

Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

2025 – 2029



COUNTY OF
Brant Simply Grand



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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we meet on the lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, and the traditional territory of the Attiwanderonk.

We remind ourselves that the County of Brant is situated on lands that are full of rich Indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people today; we recognize the significance of their contributions to the past, present, and future of this land.

As a County, we have a shared responsibility for the stewardship of the land on which we live and work and a commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action. We commit to continue learning, reflecting on our past, and working in allyship.

Message from Mayor David Bailey

On behalf of County of Brant Council, I am pleased to introduce the updated Brant Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

This plan reflects the County's commitment to delivering essential services and supports that meet the evolving needs of our residents. As the County of Brant continues to grow, so do the opportunities and challenges we face. The goal of this plan is to provide a strong framework that strengthens our connections—both within the community and with our valued partners.

By bringing together a diverse range of community partners, we are able to collaborate meaningfully and chart a clear path forward that enhances the overall well-being of those who live, work, and play in Brant.



Thank you to the Brant Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee, our community partners, residents that took the time to engage with us, County staff, and everyone who played a role in shaping this important plan.

Community engagement and collaboration make us a stronger, safer, and better Brant.



Message from Alison Newton, Chief Administrative Officer

On behalf of the County of Brant I would like to thank everyone that was involved in the development of the updated Brant Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

This plan came together through strong collaboration between County of Brant staff, residents, service providers, and local community organizations. It shows our shared commitment to recognizing challenges and working together to provide supports that enhance the well-being of everyone who calls Brant home.

As our community grows, so do our needs, and the Brant Community Safety and Well-Being Plan demonstrates our commitment to creating and supporting initiatives that strengthen our community as a whole.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their voice, time, and expertise to help shape this plan. Together, we are laying the foundation for a stronger, more resilient County of Brant.



Joint Message from Brant O.P.P.

Joint message from Jennifer Haley, Chair of the County of Brant O.P.P. Detachment Board, and Jason McTaggart, Interim Detachment Commander, Brant O.P.P.



The Brant O.P.P. and the County of Brant O.P.P. Detachment Board are proud to support the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. It reflects our shared commitment to building a safer, healthier and more inclusive community for everyone.

We recognize that community safety and well-being are shaped through meaningful collaboration. Police, social services, health-care providers, educators, community leaders and residents all have a role to play. By working together, we can better support vulnerable individuals facing complex challenges. By responding with compassion, respect and professionalism, our officers and community partners play an important role in this work.



The County of Brant O.P.P. Detachment Board and Brant O.P.P. are dedicated to strengthening trust through transparency, equity and engagement. We believe in a future where everyone feels safe, supported and valued. And we know that by working together, we can make a lasting difference.



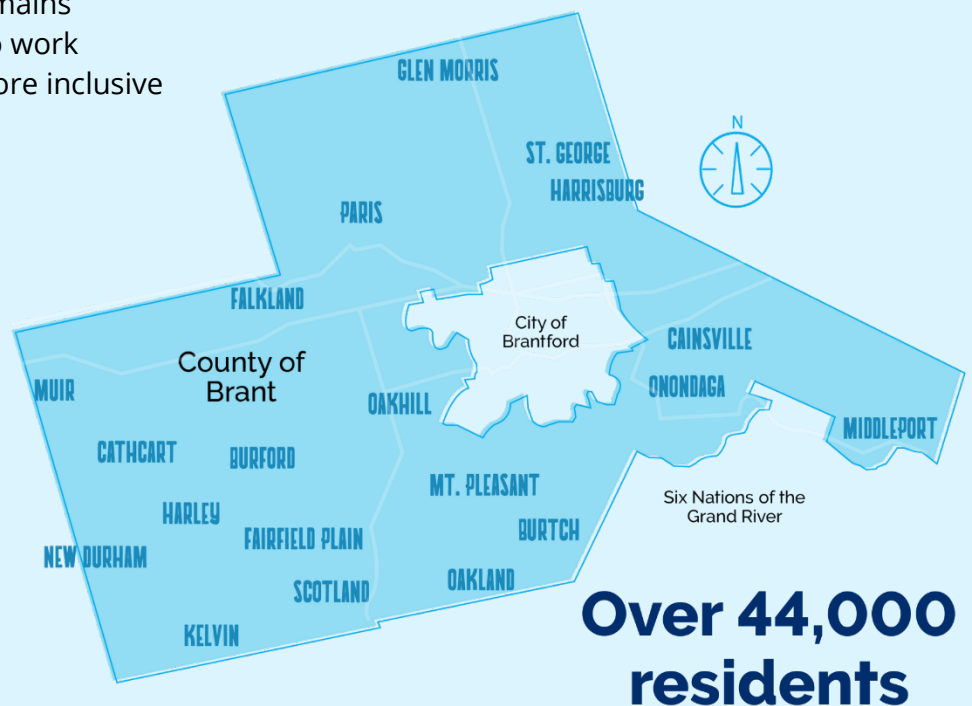
Introduction to the County of Brant

The County of Brant has over 44,000 residents and its communities are spread across approximately 843 square kilometers. Residents are rooted in Brant through various communities, including towns, villages, hamlets, rural, and agricultural areas, all boasting unique features and charming qualities. Natural and physical assets are abundant within the County of Brant, such as the Grand River and Nith River which run through it.

The County of Brant has been steadily growing over the past several years, adding to the diversity of the community. As experienced in many other communities, growth brings both new opportunities and strengths, as well as changes and challenges.

Renewal of the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan highlights these opportunities and challenges while promoting community collaboration to enhance quality of life for all residents.

The previous Community Safety and Well-Being Plan laid a strong foundation for addressing complex social issues in the County of Brant, including housing stability, mental health, and community inclusion. While we successfully achieved several key objectives, such as expanding community engagement initiatives and advancing support services, the complex, interconnected, and ongoing nature of these challenges means that many initiatives remain ongoing. Our commitment to fostering a safer, more connected community remains unwavering, and we continue to work diligently towards a brighter, more inclusive future for all residents.



Acknowledgements

The County of Brant would like to thank all the community partners and internal collaborators for their time and attention to this important work to ensure that the County keeps being Simply Grand.



County of Brant Staff Liaison

- Victoria Hall, Community Safety and Well-Being Coordinator
- Brian Grice, Community Safety and Well-Being Supervisor
- Dana Steane, Public Consultation Specialist
- Jordan Jones, Acting Manager of Community Outreach / Public Transportation Supervisor
- Melissa Connor, General Manager of Strategic Initiatives

Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee

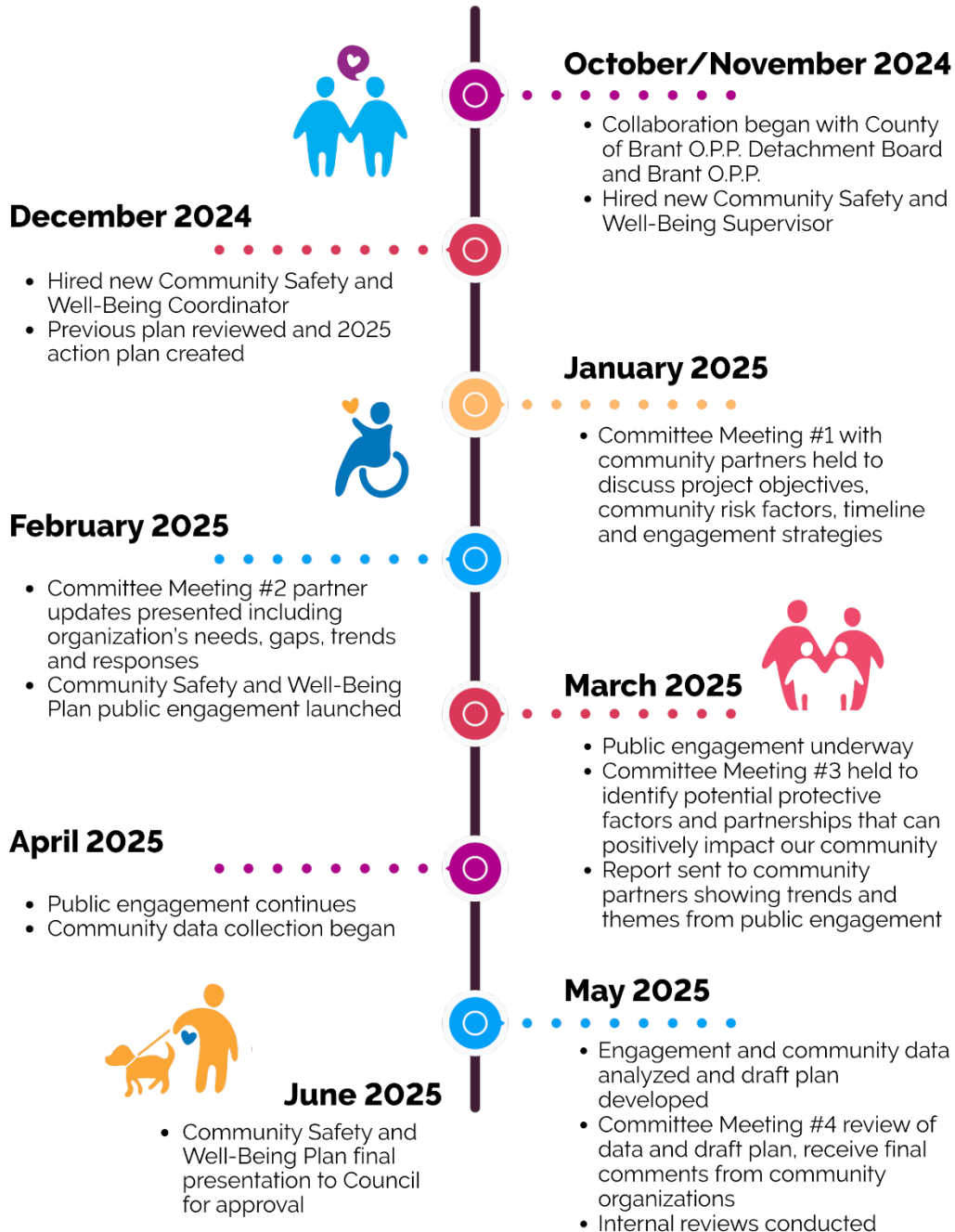
- Councillor Jennifer Kyle, County of Brant, Ward 1
- Anna Cook, Willowbridge Community Services
- DeAnna Renn, Grand Erie Public Health
- Diane Wdowczyk, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board
- Hilary Wren-Atilola, Grand Erie Public Health
- Inspector Jason McTaggart, Brant O.P.P.
- Jennifer Haley, County of Brant O.P.P. Detachment Board
- Leslie Josling, Willowbridge Community Services
- Lynn Hinds, Canadian Mental Health Association, Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk
- Malcolm Whyte, SOAR Community Services
- John Della Fortuna, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board
- Peter Ashe, Grand Erie District School Board
- Sally Johnson, Child and Family Services of Grand Erie
- Sarah Robertson, Child and Family Services of Grand Erie

Community Agencies and Organizations

- Brant Community Healthcare System
- Burford Community Food Bank
- Darmont Gives Back
- Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services
- Paris Salvation Army Food Bank
- Positive Health Network
- Sexual Assault Center of Brant
- Six Nations – Social Services Department
- The Bridge Brant
- The City of Brantford
- Victim Services of Brant
- Woodstock Hospital
- Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services
- Special thanks to all County of Brant departments and the County of Brant Public Library



Community Safety and Well-Being 2025: Timeline



County of Brant Plans, Strategies and Resources

Plan	Link
Age-Friendly Community Plan	County of Brant's Plan for an Age-Friendly Community
Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy	County of Brant Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy
Brant Safe Streets	Brant Safe Streets
Communications and Marketing Plan	County of Brant Communications and Marketing Plan
Community Safety and Well-Being Plan	County of Brant Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
Economic Development Strategy	County of Brant Economic Development Strategy 2024-2027
Inclusion Charter	County of Brant Inclusion Charter
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan	County of Brant 2025-2029 Multi Year Accessibility Plan
Official Plan	The Official Plan for the County of Brant
Public Engagement Framework	Public Engagement Framework
Recreation Master Plan	County of Brant Recreation Master Plan
Strategic Plan	County Of Brant Strategic Plan 2024 2027
Trail Master Plan	County of Brant Trail Master Plan
Transit/Mobility Service Plan	County of Brant Transit Mobility Service Plan Phase 2
Transportation Master Plan	County of Brant Transportation Master Plan



Community Partner Plans, Strategies and Resources

Plan	Link
Affordable Housing Action Plan	Affordable Housing Action Plan
Brantford-Brant Community Drug Strategy	Brantford-Brant Community Drug Strategy Action Plan 2025
Brantford-Brant Housing Stability Plan	Brantford-Brant Housing Stability Plan
Brantford-Brant Municipal Housing Master Plan	Brantford-Brant Housing Master Plan Initiative 2020-2030
Brant Community Healthcare System Strategic Plan	Brant Community Healthcare System Strategic Plan 2020-2025
Brant's Vital Signs Report	Brant's Vital Signs 2024
County of Brant O.P.P. Annual Detachment Report	County of Brant O.P.P. Detachment Report
Statistics Canada	Brant County, ON - Demographics
World Council on City Data	ABOUT WCCD — World Council on City Data



Introduction to the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

What is the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan?

The County of Brant is updating its Community Safety and Well-Being Plan to address the evolving needs of the community. As mandated by the Community Safety and Policing Act, this review occurs every four years to ensure that community services and programs remain effective and responsive. **A Community Safety and Well-Being Plan aims to:**

- Foster a sense of safety and inclusion for all residents
- Ensure easy access to essential services
- Provide individuals and families with necessary support in areas such as education, health care, food security, housing, income stability, and social connections

The plan adopts a collaborative approach to service delivery, bringing together a diverse network of partners, including local and regional governments, police services, public health and mental health providers, educational institutions, social services, and youth support agencies.

What is the County of Brant's Role?

Guiding the Way

The County of Brant is taking the lead in the Community Safety and Well-Being planning process. Addressing complex challenges such as mental health, substance use, and domestic violence requires a coordinated approach involving multiple partners. By initiating this process, we aim to set a clear and collective path forward in fostering safer, healthier communities.

Building Collaborative Support Networks

Addressing the diverse issues impacting community safety and well-being requires a unified approach that brings together agencies, organizations, and service providers. By fostering open dialogue and encouraging collaboration, we can work towards comprehensive, sustainable solutions that align with the unique needs of our community. Strengthening connections between service providers creates opportunities to share information and resources while maintaining distinct program objectives. This ongoing communication lays the groundwork for impactful partnerships that not only address immediate challenges but also enhance overall community well-being.



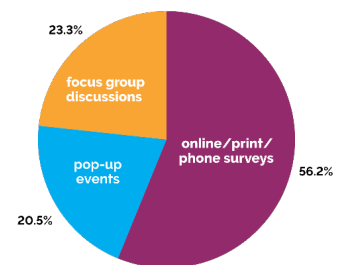
Public Engagement Summary and Key Findings

What We Heard from the Community

We heard many great voices and thoughts about what is happening in our community. Public participation directly influenced identifying priorities and needs. To review the full and comprehensive report please see the complete document starting on page 42.

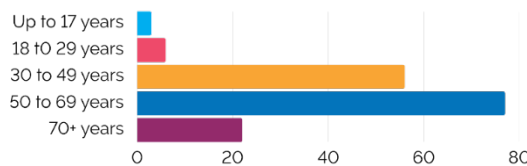
Engagement at a Glance:

- 164 online/print/phone surveys
- 60 participants at 5 pop-up events across the County
- 68 participants at 4 focus group discussions (youth, seniors, newcomers, mental health)
- Project promoted through Engage Brant, print ads, social media, posters, community organizations, and school networks






Age of Survey Respondents:

- Up to 17: 3
- 18 to 29: 6
- 30 to 49: 56
- 50 to 69: 77
- 70+: 22



Mental Health, Wellness and Substance Use Supports

61% 	53% 	52% 
61% of respondents identified services for children and youth with mental health needs as a critical need	53% identified access to affordable individual, couple, and family counseling and therapy as a critical need	Survey results determined 52% of respondents do not know about or are unsure how to access mental health supports in their community <i>"It's not that the problems don't exist—it's that people are isolated. The issues are less visible than in Brantford, but they're still here."</i>



What this means:

- A **gap in public awareness or clarity** around existing mental health services and how to access them, or
- A **shortage of appropriate, accessible, and visible supports**, services may be insufficient or underdeveloped in areas of the County

The top barriers identified for individuals accessing supports were:

- 61% of participants identified long wait times as their top barrier to accessing mental health or substance use supports
- 60% identified cost
- 51% identified a shortage of professionals/facilities



Recommended solution: Utilize library and community centres as trusted access points

“We’ve had success making naloxone available through the library network—it’s geographically dispersed and already trusted by the community.”

Participants shared other comments such as:

“Having the programs in the tiny rural areas or outreach programs also in those areas.”

“More community awareness and education about how to access services and explanation on the diverse type of services and definition of services for people to better understand what is available.”

Youth Empowerment Opportunities

We heard a strong call for more inclusive, affordable, and fun options for young people to feel supported and connected.

68% supported job training and employment programs

“It is difficult for kids to secure employment in today’s business climate. Programs that prepare them for work (i.e. help them understand expectations on an employee) would be helpful as well as programs connecting employers with these people.”

63% identified recreational and after-school activities

“A place for youth to go and explore possibilities for themselves. Like free pick-up sports, arts, music, conversation place, a place to meet up, learn about volunteering, etc. (a hang out at a good place for all)”

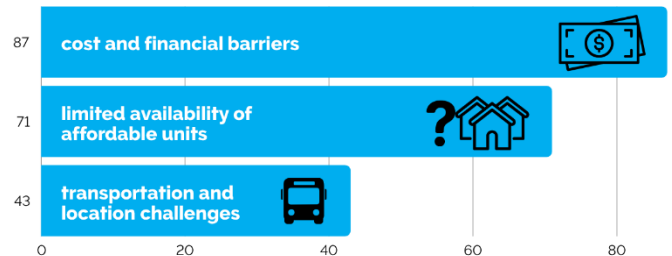


Housing and Supports for the Unhoused

Housing is a growing challenge in our community. Many residents shared concerns about high costs and long waitlists. Community voices emphasized the impact of the lack of affordable housing, rising rents, social housing waitlists, and the need for wraparound supports for those transitioning out of homelessness or living on fixed incomes.

Respondents shared widespread concerns about affordability and availability of housing.

- 87% identified cost and financial barriers as the top challenge
- 71% cited limited availability of affordable units
- 43% reported transportation and location challenges



Respondents felt the top supports needed were:

- Affordable and stable housing - **73%**
- Life skills and education - **65%**
- Financial and employment supports (including rent subsidies) - **56%**
- Healthcare and basic needs (including food security) - **54%**

Connected and Safe Mobility

Transportation was a consistent theme across the engagement. Concerns centered around public transit gaps, poor pedestrian infrastructure, and road safety.

"If you don't have a car, it's hard to get anywhere. And some roads just don't feel safe."

68% identified limited public transit options, particularly in rural areas

"More transportation to provide better opportunities for engagement. Difficult for youth to be connected without adequate transportation."

In the senior's focus group, it was noted transportation challenges limit their independence and participation in the community

64% highlighted the need for more sidewalks and maintained pedestrian pathways (rural communities)

44% raised concerns about road safety (speeding, poor lighting, lack of crosswalks).



“Our neighborhood is overrun with speeders, no stopping at stop signs poor or no signaling.”

41% called for better cycling infrastructure

“Bike lanes, improved signage and education for the community.”

38% identified the need for better lighting in parks and public spaces

Community Belonging

Respondents expressed strong pride in the County’s small-town charm, sense of safety, and natural beauty. However, many noted that population growth, and lack of connection are starting to erode this sense of community. They expressed a strong desire for meaningful community connection and inclusion.

65% supported more community events and festivals

Shared in the seniors focus group, *“people just want to connect—whether it’s fitness, drop-ins, or community dinners. Once they do, they feel part of something and stay engaged.”*

58% would like to see more outdoor and nature-based activities

54% favoured neighbourhood meet-and-greets opportunities

In the newcomer focus group, it was shared, *“getting people around the table in small groups—especially in the evenings—is how we build trust.”*

O.P.P. representatives shared that, *“there are barriers with newcomers understanding we are not the same kind of police. We’re here to help.”*

52% requested more volunteer opportunities

49% called for family-friendly programming



County of Brant Demographic and Community Data



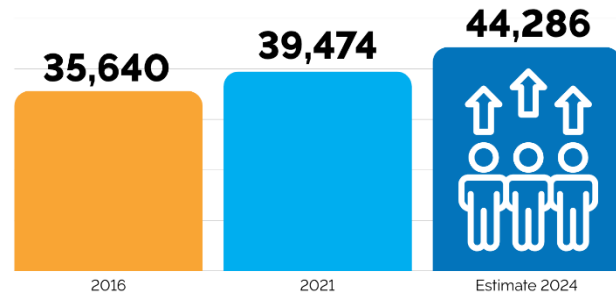
**Community Safety
& Well-Being Plan**

Community Data

The County of Brant is a charming and prosperous community and an attractive place to call home. The County of Brant has experienced a steady increase in population, increasing diversity within the community. Over 90% of residents have at least graduated from high school, with a majority having a University degree or College diploma. The community has a lower unemployment rate and higher average wage compared to other municipalities across the province and country¹.

Population Estimates

- Population 2016: 35,640
- Population 2021: 39,474
- Population Estimate 2024: 44,286



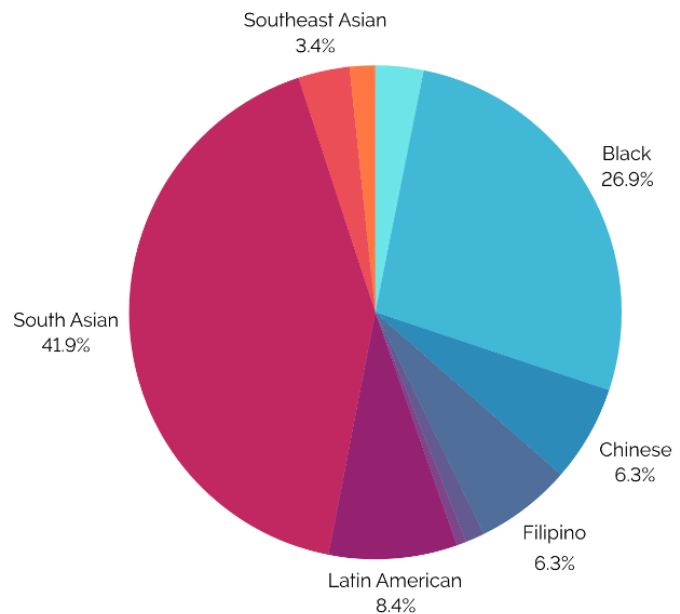
Indigenous population in the municipality

- First Nations: 655
- Metis: 225
- Other (Indigenous responses not included elsewhere): 35

Visible minority group

People belonging to a visible minority group, as defined by the Employment Equity Act., is “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.”
Based on a population of 39,474.

- Arab: 75
- Black: 640
- Chinese: 150
- Filipino: 150
- Japanese: 30
- Korean: 15
- Latin American: 200
- South Asian: 995
- Southeast Asian: 80
- West Asian: 40

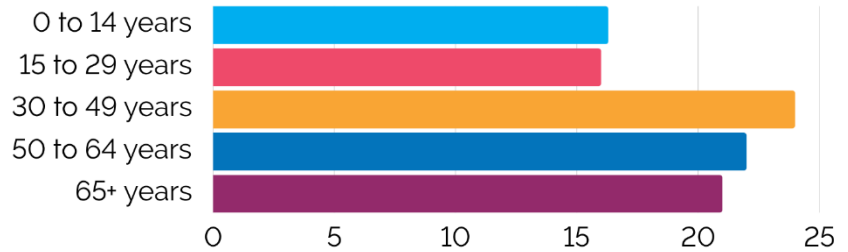


¹ Statistics Canada, *Census Data 2021*. Next scheduled release: May 2026.



Age Profile Snapshot

- 0 to 14 Years Old: 16.3%
- 15 to 29 Years Old: 16.1%
- 30 to 49 Years Old: 24.2%
- 50 to 64 Years Old: 22.3%
- 65+ Years Old: 21.2%

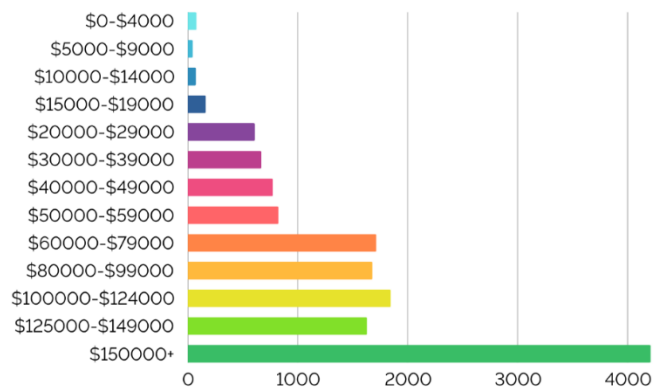


Education Attainment (Age 15+)

Education	Percentage
University Certificate, Diploma or Degree	25.1%
College or other non-university Degree	32.5%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	7.6%
High School Certificate or equivalent	26.2%
No certificate, diploma, or degree	8.6%

Marital Status

Status	Population
Single	7,455
Common	2,985
Married	18,275
Separated	795
Divorced	1,435
Widowed	1,820



Household Income

Income	Population
\$0-\$4000	80
\$5000-\$9000	45
\$10000-\$14000	75
\$15000-\$19000	165
\$20000-\$29000	610
\$30000-\$39000	670
\$40000-\$49000	775
\$50000-\$59000	825
\$60000-\$79000	1,715
\$80000-\$99000	1,680
\$100000-\$124000	1,845
\$125000-\$149000	1,630
\$150000+	4,210



Average Wages (Source: Census of Population)

- Brant - \$57,900
- Ontario - \$56,350
- Canada - \$54,450

Employment Statistics as of April 2025

Brant Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) (CMA includes City of Brantford and County of Brant)

- Employment Rate (CMA) – 60.6%
- Participation Rate (CMA) – 64.9%
- Unemployment Rate (CMA) – 6.5%

Ontario

- Employment Rate – 60.2%
- Participation Rate – 65.1%
- Unemployment Rate – 7.5%

Canada

- Employment Rate – 60.9%
- Participation Rate – 65.4%
- Unemployment Rate – 6.7%



Community and Health Organizations

Trends within local community and health organizations are a reflection of the overall health of the community. An increase in services usage can mean many things including more people who require support, more people are open to receiving support, more people understand there is support available to them and/or some agencies may have received increased funding which would expand their capacity to service our community.

As seen below, there is a growing use of services across the local organizations. These increases often put a strain on the system and can lead to long wait times and loss of service opportunities.

The following community data reflects the County of Brant residents served (unless otherwise stated. Please note, some data collection runs calendar year and some data runs fiscal year).

Brant Community Healthcare System (Willet and Brantford General Hospital Emergency Room Visits)

Mental Health crisis

- 2023: 176
- 2024: 108

Substance use related emergencies

- 2023: 733
- 2024: 719

Emergency psychiatric assessments

- 2023: 24
- 2024: 27

Intimate partner violence and/or sexual assault

- 2023: 13
- 2024: 7

Brant-Brantford Paramedic Services

Mental Health Crisis

- 2023: 805
- 2024: 838

Substance use-related emergencies, Opioid Overdose Suspected

- 2023: 238
- 2024: 278

Food Bank:

Paris Salvation Army Food Bank

- 2023: 1,150 families
- 2024: 1,165 families



Burford Community Food Bank

- 2023: 58 unique people per month
- 2024: 71 unique people per month

Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services

Shelter

- 2023: 21
- 2024: 14

Outreach Support

- 2023: 35
- 2024: 44

Court Support

- 2023: 17
- 2024: 14

Women's Counselling

- 2023: 39
- 2024: 48

Men's Counselling

- 2023: 41
- 2024: 44

Crisis Calls

- 2023: 301
- 2024: 254

Positive Health Network

Number of clients

- 2023: 15
- 2024: 20

The Van (delivery of harm reduction supplies and information about safe injection)

Number of call outs

- 2023: 2,520
- 2024: 4,914

Sexual Assault Centre Brant

- 2023: 1,312 clients served
- 2024: 1,634 clients served

SOAR Community Services (formerly St. Leonard's Community Services)

Substance use and Mental Health

- 2023: 306
- 2024: 437

Justice

- 2023: 38
- 2024: 68

Employment

- 2023: 268
- 2024: 407

Victim Services Brant

- 2023: 42
- 2024: 178

*Numbers reflect referrals from the Brant O.P.P. and do not include self-referrals or referrals from other agencies



Willowbridge Counselling Services and Developmental Service (Gender Based Violence Related Services)

- 2023: 75
- 2024: 91

Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services

Mental Health Services

- 2023: 838
- 2024: 872

Autism Services

- 2023: 78
- 2024: 142

* Does not include County residents accessing services in Brantford.

Woodstock Hospital

Mental Health Crisis (harm reduction services, emergency psychiatric assessments)

- 2023: 23

Substance use-related emergencies

- 2023: 7

Canadian Mental Health Association of Brant Haldimand Norfolk

Brant Safe Beds

- 2023: 147
- 2024: 105

Community Support Services (Case management, justice case management, drop-in support, short-term case management)

- 2023: 466
- 2024: 402

Crisis Stabilization Beds (Crisis and justice)

- 2023: 26
- 2024: 11

Housing

- 2023: 6
- 2024: 4



Brant O.P.P. Data: Crime Trends

The Brant O.P.P. responds to people in distress and crisis. In 2024, Brant reported small decreases in a number of areas, most notably, in sexual offences, assault/firearm related offences, drug crime, mental health act occurrences and overdose occurrences and a large decrease in property related crimes.

Violent Crime

Sexual Offences

- 2022: 23
- 2023: 36
- 2024: 31

Offence Resulting in the Deprivation of Freedom

- 2022: 3
- 2023: 2
- 2024: 1

Other Offence Involving Violence or Threat of Violence

- 2022: 59
- 2023: 77
- 2024: 85

Assault/Firearm related offences:

- 2022: 95
- 2023: 117
- 2024: 110

Drug Crime

- 2022: 24
- 2023: 22
- 2024: 10

Mental Health Act Occurrences

- 2022: 281
- 2023: 313
- 2024: 291

Overdose Occurrences

Fatal:

- 2022: 0
- 2023: 2
- 2024: 0

Non-fatal:

- 2022: 7
- 2023: 1
- 2024: 0



Property-related crimes

- 2022: 846
- 2023: 807
- 2024: 617

Referrals to Victim Service Agencies

- 2022: 533
- 2023: 616
- 2024: 680

Notable trends for Youth

Youth in the County of Brant are demonstrating a high level of graduation rates from high school, and an increase of participation in County-led youth recreation programming, summer camps and aquatic programs. However, police related charges for youth increased from 2023 to 2024.

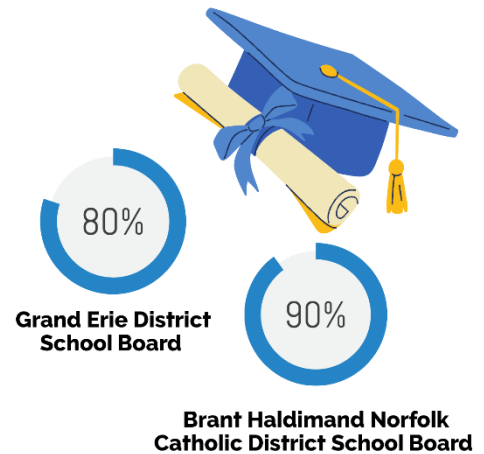
Current five-year high school graduation rates include:

- Grand Erie District School Board: 80%
- Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board: 90%

County-led youth programs saw an increase of 43% in utilization between 2019-2023.

Youth charges, as reported by Brant O.P.P.

- 2022: 32
- 2023: 16
- 2024: 25



Notable trends for Seniors

With a growing senior population and an increased awareness of the benefits of active aging, and support for seniors' overall well-being, participation in County-led seniors programming grew by 227% between 2019 – 2023.



County of Brant Library

Adult Programming

Year	Number of Programs	Attendance
2023	481	4,487
2024	782	6,609

Grant Funded Older Adult Programming (older adult programming numbers included in overall adult statistics above)

Year	Number of Programs	Attendance
2023	39	263
2024	18	145

*Please note, many adult programs are attended by older adults as well and these numbers do not fully capture the number of older adults reached through programming.

Children, Youth and Family Programming

Year	Number of Programs	Attendance
2023	1,401	20,113
2024	1,639	22,065

Teen Programming Statistics (teen numbers included in the overall children, youth and family statistics above)

Year	Number of Programs	Attendance
2023	44	268
2024	202	1,026



Housing Affordability and Supports for the Unhoused

Affordable housing continues to be a concern, as with most municipalities.

County of Brant By-Law Enforcement

In 2024, there were 13 calls to enforcement regarding unhoused individuals and encampments (related to 4 individuals). This compares to 1 call in 2023 (tracking unhoused individuals and encampments was established mid-2023).

SOAR Community Services

SOAR provides transitional housing, supportive housing, housing resource centre services, and emergency shelter services.

- 2023: 4
- 2024: 49

*SOAR noted this number is likely underreported for County of Brant residents as data streams are unable to identify and verify locations of origin for those they service.

City of Brantford

In 2024, the City of Brantford, as the designated services manager for the county, processed 905 new applications for Rent Geared to Income housing compared to 915 applications in 2023. Wait times for community housing remain unchanged from 2023 and households can be waiting up to 12 years for a community housing unit, depending on family composition, unit type and size required, and housing selections.

*A main factor contributing to long wait time seems to be due to increased costs of home prices and private rentals, resulting in fewer households exiting Rent Geared to Income units, and subsequently fewer households being offered tenancy.

Connected and Safe Mobility

Brant Transit

Despite the County's size and dispersed geography, the County of Brant offers a well-utilized micro-transit service.

Total rides:

- 2023: 23,980
- 2024: 25,000+, serving nearly 1000 unique riders



Brant Safe Streets

This County-led program is designed to calm traffic and increase pedestrian safety. The program continues to engage the public with the purpose of encouraging all community members to take accountability for safer streets.

Kids at Play sign requests

- 2023: 192
- 2024: 50

Pace car requests

- 2023: 5 participant sign ups
- 2024: 0 participant sign ups

Field studies completed, based on requests

- 2023: 124
- 2024: 122

Trailer placement locations

- 2023: 12 locations
- 2024: 14 locations

Temporary speed hump installations

- 2023: 7 locations
- 2024: 1 location

Permanent traffic calming installations

- 2023: 10 permanent speed humps, 2 AI operated signalized intersections
- 2024: 5 permanent speed cushions, 1 intersection neckdown, 5 pedestrian crossovers, 1 raised crosswalk

In-road flexible bollards/center knockdowns

- 2023: 33
- 2024: 23

Data on traffic-related incidents and injuries:

Brant-Brantford Paramedics

- Traffic Related Injuries
- 2023: 815
- 2024: 804

Woodstock General Hospital

- Traffic related injuries
- 2024: 45

Brant Community Healthcare System (Willet and Brantford General Hospital Emergency Room Visits)

- Traffic related injuries
- 2023: 595
- 2024: 643



Brant O.P.P.

From 2023 to 2024, Brant O.P.P. 's data shows a small increase in motor vehicle collisions and a decrease in speeding related and impaired driving-related charges.

Motor Vehicle Collisions

- 2022: 776
- 2023: 912
- 2024: 917

Traffic Related Charges

Speeding

- 2022: 3,971
- 2023: 3,529
- 2024: 3,065

Impaired driving

- 2022: 127
- 2023: 141
- 2024: 117



County of Brant Strategic Plan

In 2024, the County of Brant updated its **Strategic Plan** to guide decision-making and drive positive changes across the municipality. This strategic framework aligns closely with the goals outlined in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, particularly in the areas of housing, community engagement, accessibility, diversity, and environmental sustainability.



Strategic Priority 1: Economic and Financial Resilience emphasizes responsible financial governance. The County will ensure that all goals and plans help to support the growing and changing needs of our community, ensuring it aligns with the County's long-term financial plan.

A key focus under *Strategic Priority 2: Focused Growth and Infrastructure* is to address affordable housing. The County will continue its partnership with the Central Ontario Co-Operative Housing Federation to seek federal funding for co-operative housing, while also exploring non-traditional solutions such as prefabricated, modular, and CMHC pre-approved designs to expand attainable housing options.

Strategic Priority 3: Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Communities emphasize creating and sustaining opportunities for recreational, social, and community engagement. This includes implementing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy to foster a more inclusive community, executing the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to ensure equitable access, and continuing the implementation of the Age-Friendly Master Plan to address the evolving needs of older adults in the community.

Under *Strategic Priority 4: Stable and Responsive Governance*, the County aims to attract and retain a diverse workforce to support the effective delivery of community services and enhance municipal governance.

Environmental sustainability is also a priority, as outlined in *Strategic Priority 5*. The County will work to facilitate environmentally sustainable practices that align with broader community safety and well-being objectives, ensuring a healthier, more resilient community.

By aligning these strategic priorities with the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, the County of Brant is positioning itself to build stronger, safer, and more inclusive communities while fostering sustainable growth and responsive governance.



Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2025-2029: Advancing Community Priorities Through Action

Prioritized Risk Factors

The 2025 iteration of the plan will prioritize five (5) Key Risk Factors that will be the areas of focus:

- Mental Health, Wellness and Substance Use Supports
- Youth Empowerment Opportunities
- Housing and Supports for the Unhoused
- Connected and Safe Mobility
- Community Belonging



Mental Health, Wellness and Substance Use Supports



Youth Empowerment Opportunities



Housing and Supports for the Unhoused



Connected and Safe Mobility



Community Belonging



The following goals align with the County's commitment to advancing the objectives outlined in our membership with the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Communities. Additionally, each goal reinforces our dedication to the principles and priorities established in the **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**.

Mental Health, Wellness, and Substance Use Supports

Mental Health Supports

1. Implement a comprehensive awareness and anti-stigma campaign to promote local mental health and substance use support services as aligned with the goals of the *Brantford-Brant Community Drug Strategy*. Examples of resources could include Ontario Canadian Mental Health Association and Agricultural Wellness Ontario amongst many others.
2. Collaborate with local community partners to develop and deliver anti-stigma and trauma-informed training and resources for County of Brant staff, community organization staff, volunteers, local businesses and community user groups aligning with the initiatives outlined in the *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan*. Examples of training could include de-escalation, anti-stigma, cultural sensitivity training for Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers, and unhoused support amongst others.
3. Collaborate with local service providers to explore opportunities to expand support in rural and underserved areas, with a focus on youth mental health, individual, couple, and family counselling, and other community services. This initiative will address the intersection of mental health and substance use while responding to critical needs identified in the *Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Public Engagement*.

Substance Use Supports

4. Facilitate the installation of sharps bins in all County of Brant-owned and operated facilities and explore opportunities to expand harm reduction supplies across the County, aligning with the objectives of the *Brantford-Brant Community Drug Strategy*.
5. Create a Sharps Handling Policy to compliment the Handling and Disposal of Sharps Procedure CS-2018-01.

Wellness

6. Strengthen food collection service planning by partnering with local libraries and community organizations to promote food security initiatives and support events aimed at reducing food insecurity. This initiative will align with the *Age-Friendly Community Plan* by ensuring that food security programs are accessible, inclusive, and effectively integrated within community recreation spaces and senior-serving facilities.



7. In alignment with the Recreation Master Plan, enhance community connections through the “Equal Grounds” community garden program to support food security efforts by promoting access to fresh produce and encouraging local participation.

Intimate Partner/Gender Based Violence

8. Supporting the initiatives approved under *RPT-0514-23* continue to assist intimate partner/gender-based violence support services with awareness campaigns, facility use collaboration, public transportation, and resource development.
9. As outlined in *RPT-0514-23*, collaborate with organizations to identify how the County can support facilitating new partnership development, internal policy development, resource development and hosting training, forums, and events.

Youth Empowerment Opportunities

10. Support the creation of a Youth Services Strategy in conjunction with community partners to develop and outline our commitments and opportunities for the youth in the County of Brant.
11. Support and collaborate with community partners to provide ongoing free opportunities to youths across a variety of topics such as employment readiness, mental health first aid, and civic engagement.
12. Explore opportunities with local community support organizations, employers, school boards, and key community partners to develop a youth symposium for youth leadership, employment and volunteer opportunities.
13. Explore and implement targeted public engagement initiatives to actively involve youth in community discussions, capturing their unique perspectives and insights on key topics. This initiative aligns with the County of Brant's *Public Engagement Framework* and aims to foster inclusive dialogue, ensuring that youth voices are meaningfully integrated into shaping our community.
14. Collaborate with community partners to develop, promote, and facilitate additional recreational and after-school activities for youth across the County, aligning with the *Recreation Master Plan* recommendations. The *Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Public Engagement* highlighted the need for non-sport-related activities as a key component of this program's expansion.

Housing and Supports for the Unhoused

15. Continue to implement education and awareness campaigns for the public aimed at reducing stigma and raising awareness of community resources available to support unhoused individuals.



16. Partner with Wilfrid Laurier University to develop and deliver training for County staff and Council focused on unhoused, including topics such as understanding the root causes, addressing stigma, and effectively connecting individuals to available resources and support services.
17. As the designated Social Services Manager for the County of Brant, continue to actively collaborate with the City of Brantford to advance initiatives that promote housing stability and provide comprehensive supports for individuals experiencing unhoused, in alignment with the City of Brantford's *Affordable Housing Action Plan*.
18. In partnership with the City of Brantford, support and coordinate efforts to expand access to emergency shelters, transitional housing, and long-term housing solutions, integrating supportive services that address mental health, substance use, and financial stability. This initiative will align with the *Brantford-Brant Community Drug Strategy* to ensure that substance use support services are embedded within housing programs to provide comprehensive, wraparound care.
19. Continue developing the Community Planning Permit System through strategic partnerships with internal and external community partners. The Community Planning Permit System will enable the County of Brant to investigate inclusionary zoning as a tool to promote affordable housing developments, including the use of public lands to support targeted affordable builds and meet the overall affordable housing goals outlined in the Brantford-Brant Housing Stability Plan. These efforts align with the *Official Plan for the County of Brant – A Simply Grand Plan, 2023*, to encourage sustainable growth, enhance housing diversity, and address identified housing gaps from the Housing Needs Assessment while prioritizing equitable access to housing for all residents.

Connected and Safe Mobility

20. Aligned with the *Transit/Mobility Service Plan*, continue to support advancing initiatives that enhance transit connectivity within the community, and neighbouring communities, supporting the objectives outlined in the *Age-Friendly Community Plan*, *County of Brant Economic Development Strategy*, and *Transportation Master Plan*.
21. Continue to support initiatives identified in the *Brant Safe Streets Strategies*, *Active School Transportation for Youth/Safe Routes to School* in alignment with the *Age-Friendly Community Plan*. Review analytics from the campaign to identify best practices, allowing for informed decisions on supporting, or adjusting the program as needed.
22. Advance the objectives of the *Age-Friendly Community Plan* and by fostering a more connected, walkable and safer County of Brant which reflects the needs of individuals of all ages and abilities. Collaborate with internal divisions to engage with community members, identifying priority areas and aligning these goals with the *County of Brant Trail Master Plan*, *Recreation Master Plan*, *Transportation Master Plan*, *Official Plan*, and *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan*.



23. Expand and formalize the County of Brant’s cycling network to enhance connectivity for employment, recreational use, and tourism in alignment with the *Age-Friendly Community Plan*, and the *Recreation Master Plan*. Develop targeted initiatives to position cycling as a key attraction, promoting active transportation, local business access, and interconnected trail systems.
24. Continue to promote education and awareness initiatives focused on active transportation, transit accessibility, and neighborhood safety, reinforcing community engagement and aligning with the objectives outlined in the *Age-Friendly Community Plan*, *Transportation Master Plan*, and *Brant Safe Streets Strategies*.

Community Belonging

25. Develop and implement the County of Brant’s inaugural Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy to cultivate a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming community. This initiative aims to embed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion principles across all municipal operations, policies, and services, ensuring that every resident has equitable access to opportunities and resources.
26. In alignment with the *Communications and Marketing Plan*, expand the provision of multilingual supports across all forms of municipal communications, reinforcing our commitment to accessibility as outlined in the *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan*. There will be consideration given on the best practices to distribute materials to multilingual households.
27. Review and enhance the “Welcome to Brant” newcomer kits to create a consistent, inclusive, and accessible resources. Develop standardized content that reflects the diverse needs of newcomers, including older adults, ensuring information is culturally relevant, trauma informed, accessible, and supportive of community integration. Implement a regular review schedule to maintain the accuracy of information, incorporating updates on services, local resources, and key contacts. This goal aligns with the *Communications and Marketing Plan*.
28. Develop and implement the “Brant Belongs to You” civic pride campaign and an intergenerational storytelling series to foster community connection and celebrate local heritage, aligning with the *Arts, Culture, and Heritage Strategy* and the *Communications and Marketing Plan*. These initiatives will promote civic pride, strengthen community identity, and highlight diverse stories across generations.
29. Increase awareness and accessibility of the L.I.F.E. financial support program to enhance participation in recreational services, particularly among identified groups such as individuals with disabilities, seniors, children, youth, and newcomers, in alignment with the *Recreation Master Plan* and the *Multi-Year Accessibility Plan*.
30. The County will explore opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity through celebrations, events, and targeted campaigns, incorporating social media and video content to promote



cultural learning and inclusion, in collaboration with cultural associations and organizations. These initiatives align with the *County of Brant Economic Development Strategy* and the *Arts, Culture, and Heritage Strategy*, fostering a welcoming and vibrant community.

31. Collaborate and expand programming tailored to the senior population, fostering community engagement and reducing social isolation in alignment with the objectives outlined in the *Age-Friendly Community Plan* and the *Recreation Master Plan*. Support the development of targeted initiatives that address the unique needs and interests of older adults, creating inclusive recreational, educational, and social opportunities that promote active living and strengthen community connections.
32. Support the establishment of a “Newcomers Hub” to serve as a centralized resource for comprehensive, wraparound service information, fostering connections and support for newcomers to the community. This initiative aligns with the *Age-Friendly Community Plan*, *County of Brant Economic Development Strategy*, and *Arts, Culture, and Heritage Strategy*, promoting inclusive access to essential services and community resources.



Evaluation, Governance, and Reporting

Evaluation

The County of Brant will collaborate with internal and external partners to develop evaluation frameworks for the various projects and initiatives outlined in the Plan. These frameworks will include specific outcomes and indicators to effectively measure program development and success.

Governance

The development of the County of Brant's updated Community Safety and Well-Being Plan reflects a collaborative community effort. The Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee provided valuable insights and guidance throughout the plan's development, drawing on input from diverse sectors serving the community.

As the County of Brant transitions from planning to implementation, the Advisory Committee will transition to an active working group. Ongoing consultation and engagement with community members and partner agencies will remain integral to the delivery and refinement of activities, programs, and initiatives within the plan. County staff will work closely with community members, partner agencies, and subject matter experts to implement key initiatives, address emerging priorities, and adapt the plan as needed.

Reporting

The plan will undergo an annual review and be updated as the legislation requires. Annual reviews will involve consultation with local service agencies and community members to ensure the plan remains responsive to emerging issues and evolving community needs. This process will also present opportunities to proactively identify and address potential risks before they escalate.

The County of Brant Council will receive annual update reports on the overall Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, along with project-specific reports detailing key activities and progress. Additionally, County staff will provide regular updates to partner boards, planning bodies, and community groups to maintain transparency and foster continued collaboration.

Ongoing community consultation and engagement will be a critical component of the plan's continuous review process. Engagement will include tools such as community surveys, focus groups, and public feedback sessions to effectively assess the relevance and impact of the plan's actions and priorities.



Comprehensive Public Engagement Summary

Overview

From February 25 to April 17, 2025, the County of Brant invited residents, service providers, and community partners to participate in shaping the next Community Safety and Well-being Plan. The Community Safety and Well-being Plan Engagement Summary highlights the outcomes of this consultation, which focused on five key proposed priorities:

- **Mental Health, Wellness, and Substance Use Supports** - Ensuring people have access to the right resources and care for their mental health, overall well-being, and substance use challenges.
- **Youth Empowerment and Opportunities** - Providing young people with meaningful opportunities to learn, grow, and participate in their community.
- **Housing Affordability and Unhoused Supports** - Working on solutions to support individuals facing housing challenges.
- **Connected and Safe Mobility** - Improving transportation and mobility options to ensure people can move safely and easily around the community.
- **Community Belonging** - Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and connected.

Community feedback was collected through an online survey (also offered in print and over the phone through County Customer Services), which received 164 responses, 5 pop-up events across the County (approximately 60 participants), and 4 focused discussions with key groups including youth, seniors, newcomers, and a group with a mental health focus (68 participants).

To support broad participation a marketing budget of \$3,000 was used to promote the project. The project was promoted through the following channels:

- Engage Brant engagement platform
- Project was sent to 1,800 subscribers
- 1,300 page visits
- Media release sent to local media outlets and posted on brant.ca/News
- 4 print ads in local papers
- Paid social media advertising
- 137,500 Ad views
- 916 link clicks
- Posters displayed in high traffic areas of County community centers and community partner facilities
- Youth events posters distributed through County schools
- The Engage project information promoted through County of Brant and community partner social media channels on a weekly basis.



Key Themes and Insights from Online Engagement

1. Mental Health, Wellness, and Substance Use Supports

Community members emphasized the importance of access, affordability, and awareness of mental health supports.

- 61% of respondents identified services for children and youth with mental health needs as a critical need.
- 53% also identified access to affordable individual, couple, and family counseling and therapy as a critical need.
- 52% said mental health supports in schools and workplaces are needed.

Survey results determined 52% of respondents do not know about or are unsure how to access mental health supports in their community.

This finding points to a potentially significant challenge. It may reflect:

- A **gap in public awareness or clarity** around existing mental health services and how to access them, or
- A **shortage of appropriate, accessible, and visible supports**, meaning services may be insufficient or underdeveloped in areas of the County

This uncertainty underscores the need for further investigation into both the availability of services and the effectiveness of communication and referral pathways. Improving access may require not only increased promotion and public education but also a broader review of service capacity and coverage.

Top barriers identified

- 61% of participants identified long wait times as their top barrier to accessing mental health or substance use supports
- 60% identified Cost
- 51% identified a Shortage of professionals/facilities (further investigation may be required to investigate both the availability of services and the effectiveness of communication and referral pathways, as noted above)

- While lower on the scale in terms of identified barriers (4th), it is important to note that 18% of respondents noted that Transportation and rural access issues are a barrier to access.

Community Suggestions

Improve affordability:

Residents asked for free, low-cost, or income-based counseling, including long-term therapy options.

"I have had seniors mention programs with no fee or minimal fee, young mothers same. I am sure this would be same for those who have mental illness and may be currently unemployed. Immigrants new to area feeling unwelcome."

Enhance service visibility and navigation:

With more than half of the respondents unsure how to access services, residents recommended centralized directories, public education campaigns, and partnerships with trusted community agencies (e.g., libraries, schools, CMHA) to help people find and understand available supports.

"More community awareness and education about how to access services and explanation on the diverse type of services and definition of services for people to better understand what is available."

Embed supports in everyday settings:

Respondents supported placing mental health services in schools, workplaces, and rural hubs, allowing for easier access without requiring specialized appointments or travel—especially important for those facing transportation barriers.

"Having the programs in the tiny rural areas or outreach programs also in those areas"

Expand outreach and rural accessibility:

Suggestions included mobile mental health teams, in-person clinics, and community paramedic involvement to ensure people in remote areas can receive care closer to home.

"Mental health crisis team that is mobile. I had a husband who was suicidal. Calling the police doesn't really help because they can only do so much. They need to have the police and mental health workers come out to a call for help, together."

Build connection and prevention-focused spaces:

Many called for peer support groups, community education on stress, grief, and parenting, and spaces for social connection to reduce isolation and promote well-being before crisis occurs.



“Creating more opportunities and spaces for people of all ages, income, abilities to gather and socialize. Easy to access regardless where you live. Having strong connections and relationships with others is strong protective factor for mental well-being.”

Together, these insights point to the need for a dual approach: investing in the expansion of accessible, affordable services, while also strengthening community-wide awareness and early-intervention strategies to help residents find help before reaching crisis.

2. Youth Empowerment Opportunities

Respondents called for more inclusive, accessible, and meaningful opportunities for youth.

- 68% supported job training and employment programs
- 63% identified recreational and after-school activities
- 60% supported the need for outdoor and nature programs
- 57% prioritized mental health and wellness supports

Challenges raised

Lack of Safe, Youth-Friendly Spaces:

Respondents noted there are few places for teens to gather after school or on weekends. In winter months, some youth reportedly gather in heated public washrooms for lack of alternatives. Indoor hangout spaces that are inclusive, welcoming, and supervised were seen as essential.

Limited Affordability and Accessibility:

Families expressed concern that programs are often too expensive, quickly booked, or inaccessible without a car, especially for those in rural areas. Some youth are excluded from recreation or learning opportunities simply due to cost or transportation gaps.

Lack of Variety and Inclusivity in Programming:

Many emphasized that youth programs often focus heavily on organized sports, leaving out those with different interests or needs. Youth with special needs, low-income backgrounds, or alternative interests (like gaming, arts, or nature) need tailored, affordable options.

Reduced Social Skills and Mental Health Impacts:

Several educators and parents pointed to post-COVID impacts, including reduced social skills, isolation, and rising anxiety, noting that many youth don't know how or where to connect with others in healthy, real-life ways.

Few On-Ramps to Employment and Life Skills:



Respondents highlighted a gap in job readiness programs, mentorship opportunities, and basic life skills education. Youth are eager to contribute but often lack the tools or opportunities to get started.

Ideas for improvement

Free or Low-Cost Programs That Reflect Youth Interests:

Suggestions included video game tournaments, card and board game nights, indoor movie nights, cooking and sewing classes, and outdoor adventures. These would give youth fun, informal ways to connect without financial barriers.

“Get them to connect with the community better through social programs and clubs to take an invested interest in the community they live in. As well, more outdoor recreation opportunities that don't cost a great deal of money for them to engage in, which includes modern activities versus expensive team sports such as hockey, baseball, soccer, and football. There is a big shift in activities such as skate parks (The new one going in is fine, however it's very small and not functional) And bike parks. These activities have minimal barriers to entry and have an incredible, positive outlook on the community and the people who patron them.”

Accessible, Localized Programming Across the County:

Residents emphasized the importance of offering activities closer to home, especially in rural communities, and ensuring transportation is available to help youth get to programs safely and independently.

“Transportation is huge. Youth need freedom to be mobile without vehicles. Giving them opportunities in the area without excessive travel into a city would also be great”

Focus on Life Skills, Leadership, and Mental Health Education:

From financial literacy to public speaking, resumé writing, and mental wellness education, youth want to be prepared for life - and they want programming that reflects their real-world needs.

“It is difficult for kids to secure employment in today's business climate. Programs that prepare them for work (i.e. help them understand expectations on an employee) would be helpful as well as programs connecting employers with these people.”

Make Youth Feel Seen and Valued:

Perhaps most importantly, community members expressed a desire for youth to feel welcomed, respected, and invested in—not just as future adults, but as full members of the community today.



Respondents across the County, particularly in rural and smaller communities, highlighted limited public transportation options as a barrier to safety, mobility, and inclusion for youth, seniors, and those without personal vehicles.

"More transportation to provide better opportunities for engagement. Difficult for youth to be connected without adequate transportation."

Traffic Calming Measures

Speeding and unsafe road conditions, especially in residential areas, near parks and schools, were repeatedly flagged by respondents. Many urged the County to implement speed bumps, photo radar, narrowing lanes, and stricter speed enforcement.

"Cars are routinely doing over 100 km/hr. in our 50 zone. There should be speed bumps coming into town... and residential speed cameras that are automated and send tickets."

Improve Lighting for Safety and Visibility

Lighting was mentioned often as a critical factor in both real and perceived safety, especially in parks, near trails, cemeteries, and school zones.

"There are no or few lights in certain areas. As a woman walking alone at night, my preference is safety rather than a walk."

Safer Crosswalks and Traffic Calming

Community members called for flashing crosswalks, better signage, and speed-reduction strategies in high-traffic zones.

5. Community Belonging

Respondents expressed strong pride in the County's small-town charm, sense of safety, and natural beauty.

However, many noted that population growth, traffic, and lack of connection are starting to erode this sense of community. They expressed a strong desire for meaningful community connection and inclusion.

- 65% supported more community events and festivals
- 58% would like to see more outdoor and nature-based activities
- 54% favored neighborhood meet-and-greets opportunities
- 52% requested more volunteer opportunities
- 49% called for family-friendly programming



Respondents clearly value the balance of rural character, friendly community, safety, and natural beauty that the County of Brant offers. While many acknowledge recent growth and change, the dominant message was a desire to preserve the values and atmosphere that make the County of Brant feel like home.



Pop-up Engagement Events



COUNTY OF
Brant Simply Grand

**Community Safety
& Well-Being Plan**

As part of the County of Brant's efforts to update its Community Safety and Well-being Plan, 5 public pop-up engagement events were hosted in Burford, Paris, Scotland, and St. George. The events provided residents with an informal opportunity to share their insights, priorities, and concerns regarding community safety and well-being.

At the general pop-up sessions, 4 questions were asked of attendees. The summary below outlines the key themes compiled based on the feedback received.

Key Themes by Question

1. Do you know how to access mental health supports in your community?

Theme: Mixed awareness about available mental health services.

Some attendees reported knowing how to access supports, but a significant number, particularly in Paris and St. George, indicated they did not know where to find help or felt unsure.

2. What programs or opportunities are most needed for youth in the County of Brant?

Theme: Strong desire for diverse youth programming and safe spaces.

Top responses included:

- **Recreational and After-School Activities** – Frequently mentioned as a need across all locations. This was especially prevalent in Paris and Burford.
- **Safe Spaces for Youth** – The need for dedicated, welcoming spaces where youth can connect and feel supported throughout the year was highlighted repeatedly.
- **Social Connection Initiatives** – Youth mentorship, social groups, and community events were seen as important for reducing isolation and supporting mental health.

This feedback points to a community-wide priority to create more inclusive, accessible, and engaging opportunities for youth.

3. What are the most significant transportation challenges you face?

Theme: Road safety and limited public transit were the most common concerns.

- **Limited Public Transit Options** – Particularly in rural communities, participants noted insufficient transit routes and schedules.
- **Road Safety Concerns** – Many residents cited speeding, poor lighting, and a lack of traffic calming measures as serious issues, especially in residential areas.

This indicates a need for improved road safety infrastructure and more reliable, affordable transit options, especially for rural and vulnerable populations.



4. What activities or initiatives would help create a stronger sense of community in the County of Brant?

Theme: Community-building through inclusive events and recreation.

Top suggestions included:

- **Community Events and Festivals** – Residents expressed a desire for more seasonal and cultural celebrations that bring people together.
- **Sports and Recreation Leagues** – Accessible programming for all ages was identified as a key way to foster inclusion and belonging.
- **Programs to Celebrate Diversity** – Participants valued opportunities to learn about and celebrate different cultures and identities, reinforcing the County’s commitment to equity and inclusion.

Some residents also mentioned interest in community dances, all-season swimming, and informal social gatherings, reflecting the value of both structured and spontaneous opportunities to connect.



Focus Group Discussions – What We Heard

As part of the County of Brant’s Community Safety and Well-being Plan engagement process, a series of focus groups were held to gather in-depth perspectives from specific community segments, including seniors, youth, newcomers, and mental health service providers.

Why Focus Groups?

Focus groups are especially valuable as they:

- Give a voice to underrepresented groups whose experiences may not surface in general surveys
- Create space for open, nuanced conversations about barriers, needs, and opportunities
- Help identify specific actions the County can take to improve safety, inclusion, and well-being

The focus group feedback complements the survey data and helps ensure the Community Safety and Well-being Plan is informed by the real-life experiences and ideas of people living and working in the County of Brant.

Mental Health Focus Group

This focus group was created to explore experiences and ideas related to mental health and disability supports in the County of Brant. Service providers shared insights into system gaps, community strengths, barriers to access, and opportunities for improving collaboration and inclusion. The conversation highlighted the growing complexity of community needs, particularly in a rural context, and the urgency of building equitable and responsive local systems.

Key Themes

1. Geography and Transportation Limit Access to Care

A consistent theme was the geographic barrier distance and lack of reliable transportation pose to accessing services, particularly for those living in rural areas, newcomers, and people with disabilities.

“Transportation challenges are a huge issue. Some services go to families, but many don’t, and the cost is high. There’s no direct funding to help with that.”

“Virtual care doesn’t work for everyone. Seniors and newcomers often can’t use it, and many rural areas lack internet.”



Weather, cost, and lack of driver's licenses among newcomers further compound the issue.

2. Community Hubs and Libraries are Trusted Access Points

Participants agreed that libraries and community centers offer a valuable, trusted platform for service delivery, especially in dispersed or underserved areas.

"We've had success distributing naloxone through the library network—it's geographically dispersed and already trusted by the community."

"Libraries and community centers could host workshops, drop-ins, or even satellite clinics."

These familiar public spaces can reduce stigma and improve reach, especially when paired with intentional, culturally responsive outreach.

3. Cultural Inclusion and Language Accessibility Are Lacking

Participants stressed the need for culturally matched services, interpretation supports, and inclusive service environments to reflect the County's increasingly diverse population.

"We are missing out on entire populations because they don't feel welcome. Mental health isn't always openly discussed in other cultures, and we don't understand those nuances."

"We need to partner with community leaders—faith-based leaders or cultural leaders who already have trust."

Language barriers, lack of diversity among service providers, and limited translation supports were all seen as major gaps.

4. Stigma, Isolation, and Lack of Visibility

Participants noted that mental health and substance use challenges are highly stigmatized, especially in smaller communities, leading to isolation and underreporting.

"Harm reduction is under fire right now... there's a lot of misunderstanding about what it really means."

"It's not that the problems don't exist—it's that people are isolated. The issues are less visible than in Brantford, but they're still here."

Stigma not only discourages people from seeking help but also contributes to NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) attitudes and resistance to new services or supports.

5. Collaboration Needs to Be Inclusive and Coordinated

Participants described a system where many organizations work in silos or struggle to sustain partnerships due to limited capacity, unclear roles, or overlapping mandates.



“We need a centralized hub with inclusivity as the focus. Right now, everything is fractured—and we haven’t been able to re-focus since the pandemic.”

Participants emphasized the need for inclusive collaboration, clearer leadership, and mechanisms to bring both traditional and non-traditional partners to the table, including pharmacies and cultural organizations.

6. Data, Equity, and Actionable Planning

There was a strong call for data collection that reflects diverse identities and experiences, and for using that data to drive change.

“We’re not tracking who’s accessing services or where health inequities are occurring. We need identity-based data to make improvements.”

“This plan needs to focus on action—on supporting the services and organizations already doing the work.”

The group expressed hope that this plan would move beyond consultation and lead to tangible outcomes, unlike past efforts.

Conclusion

The Mental Health Focus Group emphasized the importance of equity, cultural understanding, and cross-sector collaboration in creating a healthier Brant. While there are many strong organizations doing important work, systemic barriers, particularly those linked to geography, stigma, and inclusion, continue to hinder access and effectiveness. Participants called for practical, inclusive solutions that meet people where they are, in both location and life experience.

Newcomer Focus Group

A newcomer-focused discussion was held to better understand the lived experiences of those who have recently moved to the County. The conversation explored feelings of inclusion, access to services, cultural representation, and ideas for building a stronger, more welcoming community. The discussion highlighted both progress made and significant areas for improvement.

Key Themes

1. Mixed Experiences of Belonging and Inclusion

Participants described both welcoming experiences and moments of isolation. Several noted that diversity in Brant has increased in recent years, but some still experience social distance or cultural unfamiliarity.

“When I first moved here, there was no one that looked like us... I felt like I had to be extra kind and polite.”



“Brant has become a lot more diverse since I moved here. It feels more welcoming now.”

Community groups such as Darmont Gives Back were credited with creating inclusive spaces where newcomers feel seen and supported.

2. The Importance of Empowered, Connected Community Leadership

Participants emphasized that building inclusion takes leadership—both from within communities and from the County itself.

“Getting people around the table in small groups—especially in the evenings—is how we build trust.”

The group recommended that the County invest in platforms for dialogue, leadership development, and regular town hall-style meetings to build community understanding and representation.

3. Challenges in Accessing Services and Programs Locally

Participants raised issues around the lack of local service access for newcomers, especially compared to Brantford. Many key supports like legal aid, cultural organizations, counseling, are not available in Brant or are difficult to reach without transportation.

“Organizations should have a satellite office in Brant so people can access resources here, like the Salvation Army.”

“We need more functional English and computer skills programs so newcomers can compete for employment.”

4. Barriers to Communication and Outreach

There was consensus that events and services are not always promoted in ways that reach newcomers. Participants suggested better use of social media, a centralized information hub, and stronger connections with community influencers.

“There are events happening, but the information isn’t getting to the right people.”

5. Building Cultural Understanding and Mutual Trust

A need for mutual cultural learning and relationship-building was strongly voiced. For example, Brant O.P.P. representatives noted the challenge of overcoming mistrust stemming from past experiences in other countries.

“There are barriers with newcomers understanding we are not the same kind of police. We’re here to help.”



Brant O.P.P. - Participants recommended ongoing cultural awareness training, cross-sector collaboration, and community dialogues that allow for open, non-judgmental conversations.

6. Engaging Youth and Bridging Generations

Youth engagement was highlighted as a key priority. The group encouraged programs that connect youth with seniors, local businesses, and cultural mentorship.

"We've talked about youth and senior engagement—have youth teach seniors tech, and seniors teach life skills."

"We haven't had much luck with getting the local high school involved. Maybe incentives from businesses could help?"

Conclusion

This focus group affirmed the County's growing diversity and the importance of intentional action to support belonging, visibility, and access for newcomers. Participants shared a hopeful but clear message: progress is happening, but inclusion must be actively built and continuously supported by leadership at all levels.

"We are all immigrants... but integration is a two-way street."

Seniors Focus Group

To better understand the needs of older adults in the County of Brant, two focus group sessions were held. One with seniors and the other with senior-serving organizations. Participants shared their perspectives on safety, transportation, communication, social connection, accessibility, and inclusion. Their feedback offers valuable insight into what supports aging with dignity in Brant, and what still needs attention.

Key Themes

1. Transportation and Walkability Remain Significant Barriers

Many seniors noted that transportation challenges limit their independence and participation in the community. Several shared past negative experiences with transit, which discouraged them from using services again.

"We're not even trying to use the service anymore because of previous issues—wrong addresses, no follow-up. But some are willing to try again."

Walkability was also a concern, with uneven sidewalks, lack of enforcement for snow clearing, and speeding traffic on roads like High Street making walking dangerous.

2. Limited Local Programming and Spaces for Seniors



While some seniors praised recent programming at churches and arenas, most agreed there is a lack of dedicated, accessible, and affordable spaces for seniors to gather regularly.

"We need a drop-in center where there's always something going on. Somewhere with like-minded people."

"We're currently renting churches to run programs, and even then, there's not enough space. Accessibility and parking are huge issues."

Seniors expressed a strong desire for consistent, low-cost programming—including fitness, technology workshops, and intergenerational activities.

3. Communication Must Be Clear, Accessible, and Multi-Channel

A recurring message was that how the County communicates matters as much as what is communicated. Many seniors are not online or struggle with tech-based platforms.

"We need phone calls, emails, posters in places we visit, and a seniors-specific newsletter. Not everything can be a QR code."

"A lot of seniors just want to physically read information. They check bulletin boards."

Seniors also expressed frustration that feedback often feels like a one-way street.

"We're asked to fill out surveys, but we never hear back. We want to know what happens with our input."

4. Aging in Place Requires More Accessible Services and Design

Many participants emphasized the importance of aging in place, and the need for programs and facilities to be physically accessible, local, and inclusive.

"If it's not accessible, they won't participate. Falls are a huge risk, and steps, ramps, and doors all make a difference."

Participants called for the County and community organizations to use accessibility checklists and consult directly with seniors when designing programs or spaces.

5. Inclusion and Connection Matter

Participants praised Brant's friendly, welcoming spirit, but also acknowledged the difficulty in reaching rural seniors or those from different backgrounds.

"People just want to connect—whether it's fitness, drop-ins, or community dinners. Once they do, they feel part of something and stay engaged."



Programs like Afro-Cari Brant and Apple Fest were appreciated as ways to experience cultural diversity, and there was support for more intergenerational programming and cultural inclusion efforts.

6. Housing, Volunteering, and Affordability Are Ongoing Challenges

Seniors highlighted high living costs, a growing waitlist for affordable housing, and a shortage of volunteers to run events or community programs.

“Volunteering is a struggle. Service clubs, legions, and gardening groups are all short-staffed.”

“Fixed incomes are being stretched. Programs must stay free or low-cost to be accessible.”

Conclusion

Seniors in the County of Brant want to stay active, involved, and independent, but they need accessible spaces, reliable transportation, and affordable opportunities to do so. Their feedback points to the value of ongoing engagement, meaningful follow-up, and connection through programming and accessible spaces as keys to well-being and dignity in aging.

Youth Focus Group Events

Youth participants (approximately 44 youth) shared creative and heartfelt ideas at events held in Burford and Paris to make the County a more supportive place for young people. A summary of the ideas they shared include:

Recreational Facilities: There was strong demand for an indoor swimming pool (noted 19 times), bowling alley, zipline at Lions Park, and more turf fields and soccer spaces.

Programming and Activities: Youth asked for more free events, video game tournaments, nature programs, and indoor movie nights. They also wanted life skills programming like cooking, baking, and sewing classes.

Community Connection: They valued opportunities to meet firefighters, police, and other community members, as well as spaces to talk with trusted adults.

Belonging and Inclusion: Suggestions included card nights with grandparents, safe and well-lit hangouts, and social events like bingo or games nights.

Built Environment Feedback: Concerns about affordability, too many new homes versus stores, and traffic design were raised, along with a desire for better-designed public spaces, playgrounds, and more garbage cans downtown.

Highlighting the need to co-create programs with youth, these insights, gathered directly from community youth, reinforce the need for dedicated spaces, intergenerational activities, and programming that prioritize social connection outside of sports, safety, creativity, and fun.

