

## **Municipality of Chatham-Kent**

### **Department Name**

### **Division Name**

### **Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Erin McEachran, Community Safety and Well-Being Coordinator

**Date:** May 12, 2025

**Subject:** 2025 Well-Being Status Report

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This report is for the information of Council.

### **Background**

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent is renewing its efforts to enhance safety, health, and well-being for all residents through the updated Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (CSWP). First mandated by the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, the CSWP addresses complex social issues by fostering proactive, collaborative approaches rooted in community strengths and resources.<sup>1</sup> A multi-sectoral advisory committee has been established to guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of the CSWP. One of the key responsibilities of the advisory committee is to determine the priorities of the plan where action is needed to improve safety and well-being outcomes in the community. The priority areas must be chosen in consideration of local data and consultation with community members. This report outlines local health, safety, and well-being data to establish a profile of community safety and well-being which will provide a baseline for the work of the CSWP.

Data was collected from Statistics Canada, Public Health Ontario, local agencies, and through a local community engagement survey. The community engagement survey sought to understand the concerns and priorities of Chatham-Kent residents. Over a four-week period, the survey received 350 responses, achieving a confidence level of 90% based on the population size of Chatham-Kent. The key survey findings are included in this report alongside provincial and local agency data.

The indicators chosen are well-established, regularly collected, meaningful to the CSWP, and available for the Chatham-Kent region. These population-level indicators cover a broad range of factors and are likely to fluctuate over time. Please note that many of these indicators are collected in the census which was last completed in 2021. The next population census will be completed in 2026. We will continuously update the local community safety and well-being profile as data is made available.

## **An Overview of Health in Chatham-Kent**

Health is largely influenced by the social determinants of health, which are factors that influence the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and play. This includes factors such as income, education, access to healthcare, early childhood experiences, the physical environment, experiences of racism, and more. In general, 62.9% of Chatham-Kent residents rated their health as “very good” or “excellent” compared to the provincial rate of 69.9%.<sup>2</sup> However, Chatham-Kent struggles with higher than provincial rates of chronic disease including diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and hypertension.<sup>3</sup> In our community, there are significantly higher rates of death due to heart disease, respiratory disease, diabetes, COPD, and cancer.<sup>4</sup> Sadly, members of our community have poorer health behaviours, are sicker, and die sooner than other communities in Ontario. Consider that, in Chatham-Kent:

- 431.5 deaths are premature per 100,000 compared to 288.4 per 100,000 in Ontario.<sup>5</sup> A premature death is defined in Canada as death before 75 years of age.<sup>6</sup>
- 40% of adults report consuming 3 or more standard drinks per week compared to 29% in Ontario.<sup>7</sup> The Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines recommend consuming no more than 2 standard drinks per week to reduce cancer risk.<sup>8</sup> Alcohol is a Class I carcinogen.<sup>8</sup>
- 14.8% report daily smoking compared to 10% in Ontario.<sup>9</sup>
- 89% of youth aged 12-17 do not meet physical activity guidelines.<sup>10</sup>
- 1 in 5 households struggle with food insecurity.<sup>11</sup>
- 32, 421 residents do not have a family doctor.<sup>12</sup>
- 1 in 3.5 children are developmentally vulnerable according to the Early Development Instrument.<sup>13</sup>

### Substance Use

Substance use is a complex public health concern in Chatham-Kent and impacts individuals, families, and our community in a variety of ways. In 2024, there were 175 emergency department (ED) visits due to opioid poisonings, up from 120 in 2023.<sup>14</sup> The rates of ED visits due to opioid poisonings are higher in CK than in Ontario.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Chatham-Kent lost 47 community members to substance-related deaths in 2024.<sup>14</sup> Factors that contribute to increases in opioid-related harms include limited access to addiction treatment services, harm reduction services and available social supports, increases in mental health issues, and a volatile supply of unregulated opioids and other drugs.<sup>16</sup>

### Mental Health

Mental health is a state of psychological and emotional well-being. It affects how we think, feel, act, cope with stresses in life, and make decisions. Mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness; someone with a mental illness may experience excellent mental health, just as a person without mental illness could struggle with poor

mental health. It is estimated that in any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experiences a mental illness.<sup>17</sup> Public Health Ontario measures self-rated mental health as an indicator of mental wellbeing. In 2021, 57% of the Chatham-Kent sample rated their mental health as “very good” or “excellent”, compared to 70% in 2017-18.<sup>18</sup> These rates are consistent with the provincial averages. Young people aged 15-24 are more likely to experience mental illness or substance use disorders than any other age group.<sup>17</sup> The emergency room at Chatham-Kent Health Alliance sees approximately 3 children per week for mental health care.<sup>19</sup> Nearly half (49.3%) of these children present for suicidal ideation or attempted suicide.<sup>19</sup> In 2023, Chatham-Kent Police Mobile Crisis Team responded to 1687 calls for mental health crisis response and apprehended 67 individuals under the Mental Health Act.<sup>20</sup>

The social determinants of health are especially influential on mental health, particularly social inclusion, access to economic resources, adverse childhood experiences, and freedom from discrimination and violence.<sup>21, 22</sup> Adverse childhood experiences are potentially traumatic or stressful events that occur before age 18, and include:

- Emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.<sup>22</sup>
- Emotional or physical neglect.<sup>22</sup>
- Growing up with a parent or caregiver who uses alcohol or substances.<sup>22</sup>
- Having a parent or caregiver with a mental illness.<sup>22</sup> Note that 38% of children in Chatham-Kent are born to a parent with a mental illness (greater than the provincial average).<sup>19</sup>
- Exposure to intimate partner violence, separation, or divorce.<sup>22</sup> Note that 32.5% of households in Chatham-Kent are single-parent households, higher than the provincial average of 27.8%.<sup>23</sup>
- Having a parent or caregiver who is incarcerated.<sup>22</sup>

**An Overview of Safety in Chatham-Kent**

Understanding local crime statistics is crucial for developing effective strategies to enhance community safety and well-being. The following table provides a snapshot of crime data reported by the Chatham-Kent Police Service over the past five years. These statistics offer insights into the prevalence and types of crimes occurring in our community, highlighting trends and areas that may require targeted interventions. By analyzing this data, we can better understand the challenges faced by our residents and work collaboratively to address them.

**Table 1**

*Chatham-Kent Police Service Annual Crime Snapshot*

Classification	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Murder	0	1	3	4	2

Attempted Murder	4	0	10	3	1
Aggravated Assault	12	16	5	9	14
Sexual Assault	96	93	101	74	115
Intimate Partner Violence Occurrence	2219	1904	1839	1788	1740
IPV with Charges Laid	305	204	270	288	282
IPV with No Charges Laid	1914	1700	1569	1500	1458
Criminal Harassment	120	123	116	130	132
Abduction	17	16	7	14	9
Assault	381	432	464	467	581
Missing Persons	170	192	178	222	203
Weapons	33	49	69	37	32
Drugs	195	237	224	152	104
Break & Enter to Residence	515	508	368	368	450
Break & Enter to Business	224	373	305	263	283
Mischief	554	710	669	653	697
<b>Motor Vehicle Collisions (MVC)</b>					
Number of MVCs	2265	1661	1668	1927	2052
Life Threatening	19	8	8	7	8
Fatal	12	8	10	12	14
Very Minor & Non-Reportable	80	61	62	63	53
Collision Reporting Centre MVC's	653	477	496	710	907
Impaired Driving	92	78	133	110	113

Other Criminal Code Traffic	50	87	71	58	94
<b>Youth</b>					
Number of Incidents Involving Youth	1664	Not available	1700	1487	2118
Number of Youth Charged	85	64	79	35	111
Number of youth charges	156	121	164	77	224

*Note.* Data sourced from Chatham-Kent Police Service 2019 Annual Reports 2019-2023.

Historically, Chatham-Kent has experienced a lower rate of violent crime compared to the Ontario average. To evaluate the volume and severity of police-reported crime in a specific region, the Crime Rate per 100,000 people and the Crime Severity Index (CSI) are essential indicators. The CSI is an area-based measure that reflects both the volume and seriousness of offences, providing a comprehensive overview of crime impact.<sup>24</sup> The Violent CSI, calculated using similar methods, focuses exclusively on violent offences such as homicide, attempted murder, sexual assault, and robbery.<sup>24</sup> By standardizing the CSI out of 100 across Canada, we gain a clearer understanding of how crime affects individuals, families, and the broader community.

**Table 2**

Crime Indicators by Geography

<b>Geography</b>	<b>Population (2021)</b>	<b>Crime Severity Index (2023)</b>	<b>Violent Crime Severity Index (2023)</b>	<b>Non-Violent Crime Severity Index (2023)</b>	<b>Crime Rate per 100,000 People (2023)</b>
<b>Ontario</b>	14,223,942	60.8	78.5	54.34	4723.40
<b>Chatham-Kent</b>	104, 316	75.0	71.4	77.07	6179.63
<b>City of Sarnia</b>	72, 047	87.4	108.2	79.86	8287.60
<b>St. Catharines</b>	242,460	54.5	66.8	49.97	4232.59

<b>Peterborough</b>	83,651	72.3	95.9	63.51	6158.90
<b>Sudbury</b>	166,004	75.7	126.6	56.09	5438.44
<b>Thunder Bay</b>	108,843	103	191.9	68.36	6855.41

*Note.* Data in this table is reproduced from Statistics Canada.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup> Due to municipal police and Ontario Provincial Police data being reported separately, only municipal police data is included in this table to improve comparisons. These geographies were chosen because they each represent a location that is a sparsely populated urban-rural mix.

### Feelings of Safety

When asked about their feelings of safety, Chatham-Kent residents largely reported feeling safe in their homes and schools. According to the LKDSB Climate Survey, 91% of students in grades 9-12 felt safe at school most of the time.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the CSWB Engagement Survey revealed that 90% of respondents felt “somewhat safe” or “very safe” in their homes after dark, and 82% felt “somewhat safe” or “safe” when driving after dark.

However, certain situations led respondents to feel less secure. For instance, 31% of respondents reported feeling “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” when walking alone in their neighborhood after dark. This sense of insecurity was even more pronounced downtown, with 68% of respondents feeling “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” when walking alone after dark.

Survey results also indicated that over half of respondents (56.6%) believe their community has a similar rate of crime compared to the province. Additionally, 78.9% of respondents believe that crime has increased in their community over the past four years. Among a small sample of parents with children between the ages of 5-12, only 34% reported feeling comfortable allowing their children to play outside without supervision.

## **An Overview of Community Well-Being in Chatham-Kent**

Community well-being encompasses various aspects of life that contribute to overall quality of life. This includes factors like financial stability, housing stability, and feeling a sense of belonging within the community. The following statistics were provided by Chatham-Kent Housing and provide insight into the current state of community well-being, highlighting areas that may require attention and improvement to foster a healthier, safer, and more inclusive environment for all residents.

### Socioeconomic Stability

- 6.3% of the local population was unemployed in December 2024.
- 10.2% of the local population received income assistance in 2024 (3.9% received OW, 6.3% received ODSP).

- 15% of CK residents do not have a high school diploma compared to only 10% of Ontario residents.
- Only 54% of CK residents have a post-secondary degree, diploma, or certificate compared to 67.8% of Ontario residents.

### Housing Stability

- 72% of CK residents are homeowners. 9.7% of homeowners spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs.
- 28% of CK residents are tenants. 30.7% of renters spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs.
- 428 individuals were experiencing homelessness in 2024.
- There are 1340 applicants on the centralized waitlist for Rent-Geared to Income. This list grew by 31% in 2024.

### Community Belonging

- 79% of grade 9-12 students felt a sense of belonging at school. Feelings of belonging at school were higher among grades 4-6 (91%).<sup>28, 29</sup>
- 81% reported having a positive relationship with their neighbours (CSWB Engagement Survey respondents).
- 70% reported having a positive sense of belonging in their community (CSWB Engagement Survey respondents).



### **Community Perceptions of Safety & Well-Being Priorities**

In the CSWB Engagement Survey, participants were asked about which elements of CSWB they felt were most important. Respondents were asked to indicate how important each element of CSWB was on a scale of not important at all to extremely important. The results indicate that nearly all participants felt every element was important, but the highest rated include: substance use, criminal activity, mental health, physical activity, and education and employment.

As we move forward with the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, it is imperative that we leverage this data to inform our strategies and actions. We must foster collaboration among all stakeholders, including municipal leaders, community organizations, healthcare providers, and residents, to create a safer, healthier, and more inclusive Chatham-Kent.

### **Council Term Priorities**

This report supports the following Council Term Priorities:

			
<b>Deliver Excellent Service</b>	<b>Promote Safety &amp; Well-Being</b>	<b>Grow Our Community</b>	<b>Ensure Environmental Sustainability</b>
	x		

### **Consultation**

The process of creating a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan requires extensive consultation and collaboration between municipal departments, non-governmental organizations, and the public. This report includes data that was provided by Chatham-Kent Police Service and the Housing Department.

### **Communication**

The results of the Community Safety & Well-Being Engagement Survey were communicated to the public through a media release on April 15, 2025. Members of the Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee were provided with an information report similar to this document on March 28, 2025. Communication about the development, adoption, and implementation of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan will be provided to the public through Let's Talk CK, the municipal website, and corporate social media posts.

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ)**

This report is for information only. However, the work of the upcoming Community Safety and Well-Being Plan must consider the needs of equity deserving groups to ensure that programs and services have a positive impact on community members. Due to large-scale societal structures, equity-deserving groups experience disadvantages in multiple social determinants of health, which has a direct impact on the overall well-being of a community. The actions of the CSWP will be informed by applying an equity lens to health and safety data and seek feedback from community members with lived experience related to the subject matter.

### **Financial Implications**



There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

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Attachment(s): 2025 Well-Being Report References