

# Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey

A prompt for discussion

June 2019



## Purpose of this document:

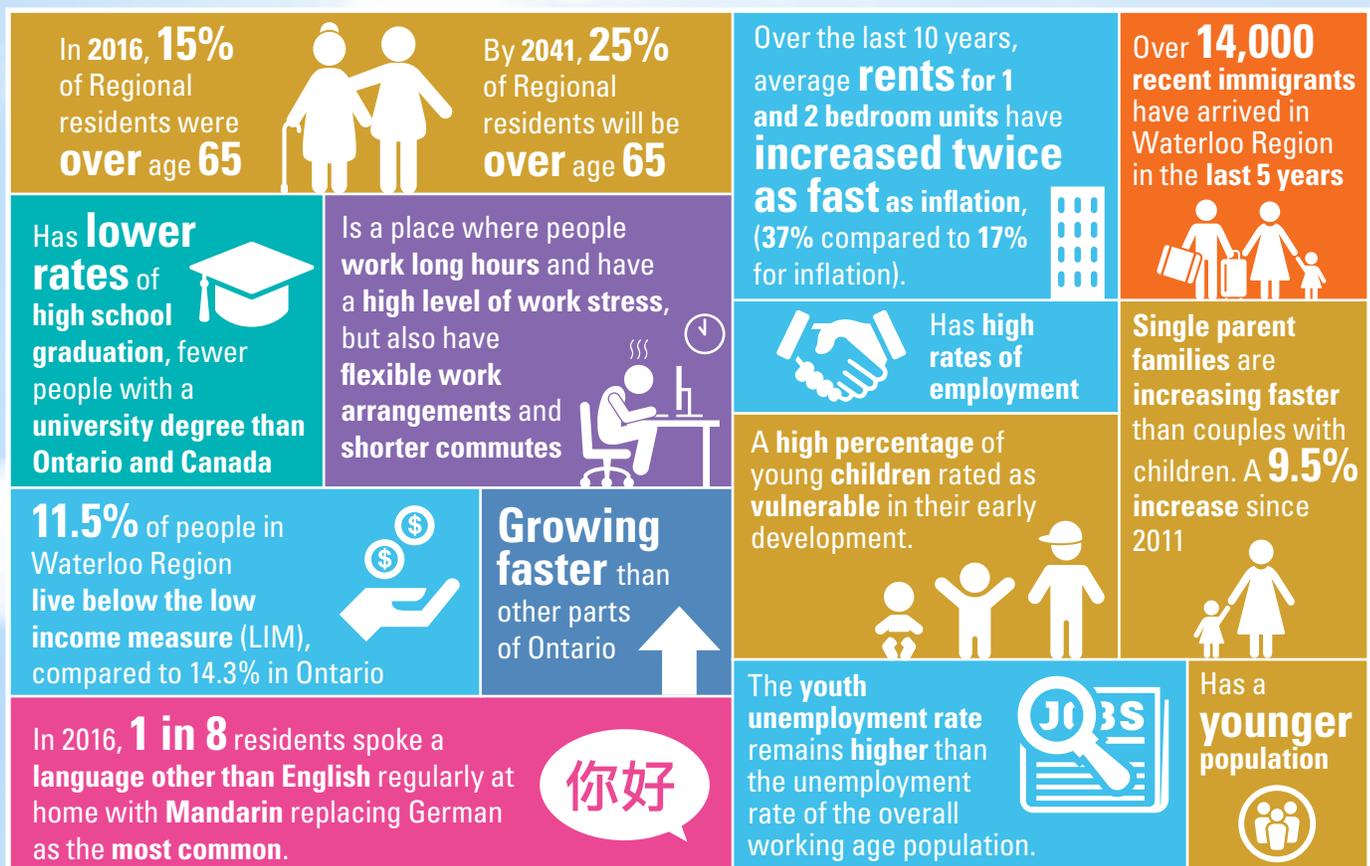
This document highlights some of the findings from the Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey that was conducted by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) through the University of Waterloo in the spring and summer of 2018. It includes comparisons of survey findings to other data sources, including a similar survey conducted in the region in 2013 (commissioned by the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation). Comparing the results of questions that were the same in these two surveys makes it possible to see how the region's wellbeing is changing over time. Census statistical data was also used in order to compare health outcomes to citizen perceptions.

This report is intended as a prompt for discussion to encourage further conversations with diverse voices to generate the most impactful solutions that improve wellbeing in Waterloo Region.

## What is wellbeing?

- Being safe, healthy and feeling connected to the people and places around us.
- The quality of our neighbourhoods, parks and the natural environment.
- Being able to express ourselves fully and participate in the activities that we love.
- Access to food and shelter and having the necessities for daily life.
- The health of our community and our relationships.

## What is a general picture of Waterloo Region?



## Background:

In today's increasingly complex and interconnected world how do we improve the wellbeing of the community so that no one is left behind and everyone thrives?

In 2018, a group of 16 community organizations in Waterloo Region including area municipalities, the Region of Waterloo, the Local Health Integration Network, community health centers, Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation, the United Way, Waterloo Regional Police Service and the Crime Prevention Council, wanted to find out how Waterloo Region residents felt about their wellbeing and quality of life in this community. They also wanted to know what they could do together to make transformational change in wellbeing because they recognized that it would take a coordinated response to create solutions that make the most impact on wellbeing.

## About the Wellbeing Survey:

The Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey asked residents about what matters most to their wellbeing and how it is connected to other factors that influence overall health. The survey gathered resident perceptions on a variety of aspects linked to eight interconnected domains of wellbeing: community vitality, healthy populations, democratic engagement, the environment, leisure and culture, education, living standards, and time use.

The following approaches were used to encourage people living in Waterloo Region (16 years and older) to take the survey:

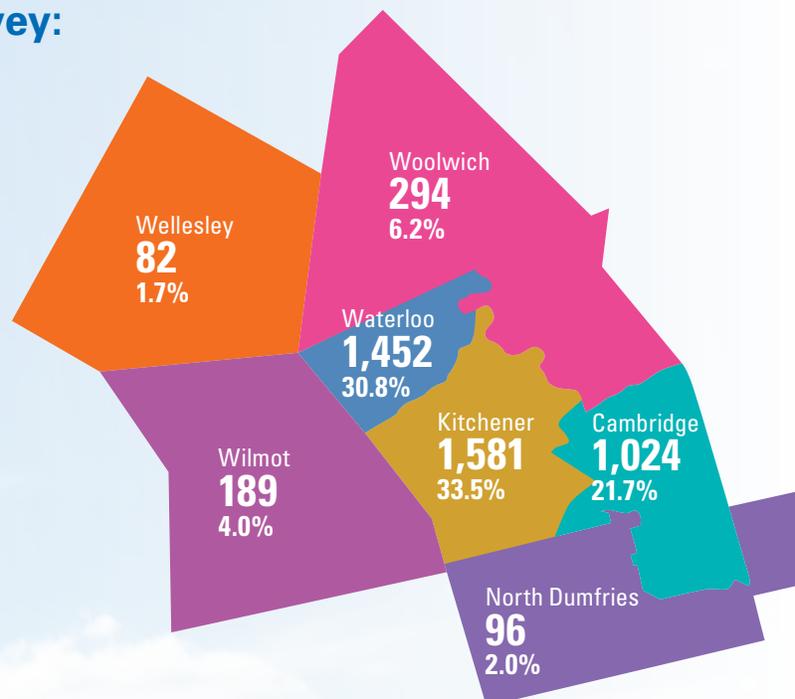
- An online survey was advertised through a variety of traditional and social media channels.
- A personalized letter was sent to 40,000 randomly selected households across the Waterloo Region.
- Targeted outreach to specific populations was implemented in order to assist with survey completion and to ensure diverse groups participated in the survey (e.g. people living on a low income, immigrants/refugees, LGBTQ+, people living with physical or mental health challenges, the Mennonite community, youth, older adults, people with addictions and those in conflict with the law etc.).

## A profile of who completed the survey:

# Over 5,000

people across Waterloo Region completed the survey, and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing weighted the survey results by age, sex and municipality to match the 2016 Census profile. Weighting the data allows the overall Community Wellbeing Survey results to more accurately reflect the responses of residents without under or over-representing any groups based on age, sex, or where they live in Waterloo Region.

\*Municipality was unavailable for 311 residents.



## High level view of results:

The survey results offer useful insights about wellbeing in Waterloo Region. Overall, the results paint a picture of an engaged, diverse and complex community where many people do work that they find meaningful, feel safe and healthy, have confidence in local institutions, and are actively engaged with one another through volunteering and participation in cultural events. There is much to suggest that the average quality of life in the region is high.

However, while many people enjoy life and lead fulfilling lives, there are a number of indicators that suggest that work is becoming more complex and more demanding, consuming a disproportionate amount of our collective time and energy. The pace of life is taking a toll. Feelings of isolation and exclusion are very real for a quarter of residents, and the experience of discrimination appears to be on the rise. Substance use, mental health and financial issues and concerns are touching the lives of many people. Institutions in the region may not be listening closely enough to those who are vulnerable or excluded.

There are some early indications that the people of Waterloo Region are beginning to take notice of these issues, and get involved in addressing them. More people are volunteering, going to community meetings, and taking an interest in local politics. People are training themselves to compete in the job market on an ongoing basis. Most residents feel a personal responsibility to address environmental concerns.



### Characteristics of wellbeing in Waterloo Region

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

Residents with **below** average wellbeing share some of the following characteristics:

- Women
- Younger
- More often on their own
- More often unemployed
- Living with a disability
- Spend over 30% of income on housing

Residents with **above** average wellbeing share some of the following characteristics:

- Men
- Older
- Married (not common-law)
- Higher incomes
- More highly educated
- Longer time residing in Waterloo Region

The following sections provide highlights of the key findings for each of the CIW's eight interconnected domains of wellbeing:



**Community vitality:** social engagement, social support, community safety, attitudes towards others and community.



**Democratic engagement:** democratic process, political institutions, participation in political activities, expression of political views, relationships with governments, trust, citizen participation.



**Education:** social and emotional competencies, basic educational knowledge and skills, overall academic achievement, attainment and participation.



**Environment:** natural resources, clean air, clean water, available energy and raw materials, the amount of wilderness, diversity of species, and natural assets.



**Healthy populations:** personal wellbeing, physical health conditions, life expectancy/mortality, mental health, functional health, lifestyle and behaviours, public health, health care.



**Leisure and culture:** participation, perceptions, experiences, opportunities in social leisure, arts and culture, physical activity.



**Living standards:** average and median income and wealth, income and wealth distribution, income volatility, economic security.



**Time use:** time, timing (control over timing of one's day), tempo (pace), temporarily (biological rhythms).

**Overall, 75%** of residents report that they are **very satisfied** with life in general.

This level of satisfaction reflects the ways in which the domains are connected and influence one another.





## Community vitality



**59.6%** of residents volunteer – an over **8.6% increase** since 2013.

**x2**

Reports of **discrimination** due to **ethnicity, culture, race or skin colour** have more than **doubled** since 2013.



Almost **7%** of respondents frequently **experience discrimination** due to **ethnicity, race, or skin colour**, and a similar percentage frequently experience discrimination due to **age or gender**.

**3.5%** of respondents frequently experience **discrimination due to sexual orientation**.

**8 in 10** people feel they can **trust the people they work with or go to school with**.

Trust of neighbours is slightly lower, at 7/10.



Almost **1 in 4** local residents feels that they **lack companionship**.



### Community vitality and wellbeing

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

#### Below average wellbeing

- Less civic engagement
- More socially isolated
- Lower needs fulfillment
- Experience discrimination more often
- Feel less safe walking alone after dark

#### Above average wellbeing

- Volunteer more
- Strong sense of belonging
- Stronger social bonds
- Feel help is available if needed
- Greater trust in others
- More confidence in institutions

- The 2018 survey provides a description of how frequently people in the region experience discrimination for various reasons. Given that about **18% of local residents are members of visible minority groups**, these figures suggest about a **third** of these people **experience discrimination frequently** which has more than **doubled since 2013**.
- **Survey respondents were most likely to trust people with whom they worked or went to school**. People also trusted (to a lesser extent) people in their neighbourhoods. They were less likely to trust people they encounter but do not know, and were often mistrustful of strangers.
- **19.1%** of residents agreed that they **often feel isolated** from others in the community. Rates of perceived isolation were highest in the three large cities.
- Over **80%** of respondents **feel safe** from crime walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood.



In general, residents reported a **moderately high degree of confidence in all institutions** including the school and health care system, local merchants, the justice system and the police.

#### Confidence in institutions

Local merchants and business people	8.7	18.1	73.1
Waterloo Region Police Service	16.4	15.1	68.5
Health care system	20.9	16.7	62.4
School system	22	19.9	58.1
The justice system and courts	22.8	21.6	55.5

■ less confidence

■ neutral/not sure

■ more confidence



## Democratic engagement

Residents are **more than twice as likely** to attend a community meeting, open house, demonstration or protest than they were in 2013.



**1/3 of people feel government isn't listening to them.**

While **2/3** of respondents see themselves as **well-informed about politics and issues** facing the region, between **1/4** and

- When the 2018 survey results are compared to the 2013 CIW survey, **more people** reported that they were **politically engaged in 2018**, although **fewer** said they were **member of a political group**. This may be partly due to the fact that there were local and provincial elections in the region in 2018, but not in 2013.
- When asked about their feelings of influence on government, people in Waterloo Region generally saw themselves as **well informed about key issues**. However, many people (**27%** of the sample) felt that they had **no say in what government does**, and nearly **32% felt public officials did not care what they thought**.

**More than half** of respondents felt that the programs and services of **local government had not made any difference for them (54.7%)**.



I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important issues facing our region

I think I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people

I consider myself to be well-qualified to participate in politics

I feel I could do as good a job in public office as most people

I do not think public officials care much what people like me think

People like me do not have any say about what government does

Political Efficacy

17.1	19.1	63.8
17.2	19.5	63.3
26.8	22.6	50.6
30.4	25.6	44
46.1	22.1	31.9
53.6	19.3	27.1

■ disagree ■ neutral ■ agree



### Democratic engagement and wellbeing

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

#### Below average wellbeing

- More likely to participate in public demonstration or protest
- More likely to join social media on local issue
- Feel they have less say in what government does
- Feel they are ignored by public officials

#### Above average wellbeing

- More likely to attend local or regional council meeting
- More likely to participate in local event supporting community
- Feel they have good understanding of important issues in Waterloo Region
- Feel they are well informed about politics/government



## Education



Overall, between **20% and 30%** of respondents had taken a course in the last year that was **related to their work**, and about **22%** had taken at least one **course for interest**.

Almost **40%** of respondents **would take courses** to upgrade their skills **if they were less expensive**.



### Profile of respondents in Waterloo Region: Highest level of education completed

Highest level of education completed	% in Region
Elementary school	3.8%
High school	16.9%
Post-secondary school	8.5%
College diploma	20.6%
University degree	32.2%
Graduate degree	17.9%

### Community Wellbeing Survey respondents participation in and perceptions of educational opportunities

2013

2018

Per cent who took a formal course to improve skills in current job	28.2%	31.5%
Per cent who agree there are plenty of opportunities to take formal education courses	77.2%	73.2%
Per cent who agree that they would take courses, but they are too expensive	38.2%	38.3%
Per cent who agree that there are schools nearby where they can upgrade my educational qualifications	71.9%	68.7%



### Education and wellbeing

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

#### Below average wellbeing

- Lower perceived availability of formal education opportunities
- Courses seen as offered at inconvenient times
- Courses seen as too expensive

#### Above average wellbeing

- Higher perceived availability of courses of interest
- More likely to have taken courses to improve skills or prepare for job

Both groups report taking a similar number of courses for interest



# Environment



Almost **90%** of people feel a personal **responsibility** to help **protect the environment**. However, this does not always seem to translate into behaviour change.

### % who do these actions quite often or all the time

2013 2018

Reuse materials (e.g., plastic bottles, plastic bags, tins cans)

**67.6%** **68.4%**



Consistent with 2013, about **1/3** of survey respondents were **concerned** with issues like **water quality, air quality and overall environmental quality**. About 2/3 of respondents saw traffic congestion as a problem. However, there was an increase in the proportion of people who reported that they were actively involved in events designed to protect the natural environment.



### Environment and wellbeing

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

#### Below average wellbeing

- Perceive air quality and water quality as lower
- Perceive traffic congestion as worse
- Less likely to conserve energy or water
- Less likely to purchase local foods

#### Above average wellbeing

- Perceive quality of nature environment as higher
- See more opportunities to enjoy nature in community
- More likely to reuse and recycle materials, and to reduce waste
- More likely to walk or bike

People in Waterloo Region spend an average of about **40 minutes** each day **commuting to and from work**.



**78.1%** of survey respondents use a personal car as their main type of transportation used to get around the community. Just over **11%** of survey respondents **walk or cycle** as their main type of transportation.

### Main transportation used % in Region

Main transportation used	% in Region
Personal car	<b>78.1%</b>
Walk	<b>8.4%</b>
Public transit	<b>8.0%</b>
Bicycle	<b>3.3%</b>
Other	<b>2.3%</b>

### Per cent who agree 2013 2018

The quality of the natural environment in my neighbourhood is very high	<b>73.4%</b>	<b>70.1%</b>
The quality of the natural environment in my town/city is very high	<b>70.1%</b>	<b>66.5%</b>
Traffic congestion in our community is a problem	<b>59.1%</b>	<b>63.2%</b>
The water quality in our community is very good	<b>64.6%</b>	<b>64.9%</b>
I feel I have a personal responsibility to help protect the natural environment	<b>88.4%</b>	<b>89.8%</b>
I regularly participate in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment (e.g., protests, fund raising)	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>



## Healthy populations

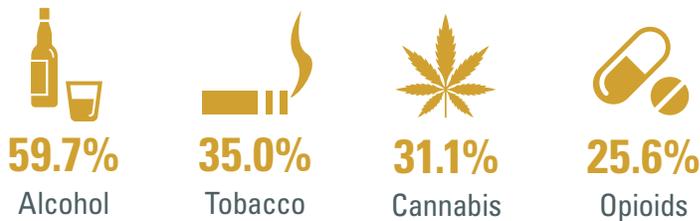


Survey respondents experienced **negative impacts** in the past 12 months due to their **own substance use issues (6.4%)**, or a **family member's substance use issues (14.5%)**, or **someone else's substance use issues (e.g. friend) (17.3%)**.



From the 2018 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health study, we know that **22.5%** of adults in the Waterloo Wellington region reported **psychological distress** in the last **12 months**, and that 6% reported fair or poor overall mental health. Although the structure of the questions was different, respondents to the 2018 wellbeing survey were much more likely to assess their own mental health as fair or poor. Findings from this survey also show that many people feel mental health issues have had a negative impact on their life in the last 12 months.

### Substance involved in negative impact



\*survey respondents could select more than one substance.

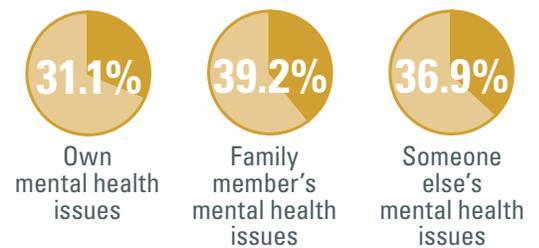


Nearly **40%** of local residents have experienced **negative impacts** related to **mental health issues** in their family this year.

A Waterloo Region Substance Use Study (2017) found that **usage of methamphetamines and fentanyl is increasing**. The use of substances can have a wide range of **negative health effects for people**, and it can be **challenging to access support**.



### Percent who report negative impacts in past 12 months



### Healthy populations and wellbeing

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

#### **Below** average wellbeing

- More likely to experience negative impacts due to mental health issues
- More likely to experience negative impacts from substance use
- Participate less in vigorous or light exercise

#### **Above** average wellbeing

- Better self-rated physical and mental health
- Higher perceived quality of health care services
- Higher perceived access to health care services
- Eat healthy meals more often



## Leisure and culture: (social leisure, arts and culture, physical activity)

**4 in 5** people now report that they **socialize online**, but people **still enjoy getting out** into their community to socialize as well.



In 2018, **45.7%** of respondents reported **daily use** of **video games**. This was **up from 33.5%** in 2013. Similarly, the percentage who **socialize with others online** has increased from **69.5%** in 2013 to **80.0%** in 2018. However, this does not seem to have translated into people spending less time out in the community. In fact, there are slight increases in some of these kinds of community activities.

<u>Participation rate:</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2018</u>
Socializing with Friends	<b>90.1%</b>	<b>92%</b>
Going out to Movies	<b>48.2%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Going out to clubs, bars, taverns	<b>32.6%</b>	<b>39%</b>
Going to a sports event as a spectator	<b>28.2%</b>	<b>30.7%</b>
Attending music concerts	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>61.4%</b>
Attending live theatre	<b>54.5%</b>	<b>51.2%</b>

Almost **1 in 4** survey respondents reported that local **recreational** and **cultural facilities** were **not affordable**.



More than **40%** felt they were **not as welcoming** as they should be.

<u>% agree, strongly agree or very strongly agree</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2018</u>
Local park is easy to get to	<b>87%</b>	<b>85.3%</b>
Recreation and culture activities are easy to get to	<b>73%</b>	<b>73.3%</b>
The recreation and cultural facilities are very welcoming to me	<b>56%</b>	<b>58.2%</b>
The cost of public recreation & culture programs prevents me from participating	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>24.4%</b>
Childcare is available at the recreation facilities if I need to use it	<b>21.1%</b>	<b>20.2%</b>



### Leisure and culture and wellbeing

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

#### **Below** average wellbeing

- Participate more home-based and computer-based leisure activities
- Use parks, playgrounds, and trails less often
- Perceive recreation and culture facilities as less accessible (i.e., costly, not convenient, no child care available)

#### **Above** average wellbeing

- Participate more in arts and cultural activities, and in social leisure activities
- Use community recreation centres, libraries, and arts facilities more
- Perceive better access to recreation and culture facilities (i.e., easy to get to, facilities are welcoming)



**Leisure** contributes to **quality of life** in many ways

<u>% agree, strongly agree or very strongly agree</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2018</u>
my leisure helps relieve stress	<b>86%</b>	<b>83.3%</b>
my leisure provides me with opportunities for social interaction with others	<b>70.5%</b>	<b>74.6%</b>
My leisure provides opportunities to try new things	<b>67.7%</b>	<b>69.7%</b>



## Living standards



More than **20%** of people are **working two or more jobs**



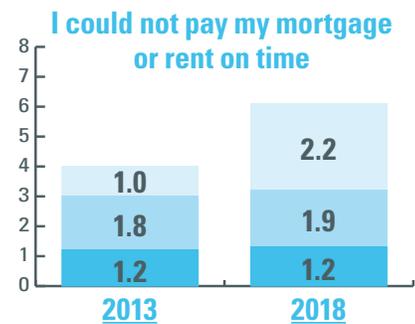
According to the 2016 Stats Canada census for Waterloo Region, **39.1%** of residents **worked full time for a full year**. The 2018 survey respondents were somewhat more likely to work full time than the population as a whole. Even so, CIW survey findings suggest that there has been a **shift since 2013 towards working fewer hours at one's primary job, and towards more people working multiple jobs**. Also, hope for job promotion and perception that job matches qualifications haven't changed since 2013.

	2013	2018
% of residents who work for pay	71.9%	67.6%
% of residents who work one job	86.9%	78.2%
% of residents who work two jobs	8.8%	17.8%
% of residents who work three or more jobs	4.3%	4.0%
% of residents working less than 35 hours at main job	17.3%	23.4%
% of residents who agree that they have poor job security	20.0%	18.9%
% who agree that job makes personal life difficult	32.2%	26.2%

Housing is becoming less affordable in Waterloo Region. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the proportion of survey respondents who reported inability to pay mortgage or rent on time has increased since the 2013 survey. The same is true for inability to pay bills.



Almost **9%** of people **struggle to pay bills** on time



### Living standards and wellbeing

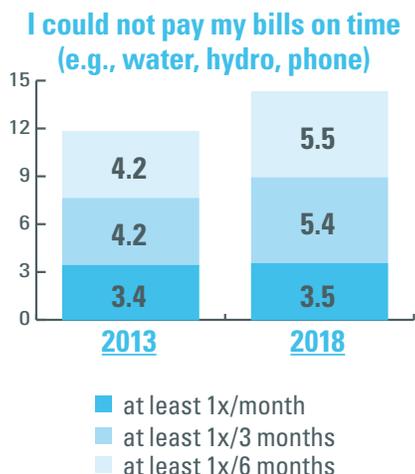
How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

#### Below average wellbeing

- Work at multiple jobs
- Lower job security
- More people could not pay their bills on time
- More people could not pay their mortgage or rent on time
- Work interferes with personal life

#### Above average wellbeing

- More likely to have a regular weekday schedule
- Have better job fit
- Less likely to work long hours
- Have enough money to buy things they *needed and wanted*





## Time use

**1/4** of respondents felt that the **supply of child care is inadequate**



The **number of available child care spaces in the region has increased slowly** over the last three years, but that **less than 20%** of young children have access to a licensed **Early Learning and Child Care Centres (ELCC) centre-based space** (2017). When asked whether they felt the supply of child care in the region was adequate, 56.0% of respondents responded that they were not sure or did not know. This may reflect the fact that many people don't have children of an age requiring care. **26.5%** indicated that they **felt the supply was not adequate**.



Almost **30%** of people **struggle to find time to be active** in the community



**26%** of people report that their **job makes their personal life difficult**, and almost **40%** **struggle to juggle work and non-work activities**

**26%** of respondents reported that their **job made their personal life difficult**. In addition, **34.5%** reported that they **neglect personal needs because of work**. **Juggling work and non-work activities is a struggle for 37.5%** of respondents. **19.4%** of survey respondents felt that they **did not have enough time to be with the children with whom they live**. **19.7%** reported **insufficient time to spend with their partner or spouse**, and **20.8%** reported **lack of time together with family**. Compared to 2013, in 2018 more people reported insufficient time to spend with children.



### Time use and wellbeing

How do residents with higher or lower wellbeing compare?

**Below** average wellbeing

- More often feel rushed
- Have longer commutes
- Less time to:
  - Get enough sleep
  - Prepare healthy meals
  - Be with partner
  - Be together with family
  - Socialize
- Work interferes more with personal life

**Above** average wellbeing

- More likely to have flexible work schedules
- More time to:
  - Keep in shape
  - Nurture spiritual side
  - Be with children
  - Form/sustain relationships
  - Participate in community
- Higher perceived work-life balance

	<u>% who say "not enough" 2013</u>	<u>% who say "not enough" 2018</u>
<b>There is sufficient time ...</b>		
To participate in or be active in the community	32.9%	28.3%
To nurture your spiritual and/or creative side	28.5%	26.9%
To keep in shape	21.2%	23.5%
To get enough sleep or rest	21.6%	23.3%
To socialize	23.0%	20%
To complete chores or errands	22.8%	19.5%
To prepare or eat healthy meals	14.8%	19%
To be yourself	15.8%	16.5%
To form and sustain serious relationships	21.6%	21.5%
To be together with your family	23.6%	20.8%
To be with your partner or spouse	20.8%	19.7%
To be with the children you live with	14.8%	19.4%

## What's next?

The Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey was supported by a partnership of 16 partner organizations, including:



The survey results will inform the 16 partner agency Strategic Plans. It will also help to develop a baseline of measurement for Wellbeing Waterloo Region ([www.wellbeingwr.ca](http://www.wellbeingwr.ca)). WWR is a community initiative that is working across sectors to make transformational change in wellbeing of residents by taking an integrated approach to identifying and addressing collective priorities, and monitoring, tracking and responding to collective issues of wellbeing.

It is important to note that there is a great deal of useful information in the larger survey report. To access the full Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey report, please visit the Wellbeing Waterloo Region website at [www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca](http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca).

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Region of Waterloo

