

SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

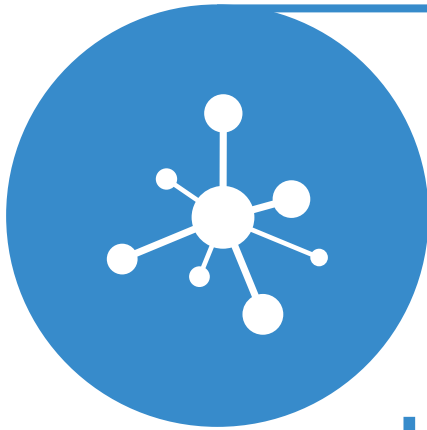
in Guelph



**GUELPH
WELLBEING**

REPORT

September 2014



Everyone will have a sense of belonging and inclusion.

OUR GOAL

When we have a strong sense of belonging and inclusion everyone will benefit. Despite current support and success stories there are still people in our community who don't feel included.

The mission of Guelph Wellbeing is to help organizations collaborate to provide the most effective and efficient services to our community. In some areas, there are overlapping services and in other areas,

there is tremendous need. By working together, we can address the issues around social connectivity and inclusion more effectively and provide the services and action that will have the most impact.

Social and physical connectivity

Being socially connected is living in a community where people feel like they belong – where they get involved, help one another, participate in dialogue on civic issues, and reach out to others and feel comfortable asking for things they need. Physical connectivity and social connectivity are inter-related. We know that in communities where people can walk or cycle to work have greater physical connectivity and higher levels of social cohesion.



**GUELPH
WELLBEING**

*Working together for the
best possible quality of life*

About Guelph Wellbeing

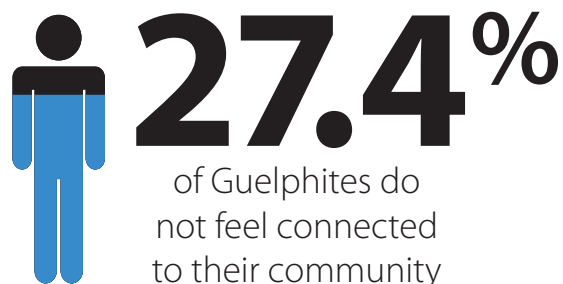
Guelph Wellbeing is a project guided by a Community Leadership Team working together to address our community's needs to create a happy, healthy and resilient community.

Our work is based on the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, a globally-recognized index that takes a comprehensive approach to measuring quality of life. Through extensive community engagement, Guelph Wellbeing has identified three key issues in our community: food security, social and physical connectivity, and affordable housing.

This report is one of four published in 2014 about Guelph Wellbeing. We hope this information about social connectivity brings awareness to the issues around the sense of belonging and inclusion in Guelph and provides you with opportunities to make a difference in our community. We will continue to gather data, take action, measure impact and prepare an impact report in 2015.

Our journey starts here...working together for the best possible quality of life.

2012 Guelph Community Wellbeing Survey



of Guelphites do not feel connected to their community

The survey, conducted by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, found that **1 in 4** does not feel a sense of belonging.

Having a sense of belonging in one's community is critical to people's health.

Residents of Guelph are satisfied with their overall wellbeing if they:

- Have volunteered in the past year
- Are a member of a cultural, educational, or hobbyist organization
- Have close relatives, friends and neighbours
- Feel safe at night in their neighbourhood and around Guelph
- Know people in the city are available to give help when someone needs it
- Have people in the city who would try to help them if they had a problem
- Feel it is easy to connect with other people in the city

What was said in the survey about Guelph as a place to live

Many people in this city are available to give help if somebody needs it

I have good friends in this city

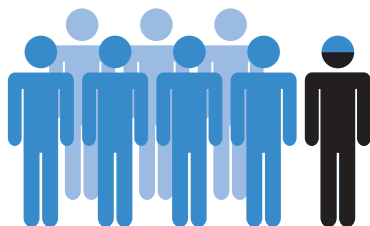
If I had a problem, few people in this city would try to help me

If I need help, this city has many excellent services to meet my needs

It is difficult for me to connect with the people in this city

In this city I have few opportunities to satisfy my needs

53% of residents performed unpaid volunteer work in the past 12 months.



77.1% of all respondents had provided unpaid help to others

Importance of social connectivity

Sense of connection to the community is extremely important to our wellbeing.

According to a 2008 Stats Canada Health Report being or feeling well connected is linked to positive perceptions of physical and mental health and can reduce the risk of obesity, poverty, and poor school performance. People who are connected to friends, family and local organizations can get help and support to avoid crisis, and they are less likely to need expensive emergency services.

We also know that social service systems are often

not enough for people who lack friends and family to connect with in times of need. In Guelph, people work hard to build a strong sense of community, and they see their neighbourhood groups and community events and programs as very important to their wellbeing. It is important for people to feel connected to their neighbourhoods.

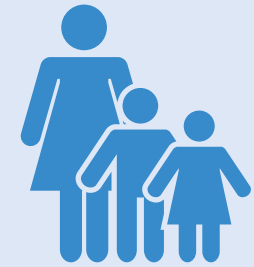
But what about the 27.4% who don't feel connected? Why not?



Fostering a sense of belonging

Organizations in our community know the value of being connected to one another socially.

- The **Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition** (GNSC), a multi-stakeholder collaboration, builds connectivity with neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood groups work extremely hard at involving their community to ensure they feel connected and a larger part of the work performed in their neighbourhoods.
- The **Volunteer Centre** encourages volunteerism and builds capacity with non-profits and helps link people to services.
- The **Local Immigration Partnership** (LIP) works towards a more welcoming and inclusive community by helping newcomers with employment, English language training, programs and services, and community inclusion.
- **Torchlight**, through its phone support service, provides a way for people to connect when in crisis.
- The **Mood Disorders Support Group** offers a way for people who are challenged with a mental illness to connect with their peers.
- Both **Transition Guelph** and **eMerge** provide numerous opportunities to those who would like to be connected to the community.
- The **YMCA's** member connect program ensures that new members feel welcome not only within the Y but within their community by linking new members with established members.
- **Access Guelph** was the winning concept at a 3 level of government event called HealthJam. The team looked at how to solve complex problems with tangible ideas through design thinking. It envisions a comprehensive, centralized information hub that will unite all of the Guelph health and wellbeing organizations and deliver local service information to the city residents using a variety of innovative and traditional media.



What it means to be socially connected

Heather, 42, and her children, 14 and 12, have been part of the Two Rivers community for the past 11 years.

After coming out of a women's shelter Heather found she needed a lot of help. She felt lonely and depressed. But from her very first visit to the Two Rivers Neighbourhood Group (GNSC) she felt comfortable and welcomed. She gradually increased her connections with her neighbours and made friends in the area.

Since that time she has continued to be part of this community where she now volunteers and is on the Neighbourhood Leadership Team and Healthy Peer Leaders team.

“The aim of Transition Guelph is to empower individuals to be the catalyst for change. Part of what it does is connect people through various social opportunities. Transition is changing the world one potluck at a time.”

Mary Kate Gilbertson, Transition Guelph

Current impact of social connectivity

Sense of belonging among newcomers rose

58 to **87%**
2007 2011

The **GNSC** and its fourteen city-wide neighbourhood groups and ten partner organizations have strong, positive impacts in their communities.

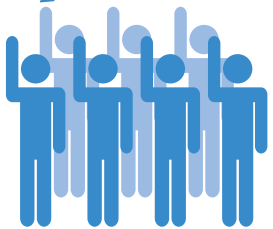
The **Local Immigration Partnership** has been very successful in its work on community inclusion. Sense of belonging among newcomers rose from **58% in 2007 to 87% in 2011**. There can be significant learning from the LIP to determine what it did to increase this figure. Its new Community Connector Initiative will build a bank of volunteers who will be able to connect immigrants to services in our area, and offer flexible and informal support, information, and friendship.

Ryan Ritskes and Maryann Sly-Kensley of the Two Rivers Neighbourhood are shining examples of connecting community members to community hubs.

“We have seen many success stories coming out of our centre. I often wonder where some folks might have landed had they not been connected to the help they needed.”

Maryann Sly-Kensley
Two Rivers
Neighbourhood Group

1,500



Applied to volunteer

Transition Guelph is part of a growing movement of people around the world who come together to address some of the most pressing issues of our time through building community, sharing new skills and taking care of one another at the local level. eMerge Guelph connects citizens and organizations to innovative solutions to maximize resource efficiency and community well-being.

The **Volunteer Centre** is so much more than a place to find a volunteer position. More than **1,500 people** applied to volunteer in Guelph and Wellington in 2013/14. Volunteering is an excellent way to connect to community. The Volunteer Centre supports **146 member organizations** in volunteer recruitment, promotion and advocacy, and training and consultation. Its database of community resources had over **1.2 million hits** on their website in 2013/14. The Volunteer Centre receives approximately **90 calls a month** which often turn out to be people calling to make connections to solve very complex issues.

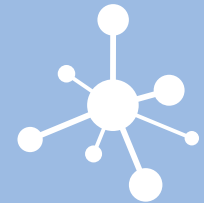
Immigrant Services and its various seniors groups and programs promote health, reduce feelings of isolation, connect seniors to the community, provide opportunities to meet new people and help increase knowledge of English. Clients are also provided with advocacy and referral to specific services. Last year Immigrant Services served more than **200 seniors**.

Torchlight offers many services to those who may feel isolated, alone and in need of human connection. Its 24/7 phone lines offer services delivered by **125 volunteers** who call out and receive calls in. Torchlight serviced over **50,000 callers** in 2013 with an increase of over 20% in the previous year.

50,000

Callers in 2013

These kinds of efforts to build community connections and social cohesion are commonly supported through community grants and resources provided by the City of Guelph, the United Way of Guelph and Wellington, and the Guelph Community Foundation. Local businesses, community members, and collaborations, such as the Elevator Project also help to support local community-building efforts through donations of money, time, expertise, mentoring, and other resources



Our collective call to action

1 Coordinate efforts for shared space, resources, knowledge exchange

We know that there are organizations and groups with similar goals of serving the community as non-profits with limited funds for space, human and technological supports. By pooling resources, sharing costs and ultimately cross-referring, many more people who would otherwise not be able to access service and become engaged in their community will be supported.

Recommendation

Pool resources to share and coordinate administrative functions.

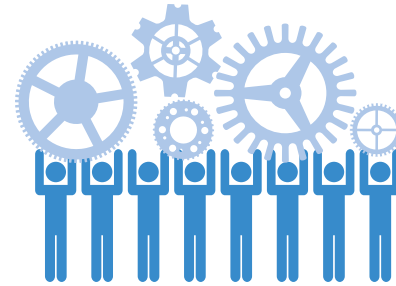


2 Get good local data

Together, we need to determine how to collect data to show that our work is making an impact. Inconsistent data collection affects our ability to clearly assess the issues and root causes of the lack of social connectivity and the costs to our community. We also need to understand who is being excluded and why.

Recommendation

Pool resources to share and coordinate administration of data collection.



3 Support organizations to connect with each other to provide resources to the people they serve

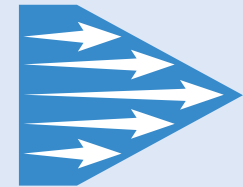
All the organizations who contributed to this report support those who want to be socially connected to their community. The GNSC is well positioned to filter networks of neighbourhood groups, and agency relationships to include people in their own communities. The Volunteer Centre actively links people to meaningful opportunities in their community at the same time as they link people to the organizations who need them. Torchlight, Mental Health services, Access Guelph, the LIP also offer support through face to face interactions, support groups and call in and out services. Ongoing communication between all these organizations is important to continue to provide the important services to those in need.

Recommendation

Explore how the Volunteer Centre's database can be integrated with LIP, Torchlight, Access Guelph, Mental Health services, and other community resource hubs. Funnel volunteer opportunities through the Volunteer Centre and connect volunteers to the Centre. Explore how the business sector and other social service agencies can connect to this work.

“Service providers need to commit to work together as a community to meet community needs by creating warm connections between services and potential clients. We believe in not turning people away. We believe in the ‘no wrong door’ approach like that supported by the Local Immigration Partnership.”

Christine Oldfield
Volunteer Centre of
Guelph/Wellington



Acting together through collective impact

Collective impact is the commitment of a group of people from different sectors that form a common agenda for solving a complex social problem. To achieve large scale, lasting solutions for social problems sectors such as government, civil society, and business need to coordinate their efforts and work together toward a clearly defined goal.



Conclusion

Guelph Wellbeing's ultimate goal is to be sure we include everyone in our community so they feel socially connected to all the services our city offers. This will only be realized if we work together.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the individuals and organizations that have contributed to the development of this report. We are extremely grateful for the contributions from those who participated in the various in-person conversations and the many conversations that took place to write this important document.

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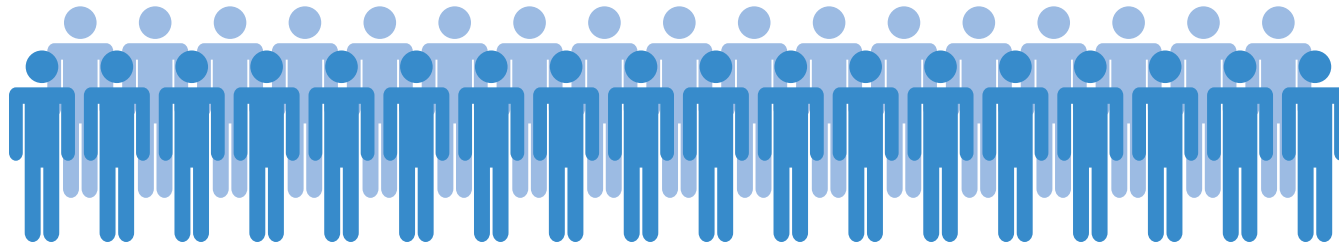
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