

STATISTICAL REPORT

Waterloo Region - 2020/21



Project READ Literacy Network
October 2021



Program Statistical Information

2020/21

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

Community Based:

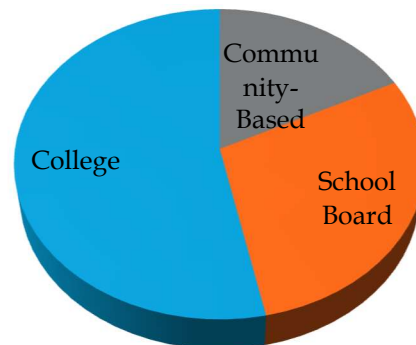
- The Literacy Group - Cambridge
- The Literacy Group - Waterloo

School Board:

- Essential Skills Upgrading (WRDSB)
- St. Louis Core Essentials (WCDSB)

College:

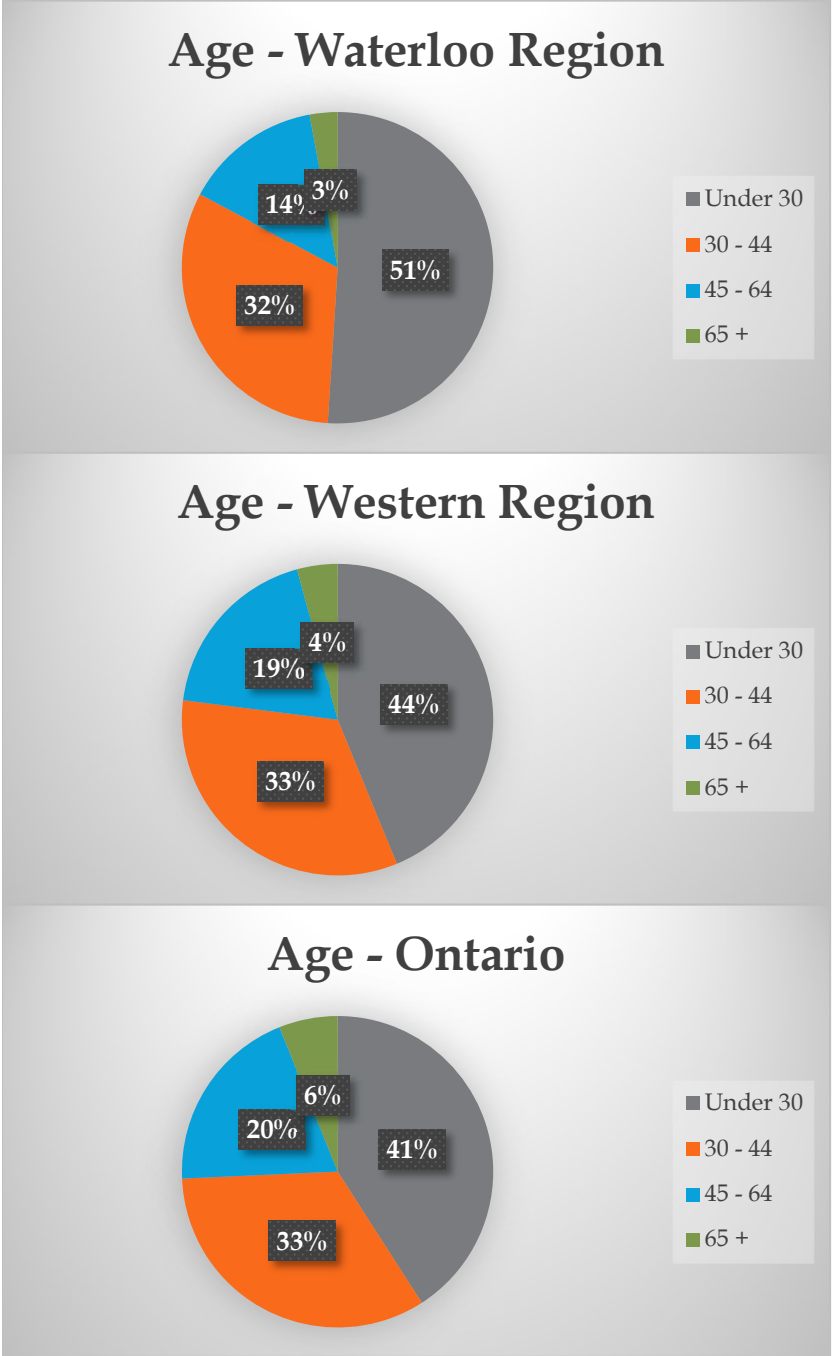
- Conestoga College - Cambridge
- Conestoga College - Waterloo



Number of Learners

The majority of learners were female at 60.4.% which dropped slightly from last year but is still comparable to the Western Region and provincial makeup.

The age of learner is where we vary:



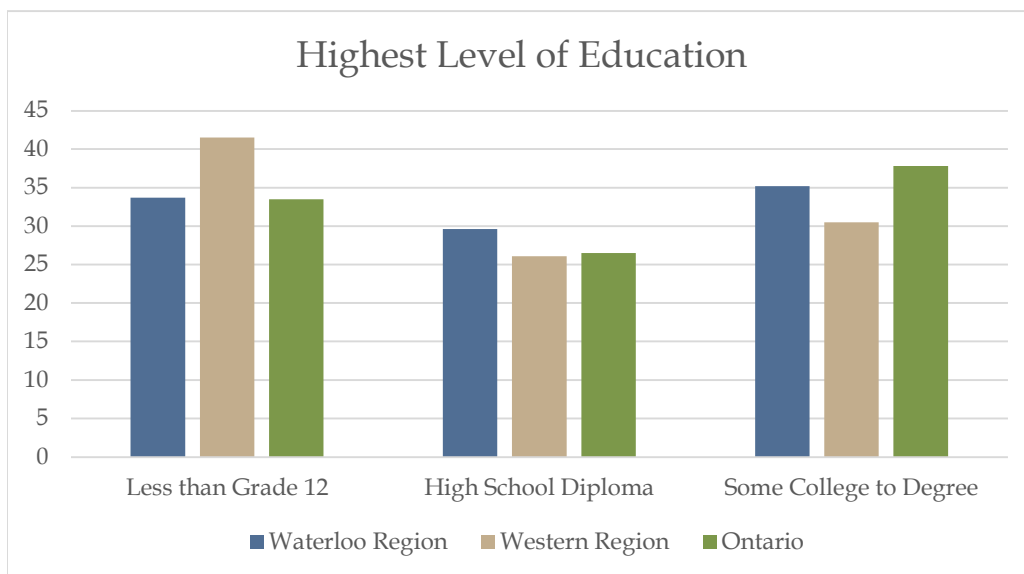
The majority of learners (51%) were under the age of 30. This number has increased from 46% last year and sits well above the numbers for the under 30 age group for the Western Region and Ontario. This is a trend that has continued upwards for the last few years and is directly affected by the number of youth that are unable to complete the

secondary school literacy test requirements, yet still need employment. This trend to younger learners may lead LBS programs to introduce different teaching methods and resources to fully engage this group that has grown up with more technology in their school career and daily lives. The need to pivot to on-line learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic may also have created additional barriers for all learners that are already struggling with their skills.

Service Quality Core Measures of Learner Suitability are important for LBS programs to reach. These Core Measures include:

Education:

- Less than Grade 12



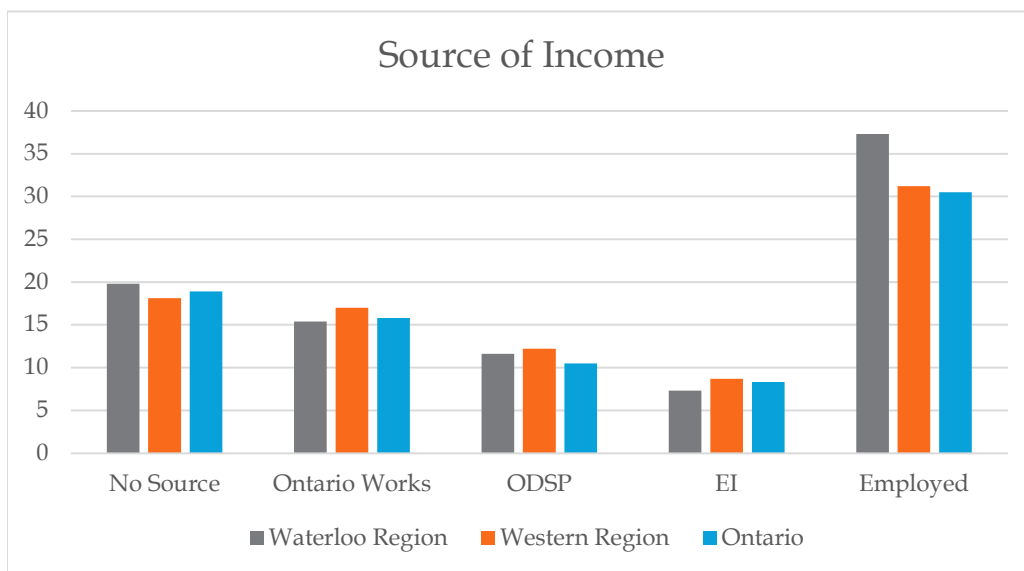
Waterloo Region continues to have a higher percentage of high school graduates in their LBS programs. This number increased 2.9% from last year. This increase from last year could in part be due to the COVID-19 pandemic with higher numbers of people becoming unemployed. As one positive, the pandemic has also provided an opportunity for people who previously could not attend in-person training to attend training when programs began to offer on-line learning options. Location and transportation were no longer barriers to attending programming this year. There are a number of other potential reasons why Waterloo region’s numbers are higher but some plausible causes are:

- EQAO Grade 10 literacy results (in 2019 – 21% of students didn’t meet the literacy standard) No EQAO testing was completed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but it is reasonable to assume testing results would be similar to 2019. EQAO results have been slowly increasing the number of students that didn’t meet the standard and it’s safe to assume this increase will continue, especially with the loss of instruction time during the pandemic

- Students needing to increase their math skills for employment or further education and training
- Youth/adults out of education for more than a year needing to brush up on skills they lost (or potentially never took in high school) and need for their goal path
- Individuals who received their education from other countries and the high school level is not equivalent

Source of Income:

- OW/ODSP recipient
- No source of income
- Crown ward



It is important to note that the number of learners on OW has dropped again this year along with referrals from OW. Waterloo Region social services have had ongoing caseworker changes throughout the year and when there are changes at the Region, it takes time for referrals to occur again. The lower rate of referrals is still being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as well because caseworkers are not meeting their clients face to face. Project READ has continued completing assessments virtually throughout the year in an effort to refer as many people as possible into programs. However, while the virtual platforms remove location and transportation barriers for some clients, this format creates barriers for others with low digital literacy skills. There is currently a small waiting list for in-person assessments for learners who are not comfortable completing the assessment on-line for various reasons including low digital literacy skills. In-person assessments will resume this Fall (2021), with COVID-19 health & safety protocols in place at the Project READ office, as long as Waterloo Region remains in Phase 3 of re-opening or higher.

Once again, the number of individuals in LBS programs in Waterloo Region receiving their income from employment has increased, but the type of employment and wage is

unknown. It is safe to assume that the majority of these learners are not making much more than minimum wage and are in precarious employment. Waterloo Region is much higher than both the Western Region and the overall numbers for the province. This is a substantial increase from last year by 6.9%. The number of learners receiving E.I. has also almost doubled across Waterloo, the Western Region and Ontario but Waterloo Region still remains below Western and Provincial numbers. Waterloo Region also has more full time employed learners and part time employed learners than the Western region and the rest of the province. This corroborates with our previous knowledge that a large majority of adults in Waterloo Region struggle with day-to-day literacy skills and suggests the possibility that there are more impoverished learners in Waterloo Region working lower-level jobs because they don't have the skills for higher level employment.

Time Out of Work:

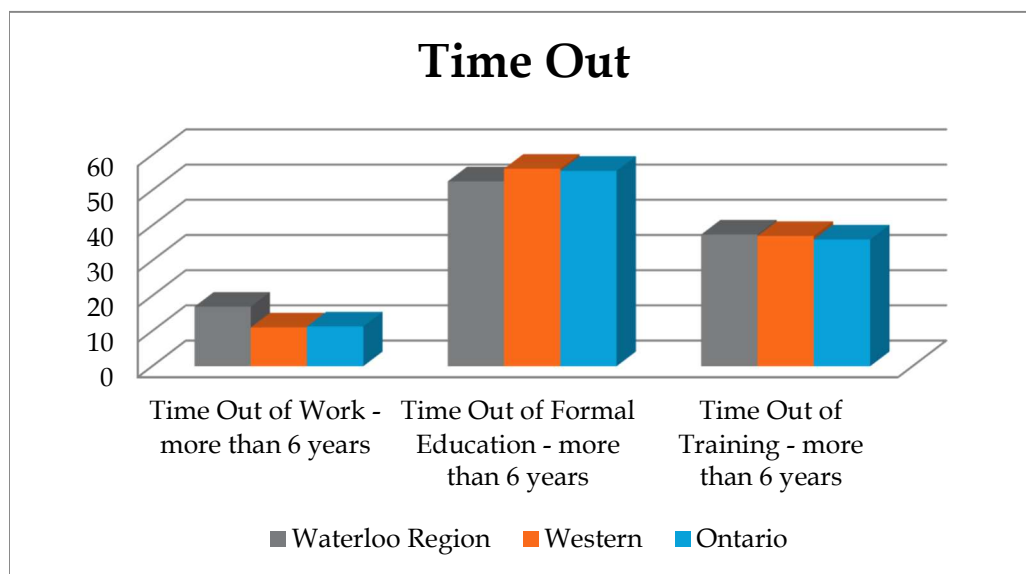
- More than 6 years out of work

Time Out of Formal Education:

- More than 6 years out of education

Time Out of Training

- More than 6 years without training



In Waterloo Region, the number of individuals out of work for more than 6 years is more than 5% higher than the rest of the province. This number has increased by 4.7% for Waterloo Region this year, while decreasing for the rest of the province. This also helps to confirm the growing percentage of people in this region that do not have the skills to obtain employment and be successful in their daily lives. The number of people

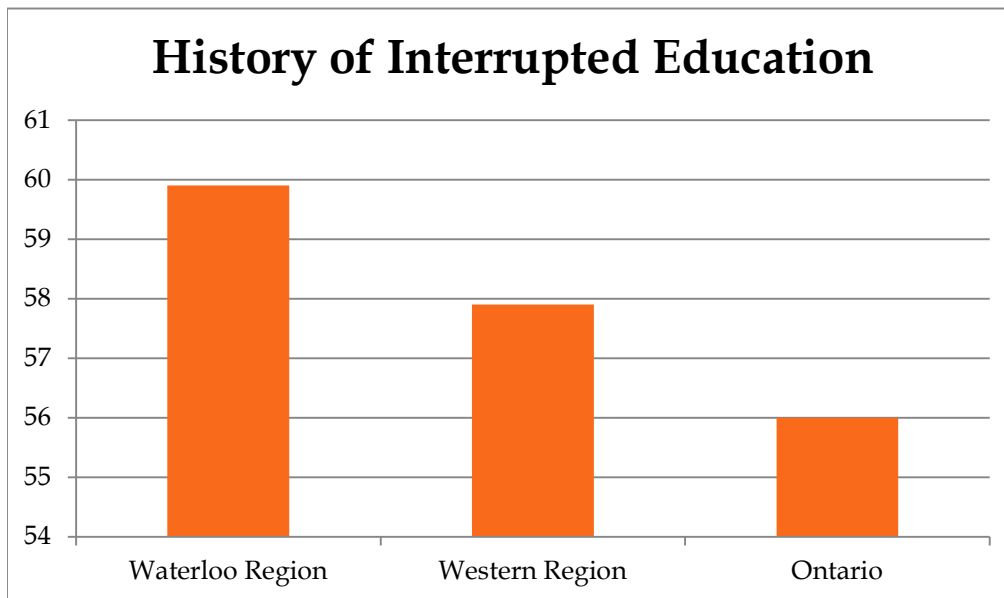
out of formal education and training for more than 6 years in this region, the Western region and across the province has decreased. This is interesting to note and could be the result of our increasingly technology-based society. With constant technological advances comes the need for increased time in training and possibly some continual training to keep up with the skills needed to maintain employment.

Age:

- Age over 45 and under 64 (see statistics on page 3)
Waterloo Region's numbers are lower than the provincial percentage, by 5.3%. It is also notable that this year, the percentage has dropped 5.5% in this age group from Waterloo Region's number last year, continuing the overall decline of people in this age category as reported last year. Labour Market Information concurs with this finding....the majority of individuals over 55 have left the workforce

Interrupted education:

- History of interrupted education
-Learners identify if they have a history of interrupted primary and secondary education.

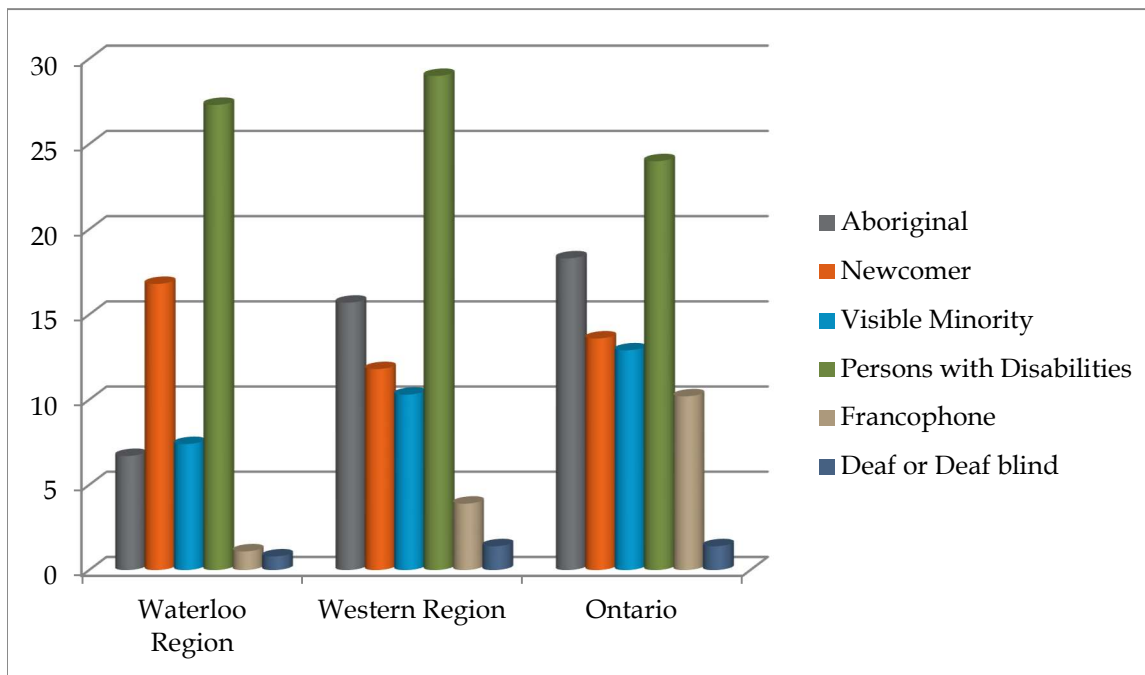


Waterloo Region again has a higher number of learners that identify as having interrupted elementary or high school education. Although the gap between Waterloo Region, the West and the provincial numbers in this category has decreased from last year (last year: 9% higher than the West and 13% higher than the province), this region is still almost 4% above provincial numbers. Adult learners with a history of interrupted education may have experienced gaps in their learning and may have had a negative educational experience due to their interrupted education. This can have an

impact on training as these adult learners need to overcome negative attitudes towards education in addition to building their skills.

Self-Identified:

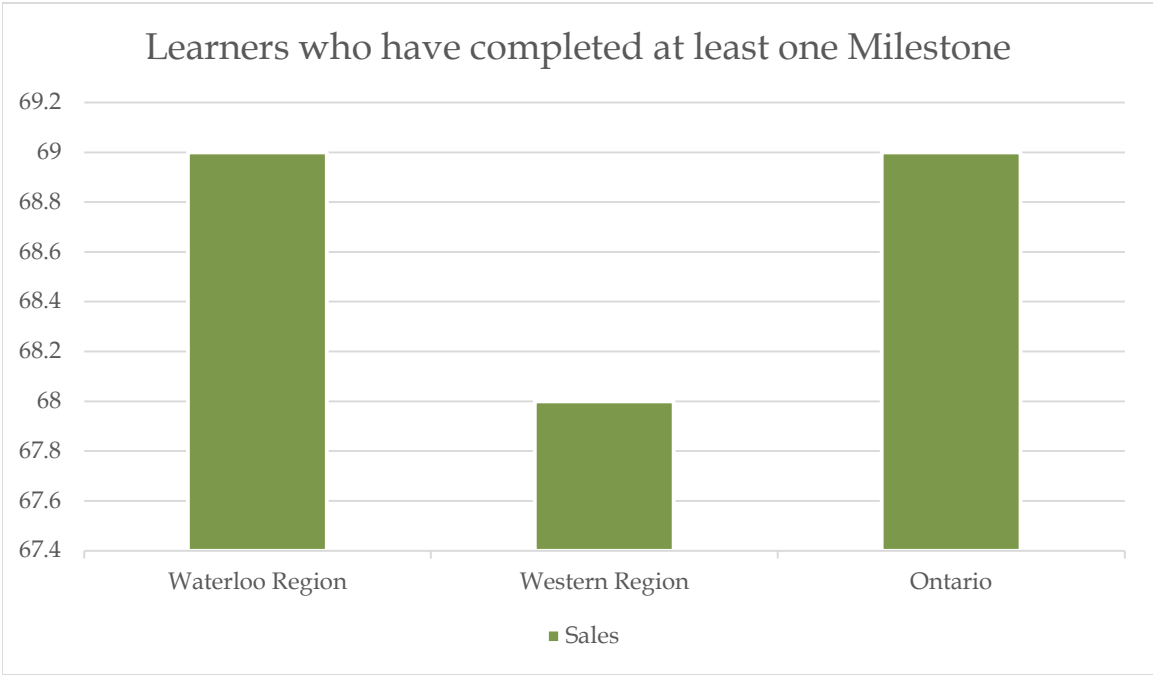
- Aboriginal
- Persons with Disabilities
- Deaf
- Francophone



27.3% of learners in Waterloo Region identify as having a disability compared to the West at 29% and province at 24%.

There are also a higher number of learners in Waterloo Region that identify as being a Newcomer, 16.8% compared to 11.8% in the West and 13.6% across the province. Waterloo Region continues to be one of the top 5 regions in Ontario attracting new immigrants.

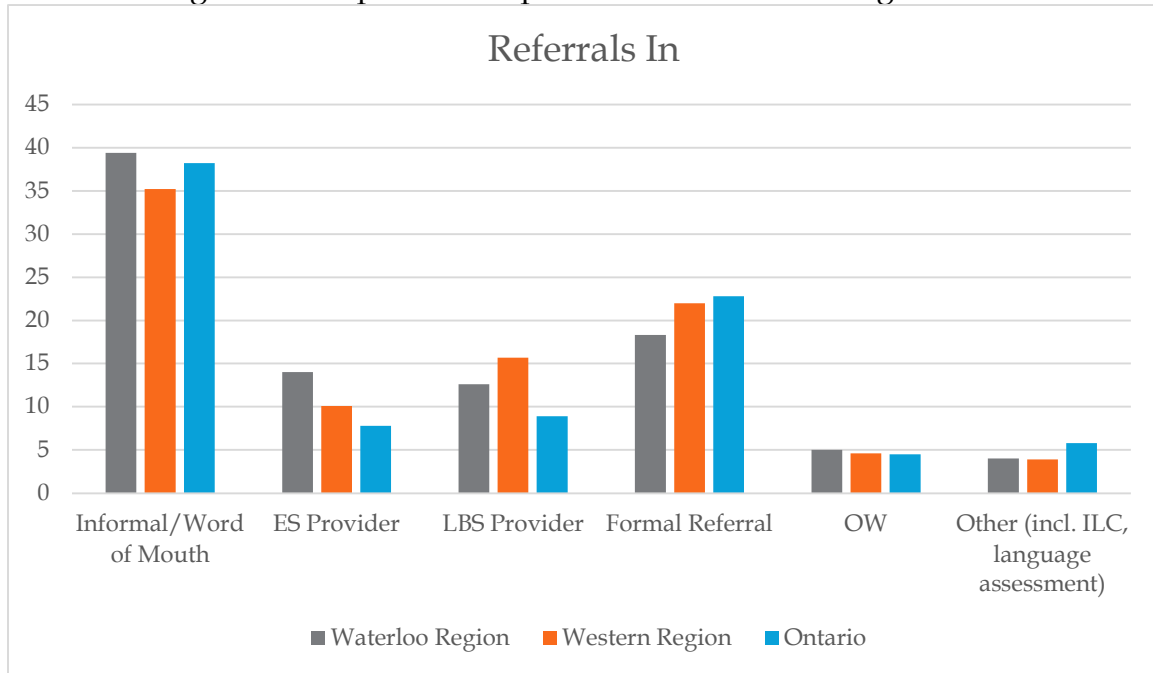
Waterloo region also has substantially less Indigenous learners than in the rest of the province with 6.7% of learners self-identifying compared to 15.7% in the West and 18.3% across the province. This is not surprising as there are no Reservations located within Waterloo Region. There is also no Indigenous LBS program available.



In Waterloo Region and across the province, LBS providers have continued to do a great job in ensuring that learners are showing growth in their programs by completing milestones in spite of the additional challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our programs pivoted quickly and worked together to share processes for assessing learning and using Milestones.

Service Coordination is also an important measure within the Service Quality Core Measures. This includes:

- Referred in
-the following are the Top 6 referral points in for Waterloo Region:



Referrals In that count towards Service Quality Standard (SQS):

Waterloo =48.2%
Western =48.6%
Ontario =52.4%

Informal/Word of Mouth referrals have jumped almost 10% in Waterloo region from 29.4% last year to 39% this year. This could largely be due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While agencies were pivoting to continue to provide service, learners were sharing available learning opportunities amidst all of the uncertainty and lock downs.

Employment Service Provider referrals in Waterloo region are almost double provincial referral numbers and are well above numbers in the Western region but are still down by 3.9%. Again, the need to shift all service delivery to online platforms to keep services available during the pandemic would most likely play a large role in this decrease. This number is significant because it shows how the work we have done on service coordination with Employment Services has paid off. ES is seeing the need to refer clients to our programs for upgrading before attaining employment.

Structured/formal Referrals In, in Waterloo Region are below the West and the province. This is a consistent number for us, but the rest of the province is over 4%

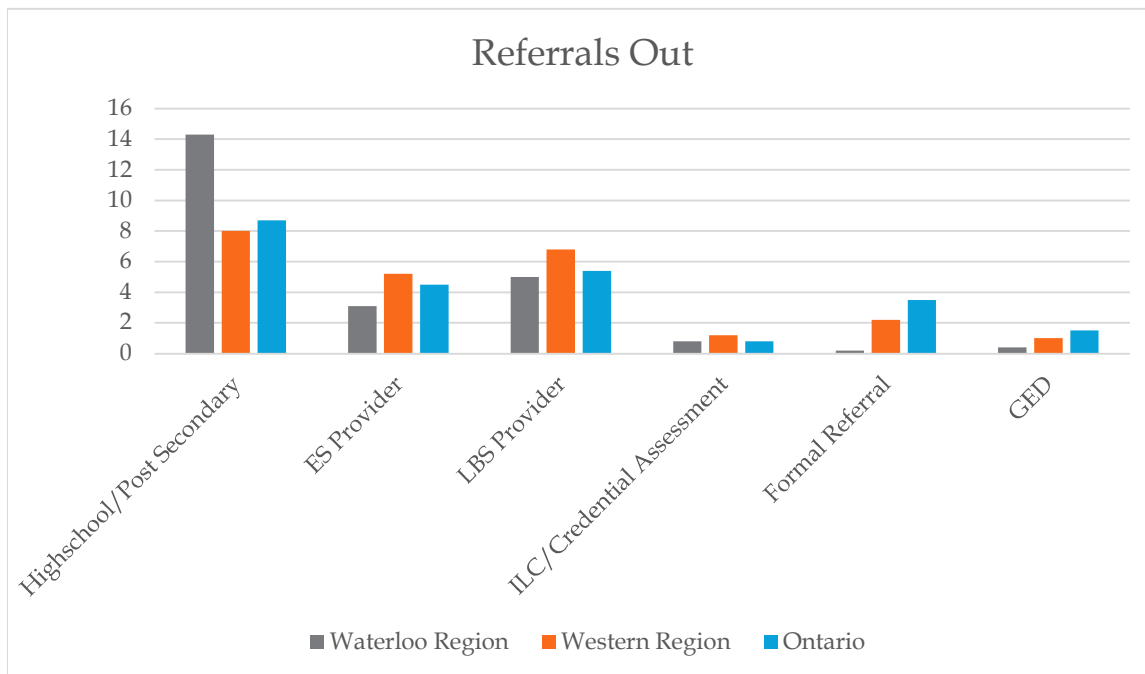
higher. We should do a review of best practices in the field for this to see how we can improve our numbers.

Other referrals (including ILC and language assessments) have increased in Waterloo region but are still below provincial numbers.

It is important to note that Informal/Word of Mouth and LBS Provider don't count towards SQS. These numbers may not count, but it is positive that Waterloo Region has greater referrals in from fellow LBS programs. This does show that referral protocols and relationships are strong amongst LBS providers within the Region.

Referrals In are less than the provincial totals, but they match the Western Region percentage again as noted in last year's report.

- Referred out
-the following are the top 6 referral points out for Waterloo Region



Referrals Out that count towards SQS:

Waterloo = 24.3%

Western = 25.8%

Ontario = 25.5%

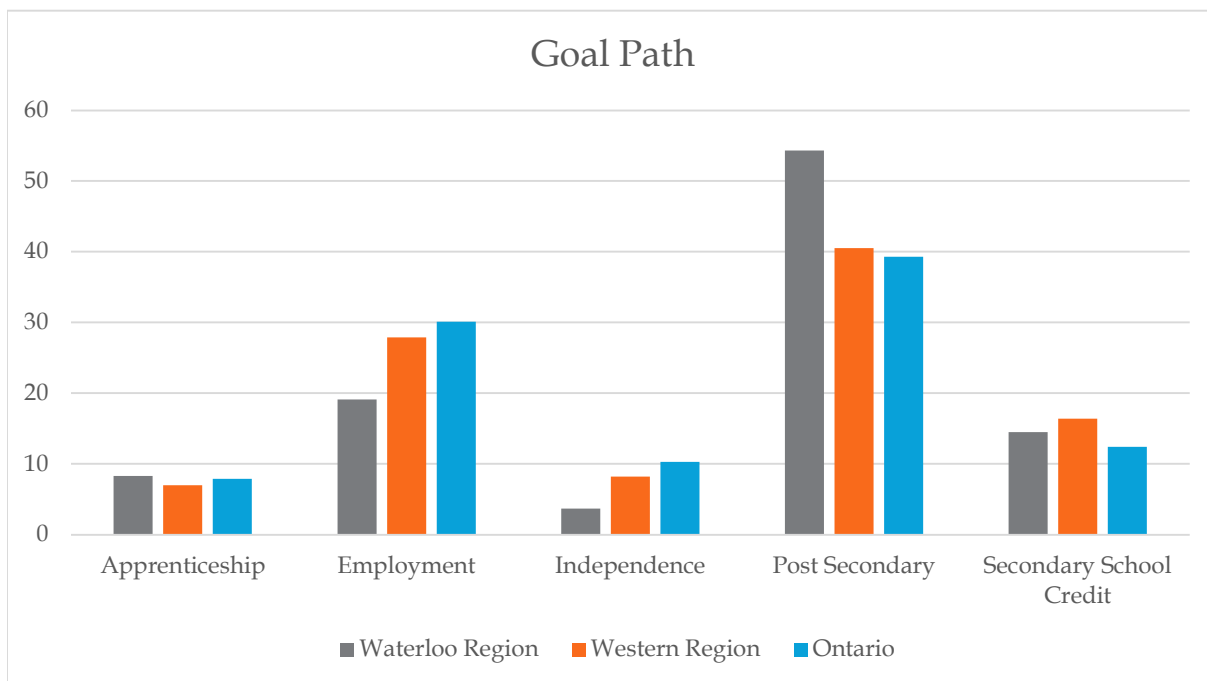
Total referrals out in Waterloo region are down by a total of 9.6%. This is not surprising during a pandemic. LBS providers in Waterloo Region have continued working hard to

develop strong relationships with outside agencies to help learners along their goal paths but the necessary shift to online service has affected all service providers this year. Although Waterloo region’s referrals out have dropped almost 10% this year, we still have comparable numbers that count towards SQS to the Western Region and the province. Again, the focus for service providers this year was to keep service available by focusing on shifting to online platforms as a result of the pandemic.

It is interesting that the referrals out to high school and post-secondary in Waterloo region have increased by 4% to 14.3% and are well above the Western region at 8% and the provincial numbers at 8.7%. This could be a result of the fact that St. Louis was back in the classroom as soon as possible with their learners and their adult credit programming was as well. It could also be the result of the college not being able to provide programming until well into the pandemic which would shift Academic Upgrading clients to the credit programs.

Goal Paths

All learners in LBS programs have the option of 5 goal paths.



The most common goal path in LBS throughout the province, the western region and Waterloo Region continues to be Post-Secondary education. Employment is the second most common goal path. The need for better employment is really the motivation behind both Post-Secondary education and completing a High School Diploma.

Individuals are looking to gain the skills needed to get and maintain a good quality well-paying job.

Where Waterloo Region differs from the Western Region and province is in the other two goal paths. Regionally we have more learners with an Apprenticeship goal than for the Independence path and this is opposite for the rest of the province. It is obvious within Waterloo Region that most learners in our programs are on a short or long-term path to viable employment.

Summary

It is obvious that Waterloo Region Literacy and Basic Skills programs have worked hard to develop relationships with Employment Service providers. We do however need to work on increasing our structured/formal referral process for the next fiscal year.

The number of youth in our programs is going to continue to grow and we must learn to adjust our facilitation to meet these learners' needs. The Pandemic is going to have a long-term effect on these numbers, as children/youth lost more school-time during the pandemic than any other province or territory.

We will need to focus on more modular programming related to employment needs. Retail and Material Handlers are the most listed jobs within Waterloo Region - a real opportunity to work with employers in the next fiscal year.

The impact of COVID will continue to affect programs over the next fiscal year. There will be those learners that are fearful to come to programming and those that will not be vaccinated. Hybrid models for learning will continue to be a need. The look of literacy will be different going forward from years before the pandemic.

Statistically, numbers are not going to show what's really happening in programs, they will reflect what's happening in the world. All they can show is how well programs are adjusting to the changes and needs during this time. We won't really know how well the programs are doing in regular work until at least the 2022/23 results.



