

Community Report 2022



PublicHealth
WELLINGTON-DUFFERIN-GUELPH
Stay Well.



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Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO

Each year of the COVID-19 pandemic has had its own ebbs and flows, its own narrative. In 2022, WDG Public Health found itself embracing that elusive “new normal.” The virus was still with us, but with the emergence of bivalent boosters and vaccine availability for our youngest residents, what COVID meant for our region and our agency changed quite dramatically. As Medical Officer of Health and CEO of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, I am pleased to share the 2022 Community Report which details our region’s ongoing response to the pandemic, but also the resumption, strengthening and re-imagining of traditional public health work as we began to move into an “and COVID” working reality.



The 2022 Community Report provides an overview of the continuing response to the pandemic, but also, significant work done by our agency to address the rise of Mpox (formerly monkeypox), the role of climate change in the work of the agency and the ongoing work of Public Health programs for the benefit of our region.

While it is true that COVID-19 will be with us for many years to come, it is also true that we are in a very different place than in 2021. WDG Public Health will continue to balance the science and real-life effects of COVID to address the many known and not-yet-known impacts on the health of our region. I am proud to present this report as an overview of the excellent work of hundreds of members of WDG Public Health and our community partners. As an agency we remain deeply committed to the continued health and well-being of all residents of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'N Mercer'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

George Bridge, Chair of the Board of Health



As I have observed the work of our agency – even as Chair of the Board – I remain impressed by what I have witnessed. The Board of Health – the municipal councillors, mayors and citizen appointees who provide oversight of the health unit – have seen the agency dedicate itself to protecting our region against COVID-19 for more than three years now.

Together, with that COVID work, we have seen them continue essential public health efforts throughout the pandemic without missing a beat. And now, we as a Board are aware of the new changes, picking up priorities that had to be set aside to fight the global pandemic in our region as the agency returns to a new normal. As we move into 2023 and beyond, you will continue to see this agency work to address a wide range of projects and programs designed to improve the health of our region.

We can draw some important lessons from the past three years. Chief among those lessons is the value of diligent, forward-looking public health. As an agency, WDG Public Health is committed to continuing this important work on your behalf. As Chair of the Board of Health, I am pleased to present the 2022 Community Report, detailing the highlights of the accomplishments of the agency over the past year. While it captures many successes from 2022, it is just a snapshot of the diligence, commitment and hard work by Dr. Mercer, the entire leadership team and all of the staff at WDG Public Health.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'George Bridge', located at the bottom right of the page.

Strategic Framework

Mission: Improve and sustain the health of the communities we serve.



Flexibility



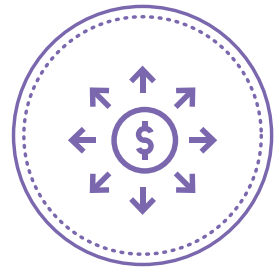
Collaboration



Equity



Integrity



Value for Money

Strategic Priority: Embrace, Live and Lead Change

People & Culture

WDGPH has an organizational culture of engagement, inclusion and agility.

Actions:

- Maximize relationships through meaningful in-person interaction
- Further integrate equity, diversity and inclusion objectives throughout the organization
- Equip ourselves for change

Partner Relations

WDGPH strategically collaborates with partners to address priority health issues in the community.

Actions:

- Re-engage with community partners
- Work with a range of partners to achieve positive health outcomes

Health System Change

WDGPH is positioned to be an agent of change within the broader health sector.

Actions:

- Advance the work of Ontario Health Teams
- Lead change in public health

Board of **Health Members**

Representing County of Wellington

Allan Alls, Councillor, County of Wellington

George Bridge (Chair), Councillor, County of Wellington,
Mayor, Town of Minto, Warden, Wellington County

Chris White (Secretary-Treasurer), Councillor, County of Wellington,
Mayor, Township of Guelph-Eramosa

Representing Dufferin County

Guy Gardhouse, Councillor, County of Dufferin, Mayor, Township of East Garafraxa

Ralph Manktelow, Citizen Appointee, County of Dufferin

Representing City of Guelph

Christine Billings (Vice Chair), Councillor, City of Guelph

Rodrigo Goller, Councillor, City of Guelph

June Hofland, Councillor, City of Guelph

Representing WDG Public Health

Dr. Nicola Mercer (Ex-Officio Member), WDG Public Health, MOH & CEO

Introduction: The Work of Public Health

Protection and Promotion

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health helps people stay well. By providing access to health services and information, we support positive health outcomes across Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. We are an essential part of a broader healthcare system and are proud to work with local partners to deliver improved community well-being.

Inspiration and Innovation

The work of WDG Public Health is never complete and staff energy can be drawn in many ways by diverse needs. Through a foundation of strong strategic leadership, established priorities, collaborative decision-making and smart allocation of resources, our agile delivery model is poised to embrace innovation and change, both planned and unplanned, to best serve our communities.

Access and Accountability

WDG Public Health is dedicated to supporting the health and safety of all residents, identifying and removing barriers to services and information. We share, publish and make available health data, notices, studies and reports that support broad community education and ensure residents make informed personal health decisions.

- Analyzing and responding to health trends and disease outbreaks.
- Advocating for and educating about healthy lifestyles and self-care.

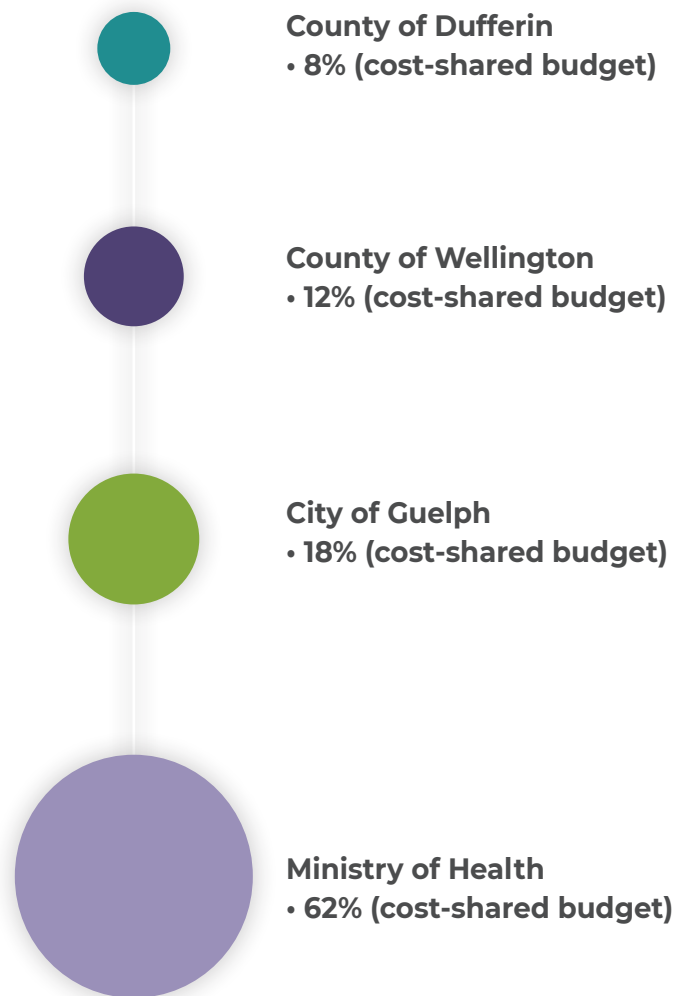
Financials

The 2022 total operating budget for WDG Public Health was \$33.8M, which includes “short-term” COVID-19 pandemic funding.

Public Health receives funding from multiple sources:

- The Province of Ontario provides funding primarily through the Ministry of Health for the Agency’s cost-shared budget of approximately \$24 million that funds the majority of WDG Public Health’s services. In 2022, the Ministry of Health provided funding for 62% of the total cost-shared budget.
- The municipalities of Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph provide funding based on the population of each municipality relative to the total population of the region. Population numbers are determined by the most recent Census. In 2022, the County of Wellington contributed 12% of the cost-shared budget, the County of Dufferin contributed 8% and the City of Guelph contributed 18%.
- The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Public Health Agency of Canada also provide program-specific funding.


As a publicly funded organization, WDG Public Health reports its finances in accordance with the public sector accounting standards. Financial statements are subject to an audit by an external audit firm as outlined in the Municipal Act. The full audited financial statements for the year can be found at wdgpublichealth.ca.




News of Note in 2022

All About Mpox (Monkeypox)

In May 2022, Mpox (formerly monkeypox) cases were identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 12 countries without travel links to endemic areas and the disease was declared a disease of global public health significance. This viral illness typically begins with fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue and muscle aches. A few days afterwards, a rash or lesions appear all over the body or at times a single location. Individuals are usually unwell for 2-4 weeks. The illness is usually mild but can be severe and result in death.



The World Health Organization assigns names to new diseases. The name 'Monkeypox' (in the process of being replaced with 'Mpox') was assigned in 1970 after the virus was discovered in captive monkeys.



As of January 31, 2023, there have been 691 cases of Mpox in Ontario with six cases in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (identified between June and September 2022).

No cases have been reported in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph since October 2022. During this period, WDG Public Health provided communications to physicians, healthcare providers, hospitals and the public about identifying and preventing Mpox infections. Using the smallpox vaccine – an identified treatment for Mpox – WDG Public Health and community partners, such as AIDS/HIV Resources & Community House (ARCH), administered a total of 407 doses to at-risk members of the public.

WDG Public Health Leads Satellite IPAC Hub Services

IPAC (Infection, Prevention and Control) Hubs were instituted by Ontario Health in 2021 to address illness in care and group settings. Hubs are made up of community care professionals and receive provincial funding.

WDG Public Health is proud to serve as the lead of the Guelph-Wellington Satellite IPAC Hub, working with local health partners to provide community-based training and support. This includes helping facilities translate resources and guidance into action, IPAC assessments, outbreak support, coaching/mentoring and a train-the-trainer approach. A total of 929 IPAC services and supports were delivered to congregate living settings in Guelph and Wellington from July 2021 to June 2022.

97%

of participants in WDG Public Health's newest Satellite IPAC Hub training program agreed that it will **improve their professional/day-to-day practice and increase their confidence**. The training, Point-of-Care Risk Assessment (PCRA) Dress for Success, focuses on the basics of selecting personal protective equipment.

Climate Change and Health

Climate change is already impacting the health of Canadians and has potential to overburden health systems. As effects are not experienced equally by all populations, WDG Public Health completed a Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Assessment. With funding from the federal grant program, HealthADAPT, the assessment examined climate change-related health impacts related to:

- 1. Our community's exposure to climate-related hazards (i.e., extreme temperatures and weather, UV radiation, food- and water-borne illnesses, air quality, diseases, mental health, etc.)
- 2. The physiological sensitivity of our community to climate-related hazards (how our bodies will react physically)
- 3. The capacity of our community to adapt to climate-related hazards

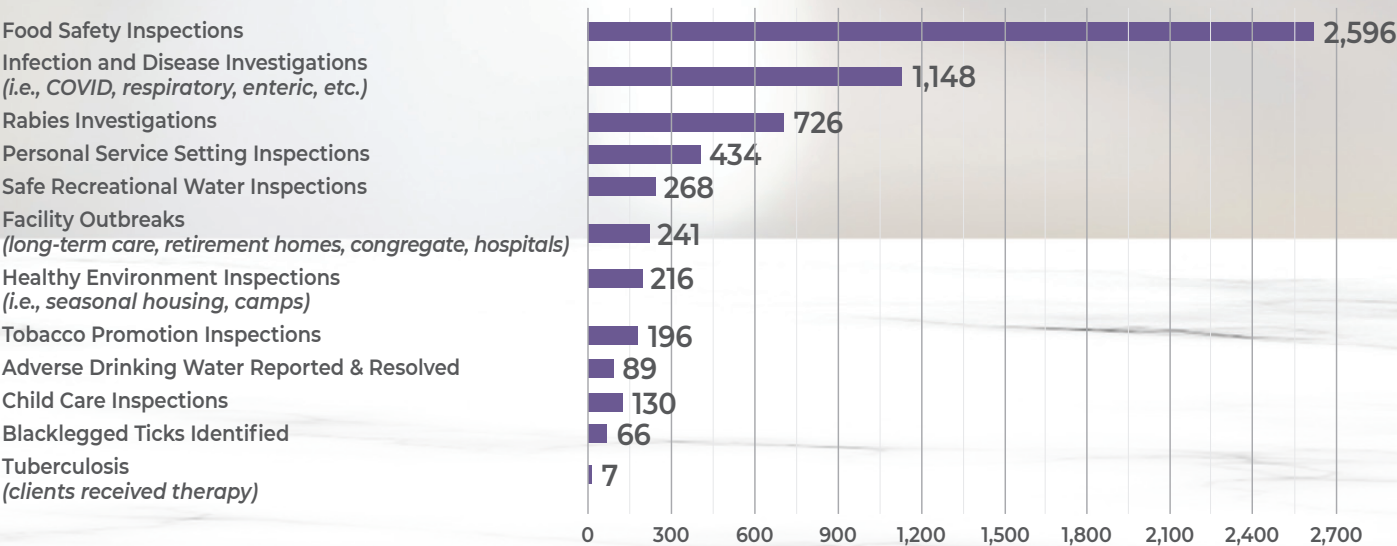
WDG Public Health will be prioritizing programming, policy and local climate change adaptation initiatives across Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph that strengthen our community against health issues related to climate change.



Health Protection 2022

Performance Indicators

WDG Public Health staff completed essential inspections and investigations:



Note: Some inspections were suspended during the pandemic or were affected by alterations in business hours and operations.

Nutritious Food Basket 2022

Food insecurity is an important public health issue. Data shows that 16.1% of Ontario households were food insecure in 2021, with numbers higher among children and young adults (more than triple that of adults 75+). An estimated 1.38 million children live in food-insecure households.

Poor nutrition can lead to negative social, physical and mental health outcomes in adults and children. It is associated with mental health disorders, non-communicable diseases (e.g., heart disease, stroke and

diabetes) and negative health outcomes including increased risk for asthma, depression and suicidal ideation in adolescence and early adulthood.

WDG Public Health uses the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) tool to estimate the cost and affordability for individuals or household grocery shopping in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. A 2022 assessment found that **individuals and families in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph with low incomes do not have enough money to pay for their basic needs, including shelter and healthy food.**

In 2022, the cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four is

\$273 /week
(or \$1,200/month)

1 in 8 (12%)

households
are food insecure

A 2020 survey among 600 residents in Guelph-Wellington (excludes Dufferin County)

1 in 5 (20%)

post-secondary students

are food insecure

A 2019 survey completed among University of Guelph students

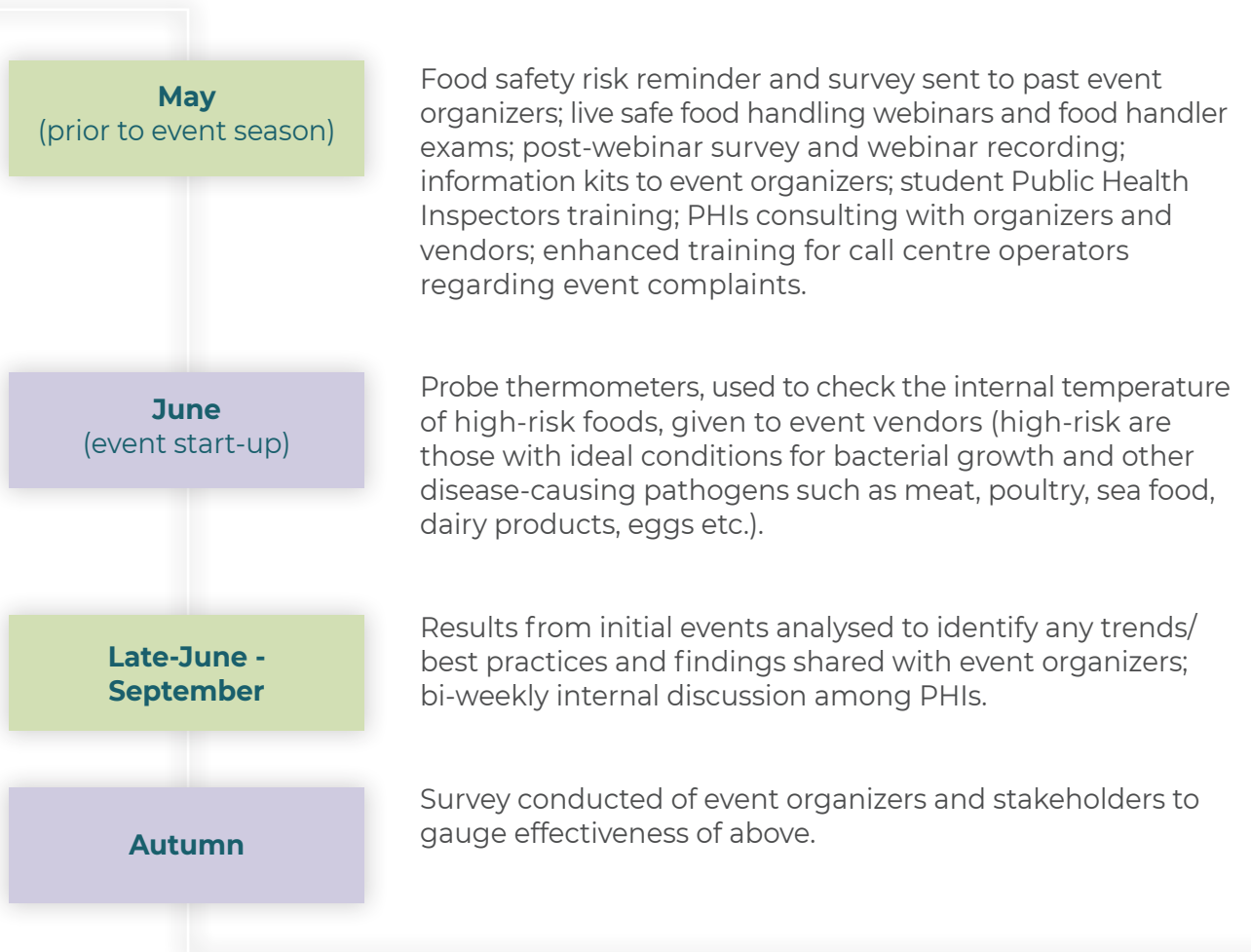


Those at highest risk of food insecurity include low-income households (including post-secondary students) and households with limited assets (e.g., homeownership, savings), Indigenous households and other racial/cultural groups, female-led lone parent households and households reliant on income supports. The largest expense for most low-income residents in 2022 is housing, which should represent 30% of income, but is currently at 37-108% of costs in six out of seven income scenarios.

WDG Public Health is working with local partners to raise awareness about the root causes of food insecurity and advocate for policies that ensure adequate nutritious food. This includes the 2022 Food Security and Health Action Plan, where WDG Public Health, alongside other local agencies, groups, government, researchers and healthcare leaders, prioritizes actions for future food access.

Food Safety Boosted for Events

Special events and farmers' markets include music, games and, often, food. In 2018, 112 events were held compared to 29 during the height of the pandemic in 2020. As the community transitions more fully back to in-person events, there is concern of a corresponding increase in food-borne illness. In 2022, WDG Public Health delivered enhanced public measures throughout the year that included:



Since May 2022, WDG Public Health has completed approximately 210 inspections of food vendors at special events and farmers' markets. Results are positive, with no rise in food safety illness or complaints when compared to previous years, despite a significant increase in the number of events. WDG Public Health was able to identify specific infractions and target these to reduce further risks. An exploration of an online special event management system with the City of Guelph is underway in 2023.

Polio Awareness Renewed

On July 18, 2022, the New York State Department of Health announced a case of poliovirus type 2 in an unvaccinated young adult. The patient experienced fever, neck stiffness, gastrointestinal symptoms and limb weakness. The last U.S. case of polio caused by wild poliovirus occurred in 1979 (a type 1 community transmission occurred in 2005), and the World Health Organization Region of the Americas was declared polio-free in 1994.

There have been no cases in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. WDG Public Health recommends that all members of the community maintain up-to-date vaccination coverage to prevent contraction of polio.

Dental Programs and Support

Oral and dental health is an important part of overall well-being that is often overlooked. In 2022, WDG Public Health provided new and updated digital tips/resources for dental health. It also restarted its Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) program after a hiatus due to COVID-19. By the end of the 2022-2023 school year, WDG Public Health will have completed oral health screenings at 125 schools throughout the region. As of February 2023, 8,524 students have been screened, identifying 280 students with urgent dental needs and 434 with non-urgent needs.



“Dental and oral health is such an important part of our children’s healthy growth and development,” said Rita Isley, Director of Community Health and Chief Nursing Officer at WDG Public Health. “We know that over the last two years many children have not seen a dental professional and we want to make sure they get the care they need.”

HSO is a provincially-funded program that provides free dental care for eligible children under 17. Services include teeth cleaning, sealants and oral health education. WDG Public Health also supports children whose family cannot afford the cost of emergency dental care.

Bat Tests Positive for Rabies

On August 10, 2022, WDG Public Health notified the public of the year’s first positive case of rabies in a bat found in the Melancthon area. Two individuals who were exposed to the bat received treatment.

Rabies is a fatal virus that affects mammals, including humans, and is most commonly spread by wild animals like raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats (even stray cats and dogs). Rabies is transmitted through the saliva of an infected animal, usually through a bite. However, saliva can also enter the body through scratches, open wounds or mucous membranes of the mouth, nose and eyes. Although rabies vaccines exist for humans and domestic animals, there is no vaccine for bats.

Celebrating Women

In celebration of International Women's Day, WDG Public Health's Dr. Nicola Mercer and Dr. Charlotte Yates, President and Vice-Chancellor at the University of Guelph, co-authored an op-ed recognizing and celebrating the extraordinary contributions women have made in the fight against COVID-19.

Doctors Mercer and Yates also addressed opportunities to enact change to remove existing systematic barriers and ensure equality for women moving forward.



Targeting Mosquitoes



WDG Public Health delivered an annual mosquito larvicide program in and around communities in Wellington and Dufferin counties. As mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water, applying larvicide to these locations can reduce or eliminate mosquito populations known to carry West Nile virus. The virus causes flu-like symptoms and, in rare cases, inflammation of the brain or spinal column can occur which may result in permanent disability or death.

There was only one confirmed human case of West Nile virus in the region in 2021 and none in 2022.

WDG Public Health encourages property owners to remove standing water in locations such as flowerpots, bird baths, wheelbarrows, eaves troughs, rain barrels and tires.

Meningitis Alert

WDG Public Health issued an alert to those returning home from Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia after cases of meningitis were identified at the university in late 2022.

Meningitis is an inflammation (swelling) of the covering of the brain and spinal cord that can be treated with antibiotics when given during initial stages of the illness. Although anyone can get the disease, most adults have developed immunity or natural protection against the bacteria. The illness is spread by direct contact with saliva and/or nasal secretions from an infected person.

There have been no recent cases in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph.

Statement for International Overdose Awareness Day



“Drug overdoses were a painful reality in our community before COVID-19, but the pandemic has made this reality worse... the most vulnerable in our society dealt with isolation, lack of awareness and reallocation of resources that exacerbated the ongoing challenge of supporting those caught in an epidemic of drug overdoses... We must continue to bring resources, data and understanding to bear on this and other complex issues in ways that centre those affected to ensure an equitable and healthier future.”

Dr. Matthew Tenenbaum, Associate Medical Officer of Health, WDG Public Health, August 31, 2022



WDG Public Health supports community awareness of the impact of overdoses and partners with community agencies involved directly with those experiencing overdose emergencies.

Vaccinations At A Glance

Influenza

Annual hospitalizations and deaths in Canada related to influenza are estimated to be approximately 12,200 and 3,500, respectively. The influenza vaccine should be administered to those six months and older on an annual basis because the body's immune response to influenza vaccination is transient and may not persist beyond a year.

WDG Public Health, in partnership with pharmacies and local healthcare providers, administered 59,529 doses of influenza vaccine during the 2022/23 flu season, an increase of almost 19% from the previous year. More than 33,437 additional doses were also delivered to local hospitals and primary care providers for distribution.

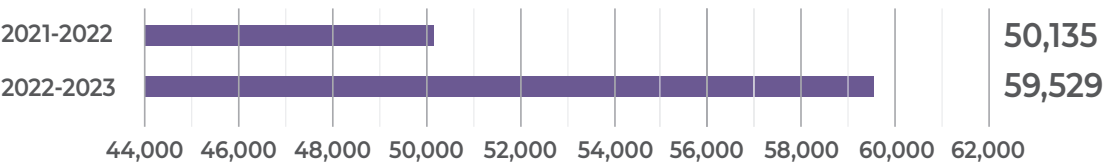
COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccines continue to be effective at preventing hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 in those six months and older. Two mRNA vaccines are approved for use in Canada: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Spikevax. mRNA vaccines trigger an immune response against COVID-19. Moderna and Pfizer Omicron bivalent vaccines are also approved for booster doses.

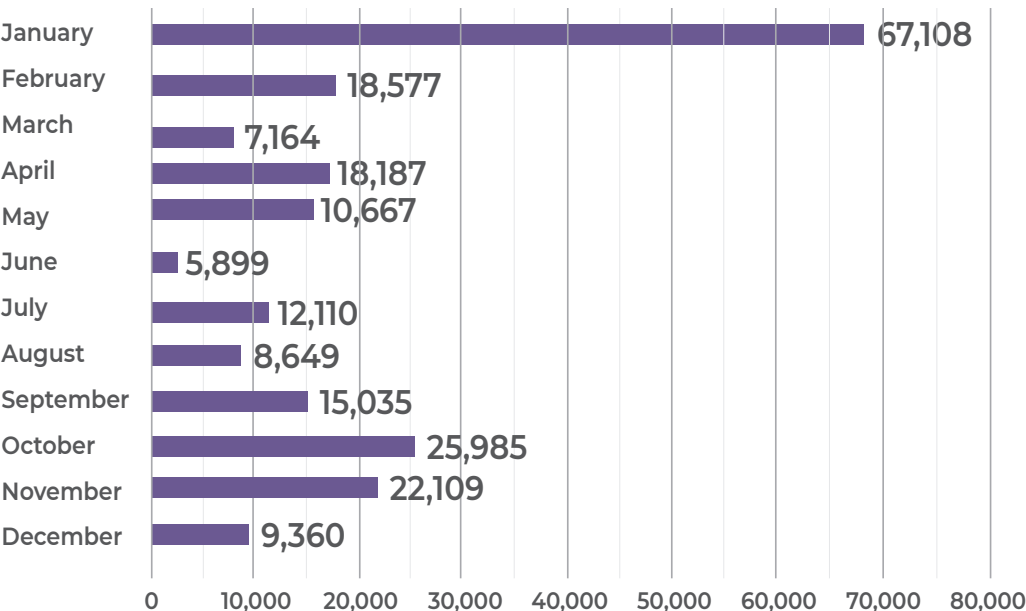
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph is in the top five health units for bivalent vaccine rates in those ages 70+ and initially led the province for the bivalent booster. In 2022, 220,850 COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph by Public Health and local healthcare providers both in-facility, and in mobile and outreach clinics.

Both COVID-19 and influenza vaccines were offered to residents at each visit:

Influenza Doses Administered



COVID-19 Vaccines Administered



COVID-19 in 2022

Local Impact of a Global Pandemic

January

The Province announces that schools will reopen to in-person learning. Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO of WDG Public Health, encourages children, families and the community to choose trusted news sources to understand the risks and guide their decision.

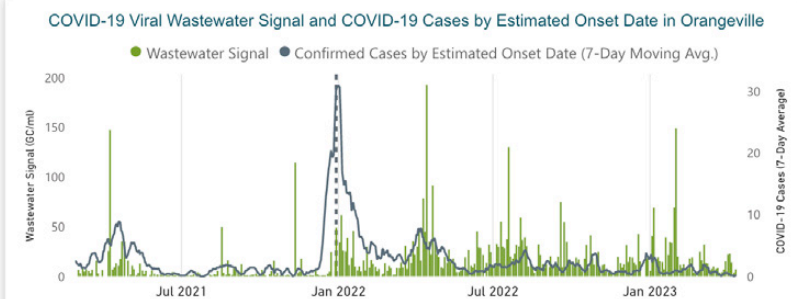


February

WDG Public Health adds Wastewater Surveillance data to its COVID-19 cases dashboard. As indicators in wastewater can appear up to a week before symptoms show, analysis can reveal trends in transmission of the Omicron variant, improve community awareness and reduce risk. WDG Public Health continues to track and follow-up on COVID-19 outbreaks and other enteric and respiratory illnesses in retirement and long-term care homes.

The Town of Orangeville

Note: Changes to PCR test eligibility have reduced the ability to confirm cases after December 30, 2021. Interpret with caution.



Thank You...

To the University of Guelph's Department of Food Science and the School of Environmental Science laboratories for their ongoing analysis of the City of Guelph and Town of Orangeville wastewater samples for SARS-CoV-2.

May

As of May 24, 2022

99%

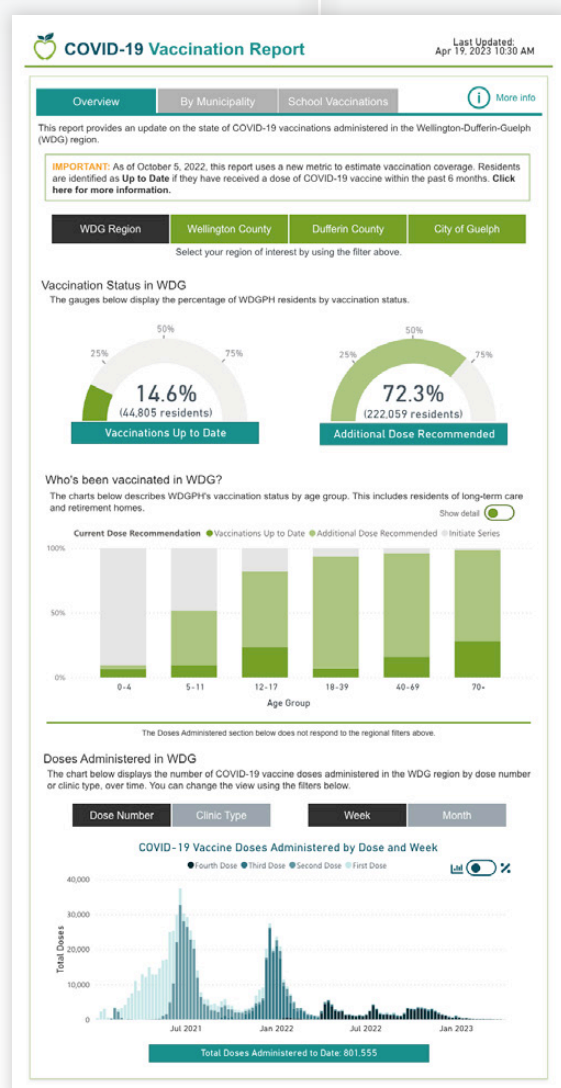
of those aged
60-69 and 75-80+

96%

of those aged
25-29

Received at
least one dose
of a vaccine

June



WDG Public Health updates its vaccine dashboard to reflect improved and more accurate demographic and geographic data (maps). Dashboard updates change from daily to weekly. New data, *Weeks Since Last Dose*, is added to address waning protection of vaccines and the importance of staying up to date.

Dashboard Highlights

Throughout COVID-19, WDG Public Health's dashboard has provided the community with the latest and most reliable data on a constantly evolving pandemic. Innovative data collection and analysis has supported operational efficiency, public awareness, vaccine prioritization for higher-risk and pandemic impact mitigation.

Did you know that WDG was the first Public Health Unit to:

- publish case rates by vaccination status
- publicly report vaccine dose numbers
- provide vaccination coverage by school

WDG Public Health partners with local physicians and pharmacies to administer vaccines to those ages 6 months to 5 years. “I encourage every parent and caregiver to speak with their primary care provider or pharmacist to answer their vaccination questions – especially for children attending school or daycare,” said Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO of WDG Public Health.



July

Thanks to the support of partners and the public, levels of vaccination in the community are at their highest. WDG Public Health moves from providing mass vaccine programs to local/targeted clinics.

August

Immunity against COVID-19 wanes with time. Omicron bivalent booster doses are recommended for those 70+ and at greatest risk of severe health complications related to the pandemic. This two-part vaccine targets the original strain of COVID as well as the Omicron variant.

September

Masks continue to be an important part of any pandemic prevention toolkit: COVID-19 is still circulating in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (and individuals can get it more than once). Masking indoors and staying up-to-date on recommended doses of vaccine can lower the risk.

Beyond...



Thank you

Our mission at WDG Public Health is to help improve the lives and health of those in our communities.

We are grateful to health care and community partners for their roles in supporting public health measures. With your care and commitment, critical Public Health programs and services are contributing to improved community wellbeing. Thank you for contributing your strength, passion, energy and vision.



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the work of WDG Public Health operates on the traditional lands and home of the Hodinöhsö:ni', Anishinaabek, Tionontati and Attawandaron people and is steeped in the tradition of many First Nations, Inuit and Metis people.

As an Agency, we encourage our staff, partners and clients to support the work of reconciliation and promote healing with our indigenous neighbours.

We are also committed to reducing social inequities and will strive to make our services culturally appropriate and safe for all Indigenous people, their families and their community.



wdgpublichealth.ca