



VANCOUVER FOUNDATION'S
VitalSigns
For Metro Vancouver



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More *Vital Signs*

This is a highlights report. For in-depth results, visit our website. We also invite you to join our blog, Facebook and Twitter.

www.vancouverfoundation.ca/vitalsigns

Message from the Chair and CEO

Imagine what we could do

We've dazzled the world with the wonders of metro Vancouver, and we proved to ourselves what we are capable of. We put on a world-class show. We came out in massive numbers to volunteer for the Olympics. Thousands of us were inspired to take sustainable transportation. And many of us experienced a renewed sense of vitality about living here in metro Vancouver.

Imagine if we could harness this kind of energy every day, what else could we do?

As a community foundation, Vancouver Foundation works to make our community a better place for everyone. To do that, we need to understand our community: what makes it vibrant, and what challenges it is facing.

That's why we produce this report, *Vancouver Foundation's Vital Signs for Metro Vancouver*. When we understand the connections between our community issues, we can work to strengthen them. When we know what is changing, we can change too. And when we see improvements, we can double our efforts.

Vital Signs helps guide Vancouver Foundation's granting programs and helps us inform our donors about issues facing our region.

Many organizations and individuals kindly gave their time and expertise to bring this report together. We would also like to thank our two generous partners—Vancity and the *Vancouver Sun*—for their role in sharing the findings with the broader community.

The Olympics showed us what we can do. Now it's up to us—to keep that energy, connection and sense of community growing as we continue forward along the road to vitality.

Faye Wightman
CEO



Jake Kerr
Chair

The vitality story



Vancouver Foundation set out on a mission to truly understand our community; and to discover the source of metro Vancouver's vitality.

The Olympics shone a spotlight on our region and showed us just how vibrant we could be. But how do we incorporate that feeling into every day life?

This report, *Vancouver Foundation's Vital Signs for Metro Vancouver*, suggests that connections are crucial to our vitality.

We are inextricably connected to one another. And the issues that we experience as a community – both positive and negative – are also intertwined.

We are more likely to judge the quality of life in our community as high and to perceive ourselves as happy when we

feel a sense of belonging and when we believe we can trust our neighbours.

This report explores 12 key areas of community life and shows that our experiences do not exist in isolation; they interweave and overlap and one issue often affects another.

For example, residents show a strong appreciation for our amazing scenery and temperate climate. This is reflected in our belief that individual choices can improve the quality of our environment. Because we appreciate the wonders of our region, we are willing to pay a high price to live here, but homeownership increases our cost of living and puts people at risk of financial stress.

As people move further from the heart of the metro region, the number of cars drives up our greenhouse gas emissions. However, it's clear from the massive number of cyclists and walkers during the Olympics that there is a growing momentum towards sustainable transportation. This contributes to our physical activity rate, something we want to encourage given the trend towards increasing obesity. This demonstrates how affordability and health, as well as our environment and transportation are all intricately interconnected.

By understanding the connections between these issues, we can make decisions that will enhance the vitality in our region, for now and for the future.

Findings in this report are based on data for metro Vancouver. This map shows the municipalities within this region.



Children need a good start in life. The more they thrive in school, at home and at play, the greater their chances of becoming happy, successful adults who keep our community strong.

Citizen Grade
C+

Citizen Priorities

- More affordable childcare: 19%
- Decrease child poverty: 15%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓

<p>Children's vulnerability 29%</p> <p>of kindergarten children struggle to meet desired developmental targets for their age 2009</p>	<p>Food banks 40%</p> <p>of the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society's clients are estimated to be children—higher than the provincial average of 31% 2009</p>	<p>Fruits and veggies 54%</p> <p>of our youth don't eat the recommended amount of fruits and veggies, and consume them less frequently than Toronto or Montreal 2009</p>	<p>Physical activity 74%</p> <p>of youth age 12 to 19 take part in moderate or higher levels of physical activity—our youth exercise more than those in Montreal or Toronto 2009</p>
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Research methodology

How to read this report

Hard factual data tells one story of life in our region. People's perceptions may tell a completely different story. Capturing both the factual reality and opinions gives us a more complete picture of our experiences in metro Vancouver.

This report examines 12 key areas of community life. The following pages contain the highlights of our findings. More detailed data is available on our website.
www.vancouverfoundation.ca/vitalsigns

Public opinion findings

Environics Research Group conducted the online survey, using a representative sample of 1,200 metro Vancouver residents.

Citizens were asked two questions in each of the 12 key areas, without knowing any of the research findings. First, they were asked to assign a letter grade A, B, C, D or F to an issue. Second, from a list of 10 to 15 options, they were asked to identify the most important priority that needs to be addressed in that area. Here is an example for Children and Youth:

Citizen Grade—How would you rate metro Vancouver when it comes to the well-being of children and youth?

Citizen Priority—Which one of the following do you believe is the most important priority for improving metro Vancouver's grade on the well-being of Children and Youth?

Factual data

The factual data was collected from a variety of reliable sources such as Statistics Canada and Metro Vancouver. They were selected by a committee of experts and researchers for their reliability and relevance to paint a clear picture of life in our region. Where available, comparative data is provided for metro Toronto, metro Montreal, BC and/or Canada.

Public opinion survey

We thrive on the strength of our connections

What is the secret to a high quality of life in our region? And what is the secret to our personal happiness?

It isn't more money or a better education, which only make a small difference. Nor is it our gender or age, our ethnic background or whether we were born here.

What really seems to matter when we gauge the quality of life in this place we call home, and what makes the biggest difference about how we feel about our own lives, is the degree to which we feel connected to one another.

A strong sense of belonging—really feeling that there is a place for us in our community—and a bond of trust with our neighbours have the greatest influence on how we rate the quality of life in our community.

The same holds true for how we judge our personal happiness and our interest in life. When we feel that we are truly part of our community and when we believe we can trust the people who live around us, then we are likely to describe ourselves as happy.

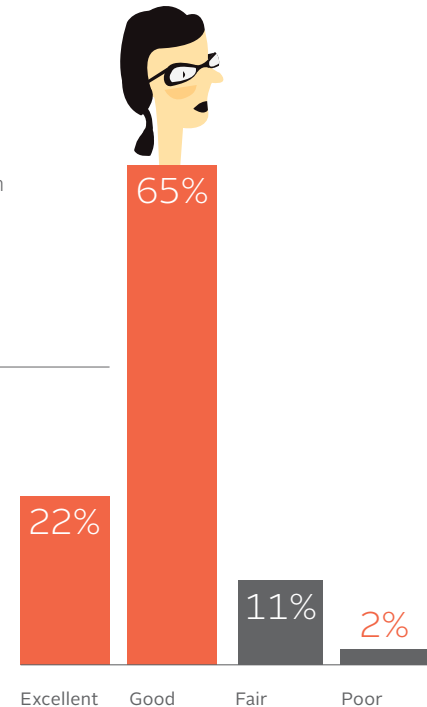
Strong social connections aren't as tangible as our beautiful mountains or temperate climate or as having a good job or a nice house. But they are essential to our experience of our community and our personal lives...and to making us feel enthusiastic about our region.

By starting with each other, drawing people in and giving people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunities to form meaningful ties, we can increase the quality of life and the happiness in our region—for everyone.

Here are highlights from the public opinion survey, given to a representative sample of 1,200 metro Vancouver residents with the help of Environics Research Group. For full results, please visit www.vancouverfoundation.ca/vitalsigns

The quality of our lives

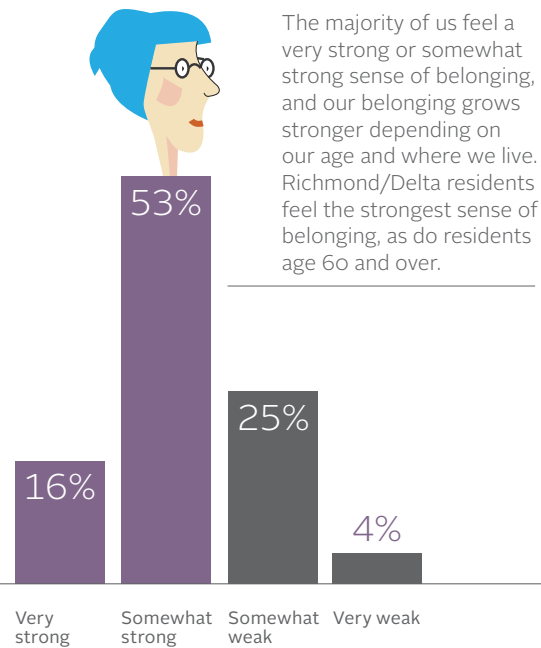
How would you rate the overall quality of life in metro Vancouver today?



The majority of our residents—87%—feel the quality of life in our region is good or excellent. And this sentiment is something we all share; it is remarkably consistent no matter where we live in our region.

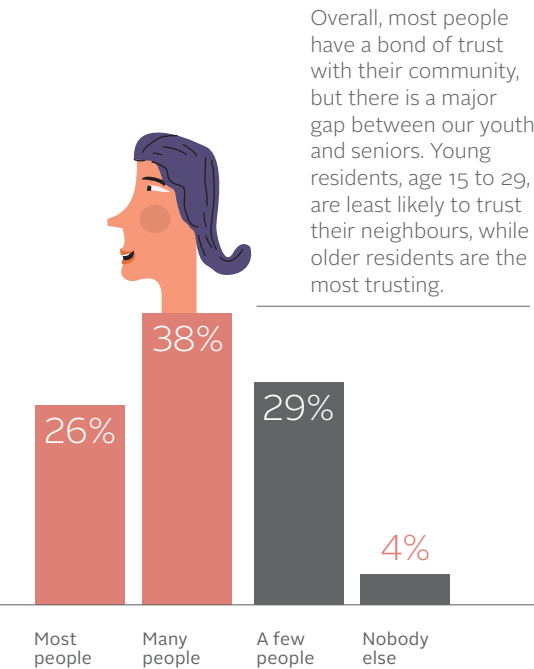
How we feel we belong

How would you describe your sense of belonging to your local community?



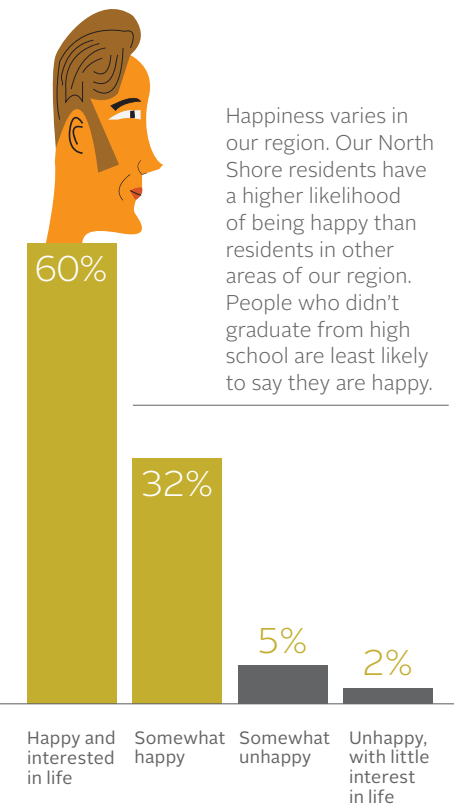
Our trust in our neighbours

In your neighbourhood, would you say you trust...



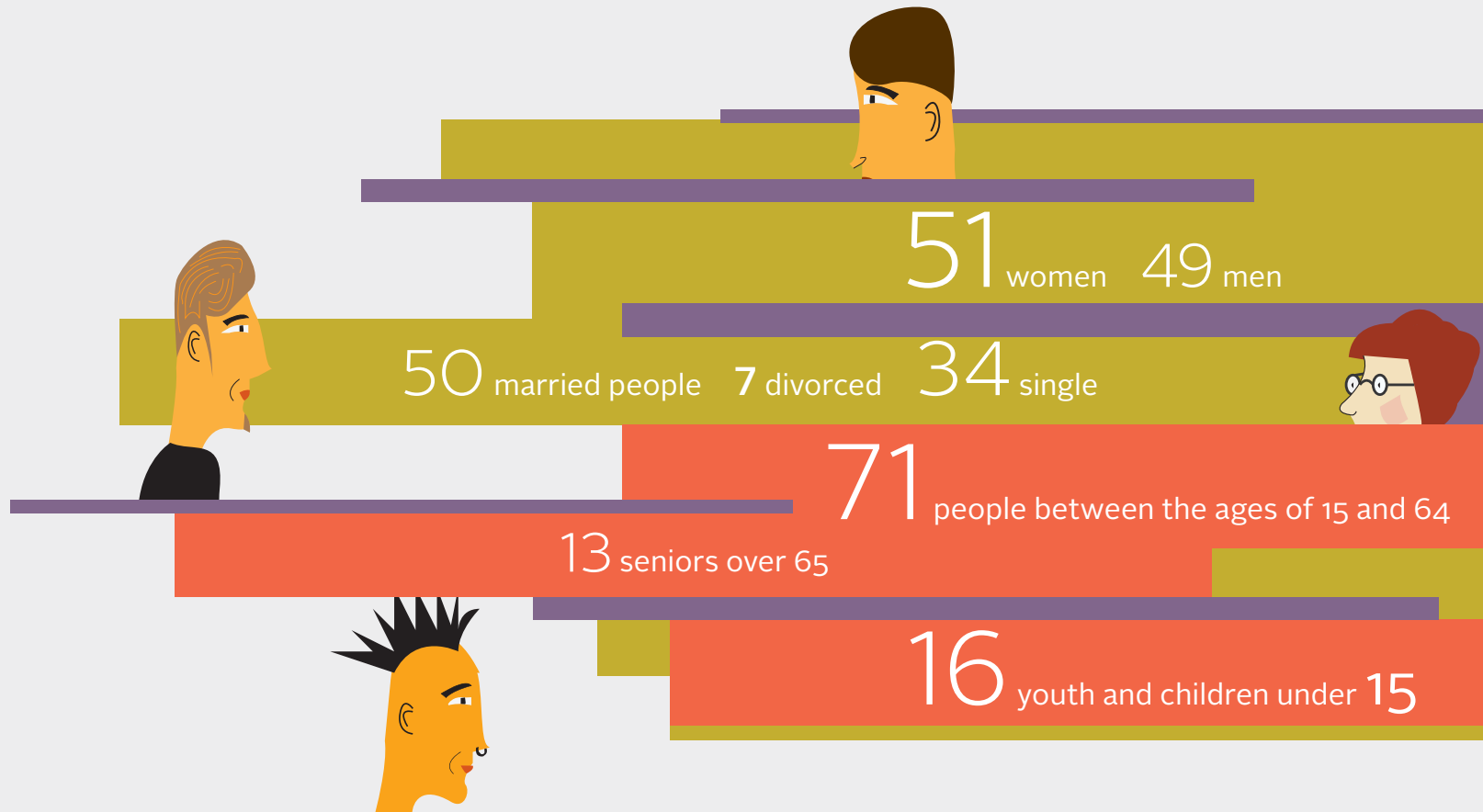
Our happiness

How do you usually feel?



The village of 100

If metro Vancouver were a village of 100 inhabitants, there would be:



42 people with a first language other than English



9 people born in Europe, 6 born in China, 4 born in India, 1 born in Africa, 1 born in the USA

11 people without Canadian citizenship



58 Caucasians, 18 Chinese, 10 South Asians, 4 Filipinos, 2 Aboriginal peoples, and 1 Black person



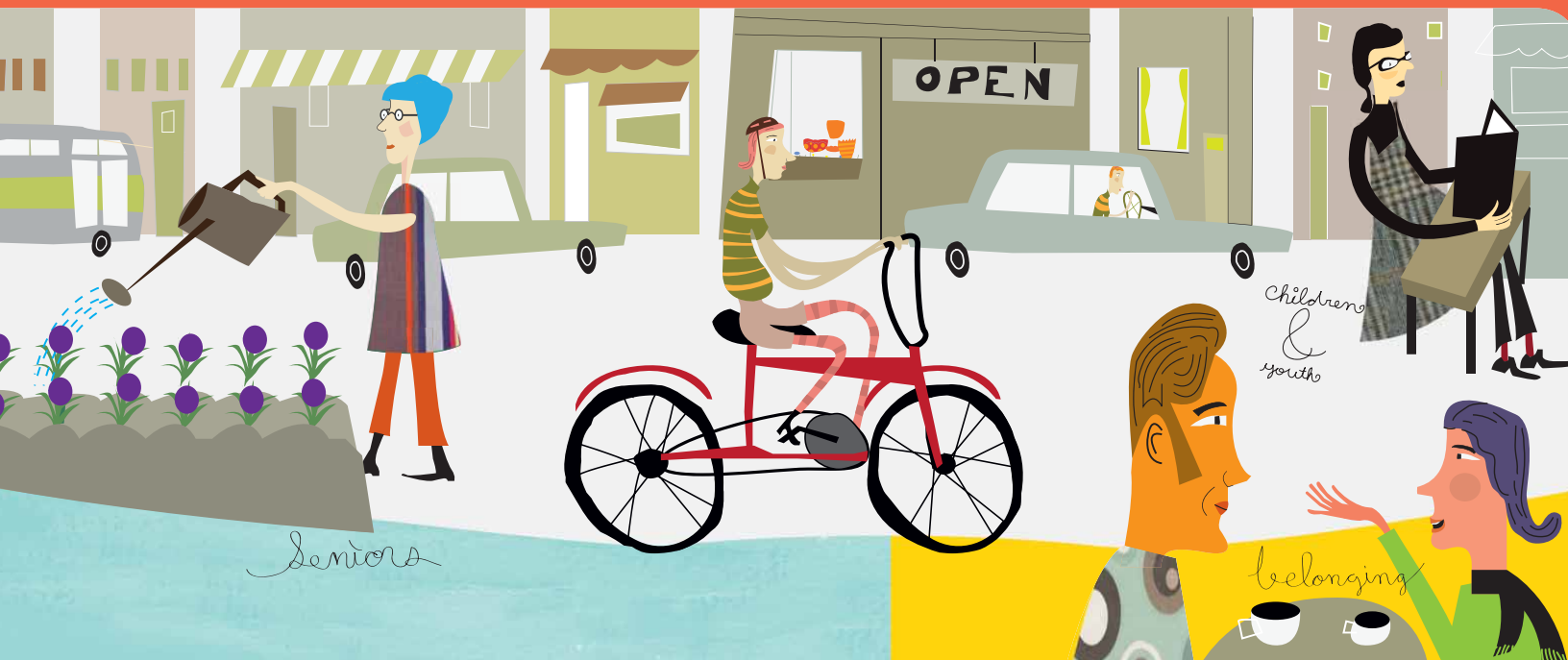
People

We are a model of diversity and integration for the world. Yet there are still significant disparities in many of our residents' lives, in their well-being and sense of belonging, and in realizing opportunities for success.

There are disparities in the lives of our children—some rely on food banks for their meals; some go hungry and consequently struggle in school. At this age proper nutrition, structure and a nurturing environment are so important for a strong start in life.

Our seniors also face challenges. We need to provide more opportunities for seniors to be included and involved in their communities. This means accessible transit, a health care system that is responsive to seniors' needs, and community care that encourages healthy choices and active lifestyles.

Regardless of our religion, race, colour, age or gender, we all want to feel that we belong, and can make a contribution to our society. By developing connections with each other, we build trust, and this is what keeps our community strong and vital.

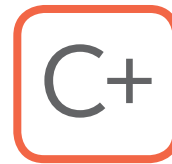


Children and Youth

Life has improved for many of our children and youth, but we need to do more

Children need a good start in life. The more they thrive in school, at home and at play, the greater their chances of becoming happy, successful adults who keep our community strong.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

More affordable childcare

19%

Decrease child poverty

15%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Children's vulnerability

29%

of kindergarten children struggle to meet desired developmental targets for their age

2009



Food banks

40%

of the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society's clients are estimated to be children—higher than the provincial average of 31%

2009



Fruits and veggies

54%

of our youth don't eat the recommended amount of fruits and veggies, and consume them less frequently than Toronto or Montreal

2009



Physical activity

74%

of youth age 12 to 19 take part in moderate or higher levels of physical activity—our youth exercise more than those in Montreal or Toronto

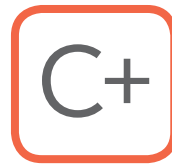
2009

Seniors

Seniors contribute to our economy and community and we need to support their independence

The well-being of our seniors reflects on our society as a whole. We need to make it as easy as possible for seniors to get around, access services and be involved, so they can live healthy and vibrant lives.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

Improve seniors' economic security

20%

More affordable independent care housing options

18%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Health
63%

of seniors have good or fully functional health—Richmond is highest at 81%
2009



Eating fruits and veggies
52%

of our seniors eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, a 16% increase from 2007
2009



Seniors' income
24%

of our seniors continued to work, 55% received income from private pension plans and 63% had investment income
2007



Seniors on the move
56%

of our region's bus stops are accessible
2010

Belonging

Our communities are welcoming,
but we're not politically engaged

People have an innate need to belong. We need a sense of connection to others and to our community in order to thrive. How our region fosters a sense of belonging, inclusion and participation is key to our vitality.

Citizen Grade

B-

Citizen Priorities

Increase community participation

19%

Improve voter turnout

13%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Sense of
belonging
68%

of residents feel they belong, a higher number than Toronto and Montreal
2009



Spirituality
83%

of our Aboriginal peoples say spirituality is very important or somewhat important in their lives
2010



Voting
54%

of North Shore area residents voted in the last municipal election, giving that area the highest voter turnout in our region
2009



Olympic
volunteers
45,000

people applied and 25,000 volunteered for the Olympics and the Paralympics
2010

Economy

The recession is still fresh in our minds, though our region has weathered the storm relatively well. The unique characteristics of our economy – that we are more service industry-based and tourism-driven than other cities; and that we have a vibrant small business sector – has helped drive the recovery, and will continue to contribute to our prosperity.

And there were the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, which buoyed our economy, while leaving us with legacies and responsibilities.

Housing still comes at a high price in metro Vancouver – it's among the highest in Canada. There is a significant impact on our society when people can't live near their work, or can no longer afford their home. Recently, new home construction has decreased significantly. This has implications not only for the construction industry and allied trades – a decrease in housing starts will ripple through other parts of the economy.

It is the question of affordability that looms largest over our region. The high cost of living here increases the number of residents who live close to, or below, the poverty line.

Our economy has done well. However, our recovery, and the slow, steady growth have not benefited everyone who lives here. The widening gap between rich and poor may be one of our greatest challenges for the future.



Economy

Our economy weathered the storm better than most

The vitality of our people depends on a strong economy. When the economy is healthy and we have good opportunities for work, it spills over into other aspects of our lives.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

Increase minimum wage

29%

Reduce unemployment

12%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Unemployment rate

7%

as of 2009 and has increased from 4% in 2008 – it has remained relatively low when compared to other large urban centres such as Montreal (9%) and Toronto (9%)

2010



Work-life balance

6%

of our residents work 50 hours a week or more, Toronto is slightly higher at 7% 2008

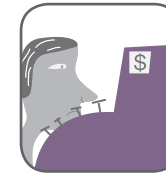


Business bankruptcies

31%

decrease in business bankruptcies since 2005, compared to an increase of 21% in Toronto and 81% in Montreal

2009



Retail Sales

4%

decrease from 2008 and declining more than the Canadian average of 3% 2009

Housing

People love our city,
but it comes at a high price

Where we live plays a key role in determining the quality of our lives. When we don't live near work, valuable hours are lost to commuting. When we pay too much of our income for housing, we have less to spend on other parts of our lives.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

Make home ownership more affordable

37%

Make renting more affordable

21%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



New housing starts

57%

drop in 2009—only 4% of new homes were rental housing in 2008
2009



Rent

\$1,150

is the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in April 2010, up 15% from 2005
2010



The cost of owning

\$74,700

is the average qualifying income to buy a standard condo, compared to \$66,800 in Toronto and \$48,600 in Montreal
2010



Young owners

22%

of people under 25, who live away from home, are home owners—a higher percentage than Toronto and Montreal
2006

Affordability

The high cost of living puts people at risk of poverty

For a region to be healthy and vital, it needs to be affordable for everyone. A prohibitive cost of living makes people more vulnerable and may start to undermine the social fabric of our region.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

Make home ownership more affordable

27%

Increase minimum wage

16%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Earnings
\$68,670

is our median family income – ranking metro Vancouver 21st out of 33 Canadian metro areas 2008



Housing risk
17%

increase in five years in the number of homeowners at risk of losing their housing, while the number of renters at risk decreased 11% 2006



The gap between rich and poor
10X

The richest residents earn 10 times more than the poorest and the gap is growing faster than in Toronto and Montreal 2006



Homeless
2,660

people reported in the 2008 Homeless Count, up 137% from 2002 2008

It is no understatement to say that many people from all over the world were dazzled by the natural beauty of this region during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

When people think of metro Vancouver, it's the natural gifts of our region they remember – the sea, the mountains, the trees, the mild climate, and how close we are to nature. Often it is these natural gifts that have drawn people to move here, and they will continue to drive

immigration in the future. Another attractive feature is the relative safety of our cities. Though some may worry about gang violence in the region, our crime rates are low compared to many other North American cities. Rates of violent crime, property crime and vehicle thefts are all down.

As more people “find out” about Vancouver, immigration will increase. As our region grows, our infrastructure must keep pace. We need

sustainable options for waste disposal and getting around (increased transit, car co-ops, and bike lanes).

Even now, regional governments are working to implement better systems. But it's important not to be complacent, to keep up the momentum, to plan now for what this region will be in the future.



Getting Around

Momentum is growing for sustainable transportation

A strong and environmentally sustainable transportation system enables people to get to their destination quickly, efficiently and with minimal impact on the planet.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

Expand public transit

29%

Make transit more affordable

25%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Public transit
32%

increase in hours of transit service since 2003, for a total of nearly six million hours
2009



Olympic record
5,000

cyclists rode and more than 10,000 people walked to and from downtown every day during the Winter Games
2010



Cycling
90%

of people feel comfortable riding on routes that are separated from cars while only 51% are comfortable on roads with parked cars
2009



Vehicles
6.4

vehicles for every 10 people in our region, and this number is growing faster than our population
2009

Environmental Sustainability

We have good intentions, but progress is slow

Recycling, driving less, reducing our water use – there are many ways we can live more sustainably. Our community is still struggling with choosing between the easy thing and the right thing to do for a healthy environment.

Citizen Grade

B-

Citizen Priorities

Improve transit service 21%

Reduce reliance on cars 12%

Cut down on waste 12%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Water use

9%

decrease region-wide over two years but still high when compared to European cities
2008



Waste

56%

of our waste is diverted from landfills – the regional target is 70% by 2015
2008



Greenhouse gases

8%

increase in emissions over two years, with the majority (55%) coming from transportation
2007



Taking action

90%

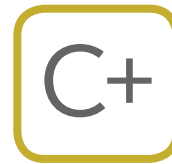
of residents believe individual actions can improve the quality of our environment, making us more optimistic than the average Canadian
2010

Safety

Crime is falling, but is higher here than many other Canadian cities

How safe we feel affects everything we do. Public safety concerns and a sense of fear limit our lives, and can hold us back from fully experiencing life within our community.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

Reduce gang violence

22%

Increase police visibility

17%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Acts of violence

12%

decrease since 2006 but still more common than in Toronto and Montreal 2009



Youth violent crime

6%

increase since 2004 in our region's youth violent crime rate, while declining in the rest of BC

2009



On the beat

9%

more police over nine years – 155 officers for 100,000 people ranks 6th among Canadian cities

2009



Gang worries

95%

of residents thought gang violence was a serious problem in 2009, yet two-thirds of all homicides in 2008 were not gang-related

2010

Society

This region, and the diverse people who live, work and play here, have much to offer. Metro Vancouver is a cultural and recreational hub – our influence is felt locally, nationally and internationally. We host a vibrant arts scene, and are home to numerous festivals, celebrations of music, live theatre and dance.

Thanks to our geography and a favourable climate, we also enjoy unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities. Many of us live healthy and active lifestyles. We enjoy nature, many parks, and all the outdoor activities the region has to offer.

The challenge lies in providing equal opportunities to everyone for leisure, learning and health. Residents are generally satisfied with our public education system, although it struggles with inequities. Today, many ESL students are finding it difficult to finish high school.

In terms of our health, residents of the West Coast are known for our healthy lifestyles, but obesity levels are creeping higher. And while our healthcare system is still strong, there are growing challenges – increasing numbers of residents have difficulty finding a family physician.

However, overall, we do well as a region. We have many ways to enjoy our lives, and develop our potential to be well-rounded, educated and healthy people.

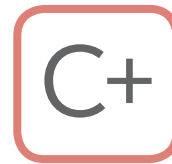


Learning

Addressing inequities in our education system is vital for the future

The more we learn, the more we can accomplish in life. Healthy communities provide learning opportunities for all ages, while a strong education system enables our residents and our region to realize our potential.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

More affordable post-secondary education

25%

Better quality of education

18%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Grad rates

46%

of ESL Grade 12 students graduate compared to 79% of Grade 12 students overall
2009



Special needs

66%

of special needs students graduated high school in 2009, the highest rate was 88% in West Vancouver
2009



Higher education

52%

of our residents have completed higher education compared to 54% of Torontonians, 56% of Montrealers and 57% of Calgarians
2009



Libraries

955,000

residents have library cards and 28 million items circulate each year
2008

Health and Wellness

A strong and accessible health care system and healthy choices are key to vitality

Health services and our income levels are only part of the picture. How we live our lives—our ability to make healthy choices—and how we feel, can also play key roles in determining our health.

Citizen Grade

B

Citizen Priorities

Shorter waits for surgeries and treatment

27%

Family physicians for everyone

17%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Stress levels

11%

decrease from 2008—one-fifth of residents find most days stressful, compared to 26% in Toronto

2009



Smoking rates

13%

of our population smokes, down 21% in one year and a lower rate than Toronto and Montreal

2009



Obesity

6%

increase and rising faster than the Canadian average

2009



Physicians

20%

fewer residents have a regular doctor than did in 2007

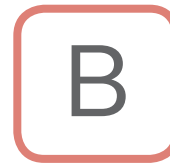
2009

Arts, Culture and Leisure

Our region is a cultural and recreational hub

People are proud to live in a region where there's a lot going on. Vibrant cultural events, recreational opportunities and diverse cultures make our region a desirable place to be, and foster the health of our community.

Citizen Grade



Citizen Priorities

More affordable recreation and sports 20%

Increase street festivals and celebrations 15%

Boost arts and culture funding 15%

RESEARCH FINDINGS ↓



Indigenous languages

32

languages in BC are endangered and three have no known living speakers

2010



Employment

11%

decrease in the film industry and 27% decrease in publishing 2009



Recreational facilities

54%

fewer households spend money on recreational facilities compared to 2002, even though our physical activity is rising

2008



City of dogs

106,000

registered dogs in the region – the city of Vancouver has the most with 20,655

2010

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the organizations and individuals who helped create *Vancouver Foundation's Vital Signs 2010*, as well as Community Foundations of Canada, which oversees the national version of this project.

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National *Vital Signs* Project

Vital Signs is an annual community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in a range of areas critical to quality of life. *Vital Signs* is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada. To read more visit www.vitalsignscanada.ca

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About Vancouver Foundation

Vancouver Foundation helps people give back to the communities they care about, in an effective, convenient and enduring way. We are the largest of Canada's 160 community foundations, and have been working to improve BC's communities since 1943 – the places where we all live, work, play and raise our kids. The places we call home.

Helping you support your community

Working with Vancouver Foundation, you can support hundreds of charities and innovative projects in British Columbia. You can give to your favourite causes (like the arts, animals, health care or the environment) or the charities closest to your heart.

Our extensive knowledge of the community means you'll have a chance to support innovative and interesting projects that can truly make a difference.

Come talk with us about how we can help you give back to your community.

Tel: 604.688.2204

Partners



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