Early Learning & Development in the Niagara Region

TRINITY UNITED CHURCH, BEAMSVILLE
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Understanding the Early Years

eccdc
early childhood community development centre
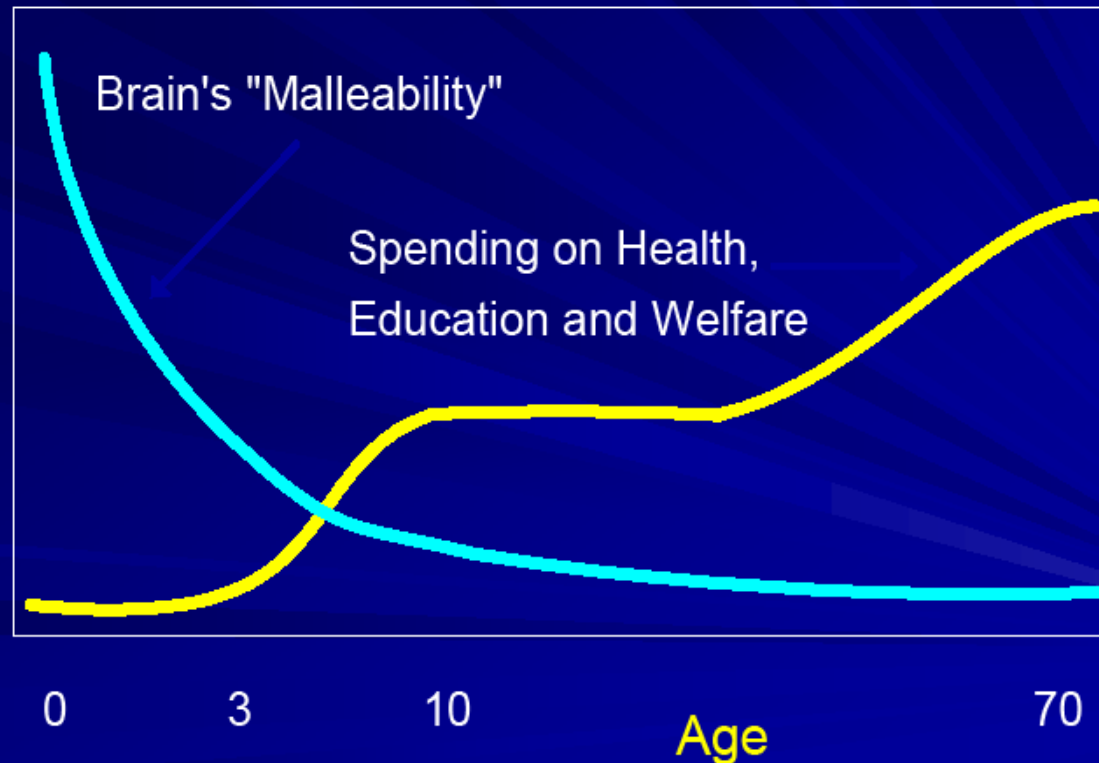
Understanding the Early Years

Why focus on the Early Years?

- Experiences before school impact all aspects of the rest of our lives.

- These influence the number of brain cells, the number of connections among them, and the way these connections get "wired".

- While individual children overcome disadvantage, the tendency established early on among the group persists. (population health trajectory set early)

- 86% of mothers giving birth are back working by the time the baby is a year old. (Statistics Canada, 2001)

An Investment Opportunity

97-044

The Mismatch Between Opportunity and Investment

Brain's "Malleability"

Spending on Health, Education and Welfare

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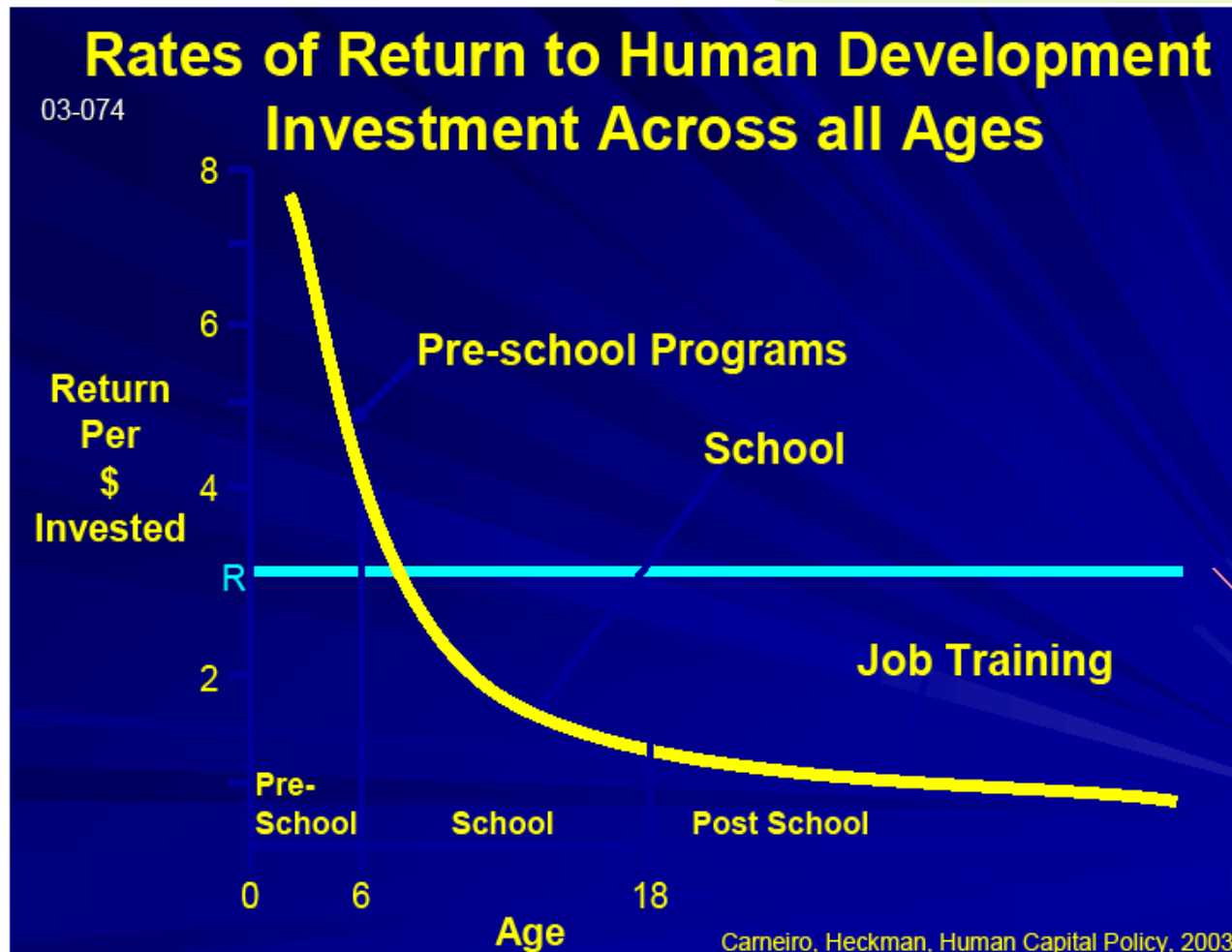
Age

Short and Long Term Benefits

In Niagara, there are approximately 32,000 children under the age of six, but just over 4,600 licensed child care spaces.

- **Regional Niagara, Community Services Department, Children's Services (Niagara's Best Start: The Early Learning & Child Care Plan 2005-2008)**

"The quality and capacity of our future population depends on what we do now to support early child development."

- **Fraser Mustard, Founder & Chair Emeritus, Council for Early Child Development**

Providing Better Returns

Rates of Return to Human Development Investment Across all Ages

03-074

Return Per $ Invested

Pre-school Programs

School

Job Training

Pre-School   School   Post School

Age

Carneiro, Heckman, Human Capital Policy, 2003

How are Niagara children doing?

What do we measure?

We use the Early Development Instrument (EDI) created by McMaster's Offord Centre for Child Studies.

It measures School readiness in SK children, based on five early years developmental domains:
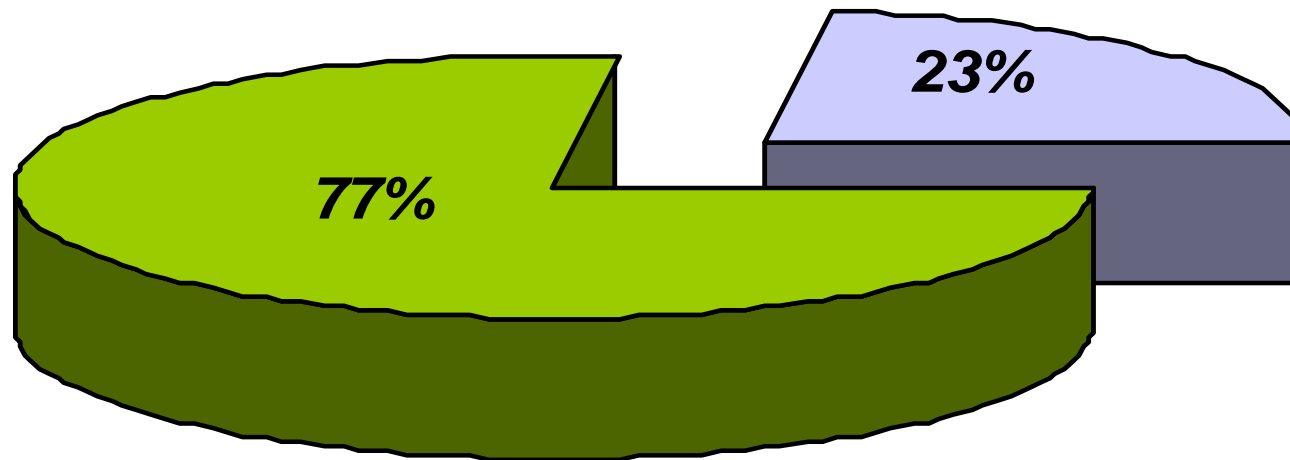
- Physical Health & Well-being

- Social Competence

- Emotional Maturity

- Language & Cognitive Development

- Communication Skills & General Knowledge

Why the EDI?

- Based on the concept of developmental health

- Assesses context / impact of early experiences

- Reflects group outcomes / milestones achieved during first 4-6 years

- Good predictor of future success in school, employment and general well-being

- Identifies needs in largest group possible

- Used across Canada and internationally

Overall Good Results ☺

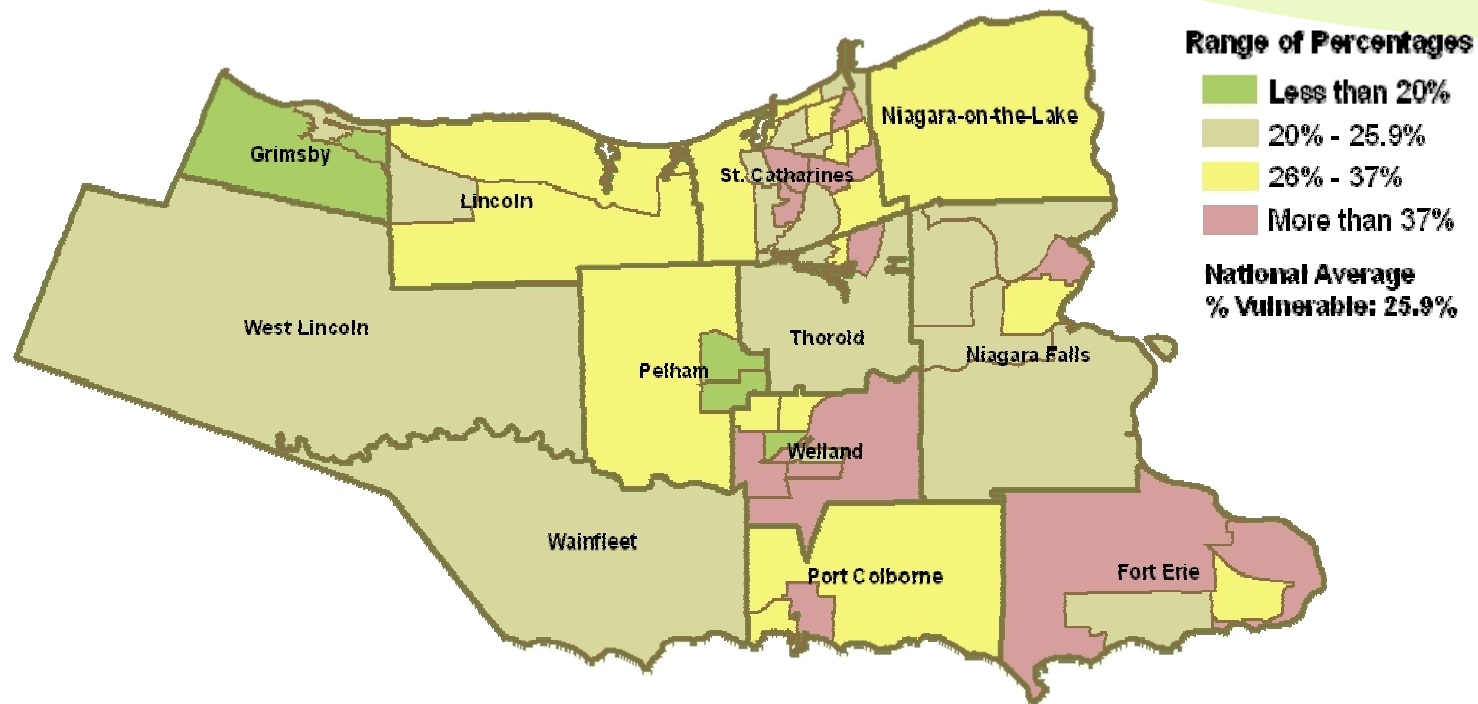% of Children On Track and Not On Track for School

On Track **Not On Track**

Also Vulnerability ☹

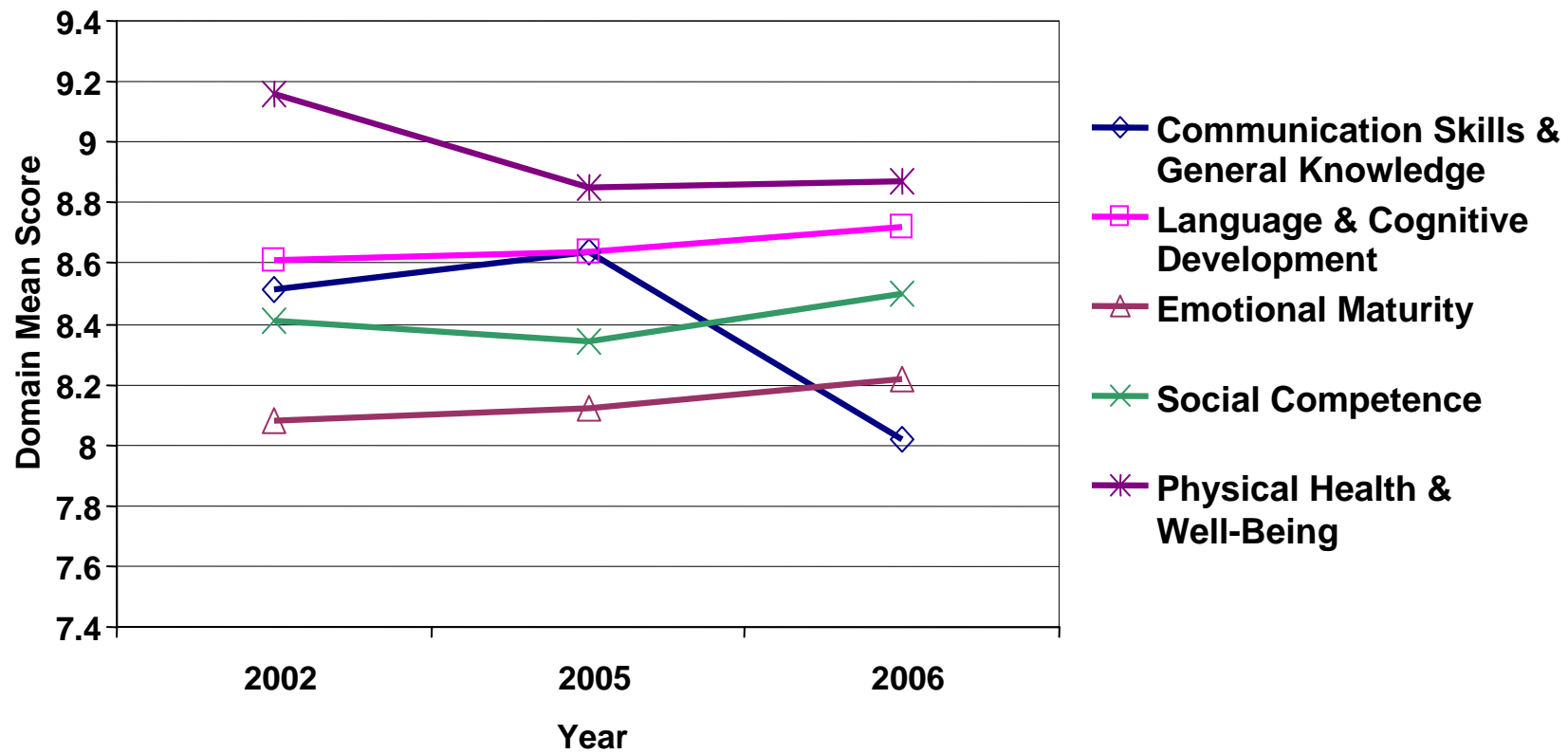% of Vulnerable Children by Neighbourhoods in Niagara Region

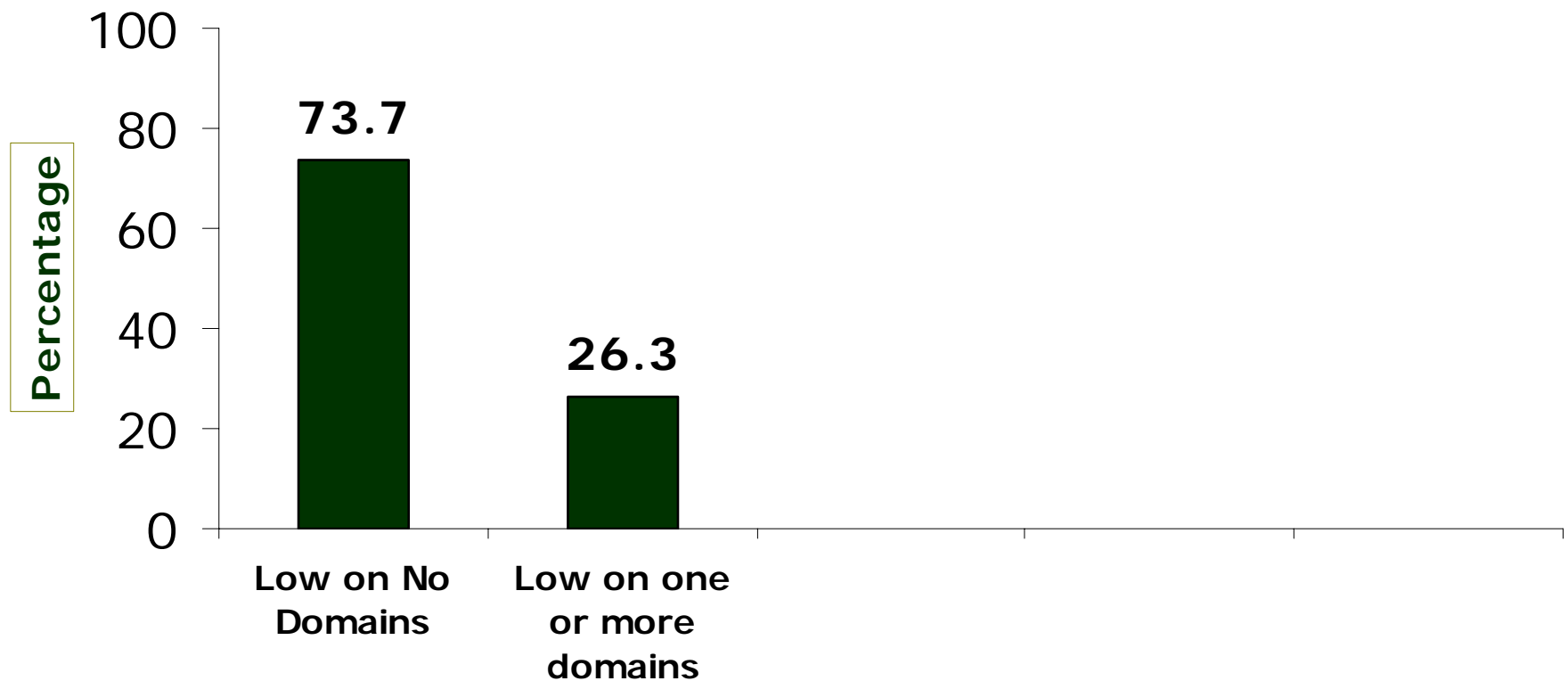(Vulnerable: Children who scored below the 10th percentile on one or more readiness to learn domains)

Shifting trends…

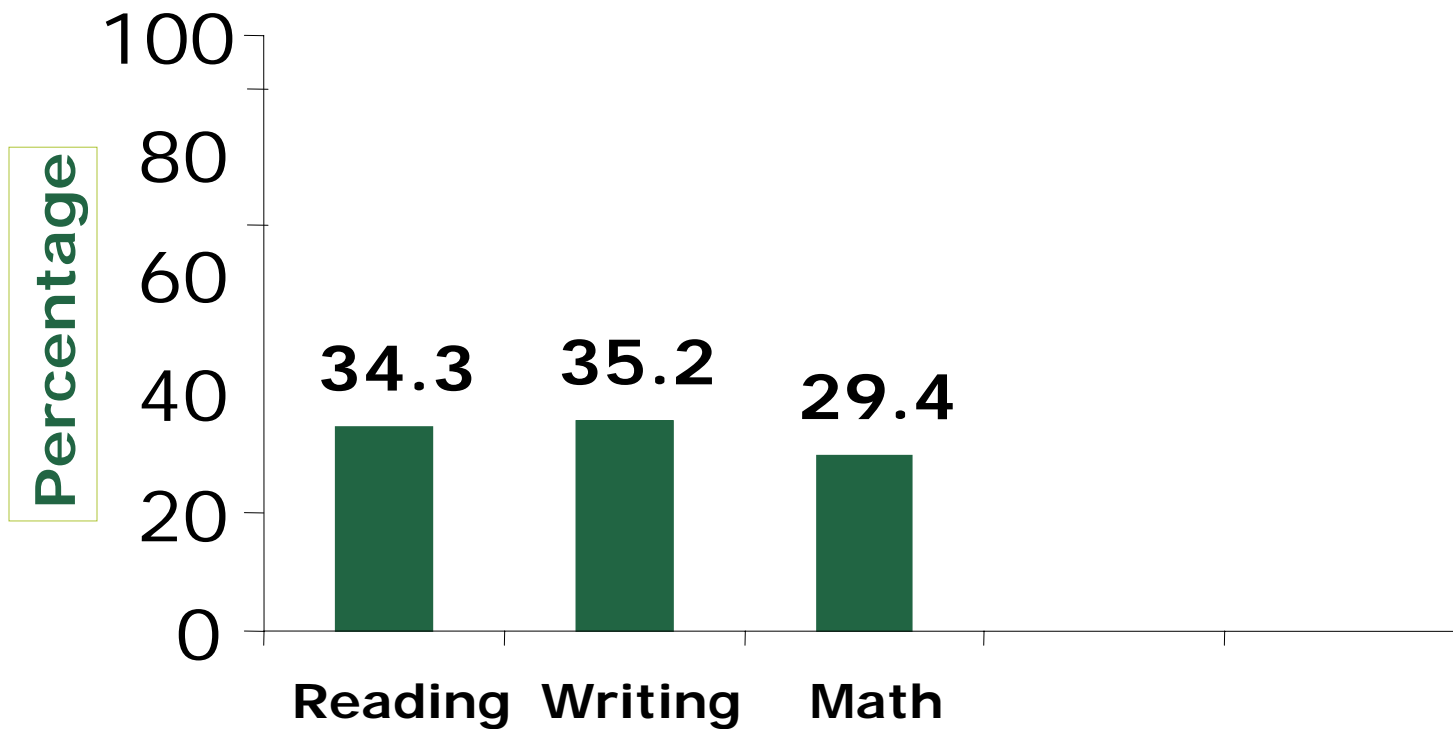Multi-Year Comparison of EDI Mean Scores, Niagara Region, 2002-2006

EDI Vulnerability

2001/02 SK EDI Scores in Niagara Region (Percentage Scoring Low/Vulnerable i.e. Bottom 10th Percentile)

EQAO Scores

2004/05 Grade 3 EQAO Scores in Niagara Region
(Percentage Scoring Below Provincial Standard)

Factors Increasing Vulnerability
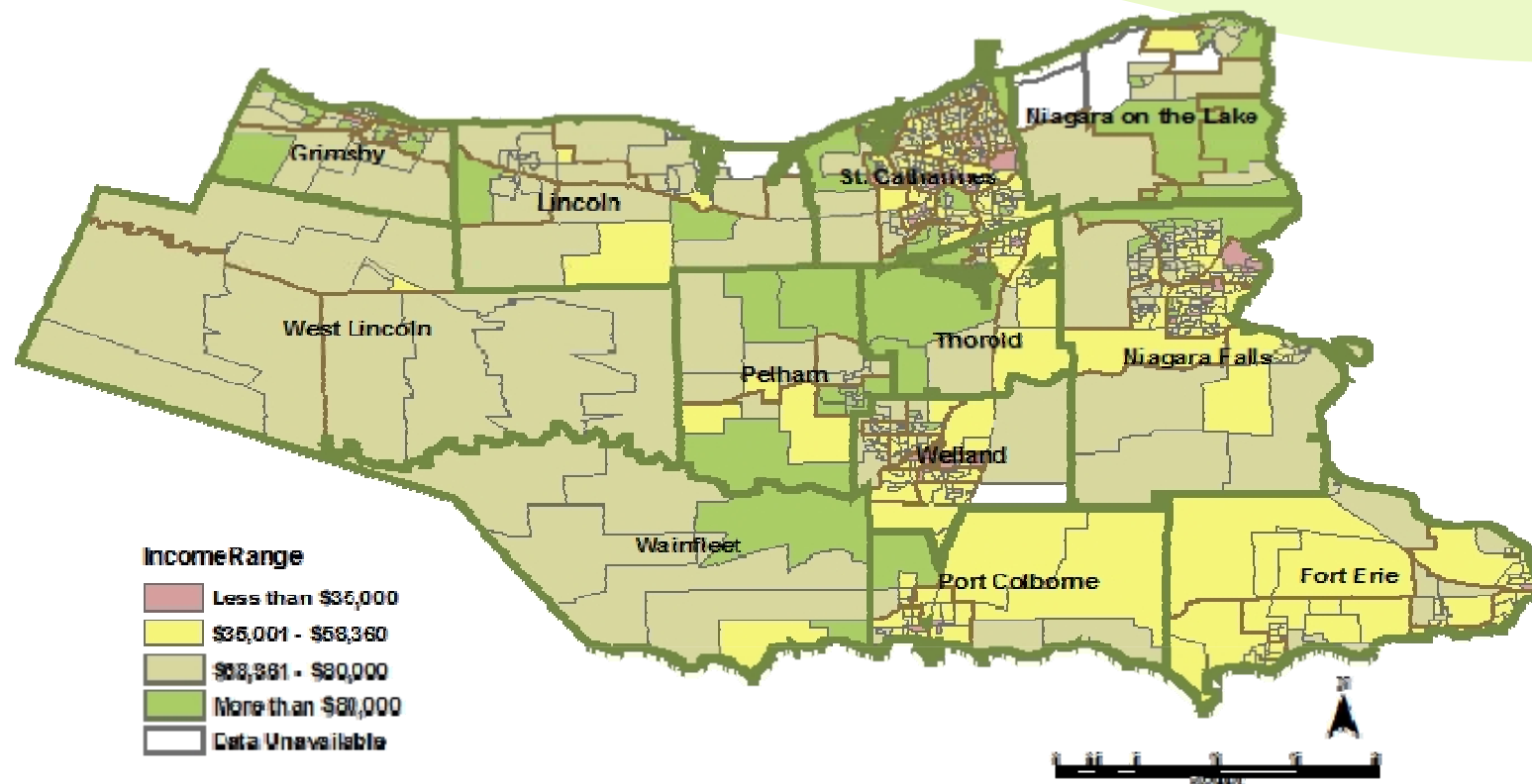
- Child health (low)   2.35

- Gender (boy)   2.32

- Income (low)   2.02

- Family status (not intact)   1.83

Source: Janus & Duku 2007

For example, if family income is low then it's 2.02 times more likely that a score in the lowest 10th percentile on the EDI will result.

2001 Census

Average Household Income in Niagara Region

Grimsby
Lincoln
Niagara on the Lake
St. Catharines
West Lincoln
Thorold
Niagara Falls
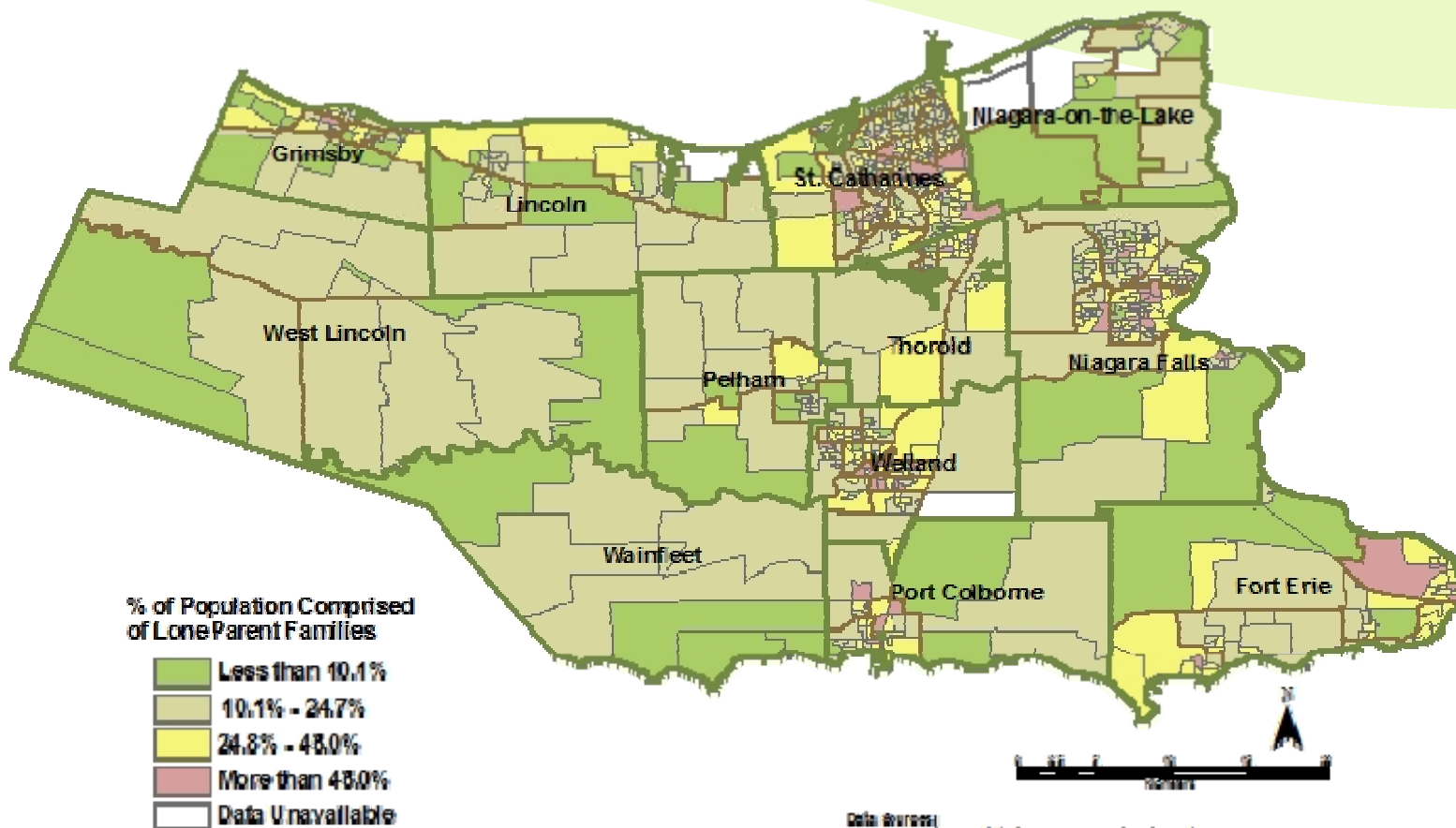Pelham
Welland
Wainfleet
Port Colborne
Fort Erie

Income Range
- Less than $35,000
- $35,001 - $58,360
- $58,361 - $80,000
- More than $80,000
- Data Unavailable

National Average: $58,360

Data Sources:
Boundary Feature - Statistics Canada system tabulation(s) from 2001 Census
Neighbourhood Neighborhood Creation Project, Ontario Early Years Niagara Region, 2006
Produced by: MBY & WFYS, 2007
© 2007 - Valimar2006

2001 Census

Family Structure in Niagara Region

% of Population Comprised of Lone Parent Families

- Less than 10.1%
- 10.1% - 24.7%
- 24.8% - 45.0%
- More than 45.0%
- Data Unavailable

National Rate: 24.7%

Niagara Summary

- Almost 1 in 4 Niagara children 'not ready for learning' and vulnerability is widely dispersed

- Larger %'s of children living in poverty and/or lone parent families are scoring vulnerable

- However, the largest # of children at risk live in middle/upper income, two-parent families

- Therefore, 'universal' services as opposed to targeted ones seem in order

- Currently a variety of initiatives addressing quality child care (QCCN), child poverty (RMN) and municipal /neighbourhood needs

What else seems to help?

- Canadian children who received high quality early childhood education enjoyed academic advantages that were apparent as early as grades one and two (n=10,600).
- The findings were consistent no matter what the mother's education level or the child's socio-economic background.

~ National Longitudinal Study of Children & Youth, HRSDC (1999).

- At-risk children who've had early childhood education have 30% more high school completions and 50% fewer arrests than those who don't.

~ Family & Work Institute, New York (1997).

The early years and your efforts on behalf of children matter!

~ *Glory*