

SOCIAL CAPITAL STRONG IN PEEL, BUT INEQUITABLY DISTRIBUTED: REPORT *United Way Greater Toronto and partners release first assessment of social capital in Peel*

July 20, 2021 – Social capital supports one’s well-being and success in good times, but it is particularly essential in hard times. What has helped many people through the pandemic has been knowing how to access local services, trusting the institutions disseminating information and vaccines, having friends to call on for connection, and having neighbours to assist when needed – all examples of social capital in action. United Way Greater Toronto, the Region of Peel, Wellesley Institute, and The Community Foundation of Mississauga released the [Peel Region Social Capital Study](#) this morning – the first report to measure social capital in Peel, assessing pre-pandemic baseline levels. While the results are largely encouraging, there is a clear divide along financial lines. The report can inform how sectors work together to overcome those disparities – mitigating crises in the worst of times, and helping people thrive in the best of them.

“If we want resilient communities, we need to understand what social capital looks like – who has how much and how we can close the gap,” said Daniele Zanotti, President & CEO, United Way Greater Toronto. “The community sector, including United Way’s network of agencies and partners, is an important bridge to social capital: where people build trust in neighbours; where they find community when it’s most needed; where they organize to improve their neighbourhoods.”

Specifically, the report assesses how much residents trust their neighbours and institutions; how extensive and satisfying their social connections are; how civically engaged they are; and how they feel about their neighbourhoods’ safety and services.

Key findings in Peel Region (data collected December 2018 - March 2019):

Pre-pandemic, social capital in Peel Region was strong: people had relatively high levels of trust, strong social networks, extensive civic connection, and neighbourhood support.

- **Trust:** Almost 60% of respondents agreed that most people can be trusted. However, of respondents who didn’t know their neighbours, just one third (32%) believed most people can be trusted, vs. 70% for those who knew most or many of their neighbours.
- **Social networks:** 90% of respondents said they had at least one family member they felt close to and 90% said they had at least one friend they felt close to.
- **Civic connection:** Almost 65% of respondents participated in at least one group or organization and almost 80% donated money or goods in the previous year.
- **Community:** Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents reported a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community, and 70% agreed that neighbours were willing to help one another.
 - Nearly 90% believed they could make a difference in addressing problems in their community.
 - Over 60% felt they had access to most (at least 75%) of the services they needed.

Even before the pandemic, people with lower incomes and less financial security faced greater barriers to accessing social capital.

- **Trust:** Respondents who said they were struggling financially were less likely to say that most people can be trusted (25%) vs. those who reported having financial security (65%) responding the same. They were also less likely to trust institutions, their neighbours, and people with different ethnic backgrounds.
- **Community:** Respondents with incomes under \$30,000 were less likely to say that their neighbours were helpful (55%) vs. those making over \$150,000 (86%). Only 13% of respondents with incomes under \$30,000 strongly agreed that their neighbourhood was safe for children to play in vs. 44% of those making over \$150,000.

In order to plan for and invest in an inclusive recovery that supports individuals' well-being, bolsters trust, and increases neighbourhood cohesion, all sectors will need to continue to address systemic issues like poverty, financial insecurity, and discrimination that impact the uneven distribution of social capital.

A complementary report on York Region has also been released today, which can be found at unitedwaygt.org.

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Quotes from *Peel Region Social Capital Study* partners:

Sonia Pace, Director, Community Partnerships, Region of Peel: “The value of social capital is reinforced through collaborations such as the COVID-19 Community Response Table, Peel’s Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and the Lived Experience Table which informs poverty reduction strategies. Engaging diverse communities and building social connection are essential to delivering human-focused services to people in Peel.”

Kwame McKenzie, CEO, Wellesley Institute: “Social capital can help communities be healthier and more resilient. We are happy to have supported this report because it gives policy makers a blueprint for starting to build social capital, which will be crucial in establishing a new normal post-pandemic in two of the fastest growing areas of the GTA.”

Anne Marie Peirce, President & CEO, The Community Foundation of Mississauga: “By providing a measure of social capital in Peel Region through this report, we help shine a light on the level of community engagement. We are proud to have participated in the *Peel Region Social Capital Study*, and know that it will help the Community Foundation of Mississauga and our community partners as we build a healthy, dynamic and successful community.”

About United Way Greater Toronto: As the largest non-government funder of community services in the GTA, United Way Greater Toronto reinforces a crucial community safety net. United Way's network of agencies and initiatives in neighbourhoods across Peel, Toronto and York Region works to ensure that everyone has access to the programs and services they need to thrive today. Mobilizing the network and other community support, United Way tackles #UNIGNORABLE issues linked to poverty. United Way's work is rooted in ground-breaking research, strategic leadership, local advocacy and cross-sectoral partnerships committed to building lasting solutions to the GTA's greatest challenges. unitedwaygt.org

About the Region of Peel: The Region of Peel works with residents and partners to create a healthy, safe and connected Community for Life for approximately 1.5 million people and over 175,000 businesses in the cities of Brampton and Mississauga and the Town of Caledon. Peel's services touch the lives of residents every day. For more information about the Region of Peel, explore peelregion.ca and follow us on Twitter [@regionofpeel](https://twitter.com/regionofpeel) and Instagram [@peelregion.ca](https://www.instagram.com/peelregion.ca).

About Wellesley Institute: Wellesley Institute advances population health and reduces health inequities by driving change on the social determinants of health through applied research, effective policy solutions, knowledge mobilization, and innovation.

About The Community Foundation of Mississauga: The Community Foundation of Mississauga is a registered charitable public foundation that seeks to build community vitality by providing efficient, flexible donor services, grants to a broad range of community initiatives and leadership in understanding and responding to current and emergent community needs. Established in 2001, the Foundation is a member of the national network, Community Foundations of Canada and has experienced significant growth in endowed funds. The Community Foundation of Mississauga is now managing more than \$23 million in endowed assets and has made over \$20 million in cumulative grants to support charities whose work benefits the city of Mississauga. cfofm.org

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