



Critical Indicators  
For Reflecting On  
Life In Niagara

Niagara Research and Planning Council

LIVING IN  
NIAGARA  
2011

# LIVING IN NIAGARA 2011

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For Reflecting On  
Life In Niagara



Niagara Research and Planning Council



# Living in Niagara - 2011

Brought to you by the Niagara Research and Planning Council.

The Niagara Research and Planning Council (NRAPC) is comprised of community volunteers, and supported by Niagara-wide community partners. Our mission, vision and guiding principles were created by the community of Niagara.

**Our Mission:** Generating knowledge that drives community action

**Our Vision:** With an end goal of community action and a more vibrant Niagara in mind, the Niagara Research and Planning Council:

- Builds community capacity for Niagara-wide research and planning;
- Facilitates coordinated stakeholder action toward developing a stronger Niagara; and
- Is recognized as an integral part of the Niagara community, and is a sustainable community entity.

## Guiding Principles:

- Research and activities are guided by communities;
- Different interests are engaged to work together mobilizing for change; and
- NRAPC links community strengths, research, and evidence in order to plan for a stronger Niagara.



Niagara Research and Planning Council

## NRAPC Members and Staff:

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Duncan MacDuff  
Louise Murphy (Appointed - Niagara Region Social Services)  
Kirk Weaver (Appointed - Niagara Region Integrated Community Planning)  
Joanne Krick (Appointed - Niagara Community Foundation)  
Mary Wiley, Executive Director

Author, lead researcher: Dr. Heather Lee Kilty of the Leadership Institute and Brock University Nursing Department  
Research Assistant: Karen Cudmore, Masters Candidate, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University  
Community Expert Opinion Leaders: A special thank you to the researchers and community expert opinion leaders who shared key information for their sectors of the report.

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Each section has a cover page with information about why that sector is important, what we are doing well and where we can improve. Each section describes the key indicators related to that sector, including trends and available comparative data.

All tables, figures and references are embedded in the full report document, and references are identified by their citation or access hyperlink. They were retrieved February to August of 2011. A list of Tables, Figures and References are available on request as an Appendix. The full document with tables and figures is at: [www.livinginnigarareport.com](http://www.livinginnigarareport.com) and on the NRAPC website: [www.nrapc.ca](http://www.nrapc.ca)





## Purpose of the Living in Niagara - 2011 report

This report maps indicators of the vitality of the community of Niagara. It identifies significant trends providing insights into issues that make a difference in the lives of Niagara residents.

It can be used as:

- an effective tool to encourage discussion about key areas of importance to quality of life in Niagara;
- a catalyst for community action; and
- a basis for evidence-informed planning and decision-making that will strengthen our region.

Applied research will guide solution generation, innovation and community action.



# Living in Niagara - 2011

It is an exciting time to live here. Together, we can make Niagara even better!

## Living in Niagara - 2011 provides a description of:

- 12 critical sectors that describe life in Niagara and a total of 127 critical indicators associated with these sectors.
- Niagara as a place to live, learn, work, play and grow.
- How well we are doing in comparison to provincial and national trends in 12 areas critical to quality of life in this region.

This report is not intended to cover all available information. Rather, it provides a snapshot of Niagara at one point in time. It is available as a summary hard copy document, and in a longer format on the [www.nrapc.com](http://www.nrapc.com) website to be read, discussed and used in planning leadership and community action initiatives. Data gathering was conducted by Niagara community leaders and organizations with the assistance of a research team.

Living in Niagara - 2011 highlights fundamental trends affecting our community's vibrancy and quality of life and was compiled by a team of research professionals using available data from numerous reliable and respected sources.

The 12 sectors and their indicators were identified, described and quantified with currently available data and research about Niagara. The process attempted to measure key determinants of a vibrant community, to assist groups and individuals to reflect on the critical indicators of life in our region, better understand its vitality now, and then focus on action for a better future.

The Niagara Research and Planning Council offers this dynamic document, in the spirit of community capacity-building and collaboration, as a relevant and vital tool for current and future use. The intent is that citizens and leaders will:

- reflect on information about Niagara over time compared to fundamental trends provincially, nationally and in other regions in Canada; and then
- engage in future dialogue about planning and actions for improvement.

## Living in Niagara - 2011

This is a status report of Niagara describing twelve sectors that are critical to quality of life in Niagara now and for the future.

It will lead to better-informed decision-making for a stronger Niagara as a place to live, learn, work and grow.

# Niagara Research and Planning Council (NRAPC)



Niagara Research and Planning Council

## Generating knowledge that drives community action

Origins of the Niagara Research and Planning Council (NRAPC):

**2005** - A group of Niagara-based "for social profit" leaders met to discuss creating a Niagara-wide approach to integrated social and community planning. The Niagara Integrated Social and Community Planning Project (NISCPP) began.

**2006** - The NISCPP hosted a facilitated meeting of interested citizens from across the region, to define the vision. Strong support was expressed for creating a community-driven body to champion Niagara-focused, collaborative, evidence-based planning to leverage Niagara's assets for focused planning and a stronger future throughout the region.

**2007** - As a result of this community action, the Niagara Research and Planning Council (NRAPC) formed.

**2008** - NRAPC released the first Living in Niagara report - a baseline snapshot of Niagara's asset-based strengths, as well as challenges affecting life in Niagara. The Living in Niagara report is widely-cited by planners throughout the region.

**2011** - The second Living in Niagara report is produced. Construction begins on the Niagara Knowledge Exchange, a digital platform for horizontal knowledge-sharing that leads to a stronger Niagara.

NRAPC works in partnership with public, private and not-for-profit organizations as well as citizens of Niagara. The Council is involved in several partnerships and community leadership initiatives:

- Producing the Living in Niagara report for community insight, reflection, planning and action.
- Facilitating the development of Niagara Knowledge Exchange capacity in the region.
- Hosting an online gathering place at [www.nrapc.com](http://www.nrapc.com), to keep citizens up to date, and engage people who wish to connect with sectors, to work and take leadership.
- Facilitating community dialogue and action plans based on the best information and leadership available.
- Partnering in the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative which is based on a global effort led by the World Health Organization. The goal is to create safe and secure environments that foster community participation, personal health and well-being.
- Working with Niagara-wide partners on emerging issues, to identify, conduct, analyze and facilitate specific research and action projects.
- Working with the community to facilitate civic action.

NRAPC will regularly update the online version of Living in Niagara - 2011. The 12 sectors of this report provide the framework for the Niagara Knowledge Exchange - a digital platform for horizontal sharing of relevant, reliable, Niagara-focused data, documents, mapping and reports, to support evidence-informed planning and focused decision-making.

# History of identifying 12 sectors and indicators to describe quality of life in Niagara

For the first Living in Niagara report (2008), an online survey tool was used to contact citizens who took part in the Niagara Integrated Social and Community Planning Project (NISCPP), to identify eleven (11) key sectors that would describe life in Niagara. They also outlined relevant indicators to measure Niagara's progress in these sectors.

For Living in Niagara - 2011, the "Recreation and Sports" sector was added, for a total of twelve (12) sectors. Indicators in each sector were selected for inclusion, using the following criteria:

- Relevance to the sector;
- Reliability of information;
- Perceived public interest;
- Understandability;
- Measurability;
- Ease and cost of data collection;
- Frequency of data collection, for future use and comparisons over time; and
- Niagara Region as the primary scope of information to be collected and reported.

## Data included in this report:

- Existing research data from Statistics Canada, reports from governments, agencies, and planning bodies, as well as research studies were collected, reviewed and analyzed for reliability and validity for inclusion. Summary reports and data exist from local municipalities, Niagara Region, and the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) that includes Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant.
- Census data is made available by community profiles broken down by Census Tract Areas, Municipalities, Regions or Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs). Niagara Region participates in the Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI), gathering data with 25 other Canadian Municipalities for comparative purposes, as well as the Federation of Canadian Communities (FCM) Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS), which includes 20 Canadian municipalities. Also included is data from Statistics Canada's most recent General Social Surveys and Canadian Community Health Surveys.
- Where possible, Niagara data was compared to provincial, national, other municipal data or existing standards. When available, trends for Niagara over time are presented. Websites were accessed and data retrieved, studied and summarized from January to August, 2011. NRAPC decided that the data required for the report would primarily be regional in focus. Niagara data is beginning to be mapped and collected by neighbourhoods, by groups such as Early Years Niagara, and the Niagara Prosperity Initiative.
- Community leaders were engaged via online contact and face-to-face dialogue, to identify sources of data for each of the sectors. Through this process, the research team learned about existing data being collected and reported locally by various organizations. Groups shared their information generously.
- A commitment to using evidence-based planning, and a new spirit of collaboration are emerging in the community of Niagara. NRAPC identified more than 36 community expert opinion leaders (approximately 3 per sector) who could help identify data, review the report and provide leadership in the follow-up engagement and action phases resulting from the findings of this report.





# Overall process, strengths and challenges

## Challenges in bringing this report to you:

- A variety of data is available for each sector from several organizations and sources. The data is not all collected in the same way and at the same time.
- Data is often collected using a variety of research methods.
- Data is presented and disseminated in a variety of reporting formats.
- Data collection is often not done on uniform time frames, so that some indicators do not have current, compatible or comparable data.
- The report is limited to use of existing data as of this writing and publication time. 2011 Canadian Census data was not available for this report. Current local, provincial and national data sources were utilized in the writing of this document.

## Strengths of this report:

- A variety of Niagara-wide reports are now being produced to map data over time.
- More sharing of information is occurring, as is evident in reports such as 'Health Story of Niagara' (Niagara Region Public Health), and 'Creating a Healthier Niagara' (Healthy Living Niagara).
- Region-wide planning initiatives are emerging within each sector.
- Many examples of Niagara-wide planning bodies and approaches now exist, such as the Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Regional Culture Committee, the Coalition to End Violence Against Women, Niagara Children's Services Sector Forum, Niagara Region's Sustainable Niagara plan, Niagara Prosperity Initiative, Early Years Niagara, Niagara Agricultural Task Force, and the Healthy Living Niagara partnership.
- Canadian data is being drawn from Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA's), Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI), Statistics Canada General Social Survey and Canadian Community Health Survey.

## The report is:

- A snapshot in time using available, most current research and data in each area.
- A way to access full reports, analysis and data from the original sources.

## The report is not:

- A full accounting of all research data that is available.
- A listing of all the programs, organizations and services available in Niagara - see Information Niagara, [www.informationniagara.com](http://www.informationniagara.com) or call 211 for such information.

# Principles of community engagement, and community capacity building

The Niagara Research and Planning Council uses principles of collaboration, information sharing, dialogue, partnership building, shared decision making and communication as it develops a community-driven planning model for Niagara. Creation of the Living in Niagara report emerged from this community engagement process. The community made existing research data available for the report. Opinion leaders were engaged in rating Niagara's progress, and identifying suggested actions to be taken.

## Perspectives on a healthy community and partnerships for community capacity building

While there are 12 separate sectors in the report, it is imperative to note that each of them are interconnected as determinants of health that influence each other and the health of individuals, families, organizations and the community of Niagara as a whole.

**Determinants of health** - From a population health perspective, the determinants of health include housing, transportation, lifestyle, the environment, education, employment, recreation and access to health care, in addition to genetic and other psychosocial determinants.

**Population health** - is defined as "the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group". It is an approach to health and health care planning that aims to improve the health of an entire population. It is "the capacity of people to adapt to, respond to, or control life's challenges and change".  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population\\_health](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_health))

**Health** - is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the mere absence of disease" (WHO, 1948). Note: "spiritual well-being" has also been added in many recent definitions.

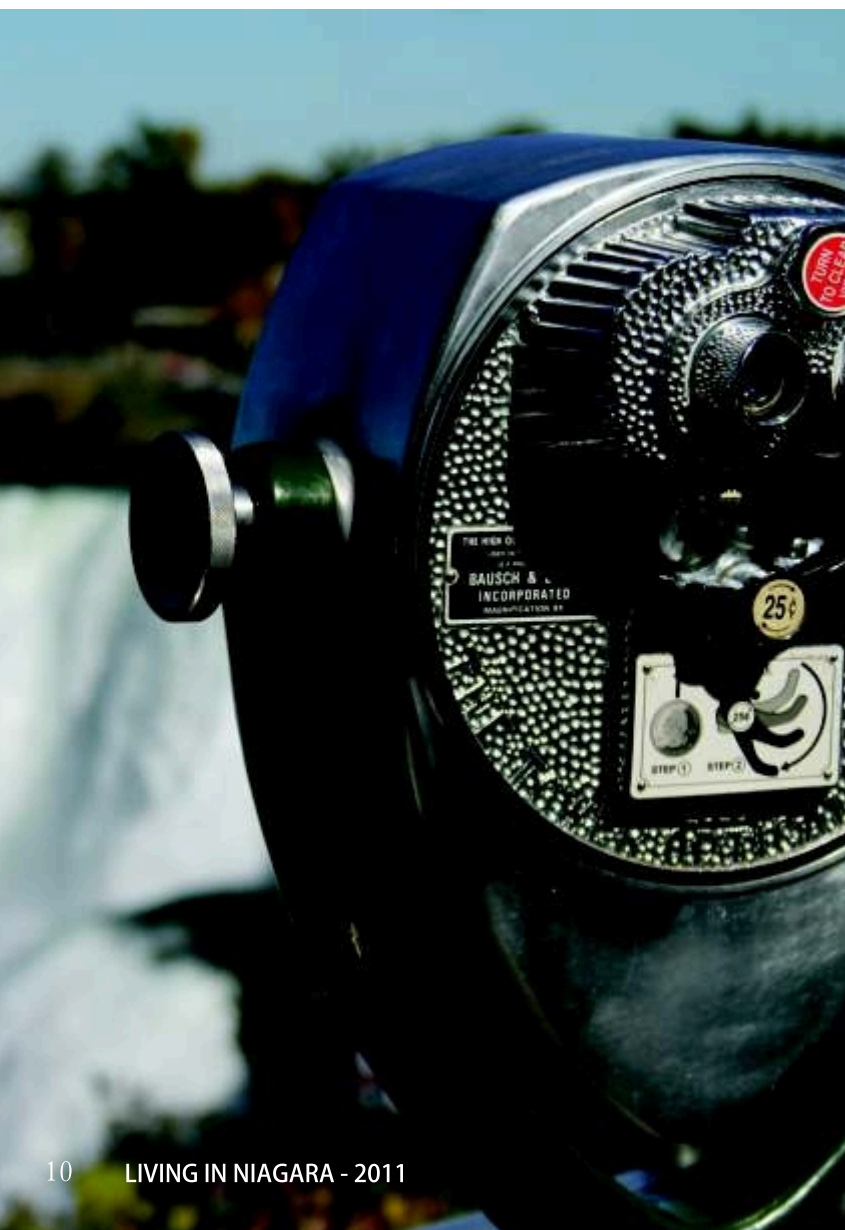
**Primary Health Care (PHC)** - is both a philosophy of care and a model to provide health services to all. The 5 principles of PHC are: accessibility; public participation; health promotion; appropriate skills and technology; and inter-sectoral cooperation. (WHO, 1978; CNA, 2002)

Source: Statistics Canada, Health Indicators -2008 no. 82-221-XIE

Read this report and rate the 12 sectors of our community. Provide feedback about how you think Niagara is doing in each sector. Go to [www.nrapc.com](http://www.nrapc.com) for more information.



# Adopting different lenses when reviewing each sector in the report...



Data about the indicators is covered specifically in each sector of the report. It is important to note that there are several overall lenses through which the reader can see how life truly is in Niagara for segments of the population.

**The age lens ...** Life in Niagara is experienced differently, depending on your age. Look for information about the region as an age-friendly community and explore information regarding each sector, such as employment, poverty, mental health, wellness and housing as experienced by different age groups throughout the region.

**The gender lens ...** Life in Niagara is experienced differently, depending on your gender. It is important to see how employment, housing, poverty, domestic violence and other issues are experienced by males and females.

**The socio-economic lens ...** Life in Niagara is experienced differently, depending on income and socio-economic factors. It is important to note that those living in poverty experience each sector differently regarding access to everything including housing, transportation, employment, education, and recreation. Aboriginal populations, those with mental health challenges, persons with disabilities, and the immigrant population experience education, safety, housing, transportation, arts, culture and poverty differently.

**Language and culture lens ...** Access to Niagara's assets, including health may be facilitated or hindered, depending on the quality of information made available. Niagara is a bilingual community with a large French speaking population, especially in Welland.

**The integrated or not integrated lens ...** Within each sector, and between sectors, it is important to look through the lens of collaboration and overall planning to see how connected or unconnected each sector is. Collaboration and coordination in each sector is emerging and some region-wide planning bodies have been developed - some are well developed and others are just beginning. The Niagara Research and Planning Council, Early Years Niagara, the Niagara Children's Services Sector Forum, the Coalition to End Violence Against Women, Niagara Region Integrated Community Planning and other groups are working on overall planning and connecting strategies.

To make this report and its actionable outcomes possible and measurable going forward, the Niagara Research and Planning Council is taking leadership on increasing community capacity by strengthening intersectoral partnerships. This follow-up phase will provide many opportunities for social change through civic action and engagement.



# Rating how we are doing

When the baseline Living in Niagara (2008) was created, a rating scale was developed for each of the report sectors and their critical indicators. The report was given to a group of 100 citizens to grade how Niagara was doing based on the research evidence presented. Each area and indicator was graded using the following grading levels:

Level 1. In dire need of corrective action

Level 2. Of concern, needs attention

Level 3. Progress is being made

Level 4. We're doing well and headed in the right direction

Level 5. We're doing great - Niagara is a leader

In preparing the 2011 report, two sources of information were used to rate how Niagara was doing in each sector:

## Method # 1: Expert opinion leaders input:

Thirty-six (36) community opinion leaders were identified by the Niagara Research and Planning Council – approximately 3 attached to each of the twelve sectors. Data was requested from many of them for the report. Selected community members also gave input on recommended opportunities for action in their sector. They provided input on ratings about how Niagara is doing in the sectors for which they have expertise. For 2011, the same rating levels were used as for the 2008 report, except that the category of Level 3 – Progress is being made was broken into more specificity, with 3a) being: A little progress being made; and 3b) Some progress being made. Thus, the 2011 rating scale is:

Level 1. In dire need of corrective action

Level 2. Of concern, needs attention

Level 3. Progress is being made

a) A little progress being made

b) A lot of progress being made

Level 4. We're doing well and headed in the right direction

Level 5. We're doing great – Niagara is a leader

## Method #2: Rating by the general public:

Through the online version of this report, the NRAPC will facilitate a process whereby citizens of Niagara may access the findings, rate the sectors, and indicate their interest in connecting with sector leaders to take action.





# Opportunities

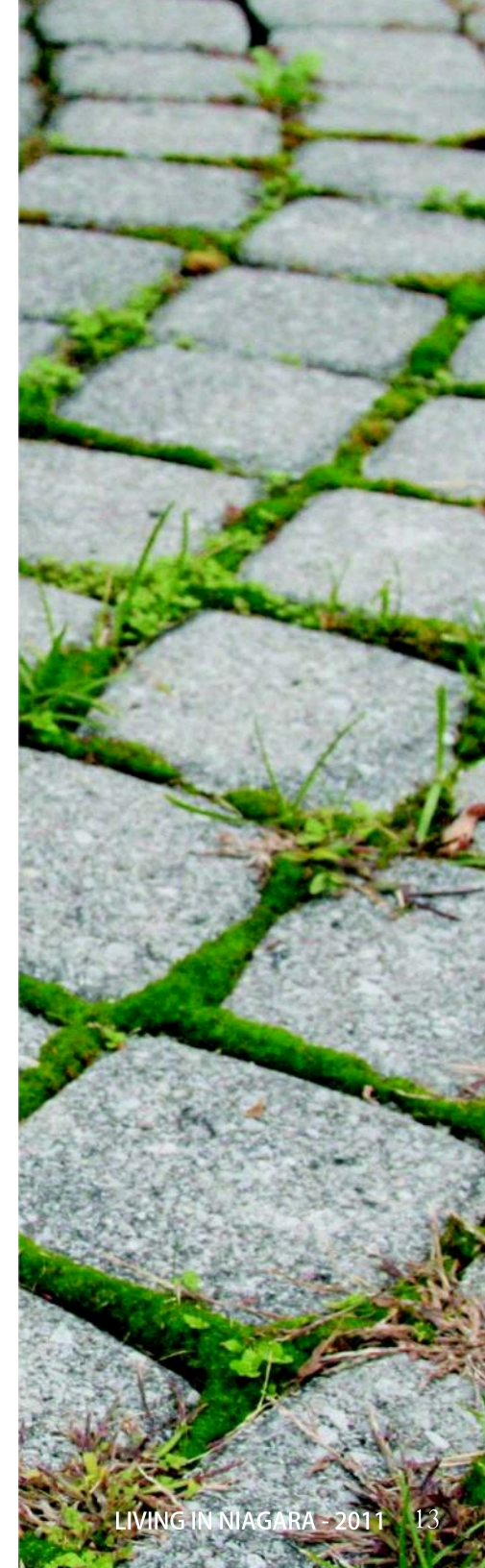




# OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES SUGGESTED FOR ACTION

The following are overall action areas identified in the Living in Niagara - 2011 report, and suggested in interviews with community expert opinion leaders. For sector-specific action items, see the following pages. Visit the Niagara Research and Planning Council website: [www.nrapc.com](http://www.nrapc.com) for the full Living in Niagara – 2011 report.

- 1. Increase planning and coordination within sectors** - Coordination, planning and partnerships are emerging and evident within many of the 12 sectors. Some planning efforts are well-established and have moved toward actionable and measurable initiatives. Some show evidence of beginning Niagara-wide planning and partnerships.
- 2. Increase inter-sectoral development and partnerships** - There could be more inter-sectoral development, planning and partnerships for mutual benefit for Niagara.
- 3. Increase knowledge exchange capacity building** - The opportunity and community support for horizontal knowledge exchange, current information and evidence is vital to positive development in all sectors, as well as to inform all indicators covered in this report.
- 4. Reduce poverty** - Poverty persists in Niagara and is evident across all sectors. Focusing on strengthening Niagara's investments in reducing poverty will benefit all of Niagara. All sectors contribute to the economy in varying degrees and drive increased prosperity for the region.
- 5. Strengthen services and approaches for mental health** - Strengthen the continuum of mental health care to include linkages between health promotion, risk prevention, treatment and care across the region and across the lifespan.
- 6. Make Niagara age friendly for all ages.** Continue to support the work of creating a region that is age-friendly, accessible and inclusive of all ages.
- 7. Strengthen and acknowledge the not-for-profit sector** - This sector contributes a great deal to the economy and quality of life by creating economic activity, and giving time, talents and leadership. This contribution should be described, quantified and considered in any economic development planning.
- 8. Create quality employment opportunities and a coordinated economic strategy for Niagara** - Quality employment opportunities, increased innovation, and a coordinated economic development strategy are essential for quality of life and growth for Niagara.
- 9. Focus on children and youth** - Investment in children and youth and their health, education, well-being and resiliency is essential and vital for Niagara's future.
- 10. Focus on seniors and the aging population** - The number of seniors in Niagara is growing. Their well-being, as well as their potential for contribution as leaders and citizens needs to be better described.
- 11. Inventory, measure and protect the natural assets of Niagara** - We have rich natural assets and we need to describe, measure, and monitor their status in order to plan for future growth and sustainability.
- 12. Create social spaces** - Create actual, virtual and relational spaces where community dialogue and innovative action strategies can be nurtured. An inclusive approach to community engagement and development is essential for this process.
- 13. Strengthen and increase the assets of Niagara** - Niagara has many assets (human and natural) and emerging strategies to make positive change. Now is the time to connect and innovatively link all those positive assets to make a quantum leap for Niagara.





# The Niagara Region





# The Niagara Region is a dynamic, unique and beautiful place in which to live.

Niagara Region is made up of 12 unique and distinct municipalities with an urban and rural mix: Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Niagara-On-The-Lake, Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, St.Catharines, Wainfleet, Pelham, Lincoln, West Lincoln, and Grimsby. The region covers 1,852 square kms. The boundaries of the region include a shared border with the United States along the Niagara River, with 5 border crossings, 4 by road and 1 by rail. Lake Ontario and Lake Erie border the region, with the Welland Canal section of the St. Lawrence Seaway providing a shipping route between these two Great Lakes. The Niagara Escarpment runs through Niagara from the point where the Bruce Trail begins in the village of Queenston and extends 800 miles north to Tobermory. In 1990, UNESCO designated the Niagara Escarpment as a World Biosphere Reserve. Niagara is part of what is referred to as Ontario's Golden Horseshoe. Its history, environment and present changes and composition makes Niagara a unique part of Canada. This report becomes part of Niagara's ongoing story as recorded in 2011 across 12 sectors, with critical indicators that contribute to quality of life across the region described for each sector.

Niagara residents share space, resources, talents, ideas, values and time together. They live, learn, work, play, shop and relate with one another. The diversity of ages, histories, ethnicities and perspectives of its residents makes Niagara both dynamic and stable. The rich variety of its physical bounties and the talents, contributions and needs of its people are all important aspects of life across the region. This report describes Niagara. However, planners and citizens can further the work of the report by identifying relevant trends, assets, and areas of needed improvement for positive change. A sustainable and positive outlook for Niagara will be determined by collective consciousness of our history, our present, and a focused vision for an even better future.



Source: Niagara Region



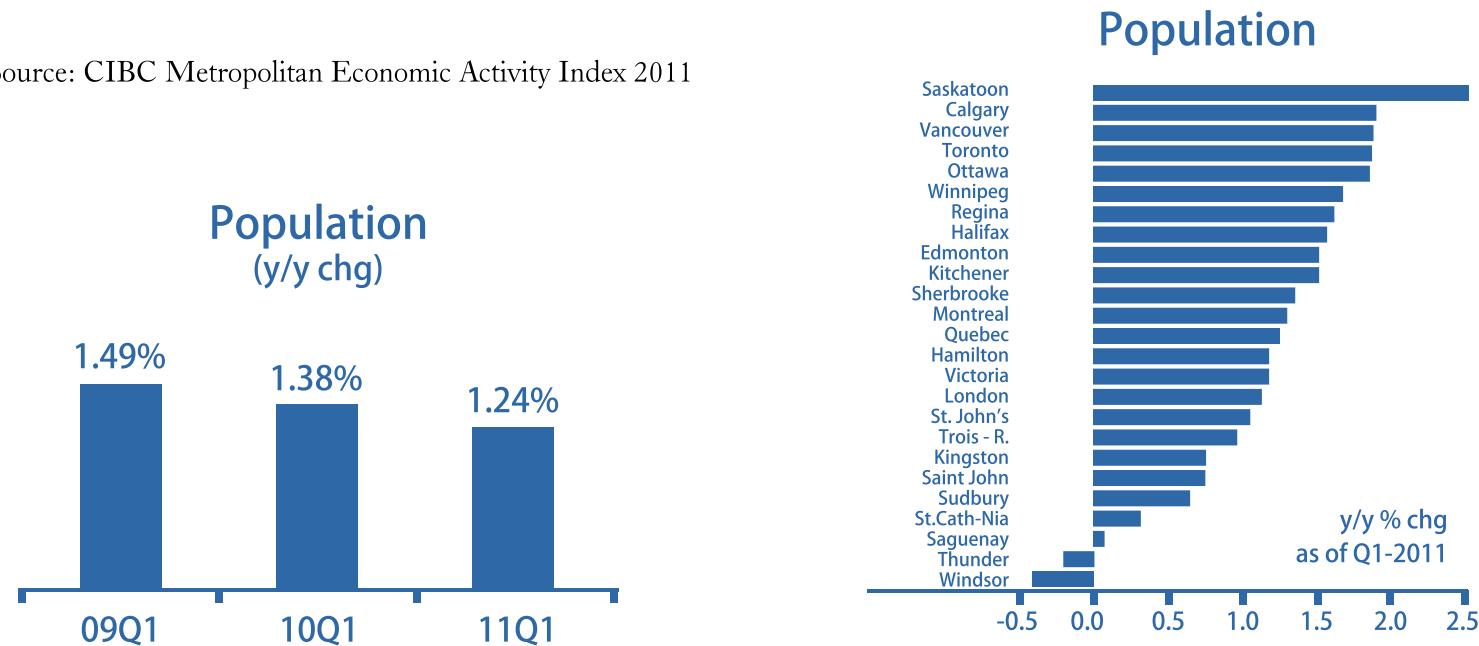


# The population of Niagara

Niagara is described in different ways by different data sources. This affects the data collection, trend analyses and possible comparisons with itself over time, or with other municipalities. Niagara is described in two different ways by Census Canada: (1) as the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of St. Catharines-Niagara (which does not include the municipalities of Grimsby and West Lincoln); and (2) as the Regional Municipality of Niagara. Some health data is reported by our "local public health unit" (a designation by the Province of Ontario), as Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH) or as part of the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) that includes Niagara, Hamilton, Haldimand and Brant.

At the time of writing this present report, the full Census 2006 data was the only set available, with some updates by CANSIM (Canadian Socio-economic Information Management System, Statistics Canada). The 2011 Census was conducted in May of 2011; any data that is made available from that source up until the time of publication of this report will be included. The population of Niagara showed a 1.49% increase from 2008 to the first quarter of 2009; a 1.38% increase to the first quarter of 2010; and a 1.24% increase to the first quarter of 2011. The year to year growth change in population for St. Catharines-Niagara CMA was very low compared to 25 other municipalities in Canada. We ranked 21 out of 25 and only 3 other areas in Canada were below our CMA in population growth as of the first quarter of 2011.

Source: CIBC Metropolitan Economic Activity Index 2011



Census 2006 reported a Niagara population of 427,421, up 4.1% from 2001. Ontario's population increased 6.6% from 2001 and Canada's rose 5.4%. The foreign-born population in Niagara was 18% of the population (10.4% recent immigrants from 2001-2006). In 2006, 6,930 people in Niagara declared they are Aboriginal.

# Families and households in Niagara

Statistics Canada's annual demographic estimate indicates the median age in St. Catharines-Niagara in 2010 had reached almost 43 years, up from just over 39 years in 2001. Provincially, only Thunder Bay and Peterborough had a higher median age. The median age for Canada is younger, at less than 40 years. Niagara is an attractive destination because of its affordability, proximity to major centers, and its relatively mild climate. There has been an influx of migrants from centers with a higher cost of living, such as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), in recent years. From 2005 to 2009, there has been a steady flow of middle-aged families, retirees, and pre-retirees moving into Niagara. During that same time period, there was a net loss of young people between the ages of 18 to 24. In 2010, this younger age group made up less than 10 per cent of the total population in Niagara.

We await Census 2011 updates from Statistics Canada, to track changes in data about age, gender and household makeup for the population in Niagara. In 2006, the Niagara Region was home to 73.3% married couple families; 10.3% common-law couple families; 13.1% female lone parent families; and 3.2% male lone-parent families. A total of 163,334 households were in Niagara. The median age of Niagara's population was 41.9 years in 2006, compared to 39.0 years in Ontario. 83.2% of the population of Niagara was over 15 years of age (81.8% in Ontario). A total of 16.8% were 0-14 years of age, 65.8% were 15- 65 years of age and 17.4% were over 65. By 2006, 13.6% of Ontario's population was 65 and older, up from 12.9% in 2001 (Ontario 13.6% and Canada 13.7%).

**Table 1 Percentage of the Total Population by Age and Gender 2006**

	Niagara			Ontario			Canada		
	Total Pop.	Male	Female	Total Pop.	Male	Female	Total Pop.	Male	Female
<b>0 - 14</b>	16.8	8.6	8.2	18.2	9.3	8.9	17.7	9	8.6
<b>15 - 64</b>	65.8	32.3	33.5	68.3	33.5	34.7	68.6	33.9	34.7
<b>65+</b>	17.4	7.5	9.9	13.6	5.9	7.7	13.7	6	7.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 Community Profiles

# Niagara's population projections

Region of Niagara, Summary of Growth Forecast Scenarios

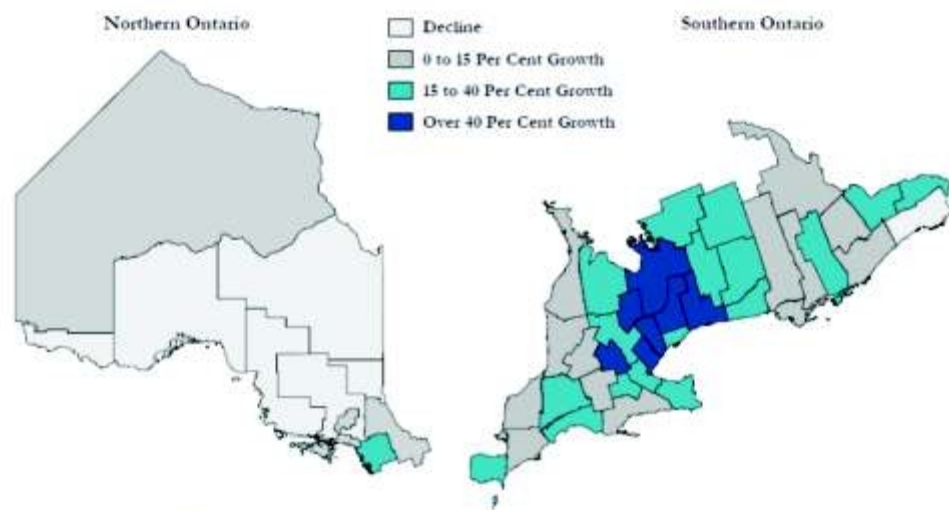
The population projections for Niagara from 2001 to the year 2031 have been calculated as follows: to grow by 84,000 as a low growth scenario; to grow by 118,000 as a medium growth scenario; and to grow by 273,000 as a high growth scenario.

Year	Population		
	Low Growth Scenario	Medium Growth Scenario	High Growth Scenario
2001	427,000	427,000	427,000
2011	442,000	463,000	467,000
2021	474,000	510,554	554,000
2031	511,000	545,000	700,000
2001-2031	84,000	118,000	273,000

Source: <http://www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives/2031/pdf/Anticipating%20Niagara.pdf>

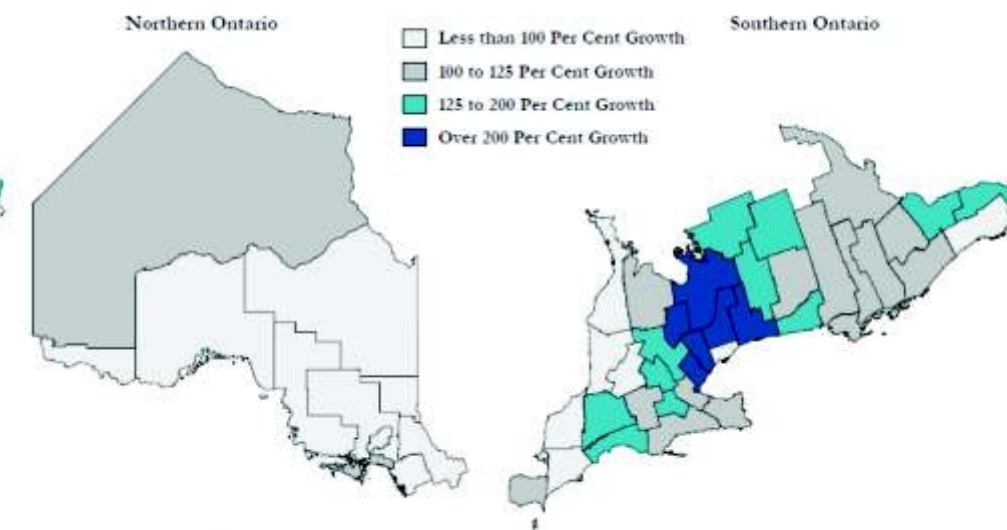
In another forecast, Ontario's population is projected to experience healthy growth over the next 28 years, rising 37.8 per cent, or nearly 4.9 million, from an estimated 12.9 million on July 1, 2008 to 17.8 million by July 1, 2036. A 100 to 125 percent growth in seniors is projected for Niagara, while the general population is expected to only grow by 15-40 per cent in that same time period. From: <http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/23011/295464.pdf>

Population growth/decline by census division over 2008-2036



Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance projections.

Growth in numbers of seniors by census division, 2008-2036



Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance projections.