








# Lifestyle Behaviours

## Addressing **pandemic impacts** on children and youth

### What is the Problem?

Fewer students in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph reported physical well-being and extracurricular involvement:

	2019		2022
Eat breakfast every day	58%		51%
Eat fruit and vegetables every day	91%		90%
Meet Canadian sleep guidelines for their age group	64%		55%
Are physically active 5+ days a week	60%		55%
Participate in youth programs*	59%		38%
Volunteer in community	73%		69%
Take part in school activities (club/sports)	57%		43%

\*Only collected for intermediate and senior students (grades 7 and up).

This is a result of the pandemic limiting participation in extracurricular activities and the lingering effects this is still having on children and youth. **A vast majority of children and youth are spending more time on screens**, which is taking up time that used to be spent on physical activity, sleep and healthy eating habits. The largest decreases were:



Participating in youth programs



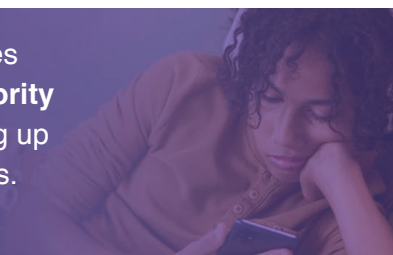
Taking part in school activities (clubs/sports)



Meeting Canadian sleep guidelines for their age group




Eating breakfast every day



The Guelph Family Health Study also reported **increased screen time and decreased physical activity** since the pandemic from the perspective of Guelph-Wellington area parents.<sup>1</sup>

Over half of the families also reported changes to their eating habits and meal routines, with some changes leading to lower quality diets, such as eating more snack foods. Eating habits can also be impacted by the unexpected changes in expenses, such as food prices, housing and transportation costs, which have led to food insecurity affecting more people and becoming more severe.

Food Insecure*			Food Insecure (moderate or severe)*	
2018	22%		2018	15%
2019	23%		2019	15%
2020	21%		2020	15%
2021	25%		2021	18%

## Three Recommendations to Address the Problem

- 1. Work with community partners** to create access to sports programs and outdoor recreation for free or reduced cost to encourage children and youth to spend more time in extracurricular activities.
- 2. Promote physical well-being and extracurricular involvement** through community and school campaigns to build resilience in children and youth.
- 3. Continue to advocate with community partners** for subsidized, affordable access to nutritious foods in the community.

\* Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0835-01. [Food insecurity by selected demographic characteristics.](#)

### References

- Carroll N, Sadowski A, Laila A, Hruska V, Nixon M, Ma DWL, et al. The Impact of COVID-19 on Health Behavior, Stress, Financial and Food Security among Middle to High Income Canadian Families with Young Children. *Nutrients* [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2023 Jul 12]; 12. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/12/8/2352>.

