of at least moderate depression compared to those in households with more than \$100,000 annual income (17%).<sup>55</sup>

**Social isolation, financial strain, and health concerns brought on by the pandemic exacerbated mental health challenges.<sup>56</sup>**

### FOOD INSECURITY:

The use of food banks surged in Durham.



**In 2020, 15.5% of households in Durham reported being food insecure.<sup>57</sup>** Since that time, there has been an unprecedented rise in food prices, with food inflation peaking at 11.4% in January 2023, outpacing overall inflation by 5.5%.<sup>58</sup> Canada's Food Price Report predicts that food prices will continue to rise between 5% and 7% through 2023.<sup>59</sup>

These shifts, along with overall increases in the cost of living in Durham, have been accompanied by increases in the number of residents accessing food banks in the community. From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 there was an **increase of 52% in food bank use to a total 205,687 visits across Durham.<sup>60</sup>** There was an accompanying increase of 51% in the number of clients, to 35,779 individuals using these programs. Visits to emergency meal programs remained steady, with 343,690 visits over this period.



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### Defining Insights

#### MEDICAL SYSTEM: Durham's health care system is still recovering from the strain of the pandemic



**Hospitals and health care centres endured throughout the pandemic**

however, this resulted in staff shortages, burnout, and tough triage decision making. These consequences affect the medical system to this day.

**The physician-to-100,000 population ratio improved in Durham**

as of 2020 to 159/100,000, up from 121/100,000 in 2006, but the ratio in Canada is 60% higher.<sup>61</sup>

#### Wait times for physician initial assessment have moderately increased in recent years from 2.8 hours in 2017/2018 to 3.4 hours in 2021/2022.<sup>62</sup>

**22 million backlogged health care services**

According to an Ontario Medical Association study in May 2022, there were 22 million backlogged health care services in Ontario, which includes one million surgeries.<sup>63</sup>

**As of 2019/2020, 92.9% of Durham residents reported having regular access to a health care provider.**

On the other hand, men are six points lower than women, higher than the Canadian average.<sup>64</sup>

### What Creates a Healthy Community

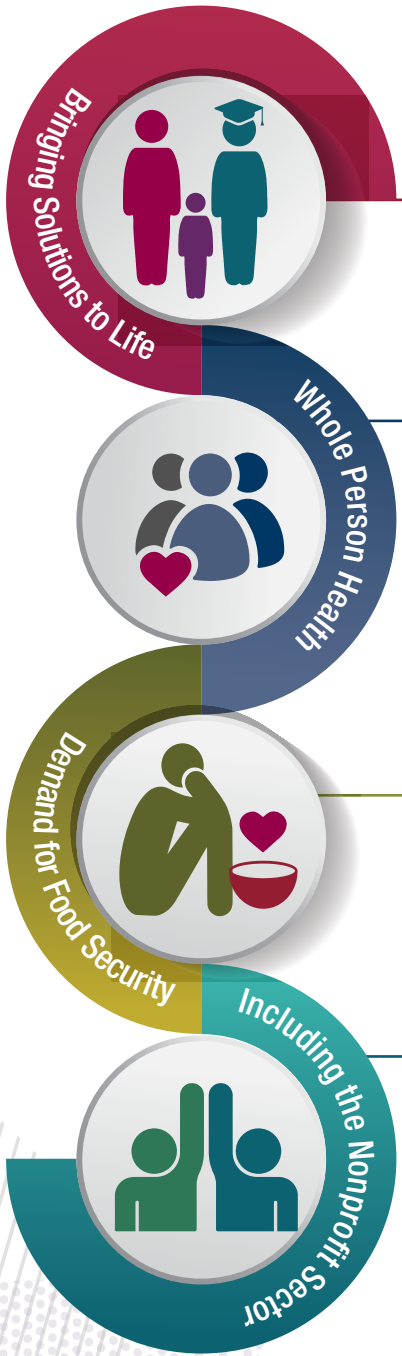
Thriving is more than just surviving. Healthy communities reduce or eliminate differences in health outcomes between diverse groups. They also recognize the intersection between environment and health. Environment can consist of four key elements: physical, social, economic, and policy.<sup>65</sup>

Mental and physical health do not necessarily exist without each other, and one can affect the other. Addressing economic disparity vis a vis housing affordability and access to healthy food might help address mental health issues in the Region.

Profound changes can occur when society understands that good health is an outcome of many environmental factors and an expression of the community in which we live. Durham has an opportunity to empower individuals to connect mental and physical well-being to thrive in all areas of life.

Given the profundity of food insecurity for too many Durham residents, Ben Earle, Chief Executive Officer of Feed the Need in Durham, recommends that we take a systemic approach to the problem, engaging community organizations, the agricultural sector, and all levels of government to develop collective solutions to the challenge of community food security. This can include both the development of local policies to encourage innovative ways of producing and procuring food at the neighbourhood level, as well as a reformation of income security programs to ensure that all residents have access to an income that supports their basic needs.

Progress Report



**Bringing Solutions to Life:**

While Durham is experiencing profound mental health and food insecurity issues, there are solutions (as shown above). The question: How should our community band together to bring those solutions to life?

**Whole Person Health:**

Increasingly, society recognizes there is no health without mental health, which was declining during the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Encouragingly, the rate of mild depression improved between 2021 and 2022.<sup>66</sup> Sustained pressures related to housing affordability, inflation, and food scarcity remain, and can contribute to mental illness. There is a strong movement among government, health care providers, nonprofits, and funders to understand these determinants of health and to create interconnected solutions for whole person health. Support for mental health is particularly needed for women, younger people, and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals.

**Demand for Food Security:**

In the period of April 2021 to March 2022, there was a 58% increase in the food bank visits in Durham over the previous year,<sup>67</sup> compared to a 17% increase overall in Ontario over the same period.<sup>68</sup> The challenge in Durham is alarming as the demand for food security programming continues to grow.

**Including the Nonprofit Sector:**

The nonprofit sector has the commitment and skills to help optimize the health of Durham's residents. They can be mobilized along with following local health guidelines to invest in staff and infrastructure, expand mental health and addiction services, expand home and community care, strengthen public health and pandemic preparedness, and provide a health care team approach to patients with digital access.<sup>69</sup>



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### Vital Steps We Can All Take

#### For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- Embrace the importance of mental wellness.
- Invest in programs that provide wide-ranging access to mental health and addiction services for residents across Durham.
- Assess and build capacity to serve the mental health needs of women, younger people, and 2SLGBTQI+.
- Support solutions to address economic inequality, including innovative approaches to economic development and the inadequacy of current social assistance rates to support living with dignity.

#### For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability to mental health and consider giving non-perishable items to food banks.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Be an influencer and encourage family, neighbours, friends, and co-workers to better understand the connections between mental and physical health.

*“More recently, we’re seeing youth in mental health crisis who need to be hospitalized but, when they are discharged, they land back at our doors. We never want to turn anyone away and yet we are not equipped for complex mental health care needs. There exists an opportunity to collaborate more deeply with our hospital system to ensure vulnerable youth get the mental health services they need.”*

**Lorie Gale-Gervais, Durham Youth Services**

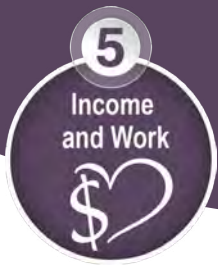




### Understanding Income and Work in Durham Region

Low post-pandemic unemployment has led to higher job vacancies and higher hourly wages. Additionally, available employment opportunities are increasingly higher skilled and higher paying. Yet, marginalized people such as women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and newcomers are not equitably benefiting from these economic developments.

*The story of Durham's opportunities for income and work is more than how much people earn and what jobs they secure. It's about equitable access to the abundance of employment opportunities, who is more likely to be unemployed, how job vacancies are higher in Durham than in Ontario, and gaining access to the higher paying jobs that are increasingly available in Durham.*

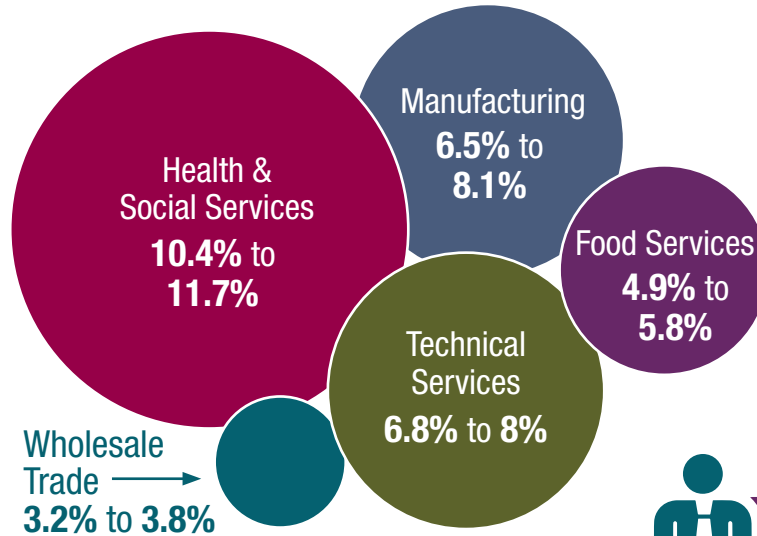


## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### Defining Insights

#### EMPLOYMENT: Manufacturing jobs in Durham continue to decline in the face of jobs requiring more advanced education.<sup>70</sup>

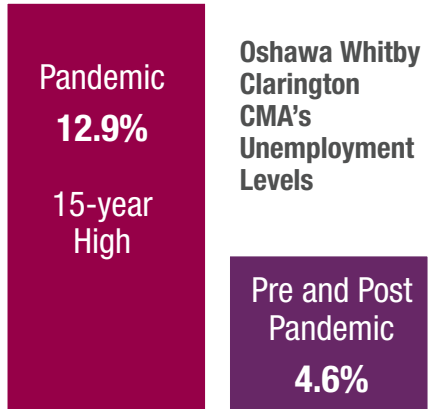
To access new higher skilled job opportunities, residents need access to education and training to avoid precarious employment.<sup>72</sup>



Between 2016 and 2021, the number of people in Durham working in lower skilled jobs decreased: manufacturing (8.1% to 6.5%), wholesale trade (3.8% to 3.2%), and food services (5.8% to 4.9%). At the same time, employment increased in health and social services (10.4% to 11.7%), and professional, scientific, and technical services (6.8% to 8%).<sup>71</sup>



#### UNEMPLOYMENT: After reaching a 15-year high of 12.9% during the pandemic, the Oshawa Whitby Clarington CMA's unemployment levels returned to pre-pandemic levels (4.6% as of March 2023),<sup>73</sup> but equitable access to job opportunities remains a challenge.



Oshawa Whitby Clarington CMA's Unemployment Levels

Low unemployment creates opportunities for those traditionally excluded from the labour market. Compared to Durham's overall 2021 unemployment rate of 12.8%, the Region's newcomers experienced very slightly lower levels of unemployment.<sup>74</sup>

Indigenous Peoples, and racialized minorities (particularly women) in Oshawa, Whitby, and Clarington CMA are more likely than Durham's average to experience unemployment.<sup>75</sup>

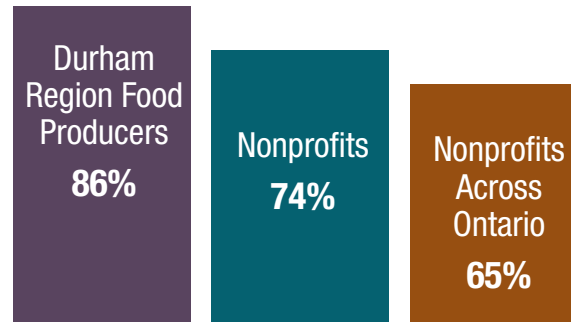


## Defining Insights

**JOB VACANCIES:**

Job vacancies essentially doubled since 2019 from 3.4% to 6.7% in 2022.<sup>76</sup>

35.6% of employers across Ontario reported labour shortages as an obstacle for their business during the third quarter of 2022.<sup>77</sup>

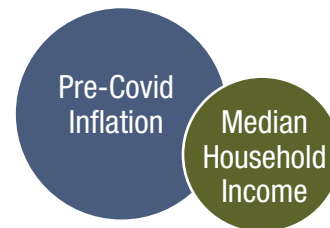


In Durham, agriculture and nonprofits are more at risk than other parts of Ontario for job vacancies. 86% of the Region's food producers cited the availability of qualified workers was fair or poor.<sup>78</sup> Between April 2021 and March 2022, 74% of the Region's nonprofits reported challenges with recruitment and/or retention compared to 65% across Ontario.<sup>79</sup>

**INCOME:**

Wages are increasing substantially,<sup>80</sup> and income gaps remain for equity deserving communities.<sup>81</sup>

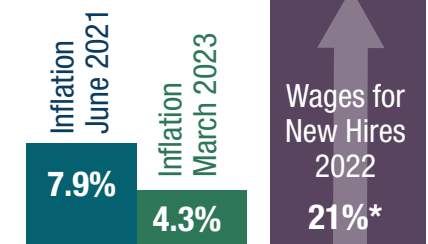
Wages in the Region are increasing beyond inflation; however, Indigenous Peoples, diverse individuals, immigrants, and women tend to earn less.<sup>85</sup> Inflation puts greater pressure on these equity-deserving groups.



Pre-Covid-19, inflation outpaced Durham's residents' incomes; even though median household incomes increased by 26% from 2000 to 2015.<sup>82</sup>

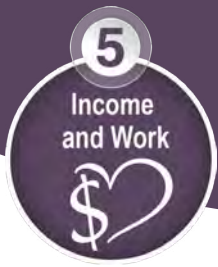


In 2020, incomes increased for most residents, including the lowest income earners; however, extra income came from Government pandemic support.<sup>83</sup>



In June 2021, inflation hit a high of 7.9%, then dropped to 4.3% in March 2023. Meanwhile, compared to 2021, employers offered 21% higher wages to new hires to offset higher job vacancies, reaching \$24.05 per hour on average in 2022.<sup>84</sup>

\*Wages for new hires went up 21% in 2022 compared to 2021



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



### What Enables Sustainable Income and Work

It is one thing for Durham to be transitioning to a higher skilled employment centre, but quite another to have chronic barriers to accessing the education and training required to attain higher skilled and better paying jobs. The question remains: how can we ensure everyone, including equity-seeking communities can get ahead?

Everyone in Durham deserves the opportunity to share in the advances being made in the Region's labour market. It means organizations, funders, policymakers, and individual community members can collaborate and be intentional about supporting local businesses owned by women and

Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) community members. Governments can develop policies to encourage a living wage. Employers can learn to attract community groups that experience employment barriers.

In the same way that affordable housing enhances economic prosperity for the entire community, empowering all members of Durham to access meaningful employment opportunities can generate widespread economic prosperity.

Progress Report



**Precarious Employment Rising:** Precarious employment (defined as temporary jobs and self-employed situations) has been increasing across Canada; however, on a positive note, Durham is fairing slightly better (3.5 percentage points fewer).<sup>86</sup>



**Higher Education Among Immigrants:** Across Ontario, immigrants are more likely to be unemployed than non-immigrants (12.8% versus 11.9% in 2021); however, data for Oshawa, Whitby, and Clarington CMA shows immigrants in these communities are slightly less likely to be unemployed compared to people overall in Durham.<sup>87</sup> Newcomers' higher education levels are a positive influence on Durham's long-term economic prosperity.



**Monitor Wages & Inflation:** The Region and many employers and citizens are monitoring the intersection between wages and inflation trending higher, and if higher wages will outpace inflation. This should help to mitigate unexpected large increases in either category.



**Income Gap Lessened:** Positively, the income gap lessened for many in equity-deserving groups in 2020, although it still persists.<sup>88</sup>

## Vital Steps We Can All Take

Overview of Our Rapidly Changing  
and Growing Community

5

Income  
and Work



### For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- Ensure a living wage so all residents can afford food and shelter.
- Remove barriers to employment through access to training and education.
- Employers collaborate with employment services to learn how to attract groups with barriers to employment.
- Funders can give higher rates of their investments to help people during these times of economical instability.
- Support local businesses and those owned by women and BIPOC community members through purchasing and sourcing their products and services.

### For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability and support local businesses in your community and those owned by women and BIPOC community members.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Advocate for policies to limit the rapid rising costs of food and shelter.

*“New and exciting possibilities have opened up. The low unemployment rate gives people who were furthest from the labour market to connect to it in a way they haven’t before. For example, people with disabilities, newcomers, and immigrants. Employers have a new opportunity to change their business practices to engage with these able groups of people through employment programs and services to support their transition into the workforce, retain employment, and keep the unemployment rate low.”*

**Heather McMillan, Durham Workforce Authority**



## Understanding the Environment in Durham Region

Climate change has created a whole new dimension when considering how Durham will thrive in the future relative to how to cope with more extreme weather. For Durham, the Greenbelt is central to the conversation on the local impacts of climate change. At the time of drafting this report, the story of the future of the Greenbelt was unfolding in the media as the Provincial Government admitted “it was a mistake”<sup>89</sup> to open the Greenbelt for development and reversed its decision. Our Foundation will continue to monitor the Greenbelt.

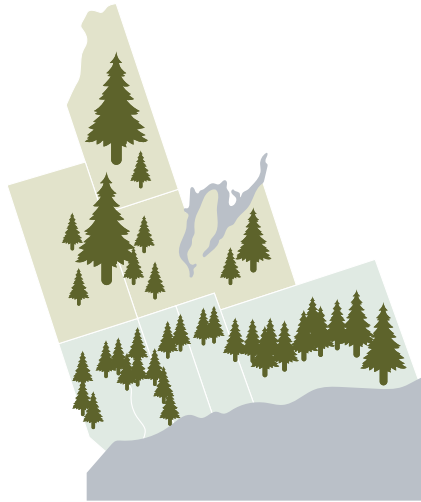
*The story of Durham’s environment is more than identifying local natural resources and climate issues. It’s about a wake-up call to steward Durham’s land (Greenbelt) for a sustainable future that affects every section of this report, including the community’s ability to thrive, types of housing, staying engaged, being healthy, making a living, children’s futures, and safety. It’s also about the Region’s ability to manage climate change, reduce carbon emissions, and divert waste to offset the impacts of a changing climate.*



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

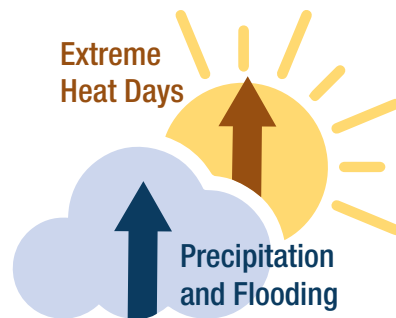
### THE GREENBELT:

The Province had originally mandated 7,400 acres of the Greenbelt be opened up for property development. 4,500 acres in Pickering’s Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP) were at risk.<sup>90</sup>



### CLIMATE CHANGE:

Extreme heat and extreme rain are more frequent than ever and will get worse, calling for immediate risk mitigation strategies across Durham.



## Defining Insights

The Province had backtracked on its promise to preserve the Greenbelt. **Fifteen areas of protected land totalling 1,500 acres were in jeopardy**, most in Pickering, with two other parcels in Ajax and Clarington. Now, the Province appears to be fulfilling its original promise to preserve the Greenbelt.

**Ontario needs more homes;** however, Durham’s leaders had sounded the alarm about the damaging environmental impacts of developing so much of the Greenbelt.<sup>91</sup>

**Parks Canada was concerned that removing the DRAP for property development would create irreversible harm** to wildlife, ecosystems, and agricultural landscape in Rouge National Urban Park. Both preserves are the last intact corridor between Lake Ontario and Oak Ridges Moraine.<sup>92</sup>

**A four-fold increase in the number of extreme heat days is expected by 2070.**<sup>93</sup> Vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, pregnant women, people with pre-existing conditions, those without air conditioning, and low-income communities are especially at risk for adverse heat-related health impacts.

**Increased precipitation and more frequent extreme rainfall events** are also expected to amplify regional flood risks.

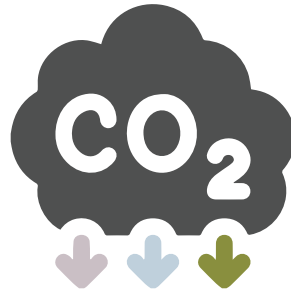
**Highest risk neighbourhoods for flooding** are in economically vulnerable neighbourhoods in southern and downtown Oshawa.<sup>94</sup>

**Over recent years Durham experienced record rainfall** with 2019 being a record year for flood warnings and several severe floods in the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Area (CLOCA).<sup>95</sup>



## Defining Insights

**CARBON EMISSIONS:**  
Carbon emissions in Durham  
were 17% higher than overall  
Greater Toronto Hamilton Area  
per capita in 2021.<sup>96</sup>



**Carbon emissions come from three major sources in Durham:** Fossil fuel combustion in buildings, transportation, and industrial processes.<sup>97</sup>

Durham made some progress decreasing carbon emissions from 2018 to 2020.<sup>98</sup>

## What Creates a Healthy Environment

**Our environment and our health are inextricably linked.**

One of the most important reasons people move to Durham Region is the presumption they will thrive. At the local level, Durham is experiencing first-hand the impacts of climate change. Measures are urgently needed to mitigate the threats of extreme heat and rain, carbon emissions, and waste.

Protecting Durham's Greenbelt is essential to sustain a healthy environment.

Burkhard Mausberg, President, Small Change Fund recommends two major strategies for extreme rainfall: (1) retrofit existing urban areas to reduce flood risks; and (2) develop new urban areas with flood mitigation plans.<sup>99</sup>

Powerful natural strategies call for Durham to invest in three main areas: natural infrastructure: (wetlands, forests, parks, lakes and rivers, fields, and soils); enhanced infrastructure (rain gardens, bioswales, urban trees and parks, biomimicry, and stormwater ponds); and engineered infrastructure (permeable pavement, green roofs, rain barrels, green walls, and cisterns).<sup>100</sup>

To address extreme heat and carbon emissions, Durham is called to embrace the Recommendations from The Atmospheric Fund. Buildings: green development standards. Transportation: zero emission vehicles and investments to support walking and cycling.<sup>101</sup>

An environmentally friendly Region could enhance social interaction and inclusion and build a deeper sense of community, simply because it provides more ways for people to interact.



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### Progress Report

**Advocates worked hard to save the Greenbelt and promote the Region’s ability to support new housing within existing boundaries through existing infrastructure.**

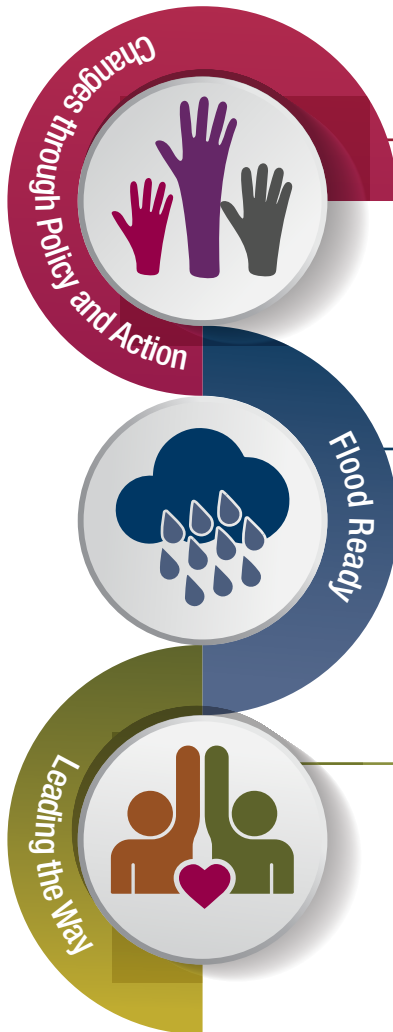
Their work appears to have made a powerful impact on saving the Greenbelt. The Greenbelt protects against urban sprawl, and provides habitats for many species, including humans, by preserving air and water quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and supporting local food security by protecting fertile farmland. The Greenbelt could be a historic rallying point to bring communities across Durham closer together and strengthen civic engagement.



**The Durham Climate Roundtable (DCR) was formed in December 2022 to support the advancement of climate change strategies being implemented across Durham Region.**

The DCR is managed through the Brilliant Energy Institute at Ontario Tech University, funded by the Region of Durham and informed by the participation of leaders from the Region, its municipalities, and corporate, academic and community organizations. Ontario Tech produces an annual greenhouse gas inventory to track our collective progress toward net zero carbon and holds an annual public forum.

### Progress Report



#### Changes through Policy and Action:

Between 1971 and 2000, there were an average only 7.6 extreme heat days per year, but this is expected to more than triple to 27.4 days per year between 2041 and 2070. While this figure is alarming, the Region, businesses, funders, and individuals are listening, and changes are being considered and delivered through policy and action, which could help to offset the post-pandemic increase in emissions.

#### Flood Ready:

Encouragingly, in May 2023, Durham Region launched the Flood Ready Durham resource to prevent flooding and protect ecosystems. This could significantly help address the preponderance of hard, impermeable surface environments in Durham's cities such as roads, parking lots, and the three "walls" of Oshawa (CP line, 401, and CN Line), which are vulnerable to absorbing water during extreme rain.

#### Leading the Way:

Durham became a Canadian leader in recycling and composting,<sup>102</sup> reducing waste sent to landfill. Durham diverted 63% of residential solid waste in 2021 up from 52% in 2011 contrasted with the median of other cities in Canada, which diverted 46% of residential solid waste in 2021, a decrease from 48% in 2011.<sup>103</sup>

Vital Steps We Can All Take

For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- Commit to the environment and a shared future through zero emission vehicles, energy retrofits of buildings and investing in natural infrastructure.
- Support civil society calls for building new housing within existing urban boundaries that build climate resilient neighbourhoods.
- Learn about traditional wisdom from Indigenous cultures.

*“Thankfully, most of us can create natural infrastructure to avert flooding. And it’s fairly easy and creates more beautiful neighbourhoods that are an oasis for people to go to when its super-hot outside.”*

**Franz Hartmann, Formerly of Unflood Ontario**

For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability to support environmental groups.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Get involved in the climate conversation with local officials.
- Retrofit your home for energy efficiency and build natural infrastructure.

*“Our Greenbelt, DRAP, is the most important environmental issue in Durham Region right now. Each and every one of us is affected.”*

**Burkhard Mausberg, Small Change Fund**



## Understanding our Children and Youth in Durham Region

A thriving community naturally imagines how its children and youth will prosper in the future and takes steps to secure it. Like communities across the country, children and youth in Durham are experiencing increasing vulnerabilities whilst most social supports are diminishing, except for more affordable childcare. This report would be incomplete without understanding the needs of the next generation, to whom the torch is passed to ensure Durham's long-term ability to flourish.

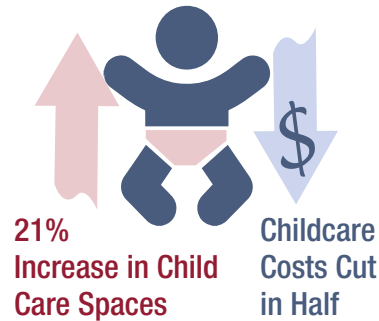
*The story of Durham's next generation of children and youth is more than their current struggles to make it in the world. It's about how their early development affects their entire lives, their personal and academic wellbeing as students, and their ability to be gainfully employed as they secure their own futures.*



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### EARLY DEVELOPMENT: (0 to 5)

31% of the Region's youngest generation are vulnerable to at least one early development domain.<sup>104</sup>



### CHILDREN AND YOUTH: (6 to 18)

Durham students' mental health has been declining.<sup>110</sup>

Durham students' mental health was declining before the pandemic and worsened thereafter.



### Defining Insights

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) assesses the readiness of children in Senior Kindergarten for school. By 2018, **vulnerability on at least one early development domain rose from 26% in 2009 to 31% in 2018.**<sup>105</sup>

Some nonprofits in Durham that support children reported **increasing developmental challenges** among their young clients since the pandemic.<sup>106</sup>

**There has been a 21% increase in childcare spaces**, up from 24,014 in 2016 to 29,293 in 2021.<sup>107</sup> The new national child care plan cut median child care costs in half from March 2022 to March 2023.<sup>108</sup>

**The number of children served by Durham Region's Special Needs Resourcing agencies more than doubled** from 1,123 in 2020 to 2,876 in 2022.<sup>109</sup>

In the Ontario Student Drug Use & Health Survey for 2021, **both students' health and risky behaviours were increasingly concerning**, especially related to feeling close to people at school, feeling part of school, physical and mental health, cyberbullying, and video gaming issues.<sup>112</sup>

**Female students suffered more negative impacts from Covid-19 than males** with 50% saying the pandemic affected their mental health very much/extremely compared to 29% of males. 70% of females felt depressed about the future due to the pandemic, compared to 47% of males.<sup>113</sup>

### Defining Insights

#### **YOUTH: (15 TO 24)**

There were near record lows for youth unemployment in 2022, but wages did not keep up with inflation.



In 1998, youth earned \$22.55 per hour in 2022 dollars, compared to \$19.87 in 2022,<sup>115</sup> making it difficult to keep pace with increasing costs of food and housing.

**Youth unemployment decreased** to 5.3% in 2022, near its lowest of 5.1% in 2018.<sup>114</sup>

The capacity of one large nonprofit serving children and youth declined due to increased needs. Their number of locations decreased by 38%, the number of children and youth in their after-school programs decreased by 57%, their part-time staff decreased by 42%, and their full-time staff by 6%, and sponsorship and fundraising revenue decreased by 42%.<sup>116</sup>

### What Enables Children & Youth to Thrive

Around the world, society increasingly recognizes the power of investing in children's developmental years, particularly birth to five. It sets them up for personal and professional success and greater life satisfaction through healthy relating with themselves, others, and the world.

The well-being of the youngest generations is a harbinger of the Region's future. If children and youth need help and guidance now, our future depends on giving it to them.

Alberta Health Services, an international leader in child development, suggests early child development requires physical health, communication and general knowledge,

social and emotional well-being, and language and thinking skills. It also means empowering parents to develop healthy attachment relationships with their babies. Child and youth mental health speaks to promoting mental health among school-aged children to instill healthy coping skills and emotional processing early on. Child and youth nutrition and physical activity empowers the young to maintain physical health, including weight, nutrition, physical exercise, and mental wellness.<sup>117</sup>

Ensuring Durham talks about the power of early years development and provides the social funding to empower families, schools, and nonprofits to support them is one of the most effective ways to ensure our collective future.

**Progress Report**

**Understanding Unique Challenges:**

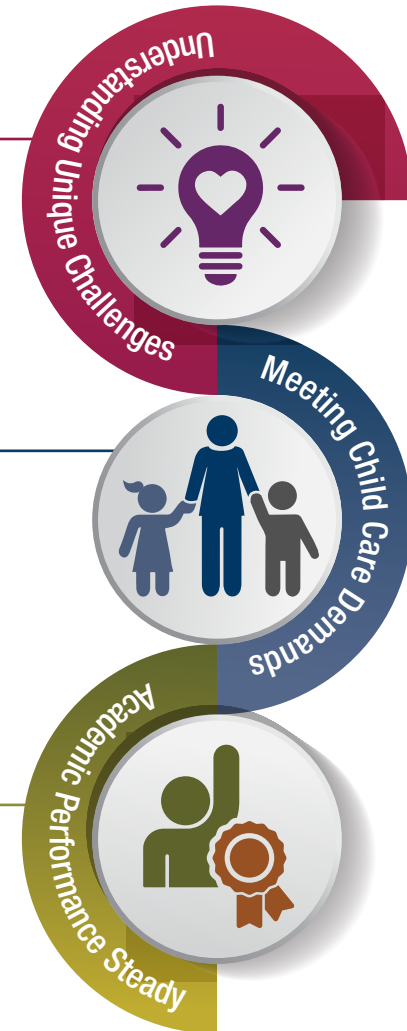
The pandemic caused children to lose three years of socialization from a structured school environment, and many missed out on Junior Kindergarten.<sup>118</sup> This knowledge, while distressing, allows families, school system, support agencies, and the Region to understand the unique challenges for the youngest population emerging from the pandemic, and to develop strategies to course correct.

**Meeting Child Care Demands:**

Child care costs are now decreasing due to the Canada-Ontario Early Years and Child Care Agreement, which aims to provide access to licenced child care programs for \$10 a day by September 2025. Encouragingly, 95% of Durham’s child care centres have already joined the program.<sup>119</sup> Child care spaces in Durham kept pace with population growth, able to serve about 25% of children younger than 13.<sup>120</sup> By March 2023, median monthly child care costs decreased by 52.7% from 2022.<sup>121</sup>

**Academic Performance Steady:**

Thankfully, despite the pressures, available data suggest Durham’s students’ academic performance is steady<sup>122</sup> and school belonging, engagement and safety may be slightly improved.<sup>123</sup> The Durham District School Board has explored academic achievement and found Black and Indigenous students consistently having lower academic outcomes and are more likely to be suspended or expelled.<sup>124</sup>





## Vital Steps We Can All Take

Overview of Our Rapidly Changing  
and Growing Community



### For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- Recognize the future belongs to children and set them up for success.
- Invest in children and youth support organizations and provide opportunities within our organizations.
- Establish family-friendly work policies to empower families.
- Include youth meaningfully in community engagement activities. Create space for and listen to youth voices.

*“Our focus has been on delivering programs that help young people learn coping skills, social skills, and the ability to manage stress because these are growing needs. Mental health issues and isolation are also affecting our children and youth, and through mentorship we can create a greater sense of connection to the community and provide support that will help them to reach their full potential.”*

**Melanie Stewart, Big Brothers Big Sisters South-West Durham**

### For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability to organizations that serve children and youth.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Advocate for policies that benefit future generations, including green space, increasing wages, reducing education costs, and supporting quality child care.
- Foster developmental relationships with children and youth in your life.

*“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives”, Audre Lorde. To buttress the above quote, women, youth, and children in our community need a whole lot of community resources to enable them to navigate diverse social service delivery systems.”*

**Esther Enyolu, Women’s Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre of Durham Region**



## Understanding Safety in Durham

People move to communities where they feel safe. Durham has a long history of being a safe place to live; however, new safety concerns have emerged related to violence against women and children.

*The story of Durham's safety is evolving and reflective of national trends. It's about empowering individuals to avoid victimization and not feel ashamed to seek help, as well as to avoid turning to opioid drugs.*



## Defining Insights

Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



### CRIME RATES:

Property crimes and youth crimes are trending downwards<sup>125</sup> while sexual violations and indecent, harassing, and threatening offences are increasing.<sup>126</sup>



**Durham experienced a 53% reduction in crime between 2001 and 2015;**

however, there was a 3.2% average yearly increase between 2015 to 2019. There was a temporary decline during the height of the pandemic.<sup>127</sup>

**Between 2004 and 2021, youth crime saw a significant decrease from 3,570.76 per 100,000 people to 734.1.<sup>128</sup>**

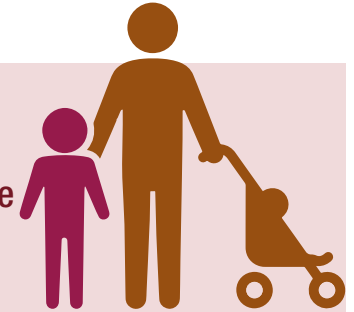
**Property crimes in Durham have dropped from 1,912 to 1,720**

while violent crimes remained relatively steady from 640 to 650 between 2017 and 2021.<sup>131</sup>

**Within the GTA, while Durham's crime severity is second only to Toronto,<sup>129</sup> it has dropped considerably over time.<sup>130</sup>**

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN:

Increases in Durham's violent crime rate is mainly related to crimes against women and children.



**Since 2017, sexual violations against children increased 2.3 times**

from 156 to 356, sexual assaults by 1.4 times, and indecent/harassing/threats by 1.4 times.<sup>132</sup>

**Human trafficking is increasingly being recognized as a serious issue in Durham,**

with Durham Regional Police identifying 42% more cases in 2021 compared to 2019.<sup>133</sup> 96% of victims are typically women and girls.<sup>134</sup>

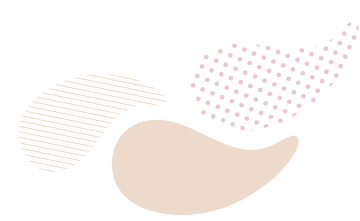
**Victim Services of Durham Region's caseload increased dramatically by 250% between 2017 and 2021**

from 3,713 to 9,108. Further, adult women account for 69% of their clientele.<sup>135</sup>

**In May 2023, the Region of Durham declared an Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic**



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community



### Defining Insights

**OPIOIDS:**  
There was a rapid increase in the rate of opioid-related deaths in Durham during the pandemic.<sup>136</sup>



**Deaths due to opioid toxicity have been increasing across Canada since the mid-2000s, and Durham is no different.**

**From 2008 to 2021, deaths due to opioid poisoning in Durham have risen 10 times from 13 to 130 by 2021.<sup>137</sup>**

This rapid increase is due to increasingly unpredictable and toxic unregulated drugs, reduced access to healthcare and community programs, a disproportionate burden on those who are homeless, and social isolation.<sup>138</sup>

### What Creates Safety in a Community

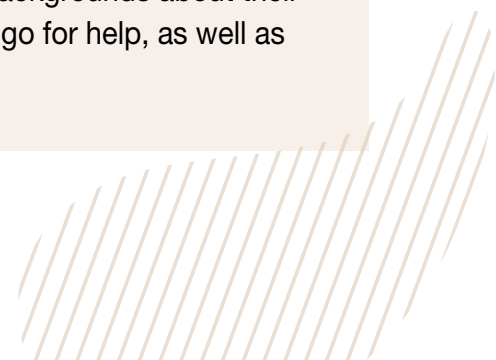
Community and a sense of safety go hand in hand. Getting to know neighbours and being a part of local events builds connections, connections create a sense of security, and security makes it easier for people to talk, reach out for help, even call the police, and share their needs.<sup>139</sup>

Public education can also have a positive impact on crime prevention, especially as it relates to empowering people to avoid being victims.<sup>140</sup>

Ontario's Ministry of the Solicitor General suggests all levels of government, law enforcement, and the community need

increased access to information on crime prevention to address related risk factors. Treatment programs and facilities for mental health and addiction issues, temporary supportive housing, and social activities are all powerful supports that can be coordinated.<sup>141</sup>

Durham needs to continue its open and honest dialogue with the community about its safety concerns, especially supporting women and children from all cultural backgrounds about their rights to safety, equality, and where to go for help, as well as individuals at risk for opioid use.



While outside the pandemic, crime appears to still be increasing annually and violent crime remains unchanged, encouragingly, property and youth crime are down, as is the crime severity index.

Some Victim Services agencies across the province have had to implement waitlists. While Victim Services of Durham Region has not had to resort to this, they have relied heavily on grant funding to meet increased demand.<sup>142</sup>

Without sustainable funding to meet increased demand it is possible that waitlists may need to be implemented in the future. They believe that increased demand could be the result of increased awareness of the issues and supports available, coordinated response by multiple community partners, and the adverse effects of the pandemic on socio-economic conditions within the region.

For the first time in Durham's history, Regional Council has declared an Intimate Partner Epidemic and has asked all levels of government to provide resources and support to address this crisis.



Durham is taking action against crimes directed at women and children. Durham Regional Police established a Human Trafficking Unit in 2019, adding four additional investigators in 2021, which has helped address more cases.

Opioid-related deaths continue to increase with deadly drugs being sold on the streets more than ever before. Education among nonprofits, health services, and schools can help turn the tide.



## Overview of Our Rapidly Changing and Growing Community

### Vital Steps We Can All Take

#### For Donors, Funders, and Policymakers

- Prevent women and children from exploitation and abuse through expanded donations and support services.
- Enhance opioid response strategies.

*“We know how successful our interventions are to support victims of violence. However, as demand for support increases without corresponding funding increases, our capacity to support becomes strained. We respond immediately to urgent police referrals. The Ministry mandates we respond within 72 hours for non-urgent police referrals and community-based referrals. Capacity and staffing constraints are putting extreme pressure on meeting this mandate. We are hopeful that when the community understands the power of helping as well as funding needs, we can all act to build greater capacity.”*

**Krista MacNeil, Victim Services of Durham Region**

#### For Individuals

- Donate to the best of your ability.
- Volunteer as much time as you can and connect with community minded leaders.
- Become a positive role model for a youth who needs one.
- Support local supportive housing for women and children as well as harm reduction programs and safe consumption sites.

*“Every person is a person first. Everyone is someone’s family member. People are more likely to reach out for help if they are not judged or stigmatized.”*

**Lee Truong, Durham Region Health Department**

# For Your Reflection:

## Your Community Makes You and You Make Your Community

When Durham Community Foundation first embarked on this Vital Signs® journey of discovery, we had a broad understanding of the challenges within our region. We stayed at arm's length, trying not to formulate any opinion until the research team presented the data to us.

When we first met with the team to review the findings, we were not surprised — but we were disheartened at the magnitude of the issues, especially the data for our most vulnerable populations including children, women, seniors, low-income, and equity-deserving groups.

Our Region faces many interconnected challenges. All are important and urgent. Therefore, as your Community Foundation, it is our job to address the challenges in a synergistic way. Each challenge must be addressed in the context of the other challenges.

As a registered charity and a local funder, the Foundation has also witnessed firsthand the immense pressure placed on the nonprofit sector to respond and help resolve these challenges. We understand the powerful impact nonprofit organizations deliver to our local economy, and we applaud the critical role nonprofits play to ensure our community's vitality.

We are uncertain how much more pressure the nonprofit sector can take.

Many organizations are working with operational budgets that were set up decades ago. They are consistently asked to do more with less. Giving is way down, as is volunteerism. Despite these stark realities, nonprofits continue to do what they can to meet the increase in demands in programs and services. But we know it is not sustainable.

Durham has a history of resilience, and we remain optimistic. There is hope in working together, facing challenges together, problem-solving together, and thriving together. Let this be the spark that ignites us to continue to do the work needed to make this region better for all residents.

There are no linear problems or solutions easily addressed by one level of government, business, donor or organization. Durham is our home, our workplaces, our community. And quite frankly, we all need to show up and work collectively to ensure that we can come out of this crisis for the better.

### What's Next for Us?

The Vital Signs® report will provide Durham Community Foundation with the knowledge we need to continue to advocate and direct resources. We encourage all funders to direct their funding to the areas of need based on the data in this report.

We recognize that funding is essential to

support and to drive the change necessary to make our community better. That is why the Foundation is building a Vital Durham Endowment Fund to ensure we can continue to provide permanent financial resources to address the current and emerging priorities outlined in this report. We hope you will join us, along with the many families and businesses that are already investing with us to ensure a better future for all in our community.

This is our commitment to our community — and to you. We invite you to consider what your commitment as an individual will be to your Durham.

### What's Next for You?

We hope that Vital Signs® inspires you to engage with your family, neighbours, friends, and co-workers. Through understanding, compassion and action, we will create a resilient and caring community where everyone feels they belong. In doing so, we can all thrive together.

If Vital Signs® has taught us anything, it's that each of us is inseparable from our community. As you learn about your community, in effect, you are also learning about yourself.

**The question is: what do you want for you and your community? And what are you prepared to do about it?**

## Join Our Giving Movement!

*“Every one of us is a product of our community. The communities we grow up in – and move into – make us who we are. Every community is the sum of the people who live within it – a unique mix of our personalities, cultures, and interests. The causes we care about, the time we invest, the people we bring together – they all shape our communities now and for future generations. Giving back is how the cycle of a vibrant and sustainable community continues.”*

**Community Foundations of Canada.**

### We are here for you and our community.

Please contact our Executive Director, Vivian Curl, to find out how you can join our giving movement.

#### **Vivian Curl**

Executive Director,  
Durham Community Foundation

[Vivian@DurhamCommunityFoundation.ca](mailto:Vivian@DurhamCommunityFoundation.ca)

905-430-6507

Mailing Address:

2C-157 Harwood Avenue North, Mailbox 250,  
AJAX, Ontario, L1Z 0B6

Charity Registration #: 898797931 RR0001



# Endnotes

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