



Individuals' sense of belonging and being connected is essential to a healthy community.

This Sector aligns with UN SDGs #3 – Good Health and Well-Being; #5 - Gender Equality; #10 - Reduced Inequalities; #16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Happening Now

- Efforts to integrate services provided by settlement agencies with those offered by mainstream health and human services agencies is helping to bridge language and cultural barriers experienced by newcomers to Niagara.
- Voices of individuals with lived experience are being engaged, to inform planning and decision-making for delivery of health and community services in Niagara. In 2022, 1200+ older adults 50+ in Niagara completed an Age-Friendly Niagara Survey. Response themes include: supports to age in home; health/wellness promotion; importance of connected generations; and an increase in recreation/leisure/learning opportunities, housing options, and information about programs/services available to older adults.
- More than 3,600 volunteers in Niagara worked to make the 2022 Canada Summer Games a success, with 5,000+ athletes participating in 18 sports and 250+ events.
- The 2023 Niagara Region Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan is intended to support diverse community members to feel welcomed and included, leading to positive health and well-being for all residents and visitors. A resulting Community of Practice (CoP) will address DEI issues in the community by sharing resources, learning about DEI topics, and incorporating DEI into Human Resource practices.
- Voter turnout rates in Niagara in 2021 and 2022 for federal, provincial and municipal elections align with national and provincial rates.

What's Emerging

- Increased emphasis is being put on intentionally reflecting the changing face of Niagara, by engaging diverse individuals in strengthening our community.
- Unprecedented demand on services, combined with a reduction in charitable giving is putting pressure on non-profit agencies and their workers.
- Various social prescribing approaches are underway, to strengthen health and well-being by reducing barriers for people to connect to meaningful activities in their communities.
- Shifts in volunteering patterns have led to organizations examining how they engage, support, train, communicate with, and empower their volunteer workforce.
- Strengthening digital literacy, access to the internet, and awareness of how social media shapes communication among people of all ages are increasingly seen as key to individuals' ability to connect with, and participate in their communities.



Suggested Community Action Steps

- Identify ways to mitigate effects of increased demand on charitable and non-profit organizations, their staff and volunteer workforce.
- Continue to strengthen Niagara as an equitable, diverse, inclusive, welcoming community with opportunities for participation for all people.
- Encourage participation through a range of opportunities for individuals of all ages and interests, e.g., volunteering, coaching, intergenerational transfer of knowledge/exchange of skills, opportunities to connect with others through events.
- Describe the current state of the volunteering landscape in Niagara. Do this to identify measurable ways to maximize the impact of volunteering, for both individual volunteers, and the organizations that are engaging volunteers in their work.
- Continue to encourage voter turnout rates in Niagara by supporting access to information and voting options, for vulnerable individuals.

Indicators

- **Charitable Giving**
- **Immigrants, Refugees, and International Students in Niagara**
- **Sense of Community Belonging**
- **Trust in Others**
- **Volunteering**
- **Voter Turnout**



Indicator: Charitable Giving

Proportion of Charitable Donors Among Tax Filers

The following table shows the number of Canadian tax filers in the St. Catharines – Niagara CMA* (Census Metropolitan Area) from 2009 to 2021, and the proportion of charitable donors among tax filers. This data only includes amounts given to charities and approved organizations for which official tax receipts were provided and claimed on tax returns. It does not reflect the variety of other ways that Canadians contribute, such as:

- Charitable donations promoted through crowdsourcing platforms for individuals or organizations who are not linked to registered charities; or
- Donations for small amounts, such as donations by text message

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of Tax Filers	293,620	292,990	292,430	295,730	297,540	302,060	306,760	310,790	313,190	320,050	316,520	326,060	329,100
Number of Charitable Donors	73,830	73,650	72,280	70,850	69,220	69,190	68,670	68,010	66,470	6,6240	63,610	61,630	59,000
Charitable Donors as a per cent of Tax Filers	25.1%	25.1%	24.7%	24.0%	23.3%	22.9%	22.4%	21.9%	21.2%	20.7%	20.1%	18.9%	17.9%

*St. Catharines-Niagara CMA does not include Grimsby and West Lincoln

Source: Statistics Canada

Retrieved from:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110000201&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.21>

Canada Helps 2023 Giving Report shows the state of the charitable giving sector in Canada, as of December, 2023. Highlights include:

- 22% of Canadians expect to rely on charities for basic needs (+8% in nine months)
- The percentage of Canadians that give to charities is down 5% in 10 years
- Of nearly 3,000 charities responding to Canada Helps’ 2023 survey, 40.3% have experienced a lasting increase in demand since the pandemic; 50.8% are highly concerned about staff burnout; 57.3% cannot meet current levels of demand; 31.5% raised fewer funds in 2022; and 55.2% have fewer volunteers than before the pandemic
- Subscription-based (monthly) giving to charities is increasingly popular with donors

Source: Canada Helps

Retrieved from: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/the-giving-report/>





Niagara Community Foundation

The 2022 Niagara Community Foundation (NCF) annual report states that since 2000, NCF has granted over \$24 million to local charities; and that in the past 10 years, NCF assets have grown from \$24 million to \$75 million.

Niagara Community Foundation Financial Highlights 2016-2022		
Year	Gifts Received	Grants Awarded
2016	\$2,740,250	\$1,300,000
2017	\$17,693,530	\$1,300,524
2018	\$8,351,831	\$1,984,261
2019	\$4,502,696	\$2,146,940
2020	\$3,116,077	\$3,063,447
2021	\$9,071,366	\$2,687,075
2022	\$5,089,667	\$3,344,438
Total	\$50,565,417	\$15,826,685

Source: Niagara Community Foundation. *Annual Reports*

Retrieved from: <http://niagaracommunityfoundation.org/about-us/publications>

United Way Niagara

The United Way Niagara (UWN) 2022 Impact Report shows that a total of \$5,270,000 was raised in Niagara, making the following impact:

- Investing in 143 impactful programs supporting people in all walks of life;
- More than 90 partnerships with agencies and community service organizations;
- Supporting 8 collaborations and community initiatives;
- Resulting in 175,398 lives changed.

UWN's Community Investment Process allocates funds through 3 priority areas: All that Kids can Be; Poverty to Possibility; and Strong Communities.

Source: United Way Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://www.unitedwayniagara.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2022-Impact-Report-FINAL-web.pdf>





Indicator: Immigrants, Refugees and International Students in Niagara

2023 Annual Report to the Parliament of Canada on Immigration

This report focuses on results achieved by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in 2022.

IRCC funded more than 550 service provider organizations, and provided settlement services to more than 607,800 clients.

Temporary Immigration

- A total of 4,789,693 travel documents were issued to visitors, students and temporary workers
- There was a total of 550,187 study permit holders
- There was a total of 604,382 work permit holders under the Temporary Foreign Workers Program, and the International Mobility Program

Permanent Immigration

- 437,539 permanent residents were welcomed to Canada in 2022
- 124,970 individuals who had a prior study or work permit transitioned to permanent residence across all streams
- For the fourth year in a row, Canada was the top resettlement country in the world, welcoming over 46,528 refugees from over 80 countries in 2022

Canadian Citizenship

- 364,166 permanent residents became Canadian citizens in 2022-23

In 2022, the IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) Anti-Racism Task Force expanded its strategic actions to advance racial equity in departmental policies, operations, and people management practices. The [IRCC Anti-Racism Strategy 2.0](#) outlines details.

Source: Government of Canada

Retrieved From: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2021-2023.html>

IRCC also provides the Government of Canada Immigration Levels Plan for 2024-2026, at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2024-2026.html>



Settlement Services in Niagara

The [Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre](#) (NFAMC) is a charitable not-for-profit organization incorporated as the Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines in 1970, having the mandate to support and assist the ethno-cultural and newcomer community in Niagara through a broad range of programs and services.

NFAMC's Mission is to celebrate and promote cultural, social and economic inclusion and well-being of all immigrants and newcomers. The Vision is to be a gateway to equitable, respectful and welcoming communities for immigrants and newcomers in Niagara. Programs include:

- Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Program
- Migrant Workers Support pilot program
- Healthcare Navigator Training pilot program for IEHPs (Internationally Educated Health Care Professionals)
- Peer to Peer Vaccine Education & Outreach Program
- 50+ Program
- Youth Services
- Skills Training Programs
- Settlement Services
- Bridging Barriers to Newcomer Mental Health
- Employment Services
- English as a Second Language Classes
- Community Connections
- Care for Newcomer Children

Source: Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre (NFAMC)

Retrieved from: <https://www.folk-arts.ca/>

The [Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre](#) (WHCMC), founded in 1976, is a non-profit charitable service organization helping immigrants to overcome barriers to integration, and develop skills to work and live in Canada. WHCMC opened the Multicultural Network of Niagara Falls in 1995, with satellite services for the Niagara Falls community. Services include:

- Newcomer Settlement Services
- Social Integration Support Services
- Niagara Foreign Credential Recognition Program
- English as a Second Language
- Emergency Shelter
- Employment Solutions
- Improving Prosperity for Niagara's Women Business Owners
- Youth Calendar
- Workshops and Professional Development

Source: Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre (WHCMC)

Retrieved from: <http://www.wellandheritagecouncil.com/>

The [Fort Erie Multicultural Centre](#) is a social, non-profit charitable organization, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The Mission is to assist newcomers arriving in Fort Erie to settle successfully into Canadian society. Fort Erie has a strong and consistent history of welcoming



and integrating newcomers; its earliest days connected to the abolishment of slavery in 1793 in Upper Canada (now Ontario) and the famous Underground Railroad. Situated at the largest border crossing for refugees in Canada, Fort Erie is both a gateway community and a place that newcomers like to call their new home.

Community Settlement Services offered include: orientation, information and referrals, immigration and legal assistance, translation, outreach and access to primary health, mental health and social services, facilitating medical and legal appointments and assistance with short- and long-term housing.

Source: Fort Erie Multicultural Centre

Retrieved from: <https://www.firststepsincanada.com/>

[YMCA of Niagara Immigrant Services](#) locations include St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Thorold. In 2022, the YMCA of Niagara provided 3,141 newcomers with one of their first settlement supports.

Source: YMCA of Niagara 2022 Annual Report

Retrieved from: <https://ymcaofniagara.org/about/publications/>

The [Niagara Local Immigration Partnership](#) (LIP) is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, to better identify local newcomer population needs and service gaps, enhance local capacity and create stronger welcoming communities for newcomers. The Niagara LIP website provides information for newcomers planning for life in Niagara, Canada.

Source: Niagara Local Immigration Partnership, Regional Municipality of Niagara

Retrieved From: <https://welcomeniagaracanada.com/local-immigration-partnership/>

International Students in Niagara

Fall, 2023 enrolment of international students at Niagara College totaled 5,841 individuals. The top 5 countries of citizenship include: Republic of India (64.9%); Republic of Philippines (10.0%); Fed. Republic of Nigeria (6.8%); Fed. Democratic Republic of Nepal (2.2%); and Republic of Columbia (2.0%).

Source: At a Glance. Niagara College Canada, December, 2023.

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/wp-content/uploads/34107-At-A-Glance-Data-Sheet-J.pdf>

In the 2022-23 academic year, Brock University had a total of 1,388 full-time international undergraduate students and 642 full-time international graduate students.

Source: Brock University. Supplemental Domestic-International Headcount Enrolment Report 2022-23

Retrieved from: <https://brocku.ca/institutional-analysis/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/Supplemental-Domestic-International-Headcount-Enrolment-Report-Academic-Year-2022-2023.pdf>



Indicator: Sense of Community Belonging

Statistics Canada outlines that research shows a high correlation of sense of community-belonging with physical and mental health. Sense of belonging to local community is an indicator in the Niagara Region Community Dashboard. It outlines the (self-reported) sense of belonging to local community of those aged 12 or older. Niagara's 2020 average for this indicator rose to 69.7 per cent, which is below the Ontario average of 71.3 per cent and just below the national average of 70.0 per cent, for the same period.

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: https://niagararegion.ca/community_dashboard/indicator.aspx?q=45

Niagara Region released its 2023-2027 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan in June, 2022. The plan is structured around six focus areas:

- Inclusive workplace culture, leadership and accountability
- Increased understanding and humility through learning
- Diverse workforce reflective of Niagara's community
- Programs and services meet the needs of everyone
- Addressing discrimination
- Inclusive communication

A total of 12 Dimensions of Diversity are identified as areas of particular interest, based on local research and feedback from Niagara Region staff and community members:

- Francophone
- Indigenous
- Ethnocultural
- New Immigrants
- 2SLGBTQQIA+
- People with Disabilities
- Older Adults
- People with Low Income
- People Experiencing Homelessness
- Youth
- Gender
- Faith

Background reports and documents, including a Data Summary Report are available, at:

<https://niagararegion.ca/projects/diversity-equity-inclusion/default.aspx>

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved From: <https://niagararegion.ca/about/inclusive-communities/pdf/dei-action-plan.pdf>

Data from the *2021 Canadian Social Survey – Well-being, Activities and Perception of Time*, showed that loneliness is prevalent across Canada. A total of 13% of people aged 15 and older reported always or often feeling lonely, and women reported higher levels of loneliness than men. Those who are lonely reported worse mental health and lower life satisfaction. People who are married or in a common-law relationship reported feeling less lonely. The Loneliness in Canada [infographic](#) provides a summary of survey results.

Source: Statistics Canada

Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211124/dq211124e-eng.htm>



A 2021 McMaster University research report states that, using data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA), a national team of researchers found that 43% of adults aged 50 or older experienced moderate or high levels of depressive symptoms at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, that increased over time. Loneliness was the most significant predictor of worsening depressive symptoms, with other pandemic-related stressors, such as family conflict, also increasing the odds.

Source: Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging

Retrieved from: <https://www.clsa-elcv.ca/stay-informed/new-clsa/2021/pandemic-depression-persists-especially-among-adults-who-are-lonely>



211 is a helpline that easily connects people to the social services, programs and community supports they need. 211 information service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Each call is answered by a highly trained Community Navigator. Individuals can call 211 to ask about:

- Health services and supports
- Financial and social assistance
- Housing and utility help
- Children and youth services
- Food assistance and meal programs
- Seniors' services and home care
- Government program assistance
- Parenting and family programs
- Disability support programs
- Newcomer services
- Volunteer organizations
- And much more!

When an individual contacts 211, anonymized data is collected, about where they are located and what their needs are, service availability gaps and barriers. By sharing that information with others, 211 Ontario can help to inform policy and funding decisions. 211 Ontario provides a Business Intelligence Dashboard, to help improve access and quality of care for all Ontarians. Dashboard data for Niagara shows that, in 2023:

- A total of 21,261 calls were made to 211 from across all local areas of Niagara
- Of the callers, 44.09% were women, the majority were adults (40.96%), and 12.13% were older adults.
- The top 5 reasons for people in Niagara calling 211 in 2023 were: Housing (23.50%); Individual/Family Services (14.27%); Health (10.60%); Information Services (9.18%); and Other Government/Economic Services (6.40%)
- Unmet needs were identified through 841 of the calls made to 211 from Niagara in 2023. The top unmet need, identified by needs category was Housing (443 calls/52.68%). The top unmet needs by reason were 'Full/waiting list' (302 calls); and 'No resource found to meet need' (219 calls).

For additional detail see: https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/01/Jan-Dec-2023_Niagara_211Contacts-Needs-Unmet-Needs.pdf

Source: 211 Ontario

Retrieved from: <https://211ontario.ca/> and <https://211ontario.ca/211-data/bi/>





[Leadership Niagara](#) provides a Community Leadership Development Program (CDLP) which encourages leadership and positive change within our communities. They do this by developing the leadership capabilities of individuals who care about the community, who understand its strengths and weaknesses, and who are willing to make a personal investment to improve the quality of life for Niagara's citizens.

A total of 25 participants are enrolled in Leadership Niagara's 2023-24 CDLP, which runs from October 13, 2023 to June 7, 2024.

Non-profit groups and service clubs in Niagara [can submit an application](#) to work in collaboration with CDLP participants to address a challenge or project. The collaboration is designed to bring fresh outlooks, provide creative ideas, and apply expertise from diverse professional backgrounds, to support current and relevant needs or challenges of the collaborating organization. Leadership Niagara is seeking community projects that will assist in CDLP participants' development in: comprehension of systems thinking; appreciation of issues faced locally by the diversity of individuals in their community; understanding of how leadership can challenge the process; and building collaboration skills.

Source: Leadership Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://leadershipniagara.ca/>

Age-Friendly Activity in Niagara

The Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC) includes community members and organizations working together to increase awareness of the Age-Friendly Community domains identified by the World Health Organization (WHO); and promote related local action and implementation in and across Niagara's local municipalities and communities. The AFNC envisions 'An age-friendly Niagara – a community for all ages'; and has a mission to foster a caring community that optimizes quality of life as people age.

In 2021, the AFNC built [Older Adult Infolink](#) in collaboration with 211 Ontario. The site allows for easier, enhanced and more centralized access to information about community services in Niagara for older adults, their families and caregivers, as well as service providers supporting older adults. Retrieved from: <https://www.agefriendlyniagara.com/older-adult-infolink/>

In 2021, Brock University researchers completed a study of older adult volunteerism in the Age-Friendly Niagara movement. Eight key informant interviews and nine focus groups were held, with a total of 64 older adult volunteers and community champions across Niagara. The study report describes the tangible and significant changes driven by older adult volunteers at both the local municipal and regional level, which have established the Age-Friendly movement in Niagara in the WHO (World Health Organization) Global Age-Friendly Cities and Community movement. Study results are available at: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/community-study-report-civic-engagement-to-build-sustainable-local-capacity-perspectives-of-age-friendly-community-volunteers-in-the-niagara-region/>





In 2022, more than 1,200 older adults 50+ from all parts of Niagara completed the AFNC Empowering Older Adults in Niagara Survey. When asked “What does ‘a community for all ages’ look like, respondents described:

- Opportunities to stay active
- Access
- Connected generations
- Inclusive communities
- Housing options and supports

Survey respondents also indicated what they see as the top 5 priorities for strengthening Niagara as an age-friendly community:

- Supports to age in my own home
- Health and wellness promotion
- Increased recreation, leisure and learning opportunities
- Increased housing options
- Increased education and information about programs and services

Survey results were presented at a March 29, 2023 webinar; the recording and related resources are available at: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/strengthening-niagara-insights-from-a-survey-of-niagaras-older-adults/> .

In November, 2023, the AFNC published the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan Impact report. It describes the reach and impact of the Age-Friendly Communities movement in the Niagara region of Ontario, by summarizing and comparing data from the 2022 Empowering Older Adults in Niagara survey with priorities in the 2015 Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan. The report is available at: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/impact-of-the-niagara-aging-strategy-and-action-plan-and-the-way-forward-to-a-community-for-all-ages/>

Source: Age-Friendly Niagara Council

Retrieved from: <https://www.agefriendlyniagara.com/>

Cyber-Seniors is a non-profit organization that provides tech training through an intergenerational volunteer model. Young people are trained to act as digital mentors to older adults in order to provide free and effective technology training. Programs are offered across North America, including in the Niagara region of Ontario.

Source: Cyber-Seniors

Retrieved from: <https://cyberseniors.org/niagara/>

Lifelong Learning Niagara

Lifelong Learning Niagara is a third age learning organization providing learning programs and experiences for adults 50+ living in the Niagara region and beyond. The goal is to present stimulating and enlightening educational programs and events that appeal to a broad range of interests. The organization promotes a community where we can discover new ideas from speakers who are well informed, and learn with others in a friendly environment.

Source: Lifelong Learning Niagara

Retrieved from: <https://llniagara.ca/>





Local Municipal Age-Friendly, Senior Advisory and Youth Advisory Activity in Niagara	
Municipality	Activity
Fort Erie	<p>The Fort Erie Senior Citizens Advisory Committee assists seniors by promoting active and healthy living, social engagement and learning by providing them with activities and services.</p> <p>The Fort Erie Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee informs Town Council about important issues affecting youth.</p>
Grimsby	<p>The Grimsby Age-Friendly Advisory Committee provides recommendations to Council regarding a strategy and action plan to elevate the profile, level of leadership, and engagement of seniors in the community.</p> <p>The Grimsby Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee is a platform for young people to have a voice, contribute to decision-making processes, and actively participate in shaping their community’s future</p>
Lincoln	<p>The Town of Lincoln is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Lincoln Age-Friendly and Active Community Advisory Committee is a newly merged Committee to advise Council on matters related to accessibility for all ages, achieving a healthy lifestyle and to look at areas that the Town of Lincoln can improve whether it be infrastructure, activity-based and accessible programming, or policies to ensure that the Town is meeting the needs of the residents.</p>
Niagara Falls	<p>The Niagara Falls Seniors Advisory Committee serves in an advisory capacity to City Council and staff on matters that impact the quality of life of seniors (60 years plus) in the City of Niagara Falls.</p> <p>The Niagara Falls Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee provides a voice for the youth of Niagara Falls, while advising Council of important recreational and social issues concerning the City’s younger population.</p>
Pelham	<p>The Town of Pelham (‘the Town’) is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Pelham Seniors Advisory Committee(PSAC) provides input and perspective on matters that impact the quality of life of senior residents and provides solutions, through an age-friendly lens, to the Town.</p> <p>The Mayor’s Youth Advisory Collective is a working group that promotes youth opportunities within the Town; addresses the needs of and enriches the quality of life, health and well-being of Pelham youth; and provides a youth perspective and shares information with regional youth groups, schools and organizations.</p>



Local Municipal Age-Friendly, Senior Advisory and Youth Advisory Activity in Niagara	
Municipality	Activity
Port Colborne	<p>The City of Port Colborne is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Port Colborne Senior Citizens Advisory Committee advises City Council on issues which have or will have an impact on Port Colborne’s seniors and the ways in which the city can become a more age-friendly community for persons of all ages and ability levels; and identifies and advises opportunities to establish policies, services and structures that support and enable seniors to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society.</p>
St. Catharines	<p>The St. Catharines Older Adults Advisory Committee is a group of volunteers who advocate priorities, programs and other projects; they are leading a review of, and supporting implementation of, the City’s Older Adult Plan.</p>
Thorold	<p>The City of Thorold is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Thorold Age-Friendly Committee provides recommendations to City Council on issues relating to older individuals to ensure they are supported within the community.</p>
Wainfleet	<p>The Township of Wainfleet Age-Friendly Advisory Committee makes recommendations to Township Council and promotes initiatives in order for the Township to become a more age-friendly community.</p>
Welland	<p>The City of Welland is designated as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.</p> <p>The Welland Senior Citizens Advisory Committee serves staff and City Council on matters impacting the quality of life of senior citizens in Welland.</p>
West Lincoln	<p>The West Lincoln Age-Friendly Advisory Committee provides input and suggestions to Township Council and staff on making the Township an age-friendly community.</p> <p>The West Lincoln Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee ensures that youth are involved in the decisions made within the Township that affect them, their families and friends. They provide a youth perspective, and inform and involve other youth in the Township of West Lincoln.</p>



Municipal Citizen Engagement websites in Niagara

Let's Talk Fort Erie is the Town's online engagement site, designed to give citizens an opportunity to tell the Town what they think.

Source: Town of Fort Erie

Retrieved from: <https://letstalk.forterie.ca/>

Let's Talk Grimsby is the Town of Grimsby's community engagement page.

Source: Town of Grimsby

Retrieved from: <https://www.letstalkgrimsby.ca/>

The *Speak up Lincoln* public engagement site provides information on corporate initiatives that have impact on the Town of Lincoln community.

Source: Town of Lincoln

Retrieved from: <https://speakuplincoln.ca/>

The City of Niagara Falls community engagement website, *Let's Talk Niagara Falls*, allows for the community to contribute ideas and feedback on City matters.

Source: City of Niagara Falls

Retrieved from: <https://letstalk.niagarafalls.ca/>

Join the Conversation Niagara-on-the-Lake is an online engagement platform where members of the public are invited to stay up-to-date on topics and projects that matter to them most, and participate in community-minded initiatives.

Source: Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Retrieved from: <https://www.jointheconversationnotl.org/>

Engaging Pelham is the Town of Pelham's online engagement tool, which invites residents to provide feedback on the Town's projects and initiatives.

Source: Town of Pelham

Retrieved from: <https://engagingpelham.ca/>

EngageSTC.ca is an online portal for citizens to engage with the City of St. Catharines by checking out active projects seeking citizen feedback.

Source: City of St. Catharines

Retrieved from: <https://www.engagestc.ca/>

EngageWelland is the City of Welland's community engagement platform, which invites residents to share feedback, ideas, and questions on the City's projects and initiatives.

Source: City of Welland

Retrieved from: <https://www.engagewelland.ca/>



Niagara Region Council 2023 – 2026 Strategic Priorities

Vision: Modern communities growing better together

Mission: Niagara Region delivers service excellence through collaborative and innovative leadership.

Guiding Principles include:

- Diversity, equity, inclusion and Indigenous reconciliation
- Fiscal responsibility
- Innovation
- Sustainability and climate change
- Partnerships with government and community
- Transparency and accountability

Priorities include: Effective Region; Green and Resilient Region; Equitable Region; and Prosperous Region

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/priorities/>

SWIFT

The Niagara Region is part of SWIFT (South Western Integrated Fibre Technology) initiative. SWIFT is a project to build an ultra-high-speed fibre optic Internet network for everyone in Western Ontario and Niagara. The project is a partnership of 16 regional and local municipalities in Southern Ontario.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated government investment in internet access as critical infrastructure. By June, 2024, four SWIFT Broadband construction projects valued at \$21,218,445 will bring better connectivity to an additional 5,646 premises in areas of Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Wainfleet, West Lincoln and Grimsby.

Source: Niagara Region and SWIFT

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives/swift/> and <https://swiftruralbroadband.ca/>



Religious Affiliation

Niagara Region Priority Profiles were created for Niagara Region Public Health and Emergency Services. The Profiles can be used by anyone, to inform. planning and decision-making. The “Religion” Priority Profile draws on Statistics Canada Census Profiles (2021) data.

Religion: Demographic Information

Religious Affiliation

- Niagara and Ontario have about the same percentage of people that have religious affiliation (66.1% for Niagara, and Ontario 68.4%) (1)
- Christians represent the largest religious affiliation in Niagara at 32.0%, and in Ontario at 26.1% (Table 1)
 - Niagara has a lower percentage of people with the following religious affiliations when compared to Ontario: Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Traditional (North American Indigenous Spirituality) (Table 1)
 - Niagara has a higher percentage of people with Christian and Catholic religious affiliations when compared to Ontario (Table 1)

Table 1: Percentage of religious affiliation- Niagara versus Ontario (2021)

Religious Affiliation	Percentage of Population (Niagara)	Percentage of Population (Ontario)
No Religion	33.9%	31.6%
Christian	32.0%	26.1%
Catholic	29.0%	26.0%
Muslim	2.4%	6.7%
Hindu	0.8%	4.1%
Other	0.5%	0.6%
Sikh	0.5%	2.1%
Jewish	0.3%	1.4%
Traditional (North American Indigenous Spirituality)	0.0%	0.1%

Data Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles (2021)

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/equity/pdf/priority-profile-religion.pdf>

Places of Worship in the Niagara region of Ontario

The Places of Worship dataset in the Niagara Open Data Portal includes 390 records.

Source: Niagara Open Data. Niagara Region. *Places of Worship*

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraopendata.ca/dataset/places-of-worship>





Indicator: Trust in Others

Trust in Others is an Indicator in Canada's Quality of Life Framework. Statistics Canada provides a "Trust in Neighbours" infographic, based on responses to the question "How many people do you trust in your neighbourhood?" from the Canadian Social Survey, conducted from April to June 2022. Highlights include:

- 53% of people in Canada trust many or most of the people in their neighbourhood
- The older a person is, the more they are to trust their neighbours
- Urbanites, especially those in large cities, are less likely to trust their neighbours
- Those with a strong sense of belonging to their community are more likely to trust their neighbours
- People who trust their neighbours have higher life satisfaction

Source: Statistics Canada, Trust in Neighbours infographic, April 19, 2023

Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023022-eng.htm> and <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023022-eng.pdf?st=7uxs5e7T>

Confidence in Institutions and the Media, 2023 is a Statistics Canada article based on data from the Canadian Social Survey – Quality of Life, Renter Experiences and Trust. The survey was conducted from October to December, 2023.

The article states that public confidence in institutions can encourage political participation, strengthen bonds between citizens and help people and communities become more resilient in the face of challenges. The link between confidence in institutions, trust in media and well-being is explored. Survey results show that having a high level of confidence in the police, the justice system, schools, Canadian media and the Federal Parliament is linked to overall trust in news stories and information from the media.

- Close to two-thirds of Canadians report high confidence in the police
- Residents of Quebec are more likely to have higher confidence and trust
- Confidence in institutions is linked with trust in news and information from the media
- Canadians with financial or health concerns are more likely to report low confidence in institutions and low trust in media
- Reporting low life satisfaction associated with lower levels of confidence in Canadian institutions
- Canadians with high confidence and trust in institutions more likely aware of strategies for flood preparedness

Source: Statistics Canada, The Daily, February 13, 2024

Retrieved From: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240213/dq240213a-eng.pdf>



Concerns with Misinformation Online, 2023 is a Statistics Canada article that presents data from the Survey Series on People and their Communities, to shed light on Canadians' concerns about misinformation, steps taken by Canadians to counter misinformation, and overall trust in media. In 2023, 59% of Canadians said they were very or extremely concerned about any type of misinformation online, and 43% felt it was getting harder to decipher online truth from fiction compared with three years earlier. Other findings include:

- Concern with misinformation increases with age, education level and income
- Many Canadians say that it is getting more difficult to distinguish between true and false information
- Almost 1 in 10 Canadians do not know how to fact-check information
- Canadians who mistrust media are more likely to fact-check content
- Feelings of hopelessness are linked to higher rates of fact-checking

Source: Statistics Canada

Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231220/dq231220b-eng.htm>

The Edelman Trust Barometer is an annual trust and credibility survey that explores trust in business, government, NGOs and media. The 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer survey was conducted in 28 countries. In Canada, the survey had a base sample of 1,500 Canadians. The data was collected between November 1, 2022 and November 28, 2022.

In Canada, institutional trust slipped slightly, but economic confidence has dropped. Only 28 per cent of respondents say that they think their families will be better off in five years.

While institutional trust in Canada is holding relatively steady, economic confidence has dropped significantly with only 28 per cent of respondents say that they think their families will be better off in five years.

As the most trusted institution, business holds the responsibility for elevating solutions for societal problems. Canadians want more engagement from businesses, not less. Fifty-eight per cent of Canadians say businesses are not doing enough to address climate change and 52 per cent saying they are not doing enough on income inequality.

Sixty per cent of Canadians say that we are more divided now than we have been in the past.

By leveraging research, science and trustworthy information, businesses can sow confidence and help bridge the gaps of polarization. Societal leadership must demonstrate a long-term commitment to addressing issues from sustainability to jobs, to fairness and inclusion.

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer

Retrieved from: <https://www.edelman.ca/trust-barometer/2023-edelman-trust-barometer>



Indicator: Volunteering

Impact of COVID-19 on Volunteering with Canadian Charities and Nonprofits

A February 2021 Charity Village survey completed by 1,361 Canadian charities and non-profits examined the impact of COVID-19 on charity and non-profit staff and volunteers. Survey results suggest that the pandemic had a significant impact on volunteerism across the charitable and nonprofit sector in Canada.

A majority (64%) of surveyed organizations indicated that they had experienced a decrease in the number of volunteers since the pandemic began in March, 2020. Of those organizations experiencing a decrease, the impact was significant, with most experiencing a decrease of more than 30% of their volunteer base. One-quarter (26%) of participating organizations lost more than 75% of their volunteers. The challenge was the greatest for charities, with 67% indicating a reduction in volunteers, compared to 48% for foundations. A majority of organizations surveyed indicated it had become more difficult to recruit (63%) and retain (65%) volunteers since the onset of COVID-19.

Source: Human Resources Impact of COVID-19 on Canadian Charities and Nonprofits. Charity Village and The Portage Group, April, 2021

Retrieved from: <https://charityvillage.com/report-reveals-significant-negative-impact-on-volunteerism-due-to-covid-19/>

Volunteering Trends and Volunteer Engagement

Volunteer Canada 2022-2023 Annual Report reports that the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors have affected volunteering across all sectors, with 65% of non-profit organizations experiencing a decrease in volunteer hours in 2022. Organizations such as Canadian Blood Services are working to understand current volunteering trends, and develop modern volunteer engagement strategies. Volunteer Canada is working to link corporations and charities through group volunteering events that benefit everyone involved. These events:

- Are a vital part of a corporation's community engagement plan
- Help employees broaden their perspectives and develop a deeper understanding of their communities
- Benefit charities by providing support and aid to help them advance their missions
- Provide a shared experience for employees that fosters belonging and connections, contributes to team building, and strengthens workplace relationships.

Source: Volunteer Canada Annual Report 2022-2023

Retrieved from: https://issuu.com/volunteercanada/docs/vc_annualreport_english_issuu

Loss or Erosion of a Number of Volunteer Hubs in Canada

A 2023 Carleton University PANL Perspectives report states that the COVID-19 pandemic "sped up changes that were already occurring in volunteering and philanthropy; specifically, the loss or erosion of a number of volunteer hubs. We're losing the groups that bring people



together at the local level and that provide space, tools and money to support community causes. We're losing churches, service clubs, auxiliaries and other groups that provide the structure for volunteering at the local, regional and national levels."

A related article, *Church Closures and the Loss of Community Social Capital*, calls for "a national conversation to rebuild nodes of volunteering and social capital that welcome all Canadians and create a new vision of how we can create community. It suggests that all sectors (charities and nonprofits; governments; and corporations, businesses and unions) work together to build a vision which takes into account reconciliation with Indigenous people, inclusion of newcomers, racialized groups and others that are missing from current models. This could lead to creating new models to increase social capital and volunteering, and include communities that are often left behind.

Source: Carleton University *PANL Perspectives*, 2023

Retrieved from: <https://carleton.ca/panl/2023/volunteer-charities-close-at-alarming-rates/> and <https://carleton.ca/panl/2023/church-closures-and-the-loss-of-community-social-capital-by-don-mcrae/>

A National Volunteer Strategy for Canada

Volunteer Canada is assessing the feasibility of building a National Volunteer Action Strategy. The call to revitalize volunteerism in Canada acknowledges 'urgent challenges': "the rising costs of living, our aging population, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a growing loneliness pandemic and the climate crisis".

In 2019, as part of a broader effort to modernize the charitable sector, a [Special Senate Committee on Canada's Charitable Sector](#) recommended that the Canadian government "implement a national volunteer strategy to encourage volunteerism by all Canadians in their communities". The committee made the recommendation in recognition that "the needs of northern, rural and urban communities are unique."

The National Action Strategy Roadmap calls for solidifying volunteering as a foundational component of building a strong, inclusive, and resilient future. The roadmap cites 2018 Statistics Canada data showing that volunteer hours are highest among hospitals (111 hours), religious organizations (110 hours), sports and recreation (105 hours), and arts and culture (104 hours), and lowest for organizations working in education and research (51 hours); grantmaking, fundraising, and volunteer promotion (52 hours); and health-related services, such as crisis intervention services, outpatient clinics, and rehabilitation services (58 hours).

Source: Volunteer Canada

Retrieved from: <https://volunteerstrategy.ca/>



Volunteering in Niagara

- Niagara's Volunteer Centre

As of March 31, 2023, INCommunities (legal name: Information Niagara Inc.) ended its role as the provider for the 211 service in the Central-South Ontario region. This was the first step in Information Niagara Inc. winding down as a charitable entity.

Thus, INCommunities no longer serves as Niagara's Volunteer Centre, nor as coordinator of the Regional Association of Volunteer Administrators (RAVA) in Niagara. In 2019, more than 45 organizations belonged to RAVA. However, in 2020 the number of RAVA members fell by 50%, due to organizations having to suspend volunteer engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Niagara Connects, from INCommunities files, and Living in Niagara-2020 report

- Post-Secondary Volunteering Opportunities

- [ExperienceBU](#) is Brock University students' online gateway to find and connect to student clubs and organizations, events, workshops, communities, services and supports, and co-curricular experiences.

Source: Brock University

Retrieved from: <https://experiencebu.brocku.ca/>

- The [Get Involved NC](#) Portal helps Niagara College students to enrich their learning through engagement and leadership opportunities. The Student Engagement team at the College is dedicated to helping provide a well-rounded experience including on-campus events, volunteerism opportunities and more – for all students, from first year to graduation.

Source: Niagara College

Retrieved from: <https://getinvolved.niagaracollege.ca/>

Measuring Volunteerism in Niagara

Volunteering patterns were affected by restrictions in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, volunteer engagement reporting by Niagara non-profit and charitable organizations differs in the period between the Living in Niagara-2020 report and this edition of the report.

- More than 3,600 volunteers in Niagara worked to make the 2022 Canada Summer Games a success, with 5,000+ athletes participating in 18 sports and 250+ events.

Source: Canada Games

Retrieved from: <https://www.canadagames.ca/previous-games/niagara-2022>

- A 2021 study of older adult volunteerism in the Age-Friendly Niagara movement is summarized in the report, *Community Study Report: Civic Engagement to Build Sustainable Local Capacity: Perspectives of Age-Friendly Community Volunteers in the*



Niagara Region. Brock University researchers worked in partnership with the Age-Friendly Niagara Council, local municipal older adult advisory committees and municipal staff. Eight key informant interviews and nine focus groups were held, with a total of 64 older adult volunteers and community champions across Niagara.

The report describes:

- the history and many of the tangible and significant changes driven by older adult volunteers at both the local municipal and the regional level, which have established the Age-Friendly movement in Niagara as a leader in the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Age-Friendly Cities and Community movement
- how collaboration and partnerships between forward-thinking community leaders, talented older adult volunteers with rich life experiences, combined with the political will of local governments, have helped each local community spread and grow the seeds of “community for all ages” across Niagara
- the invaluable role of stable support – budgetary, staff, and political – from the local municipal government, mayor, and councilors to the success and growth of the local older adult advisory committee
- the voices of many older adult volunteers regarding their motivations, perceived benefits and barriers, and concrete suggestions about how to sustain efforts in community volunteering in Niagara.
- challenges and opportunities for community volunteering in general, posed by the COVID 19 pandemic. “Participants’ insights make an important contribution to organizations and individuals seeking strategies to build a resilient community volunteering network in this challenging time”.

Source: Brock University, in partnership with the [Age-Friendly Niagara Council](#)

Retrieved from: <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/resources-publications/community-study-report-civic-engagement-to-build-sustainable-local-capacity-perspectives-of-age-friendly-community-volunteers-in-the-niagara-region/>

- YMCA of Niagara states, in their 2019-2020 annual report that 636 volunteers donated their time and talents through the YMCA to help meet community needs. This compares to 863 volunteers in the previous year.

Source: YMCA of Niagara. *2020 Annual Report*

Retrieved from: <https://ymcaofniagara.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/YMCA-of-Niagara-Annual-Report-2019-20.pdf>

- Niagara Region Seniors Services reports annually on volunteer activities in regional seniors’ programs and services. The value of volunteers’ contributions extends beyond the number of hours and dollars, as they provide an invaluable contribution to the quality of life of residents and clients. The pattern of these volunteer activities shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic. A May, 2022 update from Niagara Region Community Services



states, “At the onset of 2021, volunteer services continued to be suspended as part of the COVID-19 risk mitigation measures. By the fall, each of the long-term care homes had introduced measures to start to reinstate the volunteer program.”

Source: Niagara Region

Retrieved from: <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=24251>

Volunteer Contribution to Niagara Region Long-Term Care Homes (2017-2019)			
	2017	2018	2019
Number of volunteers	552	480	461
Volunteer hours	54,352	52,445	45,441
Monetary value of volunteerism at minimum wage	\$630,483	\$734,230	\$636,174
Number of students completing placements	403	456	522
Student volunteer hours	74,112	75,555	82,403
Monetary value of student placements at student minimum wage	\$792,998	\$993,548	\$1,083,599
Funds raised through donations	\$249,606	\$261,828	\$154,904
Total value of contribution (volunteer hours, student placements, fundraising)	\$1,673,087	\$1,989,606	\$1,874,677

Source: Niagara Region Public Health and Social Services Committee

Retrieved from:

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/council/Council%20Documents/2018/PHSSC-agenda-march-06-2018.pdf#page=20> (2017 statistics)

<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=2939#page=70> (2018)

<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=9131> (2019)

- Through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, community organizations host free tax preparation clinics and arrange for volunteers to complete income tax and benefit returns for eligible individuals who have a modest income and a simple tax situation. [Click here](#) to find information about CVITP, including a directory of free in-person and virtual tax clinics.

The Niagara West Adult Learning Centre (NWALC) in Beamsville participates in the CVITP, offering free tax preparation for individuals experiencing lower incomes and



other barriers to tax filing. This is crucial for these individuals to receive government benefits including Old Age Security, Canada Child Benefit, GST/HST credit, and the Ontario Trillium Benefit. In 2022, NWALC volunteers prepared over 100 returns for community members. The NWALC has also developed a one-on-one training program to teach interested individuals to prepare their own taxes online.

Source: Canada Revenue Agency; & Niagara West Adult Learning Centre

Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/community-volunteer-income-tax-program.html> and <https://niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/community-blog/niagara-west-adult-learning-centre-a-proud-partner-in-the-2023-community-volunteer-income-tax-program/>



Indicator: Voter Turnout

2021 Federal Election Turnout – Ridings within the region of Niagara

The September 20, 2021 federal election was held to elect the 44th Canadian Parliament. The voter turnout rate in Niagara was 64.74%.

Federal Riding	Eligible Voters	Number of Votes	Voter Turnout (per cent)
Niagara Centre	94,206	59,216	62.86%
Niagara Falls	115,159	71,295	61.91%
Niagara West	77,600	55,494	71.51%
St. Catharines	91,011	58,709	64.51%
TOTAL for Niagara	377,976	244,714	64.74%
Province of Ontario	10,492,441	6,505,569	62.00%
All of Canada	27,509,496	17,209,811	62.60%

Source: Elections Canada

Retrieved From: <https://elections.ca/res/rep/off/ovr2021app/home.html#2034>

Three-quarters (75%) of eligible Canadians reported voting in the 2021 federal election, down 1 percentage point from 2019. In Ontario, turnout was down to 75%, vs. 77% in 2019.

A Statistics Canada summary of common reasons cited by Canadians for not voting in the 2021 federal election includes:

- Not being interested in politics (most common reason for not voting; more common among men than among women)
- COVID-19
- Being too busy
- Electoral process issues (more common among new Canadians and youth 18 to 24 - includes not being able to prove identity or address, lacking information about the voting process, or having issues traveling to a polling station)

Source: Statistics Canada

Retrieved From: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220216/dq220216d-eng.pdf>





2022 Provincial Election Voter Turnout – Ridings within the region of Niagara

The June 2, 2022 Ontario general election saw the lowest voter turnout in Ontario's history.

Provincial Riding	Registered Voters	Voter Turnout	Voter Turnout (per cent)
Niagara Centre	95,459	41,402	43.37%
Niagara Falls	116,171	50,653	43.60%
Niagara West	79,089	42,027	53.16%
St. Catharines	92,924	43,360	46.66%
TOTAL for Niagara	383,643	177,442	46.25%
Province of Ontario	10,740,426	4,732,476	44.06%

Source: Elections Ontario

Retrieved From: <https://results.elections.on.ca/en/data-explorer>

2022 Municipal Election Turnout – Municipalities within the region of Niagara

Voter turnout rates for the October 24, 2022 municipal election in Ontario are shared by the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO). The voter turnout rate for Ontario was 36.30%

Municipality	Eligible Voters	Number of Voters	Voter Turnout (per cent)
Fort Erie	2,6972	9,264	35.35%
Grimsby	23,920	9,003	37.64%
Lincoln	20,087	5,492	27.34%
Niagara Falls	68,201	18,773	27.53%
Niagara-on-the-Lake	16,100	7,644	47.48%
Pelham	15,735	5,179	32.91%
Port Colborne	15,852	5,008	31.59%
St. Catharines	101,511	26,427	26.03%
Thorold	18,269	4,508	24.68%
Wainfleet	6,254	2,603	42.62%
Welland	42,818	11,056	25.82%
West Lincoln	12,727	5,542	43.55%
Total for Niagara	368,446	110,499	29.99%

Source: Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO)

Retrieved From: <https://elections2022.amo.on.ca/web/en/home>