

# WATERLOO REGION'S FAQ **Vital Signs**<sup>®</sup>

## **What is *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs*?**

*Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* is an annual check-up through which The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation measure the vitality of our Region, identify significant trends, and assign grades in 11 key areas critical to Waterloo Region's quality of life: The Gap Between the Rich and Poor, Safety, Health and Wellness, Learning, Housing, Getting Started in Our Community, Arts and Culture, The Environment, Work, Belonging and Leadership, as well as Getting Around (Transportation). There is also an economic context provided within the report.

The report card data is a compilation of numerous research sources, much of it local, and assists the community in making connections between issues and trends in different areas. The findings are then presented in a reader-friendly format to make them as accessible as possible.

An expanded, in-depth report is available online, complete with links to the original community research at [www.wrvitalsigns.ca](http://www.wrvitalsigns.ca).

*Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* also has national implications. Our report is part of a national initiative led by community foundations across Canada and its findings are part of a national summary issued annually by Community Foundations of Canada.

## **Which indicators are measured?**

The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation have consulted with a wide range of community groups to ensure our indicators capture the area's unique issues and attributes.

Of course, some core indicators are included such as:

- Poverty rate
- Literacy scores
- Unemployment rate

## **Why have you launched this program?**

Because our community foundations work with a wide range of community groups, we get a comprehensive view of local issues.

Measuring our community's vitality in critical areas will:

- Increase community awareness about issues and opportunities in our community.
- Encourage discussion about key areas of importance to our overall Region's quality of life.
- Provide important data that is accessible and usable to our community.
- Identify significant trends and provide insight into issues that matter.
- Provide year on year trending.
- Make an impact on the effectiveness of our grantmaking.
- Inform our donors about the issues and opportunities in our community to assist them in making informed decisions about their philanthropy.
- Assist us in making connections between individuals and groups to address these issues and opportunities



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## **Did you work with other organizations in the community?**

We consulted with a number of community organizations and leaders, including the Region of Waterloo, the Social Planning Councils, the Chambers of Commerce, etc. and gathered valuable research information from numerous other sources in the community.

## **Where did the idea for *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* come from?**

*Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* is based on a project of the Toronto Community Foundation and is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada.

Each community chooses its own indicators, but there are some common themes and core indicators on which Community Foundations of Canada will issue a national report.

To find out more about *Vital Signs* reports published across Canada, visit [www.vitalsignscanada.ca](http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca).

## **How is *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* different from other indicator initiatives?**

Different indicator initiatives exist across Canada. Some track specific issues at a local level, such as police services monitoring crime levels. Others analyze national data from a particular perspective, such as sustainability. All play an important role in helping us better understand our communities.

*Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* builds on existing initiatives in four valuable ways:

**Collate a broad range of data:** This report provides a broad picture of the community, using relevant national data and identify local research, on a wide range of subject areas.

**Engage the community:** *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* reflects the community because it involves the community at every level, from determining the report's indicators and exploring research sources, to assigning grades.

**Create a national report:** Community foundations across Canada are sharing their *Vital Signs* results to track local trends at the national level.

**Publish research you can read!** We are committed to publishing a reader-friendly document that appeals to a wide range of readers looking for a snapshot of quality of life and of community vitality.

## **How will *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* add value to current research?**

Another benefit of *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* is its ability to draw public attention to the terrific indicator work already taking place in our community.

By consolidating new and existing data *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* makes a wide range of information easier to access.

Individuals and organizations interested in detailed analysis of particular areas will be able to simply use our *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* website links to find the in-depth reports they need.

## **When will you produce the *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* report?**

*Waterloo Region's Vital Signs* will be published on an annual basis, usually in October.

## **Who do I contact for more information?**

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