



Canada's Vital Signs 2010

INTRODUCTION

Each fall, Canadian community foundations from the Atlantic to the Pacific prepare local report cards for, and about, their communities. Like an annual check-up, each Vital Signs report looks at how one community is doing across many aspects of quality of life. What makes for 'good' quality of life varies from one community to another. Each Vital Signs report reflects this diversity, tracking the measures that are important to its community.

On October 5, 2010, Vital Signs reports were issued in 15 communities: Calgary, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Lunenburg County, Medicine Hat, Montreal, Ottawa, Red Deer, Saint John, Sudbury, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Waterloo Region. For more detail, see our [local reports](#).

Alongside diverse local priorities, runs the thread of shared concerns - issues that are important to all Canadians. To capture these issues, Community Foundations of Canada produces Canada's Vital Signs, a web-based report focused on national issues. Within each Vital Signs issue area, an indicator is chosen to provide a snapshot of how our communities are doing across the country.

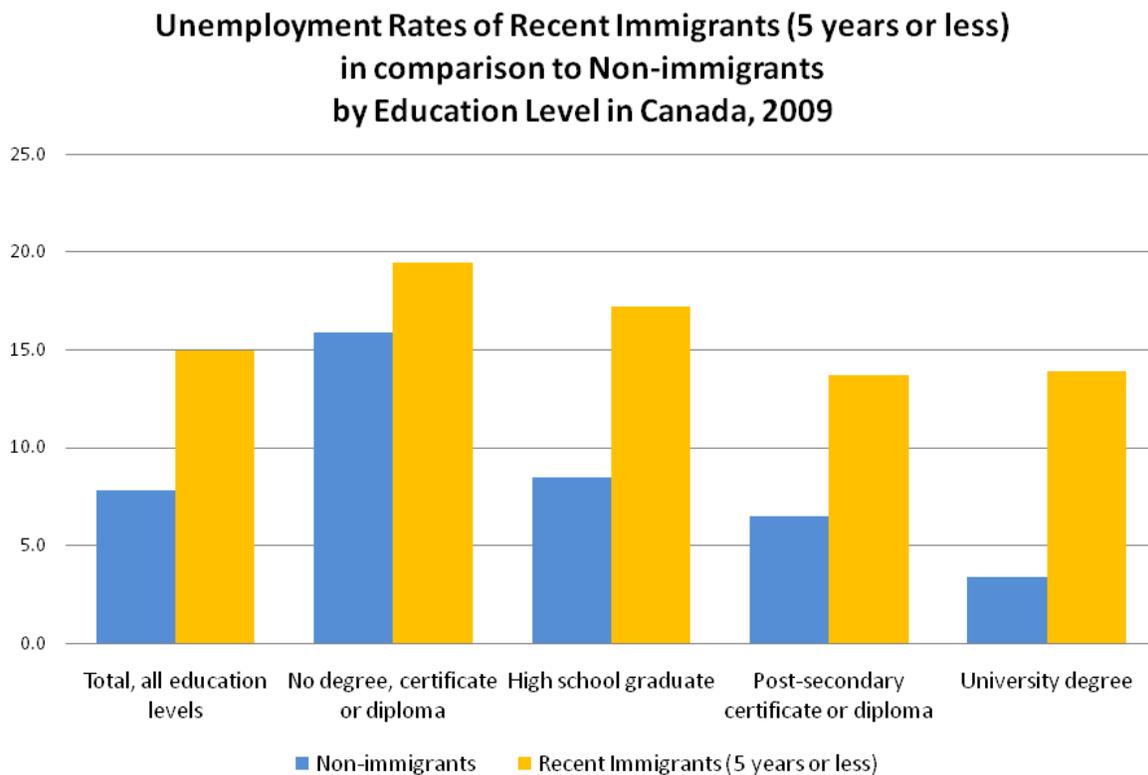
In this, the 4th edition of Canada's Vital Signs, we revisit many of the national indicators that were first reported on in 2007. The 2010 indicators include:

Issue Area	2010 Indicator
1. Getting Started	Unemployment Rate of Immigrants
2. Environment	Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Private Vehicles
3. Housing	Average Housing Prices as a Proportion of Median Income
4. Health	Physicians per Capita
5. Gap between Rich and Poor	Overall Poverty Rate
6. Work	Unemployment Rate
7. Learning	Proportion of Population with Completed Post-Secondary Education
8. Safety	Property Crime Rate
9. Arts & Culture	Employment in Cultural Industries
10. Belonging & Leadership	Sense of Community Belonging

NATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

1 Getting Started

The gap between the unemployment rates of recent immigrants (lived in Canada for 5 years and less) and non-immigrants widens as education level increases. In 2009, the unemployment rate of recent immigrants who have university degrees was 13.9% - 4.1 times the rate of 3.4% for Canadian-born workers who are university educated.¹



Source: Statistics Canada, unpublished estimates from the Labour Force Survey

On average, Canada accepts over 240,000 immigrants per year.² Due to our aging population and low fertility rate, it is anticipated that immigration will become the sole source for population growth by

¹ Statistics Canada (2010). Unpublished estimates from the Labour Force Survey Data.

² Statistics Canada (2010). [Ethnic Diversity and Immigration](#).

2030.³ What's more, virtually all net labour force growth will come from immigration as early as next year.⁴

Citizenship and Immigration Canada evaluates skilled workers based on their education, work experience, knowledge of English and/or French.⁵ Foreign-born residents (aged 25 to 54) are more likely to have a university education than Canadian-born citizens. In 2006, while 36% of immigrants in this age group had at least a bachelor's degree, the proportion was only 22% among those born in Canada.⁶

As the chart above illustrates, the unemployment rate of recent immigrants was almost twice that of their Canadian-born counterparts in 2009 (15.0% to 7.8% respectively). This gap varies depending on level of education. The unemployment rate for new immigrants without a degree, diploma or certificate was 19.5% – 1.2 times the rate of 15.9% for Canadian-born workers with the same education. In comparison, the gap is four times wider for university-educated workers (13.9% for new immigrants compared to 3.4% for Canadian-born workers).⁷

What the unemployment data doesn't tell us, however, is the proportion of foreign-educated immigrants who are working in their trained professions. A recent study by Statistics Canada found that 24% of immigrants who studied for a regulated occupation outside of Canada are working in that profession, in comparison to 53% for immigrants who studied in Canada and 62% for Canadian-born workers.⁸

There are a wide number of factors that contribute to these disparities. Immigrants cite lack of Canadian work experience, lack of recognition of foreign credentials or work experience, and language barriers as the main challenges.⁹ According to the Conference Board of Canada, if all immigrants' foreign experiences and credentials were recognized, between \$3.4 and \$5.0 billion would be added to the Canadian economy every year.¹⁰ Given the increasing role immigrants are playing in our nation's make-up and economy, more efforts must be made to eliminate the unemployment gaps between immigrant and Canadian-born workers.

³ Statistics Canada (2006). [Canada's Population](#). *The Daily*, Wednesday, September 27, 2006.

⁴ Statistics Canada (2007). [Study: Canada's Immigrant Labour Market](#). *The Daily*, Monday, September 10, 2007.

⁵ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010). [Skilled Workers and Professionals](#).

⁶ Statistics Canada (2007). [Study: Canada's Immigrant Labour Market](#). *The Daily*, Monday, September 10, 2007.

⁷ Statistics Canada (2010). Unpublished estimates from the Labour Force Survey.

⁸ Statistics Canada (2010). [Immigrants working in regulated occupations](#).

⁹ Statistics Canada (2007). [The Canadian Immigrant Labour Market in 2006: First Results from Canada's Labour Force Survey](#).

¹⁰ Conference Board of Canada (2004). [Performance and Potential 2004-05: How can Canada prosper in Tomorrow's World?](#)

2 Housing

Due to a period of low mortgage rates, many Canadians (who might not have otherwise) moved from renting to home ownership, and are now carrying a great deal of debt.¹¹ In 2006, over two-thirds of Canadians (68.4%) owned the dwellings they lived in, up from 65.8% in 2001.¹² Despite the recent economic downturn, Canada's housing market has not been as seriously affected as the United States. However, with property taxes and insurance rates outstripping inflation and nominal income gains, a relatively small increase in interest rates could dramatically affect the affordability of mortgage payments when mortgagors with high ratio loans (i.e. >80% of house value) renew. As a result, more and more Canadians may find themselves struggling to pay for home ownership;¹³ a situation highlighted in a recent report on Canada's economic status by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹⁴

So, how much 'house' can Canadians afford? The short answer is that it depends on a number of factors, most importantly household income, home equity (down payment) and mortgage interest rates. The house 'price-to-income ratio' is one such measure for determining housing affordability, and is often a basic component of financial lending decisions. The higher the ratio is, the less affordable the house.

¹¹ Statistics Canada (2007). [Study: Changes and Challenges for Canada's Residential Real Estate Landlords](#). *The Daily*, Friday, May 25, 2007.

¹² Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2009). [Canadian Housing Observer 2009](#).

¹³ Freeman, S. (2010). [Canadian Home Prices Continue to Rise](#). *The Globe and Mail*, Wednesday, August 25, 2010.

¹⁴ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010). [Economic Survey of Canada 2010](#).

Housing Price-to-Income Ratios in Selected Vital Signs Communities, 2008

Location	Average Residential Price (\$)	Median Family Income (\$)	Price-to-Income Ratio
London	212,092	71,900	2.95
Ottawa-Gatineau	290,483	89,600	3.24
Hamilton	280,790	81,700	3.44
Kitchener	271,222	78,700	3.45
Montreal	258,028	68,000	3.79
CANADA	303,607	73,500	4.13
Calgary	405,267	95,500	4.24
Toronto	379,943	82,200	4.62
Victoria	484,898	84,900	5.71
Vancouver	593,767	79,300	7.49

Source: Statistics Canada, 2010 and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canadian Housing Observer, 2009

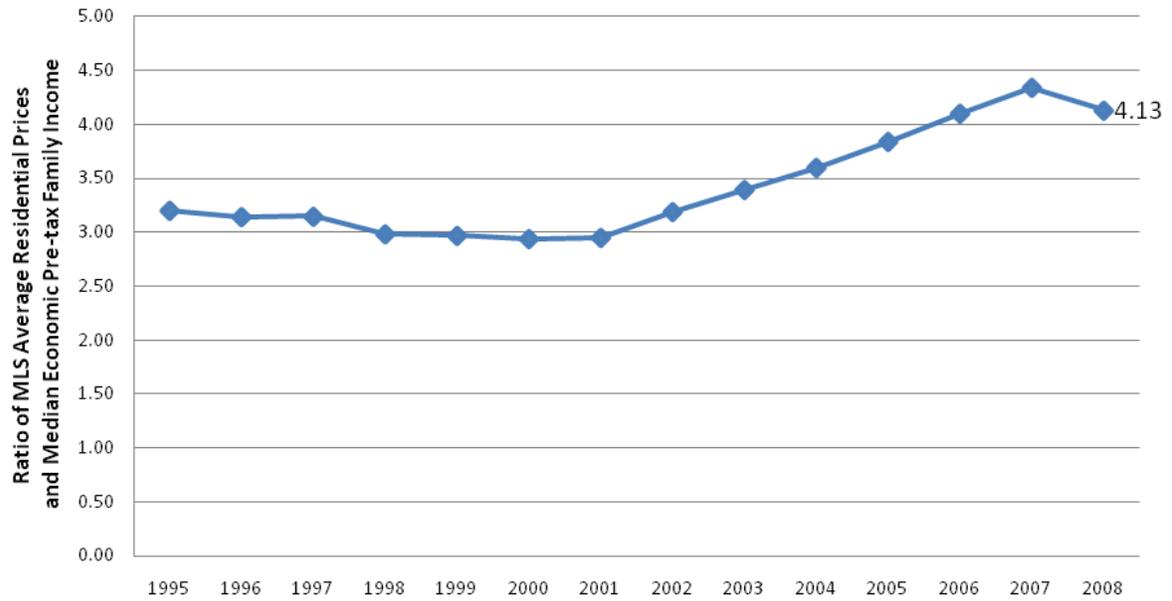
In 2008, the average price of a house in Canada was \$303,607 and the median family income was \$73,500, giving a housing price-to-income ratio of 4.13.¹⁵ Across Vital Signs communities, the ratios varied from a low of 2.95 in London to a high of 7.49 in Vancouver.¹⁶

Since we last reported on this indicator in 2007, there has been little change in the ratio (4.11 in 2005). Over the past decade, however, the national ratio has increased dramatically (from 3.20 in 1995). Growth in the ratio has been greatest in western Vital Signs communities like Vancouver, Victoria and Calgary (over 84%), and lowest in London and Ottawa (below the national average of 29%). In other words, the rise in housing prices is outstripping income levels, indicating that homeownership across Canada is becoming less affordable.

¹⁵ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). [Appendix Table V-2-i: MLS Average Residential Prices \(\\$\) in Vital Signs Communities, 1995-2008](#).

¹⁶ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). [Table V-2-b: Ratio of MLS Average Residential Prices and Median Economic Family Income for Select Vital Signs CMAs, 1995-2008](#).

Housing Price-to-Income Ratio in Canada, 1995-2008



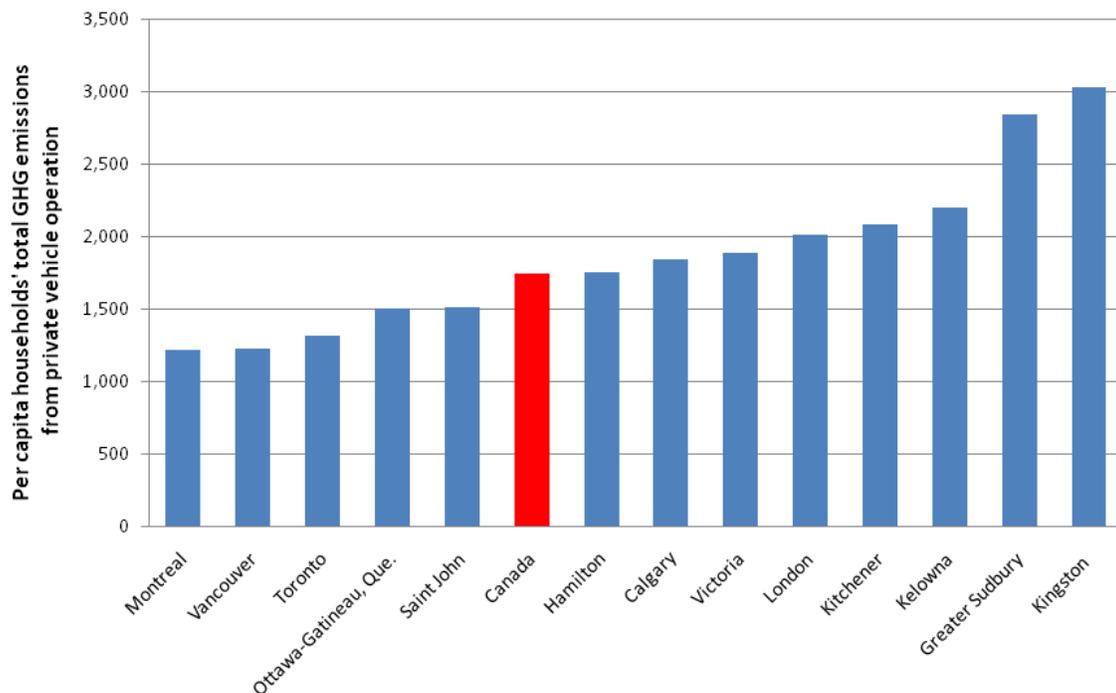
Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canadian Housing Observer, 2009

3 Environment

Since the early 1990s, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from personal vehicles have risen by almost one-third.¹⁷ Transportation currently produces a quarter of Canada’s GHG emissions, about half of which comes from personal vehicles.¹⁸ In 2007, personal vehicle operation accounted for 1,751 kilograms per capita of CO₂ equivalent in Canada.

Among the Vital Signs communities, the highest per capita greenhouse gas emissions were reported in Kingston and Sudbury (3,035 and 2,844 kilograms of CO₂ equivalent respectively). The lowest levels were reported Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto (1,219, 1,228 and 1,332 kilograms of CO₂ equivalent respectively).¹⁹ This discrepancy may, in part, be due to the availability and use of public transportation in large urban centres. Thus illustrating, how the type of communities we live in and the transportation choices we have available, shape how much we drive.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Private Vehicle Operation in Selected Vital Signs Communities, 2007



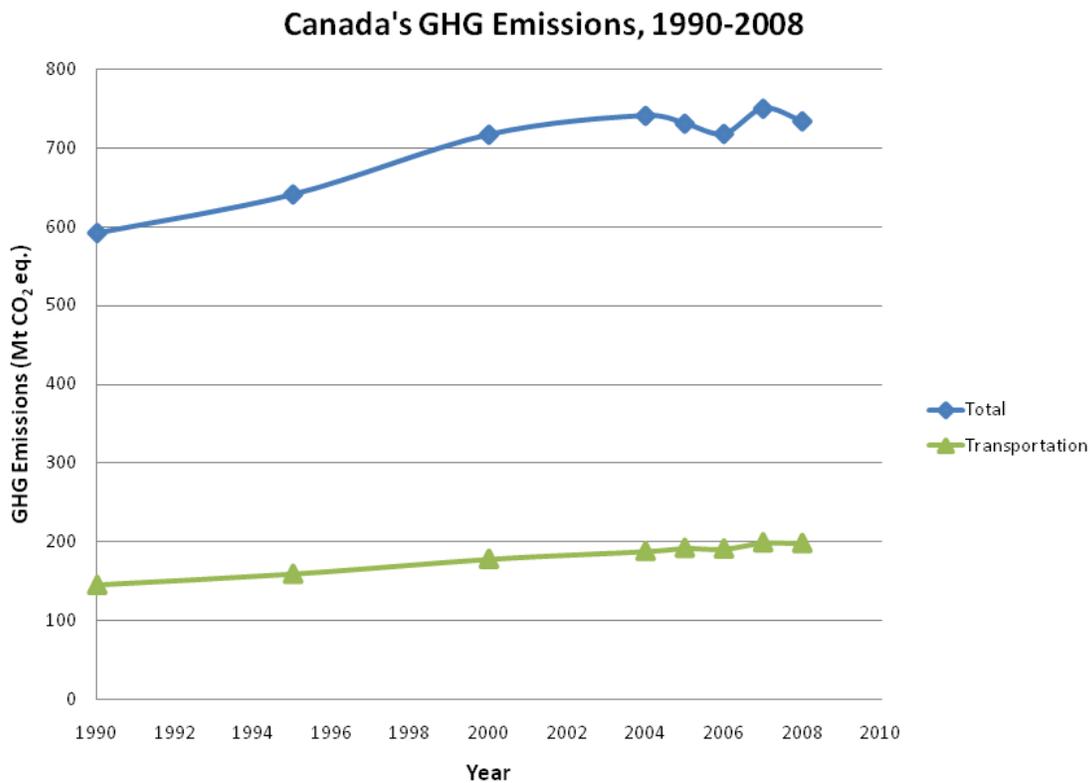
Source: Statistics Canada, Data from tables 5 and 6 of "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Private Vehicles in Canada, 1990 to 2007 by Berouk Terefe"

¹⁷ Statistics Canada (2010). [Study: Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Private Vehicles](#). The Daily, Thursday, May 13, 2010.

¹⁸ Environment Canada (2010). [Canada’s 2008 Greenhouse Gas Inventory. A Summary of Trends: 1990–2008](#).

¹⁹ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table VIII-2: [Households' greenhouse gas emissions from private vehicle operation, by census metropolitan area, 2007](#).

Canada's total GHG emissions were 734 megatonnes (Mt) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent in 2008.²⁰ Between 1990 and 2008, Canada's GHG emissions have increased by 24.1%. And since our last report (741 Mt in 2004), there has been minimal progress – a decline of only 0.9%. Furthermore, the current emission level is 31.5% above the Kyoto target (558.4 Mt).²¹ According to the David Suzuki Foundation, Canada is one of the world's foremost emitters of GHGs, ranking a dismal 28th out of 30 high-income OECD countries on environmental measures.²²



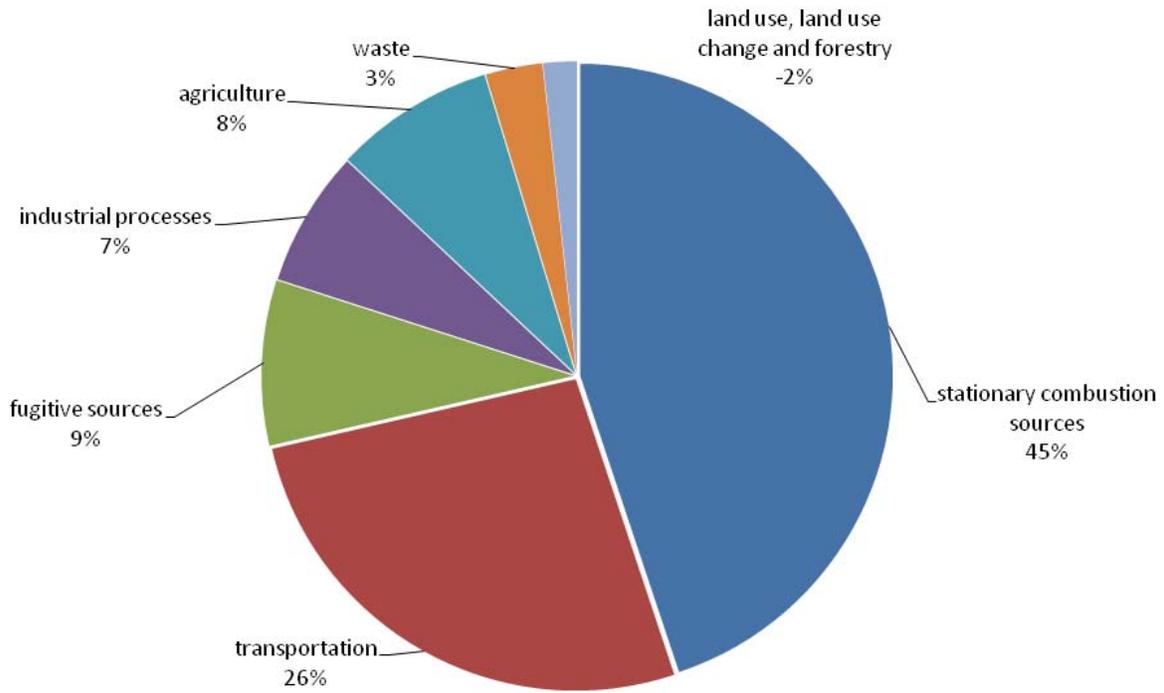
Source: Environment Canada, 2010

²⁰ Environment Canada (2010). [Canada's 2008 Greenhouse Gas Inventory. A Summary of Trends: 1990–2008.](#)

²¹ Environment Canada (2010). [National Inventory Report 1990–2008: Greenhouse Gas Sources and Sinks in Canada.](#)

²² David Suzuki Foundation (2005). [Environmental Ranking of High-Income OECD Countries.](#)

Sources of GHC Emissions in Canada, 2008



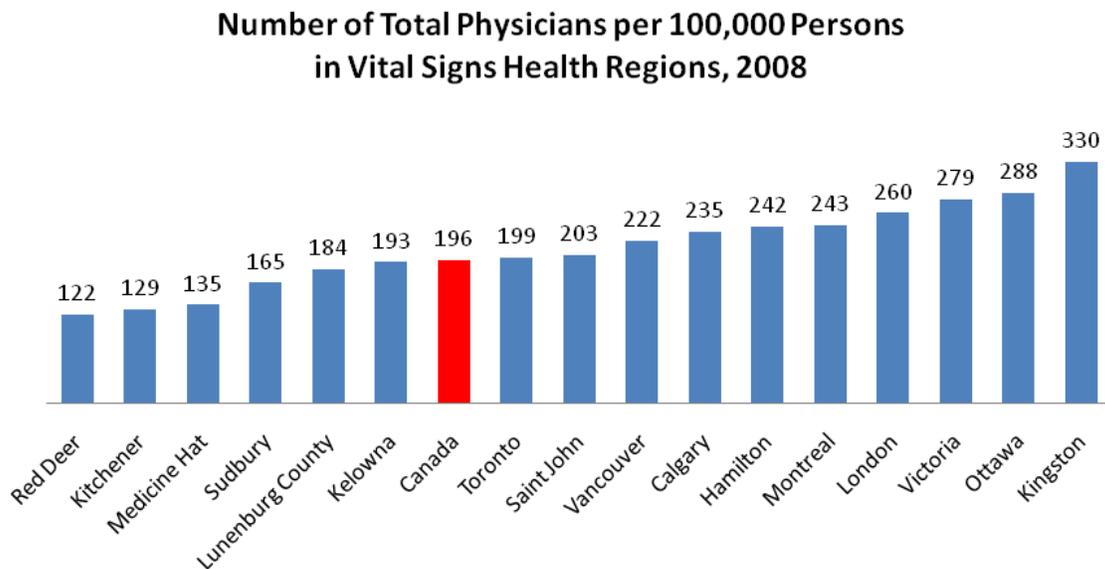
Source: Environment Canada, 2010

4 Health

The supply of doctors is rising, and more of them are women. In 2008, the number of active physicians in Canada reached 65,440.²³ This equates to a rate of 196 physicians per 100,000 persons. The physician supply rate (number of physicians per 1,000 persons) has increased 2.6% since 2005 (the figure used in our last report on this indicator) and 6.5% since 1997 (the year for which data was first available).²⁴

A recent study by the Canadian Institute for Health Information shows that women are becoming a larger proportion of the physician workforce, accounting for half (52.1%) of new general practitioners and close to half (45.1%) of new specialists in 2008.²⁵

Just over a half (51.5%) of the physicians in Canada are family doctors or general practitioners, with a rate of 101 physicians per 100,000 persons in 2008. The rate for specialists is 95 per 100,000. Between 1997 and 2008, the rate of increase was slightly higher for family physicians (7.4%) than for specialists (5.6%).²⁶



Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Indicator Reports, 2009

²⁶ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table III-2: [Physicians \(General/Family Physicians and Specialists\) per 100,000 for Vital Signs Health Regions, 1997-2008.](#)

5 **Gap between Rich & Poor**

Regardless of the measure used to assess poverty, approximately 1 in 10 Canadians are considered to be poor – and that’s before the recession. In other words, over 3 million Canadians are struggling to make ends meet; having difficulty paying for basic necessities like housing, food, and clothing. What’s more, all three measures of poverty experienced increases in 2008, and with the economic downturn this trend is expected to increase.

In Canada, we use three different measures, each with its own set of assumptions, to assess the scope of poverty in the country:

1. The **LICO (Low Income Cut-Off Measure)** is based on the level at which households spend 20% or more of their gross income on food, shelter and clothing than the average Canadian. According to the after-tax LICO, 9.4% of Canadians were living in poverty in 2008.²⁷

2. The **LIM (Low Income Measure)** refers to having less than half the median income of a family of comparable size and make-up. According to the after-tax LIM, 13.3% of Canadians were living in poverty in 2008.²⁸

3. The **Market Basket Measure (MBM)** is based on a necessary “basket” of goods and services, containing food, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation and other household needs. According to the after-tax MBM, 9.5% of Canadians were living in poverty in 2008.²⁹

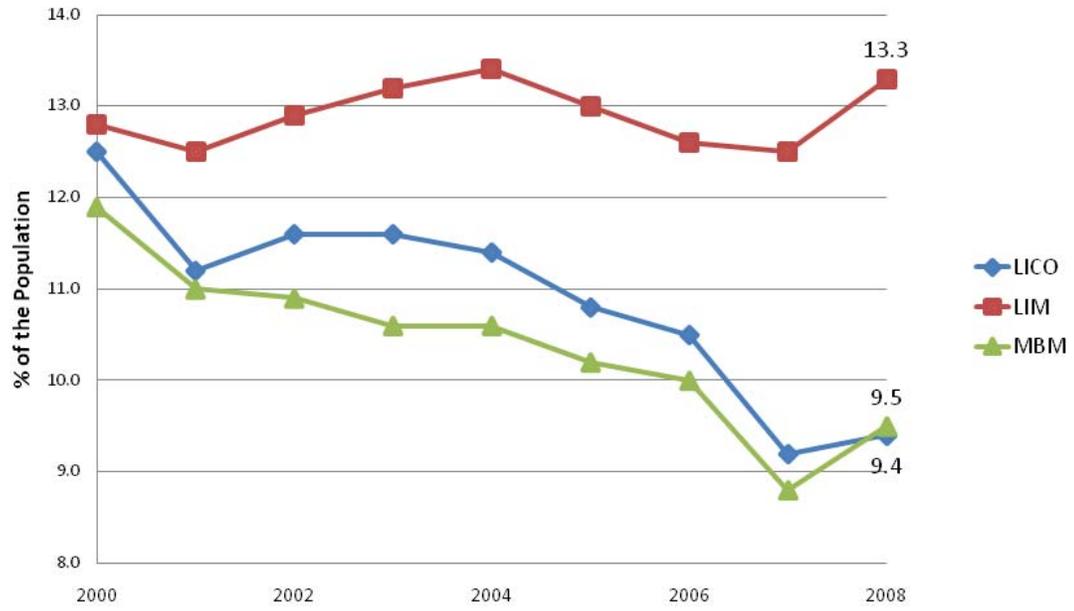
As illustrated in the graph below, little progress has been made in reducing poverty since our last report on this indicator in 2007. Between 2000 and 2007, both the LICO and MBM (‘absolute’ measures of poverty) fell 3.1 and 2.4 percentage points respectively, reflecting the strong economic growth of that period. In contrast, the LIM (a ‘relative’ measure of poverty) remained fairly stable, hovering around 13%. (A narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor is required for the LIM to fall.)

²⁷ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table I-2-c-ii: [Overall Incidence of Poverty for All Persons Based on LICO in Vital Signs CMAs, After-Tax, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000-2008.](#)

²⁸ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table I-2-c-iii: [Overall Incidence of Poverty for All Persons Based on Low Income Measure \(LIM\) in Vital Signs CMAs, After-Tax, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000-2008.](#)

²⁹ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table I-2-c-iv: [Overall Incidence of Poverty for All Persons Based on Market Basket Measure in Vital Signs CMAs, After-Tax, 2000-2008, 2008 base, Per Cent](#)

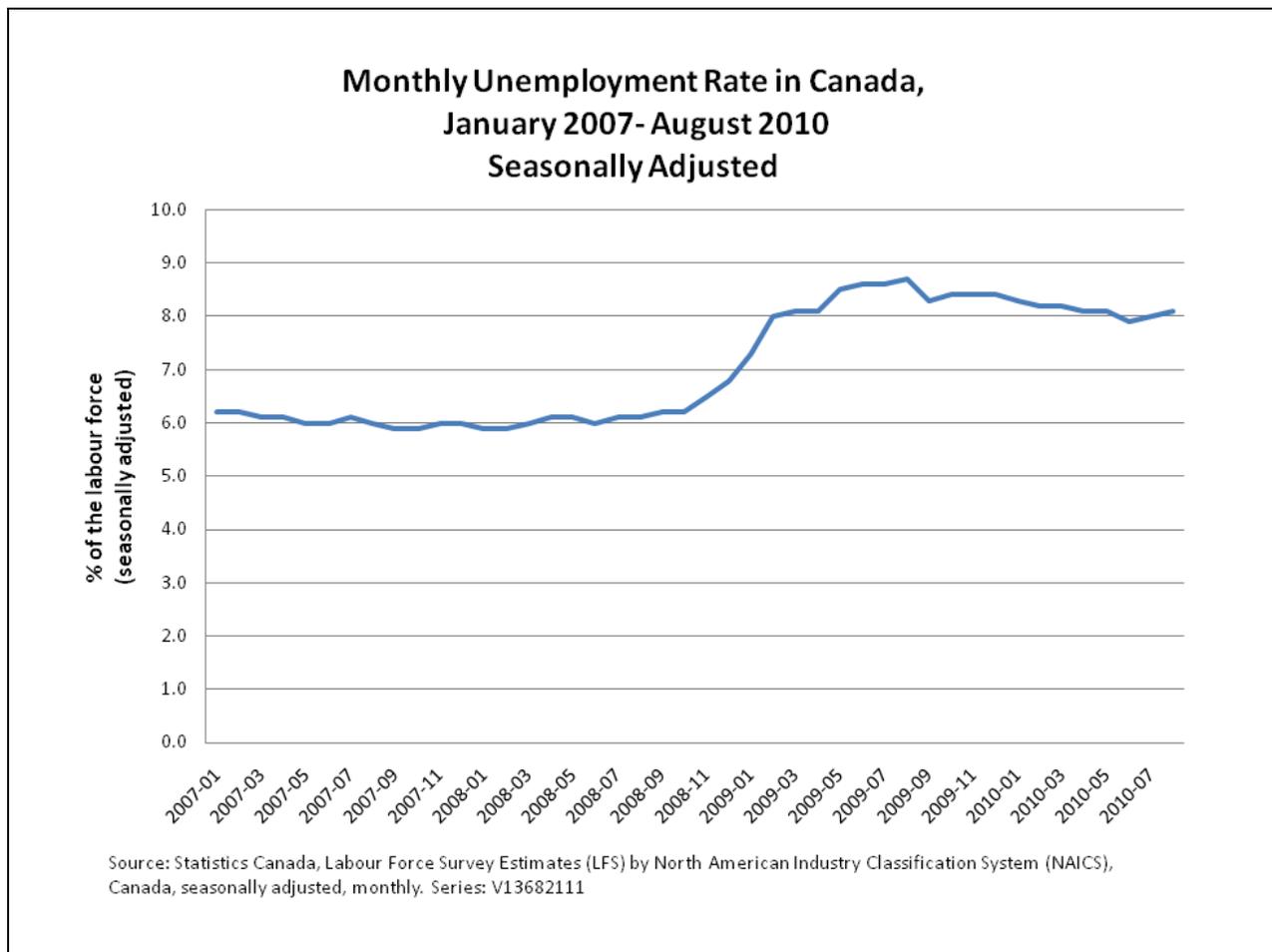
After-Tax Poverty Rates in Canada, 2000-2008



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 202-0802, 2010

6 Work

Since the global economic downturn forced hundreds of thousands of Canadians into unemployment, the jobless rate has showed little sign of improvement. Between 2008 and 2009, the national unemployment rate rose 2.2 percentage points, to stand at 8.3%. This represents 1.5 million people out of work.³⁰ More recent reports show that for the first half of 2010, the monthly unemployment rate has remained steady, hovering above 8%.^{31 32}



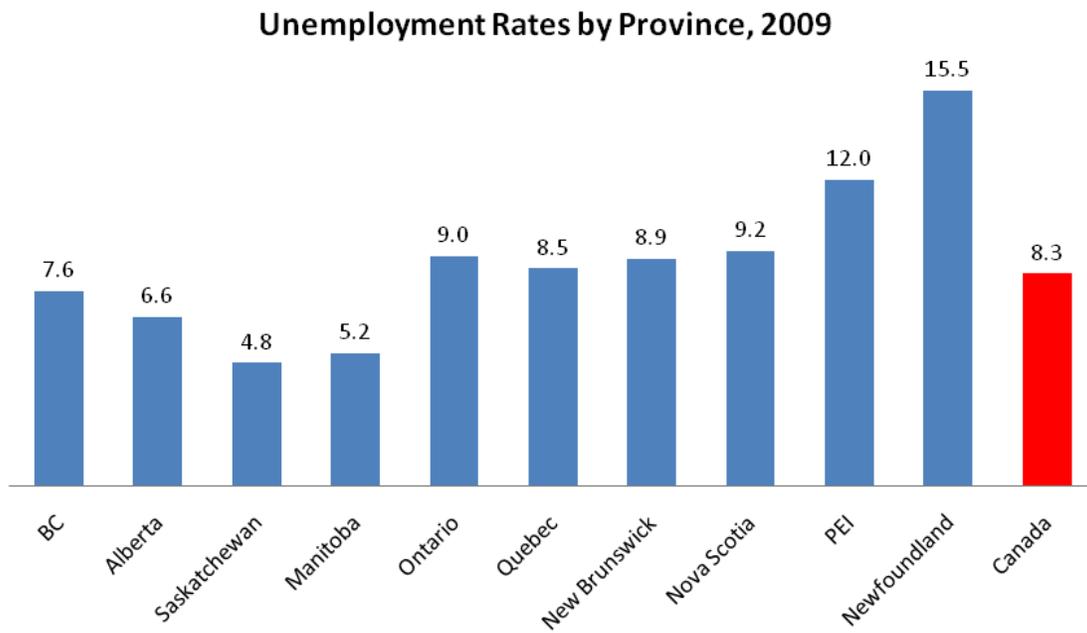
As illustrated in the charts below, unemployment rates in 2009 vary widely in different regions of the country, with Manitoba and Saskatchewan enjoying the lowest rates, and Atlantic Canada and Ontario experiencing the highest ones. Among the Vital Signs communities, Medicine Hat, Ottawa-Gatineau

³⁰ Statistics Canada (2010). CANSIM, table 282-0002: [Labour force, employed and unemployed, numbers and rates, by province, 2009](#).

³¹ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table IX-2-a-ii: [Unemployment Rate \(15+\) in Vital Signs CMAs and Economic Regions, Seasonally Unadjusted and Adjusted, Monthly, based on 3-month moving average, 2008-2009](#)

³² Statistics Canada (2010). [Labour force characteristics by province and economic region, unadjusted for seasonality, 3 month moving average ending in August 2009 and August 2010](#).

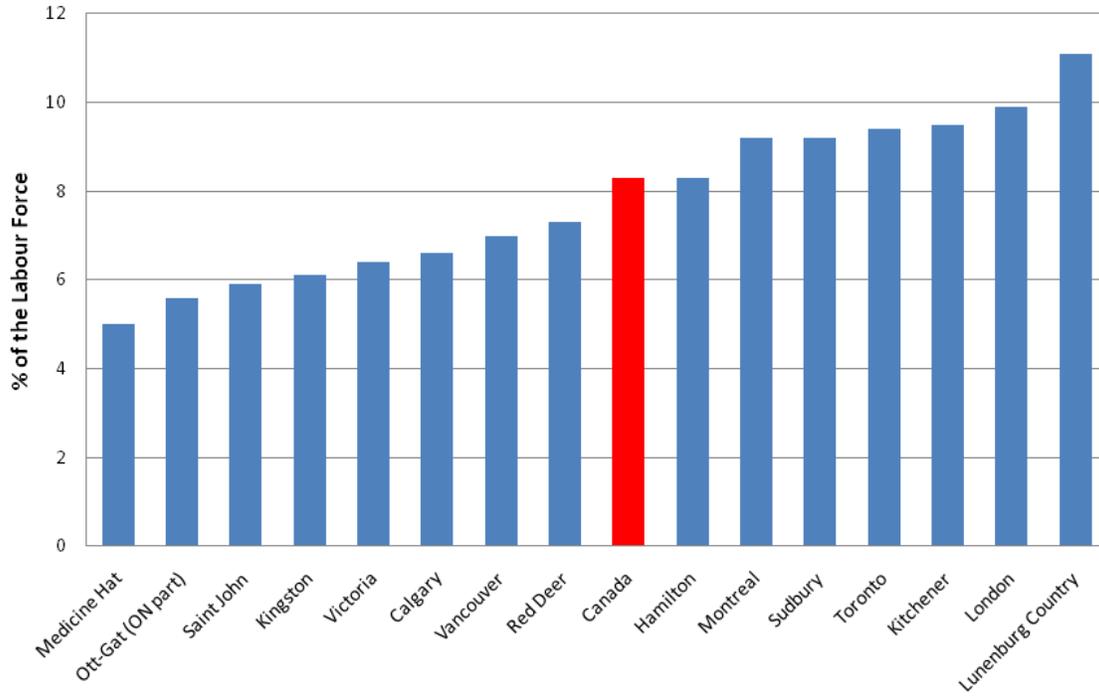
(Ontario side) and Saint John reported the lowest unemployment (at 5.0%, 5.6% and 5.9% respectively). The highest unemployment rate was found in Lunenburg County (11.1%). The next top four places of unemployment were found in Ontario.³³



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 282-0002, 2010

³³ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table IX-2-a-i: [Unemployment Rate \(15+\) in Vital Signs CMAs and CAs, 1987-2009](#)

Unemployment Rates in Vital Signs Communities, 2009



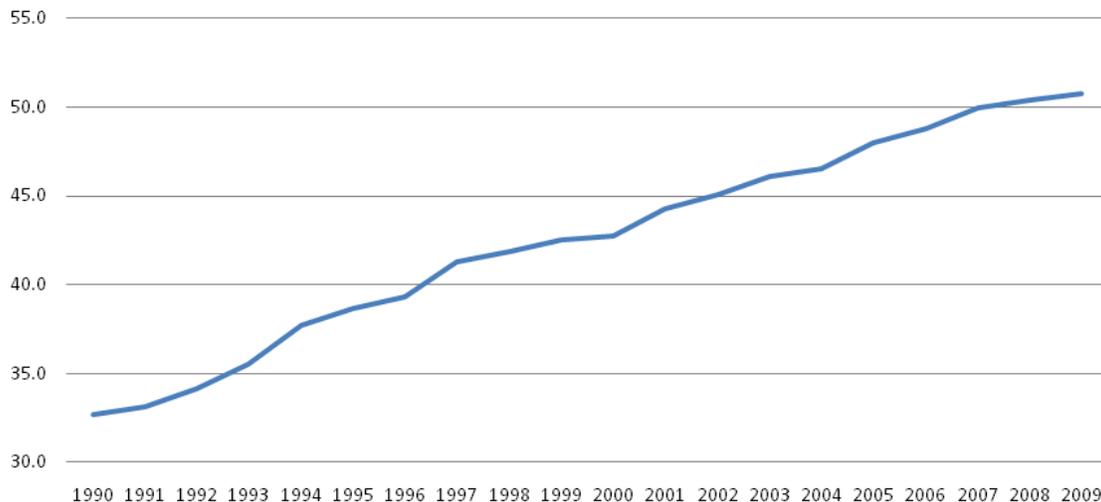
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 282-0090, 2010

7 Learning

Today, the employment opportunities and income potential for individuals with low levels of education are limited. The good news is that presently one half of Canadians (aged 15 and over) have some form of post-secondary education (50.8% in 2009). The proportion of the population with post-secondary qualifications has increased 2.0 percentage points from 2006 (the figure used in our 2007 report on this indicator), and 18.1 percentage points since 1990 (the first year for which comparable data are available).³⁴

All Vital Signs communities saw an increase in the proportion of their population with post-secondary qualifications between 1990 and 2009. The smallest increase was in Red Deer (31.4%) and the largest rise was in Kingston (74.3%).

Proportion of the Population (15 years and older) with a Post-secondary Education in Canada, 1990-2009



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 282-0004, 2009

³⁴ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table IV-2-a: [Proportion of the Population \(15 years and over\) with a Post-Secondary Education \(University Degree; Post-Secondary Certificate or Diploma\) for CMAs and Economic Regions, 1990, 2000-2009](#)

8 Safety

Property crimes have declined nearly 30% in the past decade. Property crimes include breaking and entering, theft, arson, and motor vehicle theft. Unlike robbery, which is classified as a violent crime, these offences do not involve force or threat of force against a victim.³⁵

Police reported 4,081 property crime offences per 100,000 persons in Canada in 2009, a drop of 3.9% from the previous year and 15.1% since 2006 (the figure we reported in 2007). In fact, except for a small increase in 2003, the nation's property crime rate has fallen every year since 1998 for a total decline of 28.4%.³⁶

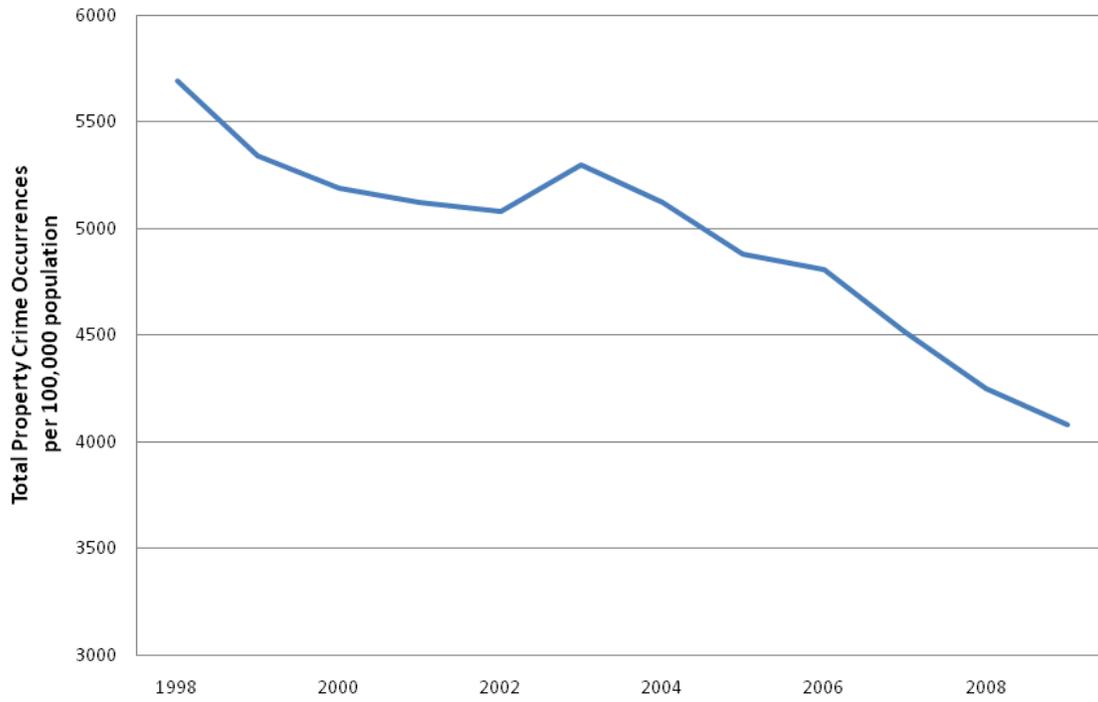
According to Statistics Canada, break-ins have been steadily declining since peaking in the early 1990s. Police reported just over 205,000 break-ins in 2009, of which 6 in 10 were residential. Motor vehicle thefts dropped substantially for the second year in a row, down 15%. There were about 108,000 motor vehicle thefts in 2009, an average of 300 stolen vehicles each day.³⁷

³⁵ Wikipedia (2010). [Property Crime](#).

³⁶ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table II-2: [Property Crime Rate per 100,000 Population in Vital Signs Communities, 1991-2008](#).

³⁷ Statistics Canada (2010). [Police-reported Crime Statistics](#). *The Daily*, Tuesday, July 20, 2010.

Property Crime Rate in Canada, 1998-2009



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 202-0802, 2010

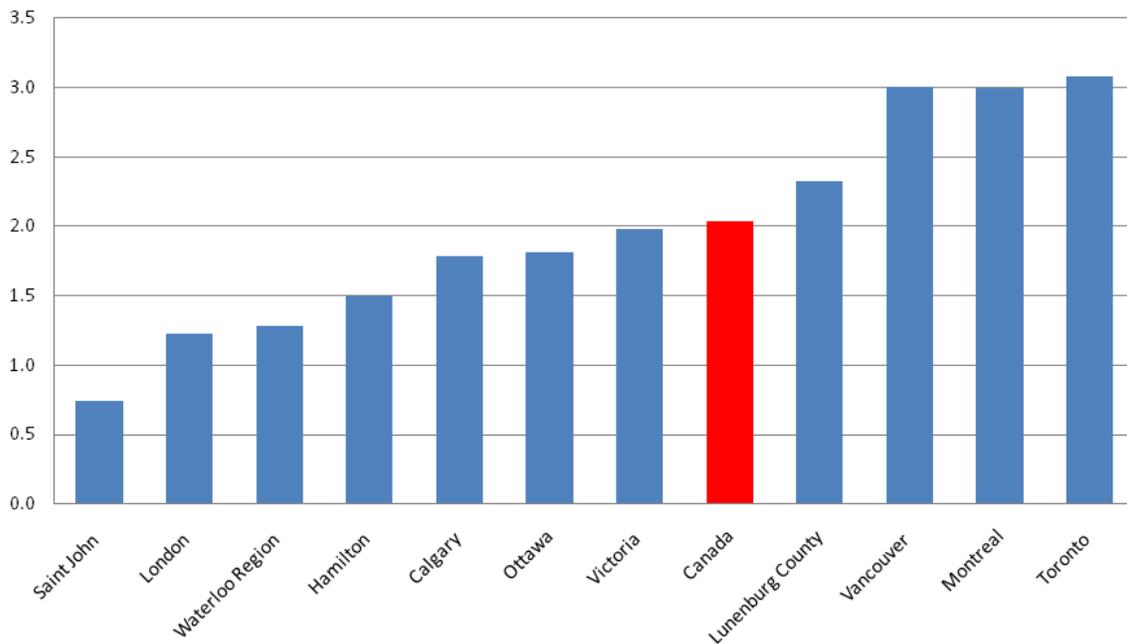
The drop in property crime rates is consistent across all Vital Signs communities. Between 1998 and 2009, it ranged from a modest decrease of 7.6% in Saint John to a dramatic fall of 44.7% in Vancouver.³⁸

³⁸ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table II-2: [Property Crime Rate per 100,000 Population in Vital Signs Communities, 1991-2008](#).

9 Arts & Culture

Nearly 350,000 Canadians were employed in cultural industries in 2009. Cultural industries include occupations such as: publishing, motion picture and video broadcasting, internet publishing and broadcasting, performing arts, spectator sports, heritage institutions. Although the number of people employed in this sector has increased 40.2% since 1987, the size of the industry relative to the total labour force (2.0%) has remained constant. As previously reported in Canada's Vital Signs in 2007, this proportion is generally higher in Canada's large urban centres than in small ones. As evidence, the three Vital Signs cities with the highest share are Montreal (3.0%), Vancouver (3.0%), and Toronto (3.1%).³⁹

% of Labour Force Employed in the Arts & Culture Sector in Selected Vital Signs Communities, 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Special Request, program A060804, 2010

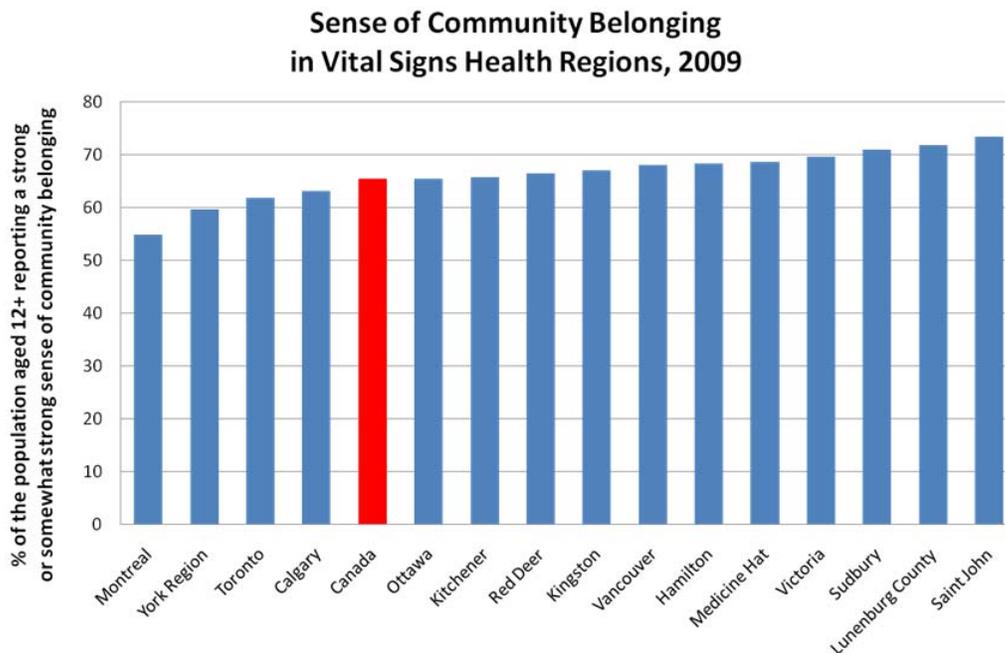
³⁹ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table VII-2-b: [Employment in Cultural Industries for Vital Signs by CMA and Economic Region, 1987, 2000-2009](#)

10 Belonging and Leadership

Close to two-thirds (65.4%) of Canadians, aged 12 and older, report a strong or somewhat strong sense of community belonging. The percentage of the population that feel this way has been steadily increasing (1.5 percentage points) since it was first recorded in 2003.⁴⁰

To measure sense of community belonging, respondents to the Canadian Community Health Survey are asked, “How would you describe your sense of belonging to your local community?”⁴¹ People with a high sense of community belonging are likely to have more ties to individuals in their community and the community as a whole; conversely people with a low sense of community belonging are likely to be socially isolated.⁴² Research has shown that sense of community belonging is highly correlated with physical and mental health, even when age, socio-economic status and other factors are taken into account.⁴³

The rate varies widely between Vital Signs communities, from a low of 54.9% in Montreal to a high of 73.5% in Saint John. In general, the lower rates are found in larger cities.⁴⁴



Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 105-0501, 2010

⁴⁰ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table X-6: [Population 12 and over Reporting A Strong or Somewhat Strong Sense of Community Belonging, by Province and Health Region, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2008, Per cent](#)

⁴¹ Statistics Canada (2010). [Community Belonging](#).

⁴² The Source – Women’s Health Data Directory (2010). [Sense of Community Belonging](#).

⁴³ Statistics Canada (2010). [Community Belonging](#).

⁴⁴ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table X-6: [Population 12 and over Reporting A Strong or Somewhat Strong Sense of Community Belonging, by Province and Health Region, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2008, Per cent](#)

About Vital Signs

Vital Signs is an annual community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our cities, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in at least ten areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs coordinated nationally by [Community Foundations of Canada](#).

Community foundations use Vital Signs to increase the effectiveness of our grantmaking, better inform our donors about issues and opportunities in the community and assist us in making connections between individuals and groups to address those issues.

Related Research

Canada is home to a number of initiatives that measure wellbeing and quality of life. Each one plays an important role in helping us better understand our communities. Please see our [Related Research](#) section for more information on their important work.