

Statistical Report

Waterloo 2021-2022

Project READ Literacy Network

October 2022



Project READ
Literacy Network



Table of Contents:

Program Statistical Information for 2021/22	3
Introduction	3
Number of Learners in Waterloo Region	3
Self-Identified	4
Age	5
Level of Education	6
Source of Income	7
Goal Path	8
Referrals In	9
Referrals Out to Other programs	10
Milestones Completed	11
History of Interrupted Education	12
Summary	13

Program Statistical Information for 2021/22

Introduction

The Waterloo statistical report is a summation and analysis of all statistics from 6 funded literacy sites:

Community Based:

- The Literacy Group - Cambridge
- The Literacy Group - Waterloo

School Board:

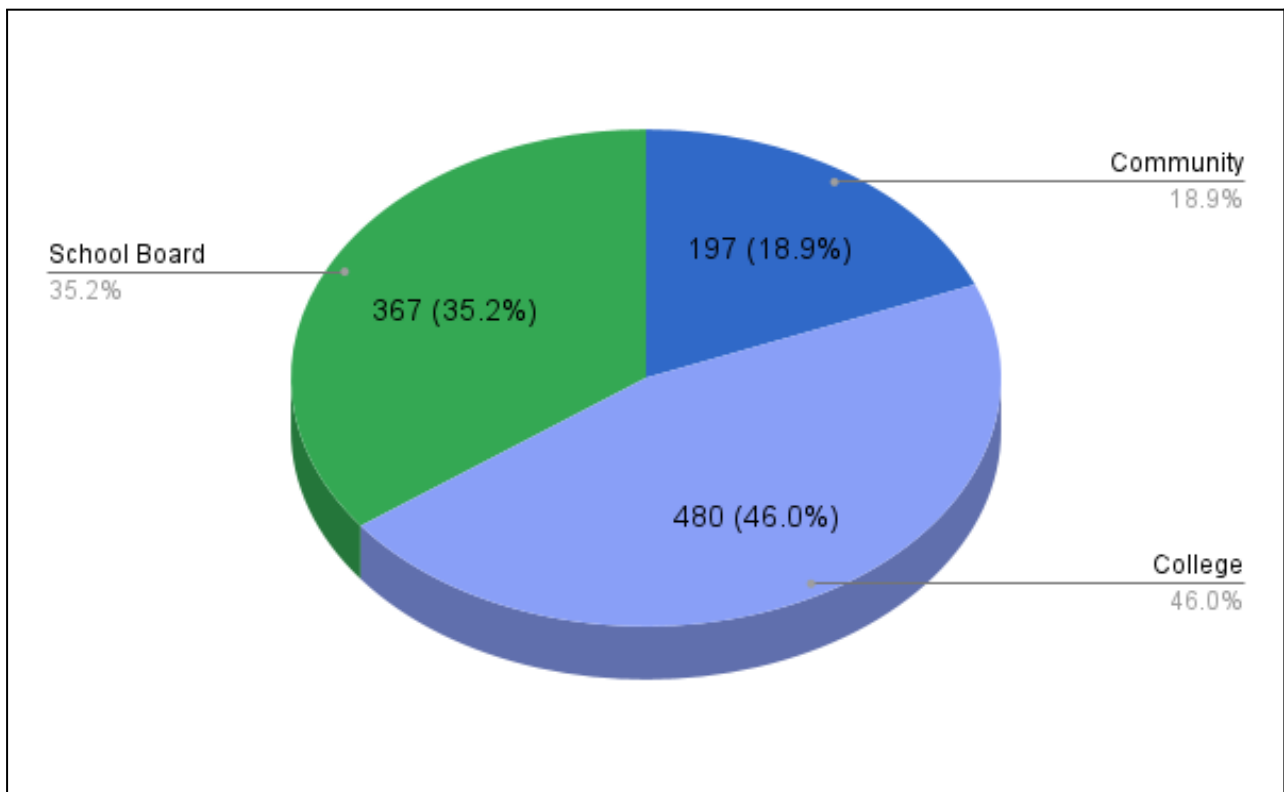
- Essential Skills Upgrading - Waterloo Region District School Board
- St. Louis Core Essentials - Waterloo Catholic District School Board

College:

- Conestoga College - Cambridge
- Conestoga College - Waterloo

Number of Learners in Waterloo Region

In 2021-2022, college programs in Waterloo Region had the largest number of learners with 480 learners in their programs, followed by 367 school board learners and 197 learners upgrading in community based programs.



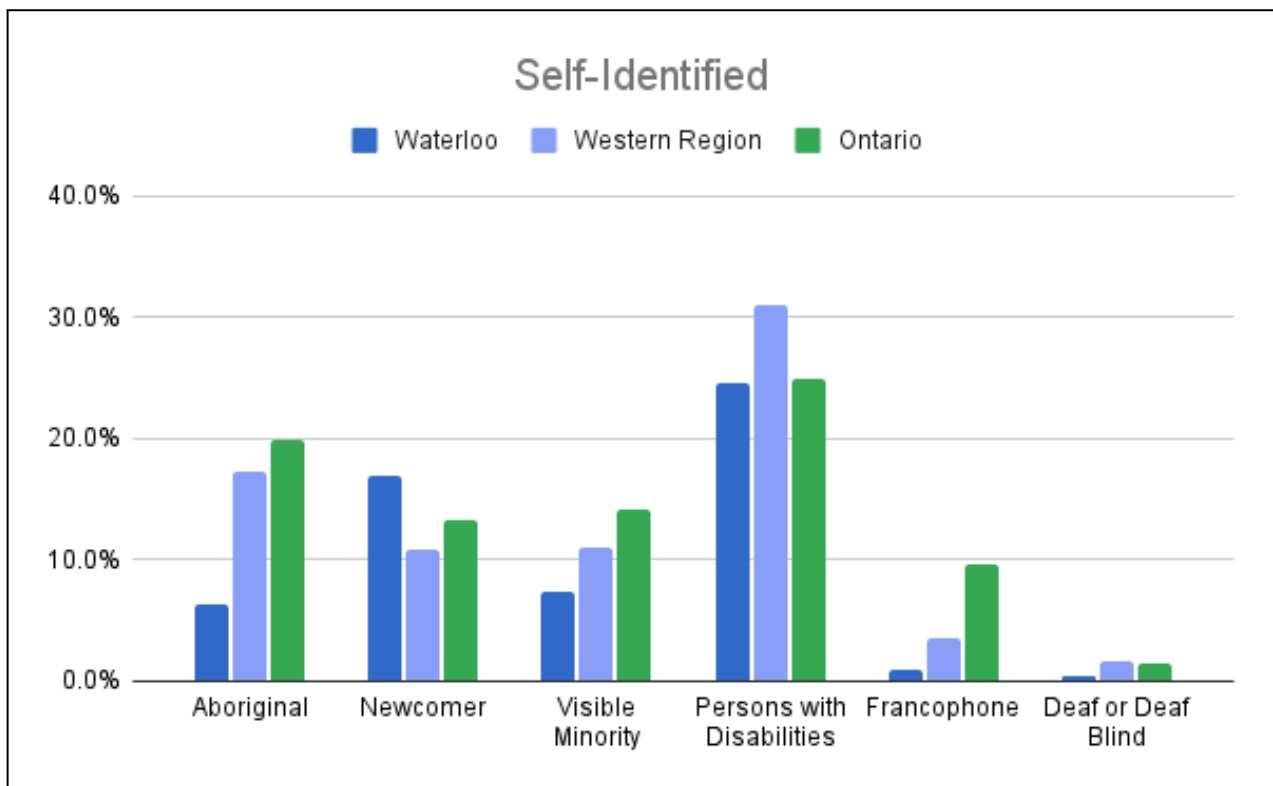
Self-Identified

There was a slight increase in the number of learners identifying as female in Waterloo Region. Overall, Waterloo Region is fairly consistent with the Western Region and Ontario numbers for this year with female learners making up 64.1% and male learners making up 34.4% in our programs.

Waterloo Region has a higher number of learners identifying as Undisclosed/Trans/Other at 2% compared to the Western Region at 1.2% and the province at 1.3%. This number has more than doubled in Waterloo Region since last year. Programs and organizations have worked hard to be inclusive and provide solid well-being support for all members of the community.

The number of people self-identifying as a person with a disability is lower in Waterloo Region than in the Western Region, yet comparable to provincial numbers. Does this indicate that people with disabilities were left behind due to pandemic restrictions? Did the limited options to connect with programming during the pandemic affect this number? It's difficult to understand why this number has dropped and is lower in this region than across the province and other regions.

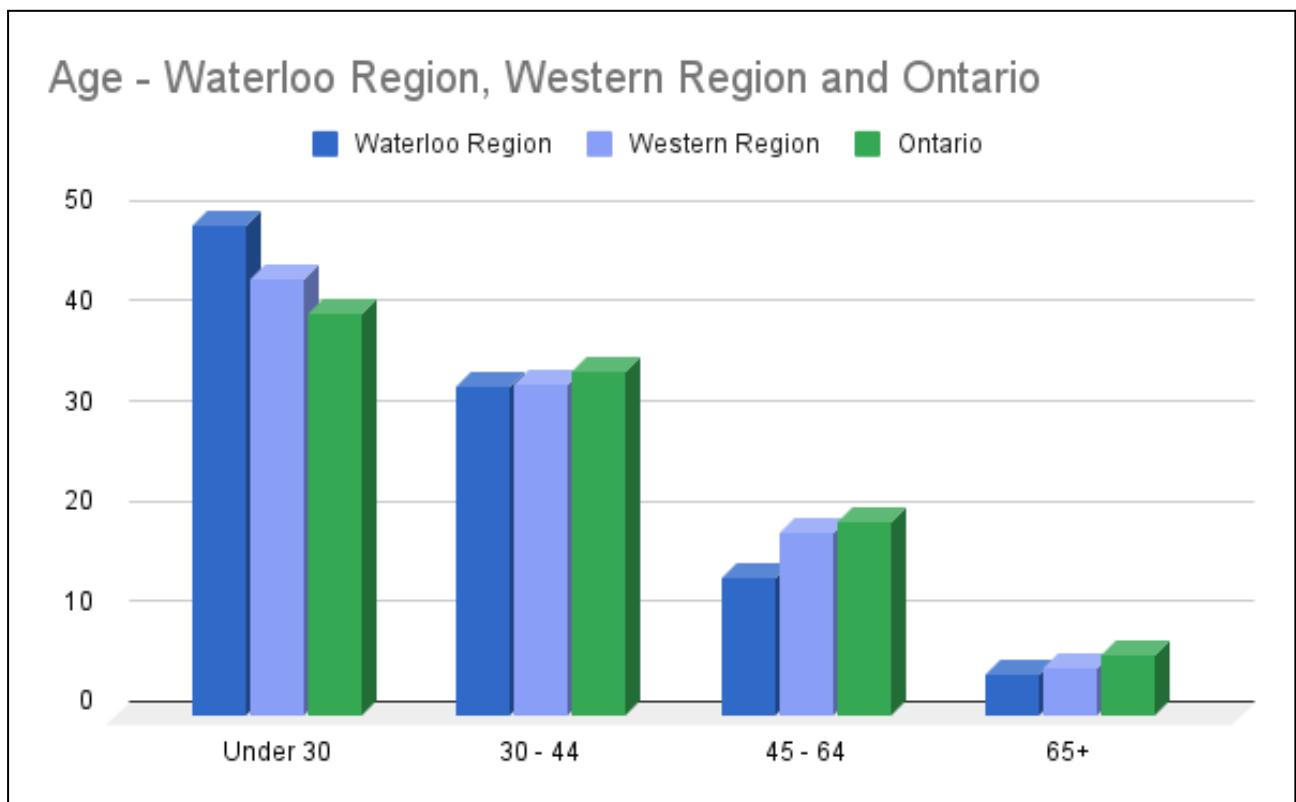
Newcomers seem to be the most comfortable self-identifying while other groups may not be as comfortable sharing this information, or it may not be getting captured by program staff. Waterloo Region does not have programs available for the aboriginal or deaf community and has limited francophone programming. As a result, the numbers in these areas are lower than in other parts of the province.



Age

In 2021-2022, Waterloo Region programs were serving fewer learners in the 55+ age group at 4.2% of learners compared to the Western Region at 9.8% and Ontario at 12.2%. Waterloo Region does have a lower median age, at 36 years old ([Source](#)), than Ontario at 40.7 years old ([Source](#)). The younger population in the region could affect the number of learners in the 55+ age group. The number of learners in the 18-24 year age group is also much higher in Waterloo Region (32.4%) than the Western Region (27.1%) and the province (23.9%), even though this number has dropped 2.4% from the previous year in this region. 49% of learners in Waterloo Region are under 30, which proves that Waterloo Region is doing a good job reaching and supporting learners in this age group. However, Waterloo Region is far below service quality standards for the 55 -64 year olds and programs need to research and market to this learner group to bring more learners into our programs.

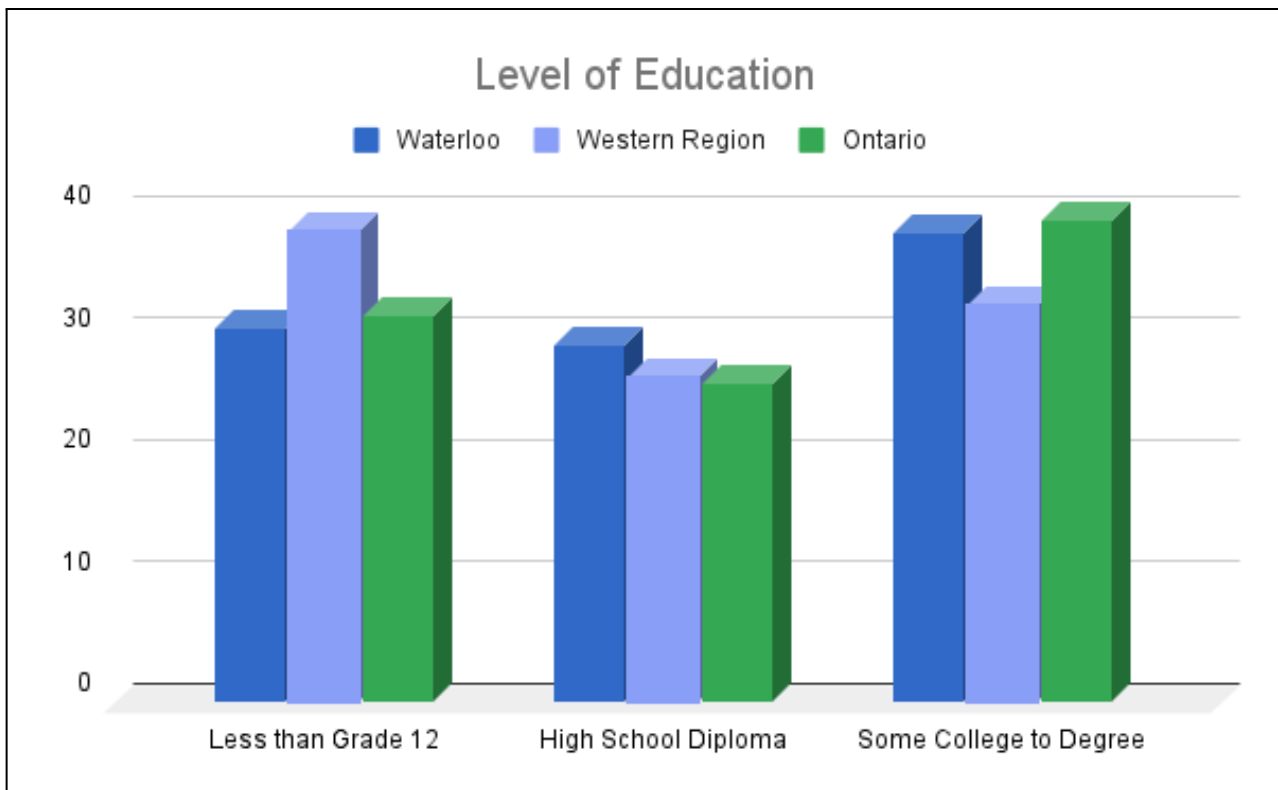
It is important to keep in mind that programs were still shut down for a portion of this year due to pandemic restrictions. Community-based programs faced challenges connecting with lower level learners that did not have the digital literacy skills to attend classes using computers, and all programs struggled with in-person programming delays due to social distancing restrictions.



Level of Education

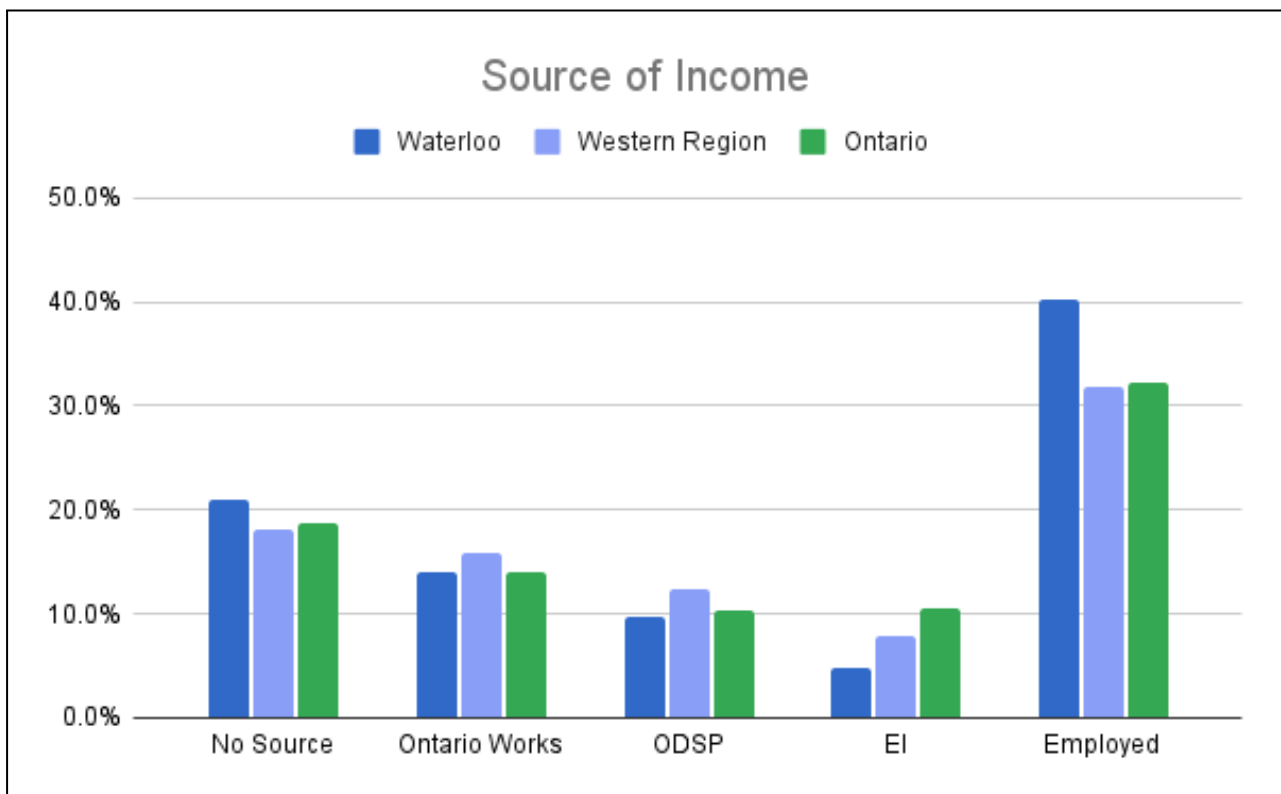
Waterloo Region had a higher percentage of learners (29.3%) with a grade twelve education compared to the Western Region at 26.6% and all of Ontario at 26.1%. This region also had a significantly higher percentage of learners with some post-secondary education (38.4%) is comparable to numbers for all of Ontario (39.6%). Normally in LBS programs, people with some post-secondary education wouldn't be considered to be a large percentage of learners, however, this large percentage demonstrates the obvious need across the province for people to upgrade their skills to complete their post secondary education.

22.2% of adult learners in this region were employed full-time, compared to 19.5% for the Western Region and 21.2% for Ontario. This region shows a 3% shift from learners with less than grade 12 to learners who have completed some college to post-secondary from last year. This could indicate that highschool graduates don't feel they have the skills for future training.



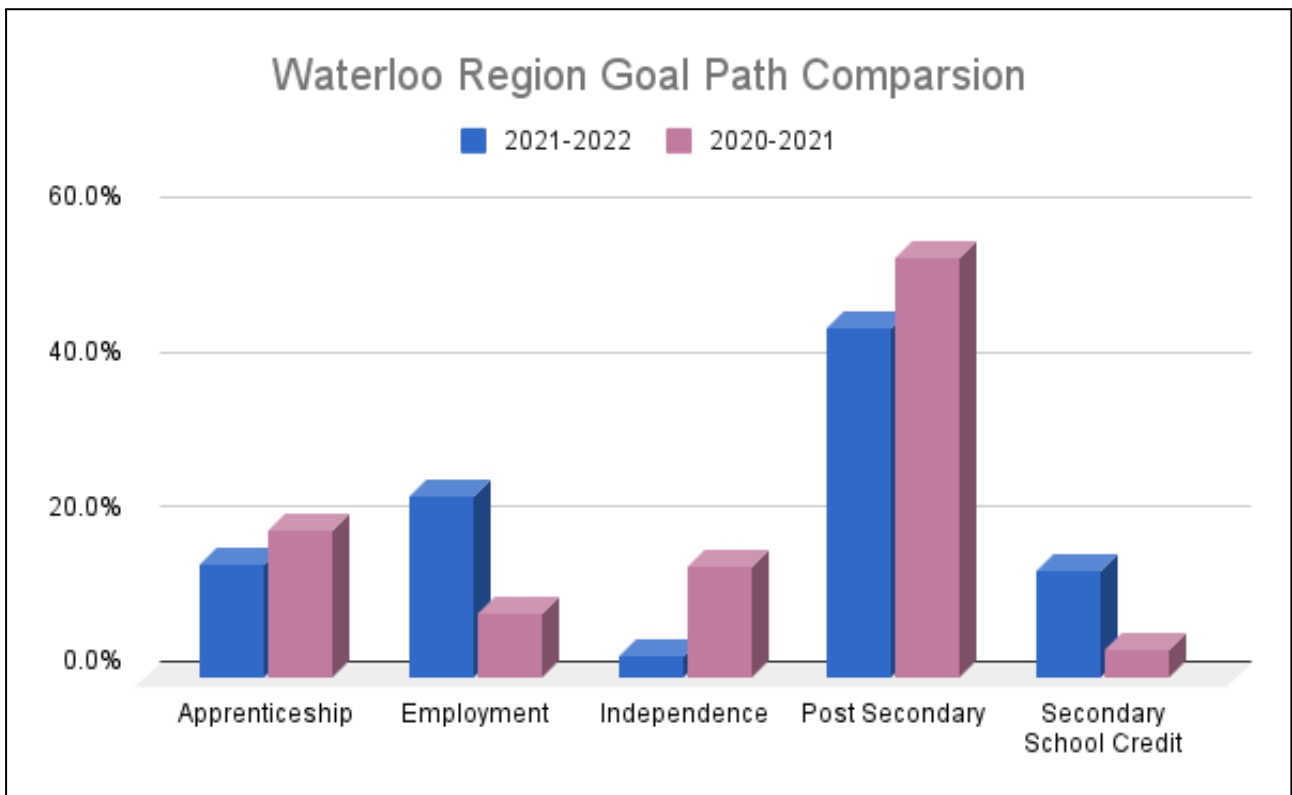
Source of Income

In Waterloo Region, 46% of our learners are most definitely living in poverty. Waterloo Region has a significantly higher percentage of learners who are employed than the west and province (40.2% compared to 31.9% and 32.3% respectively), however, they still need upgrading to either keep or move forward in their jobs. The higher number of employed learners mentioned in the Level of Education section of this report is also shown here, with Waterloo Region serving 40.2% employed learners as compared to the Western Region at 31.9% and Ontario at 32.3%. It is important to note that learners are not asked to disclose their wage and may be “the working poor”, which would include them in the vulnerable population. They may have chosen to work while upgrading because it is a faster route forward to their future employment goals. It is also interesting to note that the number of learners that reported being Under-employed has increased by 2.5% this year, yet still remains lower than the West and Ontario numbers. There has been a drop in OW and ODSP clients over the pandemic and this is a result of caseworkers not seeing their clients face to face. In Waterloo Region OW offices are still not open to people coming in as of October 2022.



Goal Path

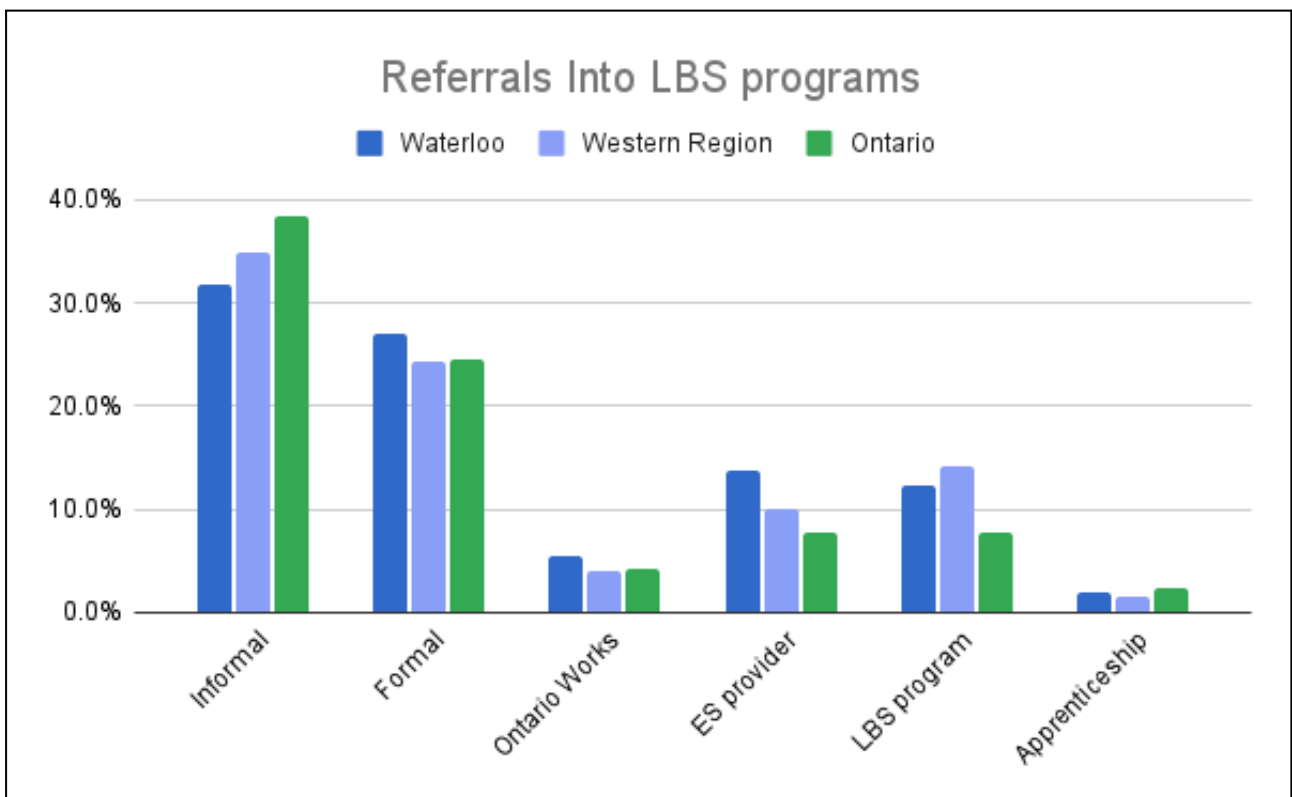
All learners in LBS programs have the option of 5 goal paths. Almost half of the learners across Waterloo Region (45.2%) were attending College upgrading programs, this is a decrease of 9.1% working on post secondary education to reach their goals. Apprenticeship numbers last year were still substantially higher than the West and the province, even though they dropped slightly in this region from the previous year. It is interesting to note that the employment (23.6%), and secondary school credit (13.8%) goal path numbers are both lower than the West and the province this year. Compared to last year in this region, there was a large increase of 15.2% of learners in the employment path, up to 23.6% from 8.3%, while learners seeking secondary school credits increased by 10% from last year. These shifts in goal path may indicate an awareness in the learners that building their skills will lead to more long-term employment opportunities in the future which would benefit this region.



Referrals In

The number of Structured/formal referrals increased significantly in Waterloo Region this year to 27% from 18.3% last year and was higher than the Western Region (24.4%) and Ontario (24.6%). Referrals In from ES providers were excellent at 13.7% compared to the Western Region at only 10.1% and the province at an even lower 7.7%. ES Referrals In stayed quite consistent to the previous year in this region. While Informal Word of Mouth/media referrals continue to be the largest percentage of referrals into our programs (31.8%), we are below the West (34.8%) and Ontario (38.5%) which means we've made a significant impact with our community partners.

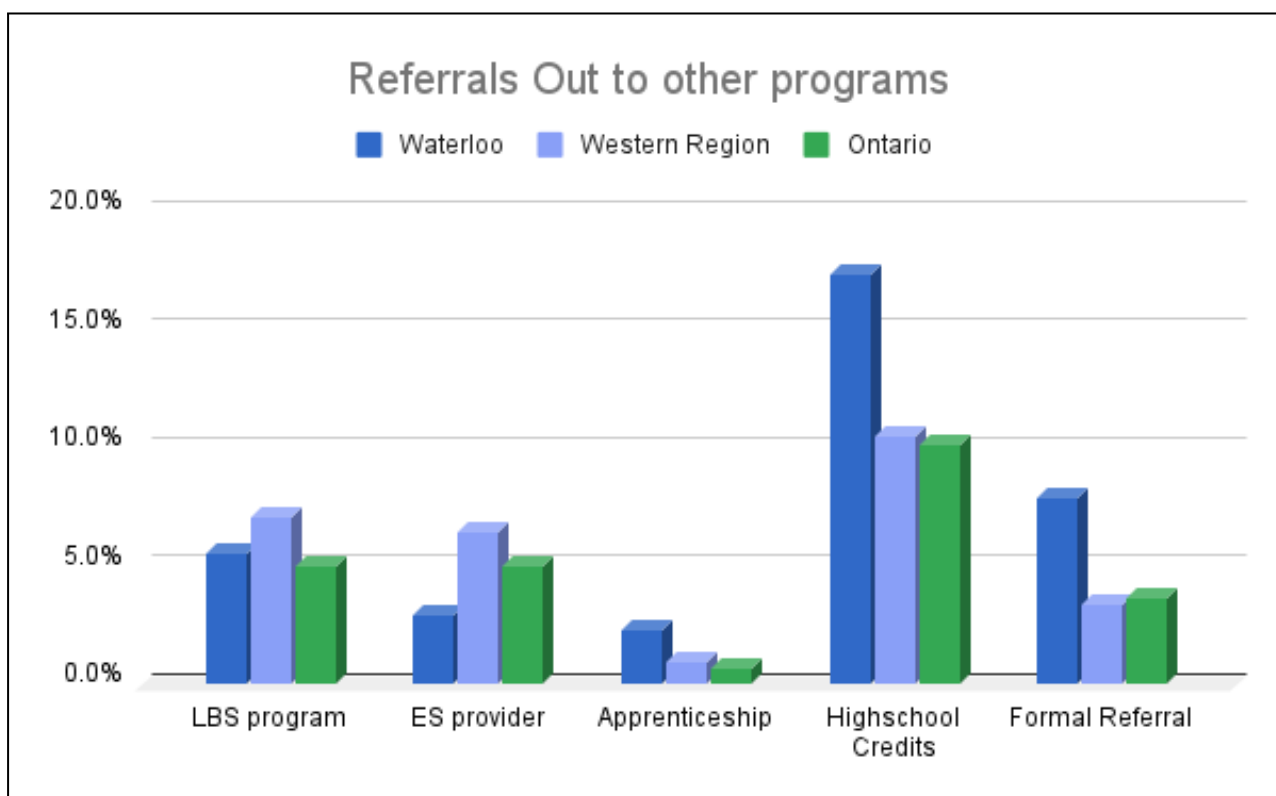
OW Referrals In at 5.4% show an increase from last year in this region and continue to remain higher than the West (4%) and the province (4.2%). EO Apprenticeship Referrals In have also increased from 0% the previous year to 2% this year which places Waterloo Region between the Western Region at 1.4% and Ontario at 2.4%. For all sources of referral in that count towards SQS, Waterloo Region has 55.7%, almost 3% higher than the province.



Referrals Out to Other programs

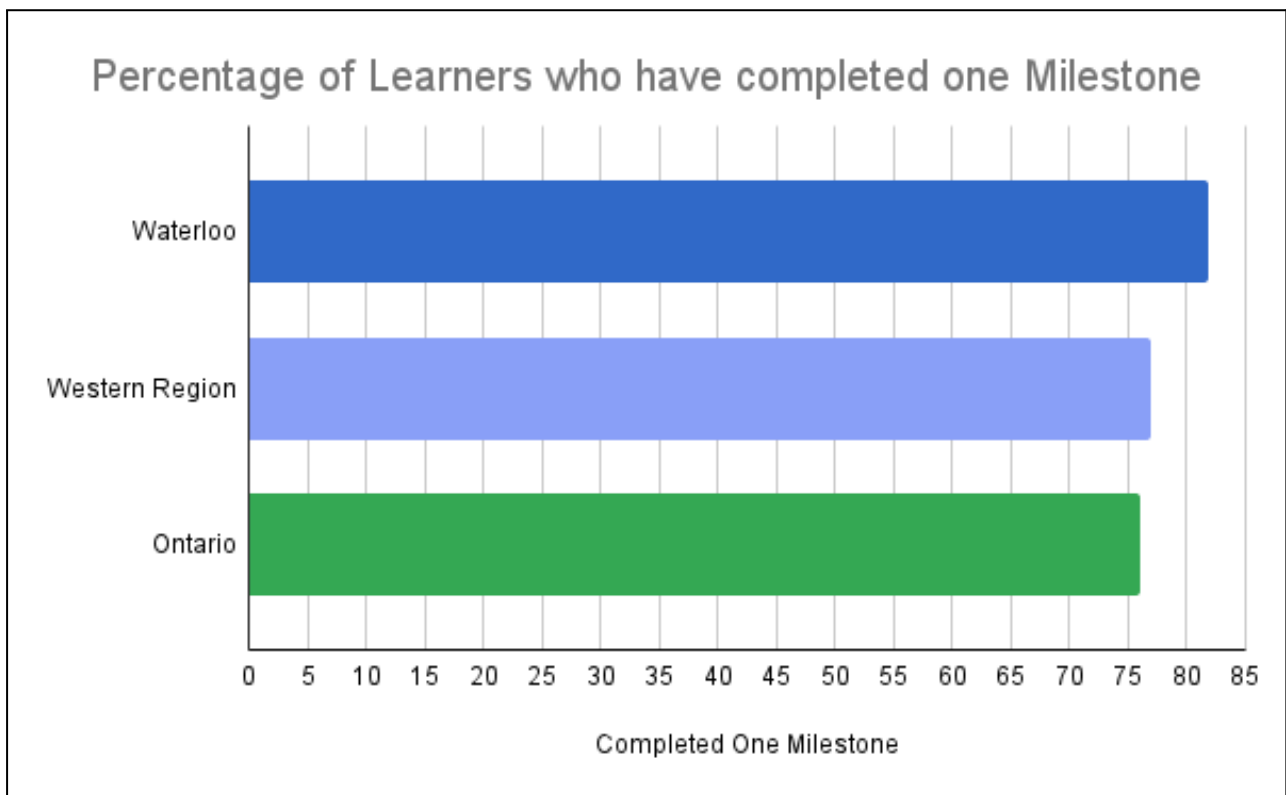
Referrals Out to other programs in Waterloo Region are consistent with the number of learners in specific goal paths in the Region. Referrals Out to High school and Post Secondary were quite high at 17.3%, compared to the Western Region at 10.5% and the province at 10.1%. Other - structured/formal referrals were also substantially higher at 7.9% in Waterloo Region, than the West at 3.4% and the province at 3.6%. This could reflect the more immediate need for other community services & supports before learners can focus on their upgrading.

Referrals Out to ES service providers were substantially lower in this region at 2.9% compared to the Western Region at 6.4% and Ontario at 5.0%. ES agencies are referring clients to our programs but we are not reciprocating in the same number of referrals to their agencies. This is an area where there is need for improvement to build stronger connections to ES agencies with the new Service Systems Management that will be starting in 2023. Overall Referrals Out in Waterloo Region that count towards SQS are higher at 37.5% than the Western Region at 31.6% and Ontario at 28.4%. This is an increase in Waterloo Region of 13.2% over last year at 24.3%. This trend may continue as program delivery returns to a “new normal” and pandemic restrictions end.



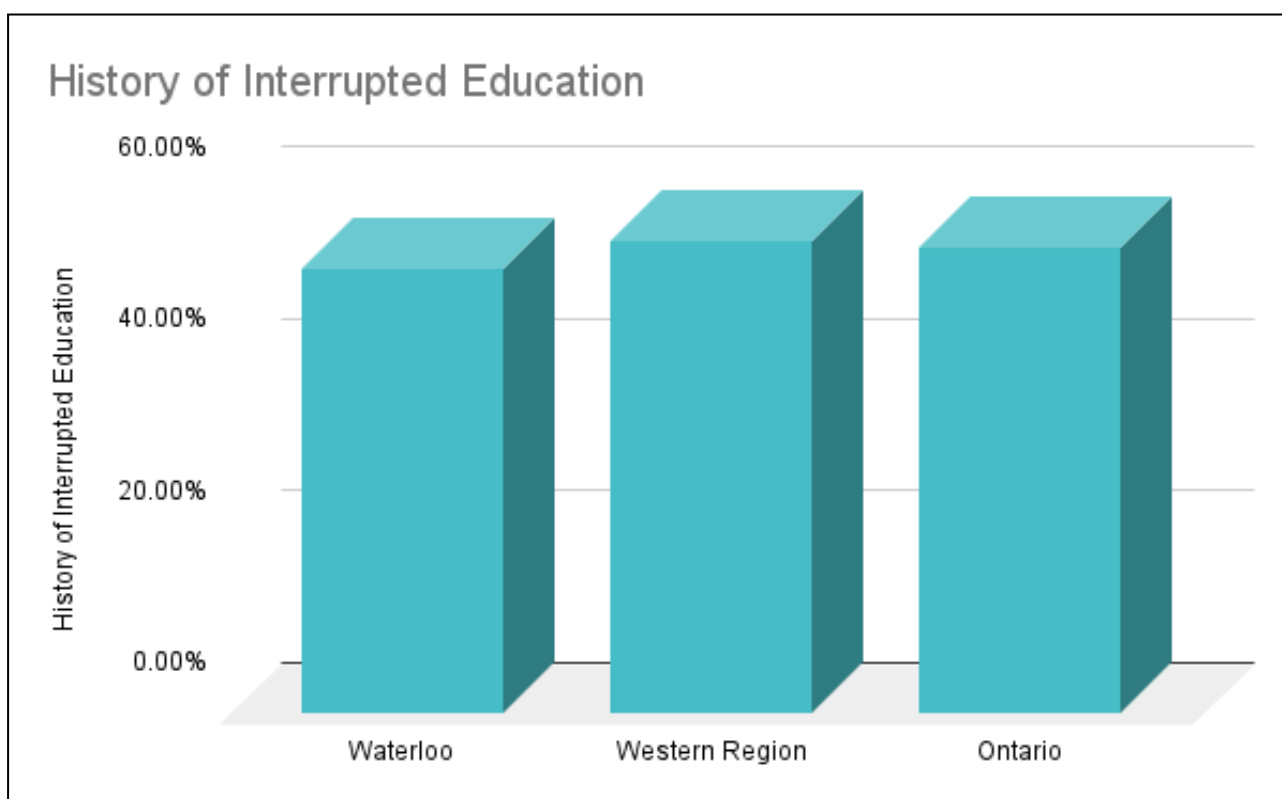
Milestones Completed

LBS providers in Waterloo Region have done excellent work demonstrating learner growth through the completion of learner milestones again this year. In Waterloo Region programs, 81.9% of LBS learners completed at least one milestone which is 4.9% higher than the Western Region and 5.9% higher than the province at 76%. Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington providers have continued to work together to build a consistent process for using Milestones for remote learning. This may have positively affected the number of milestones successfully completed in the past year.



History of Interrupted Education

The number of learners reporting a history of interrupted primary or secondary education in Waterloo Region this year is 51.9%. This number seems to be trending downward over the last couple of years, decreasing substantially this year by 8% and by 9.5% in the previous year. Waterloo Region is now lower than both the Western Region at 55.1% and Ontario at 54.3% of learners reporting a history of interrupted primary or secondary education. It is very common that adults that struggle with literacy skills have had a more sporadic history with the education system. This change could indicate a shift in the type of learners that the LBS programs are serving. People with a history of learning issues and barriers are still being served but there may be a growing number of learners attempting to keep up with current employer skill needs and digital skills in today's workplace environment. It may also be worthwhile doing a survey of programs across the province to collect information about how they approach this question with their learners and to determine if "history of interpreted education" is being explained consistently to learners in programs across the province. This too could affect the number of people reporting this experience and affect overall results.



Summary

Waterloo Region Literacy and Basic Skills programs continued to work hard this year to develop relationships with Employment Service providers to bring referrals into our LBS programs. However, work is still needed on reciprocating referrals out to ES providers to prepare for the new Service Systems Management next year.

The number of youth continues to grow in our programs in Waterloo Region with half of our learners below the age of 30 looking to build their skills for sustainable employment, career changes and/or future training. In contrast, the number of older learners in our programs is decreasing more every year. Our programs would benefit from some research into why we aren't reaching these learners to be able to target them with our marketing plans and increase their participation in our programs. It is these older learners that we need to focus our efforts on. We need to improve our marketing to those older workers (45 to 64 yrs)...or do more research on whether there is a need in this region.

This year COVID-19 continued to affect programs as they struggled with pandemic restrictions, low learner digital skills and limited internet and in-person options for learners. Now with the pandemic restrictions ending and programs coming back to a new normal, the number of youth in our programs will likely continue to grow and more hybrid models of service will be needed to meet these learners' needs. There will also be a continued need to focus on more modular programming related to employment needs as many learners now want short, focused upgrading options.

It will be important to see what the trends are for the coming year in Waterloo Region and the statistical results, now that we are coming out the other side of the COVID 19 pandemic. How will things change? Will they change? What will the SSM do for LBS marketing and programming?