

Mental Health

Substance Use

Criminal  
Involvement

Social  
Isolation

Victimization

Homelessness  
and Basic Needs

Experiences  
of Racism



**Community  
Safety and  
Well-Being  
Plan**

November 2025



## Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Region of Durham exists on lands that the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg inhabited for thousands of years prior to European colonization. These lands are the traditional and treaty territories of the Nations covered under the Williams Treaties, including the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, and the Chippewa Nations of Georgina Island, Beausoleil and Rama.

We honour, recognize, and respect Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live. In our efforts towards reconciliation, we continue to build and strengthen relationships with First Nations, as well as the large Métis communities and growing Inuit communities here in Durham. We commit to learning from Indigenous values and knowledge, building opportunities for collaboration, and recognizing that we are all connected.

## Labour Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Durham Region has profited from the free labour of enslaved people of African descent who were uprooted from their homelands and forced into labour to generate wealth for this nation. We also acknowledge the labour of immigrants - voluntary, forced, or undocumented - whose work has shaped this land. This includes the Chinese railway workers, whose efforts in building the transcontinental railway continue to underpin so much of our prosperity today.

We offer these acknowledgments with respect and gratitude, along with the intention to affirm fundamental human rights and improve equity and justice in all our programs and services.

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## Message from the Regional Chair and Chief Administrative Officer

At the heart of every strong community is a shared belief: that everyone deserves to feel safe, supported and valued. We are pleased to share our vision for a safer, healthier and more inclusive Durham Region through the updated Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan.

This update builds on the strong foundation established in 2021 and takes an important step forward by deepening co-ordination across sectors and introducing clear roadmaps for collective impact. These roadmaps will guide our efforts, ensuring that actions are aligned, measurable, and focused on outcomes that matter most to residents and community partner organizations.

We know that no single organization can do this alone. Real change happens when we come together—local government, police services, community partners and residents—sharing our strengths, our knowledge and our compassion.

This plan is the outcome of extensive engagement, research and co-creation with nearly 350 partners across the region. It reflects the voices and the expertise of those who work every day to make Durham a better place to live. These contributions have been invaluable in ensuring that the plan is grounded in lived experience and informed by local priorities.

By working hand in hand, we can move beyond reacting to crises and instead focus on preventing them. Through partnership, we can help prevent harm before it happens, support those who need us most and build a future where no one is left behind.

We want to express our sincere gratitude to the many partners who contributed their time, knowledge and passion to this work.

As we look ahead, we do so with optimism and determination. The updated CSWB Plan provides the tools and strategies needed to align efforts, amplify community voices and build a stronger, more resilient region.



## Message from Durham Regional Police Service Chief Peter Moreira

On behalf of the dedicated members of the Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS), I am proud to partner and support the Region of Durham Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan.

Every day, our officers work hand-in-hand with community agencies and organizations to support residents in need and strengthen the systems that contribute to the safety and well-being of our residents. Through strategic partnerships—with mental health professionals, educators, social service providers, and local organizations—we are building coordinated responses that help address the underlying factors that contribute to harm and vulnerability.

Durham Region is fortunate to have many capable partner agencies and organizations working tirelessly to address the social and systemic challenges that too often appear in crime statistics. As critical as law enforcement is to the welfare of our residents, we know that true community safety requires a coordinated and sustained effort—one that brings together police, first responders, social service agencies, healthcare professionals, educators, and community organizations.

At DRPS, we are proud to work closely with our partners on initiatives such as Durham Connect, the Mental Health Response Unit, and De-escalation Training –programs that demonstrate the power of collaboration in creating meaningful change. These partnerships allow us to connect residents with the right support at the right time and to address the conditions that can lead to crisis, victimization, or harm.

We are committed to strengthening and expanding these strategic partnerships and identifying new strategies that are measurable and will lead to better outcomes to advance community safety and well-being across the Region. The CSWB Plan provides an important opportunity to align our collective efforts, improve communication and coordination, and develop innovative, people-centered approaches that promote equity, inclusion, and trust.

Together—with compassion, collaboration, and commitment—we can ensure Durham remains a safe, healthy, and welcoming community for everyone.



## Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan Introduction

As the eastern economic gateway to the Greater Toronto Area, Durham offers prime access to a consumer market of more than five million people. The broader region provides a wide range of programs and services to a growing and increasingly diverse community of residents, businesses, and visitors. Today, the region is home to over 750,000 people and that number is expected to grow to 1.3 million by 2051 ([Region of Durham Official Plan, 2024](#)).

As shown in **Figure 1.1**, Durham is made up of eight area municipalities.



**Figure 1.1: Region of Durham**

As Durham continues to grow, the importance of maintaining high levels of safety and well-being is a top priority. Durham Region is performing well against many indicators of safety and well-being. However, there are areas for improvement that require targeted, collaborative and intentional solutions ([Durham Region's Profile, 2024](#)).

## CSWB Plan Purpose

The Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, mandated communities across the province to develop a CSWB Plan ([Government of Ontario, 2019](#)). The Region of Durham's first CSWB Plan was adopted by Durham Regional Council on November 24, 2021. This legislation also requires the Region to review and submit a revised CSWB Plan to the Ministry of the Solicitor General every four years.

In preparation for this deadline, the Region of Durham CSWB Secretariat (Region of Durham staff responsible for the development and implementation of the CSWB Plan) worked closely with partners to conduct data analysis, research and community engagement to support the review and development of the updated CSWB Plan 2025-2029.

The goal of the CSWB Plan is to outline a framework for collective action that works to ensure residents of Durham Region feel safe and have a sense of belonging, and their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, as well as social and cultural expression are met. The CSWB Plan outlines a collaborative approach for integrated service delivery, working with community partners to support upstream intervention and investment to address priority risk factors.

For more information, please visit the [CSWB Online Information Hub](#).

**“We want to express our heartfelt appreciation to the many people who took the time to participate in shaping this plan. Without their lived experience, sector knowledge and subject matter expertise, the updated CSWB Plan and associated outcomes would not have been possible. - Region of Durham, CSWB Secretariat**

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## Benefits of the CSWB Plan

No one organization or sector holds the sole responsibility for community safety and well-being. Building robust community capacity to ensure residents have access to the right services at the right time is a shared responsibility across all sectors. The CSWB Plan provides an opportunity to make the best use of resources, avoid duplication, learn best practices, facilitate and support effective cross-sectoral collaboration.

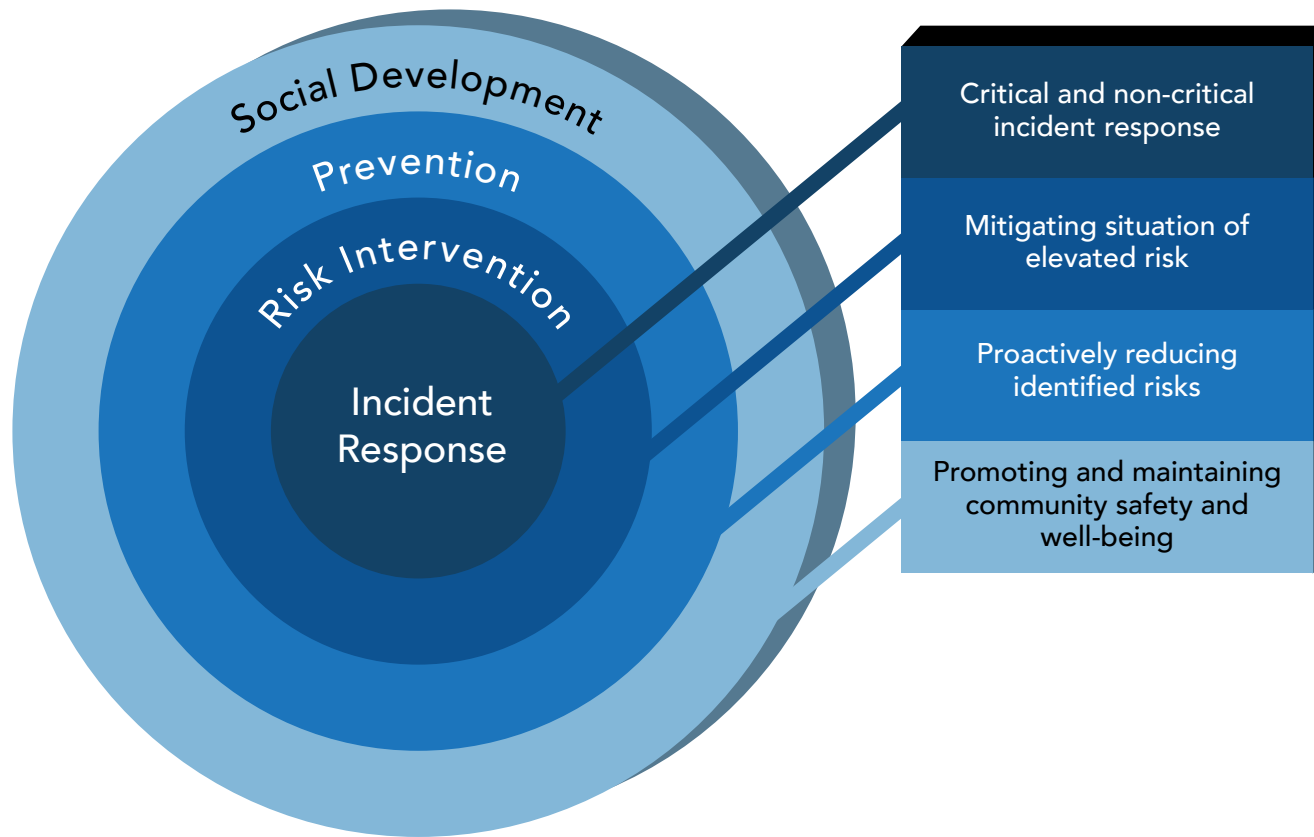
Residents, organizations, institutions and municipal partners in the Region of Durham will benefit from the CSWB Plan. It will serve as an umbrella document, creating the opportunity for alignment at the regional, municipal and community level. The CSWB Plan creates a formal framework to convene system and sector leaders to share, plan and strategize together. This includes the involvement of persons with lived experience and the not-for-profit community, which is vital to community safety and well-being.

## CSWB Plan Framework

The CSWB Plan calls on different sectors, institutions and service delivery agents to share in the collective responsibility of creating the type of community we want to call home. The CSWB Plan acknowledges this work must extend beyond the system of policing to address complex social issues that often contribute to crime and poor health outcomes. **Figure 1.2** (see next page) demonstrates how the CSWB Planning Framework focuses on improving early interventions and upstream services as the key to shifting away from acute care, deep poverty and criminal justice system involvement.

When youth have spaces where people feel safe and can be themselves, the ripple effect extends much further than aiding that specific youth. These spaces strengthen our communities at large, particularly for justice involved youth, whom we deal with daily. These supports create pathways away from cycles of conflict with law enforcement, and towards positive contributions to society. It's a more holistic approach to working with young people.  
- Kim Miller Sands, Program Manager, Murray McKinnon Foundation (CSWB Fund Recipient)





**Figure 1.2:** CSWB Planning Framework ([Region of Durham, CSWB Plan, 2021](#)).

**Figure 1.2** illustrates that by using community-based planning, such as a CSWB Plan, many of the crises and incidents that occur could potentially be avoided or reduced (if collaborative social interventions addressed the originating issue). These rings show the interconnectedness of community challenges and the importance of addressing issues across all four levels. The CSWB Plan focuses primarily on upstream approaches, promoting alignment and integration of services. This approach uses critical community services, such as emergency responders, in a more effective and intentional way. It also gives system users more information about available supports and greater autonomy over their options.

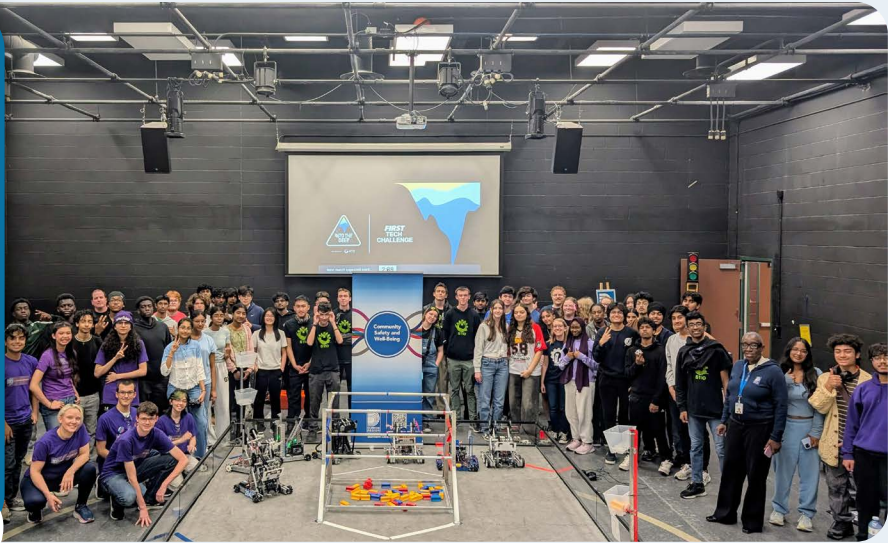
## Previous CSWB Plan (2021-2025)

Following extensive data analysis, feedback from community partners, and resident engagement, the following risk factors were identified in the 2021 CSWB Plan.



During the review of the 2021 CSWB Plan, it was confirmed these original risk factors remain relevant, critical and highly interconnected, with compounding impacts. The updated 2025 CSWB Plan highlights the ongoing urgency of these risk factors and the need to attract attention, investment, and drive collective action toward common goals.

“ This event was more than just a robotics competition. It was a powerful example of youth leadership and the impact that meaningful opportunities can have when supported by the community. Your [CSWB] investment in this initiative directly contributed to student growth, engagement, and well-being—and for that, we are truly grateful. ”



Stormbots Robotics Team at J. Clarke Richardson Collegiate, 2025 (CSWB Fund Recipient)

## Progress Report: Accomplishments to Date

Since the adoption of the CSWB Plan, the Region of Durham CSWB Secretariat has been hard at work to mobilize programs and initiatives in collaboration with community partners across Durham ([Appendix B](#), [Appendix C](#)). These initiatives were funded primarily by Public Safety Canada - Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) ([Government of Canada, 2023](#)). BSCF funding has allowed Durham to mobilize local resources and partnerships in a way that aligns efforts and optimizes the impact of local initiatives. The impact of this work in our community cannot be overstated.

The Region of Durham acknowledges, with appreciation, the important contribution of Public Safety Canada toward advancing violence prevention and intervention priorities in Durham Region. As the current funding period comes to a close, the Region remains committed to sustaining progress under the CSWB Plan. Ongoing collaboration with federal and provincial partners is essential to securing stable, long-term funding and continuing this vital work that supports safer, more resilient communities.

“

We are a group of friends that want to teach youth sport skills and [the] importance of staying away from bad influences. Our goal is to improve the skills and confidence of each of our kids while relieving the pressure of cost on the parents.

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Phoenix Football Club (CSWB Fund Recipient)

Following the adoption of the CSWB Plan in 2021, the Region met the following objectives:

- Establish the CSWB Secretariat
- Host Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) Community Safety Symposium ([#2022-INFO-71](#)).
- Transition from Planning to Implementation: Steering Committee and Working Groups ([Appendix B](#))
  - CSWB Steering Committee:
    - Co-chaired by the Regional Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Durham Regional Police Service Chief, this group includes leaders from health, justice, education, and child protection sectors. It focuses on addressing CSWB Plan risk factors, including youth violence and gang involvement through system-level collaboration.
  - CSWB Area Municipal Working Group:
    - Includes CAOs or delegates from all eight Durham municipalities. It supports collaborative implementation of the CSWB Plan, addressing local safety and well-being priorities.
  - CSWB Internal Working Group:
    - Includes representation from all Regional departments (e.g., Health and Social Services) to support opportunities for cross- departmental information sharing, guidance and strategic alignment.
  - CSWB Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) - Youth Violence Prevention and Intervention:
    - Composed of 30 experts and agency leaders from across the region, this group guides youth violence prevention initiatives, supports advocacy and capacity-building for youth-serving organizations.
  - CSWB Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) Working Group:
    - Includes representation from GTHA municipalities to leverage best practices and ensure alignment across municipal boundaries.
- Identify and participate on existing tables and working groups across the Region, working to mobilize collective work in alignment with the CSWB Plan Risk Factors.
- Manage funding reporting requirements to multiple levels of government.
- Advance advocacy efforts to raise awareness and increase supports addressing CSWB Plan Risk Factors.

In addition to these structural components, the following **highlights key accomplishments to date**. This work aligns with the CSWB Plan Risk Factors and responds directly to community needs.

**Community told us: Information about the CSWB Plan and associated initiatives should be communicated in different formats and easy to find online. In response:**

- Launch of the [CSWB Online Information Hub](#).
- Development of communication materials and resources (e.g. CSWB Information Video, awareness materials - including poster board and postcards, presenting at community-led tables and attending community events).
- Highlight best practices in Durham Region by presenting on CSWB work at provincewide conferences: Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (2024) and Ontario Professional Planning Institute (2021).

**Community told us: Data needs to be made available for use by community partners. In response:**

- The CSWB Plan reports on data points for all Risk Factors, available publicly on the [CSWB Data Dashboard](#). This information is intended to provide a community wide snapshot of publicly available, regularly updated data points to guide decision making, inform strategic planning efforts, support grant applications and other purposes as determined by partners.

“We are a group of fathers looking to create a safe space to support one another in the challenging journey of raising children. Our mission is not only to [be] better fathers, but to redefine what it means to be a father in today’s world.”



Dads Discuss (CSWB Fund Recipient)

**Community told us: More funding needs to flow into community to address priority risk factors. In response:**

- The CSWB Fund, including the Micro-Grant Program, was established and to date, \$1,000,000 has flowed directly to community agencies and resident-led initiatives to deliver local programming, reaching over 5,000 individuals in Durham Region, including children, youth and families with complex needs. Together, these programs capture the full spectrum of violence prevention activities, from social development and violence prevention to intervention and interruption. Specialized services that are being provided include reintegration, complex case management, counselling, and crisis support. Culturally responsive social development, leadership and mentorship programs are also being delivered.
- This included \$70,000 that has flowed to seven Williams Treaty First Nations to support initiatives that foster pride in cultural identity, pro-social connections, and sense of belonging in children and youth.

**Community told us: Agency staff need access to training opportunities to increase capacity to support more community members. In response:**

- The CSWB Community Capacity Training Series was launched. This series has provided training to nearly 350 people from almost 45 organizations in topics identified by community as critical, including ASIST, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Harm Reduction, Human Trafficking, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Trauma Informed Practices, Board Governance, Project Management, Indigenous Cultural Safety, and Grant Writing.

“

We are a small group of teens who host events and activities in seniors' homes, hence our name Senior Buddies! We believe that youth should get the opportunity to learn from and engage with seniors in our communities.

”



Senior Buddies (CSWB Fund Recipient)

**Community told us: Youth is a priority population. In response, the following was advanced:**

- In partnership with Durham Community Action Group (DCAG), the CSWB Secretariat established the Youth Action Group (YAG) to build leadership and civic engagement skills among Durham Region youth. YAG members, who themselves were youth, worked to curate and display artwork from 23 youth artists aged 13 to 21, from across the region. Using a variety of mediums, their artwork promoted anti-violence, healing, resilience, and included themes of bullying, racism, mental wellness and more. The YAG project demonstrated the resilience of youth in Durham Region and showcased their talents as ambassadors and leaders in their communities.
- The CSWB Secretariat established the CSWB Strategic Advisory Group (SAG), comprised of almost 40 youth serving organizations who meet monthly to focus on ways to support youth across the risk mitigation framework.
- With key guidance and in collaboration with YAG, SAG and other partners, including DRPS, the CSWB Secretariat is developing a Youth Violence Prevention Strategy. Recent community engagement on this strategy involved 36 community service providers representing 22 organizations, and 49 youth who attended four youth-focused engagement sessions.

“

It makes a profound difference when community organizations, local government and residents work together under a shared plan for community safety and well-being. When we all share this responsibility, we bring together a wide range of skills, expertise, and knowledge that no single group has on its own. This collective approach allows us to proactively reduce risk and make sure vulnerable groups don't fall through the cracks. It also reduces recidivism, strengthens trust between young people, community partners, and institutions, and increases overall community safety and well-being. - Suzette Lewis, Chief Executive Director, Murray McKinnon Foundation, (CSWB Fund Recipient).

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**Community told us: Launch Durham Connect – a Situation Table in Durham. In response:**

- With partners in DRPS, the CSWB Secretariat engaged community to hear about how this Table can be of value and received feedback from 50 organizations. As a result of this guidance, the Region and DRPS are on track to relaunch the Table in early 2026, to address situations of Acutely Elevated Risk (AER).

**Community told us: Increase access to information and support following violent or traumatic events. In response:**

- The CSWB Secretariat is developing a Community Healing Toolkit, informed by 17 interviews, five focus groups and guidance from networks such as the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council (VPCC) of Durham. The Guide will be released in early 2026 to support recovery, healing and reduce retaliatory violence in Durham Region.

**Community told us: Seniors and older adults need support accessing local programs and supports. In response:**

- With partners, the CSWB Secretariat developed the Guide to Community Resources for Seniors and Older Adults, and over 6,700 printed copies have been distributed to date across more than 130 locations throughout Durham Region. An accessible online version is also available at [durham.ca/agefriendly](https://durham.ca/agefriendly). The Guide highlights services offered by 109 non-profit organizations, organized into ten key categories: Food and Clothing, Health, Mental Health, Housing, Income, Legal, Safety, Settlement, Social and Recreation, and Transportation.

“

It is very important to start early prevention and intervention for young people so that we can create a solid foundation for them. When we introduce young people to their roots, especially in our community, they feel rooted, just like a tree that has strong roots.

-Sanaaj Mirrie, Executive Director, Afiwi Groove School (CSWB Fund Recipient).

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**Community told us: IPV is an urgent priority and has been declared an epidemic by Durham Regional Council. In response, the following was advanced:**

- The CSWB Secretariat has partnered with Violence Against Women serving agencies on two community walks - the first walk was on September 21, 2024, which had over 200 participants (#2024-INFO-81). The second walk is scheduled for November 1, 2025, and the Region expects even greater participation this year.
- The CSWB Secretariat, in partnership with Social Services, secured a Proclamation and the Flag Raising for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 2024 and 2025.
- In collaboration with the VPCC of Durham, the Region will complete a GBV and IPV Action Plan by the end of 2025.
- The CSWB Secretariat launched the Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response Fund to support agencies and non-profit organizations doing critical work to provide supports and services to persons experiencing GBV and IPV in Durham Region.

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**I think when we create a society that invests in our young people, we really see the value of our own community. And the future – young people who are excited, who are connected to their communities, have just better outcomes. They can sustain jobs; they are able to start their own families. So, by investing in young people, we see a huge ripple effect within our communities.** -Nicole Perryman, Executive Director, Ifarada Centre for Excellence (CSWB Fund Recipient).

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2025 CSWB Micro-Grant Program Launch


“

The Community Safety and Well-Being collective in Durham Region has become a vital force in fostering collaboration, accountability, and proactive solutions to complex social challenges. Northstar sees great value in bringing together diverse community partners, from youth justice organizations and mental health providers to educators and municipal leaders, to create a unified space for dialogue, innovation, and coordinated action.

This collective approach ensures that safety is not just about enforcement, but about equity, prevention, and belonging. For Northstar, participating in this committee means being part of a regional movement that prioritizes upstream interventions, addresses root causes like social isolation and victimization, and builds a network of support around youth and families. It's a model that doesn't just respond to crises, it works to prevent them, making Durham a safer and more resilient community for all.

- Jai Sahak, Executive Director, Northstar (CSWB Steering Committee Member)

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CSWB Plan,  
2025 Priority Risk  
Factors

## Criminal Involvement

Criminal involvement includes participating in behaviours, acts or conduct prohibited by law. As a priority risk factor, it includes theft, assault, gang activity, use of guns and other illegal activities.

There are often multiple complex and interconnected factors that can result in a person becoming involved with criminal activity (Criminal Involvement NOR, 2025). These factors are often categorized into individual (e.g., mental health, trauma), family (e.g., unsafe family environment), community (e.g., poverty, unaffordable housing, barriers/lack of employment) and systemic factors (e.g., racism and marginalization). Knowledge of these factors can provide necessary context and awareness for the importance of early intervention and prevention initiatives.

Protective factors in a person's life help prevent criminal involvement (Criminal Involvement NOR, 2025). These may include equitable and sufficient access to community services, supports, programming, opportunities and employment, family support, adequate and appropriate physical and mental health care, positive relationships with mentors and peers, equitable and culturally appropriate service in schools, health care, police and justice systems.

### Key Data Insights

- As of 2021, approximately 7 per cent of Durham Region residents live in poverty; slightly fewer than the Ontario average (10 per cent) (Criminal Involvement NOR, 2025).
- Food bank use increased by 52 per cent from 2022 to 2023 in Durham Region (Homelessness and Basic Needs NOR, 2025).
- One in 10 (11 per cent) Durham Region elementary school students and 17 per cent of secondary school students seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year (Criminal Involvement NOR, 2025).
- The most recent data from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health survey OSDUHS (2016-17) indicates that one-third (31 per cent) of Durham Region elementary school students and almost half (47 per cent) of all high school students reported that they rarely or never talk to a parent about their problems (Criminal Involvement NOR, 2025).
- The most recent data from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health survey (OSDUHS) indicates that 24 per cent of grade 7 and 8 students and 13 per cent of high school students in Durham Region state they are bullied at school (OSDUHS, 2016-17).

## Experiences of Racism

Racism is an ideology that directly or indirectly asserts that one group of people is inherently superior to others. Racism can be expressed openly through racial slurs, jokes, or hate crimes. It may also live in the everyday attitudes, values, and stereotypes people hold and operate at various levels, such as individual, systemic and societal.

Racism has profound consequences for individuals, influencing their safety, justice system involvement, health, economic outcomes, and access to education and housing. Individuals with intersecting identities often experience compounded effects of racism.

### Key Data Insights

- Canada's population has become increasingly diverse in recent decades due to immigration. As of 2021, 26.5 per cent of Canadians identified as racialized and 5 per cent as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) (Experiences with Racism NOR, 2025). This proportion is expected to rise to nearly 43 per cent by 2041 (Experiences with Racism NOR, 2025).
- The 2024 Durham Region Profile shows that one-in-four residents are immigrants to Canada, and 70 per cent of new residents moving into the Durham Region in the last five years are immigrants. Visible minorities make up 36.3 per cent of the Region's population, over one-third of whom are South Asian (36.7 per cent), 26.3 per cent are Black, 8 per cent Filipino, and 6.5 per cent Chinese ([Durham Region Profile, 2024](#)).
- In 2024 DRPS reported 55 hate-motivated incidents based on race/ethnicity (Experiences with Racism NOR, 2025).

## Homelessness and Basic Needs

Homelessness refers to the state of individuals or families who do not have a fixed, regular, and/or adequate place to live within the geographical boundaries of Durham Region. Homelessness can be characterized by a lack of stable housing options, which may include living on the streets, in emergency shelters, or in temporary accommodations such as cars or makeshift dwellings. Basic needs include anything that people or households need to survive, such as belongings, food and shelter. It can also include what is needed to move from survival to well-being, such as transportation, clothing, healthcare and education.

Food insecurity is another common outcome of unmet basic needs and is the result of not having enough income to buy food. Food insecure households struggle and must choose between paying for food, rent, bills and other basic needs. In more concrete terms, food insecurity can mean: worrying that food will run out; having to compromise on the type of food they eat, or eat less food than they need; skipping meals; eating the same few foods for all their meals; going without eating so their children can eat (Homelessness and Basic Needs NOR, 2025).

### Key Data Insights

- 4,377 people accessed the shelter system in 2024 (this includes shelter admission, winter warming, hotel stays). ([Durham Region, 2025](#)).
- In August 2025, there were 1,003 people on the Durham Region's By-Name List, up almost 25 per cent from August 2024 (786 people). ([Durham Region, 2025](#)).
- 362 people experiencing homelessness on Durham Region's By-Name List moved into housing in 2024 and 293 people have moved into housing by August 2025. ([Durham Region, 2025](#)).
- 1 in 4 households are experiencing food insecurity in Durham Region ([Durham Region, 2024](#)).

## Mental Health

Mental health is the state of psychological and emotional well-being and is influenced by social, biological, psychological and economic factors. It is a necessary resource for living a healthy life and a main factor in overall health.

There are several factors that influence mental health and mental well-being. These factors can be broadly categorized as structural, social, environmental and psychological, and biological and physical in nature (Mental Health NOR, 2025).

Social media has also become a key environmental factor that offers virtual spaces for individuals to engage and form inter-personal relationships. Although the shift from face-to-face to online communication has made sharing information easier, there is evidence that social media can have negative impacts on mental health (Mental Health NOR, 2025). The mental-health impact grows when exposure includes hostile interpersonal content. Social media has also created a potentially harmful space for cyberbullying, especially among the youth (Mental Health NOR, 2025).

### Key Data Insights

- Between 2013 and 2022, self-reported “excellent” or “very good” mental health declined from 71 per cent in 2013 to 56 per cent in 2022. The sharpest decline occurred in 2021, when only 53 per cent of individuals reported “excellent” or “very good” mental health ([Region of Durham CSWB Dashboard](#)). The sharp decline in 2021 is closely linked to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mental Health NOR, 2025).
- 18 per cent of surveyed Durham Region adults are very satisfied with the availability of mental health services ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- 56 per cent of Durham Region adults rate their mental health as very good or excellent ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).

## Social Isolation

Social isolation, loneliness, and/or lack of belonging can be experienced by any person and at any age, but are more commonly experienced by those who face barriers to social engagement such as systemic discrimination (e.g., racism, ageism, ableism); physical separation from social activity (lack of physical access to activity due to physical distance and/or lack of transportation options); mental health, health, mobility or accessibility challenges; living with low income; having caregiving responsibilities.

### Key Data Insights

- In Durham Region, the latest Census data (2021) found that 16 per cent of the population was aged 65 or older (Social Isolation NOR, 2025).
- 77 per cent of surveyed Durham Region adults have a strong sense of community belonging (2022) ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- 20 per cent of surveyed Durham Region seniors live alone (2016) ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).

## Substance Use (e.g., cannabis, opioids, alcohol, vaping/e-cigarettes)

Substance use refers to the consumption of alcohol, cannabis, opioids or other legal and illegal drugs. Substance use may lead to substance use disorders, overdose, infectious diseases or other complications. Reducing the harms associated with substance use can prevent injury, illness or death.

Factors associated with substance use and addiction are multi-faceted and complex. In addition to risk factors, there are also protective factors, these include physical safety, positive school environments, good relationships with parents/caregivers, and social inclusion (Substance Use NOR, 2025).

### Key Data Insights

- In 2021, the rate of opioid toxicity deaths was 18 per 100,000 population ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- In 2021, the rate of emergency department visits for conditions entirely caused by alcohol was 428 per 100,000 population ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- In 2021, the rate of emergency department visits for cannabis-related harms was 130 per 100,000 population ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- In Durham Region, 81.3 per cent of people reported drinking alcohol in the past 12 months in 2019-2020, slightly above the rate for Ontario (75.8 per cent). The rate of self-reported binge drinking in Durham Region was 17.7 per cent, which was comparable to the rate for similar areas across Ontario (17.1 per cent) (Substance Use NOR, 2025).
- Evidence from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Mental Health Survey shows an increase in the percentage of middle and high school students (grades 7 to 12) using e-cigarettes from 2015 to 2019. In 2015, 11.7 per cent used e-cigarettes, rising to 22.7 per cent in 2019 (Substance Use NOR, 2025).

## Victimization (e.g. Gender Based Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, and Human Trafficking)

A victim is a person who has suffered physical or emotional harm, property damage, or economic loss as a result of a crime. Victimization often impacts people on an emotional, physical, financial, psychological, and social level. Victimization as a priority risk factor includes sexual and/or physical assault, domestic violence and human trafficking.

Anti-violence efforts exist on a spectrum, ranging from preventing violence before it occurs (primary prevention) to meeting the immediate needs of victims and mitigating long-term impacts (tertiary prevention). Across this spectrum, addressing the root causes of violence requires changing social norms and policies, in addition to individual behaviour.

In 2023, Durham Regional Council approved a motion to formally declare IPV as an epidemic and encourage that prevention of IPV be integrated into every municipality's CSWB Plan. Following this motion, the CSWB Secretariat and the VPCC of Durham have been developing a joint action plan outlining the regional response to the IPV epidemic.

To date, recommended priority areas within the plan include the following:

- Expanding GBV and IPV awareness and prevention initiatives.
- Enhancing outreach and engagement with populations disproportionately affected by GBV and IPV.
- Securing sustainable funding for GBV and IPV prevention and response efforts.
- Improving access to safe and affordable housing for GBV and IPV victims and survivors to help them escape abusive situations.
- Strengthening data collection and monitoring of GBV and IPV prevalence and trends.

## Key Data Insights

- In Q3 2024, there were 460 criminal incidents involving an older adult victim/complainant ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- In Q3 2024, the two-year violent intimate partner violence revictimization rate was 10 percent ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- In 2023, there were 235 identified victims and at-risk individuals of human trafficking ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- In 2023, the DRPS human trafficking unit launched 289 investigations ([Region of Durham CSWB Data Dashboard](#)).
- In 2024, 624 individuals were referred to the [Region of Durham Partner Assault Response Program \(PAR\)](#) by the courts for charges related to IPV (496 men; 128 women).
- In 2024, 56 victims/survivors were provided safety planning and other supports for IPV through the [PAR Program](#).





Overview of  
Process to Update

## Project Timeline: CSWB Plan Update (2023-2025)



### Engagement with Rights Holders (throughout 2023-2025)

- **Action:** Invited the seven Williams Treaty First Nations to engage and participate in dialogue.
- **Focus:** Prioritizing Indigenous perspectives and leadership.



### Alignment with Community Partners (throughout 2023-2025)

- **Action:** Engaged service providers and agencies across the human services system.
- **Focus:** Leveraging subject matter expertise and organizational influence to drive system-level change.



### Public Engagement Integration (2023)

- **Action:** Incorporated findings from the Region's 2023 Strategic Plan Community Engagement Summary.
- **Focus:** Ensuring community voices shape priorities and outcomes.



## Ongoing CSWB Framework Group Engagement (throughout 2023-2025)

- **Groups Engaged:**
  - CSWB Steering Committee
  - Area Municipal Working Group
  - Internal Working Group
  - Strategic Advisory Group - Youth Violence Prevention
  - Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Working Group
- **Focus:** Continuous feedback and alignment across sectors.



## Community Partner Workshops (2023)

- **Action:** Over 100 community partners attended two workshops to provide input on priority projects and initiatives.
- **Focus:** Emphasized the need for a more detailed and actionable plan.



## Research and Analysis (2023-2024)

- **Action:** CSWB Secretariat oversaw the development of Needs Overview Reports and Theories of Change for each Priority Risk Factor.
- **Focus:** Academic research and integration of engagement findings to inform recommendations.



## Internal Sub-Committee Formation (2025)

- **Action:** Established seven sub-committees to ensure alignment across the organization, including acknowledging the role of system managers (e.g., Housing and Homelessness) and incorporation of existing strategies (e.g., Poverty Response Program).
- **Focus:** Cross-sector collaboration, resource alignment, and co-creation of draft outcomes and actions.



## Community Partner Workshops (2025)

- **Action:** Almost 300 community partners attended seven workshops (one for each priority risk factor) to inform and validate draft outcomes, actions, and data points.
- **Focus:** Strengthen collaboration and co-creation of finalized recommendations.



## Finalization of CSWB Roadmaps for Collective Impact (2025)

- **Action:** Developed updated roadmaps for collective action.
- **Focus:** Clearly defined outcomes, actions, and data points to guide implementation and drive collective action across the region.

## Looking Forward - Going Further Together

Achieving community safety and well-being is a shared responsibility—no single organization or sector can do it alone. It requires collective action, rooted in strong partnerships and a common vision. The Region of Durham plays a critical role as a convenor and backbone agency, driving collective impact forward by providing a community-informed roadmap, supporting capacity building, and mobilizing actions identified in the updated CSWB Plan ([Appendix A](#)).

Our co-collaborators at the local area municipal level are essential to this work, bringing deep local knowledge and leadership that strengthens alignment and implementation. Across the region, incredible collaboration is already underway, demonstrating the energy and willingness to do great things together. At the same time, engagement with partners has surfaced areas for improvement—opportunities to deepen coordination, clarify roles, and enhance impact. As we navigate a complex and evolving landscape, including an uncertain funding environment, we need each other more than ever. The next chapter begins with renewed commitment, robust engagement, and a shared belief that together, we can go further.

As outlined in the timeline above, in 2025 almost 300 people attended seven workshops with a shared goal to collaboratively develop plans for where we want to go (outcomes) and how we want to get there (actions). **Following steady community engagement, deep academic research and critical guidance from partners, the updated CSWB Plan now includes CSWB Roadmaps for Collective Impact ([Appendix A](#)).** This work will serve as a starting point, to guide next steps for CSWB Plan implementation and lay the groundwork for meaningful change in Durham Region.



## Conclusion

This CSWB Plan reflects our shared commitment to collective impact, upstream intervention, and prevention initiatives that foster community stabilization and support strong economic development. Moving forward, the success of this plan will rely on sustained core funding, meaningful community engagement, and the active participation of partners, including DRPS.

We will continue to engage the public using clear roadmaps to shape messaging and manage expectations – recognizing that while the CSWB Plan does not directly fund services, reduce waitlists, build housing, or direct sector mandates, it plays a vital role in aligning efforts and amplifying community voices.

To strengthen governance and ensure alignment with local priorities, the Region will review CSWB Framework groups and collaborate with existing tables to develop clear work plans, roles, responsibilities, and indicators for success. With community support and engagement, together we will identify new opportunities for collaboration while remaining nimble and responsive to emerging priorities.

Key initiatives will continue, including the CSWB Fund and Microgrant Program, the Capacity Strengthening Training Series, and the completion and launch of several strategic efforts such as the IPV/GBV Action Plan, Situation Table, Youth Violence Prevention Strategy, and the Community Healing Toolkit.

Ongoing engagement with community-led tables and working groups will ensure that this plan remains grounded in lived experience and local expertise. Together, we will build a safer, healthier, and more connected Durham Region.



## Appendices

[Appendix A: CSWB Roadmaps for Collective Impact](#)

[Appendix B: 2025 CSWB Committee Members List](#)

[Appendix C: CSWB Participating Agencies](#)

[Appendix D: Acronyms and Glossary](#)

[Appendix E: References](#)



# Community Safety and Well-Being Plan



If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator by emailing [accessibility@durham.ca](mailto:accessibility@durham.ca) or calling 311 extension 2009.