

What is Ottawa's Vital Signs®?

Ottawa's *Vital Signs* is an annual checkup through which the Community Foundation of Ottawa measures the vitality of our city, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in eleven areas critical to Ottawa's quality of life. These areas include: the Gap between Rich and Poor; Safety; Health and Wellness; Learning; Housing; Getting Started in the Community; Arts and Culture; Environment; Work; Belonging and Leadership; and Getting Around.

The report card data is a compilation of research from numerous sources, much of it local, that can help the community make connections between issues and trends in different areas. The findings are presented in a reader-friendly format to make them as accessible as possible.

An expanded, in-depth report is also made available on our website, complete with links to original community research, in English and French, at www.ottawavitalsigns.ca and www.signesvitauxottawa.ca.

Ottawa's *Vital Signs* also has national implications. Our report is part of a national initiative led by community foundations across Canada and its findings are part of a national summary issued annually by Community Foundations of Canada.

What indicators does the report measure?

The *Community Foundation of Ottawa* consulted with a wide range of community groups to ensure our indicators capture the area's unique issues and attributes.

The report includes such core indicators as:

- The income gap between rich and poor
- Violent crime rates and police response times
- Physical activity levels amongst residents
- Education levels
- Accessibility to affordable housing
- Net migration levels
- Arts and culture funding
- Air quality
- Unemployment rate
- Voter turnout and community participation
- Commute times to and from work

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Why did you launch this program?

Because our community foundation works with a wide range of community groups, we get a comprehensive view of local issues.

Measuring our community's vitality in critical areas will increase the effectiveness of our grantmaking, help us to inform our donors about issues and opportunities in the community, and assist us in making connections between individuals and groups to address those issues.

Are you working with other organizations in the community?

Ottawa's Vital Signs is an initiative of the *Community Foundation of Ottawa*; however, in the process of producing the report we consulted with a wide range of community organizations and leaders, including the City of Ottawa, the United Way, the Social Planning Council, OCRI, the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, Police Services, Boards of Education, Champlain Local Health Integration Network, Success by Six, arts and cultural organizations and environmental groups. We have also gathered valuable research information from numerous sources in the community.

Where did the idea for *Vital Signs* come from?

Ottawa's Vital Signs is based on *Toronto's Vital Signs*®, an indicator report developed by Toronto Community Foundation, which we and other community foundations find really valuable.

To see the *Toronto's Vital Signs* report, which has been published since 2001, visit www.tcf.ca.

Ottawa's *Vital Signs* is part of a national initiative led by Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) through which 16 communities across the country release *Vital Signs* reports on the same day. These include Victoria, BC; Central Okanagan, BC; Sunshine Coast, BC; Boundary Communities, BC; Calgary, AB; Medicine Hat, AB; Red Deer, AB; Sudbury, ON; Toronto, ON; Oakville, ON; Guelph and Wellington, ON; Waterloo, ON; Kingston, ON; Ottawa, ON; Wolfville, NS; and Saint John, NB. Each community chooses its own indicators, but there are some common themes and core indicators on which Community Foundations of Canada issues a national report. All reports are available at www.cfc-fcc.ca.

How is *Vital Signs* different from other indicator initiatives?

Various indicator initiatives exist across Canada. Some track specific issues at a local level, such as a police department monitoring crime levels. Others analyze national data from a particular perspective, such as sustainability. All play an important role in helping us better understand our communities.

***Ottawa's Vital Signs* builds on existing initiatives in four valuable ways:**

Collates a broad range of data: We develop a distinctly broad picture of the community using relevant national data and identifying local research on a wide range of subject areas.

Engages the community: *Ottawa's Vital Signs* reflects the community because it involves the community at every level, from determining the report's indicators and exploring research sources, to assigning grades.



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Creates a national report: Because community foundations across Canada are participating in this project, we are able to share results and track local trends at the national level.

Publishes research you can read! We are committed to publishing a reader-friendly document that appeals to a wide range of readers looking for a snapshot of quality of life and of community vitality.

How does *Ottawa's Vital Signs* add value to current research?

Another benefit of *Ottawa's Vital Signs* is its ability to draw public attention to the terrific indicator work already taking place in our community.

By consolidating new and existing data, *Ottawa's Vital Signs* makes a wide range of information easier to access.

Individuals and organizations interested in detailed analysis of particular areas can simply use our website links to find the in-depth reports they need.

When is the *Ottawa's Vital Signs* report published?

Ottawa's Vital Signs is published every autumn. The 2009 report will be released on October 6.

How can I get more information?

Contact Anita James, Manager, Community Initiatives, at the Community Foundation of Ottawa at 613-236-1616 ext. 222 or ajames@cfo-fco.ca. You can also visit the OVS website at www.ottawavitalsigns.ca.