

# 2024 YORK REGION HEALTH AND WELL-BEING REVIEW



For the year ended December 31, 2024  
Regional Municipality of York, Ontario, Canada  
Prepared by Community and Health Services



## Land Acknowledgement

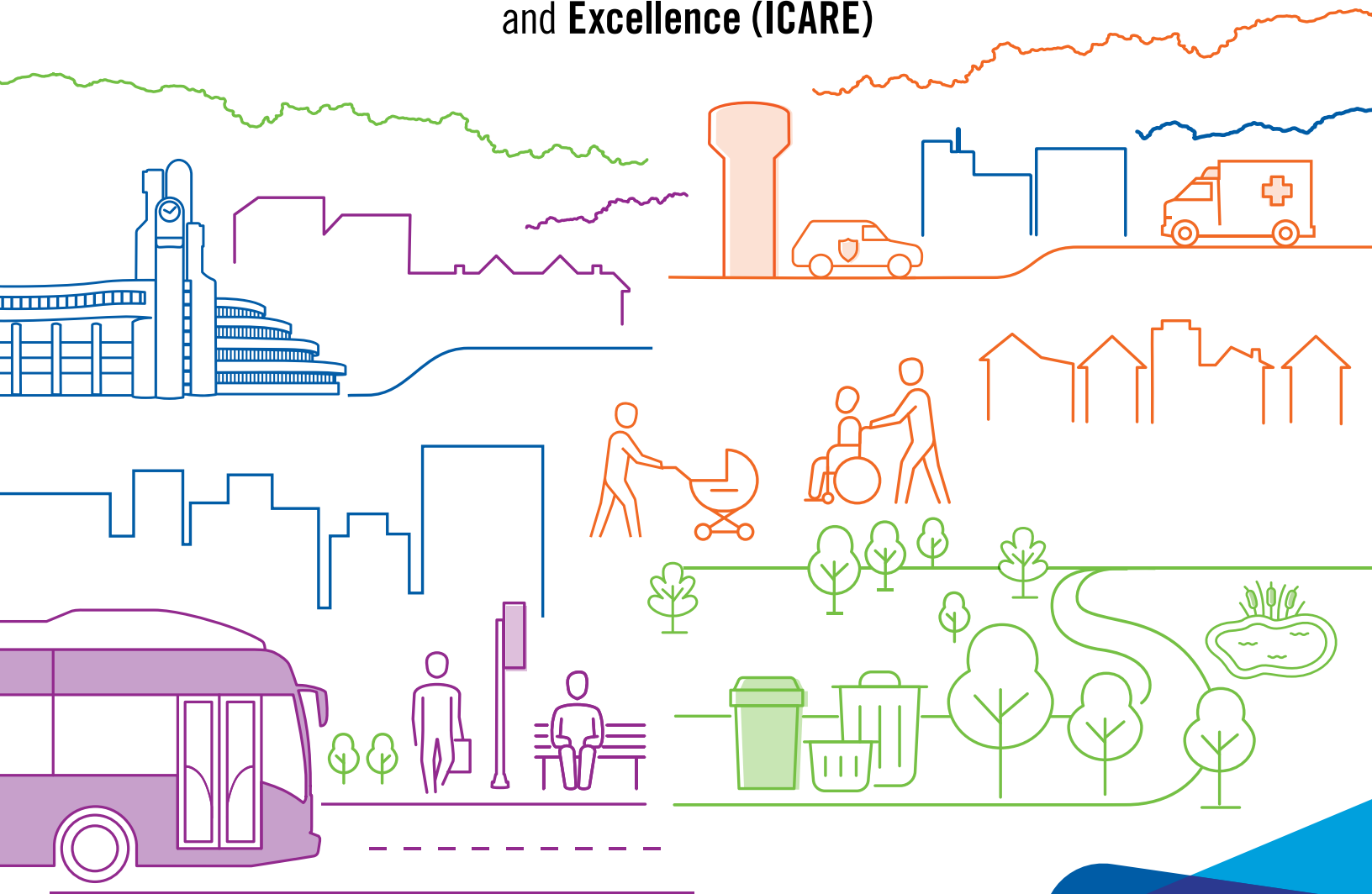
We acknowledge that York Region is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Peoples including the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Métis peoples and the treaty territories of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Williams Treaties First Nations. Today this area is home to many diverse Indigenous Peoples, and we recognize their history, spirituality, culture and stewardship of this land. We also acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation as our closest First Nation community.

# VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

We envision  
**strong, caring, safe communities**

through our mission of  
**working together to serve our thriving communities**  
— **today and tomorrow**

by relying on our values of  
**Integrity, Commitment, Accountability, Respect**  
and **Excellence (ICARE)**





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# INTRODUCTION

The 2024 York Region Health and Well-Being Review (the Review) presents an annual overview of:

- **Key population and socio-demographic trends in York Region**
- **Programs and services provided by Community and Health Services Department, including service pressures**

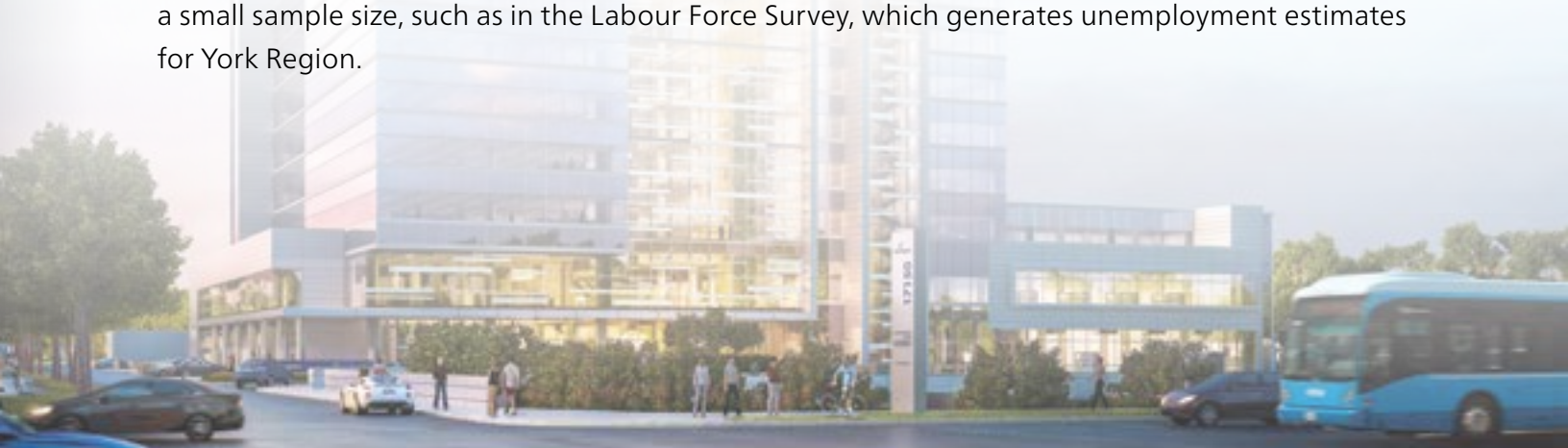
The Review identifies the importance of innovations, integrated partnerships and advocacy to realize sustainable and responsive solutions that build healthier, more engaged and inclusive communities for residents at every stage of life.

# METHODOLOGY

Data presented in this Review uses the most current and reliable data, drawing on approximately fifty external and internal data sources including but not limited to Statistics Canada, internal program data, academic and think-tank research, and community partners.

Data sources have different collection schedules and release dates, which impact availability of data year-over-year. For example, income data is analyzed from 2023 income tax filings of York Region residents, representing income from 2022. In contrast, Rental Market Survey data is collected annually by Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation and survey data included in this Review represents 2024 findings.

To effectively highlight recent trends, where feasible the Review presents both numerical figures and percentages. However, in certain situations it may not be possible to provide both numerical figures and percentages. This can arise from methodological limitations in a data source or due to a small sample size, such as in the Labour Force Survey, which generates unemployment estimates for York Region.



## 2024 KEY FINDINGS

Key 2024 trends include a growing and diversifying population, decreasing income security, and challenges with housing affordability and mental health and well-being. These trends are driving an increased demand for human services and wraparound supports.

The Regional Municipality of York (the Region) delivers a number of provincially mandated human services programs in collaboration with community partners. Expertise in local community needs and partnerships enable the Region to implement a person-centered approach to deliver human services. This supports residents, often during their most vulnerable times, and contributes to strengthening communities and quality of life in York Region.

Provincial funding has not kept pace with inflation or increased demand, which could negatively impact current and future service delivery levels and the Region's ability to provide them to residents. The Government of Ontario (the Province) has recognized the need to adjust funding in some areas to help address gaps. Regular and proactive discussions with the Province remain important to explore opportunities to support the effective delivery of human services.

Key actions and investments continue to be made by Regional Council to address evolving needs of residents. For example, over \$12 million in [Critical Social Infrastructure](#) investments were approved by Council to address challenges facing communities in priority areas of homelessness, housing and community investments. With these investments and through programs and services, Regional Council and the Region are positively impacting the lives of York Region residents. These impacts can be seen in the outcomes of York Region programs and services identified on the following page.

**Human services** support people at every stage of life, strengthening communities, and positively influencing health equity, well-being, and stability. Examples include health services, income security, employment assistance, housing programs, seniors, family and children's services, newcomer supports, education, recreation, and local community outreach programs.<sup>1</sup>



## IMPACT OF YORK REGION'S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**Multi-year Plans**  
**help meet resident needs** including seniors, paramedics, newcomers, homelessness and community safety and well-being

**Over 5,300**

**people supported** by Homelessness Community Programs and community providers

**Over 47,800**

**residents engaged** through Community Safety and Well-Being Plan initiatives

**Over 19,000**

**residents accessed food services** funded by Community Investment Fund

**Over 6,800**

**residents served** through 24 mental health and well-being projects funded by Community Investment Fund

**Over 500**

**people provided support** through Community Paramedicine Outreach Response Program

**Over 6,500**

**households supported** through rent subsidies

**Over 183,000**

**residents supported** through Access York

**Over 21,600**

**beneficiaries** of Ontario Works program

**Note:** Impacts above are based on current and most up-to-date data and outcomes for programs highlighted. These include data from 2022-2024, 2023 and 2024 depending on data collection and reporting schedule.

The Region continues to collaborate and adapt programs and services to meet evolving needs and advocate for policy and funding changes to enhance quality of life for York Region residents.

# BACKGROUND: COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Community and Health Services (CHS) Department at the the Region plans, delivers and oversees human services for York Region residents at every stage of life.

CHS' mandate is to build healthier, more engaged, and inclusive communities by providing and enabling equitable human services programs and supports.

CHS plans, delivers and oversees nine program areas, including six Regional core services and three support services. These program areas support residents, often during their most vulnerable times and contribute to strengthening communities and the quality of life in York Region by:

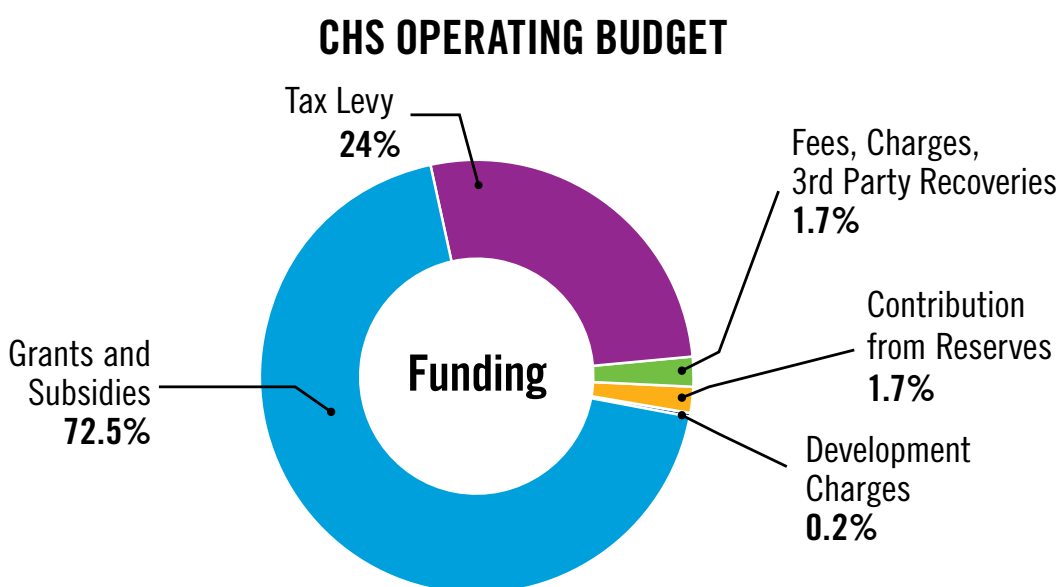
- Protecting and promoting resident health and well-being
- Strengthening the Region's network of integrated, equity-based human services
- Improving access to health and social support services
- Supporting housing affordability and stability through community housing, rent subsidies and eviction prevention programs
- Promoting welcoming and inclusive communities



In the Region's [approved 2025 Budget](#), CHS' gross operating budget is \$1.3 billion and the 10-year capital budget is \$570.5 million.

CHS relies on funding from other levels of government to deliver programs and services to residents, with the majority of its operating budget (almost 73%) coming from grants and subsidies from senior levels of government.<sup>2</sup> There is an increased risk to the Region's ability to support residents' human services needs due to the uncertainty of provincial funding, cost-sharing and policy changes.

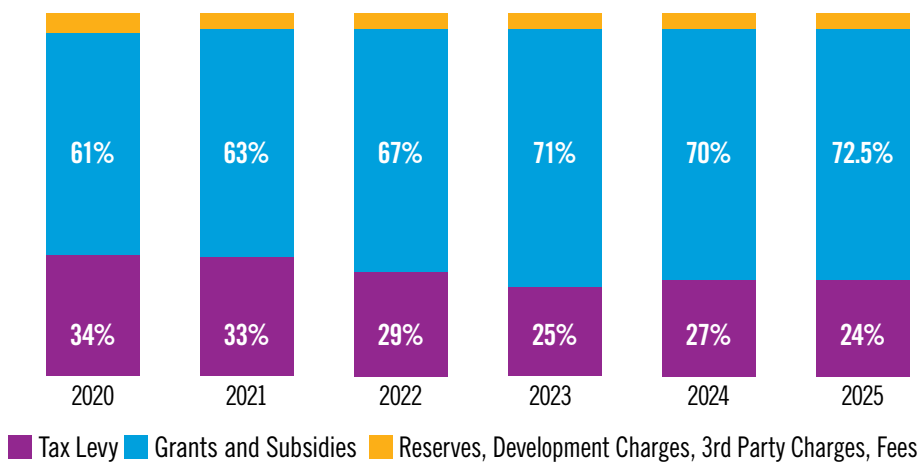
Key drivers impacting the operating budget include continued growth of Ontario Works caseloads, support for homelessness rapid deployment actions, and paramedic services actions related to the Paramedic Services Master Plan 2021-2031.



**Source:** York Region. November 28, 2024. 2025-2026 Budget

Note: Development Charge (DC) reserves comprise a component of the operating budget as they are used to pay down debts issued against Development Charges to fund capital projects.

### CHS FUNDING SOURCES, 2020-2025



## SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

According to the [World Health Organization](#), Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age. These conditions are shaped by economic, social, cultural and political factors beyond an individual's control, and have a direct and indirect impact on population health outcomes.

The overlapping aspects of a person's identity, like race, gender, economic status, and sexual orientation intensifies the impact of these factors on marginalized communities.

Access to economic and social resources are important for addressing inequality and influenced by policies at all levels of government.

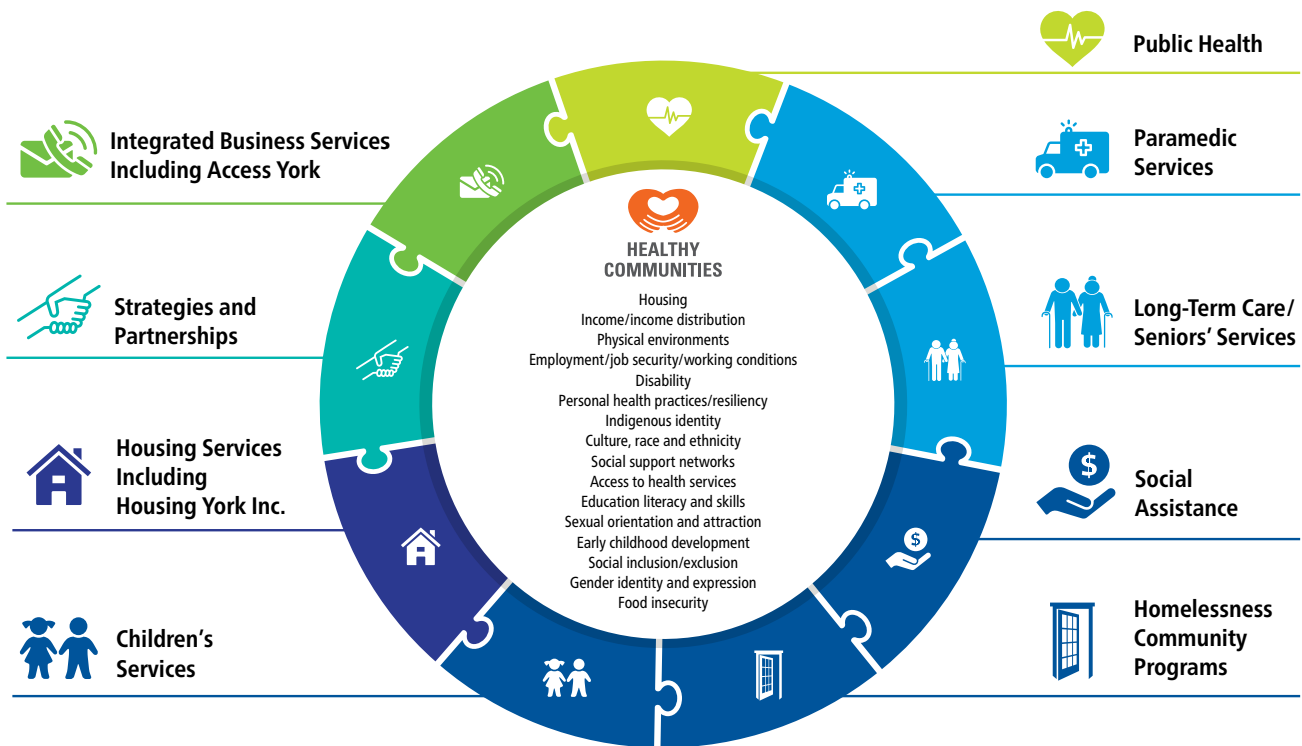
CHS supports Council's [Vision](#) of strong, caring and safe communities and the [2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan: From Vision to Results](#) priority to support community well-being. This is advanced under the Healthy Communities area of focus by:

- Protecting and promoting residents' well-being
- Supporting safe communities
- Sustaining and increasing affordable housing choices



CHS raises public awareness, engages multi-sector partners, and advocates for policy and program improvements at the provincial and federal levels. The Region is one partner in the broader human services system. Federal and provincial governments, the nine local municipalities, and community partners all play vital roles in supporting thriving communities by providing services that positively impact individuals' social determinants of health.

### CHS SERVICE AREAS AND THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH THEY INFLUENCE



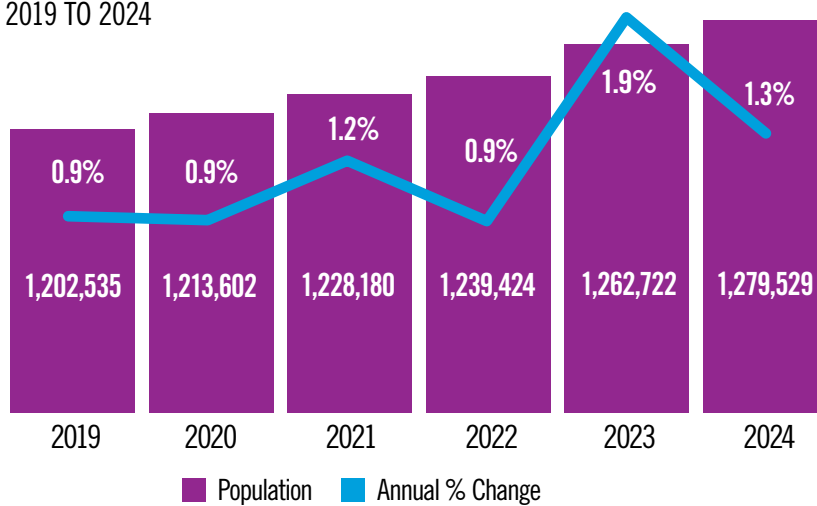
# SECTION 1: POPULATION & SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

## York Region's population is growing, reaching 1.28 million residents in 2024

York Region is the fourth fastest growing municipality in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). In 2024, York Region grew by almost 17,000 residents or 1.3% but remained below the Ontario average of 3.2%. By 2051, York Region's population is expected to exceed two million.<sup>3</sup>

### ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH IN YORK REGION

2019 TO 2024

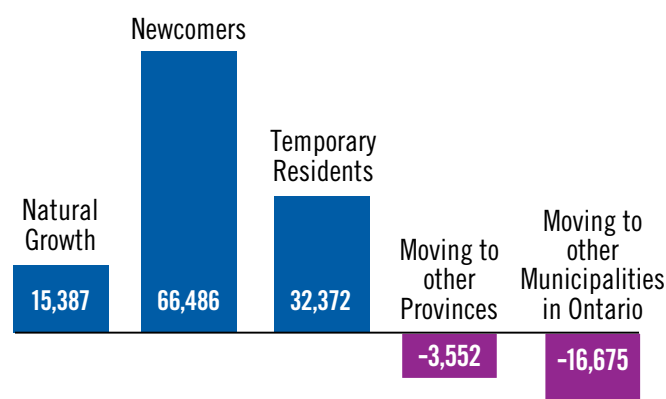


Source: York Region, Corporate Services, Economic and Development Services Branch

## Newcomers are driving population growth and enriching cultural diversity

### YORK REGION POPULATION GROWTH FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES

2019 TO 2024



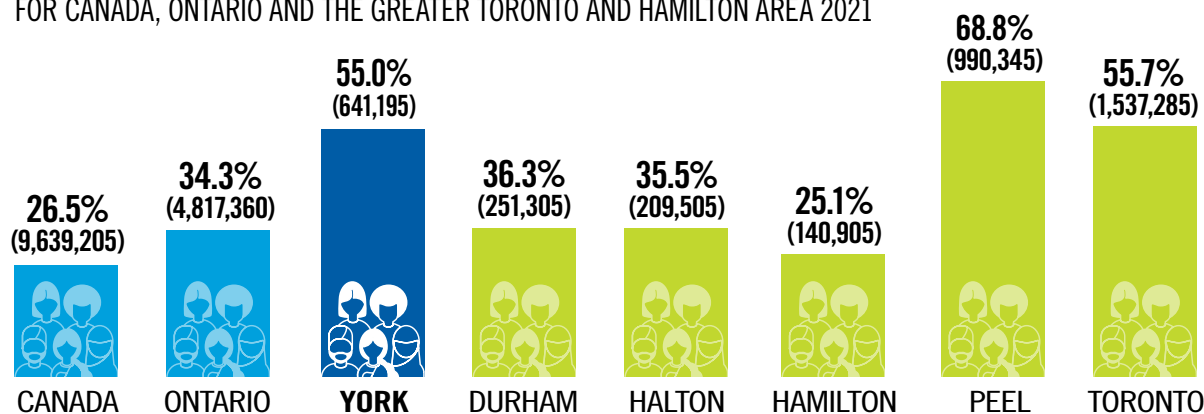
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0153-01  
Components of population change by census division,  
2021 boundaries 2024 data

From 2019 to 2024, over 66,000 newcomers moved to York Region, representing approximately 71% of population growth<sup>4</sup>. Newcomers bring talent and skills to our communities, creating jobs, filling labour gaps and supporting services and economic growth through labour force participation.

During this period, York Region welcomed over 32,000 temporary residents, including international students and foreign workers, the highest number ever recorded<sup>5</sup>. Like other municipalities across Ontario, there is an increase in asylum claimants seeking residence in York Region, resulting in unprecedented growth in unplanned migration since 2022.

### PROPORTION OF POPULATION THAT SELF-IDENTIFY AS A VISIBLE MINORITY

FOR CANADA, ONTARIO AND THE GREATER TORONTO AND HALTAM AREA 2021



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population

## Recent federal policy changes will impact funding for newcomer services

The Government of Canada’s Immigration Levels Plan influences the arrival of newcomers, with nearly 4% of all permanent residents choosing York Region over the past decade.

The federal government in its [2025-2027 Immigration Levels Plan](#) will reduce permanent resident targets starting in 2025. This reduction will lower funding for settlement services and could place service pressures on newcomers supports provided by the Region and partners.

The federal government also plans to decrease temporary residents to 5% of the population over the next three years, affecting sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, food processing, and accommodations due to potential labour shortages.

## While overall population continues to increase, more residents are leaving York Region for other areas of Ontario and Canada than before

A growing number of residents between the ages of 15 and 35 are leaving York Region for other places in Ontario and Canada.<sup>6</sup> This trend may be in part influenced by York Region’s rising cost of living and contributes to a growing proportion of seniors.

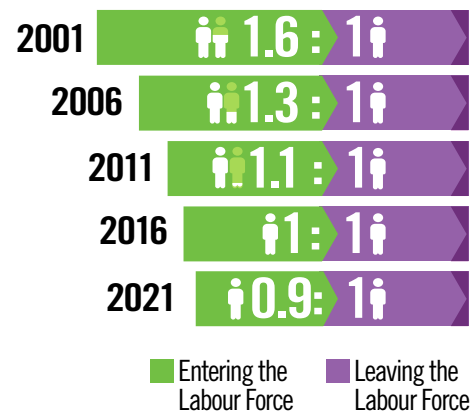
With more younger residents considering leaving, it may become more difficult to fill jobs left by retirees. Approximately one in four residents are approaching retirement age and there are more people leaving the labour force than entering.<sup>7</sup>

## York Region’s population is aging and residents are living longer

Advances in healthcare, better living conditions, and healthier lifestyles are increasing life expectancy in Canada, leading to a higher proportion of older residents. There are now more seniors over 65 than

### YORK REGION LABOUR FORCE REPLACEMENT RATIO

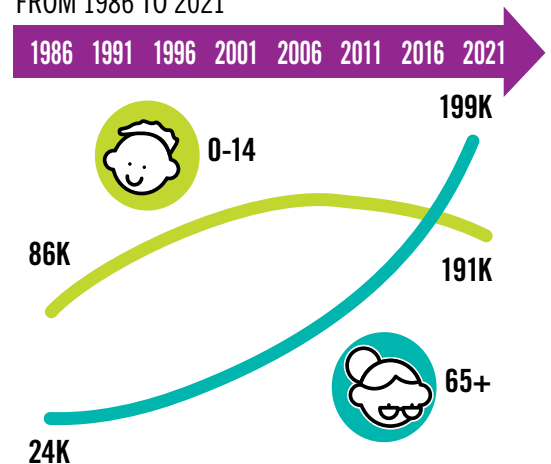
2001 TO 2021



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population

### NUMBER OF SENIORS AND CHILDREN IN YORK REGION

GROWTH IN CHILDREN (0 TO 14) AND SENIORS (65+) FROM 1986 TO 2021



Source: Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population



children under 14 in York Region.<sup>8</sup> By 2051, seniors are expected to make up 24% of the population. This is an increase of 143% when compared to 2021.<sup>9</sup>

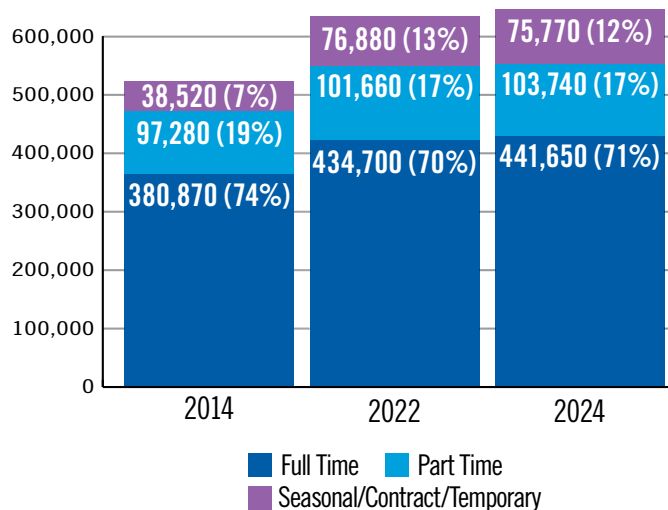
While many seniors remain healthy, active and connected to their communities, as seniors age, they may require more comprehensive supports across a broad continuum of health and social care to age in the right place for their needs, circumstances and preferences.

## Job growth is steady across many sectors but a rise in contract-based, seasonal, and temporary employment can result in economic precarity

In 2024, York Region recorded strong employment growth in Health Care and Social Services, Construction, and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sectors. However, industries like Administrative and Support Services, Real Estate, Rental and Leasing, and Information and Cultural Industries are facing challenges due to inflation, housing affordability, high interest rates, and geopolitical policies.<sup>10</sup>

In York Region, contract-based, seasonal, and temporary employment has seen significant growth over the past decade, with an increase of 97%. The number of jobs in this category rose from 38,520 in 2014 to 75,770 in 2024, adding an additional 37,250 jobs to this category.<sup>11</sup>

**EMPLOYMENT BY TYPE OF WORKER, YORK REGION**  
2018, 2022, 2024



Source: York Region, Corporate Services, Economic and Development Services Branch, 2024 York Region Employment Survey

Newcomers, racialized groups, youth, women and seniors are more likely to enter the “gig economy”. The “Gig economy” or “gig work” is a form of employment characterized by short-term jobs or tasks which do not guarantee steady work and where the worker must take specific actions to stay employed.<sup>12</sup> These forms of employment offer flexibility, however, gig work can negatively impact mental and physical health.<sup>13</sup> The precarious nature of gig jobs can also lead to instability.

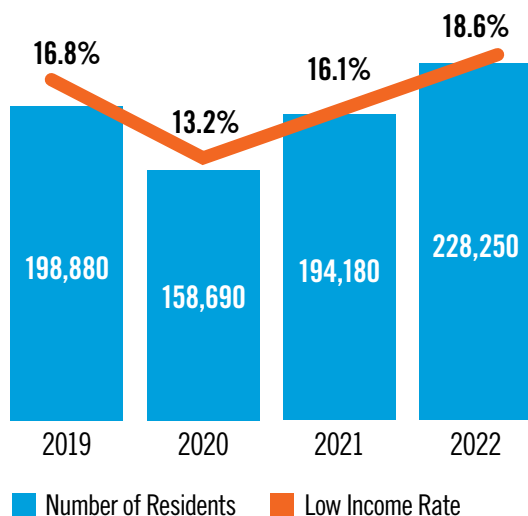
Unemployment rates in York Region are rising, increasing from 4.2% in early 2023 to 8.1% in late 2024, and up from 4.7% in 2019.<sup>14</sup>

## More residents are experiencing low-income

A person is in low-income when their family income is below the thresholds associated with their family size. Latest data from 2022, shows 18.6% of York Region residents (228,250)

are living below the low-income threshold, surpassing pre-pandemic level of 16.8% (198,880) in 2019.<sup>15</sup>

### LOW-INCOME TRENDS IN YORK REGION 2019 TO 2022

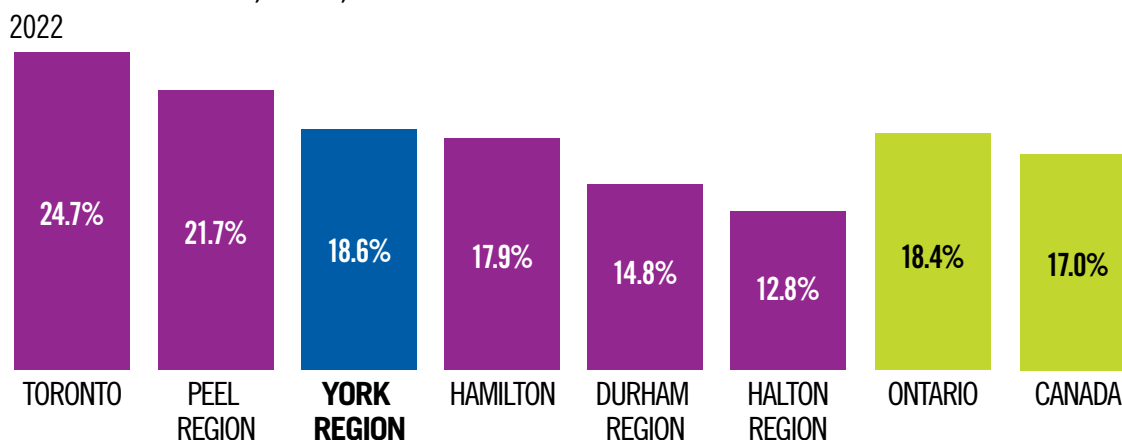


Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File and York Region, Strategies and Partnership calculations

- 18% of children under 18 years of age live in low-income families; the highest since 2014
- 24.6% of Seniors are living in low-income, down from 26% in 2021

For a single person, in 2022 the low-income threshold was \$25,418 and for a family of four it was \$50,836.<sup>16</sup> These residents are among the most vulnerable, including people who rely on social assistance or housing subsidies, and people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, living with disabilities and/or experiencing mental health challenges. Among low-income residents, 33.1% are employed but earned too little to lift them out of poverty.<sup>17</sup>

### LOW INCOME RATE, GTHA, ONTARIO AND CANADA 2022



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File and York Region, Strategies and Partnership Branch calculations

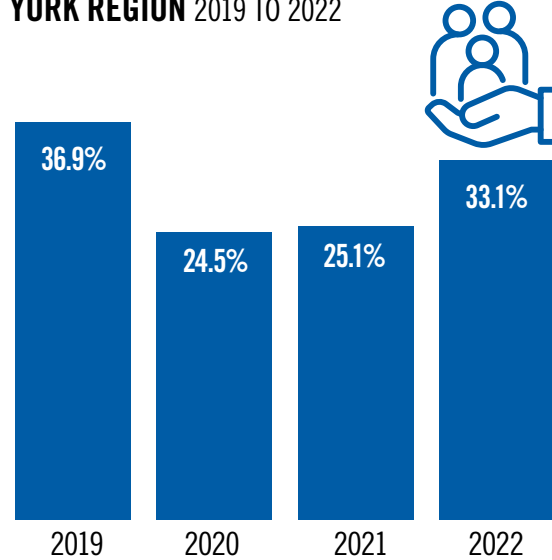


### LOW INCOME THRESHOLDS 2022

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS	LOW INCOME THRESHOLDS
1	\$25,418
2	\$35,946
3	\$44,025
4	\$50,836
5	\$56,836
6	\$62,261
7	\$67,250
8	\$71,893

Source: Statistics Canada. Technical Reference Guide for T1 Family File, 2022

### PERCENT OF LOW INCOME RESIDENTS WHO ARE WORKING POOR, YORK REGION 2019 TO 2022

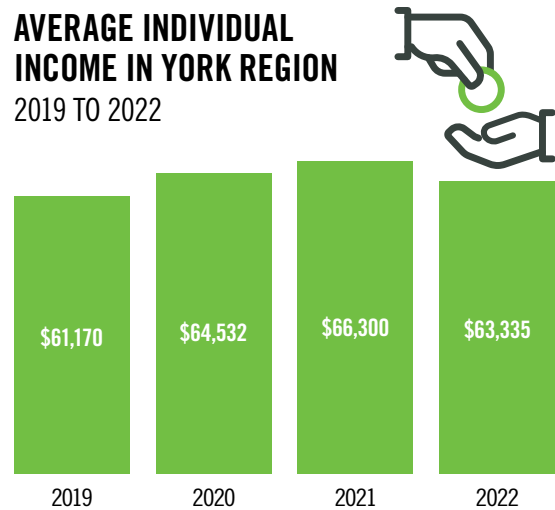


Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, Custom tabulation

### Average total income of York Region residents is decreasing

Residents' average total individual income, when adjusted for inflation, fell by 4.5% from 2021 levels (\$66,300) to \$63,335 in 2022.<sup>18</sup> This downward trend may in part be caused by historically high inflation rates, the end of pandemic-related benefits including Canadian Emergency Response Benefit, Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Caregiver Benefit, among others, and the rollback of special adjustments to Employment Insurance (EI) program.

### AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME IN YORK REGION 2019 TO 2022



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File and York Region, Strategies and Partnership Branch calculations

## Decreasing income security impacts residents' ability to afford basic needs

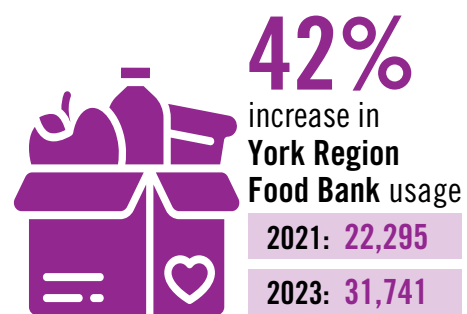
Income security refers to the level of income that ensures basic consumption needs can be met and influences overall well-being. It is the actual, perceived and expected income earned, and income received from government and nongovernmental programs and services aimed at poverty reduction, social assistance, affordability strategies, and housing stabilization supports.

## Income is a key factor in food access and affordability

Food insecurity is a growing concern in York Region, alongside rising cost of living. In 2023, an estimated 19.4% of York Region households experienced food insecurity, increasing from 15.5% over the span of 2021 to 2022.<sup>19</sup>

Food insecurity refers to inadequate or uncertain access to food, and/or sufficient quality of food due to financial constraints. Challenges accessing food vary from inability to afford meals, to settling for less nutritious options, to going without food on the table.

Food insecurity is not about a lack of food, it is about a lack of income to afford food.



Source: Food Bank of York Region, Report on Food Insecurity, 2021 and 2023

### DID YOU KNOW?

Every Year, the Region conducts the Nutritional Food Basket (NFB) survey to determine whether people living on social assistance or minimum wage can afford to pay for rent and maintain a healthy diet.

[Food Insecurity is York Region: The 2023 Nutritious Food Basket](#) report provides an analysis of findings and calls attention to income as a key factor in food access and affordability. An updated report will be released in 2025.

For a family of four, the monthly cost of food is approximately \$1,219.20.<sup>20</sup> This represents 44% of income for a family of four that relies on Ontario Works. Improved financial conditions are needed for people experiencing or at risk of food insecurity, including programs and policies aimed at living wage, basic income, increased social assistance rates and alleviating affordability pressures.

In Ontario, food bank usage increased by 38% from April 2022 to March 2023. This marked the seventh consecutive, and the largest single-year increase recorded by the Ontario food bank network.<sup>21</sup> Food banks

play a role in providing short-term relief but alone cannot solve food insecurity in sustainable ways. Similarly, food education programs help, but research shows people experiencing food insecurity are often already applying resourceful strategies to stretch food supply on a limited budget.<sup>22</sup>

People living in food-insecure households have greater risk of adverse health effects including heart disease, high blood pressure, poor dental health, depression, and mood and anxiety disorder.<sup>23</sup>



## York Region is experiencing a housing affordability crisis

In Canada, housing is considered “affordable” if it costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income. Just over a quarter of homeowners (26.9% or 86,449) and just under half of renters (46.7% or 32,485) in York Region are spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs. These proportions are the highest in Ontario.<sup>24</sup>

York Region has not met its affordability targets for six consecutive years. Among all new housing units built in 2023, 85% (7,469) were ownership units and only 15% (1,271) were rental; including private market, Housing York Inc. and registered additional dwelling unit types. No affordable ownership units were built in 2023, but all rental units built (1,271) were classified as affordable.<sup>25</sup>

## York Region residents hold high mortgage and consumer debt

In 2023, York Region residents held the highest mortgage (\$731,517) and consumer debt (\$82,133) across the GTHA. The average York Region household owed \$3.13 for every dollar of disposable income.<sup>26</sup>

In 2023, Bank of Canada raised interest rates three times, the highest in over two decades, before cutting rates in 2024. Many households face a

heavy debt burden to maintain their homes. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reports that approximately 1.2 million mortgages are set to be renewed nationally between 2024-2025, with 85% approved when interest rates were at or below one percent.<sup>27</sup> This could leave some households at risk of being unable to afford their homes.

## GTHA HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS SPENDING 30% OR MORE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME ON HOUSING 2021

	OWNERS	RENTERS
York	26.9%	46.7%
Toronto	25.5%	39.5%
Peel	25.7%	37.9%
Halton	18.7%	43.9%
Hamilton	15.8%	37.1%
Durham	18.7%	40.4%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2021 Census of Population

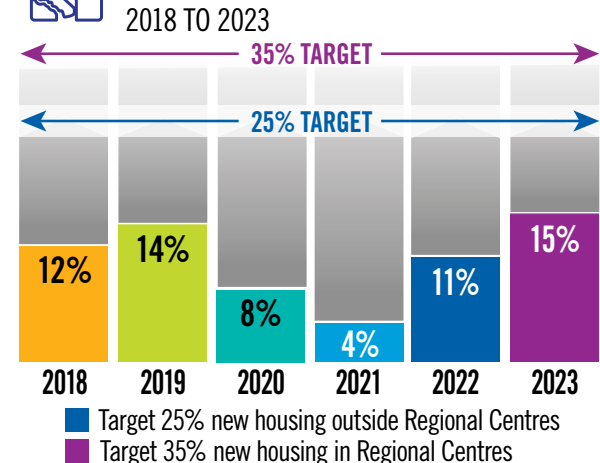
## AVERAGE MORTGAGE AND CONSUMER DEBT, GTHA 2023

	AVERAGE MORTGAGE	AVERAGE CONSUMER DEBT
Durham, ON (RM)	\$518,002	\$67,009
Halton, ON (RM)	\$699,414	\$82,058
Hamilton, ON (CDR)	\$448,654	\$50,705
Peel, ON (RM)	\$582,959	\$65,634
Toronto, ON (CDR)	\$558,244	\$48,960
<b>York, ON (RM)</b>	<b>\$731,517</b>	<b>\$82,133</b>
Ontario	\$465,207	\$55,876

Source: Environics Analytics, 2023 WealthScapes Financial Database



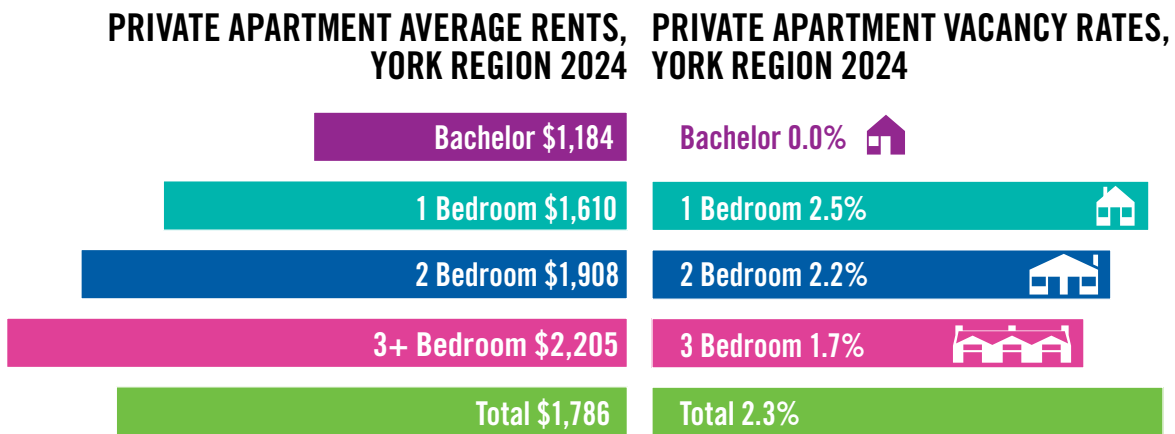
## PERCENT OF NEW UNITS BUILT IN YORK REGION THAT ARE AFFORDABLE 2018 TO 2023



Source: Affordable Housing in York Region: 2023 Measuring and Monitoring Report

## There is a lack of purpose-built rental options in York Region

At the end of 2024, the average vacancy rate in York Region’s purpose-built rental market was 2.3%<sup>28</sup>, below the 3% to 5% vacancy rate necessary for a healthy rental market.<sup>29</sup> The average rent for a purpose-built bachelor unit in 2024 was \$1,184 per month.<sup>30</sup>

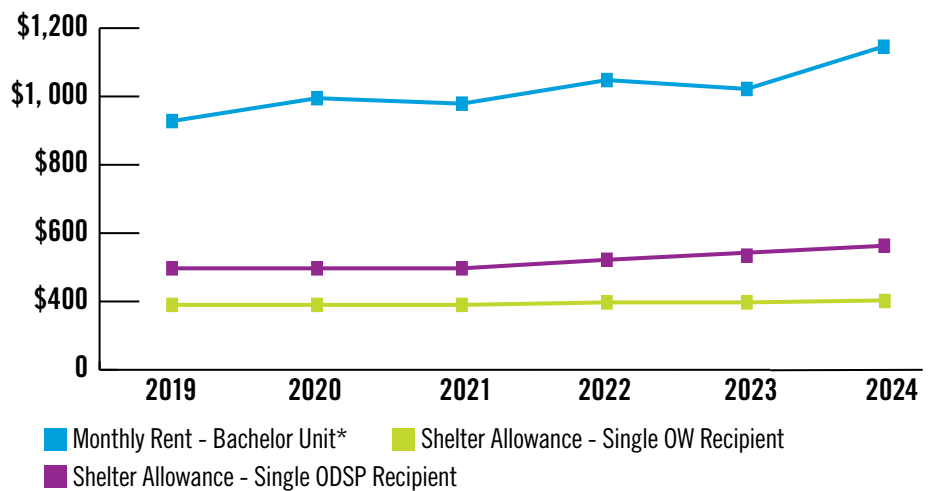


Source: CMHC, Rental Market Report, 2024

Source: CMHC, Rental Market Report, 2024

Almost all renters in York Region rely on the secondary rental market, such as privately owned rented homes and condominiums. This offers less security and affordability compared to purpose-built rentals. Residents living alone in receipt of Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program find it especially challenging to find affordable options.

**YORK REGION MONTHLY SHELTER RATES FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS COMPARED TO AVERAGE BACHELOR RENTS 2019 TO 2023**

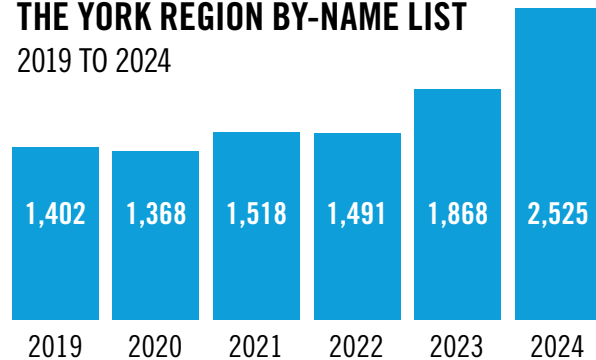


Source: CMHC Rental Market Reports 2020-2024, York Region Zones 25-27

## Homelessness is on the rise in York Region

Existing emergency and transitional housing facilities in York Region regularly operate at or near capacity and have been impacted by growth in asylum seekers since 2022. The average length of stay in emergency housing almost doubled from 2019 to 2024 increasing from 26.5 to 51.7 days. In addition, the number of known encampment locations increased, from 62 to 361 between 2021 and 2024. Research indicates that about 80% of homelessness is “hidden,” making it challenging to determine exact rates of homelessness in communities.<sup>31</sup>

**NUMBER OF UNIQUE CLIENTS ON THE YORK REGION BY-NAME LIST 2019 TO 2024**



**Source:** York Region, Community and Health Services, Social Services Branch, Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, v4 as of February 4, 2025

Homelessness has significant, long-lasting impacts on health and well-being, particularly for those experiencing chronic homelessness. This includes crowded shelters, exposure to extreme weather, difficulty in accessing treatment and following recommended care. People who experience homelessness may be more likely to use hospital emergency departments and have a greater risk of death compared with people that are housed.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The Region with the United Way Greater Toronto conducted a 2024 Point-in-Time Count of people experiencing homelessness in York Region. This will help the Region better understand the scope of homelessness. Results will be shared in 2025.

Aspen Woods



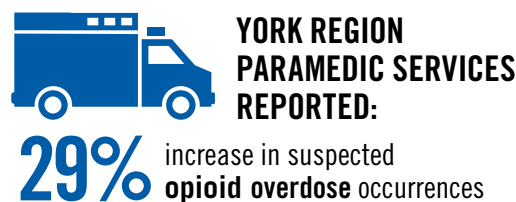
## Mental health and well-being challenges are growing

York Region’s population reporting their mental health as either “very good” or “excellent” has decreased from 70.8% in 2015 to 58.4% in 2021. This decline was most notable among females and older residents and may have been triggered or worsened by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>32</sup>

BETWEEN 2020 TO 2023



Source: York Regional Police, 2023



Source: York Region. Community and Health Services Department, Paramedic and Seniors Services Branch, 2023

## Opioid use in York Region has been increasing over the last 10 years<sup>33</sup>

In 2023, 83 opioid-related deaths were reported in York Region, an increase of 38% compared to 2022 where there were 60 opioid related deaths.<sup>34</sup> From 2018 to 2023, York Region Paramedic Services' calls related to suspected opioid overdose increased from 41 to 152 (271%).

Increasing rates of opioid use are emerging among secondary school students in York Region. In 2023, 19.1% of York Region secondary school students self-reported non-medical use of prescription opioids in the last 12 months, compared to 10% in 2017.<sup>35</sup>

### ALCOHOL, CANNABIS, E-CIGARETTES AND PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS USE BY SECONDARY STUDENTS, YORK REGION

2017 TO 2023

	2017	2023
Secondary students used cannabis in the last 12 months	21.9%	14.6%
Secondary students vaped in the last 12 months	11.1%	12.4%
Secondary students used alcohol in the last 12 months	50.2%	34.6%
Secondary students used prescription opioids non-medically in the last 12 months	10.0%	19.1%

Source: York Region Public Health. Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey 2017 to 2023

## Intimate partner violence, hate crime and hate incidents are on the rise

York Regional Police reports that criminal incidents of family violence increased by 25% and criminal incidents of intimate partner violence increased by 31%, between 2022 and 2023.<sup>36</sup> These rates have been increasing over the past five years.

York Regional Police crime data reports that there were 293 hate crimes reported in 2023 compared to 277 in 2022.<sup>37</sup>



## SECTION 2: COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES IMPACT - BUILDING HEALTHIER, MORE ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

### Through collective impact initiatives the Region is responding to newcomers' needs

Settlement and inclusion of newcomers requires a coordinated effort by community partners and all levels of government.

Newcomers bring education, skills and experience, but they are at risk of declining physical and mental health due to socio-economic challenges associated with immigration and settlement.<sup>38</sup>

It takes at least five years for immigrants who are university-educated and six years for skilled worker immigrants in York Region to bridge the income gap with their Canadian-born counterparts placing them at risk of economic precarity and associated impacts to mental health.<sup>39</sup>



Since 2009, the Region has led a [Local Immigration Partnership](#), a federally funded initiative to support newcomer settlement and inclusion. Council approved [A Place to Thrive: York Region’s 2024 to 2027 Plan for Newcomer Inclusion](#) that outlines collective actions for the Region and community partners to make York Region a welcoming place where everyone can thrive.



### 2024 HIGHLIGHTS OF PLAN FOR NEWCOMER INCLUSION

**1,859** Downloads of York Region Newcomer Guide

**45+** Community partners engaged on collective actions

**30+** Organizations involved in Welcoming Week

**Source:** York Region, Community and Health Services Department, York Region Local Immigration Partnership, 2024

In its first year of implementation, the Plan for Newcomer Inclusion is supporting [newcomer service navigation](#) by planning a “Welcoming Week” celebration supporting settlement needs of diverse newcomers. Progress on the Plan for Newcomer Inclusion will be presented to Council in 2025.

## The Region is supporting asylum seekers looking for refuge in our communities

The Region continues to provide emergency housing as part of the asylum seeker response. Since opening in October 2023, 387 unique people were supported through the Asylum seeker hotel program and 250 unique people were housed (private market, subsidized, supportive).<sup>40</sup>

The Region is part of a Working Group established by federal and provincial governments, the City of Toronto and other GTHA partners to develop a strategy to support asylum seekers.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Through the [Inclusion Charter for York Region](#) the Region is committed to a welcoming and inclusive community where diversity is celebrated and everyone can develop to their full potential, practice freely in society and live with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination.

The Region is a proud member and co-chair of the [Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group \(MDIG\)](#). In collaboration with MDIG, the Region developed an [Inclusive Language Guide](#), and promotes the #EndHateYR Campaign.

## Services are adapting to meet the needs of seniors to “age in the right place”

As the number of seniors in York Region increases, so too does the need for affordable and supportive housing, accessible home and community care services, long-term care beds, active living programs, community and health supports, and emergency services.<sup>41</sup>

The Council approved [2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors](#) addresses system challenges and opportunities for joint advocacy and collaboration to enhance the health and well-being of our growing and diverse seniors’ population.

Education and training are vital tools in the Plan to Support Seniors to equip seniors, caregivers and those who partner in their care with enhanced understanding of resources and supports available. Information and training is provided through the Psychogeriatric Resource Consultant program, Healthy Aging and Healthy Built Environment programs, Community Housing Financial Empowerment Workshop Series, Retiring on Low Income Workshops, and presentations through coordinated outreach and engagements.



### YORK REGION PUBLIC HEALTH SENIORS DENTAL PROGRAM, 2024

**1,456** Unique clients served  
**4,776** Appointments completed

**Source:** York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Paramedic and Seniors Services Branch, 2024

The dental services program for seniors improves quality of life, decreases pain resulting from oral infection and ultimately, leads to decreased emergency visits.

Five adult day programs are offered across Maple and Keswick sites that provide supervised activities and enrichments for people with age-related illnesses, aphasia, cognitive impairment or acquired brain injury, supporting 256 people in 2024. These programs provide caregivers needed respite and enable those they support to remain in their homes for as long as possible.



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Unionville Commons Seniors Hub, a service hub on the ground floor of [Unionville Commons](#) in the City of Markham, is approximately 11,000 square feet and will offer inclusive and accessible seniors-focused programs and services aligned with the 2023 Needs Assessment for seniors living in Unionville Commons and surrounding communities. The Unionville Commons Seniors Hub aims to create a sense of community and to help seniors age in the right place.

Construction of the Seniors Hub is scheduled to begin in 2025 and it is expected to open its doors in 2026.

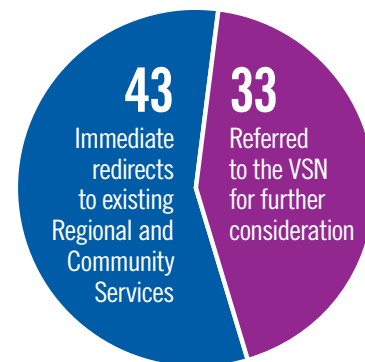
A permanent program since January 2024, Vulnerable Seniors Network (VSN) is an internal response table to stabilize vulnerable senior clients through needs-based solutions and harm reduction. VSN mitigates costly interventions such as calls to 911 and/or emergency department visits. In 2024, there was a 95% reduction in 911 calls for paramedics and 59% for police among seniors referred to VSN in the three months post-intervention.

The Region operates two long-term care homes, the [Newmarket Health Centre and Maple Health Centre](#), offering a total of 232 beds. Residents receive 24-hour nursing and personal care, help with daily living and on-site supervision and monitoring to protect their health, safety and well-being. In July 2024, there were 29 long-term care homes and an estimated 4,044 licensed long-term care beds across York Region.

To maintain compliance with the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*, average direct care hours must be increased to four hours per resident per day by March 31, 2025. With Provincial and Regional investments, the Region's Homes are on track to meet the legislated hours of care system target.

The Region is one of many service providers supporting seniors in the health care system. Addressing current and future needs requires collaborative planning, intervention, and evidence-based innovation with all levels of government, local municipalities, community partners, and the private sector.

## IN 2024, VSN RECEIVED 76 INQUIRIES ABOUT SENIORS' SERVICES



Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Paramedic and Seniors Services Branch, 2024

## Innovative initiatives such as community paramedicine programs are responding to increased 911 call demand

911 call demand continues to increase faster than the rate of population growth, driven mainly by the Region’s aging population. In 2023, paramedics responded to 92,473 incidents.

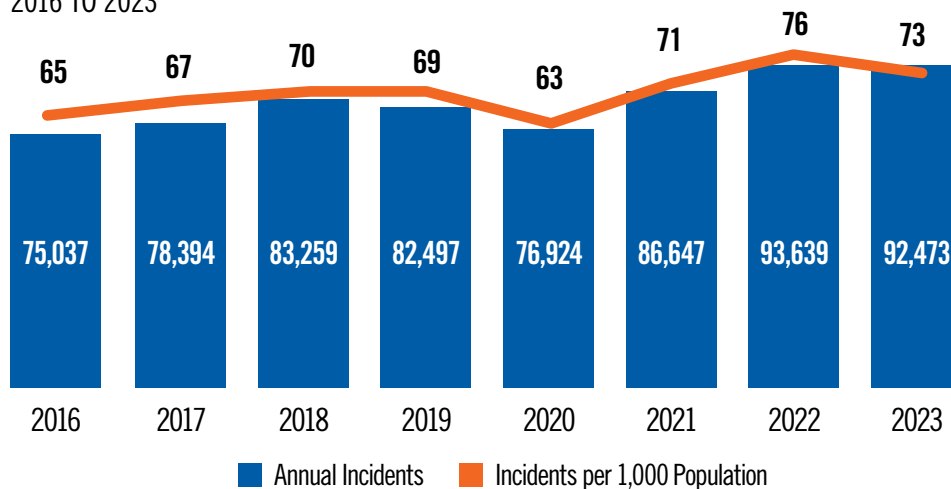
By 2031, paramedics are forecasted to respond to 163,606 incidents, an average annual increase of 6.8%. This rise and more complex medical and mental health needs impact the system’s capacity.

Strategic planning for community needs is delivered through the [York Region Paramedic Services Master Plan 2021 – 2031](#). In 2023, York Region Paramedic Services surpassed all six response time targets.

The Paramedic Services Master Plan identifies opportunities to mitigate costs and find innovative solutions to support system capacity, such as community paramedicine. The [Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care initiative](#) aims to reduce frequency of 911 calls from seniors. CP@Clinic is run out of subsidized seniors’ housing locations with high 911 calls.

### YORK REGION PARAMEDIC CALL VOLUME TOTAL AND PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

2016 TO 2023

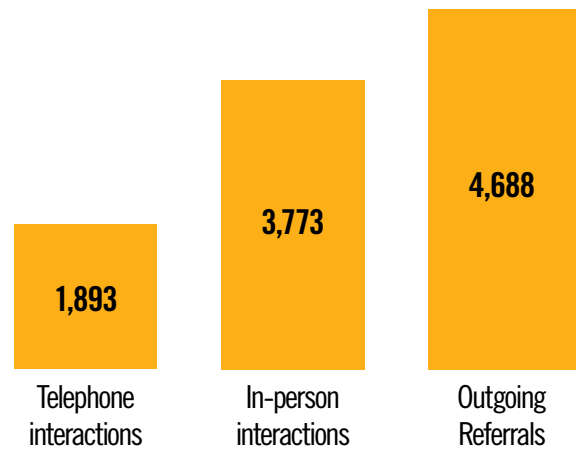


Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Paramedic and Seniors Services Branch, 2024

[Improving Patient Access to Care in the Community](#) introduced in April 2024, ensures paramedics have expanded skills to attend to patients, and reduce Emergency Room visits for 911 calls that do not require emergency care. York Region Paramedic Services is currently the only service with this pioneering initiative. Early results are promising, with about 57% of eligible patients being discharged at the scene (e.g., home) with care plans.

From January to October 2024, Emergency Department/911 Diversions from Community Paramedicine totaled 682. Expanding initiatives that increase capacity for 911 dispatch to divert calls to the most appropriate resource, to reduce the demand for ambulance response, remains a key priority for York Region Paramedic Services.

### DEMAND FOR COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE IN YORK REGION 2024



Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Paramedic and Seniors Services Branch, 2024



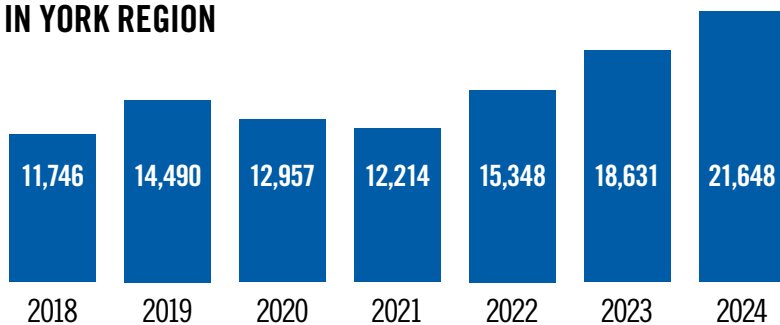


## The Region is continuing to support a growing social assistance caseload

For people living on low income, out of work or with no other means of support, the Region administers the provincial Ontario Works program which provides life stability case management and financial supports for basic needs and shelter.

Ontario Works is intended to help people return to employment, but many face barriers such as unmanaged mental health concerns, addiction, recent history of violence or displacement, English

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE RECEIVING ONTARIO WORKS IN YORK REGION



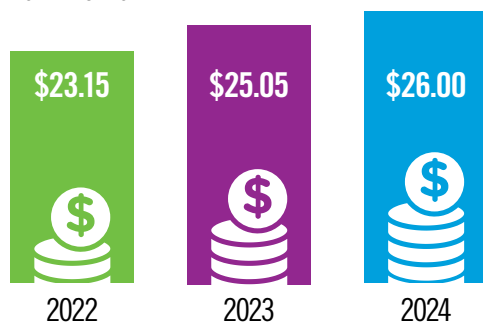
Data is provided to December 31st for each year

Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Social Services Branch, 2024.

as a Second Language, or lack of recent work history. This is resulting in increases in the number of people applying to and receiving Ontario Works. In York Region, the number of people receiving Ontario Works support increased by 84% (from 11,746 people on December 31st, 2018, to 21,648 people on December 31st, 2024).

To afford adequate basic needs and housing, an individual in York Region should earn a living wage.<sup>42</sup> Ontario Works financial benefit rates for basic needs and shelter have not been adjusted since 2018, leading to food insecurity and homelessness.

### LIVING WAGE RATES IN YORK REGION 2022 TO 2024



Source: Ontario Living Wage Network.

Updated 2024 Living Wage Rates, 2024

The provincial government continues to implement a new plan for social assistance delivery. Regional staff delivering Ontario Works provide wraparound support to help people achieve their employment goals. This includes supporting clients by helping them access childcare, health services, and programs to build financial literacy, emergency financial help and subsidized transit.

The Region's Social Assistance program also offers supports such as tax filing to residents receiving Ontario Works. As of July 2024, the program had assisted 469 customers with 674 years' worth of tax returns, amounting to an estimated \$3.39 million in refunds and ongoing benefits.

To reduce caseload pressure, and enable residents to contact their caseworker directly and upload documents, the Region is promoting the Province’s MyBenefits, an online service available 24/7 to Ontario residents who receive Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program.

[MyBenefits](#) makes it faster, easier and more convenient to securely access information on any device. As of July 2024, 84% of Ontario Works customers in York Region signed up for MyBenefits.

The Region continues to advocate to the provincial government for higher Ontario Works benefit rates, such as to increase and index Ontario Works rates with inflation to meet life’s basic needs.

### Efforts are underway to promote income support initiatives to tackle food insecurity

With a focus on food security system development, the Region is supporting a sustainable and integrated system to meet the needs of residents struggling to access food. In 2024, [York Region's Community Investment Fund](#) (CIF) funded 9 projects targeted to support food access to over 19,000 residents.

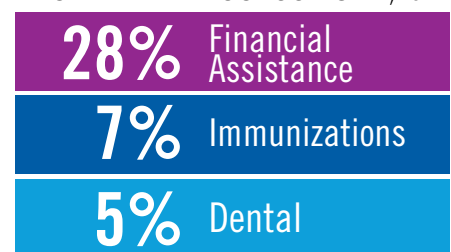
Approximately \$1 million has been invested over the past two years by CIF to strengthen local emergency food providers and improve food access, including funding for small capital purchases, such as fridges and freezers, shelving and food transport and other operating expenses. Funding also supported development of online resources to help residents find food supports and services and to help local food banks and pantries respond to residents’ immediate needs.

York Region Public Health raises awareness of food insecurity through education and knowledge-building events.

From November 2023 to August 2024, 293 people have been consulted on a York Region Food Charter to make income a central focus for realizing food security in York Region. It is important to continue advocating to senior levels of government to prioritize the implementation of living wage and basic income policies, and to include the reduction of food insecurity as an outcome of all relevant government policies.



#### TOP CATEGORY OF INQUIRY RECEIVED BY ACCESS YORK, 2024



Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Integrated Business Services Branch, 2024



**144** Individuals Reached Through York Region Public Health’s Food and Security Events

Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Public Health Branch, 2024

## Actions to address increased demand for subsidized housing are being implemented

The Region’s subsidized housing wait list continues to grow. In 2024, about 4,500 new applications were added, while 436 households were housed.

Most housing subsidies support households to lower shelter costs to 30% of their income through a rent reduction or benefit. The number of households in York Region receiving support through rent subsidies increased by about 29% from 2019 to 2024, from 5,083 to 6,574.

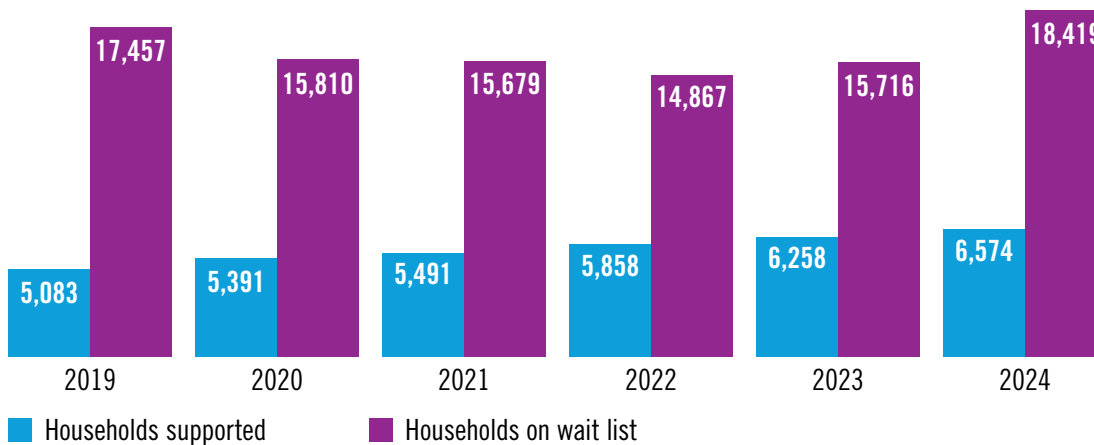
In 2024, 247 (57%) households accepted a subsidized or rent supplement unit from a community housing provider, while 189 (43%) accepted portable rent benefits including the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB). COHB has contributed to the Region’s ability

to address affordability needs of wait list applicants. Since its launch in 2020, the Region has supported more than 1,300 households to access COHB.

Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, as a Service Manager, the Region is required to provide priority status on the subsidized housing wait list to survivors of domestic abuse and human trafficking.

Over half of Special Priority applications are approved each year, but only a small number are offered housing due to low turnover rates at community housing sites. To address this, the Region also prioritizes Special Priority applicants for COHB. On average the Region has housed 78 Special Priority applicants annually since 2019.

### YORK REGION'S SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WAIT LIST AND HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED



Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Housing Services Branch, 2024

## The Region is working with partners to increase and sustain community housing supply to help residents struggling with housing

York Region’s [10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan](#) provides a roadmap for the Region, working with other levels of government and community partners, to address housing needs, support complete communities and promote economic development and social inclusion.

Increasing community housing supply remains a key priority.

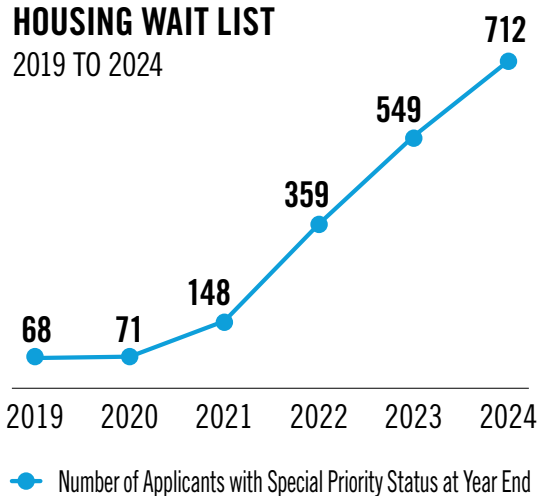
Sustaining existing community housing supply is equally important. The community housing system is comprised of 43 housing providers – non-profits, co-operatives and Housing York Inc. (HYI), the Region’s local housing corporation.

Investments from senior levels of government are critical to advancing and sustaining projects as are innovations to update and create new granting programs and service agreements that right size funding to maximize lifespan of existing supply.

A Council report in October 2024 outlined [Actions to Increase Affordable and Community Housing Supply Under the Next 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan](#). Staff will continue to engage Council as development of the next 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is underway, including through future meetings of the Housing Affordability Task Force.

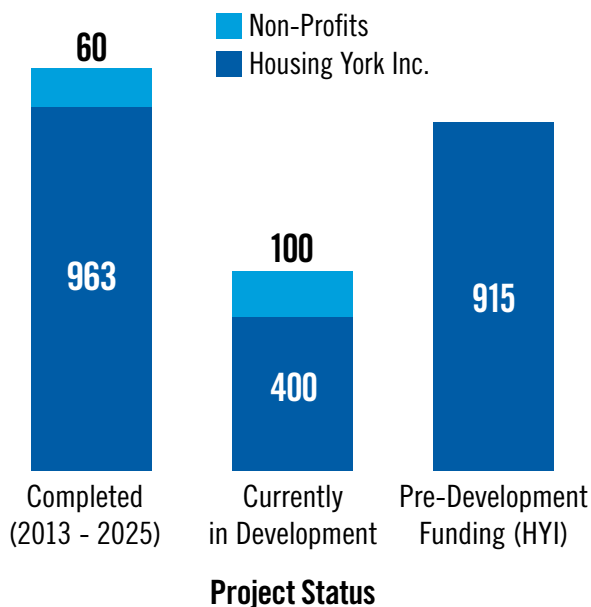
### SPECIAL PRIORITY APPLICANTS ON THE SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WAIT LIST

2019 TO 2024



Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Housing Services Branch, 2024

### HOUSING YORK INC. AND NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS: COMPLETIONS, DEVELOPMENT AND PRE-DEVELOPMENT



Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Housing Services Branch, 2024

Note: Projects completed and currently in development include new HYI units and non-profit units that the Region has enabled through capital funding.

## A housing system with a range of options helps keep residents housed

The Region prioritizes a full mix and range of housing within available resources; however, the Region alone cannot sustain investment needed to build enough community housing to meet growing demand. A healthy housing system is the responsibility of all levels of government.

To get more homes built, the Province has made changes related to planning and development. Challenges to building more homes include shortages of builders, skilled tradespeople, short-term land supply, higher interest rates and construction financing.

Provincial projections indicate a shortfall of 150,000 homes per year to meet the goal of adding 1.5 million by 2031.<sup>43</sup>

To date, under the 2022-2026 [York Region Community Safety and Well-Being Plan \(CSWBP\)](#), 640 residents have been engaged in educating tenants on housing rights to help more residents stay safely and adequately housed.

## Government and community partner initiatives are helping to prevent and address homelessness

Demand for homelessness services in York Region is anticipated to continue to grow. The [2024 to 2027 Homelessness Service System Plan](#), which includes Rapid Deployment Actions, guides the Region's approach and investments. Actions also include enhancements to Community Paramedicine Outreach Response Team (CPORT), adding outreach workers and expanding hours of service to support people living unsheltered, in encampments or experiencing chronic homelessness. CPORT supported 505 individuals in 2023.



**139** New beds in emergency and transitional housing, hotels and seasonal shelters from Rapid Deployment Actions in 2024

Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Social Services Branch, 2024

### DID YOU KNOW?

In February 2021, Regional Council declared a [Housing Affordability Crisis](#) in York Region. Council reinforced building [complete communities](#) and addressing affordability challenges through partnerships, innovation and policy. Staff are working on actions outlined in the [October 2024](#) report to Council, which include exploring ways to incentivize and partner with non-profits, co-operatives, and the private market on affordable housing.

Redevelopments of existing emergency and transitional buildings are underway in Towns of Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and Georgina. The Region recently [secured](#) \$5.3 million in Provincial Encampment Response Initiative and Last Mile Funding, and \$10.8 million in Federal Unsheltered Homelessness and Encampment Initiative funding for 2025 to 2026.

The federal government has committed to ending or eliminating chronic homelessness by 2030. However, in March 2024, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer predicted that achieving a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness would require additional \$3.5 billion per year, approximately a 7-fold funding increase over the National Housing Strategy average.<sup>44</sup>

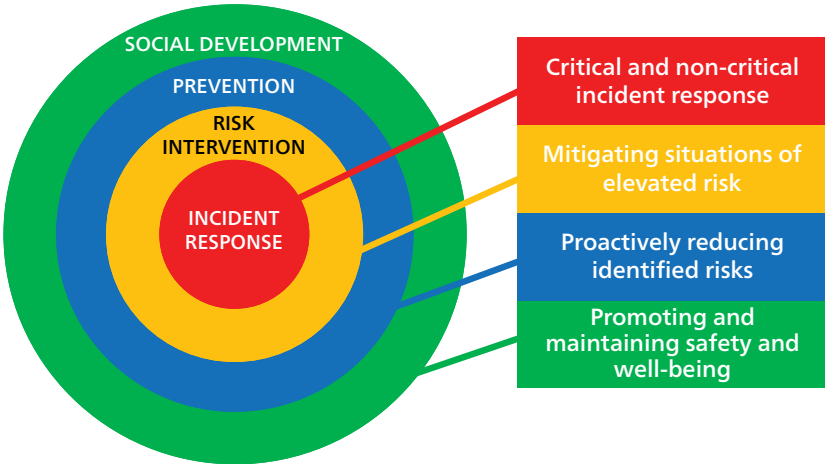
### **Actions that mitigate or prevent risks to safety, mental health and well-being strengthen community well-being**

Implementation of the [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan](#) (CSWBP) focuses on upstream social development and prevention activities that are proactive, targeted, and community-driven to enhance safety and well-being.

Actions focus on generating community engagement and partnerships to strengthen community capacity to address local safety and well-being challenges, reducing risks and calls to emergency services.

Although CSWBP is mandated by the Province, there is no dedicated funding from the Province to support it. Advocacy is needed to sustain current upstream innovative solutions that reduce more costly interventions downstream.

**47,872** INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN CSWBP INITIATIVES



Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Strategies and Partnerships Branch, 2024

The Region also implements risk intervention services and supports for youth and their families and funds community projects that help residents to have positive mental health and well-being. This includes [Children, Youth and Families Situation Tables](#), and investments through the Community Investment Fund.

Public Health partners with all school boards including York Region District School Board's Students Promoting Awareness, Connection and Empowerment for Mental Health and Well-being Initiative.



**546** situations addressed by **Children, Youth and Families Situation Tables** in 2023, lowering acutely elevated risk in **78%** of the situations

Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Strategies and Partnerships Branch, 2024

**6,800** residents served through **24** mental health and well-being projects funded by Community Investment Fund in 2024

Source: York Region, Community and Health Services Department, Strategies and Partnerships Branch, 2024

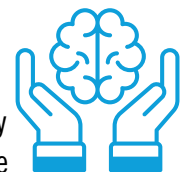
## The Region is supporting navigation and system integration for residents experiencing mental health and well-being challenges

Many families have difficulty navigating the mental health system and feel ill-equipped managing their mental health needs or those of dependents. Service backlogs, stigma, and limited availability of culturally tailored care results in silent struggles; especially among newcomers and racialized communities.<sup>45</sup>

The Region, through the CSWBP, is working to develop navigation assistance programs such as the [Service Navigator Pilot Program](#) that has supported 324 clients and the [Mobile Youth Services Hub](#) that has assisted 1,773, by October 2024.

**1,168 (17.5%)**

of 211 Ontario contacts by York Region residents were for “**mental health or substance use**”, the leading area of service navigation need



Source: 211 Ontario, Business Intelligence Dashboard, 2024

The Region collaborates with community partners to assess the current state of mental health services, identify gaps and pinpoint underserved populations. Consultations, such as the York Region Mental Health Roundtable that was held in November 2024 with community partners and provincial Ministers, identified need for enhanced support for addiction, substance use, diagnostic and developmental, eating disorder and self-harm services among others. Agencies also highlighted need for increased capacity, improved collaboration, and sustainable funding from all levels of government.

## Expanded partnerships support the Region in mitigating opioid-related harms

Since 2018, York Region Public Health has actively participated in the Ministry of Health Take Home Naloxone kit program, with York Region Paramedic Services joining in 2021.

The Region supports emergency and transitional housing providers and community agencies with Naloxone distribution, and in 2024 outreach workers became trained distributors.

On [August 20, 2024](#), the Ministry of Health announced a Call for Proposals to establish Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs, and closure of 10 Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS), across Ontario. There are no CTS' in York Region, but closure in Toronto may negatively impact residents who travel outside York Region for safe consumption services.

In [October 2024](#), the Region and York Regional Police supported the development of and endorsed Addiction Services Central Ontario's (ASCO) proposal to establish a HART Hub in York Region. In [January 2025](#), the Province announced successful recipients, bringing the total to 27 new HART Hubs across Ontario; York Region was not among them.

The Region will continue to advance existing collaborations while exploring new opportunities to support people struggling with addiction and mental health issues and reduce demand on police and paramedic services.



**3,920**  
**NALOXONE KITS TO**  
**CLIENTS IN 2024**

Source: York Region, Community Health Services Department, Public Health Branch

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Region is collaborating with Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to support development of a [Mental Health Community Care Hub](#) in the Town of Newmarket. \$5 million in capital support was [approved by Regional Council in 2024](#). The CMHA Hub will focus on preventative addictions and mental health supports for adults, youth 12+ and families with service delivery expected to begin in 2026.





# CONCLUSION: LOOKING FORWARD

Increased demand for human services is driven by a range of factors, including shifting demographics, case complexity, cost of living, global instability, and federal and provincial policies and priorities. Sustainable and responsive solutions help prevent challenges from becoming more acute and widespread.

Key trends identified in 2024, include:

- **Growing, aging and diversifying population**
- **Increasing number of residents unable to meet basic needs such as housing and food**
- **Mental health and well-being challenges**
- **Demand for human services outpacing what the Region and community partners can support**

As one player in the human services system, the Region works with partners and funders to ensure the system and funding are responsive to our communities; however, the Region is one segment of a complex human services system that involves community partners and other levels of government.

Partnerships are crucial to the successful planning and delivery of human services. Investments made by Regional Council have resulted in concrete action in communities, enhanced strategic partnerships and integrated services to help residents in need. For example, Housing Services launched a new Community Housing Supply Grant Pilot Program in 2023 to support non-profit organizations that are ready to build new community housing and is exploring ways to incentivize and partner with non-profits, community agencies and the private market on affordable housing options. Community Paramedicine Outreach Response Team (CPORT) is also working with community partners to expand services to support people living unsheltered, in encampments or experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Region continues to have a positive impact on residents through integrated services and partnerships, while also heightening its focus on advocacy. Current service delivery levels are at risk as demand and rising costs have outpaced provincial funding. Community

partners across York Region are also struggling with capacity. In 2024, 83% of non-profits in Ontario experienced an increase in service demand compared to 2023.<sup>46</sup> The [Metamorphosis Network](#) found non-profits in York Region are underfunded compared to other jurisdictions.

The Region continues to advocate for sustained funding to senior levels of government. The Region joined over 155 municipalities and organizations to endorse the Association of Municipalities of Ontario resolution for a [Social and Economic Prosperity Review](#) to address pressures municipalities face in responding to changing socio-economic needs.

In [January 2025](#), Council also endorsed the Region's submission to Ontario's 2025 Budget consultation requesting enhanced funding for human services to meet growing needs highlighted in this Review. In 2025, more information will be presented to Regional Council on provincial underfunding for mandated human and health services provided by the Region.

There are opportunities to innovate and integrate to unlock solutions and enhance outcomes in critical social infrastructure. Working across governments and with community partners is essential to building healthier, more engaged and inclusive communities.

Partnerships form a foundation for joint advocacy, and a unified voice in communicating calls to action, promoting key messages, and advocating to senior levels of government for increased funding and supports needed to deliver human services.

This Review will be used to set the stage for future Regional program and service planning, responsible budget development, and advocating for critical funding and to influence policy decisions.

This Review underscores the Region's efforts and CHS' role in supporting human services to foster a thriving, healthy and welcoming community for all residents in every stage of life.



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