

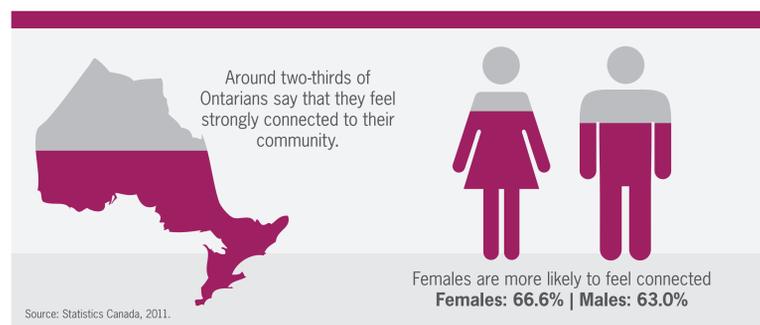
YOUR COMMUNITY

We all have our own unique places that we call home and people that we share them with. Although how we experience our community may be different, community belonging is important to everyone's health, happiness, and well-being.

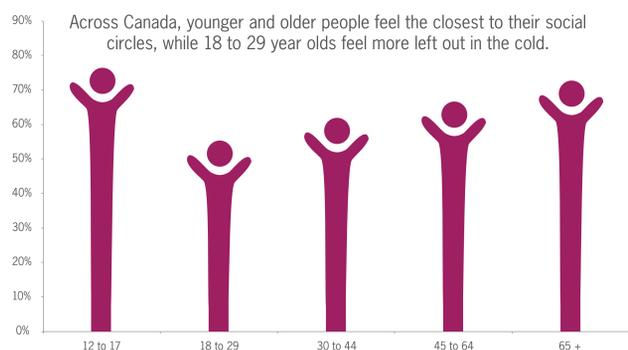
Whether it's people from down the street, two lockers across, at a sports game, or on your computer – how deeply connected you are with your community is an important social determinant of health.



THE CONNECTION CLIMATE IN CANADA



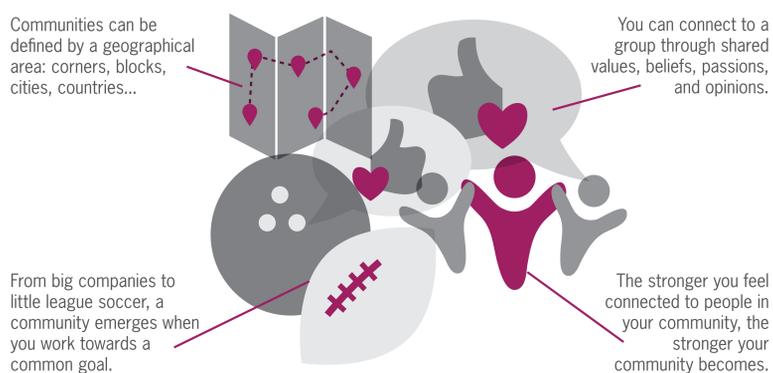
PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO FEEL A STRONG OR SOMEWHAT STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY BY AGE GROUP



Source: Shields, Margot (2008). Community Belonging and Self-Perceived Health. Health Reports, Vol. 19, (No. 2).

WHAT BUILDS BELONGING AND TRUST IN OUR COMMUNITIES?

What shapes a particular community is not the same for everyone. Many people feel part of multiple communities.



DID YOU KNOW?

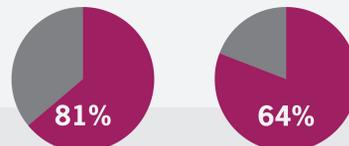
Community centres are important neighbourhood hubs where people can meet, kids can play, social and cultural events can be held, and services can be provided.

"The community centre has opened up opportunities for so many children that are deprived of a proper facility to play sports like basketball and soccer, especially during the cold and brutal winters of Toronto." (Community Voices participant)

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES MEAN HEALTHY LIVES

Stronger community connections means a healthier mind.

81% of Canadians who say that they have very strong connections to their community also have excellent or very good mental health versus only 64% of people with very weak community connections.



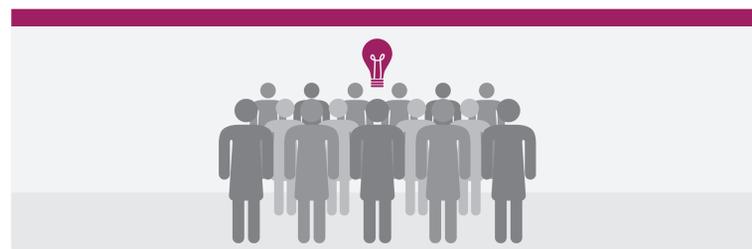
Support from your friends, family, peers and neighbours is a universal human need and a factor for good health.

Stronger bonds also means a stronger body.

65% of people with deep community connections report excellent general health versus 51% of people with very weak community connections.



LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO LOCAL CHALLENGES



In solving community challenges, it is important that the community itself influences the decisions that are made. It is critical that the community itself decides what needs to be done and organizations working in the community need to build strong, trusting relationships with members of the community.

A study by the Wellesley Institute showed that a vast and diverse range of community-based organizations and agencies can help to build stronger, more connected, and more equal communities (Danaher, 2011). An effective and innovative community sector can attend to local needs while also tackling the big issues of inequality in our communities.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

✓ To help build strong communities, we should look for ways to support local solutions. One innovative example is **Vibrant Communities**: a community-driven initiative to reduce poverty in Canada. Vibrant Communities creates strong partnerships between people, organizations, businesses, and governments; supports local initiatives; and identifies and uses existing community assets to solve local issues.

✓ Another example of building community connections is Toronto's **UforChange**. UforChange connects youth living in and around St. James Town with professionals, artists, and community leaders who help them use the arts for economic, cultural and social change. The youth are supported to pursue higher education, volunteering and employment.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE EXCLUDED?



There are preventable barriers that make feeling part of a community harder for some more than others.

Discrimination, like racism and sexism, are problems that can leave people feeling isolated. Immigrants and people with disabilities are examples of groups that tend to suffer discrimination in their communities.

Discrimination means little access to opportunities to connect with your peers, such as:

- Participating in activities you enjoy or are skilled at.
- Having access to the things you need to survive, like health care, housing, education, income security, or language services.
- Participating in social and cultural activities.
- Having economic resources and opportunities, like paid work.

People who are **socially excluded**:

- Are more likely to be unemployed or have lower incomes.
- Have less access to health and social services.
- Have less access to education.
- Are often concentrated in specific neighbourhoods that lack the resources needed to build strong communities.
- Are excluded from power – they have little control over the decisions that affect their lives.

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS



Providing hubs like libraries not only improves community connections – they can also improve communities' education.

Good community connections can mean better support for vulnerable people, like the elderly, to complete essential tasks like grocery shopping.

Studies show that strong community connections and a sense of belonging can lead to lower crime rates, which means a safer neighbourhood.

People with strong community connections tend to have better physical and mental health than those without, which means reduced need for health care services.