



LONDON  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION



2024

LONDON & MIDDLESEX

**VitalSigns**

# Accelerating Equity, Together

Across London and Middlesex, amidst its busyness and its vibrancy, lies a stark reality.

For too many in our communities, the foundations of a healthy and connected life are not equally accessible. In fact, there is a widening gap in many areas of daily life that separates those who thrive from those who struggle against systemic barriers – from the basics of shelter and food security to the fundamental principles of gender equality and racial equity.

Although it may not always be visible, inequality permeates many aspects of life in our region and has many intersections.

Unfortunately, issues like climate change, hunger, racial and gender inequality, health, and housing, and the ways they interconnect and affect one another, are not new to us as a community or as a country. While the pandemic exposed some of them more visibly, they have existed in our community for far too long. But today, they are more acute and urgent than at any time in most people's memories.

While we see signs of hope in many corners, we are not making progress on systemic issues as rapidly or as deeply as we need to in order to ensure everyone in London and Middlesex can thrive. It's a simple truth we all need to care about

and act together, to change. Because the health of our community is only as strong as all of us.

**The purpose of London Community Foundation's Vital Signs report is to shine the spotlight on this reality and bring people together to accelerate change.** This report helps the community understand where progress may be happening while also highlighting where we might be losing ground and need a more focused, collective effort.

This year's Vital Signs report acknowledges the interconnectedness of our challenges and how the threads of inequity weave through every aspect of our lives.

**And just as the issues are interconnected in their impacts, we are interconnected in the possibility for change.**

Vital Signs is a call to bridge the gap and to build a better London and Middlesex for all. It is an invitation to work together so that fewer of us are left behind and each of us can contribute to a more equitable community.

**Let's accelerate equity, together.**

# Land Acknowledgement

## A Commitment to Practices that Promote Reconciliation and Speaking the Truth

As we, the London Community Foundation, its volunteers, staff, and donors live and work on these traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron Nations, we wish to engage in, and inspire action and commitment towards Reconciliation. To us, this means in our decisions and through our actions we want to build relationships with Indigenous communities. As well, we want to set an example for all our partners and friends. This means speaking the Truth and building a better world where Indigenous peoples feel at home to live their lives, build their cultures, and prosper.








Anthony, Bub'z Dropin and Soup Kitchen, Oneida Nation of the Thames

# A Note About the Data

Vital Signs is a collaborative effort, and in addition to Statistics Canada census data, we rely on community organizations as an invaluable source of local data and insights. Due to the many sources of data found in Vital Signs, please consider the following factors as you read the report.

*The graphic shows the overlap of the CD and CMA boundaries \**

-  London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) Boundary
-  Middlesex County Census Division (CD) Boundary
-  Chippewas of the Thames First Nation
-  Munsee-Delaware Nation
-  Oneida Nation of the Thames



## Geographic Boundaries

Much of the data from Statistics Canada in this report comes from the London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), which includes most of Middlesex County, Central Elgin, St. Thomas, and Southwold. Notably, London CMA doesn't include data from Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation, Parkhill, Lucan, Glencoe or Newbury. This means that the CMA-specific data may slightly overrepresent people living in urban settings and under-represent Indigenous and rural communities.

The report also uses Census Subdivision (CSD) data from Statistics Canada from the London and Middlesex regions. Census subdivisions usually correspond to specific individual municipalities. Additionally, data from the Middlesex-London Health Unit covers the Middlesex County Census Division (CD), which incorporates municipalities within Middlesex County, the City of London, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, and Munsee-Delaware Nation.

## The Diverse Experiences of Racialized Peoples in our Region

In 2021, 23.35% of the population in the London census metropolitan area and 24.73% in Middlesex County census division were visible minorities, defined by Statistics Canada at the time as being people who are not Aboriginal, Caucasian, or white. It's important to note that these statistics may not fully capture the experiences of nearly 1 in 4 people in these populations who identify as members of a racialized group. Where the data is available, we have provided data to highlight the different experiences of Indigenous people and people from racialized communities.

## Organizational Capacity

Some data in this report are provided by non-profit organizations. These figures may be somewhat limited by the organization's capacity to deliver services rather than reflecting the total need for those services.

# Climate & Environment

A changing climate and degraded natural environment directly impact public health, environmental stability, and economic prosperity – all of which contribute to a community’s ability to thrive and be well. Progress has been made, as can be seen in the data, but as we contend with the increasing impacts of climate change, we need to accelerate our efforts.

We know that for individuals in our community who are facing systemic barriers, the impacts of a changing climate can be especially significant. When community planning, we need to think about how climate impacts people’s access to essential community elements like housing and transportation, and we must work to ensure that children and young people understand and value the natural world globally and in their own backyards. By prioritizing climate and environmental action, we can create a healthier, more prosperous, and sustainable future for those living in London and Middlesex.



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Prioritizing getting children outside in nature inspires curiosity, ignites passions and cultivates their creativity. Let’s embrace the thrill of outdoor adventures and the lessons they bring, ensuring our children have the freedom to explore and learn in nature’s vast, exciting playground! Get muddy, balance on logs, climb trees, find bugs, dig holes, skin a few knees, get tired, and be happy.

– Nadine, ChildReach

Read the full story at [lcfvitalsigns.ca](https://lcfvitalsigns.ca)

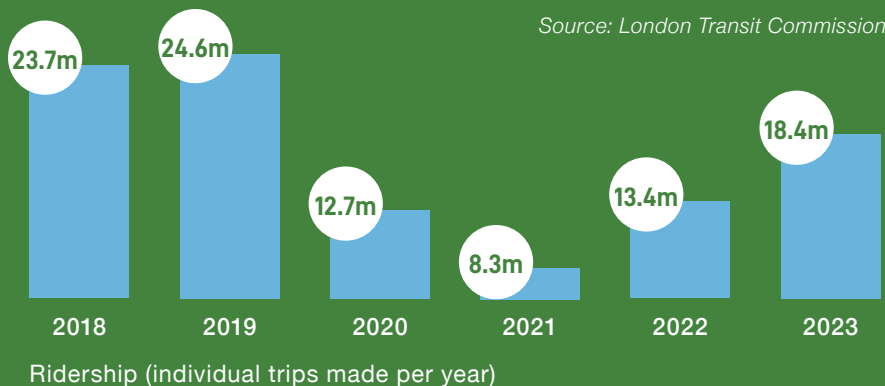
## London's greenhouse gas emissions return to pre-pandemic levels

In London, greenhouse gas emissions have begun rising again following the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, when lockdowns limited people's ability to do everyday activities, like travelling, that contribute to climate change pollution. Greenhouse gas emissions contribute to worsening air quality, negative health outcomes, and the larger effects of climate change.



## London's transit ridership rebounding from pandemic levels

From an all-time low of 8.3 million at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, London's transit ridership continues to rebound. A connected, robust, affordable, and well-used public transit system is critical to ensure everyone can access essentials like employment and food, and provide a viable transportation option that helps to reduce pollution related to climate change. Transit is a key enabler for a growing city, and its citizens, to thrive.



## Over 2,300 species call Western University home

2,360 Total Species Identified



1,151 Insects & Arachnids



21 Mammals



135 Birds



28 Fish



708 Plants



317 Other

Since 2022, visitors have been surveying and tracking the different species that call Western University's campuses home. During that time, they have logged over 2,300 unique species sharing space with people in urban London. Benefits of healthy biodiversity include improved air quality, more tree cover, and natural drainage, which can help reduce flood risk.

Source: [www.inaturalist.org/projects/biodiversity-inventory-at-western](http://www.inaturalist.org/projects/biodiversity-inventory-at-western) Accessed 6/28/2024

# Zero Hunger

When people are hungry, there are wide-ranging and profound impacts on those individuals and the communities they live in. With the cost-of-living crisis, more people in London and Middlesex simply cannot afford food.

Food security means that someone has reliable access to enough safe and nutritious food of their choosing to live a healthy life. As housing costs rise in London and Middlesex, more of people's income is going toward keeping a roof over their heads, which can mean they have to sacrifice other important life essentials, like buying food. Many in London and Middlesex are increasingly turning to food banks to have enough to eat. But these organizations are dependent on the generosity of the community to operate, and are not always able to meet the growing demand. Additionally, food insecurity is often exacerbated by other systemic barriers, such as socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, gender, and geographic location, which can make addressing it even more complex.



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When I lived in the city and the grocery store was right around the corner, I didn't have to stockpile my fridge and freezer because I had easier access. I didn't have to travel from the reserve to London. Maybe I didn't even need a car. I see the people in the reserve who don't have a license or don't have a car. They spend \$40 on getting a ride to the grocery store. That's \$40 that's not going in your fridge versus if they were living in a city where they could just walk to the grocery store or spend \$3 getting the bus.

– Anthony, Bub'z Dropin and Soup Kitchen,  
Oneida Nation of the Thames

Read the full story at [lcfvitalsigns.ca](https://lcfvitalsigns.ca)

## 1 in 6 households in London and Middlesex are food insecure

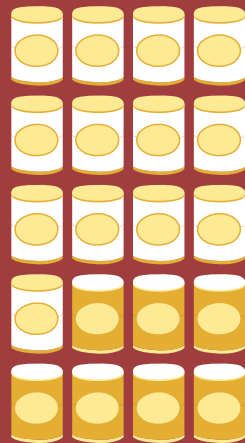
In London and Middlesex, nearly 84,000 people face food insecurity - that's 1 in 6 households. Half of those households report that they have paid employment.

Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit



## More new clients are accessing London Food Bank each year

In 2022, 36% of London Food Bank clients were new



2022

In 2023, that grew to 46%.



2023

London's food bank usage continues to increase rapidly, furthering its need for community support. A broad spectrum of people are using the London Food Bank. In 2023, 8% of food bank users were above the age of 60, 10% were students, and 18% reported that they were employed.

Source: London Food Bank

## Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program aren't sufficient to address food insecurity

A single person in the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) spends 82% of their income on rent.

(Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit, Report No.69-23: Appendix B)

In 2023, even though ODSP rates increased for the first time in 5 years by 6.5%, overall inflation in Canada rose 18%\* during that time period.

\*United Way Elgin-Middlesex's Make It Livable Campaign

Demographic and program	Income	Rent	Food	What's Left
Single Person - Ontario Works	\$865	\$860	\$405	-\$400
Single Person - Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)	\$1,369	\$1,124	\$405	-\$160
Single Parent with 2 Children - Ontario Works	\$2,560	\$1,393	\$826	\$341
Family of 4 - Ontario Works	\$2,794	\$1,607	\$1,124	\$63

Source: Middlesex-London Health Unit, Report No.69-23: Appendix B

# Gender Equality

For a community to thrive, it is vital all members have equal opportunities. This allows diverse perspectives to be heard and talents to be recognized, driving innovation and growth in communities. Gender equality is not a new issue; however, in London and Middlesex, data show that women are feeling more disconnected, and rates of violence are rising.

Systemic barriers in essential areas of life, such as housing, health, and food security, can compound gender inequalities, just as factors like age, race, disability, and newcomer status can all impact how a person experiences gender discrimination.

Important work is being done in London and Middlesex County to improve the lives of women and gender-diverse people, including efforts to close the pay gap and increase access to affordable housing. But we need to accelerate efforts to create a gender-equal community where everyone is safe, included, and empowered.



“

In recent years the conversation around sexual violence has finally started shifting to include men and the need for work to be done with men in order to prevent perpetration. This is key, because no amount of survivor support or intervention moments for young women will ultimately end sexual violence. If women alone could have ended sexual violence, well, we would have done it already. The fact of the matter is that we need men to step up. We need men to get involved. And that means inviting them into the conversation.

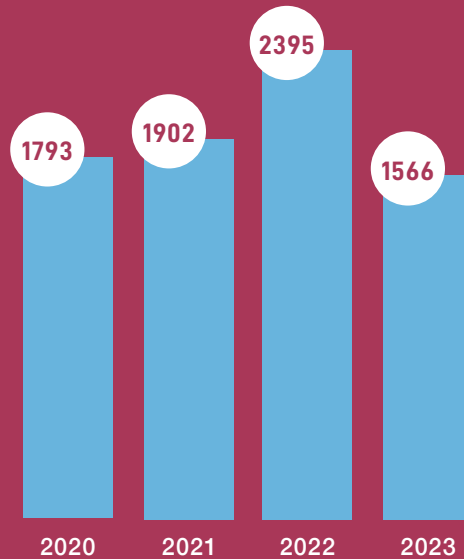
– Allison, Anova

Read the full story at [lcfvitalsigns.ca](https://lcfvitalsigns.ca)

## There are not enough safe spaces for women

Progress has been made over the past year, but there continues to be significant strain on women’s shelters. The homelessness crisis limits the resources available to support people who are escaping gender-based and sexual violence. Continued progress is needed to ensure more people can receive support.

Source: Anova



How often women have been turned away from the Anova-run shelter due to a lack of beds.

## Sexual violence continues to increase after historic highs

Sexual violence in London and Middlesex has increased significantly year-over-year at various points from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While Middlesex saw a decrease year-over-year during the first year of the pandemic (2020-2021), sexual violence has increased since then.

Location	2020-21 Year over Year Change	2021-22 Year over Year Change	2022-23 Year over Year Change
London	20.6%	3.23%	11.5%
Middlesex	-17.4%	20.8%	10.4%

Source: London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse (LCCEWA) annual snapshots

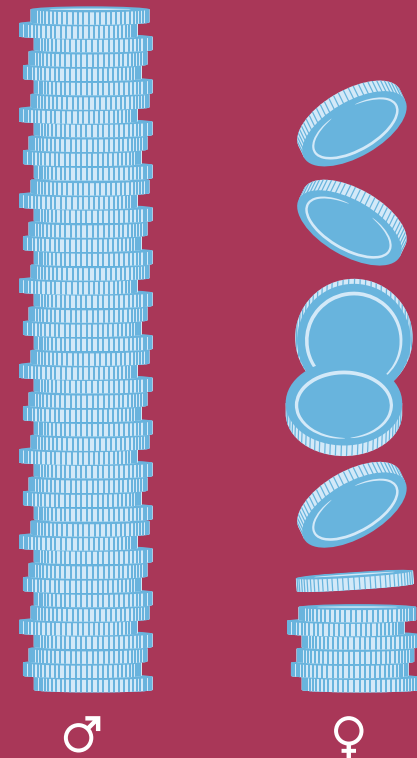
## Women in London and Middlesex are on average making less than men did 10 years prior

Females in 2021 had a median income of \$37,380, less than the median income of males in 2011 (\$37,500).

London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)  
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0008-01 Tax filers and dependants with income by total income, sex and age

Factors such as education, job tenure, part-time vs. full time work, public vs. private sector work, firm size, unionization rates, occupation, industry, and demographics, can only explain approximately 30 percent of the wage gap.\*

\*payequity.gov.on.ca



# Good Health & Wellbeing

Unequal access to health care has significant and far-reaching effects on communities, impacting both individual and overall community health. Over time, the effects of this unequal access can exacerbate existing inequalities like housing instability, employment opportunities, educational impacts, and more, leading to a cycle of poor health that is difficult to break.

Providing health care to a community with many diverse needs is complex. Challenges in the health-care system, such as a lack of family doctors, and reduced capacity at hospitals, have worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic. Factors such as socioeconomic status, race, gender, newcomer status, and even geographic location often intersect to create disparities in access to medical services, which affects health outcomes. Providing care to people who face barriers related to language, mental health, or housing, requires individualized solutions and options. While progress is being made to meet the diverse needs of many populations, we need to re-commit to ensuring health equity for all.



“

I reflect on a chance encounter when a mother who could barely speak a word of English shuffled through the walk-in clinic doors, with her elementary school-aged child in tow, hoping to have a doctor tend to their medical needs. Sadly, the roadblock embedded in the sign that read “translator must be over the age of 16” lifted off the pages and came to life before all the other patients seated along the clinic walls. Noticing the distress of the parent, a stranger graciously stepped in to translate for the woman.

– Nicola, formerly Strengthening Families Program,  
Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support & Integration

Read the full story at [lcfvitalsigns.ca](https://lcfvitalsigns.ca)

## Individuals receiving social assistance in Ontario live in deep poverty

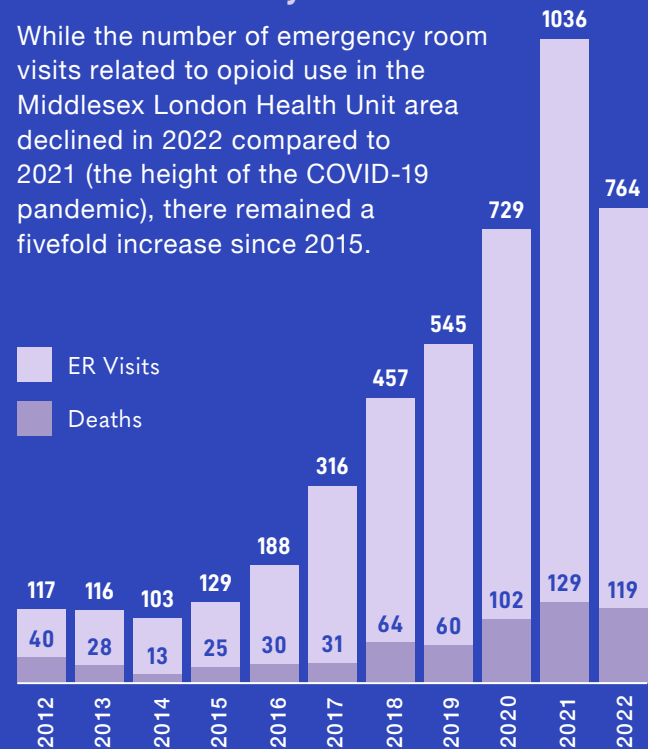
In Ontario, whether someone is single, a single parent, or in a partnership with children, the level of income from social assistance that they receive means that they fall below the deep-income poverty line. Living in deep poverty is shown to have negative outcomes for people's mental and physical health, as they cannot afford adequate food and housing or other essentials of life.

Source: Maytree Welfare in Canada Report

Family Type	Welfare Income	Official Poverty Line (MBM)	Deep-Income Poverty Line (MBM-DIP)
Unattached single considered employable	\$10,253	\$27,631	\$20,723
Unattached single with a disability	\$15,871	\$27,631	\$20,723
Single parent with one child	\$23,102	\$39,071	\$29,303
Couple with two children	\$33,368	\$55,262	\$41,447

## Emergency visits for opioid poisoning increase more than 550% in 10 years

While the number of emergency room visits related to opioid use in the Middlesex London Health Unit area declined in 2022 compared to 2021 (the height of the COVID-19 pandemic), there remained a fivefold increase since 2015.



Source: Public Health Ontario: Interactive Opioid Tool

## Lack of regular dental care is contributing to emergency room backlogs

In 2021, adults made nearly 2,500 visits to a London and Middlesex hospital emergency department for an oral health problem. 75% of those visits were for non-traumatic oral health conditions.

Source: Public Health Ontario. Emergency Department Visits for Oral Health Conditions Snapshot (2012 to 2021)

Non-traumatic oral health conditions include tooth decay, intraoral abscesses, gingivitis and periodontitis, and other conditions of the teeth or supporting structures caused by infection.



# Reduced Inequalities

Inequality has profound and complex impacts on communities. London and Middlesex have experienced firsthand the tragic consequences of hatred and fear of difference. We must work together to ensure that our region is home to equitable communities where everyone can thrive.

Inequality manifests itself in a multitude of ways, which plays out in our communities daily: from people being victims of hate crimes, to racialized groups being significantly less likely to have a family doctor, to paratransit remaining persistently difficult to access. Reports of racism are on the rise. Overall, too many of our racialized neighbours struggle to access the basic foundations that many of us take for granted.



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When you are a 2SLGBTQIA+ person, when you are a racialized person, you already tend to feel alone. When you then enter a space that is not specifically crafted for you, or for the community that you are a part of, it can really amplify these feelings.

– Donavon, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

Read the full story at [lcfvitalsigns.ca](https://lcfvitalsigns.ca)

## Hate crime charges in London triple since 2019

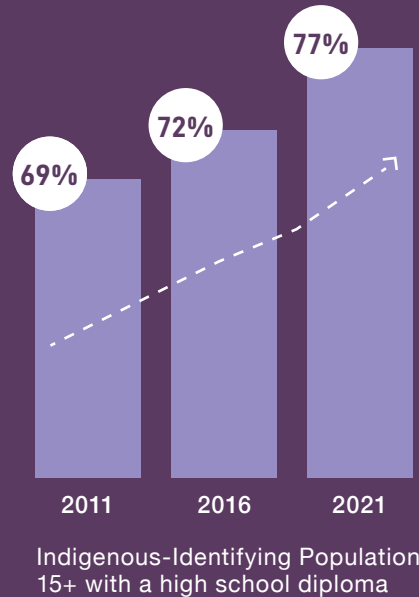
London is facing a worrying increase in the number of hate crime charges laid, tripling since 2019. While recorded incidents increased by 270% over the same time period, this may not capture the true increase as many acts of hate go unreported.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Recorded Incidents	30	44	83	80	111
Charges Laid	24	25	55	37	74

Source: London Police, reported in the London Free Press

## More Indigenous youth are finishing high school

Between 2011 and 2021, the percentage of Indigenous people living in London and Middlesex with a high school diploma increased by 8%. As our educational system makes improvements to ensure it is more accessible to Indigenous young people, the education gap is beginning to close.



London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)  
Sources: Vital Signs: What London Can Be, Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0291-01 and Table 98-10-0385-01

## 1 in 5 visible minority people in London Middlesex do not have a regular healthcare provider



Compared with 1 in 14 people not of a visible minority.

London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)  
Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Order



London has a shortage of family doctors, so access is already difficult. This issue can be exacerbated by factors like language barriers. The Middlesex London Ontario Health Team estimates there are 65,000 unattached patients in London and Middlesex, and 70 physicians are needed to close that gap.

# Housing

With the cost-of-living crisis, more people are finding themselves unable to afford basic necessities of life, like housing. People who have always had a secure home are now finding that they cannot afford to keep a roof over their heads and are experiencing homelessness. The increased demand for the most acute support systems for urgent help, such as shelters, further strains an already overloaded system.

Some members of our communities are especially vulnerable because of rising housing costs. The lack of affordable housing may mean that a person experiencing intimate partner violence is less able to leave, or that a newcomer family has a more difficult time finding their footing. As the gap widens between those who can afford safe and secure housing and those who cannot, it can further heighten existing inequality.



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The Government-Assisted Refugees program and Ontario Works provide financial support differently, which creates challenges for refugee families. When refugees transition to Ontario Works after one year, the financial situation changes significantly. This policy shift often leads to a drastic reduction in household income, making it difficult to afford the same housing.

– Maria, Cross Cultural Learner Centre

Read the full story at [lcfvitalsigns.ca](https://lcfvitalsigns.ca)

## Over 7,000 households are on London's subsidized housing waitlist

As of June 30, 2024, 7,249 households were on the waiting list for subsidized housing in London. From April 1 to June 30 of 2024, 80 households were placed in housing\*. The demand for assistance is rising as rents increase. At the same time, London's population is growing, putting more pressure on availability.

Source\*: City of London



## Rents are increasing in London & Middlesex County

Rising rent is not just an urban issue – rental prices in Strathroy in Middlesex County are rising as quickly, and in some cases, faster, than in London.

Source: Statistics Canada and CMHC. Table 34-10-0133-01 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, average rents for areas with a population of 10,000 and over

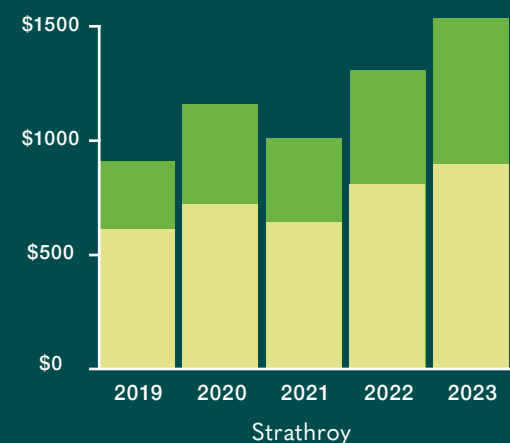
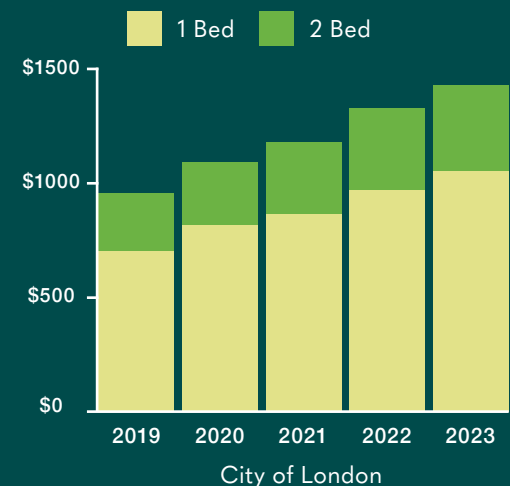
## Core housing need lessens between 2016 and 2021

According to CMHC, a household is in 'core housing need' if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability, or suitability standards, and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income on rent to find an acceptable home. Acceptable housing is adequate in condition, suitable in size, and affordable. The percentage of households in London and Middlesex in core housing need improved in all municipalities between 2011 and 2021, thanks in part to rent freezes put in place during the pandemic.

### % of households in Core Housing Need

Location	2011	2016	2021
London (CSD)	13.7%	15%	11.2%
Thames Centre (CSD)	4.4%	4.5%	4%
North Middlesex (CSD)	6.3%	8.3%	3.4%
Middlesex Centre (CSD)	4.7%	3.6%	2.9%
Adelaide Metcalfe (CSD)	7.4%	3.8%	3%
Strathroy-Caradoc (CSD)	11.3%	9.4%	6.8%
Southwest Middlesex (CSD)	10.9%	9.8%	2.8%

Source: Statistics Canada and CMHC





# Thank you!

The 2024 Vital Signs report is the result of the passion, diligence, and care of many people in our London and Middlesex community.

Thank you to all the organizations and individuals who provided their expertise as members of our issue area advisory committees. You were instrumental in shaping this report. Thank you, also, to all the organizations in London and Middlesex County who have shared their data with us to post publicly on the London and Middlesex Vital Signs Data Hub.

We owe much gratitude to the volunteer Vital Signs Task Force members who offered their time, effort, and valuable insights.



## **Vital Signs Task Force:**

**Jerry White (Chair)**

**Al Day**

**Sheila Simpson**

**Karna Trentman**

## **About Vital Signs**

Vital Signs is Canada's most extensive community-driven data program led by community foundations in Canada and around the world.

Vital Signs uses local knowledge to measure the vitality of a community and support action towards improving collective quality of life. Local data gathered through the program is used to support evidence-based, locally-relevant solutions to improve the quality of life at the community level. Vital Signs aims to inspire civic engagement, to provide focus for public debate, and to help a range of actors take action and direct resources where they will have the greatest impact.

## About London Community Foundation ([www.lcf.on.ca](http://www.lcf.on.ca))

Through strategic philanthropy, we tackle our community's most pressing issues with bold solutions. We believe that with a strong foundation, anything we dream is possible, together.

### Our Vision

A community working together to enrich the quality of life for all.

### Our Mission

We create a vibrant, smart and caring community through strategic investing that drives innovative community-based initiatives.

Cover photo: A participant in ChildReach's WILD CHILD program at Westminster Ponds in London.



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