

The Perth County Healthy Communities Partnership will work together in our community to foster conditions in which people can be healthy.



Profile of Perth County

- **Location:** Southwestern Ontario
- **Political composition:** the Municipality of North Perth, Township of Perth East, Township of Perth South, and the Municipality of West Perth, the City of Stratford, the Town of St. Marys.
- **Population:** 74,344 (in 2006)
- **Demographics** (between 2001 and 2006): A shift towards an aging population as well as slightly more people under age 20 as compared to Ontario. The rural population is slightly younger than the urban population.
- **Education:**
 - The highest level of education most commonly attained is non-university level post-secondary education, which includes college and trade certification and diplomas.
 - More than one fifth of Perth County residents 25 years and older have no certificate, diploma or degree, including high school.
- **Employment:** Most residents are employed in the manufacturing industry, followed by the retail trade sector, agriculture, health care and social assistance sectors.
- **Low-income Living:**
 - There are fewer people considered to be living on low income when compared to Ontario.
 - Stratford has the highest percentage of individuals living on low income.
- **Cultural Populations:** The Anabaptist Community is the largest cultural community, consisting of a number of Amish and Mennonite groups. This community comprises about 4% of Perth County's population.

Healthy Communities Partnership: Key Stakeholders

The Perth County Healthy Communities Partnership is made up of decision-makers from organizations who are poised to make key contributions to the health of our community.

Sectors represented include:

- Boards of Education
- Counselling services
- Early Years providers
- Health care (e.g. Family Health Teams, hospitals)
- Mental Health organizations
- Municipalities
- Perth District Health Unit (lead agency)
- Recreation providers
- Seniors outreach networks

Community Picture Summary - Perth County

Perth County Health Status, Recommended Actions and Policy Goals

The table below outlines action statements and policy goals for each of the six Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport priority areas. These goals emerged as priorities for Perth County through the community partnership and engagement consultation process.

Healthy Community Priority Areas	Perth County Behaviours ¹	Recommended Actions	Policy Goals
Physical Activity, Sport, Recreation, Active Transportation	• More Perth County adults are inactive (50%) compared to their peers (46%) and Ontario (49%) • Perth County residents become less active as they get older • Walking is the preferred choice of physical activity	• Increase access to local recreational opportunities • Increase the percentage of the population who are achieving recommended levels of physical activity • Increase municipality, community organization and public support for walkable and bikeable communities	• Policies that increase opportunities to participate in physical activity regardless of age, income and physical ability • Policies that address land use planning and infrastructure that make it easier and safer for people of all ages to walk and bike and use other forms of human powered active transportation
Healthy Eating	• Perth County residents eat vegetables and fruit at least 5 times per day (45%) more often than their peers and Ontario (42% each); females have a healthier diet than males • Perth County residents tend to be more overweight and obese (37%; 20%) compared to Ontarians (35%;16%) • The number of people using local food banks is increasing	• Increase access to affordable and local healthy foods • Increase opportunities for the general public to improve their knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices	• Policies to increase access to affordable and local healthy food, and increase knowledge and skills of healthy food choices to Perth County residents, regardless of socio-economic status
Tobacco Use/ Exposure	• Smoking is more prevalent among males than females in Perth County • Perth County females (14%) smoke significantly less than their peers (22%) and Ontario (18%) • While Perth County youth may smoke less than their peers and Ontario, they remain an important target group	• Increase the number of smoke-free outdoor spaces and the number of smoke-free multi-unit dwellings • Engage health-care providers to develop synergy and enhance their capacity to support and provide smoking cessation services	• Mobilize community partners and the general public to advocate for by-laws that protect residents from tobacco-use and second-hand smoke in outdoor areas i.e., parks, playgrounds, playing fields, setbacks from municipal buildings, hospital grounds, patios, festivals and community events • Policies to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke by advocating for no-smoking housing policies in multi-unit dwellings
Injury Prevention	• Unintentional injury rates per 100,000 in Perth County (32) are greater than those in Ontario (23) • The age specific rate of hospitalizations due to falls in Perth County seniors is significantly higher than Ontario • Perth County residents have a 20% greater risk of being hospitalized due to cycling injuries compared to Ontario	• Decrease rural and farm injuries and increase injury prevention practices • Decrease the number of pedestrian and cycling injuries	• <i>Policy goals still to be determined</i>
Substance and Alcohol Misuse	• The number of people in Perth County consuming 5 or more drinks on one occasion (heavy drinkers) increased from 2003 to 2007 • More males (64%) are heavy drinkers compared to their peers (61%) and Ontario (55%) • More youth (70%) are heavy drinkers compared to their peers (62%) and Ontario (55%)	• Denormalize substance and alcohol misuse • Increase recognition of the harmful effects of alcohol and substance misuse	• Community organizations and agencies collaborate to facilitate the development of policies and practices that decrease substance and alcohol misuse for all ages and engage and mobilize youth to increase resiliency and decrease substance and alcohol misuse
Mental Health Promotion	• Residents are satisfied or very satisfied with life (94%) compared to their peers (93%) and Ontario (91%) • A strong or very strong sense of community belonging was expressed by Perth County residents (74%) compared to their peers (70%) and Ontario (66%) • However, only 63% perceive their mental health as very good or excellent compared to 74% of Ontarians	• Increase opportunities for the general public to improve their knowledge and skills for maintaining mental health and well-being • Decrease stigma, and increase recognition and early identification of symptoms that may indicate potential mental health concerns	• Community partners from various sectors collaborate to facilitate the development of policies and practices that increase mental health literacy for all ages and create healthy resilient inclusive communities

¹Data source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008. Peer groups include health regions with similar socio and economic health determinants as Perth County.



For more information, contact Health Line at 519-271-7600 ext 267
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Healthy Communities working together and Ontarians leading healthy and active lives