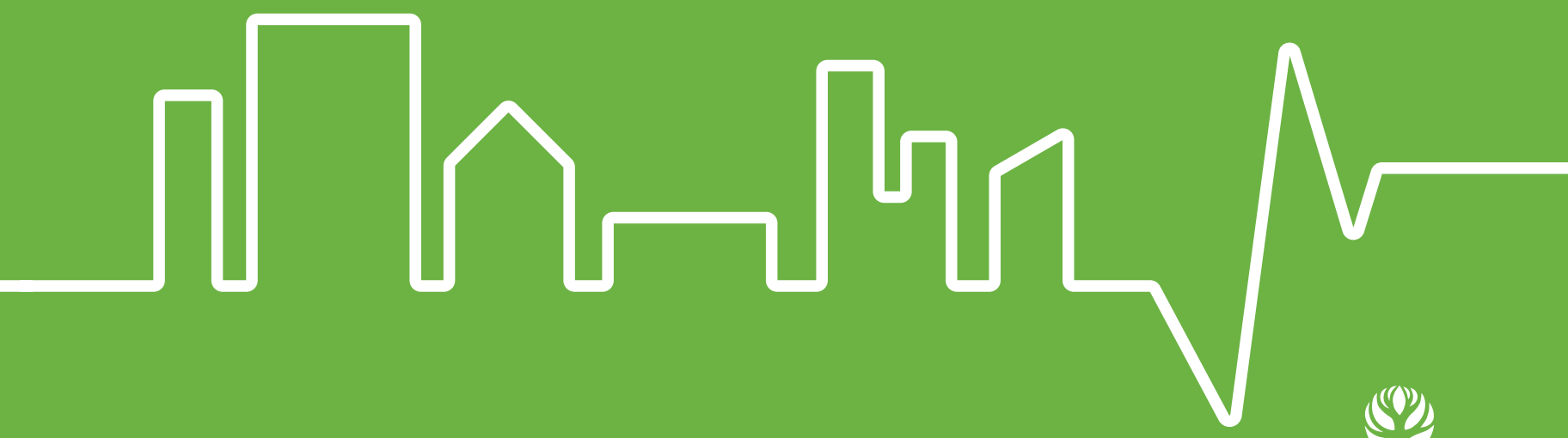
LONDON'S

VitalSigns

What London Can Be



LONDON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

What is it to belong?

It's the **safety and security** of feeling you fit and connect. And of **being seen** that way by your peers and your community. It's the **reassurance of loving care** well beyond the easy, joyful times. It's **meaningful work and fair wages.** It's **feeling safe** when you walk out onto the street. And having somewhere to go when you don't. It's having a **consistent**, **comfortable** and **private place where you can return.** And neighbours who knock when they haven't seen you for a while. It's about **having people** around you that feel like you and share your values. It's about friends and neighbours and employers who see and treat **you as equal.** And it's knowing you are in precisely the place you're supposed to be.

London and Middlesex Community
Developed from survey responses

Believing in what London *can* be...

Feeling a sense of belonging is a human need – just as important as food or shelter.

When I reflect on what belonging means to me, I think of acceptance, love, connection, and community. Belonging is a powerful feeling that is important for our individual well-being and allows us to feel as though we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Intersecting with all aspects of life, belonging is the glue that holds our community together. This is why we are focusing on the theme of belonging for this year's Vital Signs report.

Taking the pulse of our community, Vital Signs is a bi-ennial check-in on how we are faring on issues that are significant to well-being and quality of life in London and Middlesex. Vital Signs is an opportunity to guide our community toward a future that is strong and vibrant. The issue areas featured in this report have emerged as some of the most significant challenges our community faces, and those that we feel are particularly relevant to fostering a sense of belonging.

As leaders, mobilizers, and agents of social change, London Community Foundation believes our community is only as strong as our most vulnerable person. That is why, this year, we are integrating the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - a universal framework and call to action to end poverty, tackle inequalities, and create a more sustainable and thriving global community. The SDGs have strong alignment to our Vital Signs issue areas, and are rooted in the important philosophy of "leave no one behind." This integration is an opportunity to connect our collective local work to global health and well-being, because global change starts locally.

London Community Foundation is dedicated to making London and Middlesex a stronger, more diverse, and inclusive community, but we can't do it alone. **As you read this report, take the time to reflect on the opportunities for the future of our community and to believe in what London can be.**

A Message from President & CEO, Martha Powell

Land Acknowledgment

The city of London is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Wendat Nations – each of whom have left their lasting mark upon the history of Southwestern Ontario. Today, London and the surrounding area are subject to the Upper Canada treaties, and specifically the Longwoods Treaty of 1822. Three First Nations communities are located outside the city limits; these are the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee-Delaware Nation. Going forward, we would like to acknowledge our shared responsibility to the land and to each other to ensure the well-being of future generations.

Written by Summer Bressette

A Note About the Data

Taking our community's pulse is a collaborative effort, and we rely on a number of community partners for insight and local data. Mindful of our theme of belonging, we wanted to ensure a range of diverse voices and experiences were represented in this report. With the Foundation's commitment to reconciliation, the plan for this Vital Signs report included more information about the Indigenous population living in the city. At the time of this report, not as much local and recent data was available as we had hoped.

We are committed to working with all of our partners to increase access to this important information and are aiming to publish additional material on this topic in the coming months.

** Acronyms and definitions can be found on page 50 of this report.*

Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal framework and plan to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. The SDGs were used to help map the areas of focus in the Vital Signs report. These goals address global challenges including those related to: poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice.

Global collaboration and local action aims to achieve each goal by 2030 in a pledge to ensure no one is left behind.

London Community Foundation supports the Sustainable Development Goals

Be Healthy

Most Londoners enjoy relatively easy access to health care, but stigma, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers are *still* preventing many from receiving the care they deserve.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

We believe in a future where all Londoners have barrier-free access to health care.

With rising obesity rates and long wait times for mental health services, **individuals in our community need better care, especially our most disadvantaged.**

Our community's holistic health and well-being, including mind, body, and spirit, must be a priority for all.

London's obesity rates are rising.

In London and Middlesex, **obesity rates have risen 33%** since 2007, for those **18 years and older** (17.9% in 2007 and 23.9% in 2016).

This is slightly lower than Ontario (26.2%) and Canada (26.3%).*

Children in need are experiencing long wait times for mental health support.

Children in London can wait anywhere from **8 months, up to 2 years**, for counselling and psychotherapy support.**

Londoners are consuming more alcohol than the average Canadian.

In 2015 – 2016, **21.5% of Londoners aged 12+** were **considered heavy drinkers.** That's **3.3 percentage points higher than** the **provincial rate** (18.2%) and **2.4 percentage points higher than** the **Canadian rate** (19.1%).***

* Statistics Canada
** Children's Mental Health Ontario, 2017
*** Middlesex London Health Unit

Be Healthy

We *believe* in a community where physical, mental, and spiritual well-being are equally valued, and the delivery of care is holistic in nature; where *every* Londoner receives timely care that caters to their diverse spiritual and cultural needs, *without* fear of being stigmatized.

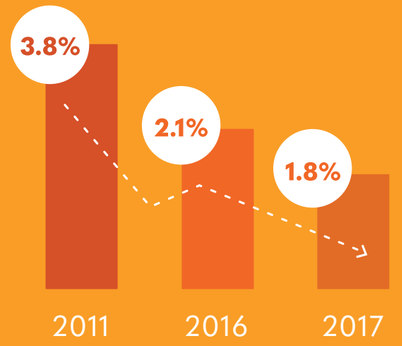
Be Sheltered

For too many of our neighbours, a safe, secure, and affordable place to lay their heads at night is *not* within reach.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

With rising costs, precarious employment, and a lack of affordable housing, **thousands of children, seniors, and vulnerable adults can't count on this basic need.**

Our Indigenous and newcomer communities are particularly vulnerable to the equation of low-income and high rent.



London's rental vacancy rate is shrinking.

In **2017**, the rental vacancy rate in London was just **1.8%**, a drop from the already low **2.1% in 2016** and **3.8% in 2011**.*

A healthy housing market has a 3% vacancy rate**.

26.5%

Indigenous households are more likely to be living in inadequate, unsuitable, or unaffordable housing.

In 2016, **26.5% of Indigenous households** were living in such conditions, which is **nearly double that of non-Indigenous households**.***

Those who are spending 30% or more of their total household income on housing, have a housing affordability problem.

In 2015, **45.6% of London renters spent more than 30% of their income on rent**, up **2% from 2010**. While this is the same as the average for Ontario, it's **5.7% higher than the Canadian average**.****

* City of London
** Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association
*** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
**** Statistics Canada

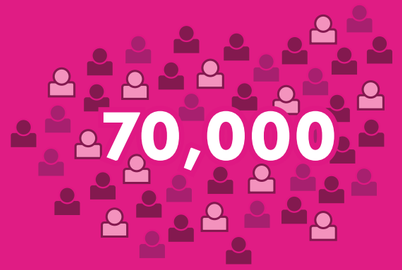
Be Sheltered

We *believe* in a community where an adequate, safe, and affordable place to lay your head isn't out of reach. Where everyone, from our very youngest to our most senior, from our newest Canadians to those who have been here for generations, has equal access to safe housing, so they can build their lives, their futures, and be part of the *community*.

Be Equal

As the gap between rich and poor continues to widen, too many of our community's most vulnerable are being left at *risk*.

Inequality affects our community in many ways and has human, economic, and social costs. **Londoners in every area of the city are left out every day** because of their experience with poverty, income disparity, and low income challenges.

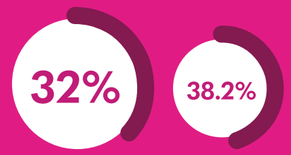


More than 70,000 Londoners are living in poverty.

That means **more than 18% of Londoners** can't participate in everything London has to offer, which is nearly 5 percentage points higher than the national average.*

One in four children in London are living in poverty.

24.9% of children in London are living in poverty, an increase of 5.3 percentage points since 2005. When it comes to children living in poverty, London is **6.5 percentage points higher than the Ontario average** and **7.9 percentage points higher than the Canadian average**.*



Indigenous communities are experiencing poverty at an alarming volume.

32% of Indigenous Peoples in London and **38.2% of Indigenous children and youth**, ages 0-17, are living in poverty.*

* Statistics Canada (LIM-AT)

We *believe* in a community where everyone thrives and feels equally valued. Where age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status *don't determine* our fate. Where health, education, employment, housing, safety, and social mobility are not a function of our status or identity.

Be Employed

While London has the lowest unemployment rate in years, *many* in our community struggle to access sustainable and meaningful work.

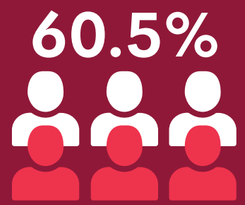
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

A changing economy has led to both a lack of skilled labour and skill mismatch in our community.

London's knowledge economy continues to grow, with a demand for workers in sales and professional, scientific, and technical services. Manufacturing remains a dominant industry in London with a high demand for both skilled and unskilled labour. Along with these industry challenges, there continues to be a gender gap related to career advancement.

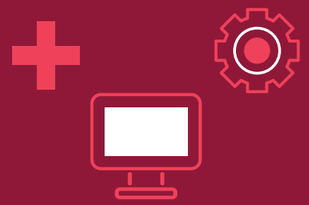
The gender gap persists.

While the gap is narrowing, in 2016, **women still earned 21.5% less than men**.**



London's labour market does not align with available opportunities.

This could be a result of a skill mismatch or a lack of well-paying, reliable jobs. In **2017**, only **60.5%** of Londoners willing and able to work were employed or looking for work. This is one of the **lowest labour force participation rates in Ontario**.*



Growing employment sectors in London include:

- **25,000+** employed by hospitals and research institutions ***
- **9,000+** employed by 300+ digital creative companies ***
- **33,000+** employed by 500+ manufacturing companies ***

* Statistics Canada
** City of London
*** London Economic Development Corporation, 2018

Be Employed

We *believe* in a future where our city's economy is *thriving*. A future where we don't have to fight for equal pay for equal work. One where workplaces value diversity and no one faces employment discrimination because of their age, race, gender, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation.

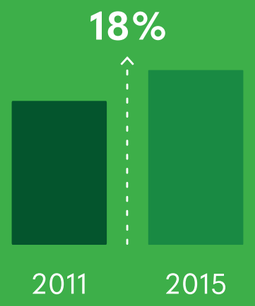
Be Green

From the health of the Thames, to our energy consumption and forest cover, our local environment *needs* our help and attention.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND

Climate change impacts our environment in many ways and affects life on land as well as below water.

Extreme weather events, declining forest cover, and poor air and water quality are just a few ways we are impacted by climate change. We must engage in sustainable production and consumption, including waste and energy, in order to protect the sacred land on which we live.



Voluntary composting is growing in London.

While the City of London does not have a formal composting program, **in 2015, 51% of households** were **voluntarily composting** kitchen waste in their own yard, which is a **growth of 18% since 2011.**** The national average for household composting in 2015 was 52%, and the provincial average was 63%.***

Forests play a vital role in our community's health, but London's forest cover is declining, including the majority of the region's watersheds.

In the last 10 years, over **800 hectares of forest was lost** with just 324 hectares planted. **To be truly healthy**, our region should be **at least 30% forest** or natural coverage, but **the Forks of the Thames has only an 8% forest cover**.*

Watersheds in London and Middlesex region have poor quality.

Our watersheds **do not meet the Provincial water quality objectives for phosphorus** (contributes to algae blooms we see in streams and lakes) **or E.Coli** (fecal bacteria). They all **received a grade of C or D**.*

* Upper Thames River Conservation Authority & Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, 2017
** CMA
*** Statistics Canada

Be Green

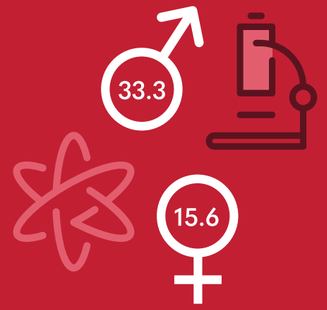
We *believe* in a future where a healthy and resilient natural environment provides clean air and water, feeds us, regulates the climate, supports biodiversity, and meets our diverse spiritual and cultural needs; a place where unique recreational opportunities are abundant and livelihoods are supported and *enriched*.

Be Educated

London's general population and many newcomers have significant education accomplishments, however, traditional gender gaps continue to *persist*, and the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities *remains* too high.

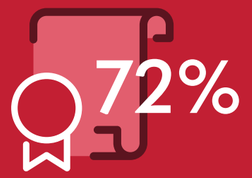
4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Obtaining quality education is the foundation of success. Even though a significant number of Londoners have access to higher education, **citizens like our Indigenous community are falling behind. We continue to see gender gaps with more men concentrated in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries.** While access to equal education has come a long way, we still have advancements to make.



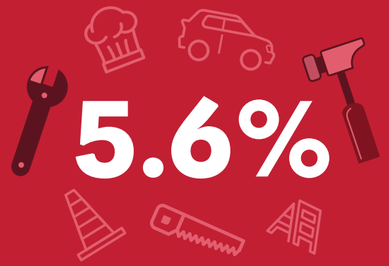
Gender gaps continue to persist in STEM related industries.

In 2016, **15.6% of women** in London aged 25–64 with a bachelor's degree or higher studied STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), **compared to 33.3% of men**.*



Indigenous students have an increasing level of academic achievements.

In London, the proportion of the **Indigenous population 15 years and older** with **at least a high school diploma rose from 69% in 2011** to **72% in 2016**. While this increase is positive, **a significant gap still remains** between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population.*



Fewer students are studying trades, despite our local need.

Just **5.6% of Londoners** have an education **in the trades as of 2016**, compared to **6.9% in 2011**.*

* Statistics Canada

Be Educated

We *believe* in a London where everyone has equal, *inclusive* access to quality education. Where lifelong learning is encouraged, where everyone has the confidence and the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Belong

Today, too many of our neighbours don't have the safety and security of a *true* sense of belonging in our community.

We believe in a future where every Londoner belongs.

Belonging is a two-way street – it's not only about how much we fit in or how welcoming a group or place is to us. **It's about being and feeling part of a collective 'we'.** And it's about access to housing, health care, basic income, social support, and all the critical things that build a healthy community for everyone.

Belonging is a tricky word. It's hard to understand, and sometimes, much harder to feel. For the Londoners we asked, belonging means some simple, powerful, and beautiful things:

Experiencing life ***judgement free.***	**A recognition.** Of each other and our shared humanity.	People who ***don't think*** "I need to be fixed."
Having support for those who are hardest to care for.		When others see me. ***Really see.***
Being invited to join my neighbours on their porch.	Not necessarily the place you were born and raised, but **the place you feel most happy and accepted.**	***Feeling normal.*** Just normal. ***And loved.***

And while we all experience belonging differently, we know this for sure: Not all Londoners are experiencing the important security and stability of visibility, equality, and acceptance. And we *need to change* that.

Because no one can truly belong if they don't have enough resources to live with dignity.

Belong

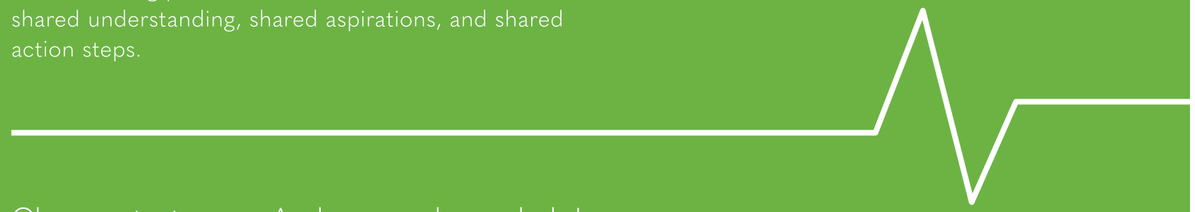
We *believe* in a future where everyone in our community feels as though they belong – regardless of their age, race, gender, ethnicity, ability, or socioeconomic status. A future where each and every person is valued. We *dream* of a London where people of all ages and backgrounds are empowered to say yes - or no - rather than having few choices or none at all.

What Can I Do?

Together we can create what London can be.

Our community can only be as healthy as its most vulnerable community member. And today, our statistics and stories tell us we're falling short on some key measures of community health and wellness.

But it doesn't have to be that way. And this isn't the starting line. We have many miles of great work by committed local organizations behind us. This is the next leg of the journey. It's a commitment to continue to tackle the big issues. And it's a recognition that we can't solve big problems unless we're connected - with shared understanding, shared aspirations, and shared action steps.



Change starts now. And we need your help!

Visit londonvitalsigns.ca and sign up to be part of the ongoing discussion as we work together to connect, collaborate, and build the London we all dream of.

@LdnCommFdn
#WhatLdnCanBe

Thank You!

This Vital Signs report is the result of great time, passion, diligence, and a lot of love.

It couldn't have been done without our incredible and dynamic advisory committee, who offered their time, effort, and valuable insights.

The community continues to rally behind this important check-in on London and Middlesex's health. From individuals sharing what belonging means to them, to community organizations supporting the search for up-to-date, relevant, and compelling data that not only tells us where we are but helps inform where we can grow and improve, together. It's in this collaborative way that we can develop a chance for every Londoner to be healthy, be sheltered, be equal, be employed, be green, be educated, and truly, belong. Thank you, again and again, for helping make Vital Signs a reality.

Advisory Committee Members:

Shawn Adamsson
Summer Bressette
Mary Ann Colihan
Madeline Lennon (Chair)
Jerry White
Laura Monteiro (our researcher)

LONDON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Acronyms & Definitions

Regions: London Community Foundation serves the London-Middlesex region, which is the focus area of this Vital Signs report. Due to unavailability to get data limited solely to the London-Middlesex region, statistical data will refer to the city of London whenever possible. At times, other regions will be referenced in the report, including:

1. ***Middlesex London Health Unit Region (MLHU):*** Data sourced from the Middlesex London Health Unit (MLHU) includes the City of London, as well as Middlesex County, which includes Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation, and Oneida Nation of the Thames.*
2. ***Census Metropolitan Area (CMA):*** Most commonly used by Statistics Canada, the London CMA is broad and includes London, St. Thomas, Strathroy-Caradoc, Middlesex Centre, Thames Centre, Central Elgin, Southwold, and Adelaide-Metcalfe regions. This also includes Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation, and Oneida Nation of the Thames.**

Affordable Housing: The cost of adequate shelter should not exceed 30% of household income. Housing which costs less than this is considered affordable.***

Core Housing: A household is considered to be in core housing need if housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability, or suitability standards, and is spending 30% or more of their total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).**

Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT): A fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted after-tax income of households observed at the person level, where 'adjusted' indicates that a household's needs are taken into account.**

Participation Rate: The number of persons who are employed and unemployed but looking for work, divided by the total working-age population.**

Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing: Rent that is based directly on the tenant's income, usually 30% of the gross monthly household income, and is often subsidized.***

Vulnerable Populations: Some populations are more vulnerable to environmental risks as a result of physical differences, behaviours, location and/or control over their environment. These vulnerable populations may include: children, racial and ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, and seniors.**

*** Middlesex London Health Unit**
**** Statistics Canada**
***** City of London**

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Be Sheltered
Be Equal
Be Employed
Be Green
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Belong

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LONDON'S **VitalSigns**