

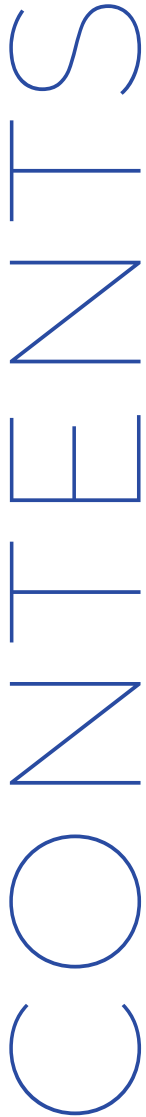
# Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Toronto **Environmental Scan**

2025





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Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto commissioned the Centre for Organizational Effectiveness to produce environmental scan reports for each of the regions of the Archdiocese of Toronto to assist in the strategic plan development of Catholic Charities. Anchored by Catholic Social Teachings, which provides the shared understanding of how faith engages with the world, these documents provide a current overview of the people in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

The Social Determinants of Health review include:

- Low Income and Food Insecurity
- Education and Employment
- Housing and Homelessness
- Health, Mental Health, and Addiction
- Newcomers and Immigration
- Community and Belonging: Civic Engagement, Recreation, Racism, Crime & Violence
- Age: Children and Youth, and Seniors
- Environment

We invite member agencies, parishes and partners to review to review the information through an open heart, inviting the Holy Spirit to enter into the journey of discerning how your gifts, and your resources can continue to support the people of Toronto in living life abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

## COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS: DATA HIGHLIGHTS

Data highlights provide an overview of key community characteristic data for Toronto and compares these to Ontario. In the main report, each Social Determinant of Health (SDOH) Area is explored in detail. Each SDOH has a different section in the report

World Health Organization, in "Closing the Gap" defines the SDOH as:

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These determinants are key factors influencing health outcomes and health disparities among populations. They include various social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors that can either promote or hinder individuals' health and well-being. <sup>[i]</sup>



Indicates that the stat for the region is higher than Ontario











Indicates that the stat for the region is the same as Ontario



Indicates that the stat for the region is lower than Ontario

i. World Health Organization, "Closing the gap in a generation"



SDOH Area	Toronto Highlights	Compared to Ontario
Low Income (based on After-Tax Low Income Cut Off – After-Tax LICO)	<p><b>9%</b> live with low income in 2020; 8% of children and youth age 0 to 17 live with low income and 6% of adults age 65 and older live with low income.</p> <p><b>23%</b> of Toronto families fall in the bottom 20% of income compared to families across Canada.</p>	 
Food Insecurity	<p><b>22%</b> of Toronto's households and 24% of Toronto residents were food insecure in 2022. Food insecurity increased from 2021.</p>	
Housing and Homelessness	<p><b>48%</b> of Toronto dwellings are rented.</p> <p><b>40%</b> of tenants live in unaffordable housing.</p> <p>More than <b>80,000 households</b> wait for subsidized housing from the City.</p> <p>As of late 2022, over <b>9,700</b> individuals actively used the shelter system in the past three months.</p>	 
Employment and Education	<p><b>64%</b> of the population age 15 and older was working or looking for work in 2021; 9% were unemployed.</p> <p><b>9%</b> of the population age 25 to 64 has not obtained a high school certificate, diploma or degree.</p> <p><b>13%</b> of Toronto's small neighbourhood areas have high concentrations of people who don't have income from employment. This may be due to age or inability to work.</p>	  



SDOH Area	Toronto Highlights	Compared to Ontario
Health	<b>63%</b> of Torontonians report having very good or excellent health.	
Mental Health and Addiction	<b>67%</b> of Torontonians report having very good or excellent mental health. <b>12%</b> of Torontonians report heavy drinking at least once a month.	 
Newcomers and Immigration	<b>52%</b> are immigrant or non-permanent resident (2021). <b>56%</b> identify as a visible minority (2021).	 
Belonging	<b>67%</b> have a strong sense of belonging to their local community. <b>40%</b> of Toronto's small neighbourhood areas have high concentrations of recent immigrants and visible minorities. These areas may experience higher levels of racialization and xenophobia. <b>32%</b> of Toronto's small neighbourhood areas may have less family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness based on the types and density of housing and family structure characteristics.	  
Age	<b>19%</b> of the population are under age 20 in 2021. <b>17%</b> are age 65+.	 



# SUMMARY OF AREAS WITH HIGHEST MARGINALIZATION

The following table summarizes analysis of the Ontario Marginalization (ON-Marg) Index maps produced by Public Health Ontario. These maps are based on Statistics Canada 2021 data. The ON-Marg shows differences in marginalization between geographic areas. ON-Marg applies to areas, not individual people. The maps in this report show patterns of marginalization at the Dissemination Area (DA) level. A DA is a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more adjacent blocks with an average population of 400 to 700 people.

For this project, the maps were examined and cross-referenced with Ward Area maps found on the City of Toronto website<sup>[ii]</sup> to identify Wards with high marginalization. These maps can be used to identify where resources and support may be more needed geographically.

The maps (see Appendix) and this table shows that there are a number of Wards that are highly marginalized for one or more dimensions. Wards that show up as being among the highest marginalized for two or more dimensions of marginalization include:

- Wards in Scarborough, particularly Scarborough-Agincourt
- Etobicoke North
- Humber River-Black Creek

Marginalization Dimension	Highest Marginalization
Material Resources – this relates closely to poverty and refers to the inability of individuals and communities to access and attain basic material needs relating to food, housing, clothing and education.	<p>26% (986) of Toronto’s small neighbourhood areas (Dissemination Areas/DAs) are ranked among the most marginalized (fewest material resources) across Ontario. Another 22% (837) are ranked in the second highest quintile.</p> <p>Ward Areas with many of the most marginalized small neighbourhoods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scarborough Agincourt</li><li>• Scarborough Guildwood</li><li>• Scarborough Centre</li><li>• Parts of Humber River-Black Creek</li><li>• York South-Weston</li><li>• Scattered throughout Scarborough</li><li>• Etobicoke North</li></ul>

ii. NEW City of Toronto, “City Government”



## Marginalization Dimension

Racialized and Newcomer Populations – this relates to area-level concentrations of people who are recent immigrants and/or visible minority populations.

Age and Labour Force – this measure relates to the impacts of disability and dependence. It refers to area-level concentrations of people without income from employment including children, older adults, adults whose work is not compensated and/or those unable to work due to disability. It may also be connected to the economic vitality of the community and the ways that infrastructure and resources are allocated.

ILL: NEW CITY OF TORONTO, CITY GOVERNMENT

## Highest Marginalization

40% (1,500) of Toronto's small neighbourhood areas (DAs) are ranked among the most marginalized across Ontario for this dimension. Another 30% (1,100) rank in the second highest quintile. These areas may experience high levels of racialization and xenophobia.

Ward Areas with the highest area-level concentrations include:

- Scarborough Rouge Park, north of Kingston Road
- Scarborough North
- Much of Scarborough-Agincourt
- East side of Don Valley North
- Much of Willowdale
- Much of York Centre
- Much of Humber River-Black Creek
- Much of Etobicoke North
- Pockets in many of the other Wards including York South-Weston and Scarborough Southwest

13% (496) of Toronto's small neighbourhood areas (DAs) are ranked among the most marginalized across Ontario for this dimension. Another 19% (709) rank in the second highest quintile. Pockets of high marginalization dot the City. Wards that appear to have more DAs with concentrations include:

- Scarborough North
- Scarborough-Agincourt
- Don Valley North
- Don Valley West
- Scarborough-Guildwood
- Scarborough Rouge Park



## Marginalization Dimension

Households and Dwellings – this measure relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness. Stable neighbourhoods promote cohesive communities which provide a positive, socially supportive environment that promotes resiliency, mental health and wellbeing.



ILLUSTRATION BY NEW CITY OF TORONTO, CITY GOVERNMENT

## Highest Marginalization

32% (1,200) of Toronto's small neighbourhood areas (DAs) are ranked among the most marginalized across Ontario for this dimension. Another 21% (767) rank in the second highest quintile. Pockets of high marginalization dot the City.

Ward Areas with the highest area-level concentrations include:

- York Centre
- Spadina-Fort York
- University-Rosedale
- Parts of Toronto-St. Paul's
- Parts of Etobicoke-Lakeshore
- Southern section of Etobicoke North





# ACTIONABLE IDEAS BY SDOH

There are many parish social ministries with a pastoral lens across the Toronto region and Catholic Charities funded organizations that are already providing services within each SDOH. Following are some examples of social actions for consideration as well as examples of work being done. Where partnerships are possible, they are encouraged in order to have greater collective impact. The list of agencies supported by Catholic Charities is found following this table.

SDOH	Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options	Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options
<b>Low Income &amp; Food Insecurity</b>	<p>Volunteer within the St. Vincent de Paul program in your parish</p> <p>Within the network of food programs, determine the gaps and develop a food program for marginalized populations</p> <p>Consider being a living wage employer. Paying staff at least \$26.00/hr. (Toronto), \$26.00/hr (Peel Region), \$21.30/hr (Waterloo-Dufferin-Guelph-Wellington), \$26.00/hr (York Region), \$23.05/hr (Simcoe County), \$21.65/hr (Durham)</p> <p>Tap into local food networks, to volunteer in places that address food insecurity</p> <p>Develop a community garden and work with the local network for its distribution</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p> <p>Coordinate outreach speakers to learn about the work on local agencies</p> <p>Partner with local agencies to run parish-based wellness groups for seniors</p> <p>Coordinate a parish effort to fundraise for meal programs, clothing drives, furniture drives, coats for kids, cribs for kids, and Christmas and easter gifts</p>	<p>Support poverty reduction strategies - such as advocating for policies that address income inequality, improve social safety nets, and promote economic opportunities for all residents. For example, the Toronto Food Policy Council, Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy</p> <p>Develop a knowledge base about the work of local agencies and make referrals to meal programs, emergency shelter, mental health (211), counselling, groups, supports offered in other languages</p>



## SDOH

### Education & Employment

## Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

Work with your local Catholic elementary school to:

- Grow community gardens and provide some produce to local food insecurity programs
- Provide a free-tutoring program for students with parishioners/volunteers providing the expertise
- Determine the digital needs of students and create ways to address them (to close the digital gap)
- Provide opportunities for youth and newcomers to gain experience at your workplace

Provide a parish-based binder/bulletin board with job opportunities to encourage parishioners to hire parishioners

As employers, consider ways to provide quality employment

Work with post-secondary schools such as St. Micheal's College to support students living in poverty

Find out what free government employment agencies are in your area and develop a connection to them so that referrals to the agency can be easier

Offer space for education programs such as: parent classes, afterschool programs, and employment clinics

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)

## Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

Continue to advocate for strong, inclusive Catholic education

Work with employment agencies to improve pathways between your organization and employment services

Partner with organization like Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto to advocate against labour exploitation





## SDOH

### Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

### Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

#### Housing & Homelessness

Link with an organization that supports people experiencing homelessness, and learn ways to support their ministry and refer people to them

Consider whether you can have a tenant (such as a post-secondary student) in your home to alleviate the housing challenges

Volunteer with an organization that supports people experiencing homelessness such as the Felix Centre and Good Shepherd Ministries

Find ways to support young people that may be living alone and whose housing may be at-risk

Refer French speakers to Centre d'Accueil Heritage for supports

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)

Form connections with transitional housing services

Participate and/or coordinate educational opportunities for the community such as Symposium on Homelessness

Build a partnership to innovative solutions such as supporting wrap around care for transition housing

Increase your presence at planning tables focused on addressing homelessness and building supportive and affordable housing





## SDOH

### Health, Mental Health & Addiction

## Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

Start or continue to promote meditation and centering prayer

Start or continue a health/walking programs in your parish to promote health & well-being

Start or continue to support Alcoholics Anonymous, Substance Abuse Anonymous programs or other related substance use support groups

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)

Volunteers visiting agency clients and /or help with activities and programming

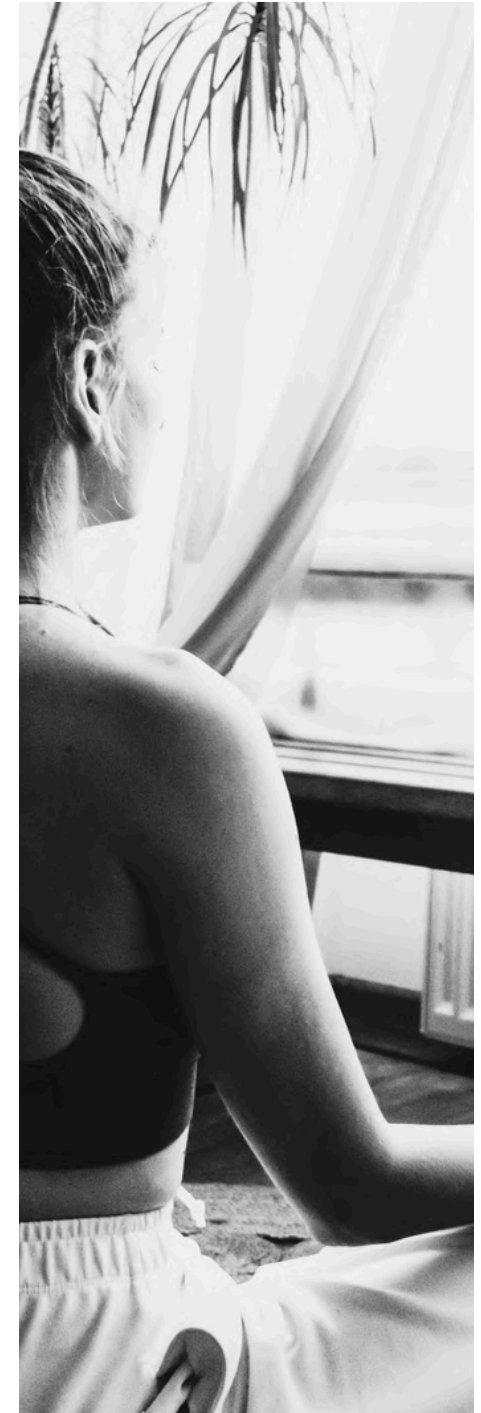
Connect with organizations such as St. Elizabeth Health to learn how to support their work providing end of life care for vulnerable populations

Use parish spaces to offer wellness programs such as exercise classes

Promote activities organized by parishioners, for example, walks/hikes, bike rides, pickle ball

## Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

Consider focusing resources to support the health, mental health, and addiction needs of people (e.g., having counsellors, social workers, parish nurses, training staff on Mental Health First Aid)





SDOH	Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options	Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options
<b>Newcomers &amp; Immigration</b>	<p>Work closely with Office of Refugees Archdiocese of Toronto and other cross cultural service agencies to determine how you/parish can support their work, for example through Refugee Committee work</p> <p>Host conversation circles to increase English language proficiency</p> <p>Partner with agencies such as RCJ Refugee Centre and Becoming Neighbours to host volunteer/ internship mentoring opportunities of newcomers</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p> <p>Support for connecting individuals served by Catholic Charities funded agencies to various newcomer communities</p>	<p>Continue/develop a plan to sponsor refugees as a parish</p> <p>Develop staff skills to better serve newcomers and immigrants</p> <p>Review hiring practices to ensure inclusive hiring practices are used</p>
<b>Community &amp; Belonging</b>	<p>Continue with your volunteer engagement and develop new strategies to reach and involve younger parishioners</p> <p>Find ways to engage youth and seniors toward community belonging and decreasing isolation, for example hosting seniors' and other wellness group on behalf of Catholic Charities funded agencies</p> <p>Organize potluck dinners with speakers to encourage groups (women, seniors, parents, youth) to come out and meet each other</p> <p>Work with organization such as L'Arche Day break to support inclusivity for persons with disabilities</p> <p>Consider the Truth &amp; Reconciliation Commission and ways in which you can incorporate some recommendations in your life</p> <p>Educate your team and community about the issues of human trafficking</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p>	<p>Create policies regarding equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination</p> <p>Consider ways your organization/parish can be involved in the work of anti-human trafficking</p> <p>Develop a plan toward Truth &amp; Reconciliation</p>



## SDOH

### Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options

### Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options

#### Children & Youth

Consider after school programs for children

Enhance your youth ministry programming and connect with the Office of Catholic Youth

Connect with Covenant House to find best ways to support their ministry

Develop an understanding of the issues facing young parents and ways to support them

Fundraise for programs such as Angel foundations for learning

Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies such as Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (see full list below)

Offer use of space for camps, programs, and events hosted by Catholic Charities funded agencies

Promote multigeneration socialization for example "Learn to Crochet" evenings

Youth evening that connects with schools to make blankets for the homeless

Consider a plan to develop daycare programs at the parish

Consider ways to hire a coordinator of youth ministry

Consider ways to serve children and youth in your organization





SDOH	Short Term Doable Action (1-2 years) Options	Long Term Action (3-5 years) Options
<b>Seniors</b>	<p>Social programs for seniors such as knitting clubs, prayer groups, brunches with young adults</p> <p>At-home visiting programs for seniors</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies such as Mary Centre, and Silent Voice (see full list below)</p> <p>Partner with local agencies to run parish-based wellness groups for seniors</p> <p>Refer French speakers to Centre d'Accueil Heritage for supports.</p> <p>1-1 or small group supports for seniors with disabilities</p> <p>Plan weekend away religious pilgrimages for seniors in your community</p>	<p>Develop a plan to build long term care homes</p> <p>Work with others toward joint advocacy to improve seniors care and services</p> <p>Consider ways to serve seniors in your organization</p>
<b>Environment</b>	<p>Create green space for your community such as shared garden spaces for young parent families</p> <p>Consider ways to decrease plastic use</p> <p>Develop carpool programs / Take public transit to church</p> <p>Connect with local Catholic Charities funded agencies (see the list below)</p> <p>Make commitments in your parish such as using fairtrade coffee, non-disposable dishes, less paper products, etc.</p>	<p>Develop an environmental sustainability plan to decrease your environmental foot print</p> <p>Partner with organization like Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto to advocate again climate change and promote environmental justice</p>



# CATHOLIC CHARITIES FUNDED AGENCIES

Organization	Website	Phone number
Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto	<a href="https://torontoccas.org/">https://torontoccas.org/</a>	416-395-1500
Catholic Community Services of York Region	<a href="https://ccsy.org/">https://ccsy.org/</a>	905-770-7040
Catholic Crosscultural Services	<a href="https://www.cathcrosscultural.org/">https://www.cathcrosscultural.org/</a>	416-644-0816
Centre d'Accueil Heritage	<a href="https://www.caheritage.org/">https://www.caheritage.org/</a>	416-365-3350
CFS Counselling & Wellness	<a href="https://cfssc.ca/">https://cfssc.ca/</a>	705-726-2503
CFS Durham County	<a href="https://www.cfsdurham.com/">https://www.cfsdurham.com/</a>	905-725-3513 (Oshawa Office)
CFS Peel-Dufferin	<a href="https://cfspd.com/">https://cfspd.com/</a>	905-450-1608 ext. 112
CFS Toronto	<a href="https://www.cfstoronto.com/">https://www.cfstoronto.com/</a>	416-921-1163 (Central Toronto Office)
Covenant House	<a href="https://covenanthousetoronto.ca/">https://covenanthousetoronto.ca/</a>	416-598-4898
Houses of Providence - Unity Health	<a href="https://unityhealth.to/clinics-services/cardinal-ambrozic-houses-of-providence-long-term-care/">https://unityhealth.to/clinics-services/cardinal-ambrozic-houses-of-providence-long-term-care/</a>	416-285-3742
Journey Home Hospice – Saint Elizabeth Health Care	<a href="https://journeyhomehospice.ca/">https://journeyhomehospice.ca/</a>	647-348-4490
Mary Centre	<a href="https://www.marycentre.com/">https://www.marycentre.com/</a>	416-630-5533 (Toronto/ York Region Office)
Rosalie Hall	<a href="https://www.rosaliehall.com/">https://www.rosaliehall.com/</a>	416-438-6880
Rose of Sharon	<a href="https://roseofsharon.com/">https://roseofsharon.com/</a>	905-853-5514
Society of Sharing	<a href="https://societyofsharing.org/">https://societyofsharing.org/</a>	416-413-0380
Silent Voice	<a href="https://silentvoice.ca/">https://silentvoice.ca/</a>	416-463-1104
St. Bernadette's Family Resource Centre	<a href="http://www.stbernadettesfrc.org/">http://www.stbernadettesfrc.org/</a>	416-654-9810
St. Michael's Homes	<a href="https://www.stmichaelshomes.org/">https://www.stmichaelshomes.org/</a>	416-926-8267
Vita Centre	<a href="https://vitacentre.org/">https://vitacentre.org/</a>	905-502-7933



Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto commissioned the Centre for Organizational Effectiveness to produce environmental scan reports for each of the region of the Archdiocese of Toronto. Anchored by [Catholic Social Teachings](#), which provides the shared understanding of how faith engages with the world, these documents provide a current overview of the people of Toronto.

We invite member agencies, parishes and partners to review the information through an open heart, inviting the Holy Spirit to enter into the journey of discerning how your gifts, and your resources can continue to support the people of Toronto in living life abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

As you likely already know, there are many needs that the people of Toronto experience on a daily basis. Reviewing and understanding the context of these needs can become overwhelming. Where do we begin? What do we focus on? What is our call? Our prayer is that this focused information, inclusive of what others are doing, may provide crucial information in refocusing and prioritizing your social services with a pastoral lens. The world is ever-changing and we are called to respond to its current social needs. Examples of what might be possible within each social determinant of health are provided in the Executive Summary.

We are aware that there is so much good that you, your parish, your region and the Archdiocese are already doing. This gives us hope and energy to forge ahead. The great work of the people of the Archdiocese of Toronto has not yet been capture in this report. In 2024, sessions will be facilitated to review the information in these reports and together add examples of the work the regions are doing.

Pope Francis' often speaks about the social determinant of health: education, employment, environment, working with those that are most marginalized, experiencing

homelessness, refugees and immigrants – his call to solidarity and action is unwavering. It is through this lens that we invite you to prayerfully review the report



## SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH – A COMMUNITY PROFILE

The social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These determinants are key factors influencing health outcomes and health disparities among populations. They include various social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors that can either promote or hinder individuals' health and well-being.<sup>[iii]</sup>

The Archdiocese of Toronto is divided into 4 regions: Central, East, West, and North. For each of these areas the following Social Determinants of Health were considered:

- Low Income and Food Insecurity
- Education and Employment
- Housing and Homelessness
- Health, Mental Health, and Addiction
- Newcomers and Immigration
- Community and Belonging: Civic Engagement, Recreation, Racism, Crime & Violence
- Age: Children and Youth, and Seniors
- Environment

iii. World Health Organization, "Closing the gap"



## EACH COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Toronto Community Profile draws from many different sources to provide readers with an overview of what Toronto looks through the lens of the social determinants of health. The report includes a large amount of information. The goal is not to overwhelm but for readers to feel empowered. To help with this, the document is organized as follows for each social determinants of health area listed above:

1. Community characteristic data from Statistics Canada Census Profile and Public Health Ontario's reporting of the Canadian Community Health Survey.
2. Further contextual understanding based on a summary of community documents reviewed for this project. Sources include Public Health documents, Community Wellbeing resources, United Way, Community Foundations, Municipal government, Social Planning Councils, and Local Immigration Partnerships
3. Reflection questions to discern what is new information, relevant information, and call to action



It is important to note that this report is not exhaustive. It does not include all of what is occurring within each SDOH area. The information is provided to provide context, relevant statistics and examples. It is hoped that this document will be used by member agencies, diocesan ministries, parishes and volunteers to grow awareness and education as well as identify and discern ways to respond to local needs.

Additional information is provided in the Appendix. In the Appendix, there are maps that visualize and explore the geographic distribution of marginalization. Ontario Marginalization (previously Social Determinants of Health) maps are produced by Public Health Ontario using Statistics Canada Census data.

To give an example of how these maps can be used, “the TCDSB Research Department uses ON-Marg to understand the socio-demographics of both school communities and the neighbourhoods in which students are living to support and resources schools equitably. For example, using the material deprivation index, we provide additional funding to schools where the school population is characterized by a high proportion of students living with socioeconomic stress according to the neighbourhoods they live in.”<sup>[iv]</sup>

### Data Limitations

In conducting this Environmental Scan, the data collected had the following data limitations. Statistics Canada data is specific to the Archdiocese boundaries. The Canadian Community Health Survey Data follows the health region boundaries which do not always match the Archdiocese boundaries. The community documents were reviewed to the lowest level of geography possible.

iv. NEW qtd. in Matheson, F. et. al. Ontario Marginalization Index

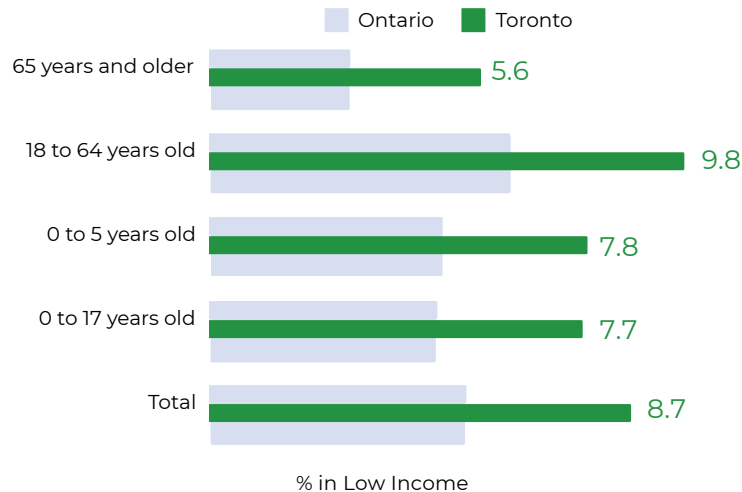


# LOW INCOME AND FOOD INSECURITY

## Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

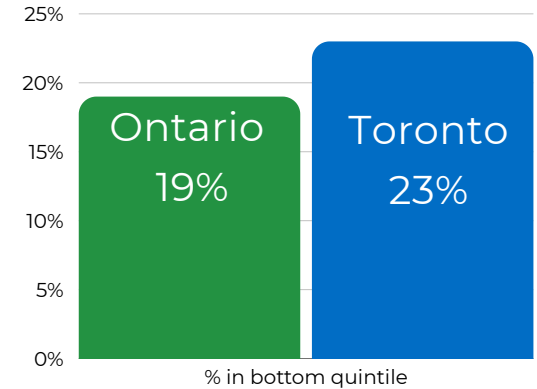
### LOW INCOME

Overall, almost 9% of Torontonians live with low-income (after-tax LICO, 2020). Low-income rates in Toronto are higher than across Ontario.



Almost **one in four** families in Toronto fall in the lowest 20% income group compared to all families across Canada (2020).

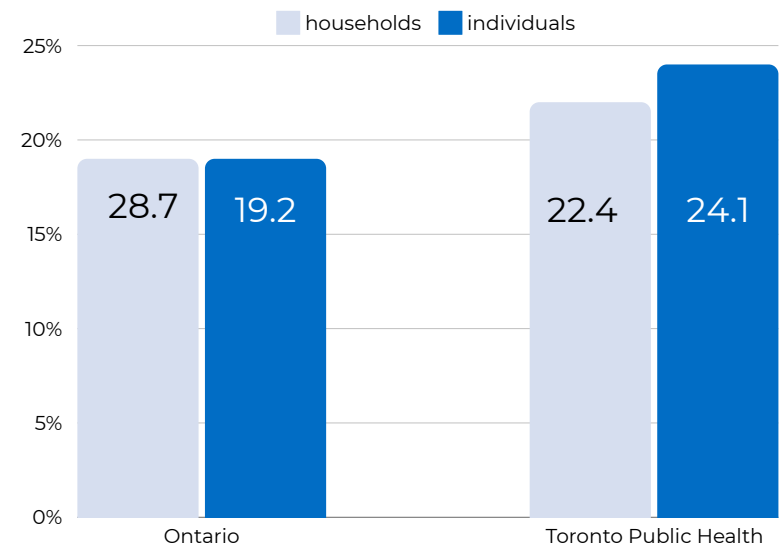
% of families with income in the bottom 20% group



### FOOD INSECURITY

In 2022, 22% of Toronto households and 24% of Toronto individuals were food insecure. These rates are not significantly different from Ontario. Like Ontario, Toronto's household food insecurity increased in 2022 compared to the year before.

% who are food insecure





# Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

## LOW INCOME

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW), benefit rates have remained stagnant for decades, and recipients experience **deeper poverty now than a generation ago.**<sup>[1]</sup>

### 3RD HIGHEST child poverty rate

Toronto has the third-highest child poverty rate among large urban centres in Canada.<sup>[2]</sup>



In Toronto, the average rent for available units has increased by more than 20% in just one year.<sup>[3]</sup>

Respondents to the 2021-2022 *Community Wellbeing* survey said they could **afford basic needs but few could afford unexpected expenses.**<sup>[4]</sup>



1. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city", 1  
2. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city", 1  
3. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city", 1  
4. Foster et al, "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 29  
5. Ontario Living Wage Network, "Rates"

**\$26.00** The 2024 living wage for the Greater Toronto Area is \$26.00 per hour.

### GTA Living Wage

The living wage is the hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their basic expenses and participate in the community.<sup>[5]</sup>





## FOOD INSECURITY

**29%** of residents of Toronto who said their income was not enough also said that they had not been able to afford food at some point in past 12 months.[6]

Food insecurity has been highly associated with pain and opioid use in adults.[7]



Each month, **Toronto's food banks are seeing 12,000 new clients – 6 times more than before the pandemic.**

The high cost of living, insufficient wages, and inflation are contributing to this record growth, putting tremendous pressure on community groups that provide food security programs.[8]



Visits to the Daily Break Food Bank surged by **295%** between June 2019 and June 2023 with 22% of Torontonians in a 2022 poll reporting eating less than they should, due to a lack of funds.[9]

Food insecurity is more common amongst certain groups of people: [10]

**40%** Youth

**36%** Whose disabilities limit their activities

**25%** Racialized Individuals

**37%** Single Parents

**31%** LGBTQ+ Community

Food bank users are more likely to report **no social supports** versus other Torontonians.[11]



**10.6%** In February 2023, food costs were up 10.6% over the previous year.[12]

The Material Resources Marginalization map at the end of this report shows the geographic distribution of factors connected to poverty.

6. Toronto Foundation, "wellbeing"

7. Toronto, "Toronto Drug Strategy", 10

8. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city", 1

9. Ayer, "Toronto Vital Signs", 19

10. Toronto Foundation, "wellbeing"

11. Ayer, "Toronto Vital Signs", 19

12. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city", 1



## LOW INCOME

The pandemic intensified economic struggles, led to skyrocketed food bank usage, and highlighted the link between financial stability and mental wellbeing.<sup>[13]</sup> Financial stress has been growing in Toronto in recent years. The long waitlists for free and low-cost services, such as childcare and social housing, are disheartening.<sup>[14]</sup> Financial health correlates with social trust, civic engagement, and social connections; the growing financial distress risks eroding Toronto's social fabric.<sup>[15]</sup> The increasing costs of living in Toronto have been a significant concern for residents, particularly for those with lower incomes. Because poverty is rooted in our systems and institutions, people with disabilities and those who are Indigenous, racialized, newcomers, immigrants, and seniors experience higher rates of poverty than the overall population.<sup>[16]</sup> Several factors contribute to the rising costs of living in the city:

- **Housing costs and rental market:** Toronto has experienced a housing affordability crisis, with rapidly rising home prices and rental rates outpacing income growth. Limited housing supply, high demand driven by population growth. The rental market in Toronto is highly competitive, with vacancy rates often below the healthy threshold. This imbalance between supply and demand allows landlords to increase rents, making it challenging for low- and moderate-income residents to find affordable rental accommodations.
- **Transportation:** Toronto's transportation costs, including public transit fares and owning a vehicle, can be significant. While public transit is available, fares have been increasing, and the city's expansive layout may necessitate long commutes for some residents, adding to transportation expenses.

- **Utilities, Taxes and Other Living Expenses:** The costs of utilities such as electricity, heating, and water, as well as other basic services like internet and cell phone plans, property taxes, income taxes, and other living expenses such as insurance premiums and entertainment costs also contribute to the overall cost of living in Toronto.

The *Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy* is a concrete 20-year plan that focuses on the quality of jobs and income, food access, housing stability, service access, transit equity and systemic change. Specific to “quality jobs and livable wages”, the Plan recommends improving the quality of and access to income supports, creating employment opportunities for low-income groups with high unemployment rates and improving the quality of jobs. Specific to food access, the Plan recommends increasing access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

<sup>[17]</sup>

To address the challenges posed by the increasing costs of living, policymakers, community organizations, and advocacy groups in Toronto have been working on various initiatives, including:

- Affordable housing programs and initiatives to increase housing supply, such as inclusionary zoning and supportive housing developments.
- Rent control measures to stabilize rental rates and protect tenants from sudden increases.
- Subsidies and financial assistance programs for low-income households, including rent supplements and affordable childcare options.
- Investments in public transit infrastructure and fare subsidies to make transportation more affordable and accessible.
- Food security programs and initiatives to increase access to affordable and nutritious food in underserved communities.
- Advocacy for policies that address income inequality, improve social safety nets, and promote economic opportunities for all residents.

<sup>13</sup>. Ayer, “Toronto Vital Signs”, 19

<sup>14</sup>. Social Planning Toronto, Well Living House, Senior Poverty & Inequity, 3

<sup>15</sup>. Social Planning Toronto, “Livable city”, 1

<sup>16</sup>. Social Planning Toronto, “Livable city”, 1

<sup>17</sup>. City of Toronto, “Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy”



## FOOD INSECURITIES



Toronto, like many urban centers, grapples with issues of low-income populations and food insecurity. Here are some trends and initiatives that were prominent up to that point, though there might be newer developments:

- **Rising Housing Costs:** Toronto has experienced significant increases in housing costs, leading to affordability challenges, particularly for low-income households. This has implications for their ability to afford other basic needs, including food.[18]
- **Food Banks and Community Food Programs:** The city has a network of food banks and community food programs that aid those in need. These organizations play a vital role in addressing immediate food needs but often face challenges in meeting the demand.

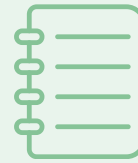
18. Ayer, "Toronto Vital Signs"  
19. Toronto, "Food insecurities"  
20. Toronto, "Food insecurities"

- **Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens:** There has been a growing trend towards urban agriculture and community gardens in Toronto. These initiatives help increase access to fresh produce in low-income neighborhoods and provide opportunities for community engagement and skill-building.
- **Policy Initiatives:** The city government has implemented various policy initiatives aimed at addressing poverty and food insecurity. These include affordable housing programs, minimum wage increases, and initiatives to improve access to nutritious food in underserved areas.[19]
- **COVID-19 Pandemic Impact:** The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated food insecurity in Toronto, as many individuals and families faced job losses and financial hardships. Food banks and other food assistance programs experienced increased demand during this time.[20]

There has been a trend towards greater collaboration between government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and community groups to address food insecurity comprehensively and sustainably. Specific examples of initiatives and programs addressing low-income and food insecurity issues in Toronto:

- **Daily Bread Food Bank:** Daily Bread Food Bank is one of the largest food banks in Toronto, distributing millions of pounds of food each year to individuals and families in need. They also advocate for policy changes to address the root causes of hunger.
- **FoodShare Toronto:** FoodShare Toronto operates various programs aimed at increasing access to healthy food, including community gardens, school food programs, and fresh produce markets in low-income neighbourhoods.
- **The Stop Community Food Centre:** The Stop Community Food Centre runs a wide range of programs, including a drop-in meal program, community kitchens, and a food bank, all aimed at addressing food insecurity while also fostering community engagement and empowerment.





## Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

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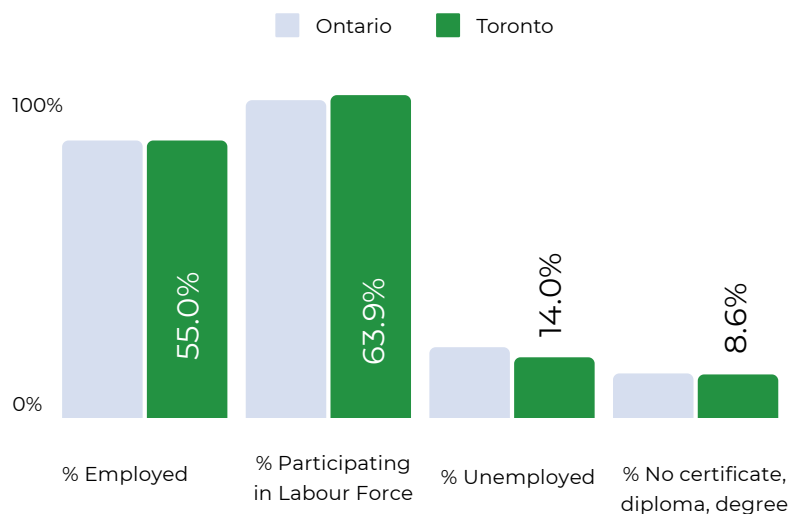
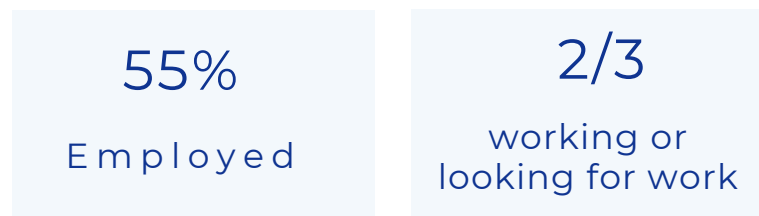
- **Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) Initiatives:** TCHC implements initiatives such as community gardens and food skill workshops in their buildings to promote food security and community building among residents.
- **The Toronto Food Policy Council:** The Toronto Food Policy Council advises the city government on food-related issues and advocates for policies that promote food security, such as supporting urban agriculture and healthy food procurement in public institutions.
- **Good Food Box Programs (through foodshare.net):** Various organizations in Toronto operate Good Food Box programs, where individuals can purchase boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables at affordable prices, making healthy food more accessible to low-income communities.
- **Meal Programs for Vulnerable Populations:** Numerous organizations and shelters in Toronto offer meal programs specifically targeted at vulnerable populations, including homeless individuals, newcomers, and at-risk youth.
- **Mobile Food Markets:** Some organizations operate mobile food markets that travel to different neighborhoods, particularly those with limited access to fresh produce, providing residents with affordable fruits and vegetables.

These examples highlight the diverse range of initiatives and organizations working to address low-income and food insecurity issues in Toronto. They demonstrate the importance of collaborative efforts involving government, non-profit organizations, faith-based communities, businesses, and communities to create lasting solutions.



## Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

In 2021, Toronto's education and labour force statistics were similar to Ontario's. Just over half (55%) of the population age 15 and older was employed, two-thirds (64%) were working or looking for work, and 9% of those in the labour force were unemployed. Almost 9% of the population age 25 to 64 has not obtained a high school certificate, diploma or degree.



Education and employment are factors contributing to two dimensions of marginalization: Age and Labour Force and Material Resources. Maps showing how the patterns of these dimensions of marginalization across the city are provided at the end of this report.

## Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

### EDUCATION



City of Toronto residents have very high levels of education. 72.5% of Toronto residents ages 25-64 have some post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree compared to 64.2% across Canada. [21]

**A higher percentage of women than men aged 25-64 in Toronto have a post secondary certificate or diploma below a Bachelor level (23.7% and 22.4% respectively)[22]**

**8.6%** of Toronto residents aged 25-64 do not have a secondary school certificate, diploma, or degree and a further 19.0% have no higher education credentials beyond high school.[23]

21. Stats Can, "Education", 1  
22. Stats Can, "Education", 1  
23. States Ca, "Education", 1



A higher percentage of men than women aged 25-64 in Toronto have an apprenticeship or trades certificate (4.3% and 2.4% respectively) or an earned doctorate (1.9% and 1.5%).<sup>[24]</sup>



Toronto is home to several prestigious universities and colleges, including the University of Toronto, York University, Ryerson University, and Seneca College.<sup>[25]</sup>



In Toronto Catholic District School Board there are more than **86,000 students** in over **195 Catholic schools** and represent close to 475,000 Catholic school supporters in all of Toronto.

## EMPLOYMENT

33%

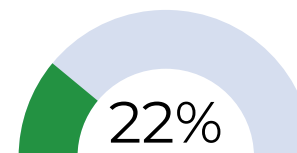
worry their job may be automated in the future.<sup>[26]</sup>



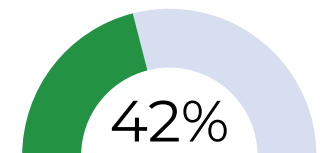
Toronto's economy experienced a partial recovery in 2022, following the record-breaking job losses of 2020 and 2021 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[27]</sup>

In June 2023, Toronto's unemployment rate dropped to 5.7%, employment was up 16% and average hourly wages had risen by 19%, compared to February 2020.<sup>[28]</sup>

Hybrid work arrangements doubled from 14% in 2021 to 28% in 2023, contributing to downtown Toronto offices having only 52% of pre-pandemic occupancy levels by July 2023.<sup>[29]</sup>



OFTEN



OCCASIONALLY

## FEELING EXHAUSTION AND BURN-OUT

More than one in five (22%) of workers in the city of Toronto often feel exhausted or burnt out, with an additional 42% experiencing these feelings occasionally.<sup>[30]</sup>

24. Stats Can, "Education", 1

25. City of Toronto, "Education"

26. Ayer, "Toronto Vital Signs", 15

27. Toronto City Planning, "Toronto Employment Survey 2022", 1

27. Toronto City Planning, "Toronto Employment Survey 2022", 1

28. Ayer, "Toronto Vital Signs", 15

29. Ayer, "Toronto Vital Signs", 15

30. Ayer, "Toronto Vital Signs", 15



## EDUCATION IMPACTS

Education is widely recognized as a crucial social determinant of health, with higher levels of education associated with better health outcomes and overall well-being. In the context of Toronto, various education trends can significantly impact the health of its residents.

- **Educational Disparities:** In Toronto, certain demographic groups, such as black, Indigenous, people of colour, and low-income populations, face barriers to higher education, contributing to health inequities.
- **Access to Quality Education:** Disparities in educational resources impact health outcomes, highlighting the importance of accessible, quality education in Toronto.
- **School-based Health Promotion:** Toronto schools play a vital role in promoting well-being through health education and initiatives.
- **Digital Divide:** The pandemic exacerbated disparities in digital access, affecting e-learning and remote education in Toronto.
- **Equity in Education Policy:** Efforts to promote inclusive schooling environments can positively impact health outcomes.



[31] Browne & Crawford, Equity Action Plan

[32] Toronto, "Healthy Schools"

- **Lifelong Learning:** Adult education programs in Toronto contribute to individuals' socioeconomic status and overall well-being.
- **Education-Employment Link:** Education influences employment opportunities, which in turn affect health and access to other resources in Toronto.

Examples of programs that correspond to key education trends:

- **Access to Early Childhood Education:** Toronto First Duty (TFD) Program - This program provides full-day early learning and childcare services for children aged 0-4 in Toronto. Access to quality early childhood education programs like TFD can enhance cognitive development, social skills, and school readiness, ultimately promoting better health outcomes later in life.
- **Equitable Access to Quality Education:** Toronto Catholic District School Board's (TCDSB) Equity Action Plan - TCDSB has implemented various initiatives under its equity policy to address disparities in educational outcomes among students from diverse backgrounds.<sup>[31]</sup>
- **Community-based Adult Education and Skills training:** Toronto Public Library Adult Literacy - The Toronto Public Library offers adult literacy and basic education programs, including English language classes, computer literacy training, and high school equivalency preparation.
- **Higher Education Opportunities for Marginalized Populations:** Pathways to Education is a national program operating in Toronto that provides academic support, mentoring, and financial assistance to help high school students from low-income communities overcome barriers to post-secondary education.
- **Integration of Health Education into School Curriculum:** Public Health School Health Program - Toronto Public Health collaborates with schools to deliver health education curricula, promote healthy behaviours, and address priority health issues such as nutrition, physical activity, sexual health, and substance use.<sup>[32]</sup>



# EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Several employment trends have been observed in Toronto, reflecting the city's dynamic economy and labor market. Here are some notable employment trends in Toronto:

- **Growth in Knowledge-Based Industries:** Toronto has experienced significant growth in knowledge-based industries such as technology, finance, and professional services. The city has emerged as a leading hub for technology start-ups and innovation, attracting skilled workers and investment in sectors such as software development, artificial intelligence, and financial technology (fintech). The city is home to the largest technology hub in Canada and third largest in North America, with 24,000 companies and 289,000 technology workers.<sup>[33]</sup>
- **Shift towards Remote Work and Flexible Arrangements:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and flexible work arrangements in Toronto. Many employers have embraced telecommuting and hybrid work models, allowing employees to work remotely either part-time or full-time.
- **Demand for Healthcare and Social Assistance Workers:** Toronto's aging population and ongoing healthcare needs have led to a growing demand for healthcare and social assistance workers. This includes healthcare professionals such as nurses, personal support workers, and allied health professionals, as well as social workers, counselors, and community support workers.<sup>[34]</sup>
- **Skills Mismatch and Upskilling Needs:** Despite job growth in certain sectors, there remains a skills mismatch in Toronto's labor market, with employers facing challenges in finding workers with the right skills and qualifications. There is a growing need for upskilling and reskilling programs to address evolving job requirements and equip workers with in-demand skills.<sup>[35]</sup>

33. City of Toronto, "Technology"  
34. Canada, "Address labour demands"  
35. Janmohamed, "Workforce". 1



## Reflections

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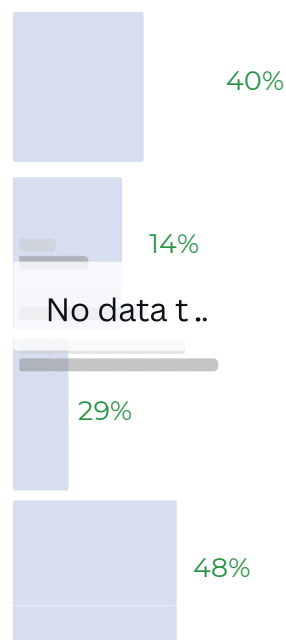
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## Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

### HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

48% of Toronto households rent and 29% of tenants live in core housing need. These rates are higher than across Ontario. Households with core housing need live in an unsuitable (overcrowded), inadequate (in need of major repair) or unaffordable dwelling and cannot afford alternative housing in their community.



% of household

36. NEW: Census Mapper, Empty Bedrooms (Canada Census 2021).

[censusmapper.ca/maps/3516#8/44.657/-77.390](https://censusmapper.ca/maps/3516#8/44.657/-77.390)

37. Toronto, "Youth Equity Strategy", 18

In 2021 just as in 2016, 17% of bedrooms in Toronto were empty. In 2016, this equalled 448,400 bedrooms out of 2.6 million total bedrooms.<sup>[36]</sup>

Housing tenure and household mobility are two SDOH factors contributing to the Households and Dwellings dimension of marginalization. This dimension relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness.

## Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

### HOUSING



Houses in the Toronto cost about 9.5 times the median income, surpassing the threshold of severe unaffordability.<sup>[37]</sup>

17%

of people living in overcrowded conditions, including almost a third of newcomers (32%).



In 2018, there was one formal eviction application for every 20 renter households (5%) and in some neighbourhoods, here was one eviction fling for every five renter households. Areas with the highest number of Black home renters had twice the eviction rates as areas with the lowest number of Black home renters, even after controlling for poverty and other factors.[38]



The **hourly minimum wage would need to rise to \$33.60** — more than double its current level — for a single minimum wage worker to afford an average one-bedroom apartment in Toronto. [39]

## HOMELESSNESS

Rents are expensive and the supply of affordable housing is severely lacking.

80,000

Households waiting for  
Subsidized Housing

More than 80,000  
households wait for  
subsidized housing from  
the City.[40]

38. Toronto, "Youth Equity Strategy", 18  
Toronto, "Youth Equity Strategy"  
40. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city", 1  
41. Toronto, "Toronto Drug Strategy", 41-42

42. Toronto Public Health, "Health profile", 4  
43. Toronto, "Toronto Drug Strategy", 33  
44. Toronto Public Health, "Health profile", 4



Stable housing helps reduce health risks of people using alcohol and/or drugs.[41]

Homelessness continues to be a pressing issue with over 7,300 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in 2021.[42]

Provide more harm reduction in shelters; shelters often fulfill some of the functions that health care and addictions services do for people experiencing homelessness.[43]

9,700

INDIVIDUALS  
ACTIVELY USED  
THE SHELTER  
SYSTEM

As of late 2022, over 9,700 individuals actively used the shelter system in the past three months.[44]





# HOUSING



Toronto's escalating housing crisis not only threatens individual health and wellbeing, but it also erodes the city's social fabric. [45]

## Ontario Strategy

The United Way 2024 report, *Bringing Affordable Housing Home: An Action Plan* for housing stability in Ontario, makes the following recommendations for improving housing across Ontario:

45. Toronto, "Youth Equity Strategy", 18

1. **Land & Assets:** Federal, provincial, and municipal governments make surplus lands and assets available to non-profit and co-operative housing providers to grow deeply affordable and supportive housing options across Ontario.
2. **Investments:** Federal, provincial, and municipal governments increase investment in and improve greater access to financing for the development of affordable and deeply affordable homes across Ontario.
3. **Incentives:** The provincial government, in partnership with municipal governments, provides development incentives that prioritize non-profit housing organizations and establishes flexible programs that maximize the community housing sector's capacity to compete in the housing market effectively.
4. **Preservation:** The provincial government, in partnership with federal and municipal governments, provides consistent and predictable long-term funding to preserve existing deeply affordable housing and supportive housing options offered by the community housing sector.
5. **Supports & Protection:** All levels of government provide housing stabilization and eviction prevention supports and strengthen tenant protections to help renters access and maintain affordable and secure homes.
6. **Indigenous Housing:** The federal and provincial governments address and prioritize persistent housing and homelessness challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples through a dedicated strategy, programs and supports developed and implemented in partnership with Indigenous leaders, diverse Indigenous communities, housing providers, and all levels of government.
7. **Collaboration & Partnerships:** The federal and provincial governments coordinate housing strategies, plans and programs with municipal governments while promoting cross-sector collaboration and resource sharing.



## Housing Programs Toronto

In Toronto, several housing programs aim to address various housing needs and challenges faced by residents, particularly those with low incomes or experiencing homelessness. Here are some key housing programs in Toronto:

- **Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC):** [Toronto Community Housing Corporation](#) is the largest social housing provider in Canada, offering subsidized rental housing options to low and moderate-income individuals and families. It manages over 58,000 units across Toronto, including apartments, townhouses, and single-family homes.
- **Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Housing:** RGI housing provides subsidized rental units where tenants pay rent based on their income, making housing more affordable for low-income households. These units are managed by TCHC and other social housing providers in Toronto.
- **Housing Allowance Programs:** The City of Toronto offers housing allowance programs that provide financial assistance to eligible individuals and families to help them afford rental housing in the private market. These programs include the: [Toronto Rent Bank](#), Housing Stabilization Fund, and Housing Allowance for People with Disabilities.
- **Homelessness Prevention Programs:** The City of Toronto funds various homelessness prevention programs and services, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and supportive housing initiatives.
- **Affordable Housing Development:** In partnership with developers, non-profit organizations, and community agencies, works to increase the supply of affordable housing through the development of new affordable rental units and homeownership opportunities.

- **Housing Support Services:** Funds housing support services that provide assistance to individuals and families at risk of homelessness or experiencing housing instability. These services include housing counseling, eviction prevention, and tenant support programs. For example, [The Homeless Hub - Toronto Housing Programs](#).
- **Housing First Approach:** Housing First is a homelessness intervention model that prioritizes providing immediate access to stable and permanent housing for individuals experiencing homelessness, coupled with wraparound support services such as mental health and addiction treatment, employment assistance, and social support such as those through the [Government of Ontario - Housing Programs and Initiatives](#).
- **Senior Housing Programs:** Housing programs specifically tailored to seniors, including affordable housing options, supportive housing, and programs that promote aging in place and independent living. An example of a seniors program is [WoodGreen Community Services - Housing Programs](#) and [Toronto Seniors Housing Resources](#).



45. Toronto, "Youth Equity Strategy", 18



## HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness remains a significant issue in Toronto, with thousands of individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness each year. According to the latest data from the City of Toronto, there were approximately 8,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in 2021. [46] Factors contributing to homelessness in Toronto include housing affordability challenges, lack of affordable housing options, poverty, unemployment, mental health issues, and systemic barriers. Despite ongoing efforts by the city and community organizations to address homelessness through various initiatives such as emergency shelters, supportive housing programs, and homelessness prevention services, the demand for housing assistance continues to outpace available resources. [47] Efforts to address homelessness require a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach involving government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and community interest holders to provide housing stability and support services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Toronto.



46. Toronto, "Shelter"

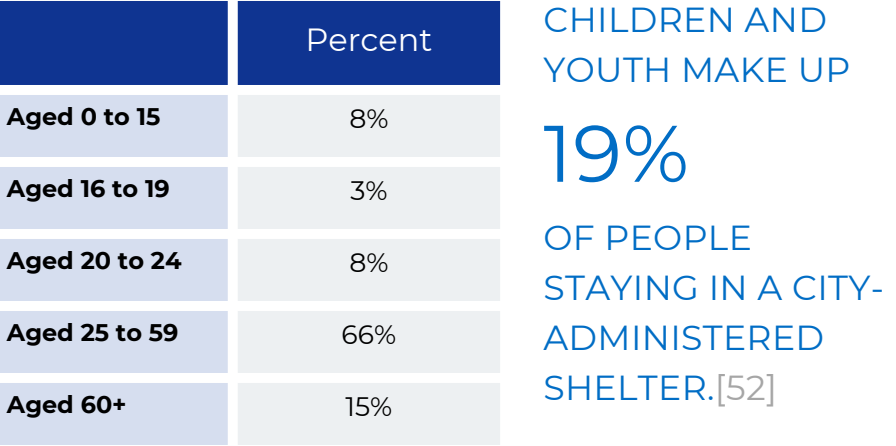
47. Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness

In addition to the examples of housing programs in Toronto, the following are examples of programs that address homelessness in Toronto:

- **City of Toronto - Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (SSHA):** The SSHA division of the City of Toronto oversees homelessness services, including emergency shelters, supportive housing, and homelessness prevention programs.
- **Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH):** Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness is a collective impact organization that works to address homelessness in Toronto through collaboration, advocacy, and community engagement.
- **The Homeless Hub Canada:** The Homeless Hub is a web-based research library and information center that provides resources and data on homelessness in Canada, including Toronto-specific information.
- **Streets to Homes Program:** Streets to Homes Program, operated by the City of Toronto, helps individuals experiencing homelessness transition into stable housing by providing outreach, support services, and housing placement assistance.
- **Homeless Services - Salvation Army Toronto:** The Salvation Army operates various homeless shelters and support programs in Toronto, providing emergency shelter, meals, and support services to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Government of Ontario - Homelessness Prevention Programs:** The Government of Ontario provides funding and support for homelessness prevention programs and initiatives in Toronto and across the province.



In Toronto, up to 2,000 youth are homeless on any given night, representing 11% to 12% of the estimated homeless population of 7,350. [48] Many more are experiencing hidden homelessness.[49] Importantly, 26% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as 2SLGBTQ+[50] and 39% struggle with their mental health.[51]



Most young people who are experiencing homelessness end up on the streets following a family conflict, neglect, or poverty. Young people who have been in foster care are more likely to experience homelessness.[53]

Many have been part of systems that perpetuate their trauma. [54] The shelter system becomes a stopgap for these young people. Youth shelters in Toronto are at 97% occupancy.[55]

Youth who are homeless find themselves disconnected from the necessary supports and systems. The stress of homelessness impacts a young person's ability to concentrate on school, maintain a job and reach their true potential.[56] Experiencing homelessness as a child or youth may be a risk factor for homelessness later in life - almost one-third of people responding to The City of Toronto's 2021 Street Needs Assessment and Point-in-Time count reported their first homeless experience as children/youth.[57]

A few organizations in Toronto offer comprehensive support to address youth homelessness, focusing on areas beyond just providing food and shelter.

- **Covenant House Toronto:** Covenant House Toronto is the largest agency in Canada serving homeless, trafficked, or at-risk youth. It provides a range of services including education, job training, health care, and mental health support. Covenant House emphasizes holistic care with programs designed to help youth achieve independence and stability.
- **Youth Without Shelter (YWS):** YWS offers emergency housing and a suite of programs focused on long-term success, such as employment readiness, life skills development, and education support. They aim to equip youth with the tools needed to transition out of homelessness and into independent living.
- **Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth:** Eva's operates multiple facilities that provide shelter, transitional housing, and health and well-being services. They focus on practical skills, including education and employment programs, to help youth integrate successfully into the community.

These organizations address the broader needs of homeless youth, such as mental health support, education, and job training, which are crucial for their long-term success and stability.

[48] City of Toronto, "2021 Street Needs Assessment Results Report"

[49] Youth Without Shelter, "Youth Homelessness"

[50] City of Toronto, "2021 Street Needs Assessment Results Report"

[51] Youth Without Shelter, "Youth Homelessness"

[52] City of Toronto, "2021 Street Needs Assessment Results Report"

[53] Blair, "Homelessness statistics in Canada"

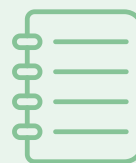
[54] Youth Homelessness in Canada, "Covenant House Toronto"

[55] Youth Without Shelter, "Youth Homelessness"

[56] Youth Without Shelter, "Youth Homelessness"

[57] City of Toronto, "2021 Street Needs Assessment Results Report"





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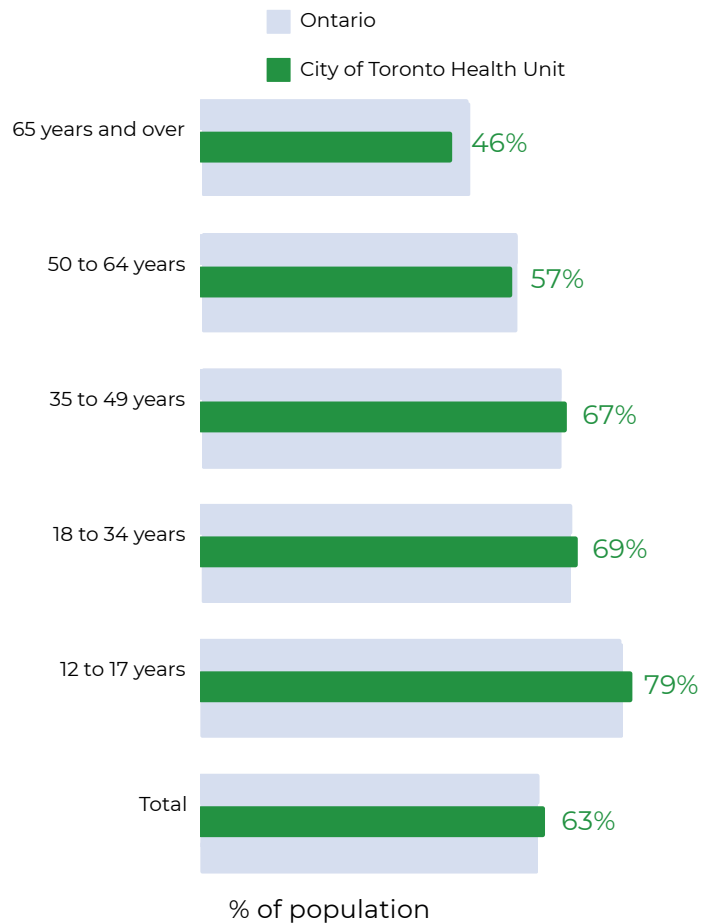
46. Toronto, "Shelter"  
47. Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness



## Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

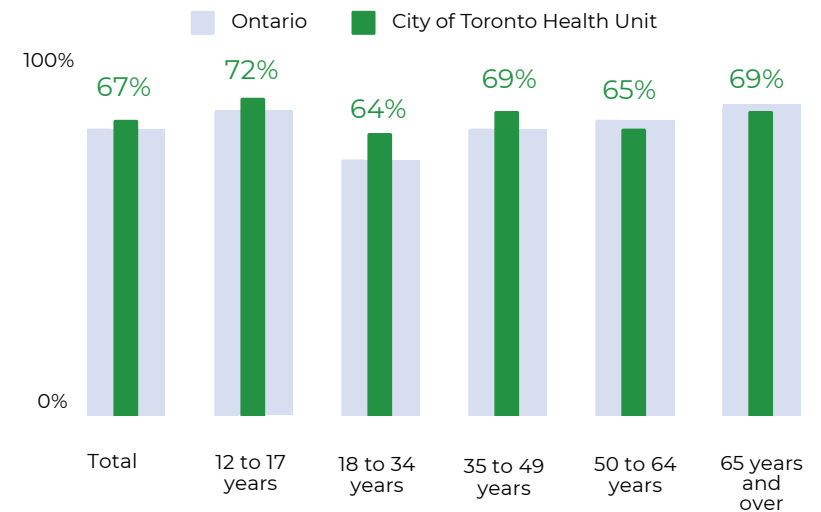
### HEALTH

Overall, 63% of Torontonians age 12 and older report having very good or excellent general health. This is similar to Ontario. Overall feeling of physical health declines with age.

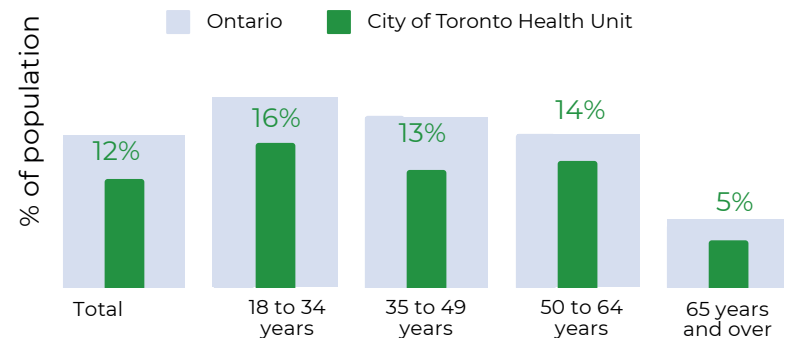


## MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

Overall, 67% of Torontonians report their mental health to be very good or excellent. This is similar to Ontario. More Torontonians age 18 to 34 report having very good or excellent mental health compared to Ontario.



12% of Torontonians report heavy drinking at least once a month. This is lower than across Ontario. Heavy drinking is defined as 5 or more drinks on one occasion at least once a month for males and 4 or more drinks on one occasion for females.





# Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

## HEALTH



Men were more than twice as likely than women to report poor general health<sup>[58]</sup>

Quality of healthcare - perceptions were mixed:

- 12.1%** believe it is excellent
- 21.1%** believe it is very good
- 26.1%** believe it is good
- 22.1%** believe it is fair
- 15.3%** it is poor <sup>[59]</sup>



Cultural safety of healthcare services: Approximately 45.5% stated it is good or very good <sup>[60]</sup>

58. Foster et al., "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 24  
59. Foster et al., "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 24  
60. Foster et al., "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 24  
61. Toronto, "Safe Toronto", 14

62. Toronto, "Our health, our city"  
63. Toronto, "Our health, our city"  
64. Toronto, "Our health, our city", 15-16  
65. Toronto, "Our health, our city", 8

## MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

Neighbourhoods with higher levels of inequities and/or violence are more vulnerable to becoming traumatized.

This can manifest in physical, emotional, and/or psychological harm - resulting in negative impacts on the community's health and well-being <sup>[61]</sup>

It is estimated that 1 in 5 Canadians experience mental health problem or illness every year <sup>[62]</sup>



### 1 in 2

**EXPERIENCE A MENTAL ILLNESS BY THE TIME THEY ARE 40**

Approximately 1 in 2 Canadians will experience a mental illness by the time they are 40, making MH issues the primary cause of disabilities in Canada <sup>[63]</sup>

People with mental illness are overrepresented in the criminal justice system (40% of people living with a mental illness are arrested at least once in their life)<sup>[64]</sup>



Since 2015 there have been close 2,900 deaths due to opioid-related toxicity in the city <sup>[65]</sup>



## HEALTH

In Toronto, public health initiatives play a crucial role in promoting community well-being and addressing various health challenges. The Toronto Public Health department implements programs and services aimed at improving health outcomes and reducing health inequities across the city. According to data from Toronto Public Health, key health priorities in Toronto include chronic disease prevention, infectious disease control, mental health promotion, and health equity initiatives.<sup>[66]</sup> Despite advancements in healthcare and public health infrastructure, challenges such as access to healthcare services, health disparities among marginalized populations, and emerging health threats continue to be areas of focus for health authorities in Toronto. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, healthcare providers, community organizations, and residents are essential to address these challenges and promote the health and well-being of all Toronto residents.<sup>[67]</sup>

## MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

Recent data demonstrates concerning trends in mental health. According to the city of Toronto Our Health, Our City: A Mental Health, Substance Use, Harm Reduction and Treatment Strategy for Toronto, Toronto is facing a drug toxicity crisis, which is intensified by the shortage of affordable housing, poverty, trauma, and other inequities. Mental health and substance use are significant public health concerns in Toronto, affecting individuals of all ages and backgrounds. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), approximately one in five Canadians will experience a mental health or addiction problem in any given year.<sup>[68]</sup> In Toronto, access to mental health services can be challenging due to factors such as stigma, limited resources, and systemic barriers.

Toronto is facing a drug toxicity crisis, which is intensified by the shortage of affordable housing, poverty, trauma, and other inequities.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing mental health challenges, leading to increased demand for mental health support services. Substance use disorders also pose a significant health burden in Toronto, with opioids being a particular concern. The Toronto Overdose Information System reported over 400 opioid-related deaths in Toronto in 2020.<sup>[69]</sup> Efforts to address mental health and substance use in Toronto require a comprehensive approach, including increased access to mental health services, harm reduction initiatives, community support programs, and addressing social determinants of health such as poverty and homelessness.

In Toronto, there are numerous mental health and addiction programs and services available to support individuals and families. These programs aim to provide a range of supports, including counselling, treatment, rehabilitation, and harm reduction initiatives.

66. Toronto Public Health, "Health profile"

67. Toronto Public Health, "Health profile"

68. CAMH, "Mental Illness and Addiction"

69. Toronto, "Overdose Info System"



There following are some key mental health and addiction programs in Toronto:

- **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH):** CAMH is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital, providing a wide range of clinical services, research, education, and advocacy. CAMH offers various programs and services for individuals experiencing mental health and addiction issues, including outpatient clinics, inpatient treatment, day programs, and community-based supports.
- **Toronto Public Health - Mental Health Support Services:** Toronto Public Health offers mental health support services, including counseling, crisis intervention, and referrals to community resources. These services are provided through the Toronto Public Health Mental Health Support Team and are available to residents of Toronto.
- **ConnexOntario - Mental Health and Addiction Helpline:** ConnexOntario operates a 24/7 helpline that provides free, confidential information and referrals to mental health and addiction services in Ontario, including resources available in Toronto. Trained specialists can assist callers in accessing appropriate supports based on their needs.
- **Toronto Withdrawal Management Services:** Toronto Withdrawal Management Services provide safe and supportive environments for individuals undergoing substance withdrawal. These services offer medical monitoring, withdrawal management medications, counseling, and referrals to ongoing addiction treatment and support programs.
- **Toronto Overdose Prevention Sites:** Toronto Public Health operates supervised consumption and overdose prevention sites across the city, providing a safe environment for individuals to consume drugs under medical supervision. These sites also offer harm reduction supplies, naloxone distribution, and referrals to addiction treatment and support services.



## Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

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What are things that you, your parish, your region, your organization are already doing?

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What ideas come to mind and heart, about what might be possible to support people that have these needs?

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# NEWCOMERS AND IMMIGRATION

Newcomers and immigrants play a vital role in Toronto's diverse and dynamic community. As one of the most multicultural cities in the world, Toronto welcomes individuals and families from all over the globe. Newcomers contribute to the city's cultural richness, economic growth, and social fabric, bringing with them a wealth of talent, skills, and experiences.

## Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

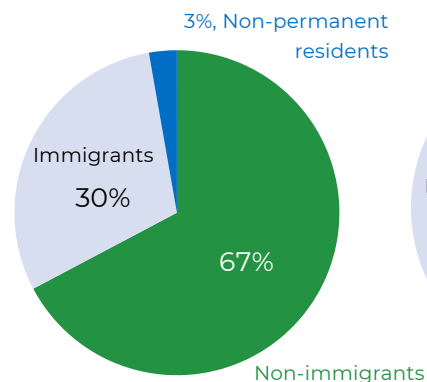
**52%**

OF TORONTO'S  
POPULATION IS  
AN IMMIGRANT  
OR NON-  
PERMANENT  
RESIDENT

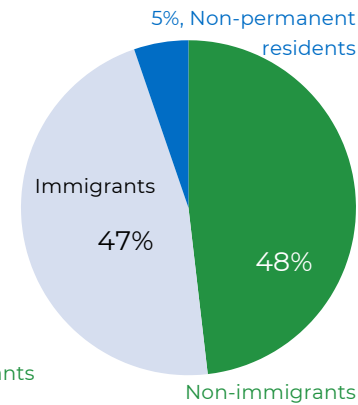
Toronto has more immigrants and non-permanent residents compared to Ontario. Just over half (52%) of Toronto's population is an immigrant or non-permanent resident. This compares to 33% of Ontario's population.



### Ontario

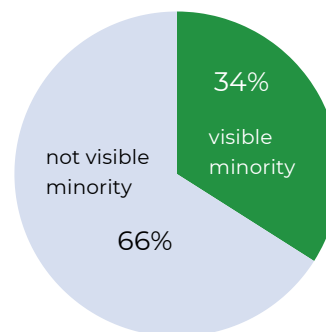


### Toronto

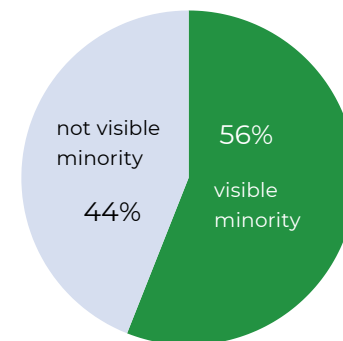


56% of the population living in Toronto self-identifies as a visible minority, more than across Ontario

### Ontario



### Toronto



The Racialized and Newcomer Populations map at the end of this report shows the areas where there are higher and lower concentrations of newcomers and non-white, non-Indigenous populations.



# Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

Resources and information about newcomers and immigration in Toronto is divided into 4 quadrants: North, South, East, and west, each with their own Local Immigration Partnership (LIP). LIPs conduct research to identify potential barriers for newcomers and then work through its partnership to remove them so newcomers can fully participate in the economic, social, cultural, and recreational life of the community.

LIP Quadrant	Strategic Priorities
North	<p><b>TNLIP Strategic Priorities 2021-2025:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Service Coordination:</b> Identify gaps in service provision for newcomers and facilitate linkages between service providers (ex. faith, francophone, senior services, etc.).</li> <li>2. <b>Health &amp; Wellbeing:</b> Support and inform the Toronto North health care system to be holistic, responsive, and attuned to the unique barriers faced by newcomers.</li> <li>3. <b>Employment and Labour Market:</b> Enhance connectedness, responsiveness, equity, and efficacy among agencies, employers, and other interest-holders in Toronto North's newcomer employment service system.<sup>[70]</sup></li> </ol>
South	<p><b>TSLIP Strategic Priorities 2021-2025:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Research and Policy:</b> Shed light on issues impacting newcomers and work towards creating a welcoming community in Toronto by conducting community-based research, augmenting stakeholder voices and tables nationally and locally, addressing systemic racism, strengthening connections with BIPOC communities, centering newcomer voices.</li> <li>2. <b>Support for Newcomer Success:</b> Support newcomer communities during Covid-19 recovery by working closely with members to address service and accessibility gaps in health and mental health, employment, and emerging challenges.</li> <li>3. <b>Strengthening Newcomer Services Sector:</b> Support members to ensure newcomers are able to equitably participate in Canadian Society. This will include supporting new services delivery models, bridging newcomer and indigenous communities, sharing research, professional development opportunities, coordination initiatives.<sup>[71]</sup></li> </ol>

<sup>70.</sup> Toronto North LIP, "Strategy," 5-6  
<sup>71.</sup> Toronto South LIP, "Strategic Plan"



## LIP Quadrant

## Strategic Priorities

### East

#### East Quadrant LIP Strategic priorities 2020-2025:

1. **Access to Information:** Enabling service providers to better understand newcomers' settlement, integration and emerging needs. Facilitate increased access to services by sharing relevant information and using current technology and alternative methods.
2. **Employment:** Contribute to successful newcomer employment pathways by serving as a platform for stakeholders to enhance support for newcomers navigating the labour market.
3. **Inclusion & Equity:** Support service providers, faith-based groups, and other stakeholders in working together to make Scarborough a more welcoming place where newcomers are connected, supported, develop a sense of belonging and actively participate in community and civic life.
4. **Health & Wellness:** Develop an equitable approach to newcomer physical and emotional health of individuals, families & the community. Examine barriers in accessing health services & specific challenges for newcomer groups and increase service provider capacity address them.<sup>[72]</sup>

### West

#### Strategic Priorities 2021 review in Annual Report:

1. **Service Coordination:** To enhance the capacity of agencies to implement effective practices for more coordinated service delivery to newcomers and refugees.
2. **Employment Resource Connections:** To raise awareness of partner services and improve referral processes through online resources and capacity building of front-line staff in the employment sector.
3. **Education Resources:** To increase frontline workers' knowledge of the programs, services, and resources available in Toronto that support newcomer learners' understanding of - and participation in - the Toronto education system.
4. **Women Against Violence:** To promote the message that gender-based violence is everyone's issue to address, and to support local community organizations to enhance their knowledge and build their capacity to address this issue.<sup>[73]</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Toronto East Quadrant LIP, "Newcomer Settlement Strategy"

<sup>73</sup> Toronto West LIP, Annual Report



Toronto South LIP (TSLIP) conducted an environmental scan *Reimagining Funding and Service Delivery for Newcomers: Lessons from the Literature and Stakeholders*, key highlights include:

- Members of the TSLIP identified entrenched inequities in how services are funded and delivered as an underlying cause of barriers to accessing services.
- Access to adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding is a longstanding issue that affects the capacity of agencies to meet client needs and ensure equitable access to services
- Funding conditions and constraints impact the ability of organizations to fully support newcomers to meet their goals and achieve success in Canada.
- Eligibility requirements are a key barrier exacerbating inequitable access to services by excluding non-permanent residents and newcomers with Canadian citizenship in need from accessing federally funded services.
- A focus on quantitative targets disadvantages organizations that work with high-risk and multiple-barriered and marginalized newcomers, such as women-serving-women-led agencies, small organizations, ethno-specific and/or racialized-focused organizations, or other groups.

Recognizing the opportunity for improvement in the current funding and service delivery model, this funding-focused scan brings attention to ways to prioritize community perspectives in the funding process and share decision-making authority.<sup>[74]</sup>

Toronto offers a wide range of resources and services to support immigrants in their settlement and integration process. The following are some key resources available for immigrants in Toronto:

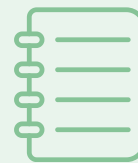
- **Settlement Agencies:** Settlement agencies provide newcomer services such as information and orientation sessions, language assessment and training, employment support, housing assistance, and referrals to community resources.

Some notable settlement agencies in Toronto include:

- [COSTI Immigrant Services](#)
- [WoodGreen Community Services](#)
- [CultureLink](#)
- [Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services](#)
- **Newcomer Information and Referral Services:** Organizations like [211 Toronto](#) and [Findhelp Information Services](#) offer information and referral services to connect newcomers with community resources, social services, and government programs available in Toronto.
- **Employment Services:** Employment Ontario provides newcomer-specific employment services, including job search assistance, resume writing workshops, interview preparation, and skills training programs. Employment agencies such as [ACCES Employment](#) and [JVS Toronto](#) offer specialized employment programs for newcomers.
- **Language Training Programs:** Language training programs are available to help newcomers improve their English or French language skills. Organizations such as the [Centre for Education and Training](#) and the YMCA offer language assessment, language training classes, and conversation circles for newcomers.
- **Healthcare Access:** [Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services](#) and other community health centers offer newcomer-specific healthcare services, including medical care, mental health support, and health education in multiple languages.
- **Legal Assistance and Immigration Services:** Legal clinics, such as the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples and the FCJ Refugee Centre, provide free or low-cost legal assistance and immigration support to newcomers, including refugee claimants and undocumented immigrants.
- **Community Centers and Cultural Organizations:** Community centers and cultural organizations in Toronto offer social and recreational programs, cultural events, and support networks to help newcomers build social connections and integrate into the community.

<sup>74</sup>. Queiser "Reimagining funding", 2-3





## Reflections

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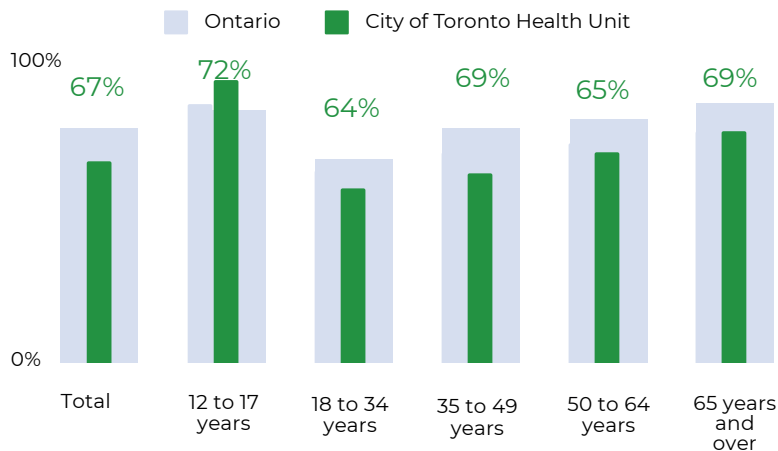
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## SENSE OF BELONGING, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, RECREATION, AND SAFETY

### Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

67% of Toronto's population age 12 and over have a strong or very strong sense of belonging to their local community, lower than across Ontario. This is primarily due to the populations between ages 18 and 49. More of Toronto's youth (12 to 17) report a strong sense of belonging compared to the rest of the population and compared to Ontario's youth.



## Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

### TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Data collected by Well Living House, a Toronto action research centre for Indigenous infants, children, and their families' health and well-being, demonstrates that Indigenous Peoples continue to face challenges in Toronto.

~ 25 %

OF INDIGENOUS ADULTS REPORTED THAT THEY AND OTHERS IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT<sup>[75]</sup>

~ 35 %

OF INDIGENOUS ADULTS IN TORONTO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS OR PRECARIOUS HOUSING<sup>[76]</sup>



Almost 1 in 4 (24%) guardians/parents of Indigenous children in Toronto indicate having concerns about the progress of their child's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and/or social development.<sup>[77]</sup>

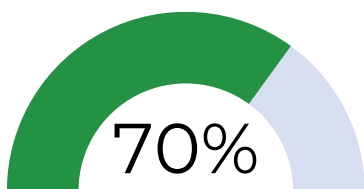
<sup>75</sup> Xavier et al, "Our Health Counts Toronto – Nutrition & Food Security Factsheet"  
<sup>76</sup> Firestone et al, "Our Health Counts Toronto – Housing and Mobility Factsheet"  
<sup>77</sup> Xavier et al, "Our Health Counts Toronto – General Health Factsheet"



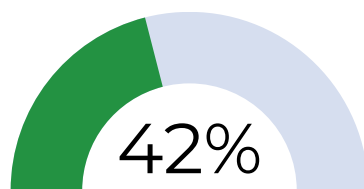


**1 in 10** Indigenous adults in Toronto reported filing a missing persons report with the police for a child or family member<sup>[78]</sup>

1 in 3 in Toronto had a close friend or family member die as a result of violence caused by another person<sup>[79]</sup>



DISSAPEARD



MURDERED

IN URBAN AREA

Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people are the most at risk of violence in urban centres: of known cases 70 percent of women and girls have disappeared in urban areas and 60 per cent were found murdered in an urban area.<sup>[80]</sup>

At this time in Canada, the importance of Truth and Reconciliation work in Toronto cannot be overstated, as it plays a crucial role in acknowledging and addressing the historical and ongoing injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada. The City of Toronto's first *Reconciliation Action Plan 2022 to 2023* <sup>[81]</sup> will guide its actions to advance truth, justice and reconciliation for the next 10 years. It builds on the City's existing commitments to Indigenous Peoples and takes them further through 28 meaningful actions across five themes:

- Actions to restore truth
- Actions to right relations and share power
- Actions for justice
- Actions to make financial reparations
- Actions for the Indigenous Affairs Office

In Toronto, several groups are actively engaged in Truth and Reconciliation work, contributing to healing, understanding, and respect for Indigenous peoples and their histories. These groups encompass various sectors, including education, advocacy, community engagement, and cultural revitalization. Some examples include:

- **Indigenous-Led Organizations:** Indigenous-led organizations such as the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, and the Ontario Native Women's Association are at the forefront of Truth and Reconciliation efforts in the city.
- **Government Agencies and Institutions:** Government agencies and institutions at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels are also involved in Truth and Reconciliation work, implementing initiatives to address the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and to promote Indigenous rights, languages, and cultures.
- **Arts and Cultural Groups:** Arts and cultural groups play a vital role in Truth and Reconciliation efforts by amplifying Indigenous voices, stories, and artistic expressions..

78. Xavier et al, "Our Health Counts Toronto – Missing Persons Factsheet"

79. O'Brien et al "Our Health Counts Toronto – Violence & Abuse Factsheet"

80. Native Women's Association of Canada. "Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Woman and Girls"

81. Toronto, Reconciliation Action Plan



- **Faith-Based Organizations and Educational Institutions:**

Faith-based organizations, including churches and religious groups, are involved in Truth and Reconciliation efforts, acknowledging their roles in colonial histories and seeking to build relationships of respect and solidarity with Indigenous peoples.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board's 2023-2026 Equity Action Plan<sup>[82]</sup> identifies TCDSB's priorities to ensure that that provide equitable opportunities at all levels of the school system. Part A of this action plan focuses on a Commitment to Indigenous Education – Two-Eyed Seeing Strategy or "Etuaptmumk" and outlines four ways that TCDSB will facilitate this:

1. Continue to support Indigenous self-determination and self-identification, and culturally responsive learning for staff and educators through the continued development of Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) learning and resources.
2. Continuing to Build Trust and Relationships.
3. Continued acknowledgment of the Territories and Treaties on which non-Indigenous peoples came as settlers and guests.
4. Continue to honour and celebrate Indigenous Days of Significance.

The action plan outlines a commitment that "as Catholics, we are inspired by Pope Francis' apology, 'I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples.' It is incumbent upon us to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) calls for action. TCDSB's focus is to support teachers and administrators in integrating Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into the classroom (Calls to Action 6-12 and 62-64)."<sup>[83]</sup>

<sup>82</sup>. Browne & Crawford, "Equity Action Plan"

<sup>83</sup>. Browne & Crawford, "Equity Action Plan"

<sup>84</sup>. Foster et al, "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 28-29

<sup>85</sup>. Foster et al, "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 28-29

<sup>86</sup>. Toronto, "Outreach & Engagement"

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement in Toronto encompasses a wide range of activities through which residents participate in shaping their communities and influencing local decision-making processes.

While most respondents reported voting in the last municipal election, **younger and racialized respondents voted at lower rates** <sup>[84]</sup>

The *Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022: A Community-Informed Approach to Characterizing Community Wellbeing* in Ontario looked at multiple communities including Toronto. The results showed that despite widespread dissatisfaction and lack of trust towards local government and community decision-making, community engagement remained robust. Additionally, there was a strong interest and desire for collaboration between decision-makers and community residents. While most respondents reported voting in the last municipal election, younger and racialized respondents voted at lower rates.<sup>[85]</sup>



Although citizen satisfaction with trust and overall satisfaction with government is low, there is still a level of care in local government affairs:

- Public services received more positive opinions than negative ones.
- Younger, male, and racialized respondents were more likely to believe that their community conditions had improved and would continue to improve compared to older, male, and white respondents.
- Participants from Peel and Toronto reported their communities as "desirable."<sup>[86]</sup>



Key civic engagement activities:

- **Community Organizations and Advocacy Groups:** Numerous community organizations and advocacy groups in Toronto provide platforms for residents to engage in civic issues and advocate for social change. These organizations often focus on specific issues such as environmental conservation, social justice, affordable housing, and community development. Examples include Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA), Social Planning Toronto, and Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC).
- **Volunteerism and Community Service:** Volunteer opportunities abound in Toronto, allowing residents to contribute their time and skills to various community initiatives, charitable organizations, and grassroots projects. Volunteerism fosters a sense of belonging and social cohesion while addressing local needs. Examples of volunteer connections in Toronto include: Volunteer Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto, Habitat for Humanity Toronto.
- **Public Consultations and Community Meetings:** The City of Toronto regularly hosts public consultations, town hall meetings, and community forums to gather input from residents on key issues, policies, and development projects. These opportunities enable residents to voice their opinions, provide feedback, and participate in decision-making processes.<sup>[76]</sup>
- **Neighborhood Associations and Residents' Groups:** Neighborhood associations and residents' groups play a crucial role in civic engagement by mobilizing residents around local issues, organizing community events, and advocating for improvements in their neighborhoods. These grassroots organizations empower residents to take collective action and have a voice in local affairs. Examples include: Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA), Parkdale Residents Association, The Annex Residents' Association.

## RECREATION

The top four most frequented civic activities:

Sports and Recreation - **18.1%**  
Community Service - **16.6%**  
Arts, Education, and Hobbies - **10.6%**  
School and Neighbourhood Groups - **10.6%** <sup>[87]</sup>

Residents in Toronto encounter numerous obstacles when attempting to access recreation programs. The City implemented a 4.7% increase in recreation fees this year, exacerbating financial barriers for residents. Additionally, limited program availability persists due to staffing shortages within recreation facilities. Furthermore, the City's plan to replace its complex online registration system has faced significant delays, with full replacement not expected until 2026.<sup>[88]</sup>

Despite the essential role of community spaces such as community centers and green areas as hubs for grassroots activities, programs, and civic engagement, access to these spaces remains unequal across neighborhoods. Disparities in park space per capita highlight the inadequacy of access to public spaces, with some neighborhoods lacking sufficient access to community centers.<sup>[89]</sup>

<sup>87</sup>. Foster et al, "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 28-29

<sup>88</sup>. Social Planning Toronto. How can we create a more liveable city?, 4

<sup>89</sup>. Social Planning Toronto. How can we create a more liveable city?, 4



In Toronto, there are numerous recreation resources available for residents and visitors to enjoy, many of which are low cost or free. Here are some of the top recreation resources in the city:

- **Toronto Parks and Recreation:** Toronto boasts a vast network of parks and green spaces, including iconic destinations like High Park, Trinity Bellwoods Park, and the Toronto Islands.
- **Toronto Community Centers:** The City of Toronto operates a network of community centers across the city, offering a wide range of recreational programs and facilities for people of all ages.
- **Toronto Public Libraries:** Toronto Public Libraries offer much more than just books. Many branches host free recreational activities and workshops for all ages, including storytelling sessions, arts and crafts programs, and educational workshops.
- **Toronto Trails and Bike Paths:** Toronto offers an extensive network of trails and bike paths, including the Martin Goodman Trail along Lake Ontario, the Don Valley Trail, and the Humber River Trail.
- **Toronto Beaches:** Toronto's waterfront boasts several beautiful beaches, including Woodbine Beach, Cherry Beach, and Sunnyside Beach.

There are also notable gaps and challenges in access and provision. Here are some of the gaps in recreational services in Toronto along with relevant sources:



- **Affordability:** The increasing cost of recreational programs and facilities can create barriers for low-income individuals and families, limiting their access to recreational opportunities.<sup>[90]</sup>

90. City of Toronto, "Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan"  
91. City of Toronto, "Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan"

- **Equity and Accessibility:** Not all communities in Toronto have equal access to recreational facilities and programs, leading to disparities in participation rates. Neighborhoods with lower-income populations and marginalized communities may have fewer recreational amenities and face challenges in accessing existing facilities.
- **Program Availability and Space:** Limited program availability and insufficient space in recreational facilities can restrict opportunities for participation, particularly during peak times or in high-demand areas.<sup>[91]</sup>
- **Digital Divide:** The transition to online registration systems for recreational programs may pose challenges for individuals who lack access to digital technologies or internet connectivity, limiting their ability to register for programs and access information.<sup>[92]</sup>
- **Community Engagement and Input:** There may be gaps in community engagement and input in the planning and decision-making processes related to recreational services, leading to mismatches between community needs and the provision of recreational programs and facilities.<sup>[93]</sup>



92. Andry et al., "Mapping Toronto's digital divide"  
93. City of Toronto, "Implementation Strategy for the Parks..."



## SAFETY AND DISCRIMINATION

Pervasive experiences of discrimination among people responding to *The Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022* emphasize the need for antidiscriminatory practices in institutional settings like healthcare and schools. Local planning initiatives should prioritize fostering social connections, particularly for marginalized or minority groups. The impact of COVID-19 underscores the importance of rebuilding community relationships and social/cultural connections. While most respondents reported a somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community, trust in neighbours varied, with 29.8% highly trusting and 36.7% somewhat trusting their neighbours. Despite this, the majority feel safe from personal attacks in their local communities. Discrimination was reported by 54.7% of respondents, with age, race, and sex being the most commonly cited factors.<sup>[94]</sup>

54.7%

REPORTED  
DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination was reported by 54.7% of respondents, with age, race, and sex being the most commonly cited factors.<sup>[95]</sup>

In Toronto, various organizations and initiatives are actively engaged in antidiscrimination work to promote equity, inclusion, and social justice. Here are some examples of antidiscrimination work being done in Toronto along with relevant sources:

- **Toronto Human Rights Office:** [The Toronto Human Rights Office](#) works to advance human rights and address discrimination through education, outreach, and enforcement of human rights laws. The office provides information, resources, and support to individuals who have experienced discrimination and works to prevent discrimination in the community.
- **Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC):** The [OHRC](#) is responsible for enforcing the Ontario Human Rights Code, which prohibits discrimination and harassment in areas such as employment, housing, and services. The commission conducts inquiries, investigations, and public inquiries to address systemic discrimination and promote human rights in Ontario.
- **Community Legal Clinics:** Community legal clinics in Toronto offer free legal services and advocacy to individuals facing discrimination and social injustice. These clinics provide legal representation, advice, and education on human rights issues and work to address systemic barriers to justice. Examples: [Legal Aid Ontario](#), [Community Legal Education Ontario \(CLEO\)](#).
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Initiatives:** Many organizations and institutions in Toronto have implemented EDI initiatives to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and community. These initiatives include training programs, policy development, and cultural competency workshops aimed at addressing discrimination and bias.
- **Community-Based Organizations:** Numerous community-based organizations in Toronto focus on combating discrimination and promoting social justice through advocacy, education, and community organizing. These organizations work with diverse communities to address issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other forms of discrimination. Examples include Black Lives Matter Toronto, Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, LGBTQ+ organizations, and disability rights groups.

94. Foster et al, "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 15-16

95. Foster et al, "Community Wellbeing Survey 2021-2022", 15-16



These examples highlight the diverse range of organizations and initiatives dedicated to antidiscrimination work in Toronto. By working collaboratively and advocating for systemic change, these efforts contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all residents.



## CRIME AND VIOLENCE

*The Toronto Drug Strategy* (2005), suggests supporting neighbourhood-based solutions, addressing drug-related crime in rental housing and reducing drug-related litter as well as exploring alternative community justice measures are ways to approach drug related crime in Toronto. [96]

Collaborative efforts between government agencies, community organizations, law enforcement, and residents play a crucial role in implementing and sustaining these programs for the benefit of all Torontonians. In Toronto, various safety programs and initiatives are implemented to promote community safety and well-being. Here are some notable safety programs in Toronto: Neighbourhood Watch Programs, Community Safety Audits, Youth Outreach Programs, Victim Support Services, Community Policing Initiatives, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Safe Schools Programs.

96. Toronto, "Toronto Drug Strategy", 43-48

In Toronto, several programs and resources are available to address and prevent crime and violence, especially against marginalized, vulnerable populations such as women and children. These initiatives aim to provide support, protection, and advocacy for survivors while working to raise awareness, prevent violence, and hold perpetrators accountable. Here are some key programs and resources in Toronto:

- **Assaulted Women's Helpline:** The Assaulted Women's Helpline provides crisis intervention, support, information, and referrals to women who have experienced abuse or violence. The helpline operates 24/7 and offers services in multiple languages.
- **Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape (TRCC/MWAR):** TRCC/MWAR offers counseling, support groups, advocacy, and public education to survivors of sexual violence. The organization also provides training for professionals and community members on responding to sexual violence.
- **Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic:** The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic offers legal representation, counseling, and interpretation services to women survivors of violence. The clinic specializes in supporting women who have experienced gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.
- **Toronto Police Service - Specialized Units:** The Toronto Police Service has specialized units dedicated to investigating crimes against women and children, including the Sex Crimes Unit, Child & Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC), and Domestic Violence Unit.
- **Family Resource Centers:** Family resource centers in Toronto provide support services, counseling, and parenting programs for families affected by violence and abuse.
- **Legal Aid Ontario:** Legal Aid Ontario provides legal assistance and representation to low-income individuals, who are facing legal issues related to violence or abuse.



- **Shelters and Transitional Housing:** Toronto has numerous shelters and transitional housing programs for women and children fleeing violence. These shelters provide safe accommodations, counseling, support services, and assistance with finding permanent housing.
- **Community Education and Prevention Programs:** Various organizations in Toronto offer community education and prevention programs aimed at raising awareness about violence against women and children, promoting healthy relationships, and providing information on available resources and support services.

These programs and resources play a crucial role in supporting survivors, preventing violence, and creating safer communities for women and children in Toronto. By working collaboratively and addressing the root causes of violence, these initiatives contribute to building a society free from gender-based violence and abuse.



The City's work related to human trafficking falls into the four main categories of the anti-human trafficking lens, where the person being trafficked, or at risk of being trafficked, is put at the centre, and their safety, well-being and human rights are prioritized. The City of Toronto has established comprehensive anti-human trafficking actions focusing on identifying victims, supporting survivors, and preventing trafficking. These include training city staff to recognize trafficking signs, providing access to emergency housing and income support, and offering health services through programs like the [Lotus Health Program](#) at The Hospital for Sick Children.[97]

The [Toronto Police Service's Human Trafficking Enforcement Team](#) plays a crucial role in investigating and arresting traffickers. Community organizations such as [Covenant House Toronto](#) and [Aura Freedom](#) provide critical support services for survivors, including emergency beds, transition housing, and educational outreach to prevent trafficking. Additionally, the [Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking](#) operates a national hotline to assist victims across Canada.[98]

Despite these efforts, human trafficking remains a pressing issue, with over 90% of cases involving domestic trafficking. Several gaps in services persist:

- **Comprehensive Long-term Support:** Long-term housing, continuous mental health support, and employment training are essential for survivors to rebuild their lives but are not sufficiently provided.[99]
- **Access to Mental Health Services:** Survivors often face complex trauma that requires specialized and ongoing psychological support, which is not always readily accessible.
- **Coordination Among Services:** A more integrated approach could improve the effectiveness of interventions and ensure that survivors receive comprehensive care without duplication of services or gaps.[100]

97. Toronto, "End trafficking TO. City of Toronto"

98. Toronto, "End trafficking TO. City of Toronto"

99. City of Toronto, "long term vision plans and strategies/end trafficking"

100. City of Toronto, "long term vision plans and strategies/end trafficking"



- **Awareness and Training:** Enhanced awareness and training programs are necessary to ensure that more individuals and professionals can identify and assist trafficking victims.
- **Legal and Immigration Support:** Survivors may struggle to navigate the complex legal system and secure their rights without sufficient legal aid and advocacy, which can hinder their ability to stay safe and rebuild their life.

Addressing these gaps requires increased funding, better coordination among service providers, and enhanced training and awareness programs. A holistic approach that includes long-term support and specialized services is crucial for effectively supporting trafficking survivors in Toronto.



## Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

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# AGE: CHILDREN AND YOUTH, AND SENIORS

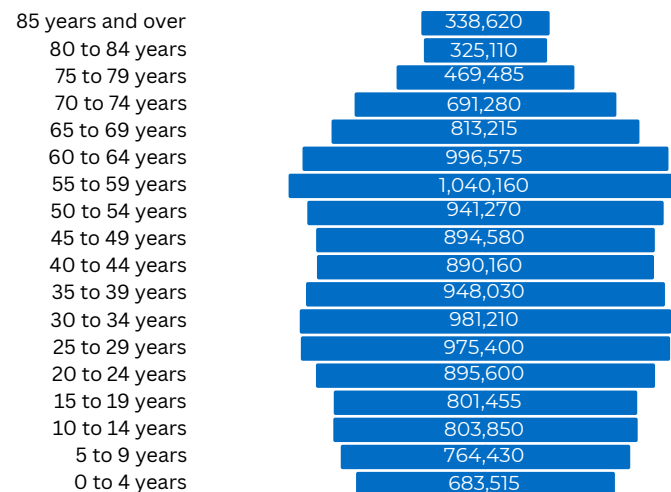
## Community Characteristics: Statistics Canada and Canadian Community Health Survey Data

Age is a significant social determinant of health, influencing an individual's well-being and access to resources across the lifespan. Addressing age as a social determinant of health requires policies and interventions that promote healthy aging, support economic security, combat ageism, and ensure equitable access to healthcare and social services across the lifespan. By addressing the diverse needs of individuals at different stages of life, communities can promote health equity and improve overall population health.

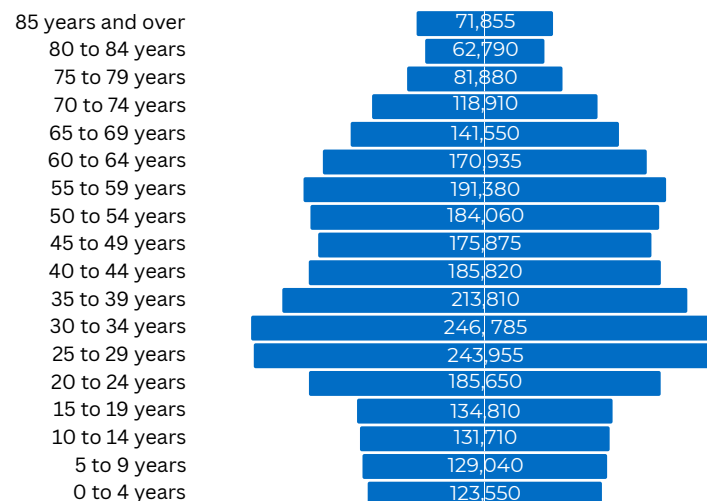
Toronto has fewer children and youth and fewer older adults compared to Ontario.



Across Ontario, **children and youth** make up **22%** of the total population and adults 65 and older make up **19%** of the total population.



In Toronto, **children and youth** make up **19%** of the total population and adults age 65 and older make up **17%** of the total population.

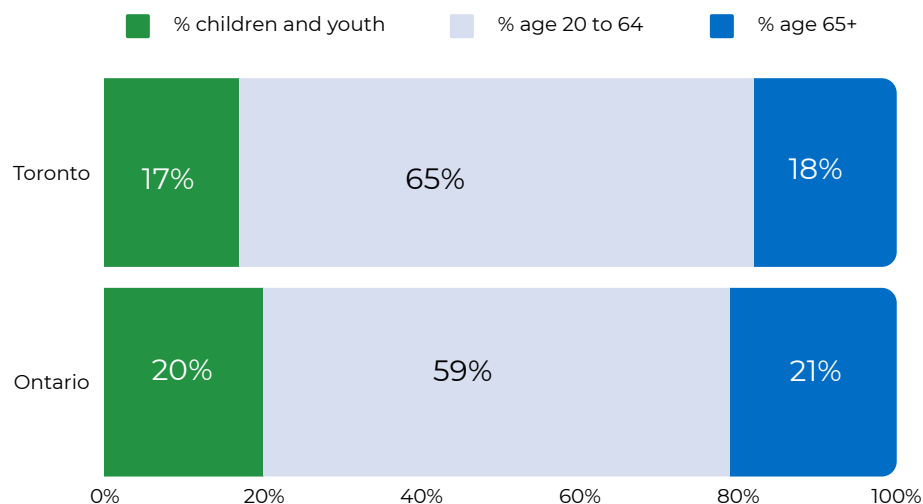




## Population in 10 years

By 2034, older adults will account for more of the population. The proportion age 20 to 64 will decrease.

Children and youth are projected to account for 22% of Ontario's population in 2034 and older adults will have increased to 23%. Toronto will see the same pattern with no change in the proportion that are children and youth while older adults will increase to 20% of the population.<sup>[101]</sup>



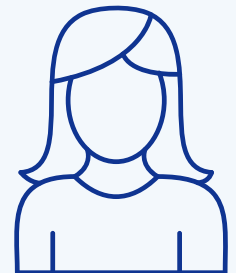
## Community Context: Summary of Community Documents

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH

#### Teen Mental Health struggles up from 2019

In 2021, 38% of teenaged students in Ontario reported fair or poor mental health, up from 27% in 2019.

**Female students in grades 7 to 12** were significantly more likely than their male counterparts to report poor mental health, elevated stress, and serious psychological distress. **The rate of psychiatric emergency department visits for young girls aged 13 to 17 in Ontario increased by 125% between 2009–2017.**<sup>[102]</sup>



#### Loneliness Increasing

Loneliness among secondary students has increased, mirroring a global trend of high school student loneliness that's been escalating even pre-pandemic.<sup>[103]</sup>

101. Ministry of Finance Projections, July 2023)  
102. Toronto, Vital Signs 2021, 12-13  
103. Toronto, Vital Signs 2021, 12





## MORE STUDENTS ARE GOING ON TO POST- SECONDARY EDUCATION

The pandemic has resulted in learning loss, particularly in younger TCDSB students and in mathematics. But graduation rates are higher, and more students are going on to post-secondary education, with the biggest improvements among Black and Indigenous students.<sup>[104]</sup>



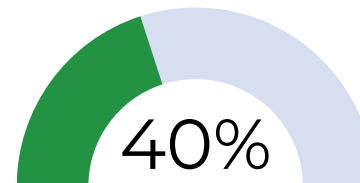
104. Toronto, Vital Signs 2021, 12-13

## SENIORS

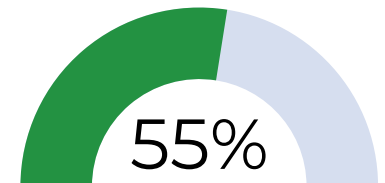
Community documents highlighted that Toronto is seeing a growing population of older adults age 65+, many are living alone and more are participating in the workforce, either working or looking for work. <sup>[105]</sup>

It is estimated that by 2041 there will be around  
1.2 million adults 55 years+ living in Toronto<sup>[106]</sup>

Around 70% of people of age  
80 and older in Toronto  
reported having a disability or  
activity limitation lasting 6  
months or more.



OF 75 OR OLDER DESCRIBED  
THEIR HEALTH AS "FAIR" OR  
"POOR"



OF THOSE UNDER 75 YEARS  
OLD DESCRIBED THEIR  
HEALTH AS "VERY GOOD" OR  
"EXCELLENT" <sup>[107]</sup>

105. Toronto, Vital Signs 2021, 14

106. Toronto, Vital Signs 2021, 8

107. Toronto, Vital Signs 2021, 13



## CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In Toronto, there are several programs dedicated to supporting children and youth in need and providing them with essential resources, care, and opportunities for growth. Here are some notable programs for children in need in Toronto:

- **Toronto Children's Services:** Toronto Children's Services offers a range of programs to support children and families, including childcare subsidies, early learning and childcare programs, and parenting supports.
- **Breakfast Club of Canada:** The Breakfast Club of Canada operates breakfast programs in schools across Toronto and the rest of Canada to ensure that children have access to nutritious meals to start their day. These programs support children from low-income families who may otherwise go hungry or struggle to concentrate in school.
- **Toronto Public Library (TPL):** TPL offers a variety of programs and services for children, including storytime sessions, literacy programs, homework help, and access to books and educational resources.
- **Boys and Girls Clubs of Toronto:** Boys and Girls Clubs provide after-school programs, recreational activities, and youth development programs for children and youth in underserved communities.
- **Toronto Foundation for Student Success (TFSS):** TFSS operates programs to support food security, student nutrition, and emergency assistance for children and families in Toronto schools.
- **Toronto Public Health (TPH):** TPH offers a range of programs and services to promote the health and well-being of children in Toronto, including immunization clinics, parenting workshops, dental health services, and sexual health education. TPH's programs aim to prevent illness, promote healthy behaviors, and address health inequities among children and families.

There are several programs designed to specifically support youth and provide them with resources, opportunities, and assistance to overcome challenges they may face:

- **Youth Outreach Workers Program:** Youth Outreach Workers Program run by various community organizations and youth agencies, this program provides outreach and support to youth facing homelessness, substance abuse, mental health issues, or involvement in gangs or criminal activities. Outreach workers connect with youth on the streets, in shelters, and in community settings to provide guidance, resources, and referrals to services such as housing, counseling, and employment assistance.
- **Youth Employment Services (YES):** YES offers a range of employment programs and services to help youth aged 15 to 30 find and maintain meaningful employment. These programs include job search workshops, resume writing assistance, interview preparation, job placements, and mentorship opportunities. YES also provides support for youth entrepreneurs looking to start their own businesses.
- **Covenant House Toronto:** Covenant House provides shelter, support, and comprehensive services to homeless and at-risk youth aged 16 to 24. In addition to emergency shelter and transitional housing, Covenant House offers counseling, life skills training, education and employment support, healthcare services, and recreational activities to help youth build brighter futures.





- **Native Child and Family Services of Toronto(NCFST):** NCFST provides culturally relevant programs and services to Indigenous children, youth, and families in Toronto. Services include counseling, cultural programs, support for youth in care, and advocacy for Indigenous rights and issues. The organization also operates an emergency shelter for Indigenous youth experiencing homelessness.
- **Leave Out Violence (LOVE) Toronto:** LOVE Toronto engages youth affected by violence, trauma, and social exclusion in creative arts-based programs to promote healing, resilience, and social change. Through workshops, mentorship, and community projects, LOVE empowers youth to express themselves, build positive relationships, and become agents of change in their communities.
- **Youthdale Treatment Centres:** Youthdale offers a range of mental health and addiction services for children and youth, including residential treatment programs, day treatment programs, and outpatient counseling.
- **Toronto Youth Cabinet:** The Toronto Youth Cabinet is the official youth advisory body to the City of Toronto, representing the voices and interests of young people aged 13 to 24. Through advocacy, policy development, and community engagement initiatives, the Youth Cabinet advocates for positive change on issues such as housing, transit, employment, and youth services.



Social isolation among youth in Toronto is a growing concern, with significant impacts on mental and physical health. The Toronto Foundation's 2023 *Vital Signs Report* highlights troubling patterns of social isolation, economic stress, and declining mental health. This isolation not only affects youth but also the broader community fabric, leading to diminished civic engagement and social capital.

Research by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) reveals that between July 2021 and January 2022, rates of anxiety, loneliness, and depression among young Canadians increased significantly.

Specifically, Canadians aged 18 to 39 reported the highest levels of these issues, with 33.5% experiencing anxiety, 29.1% feeling lonely, and 27.7% suffering from depression.<sup>[108]</sup>

Efforts to address social isolation must focus on rebuilding community connections and providing mental health support to mitigate the adverse effects on Toronto's youth.

Healthy Babies Healthy Children is a program designed to help children in Ontario have a healthy start in life. Public Health Units across Ontario complete a Healthy Babies Healthy children (HBHC) Screen with families with newborns. HBHC identifies seven different risk indicators.

Compared to Ontario, Toronto has more infants born to families with the following healthy child development risk factor:

- Families in need of newcomer support – in 2022, almost 5% of infants were born to recent immigrant parent(s) who may have been experiencing social isolation and/or lack social support

108. Toronto Foundation, "Research & Reports on Toronto"



In Toronto, young parents in challenging or unstable living arrangement such as shelters face significant challenges. For instance, organizations like Jessie's Centre and the Toronto network Young Parents No Fixed Address (YPNFA) highlight the struggles faced by young mothers, such as lack of stable housing and inadequate support systems. Jessie's Centre provides comprehensive support including counseling, pre- and post-natal care, and educational assistance, helping young mothers navigate pregnancy and early parenthood while completing their education. Despite these efforts, many young mothers struggle with mental health issues, food insecurity, and the difficulty of finding affordable housing. Programs like Mom's The Word also indicate that many young homeless mothers are survivors of sexual assault or substance users, adding layers of complexity to their needs.<sup>[108]</sup>

Young parents and single mothers often face marginalization, compounded by systemic barriers that hinder their ability to access necessary resources. This includes:

- **Discrimination:** Stigmatization of young parents, particularly those from marginalized communities, can lead to discrimination in accessing services and support.
- **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Complex administrative processes and eligibility requirements can prevent young parents from receiving timely assistance.
- **Resource Gaps:** Many shelters lack the comprehensive resources needed to address the multifaceted needs of young parents, including mental health services, childcare, and educational support.

Effective support for young parents in shelters requires addressing the SDOH that impact their well-being:

- **Education and Training Programs:** Providing accessible education and vocational training to help young parents improve their skills and employability.

- **Comprehensive Healthcare Services:** Ensuring access to comprehensive healthcare, including mental health services and pediatric care.
- **Stable Housing Initiatives:** Developing programs that provide long-term housing solutions to help young parents transition out of shelters.
- **Community Support Networks:** Building strong community support networks to reduce social isolation and provide practical assistance.

By addressing these gaps and focusing on holistic support, programs can better assist young parents in overcoming the challenges they face and achieving greater stability and independence.<sup>[109]</sup>

Supportive Building YOU is an example of a program designed to assist young parents living in shelters. This initiative provides various forms of support, including parenting workshops, life skills training, and access to educational and employment resources. The goal is to empower young parents to achieve independence and provide a stable environment for their children.



108. CTV News, "Toronto Scientist Who Helps Thousands of Vulnerable Moms to be Inspired..."



# SENIORS

Seniors living in Toronto represent a significant and diverse population within the city. Toronto has implemented age-friendly initiatives and policies aimed at promoting the health, well-being, and inclusion of seniors in the city.

These initiatives focus on creating accessible environments, supporting social participation, and addressing age-related barriers to housing, transportation, and healthcare. Service Planning Principles for an Age-Friendly Toronto [110]:

- **Equity:** "Older adults should have equitable access to services and programs"
- **Inclusion:** "The social and physical connectedness of Toronto should be enriched by facilitating older adults' participation in city life"
- **Respect:** "The contribution of older adults to the life and vibrancy of Toronto should be valued and respected"
- **Quality of Life:** "Older adults in Toronto should be supported so that they may enjoy a higher level of health and wellbeing."

Seniors in Toronto have various concerns that impact their quality of life and well-being. Primary Concerns among seniors surveyed for the Toronto Vital Signs Report (2021) included:

- **Health:** MH and isolation, affordable care/ services, preventing disease and health promotion
- **Housing:** Aging at-home, independence, need for more home and community care services, support for long-term care homes
- **Transportation:** Accessibility, Safety and Affordability (cost)
- **Recreation and Community Programs (Libraries):** Affordability (costs of programs), opportunities to socialize, education and classes for older adults
- **Safety and Security:** Elder abuse, Fear of crime, Physical safety

- **Accessibility:** Physical accessibility as well as Language
- **Civic Engagement:** Promoting greater consultation and inclusion in city planning process to avoid the segregation of older adults

Toronto has one of the highest rates of senior poverty among large urban centres in Canada. Indigenous seniors, racialized seniors, immigrants, women, older seniors, and seniors living alone have the highest rates of poverty.[111]

Racialized seniors are more likely to live in poverty compared to non-racialized seniors. [112] Community programs for low-income seniors are scarce. However, seniors' centres across the city offer a range of programs and services tailored to the needs of older adults, including low-income seniors. These centers provide social activities, educational workshops, recreational programs, and access to community resources. Some centers also offer meal programs, transportation services, and assistance with navigating government benefits and subsidies. Examples of community resources for seniors include:

- **Senior's Nutrition Program at North York Seniors Centre:** This program at [North York Seniors Centre](#) provides nutritious meals and social interaction for low-income seniors in North York. It offers subsidized meal options and delivery services for those who are unable to attend in-person.
- **Senior's Legal Clinic at Downtown Legal Services:** [Downtown Legal Services](#) operates a senior's legal clinic that offers free legal advice and representation to low-income seniors in Toronto.
- **Seniors Active Living Centres (SALCs):** SALCs, such as the East York East Toronto Family Resources Organization, offer a variety of programs and services for low-income seniors, including fitness classes, social activities, health workshops, and meal programs.

109. The Local, "Young, pregnant, no fixed address"  
110. Toronto, The Toronto Seniors Strategy, 6

111. Social Planning Toronto, Well Living House, Senior Poverty & Inequity, 3  
112. Social Planning Toronto, Well Living House, Senior Poverty & Inequity, 3



- **Housing Help Centre at WoodGreen Community Services:** WoodGreen Community Services operates a Housing Help Centre that assists low-income seniors in finding affordable housing options, navigating rental assistance programs, and accessing housing subsidies in Toronto.
- **Seniors' Ride Program at Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities:** This program provides transportation assistance to low-income seniors in Scarborough, helping them access medical appointments, grocery stores, and community services.
- **Seniors' Peer Support Group at LOFT Community Services:** LOFT Community Services offers a peer support group for low-income seniors dealing with mental health challenges. The group provides a safe and supportive environment for seniors to connect, share experiences, and receive emotional support.
- **Senior's Financial Literacy Workshops at COSTI Immigrant Services:** COSTI Immigrant Services offers financial literacy workshops specifically tailored to low-income seniors, providing information and resources to help them manage their finances effectively and plan for retirement.

Continued investment in these programs and services is essential to ensure that all seniors have access to the support they need to age with dignity and security.

Studies indicate that loneliness in older adults can be as detrimental to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, leading to increased risks of depression, anxiety, cardiovascular diseases, and even premature mortality. Various factors contribute to this isolation, including major life changes such as retirement, widowhood, and health issues that limit mobility and social interaction.<sup>[113]</sup>

In Toronto, social isolation among seniors is a significant concern, with about 30% of Canadian seniors at risk of becoming socially isolated.

Contributing factors include living alone, compromised health status, lack of transportation, low income, and critical life transitions such as retirement or the death of a spouse. Statistics Canada reports that 19% to 24% of Canadians over age 65 feel isolated and wish for more social participation.<sup>[114]</sup>

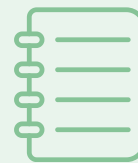
Programs in Toronto aimed at addressing senior social isolation include initiatives by the city and various organizations. Examples are the Seniors Active Living Centres which offer recreational and social activities, and the Friendly Visiting Program by agencies like Dixon Hall, where volunteers visit isolated seniors to provide companionship and support. Another notable initiative is the Circle of Care program, providing transportation services to help seniors attend medical appointments and social activities.



113. Bond, "New report highlighting impact of social isolation on aging Canadian population."

Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2020, June 17). Social isolation and mortality among Canadian seniors. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2020003/article/00003-eng.htm>





## Reflections

What about this information is really speaking to you?

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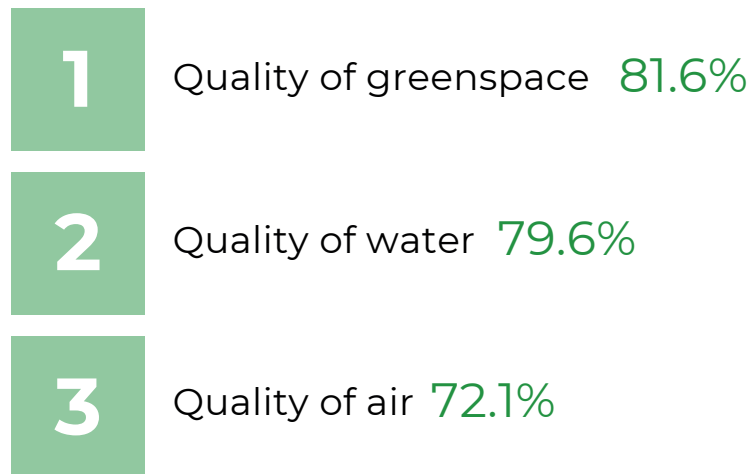
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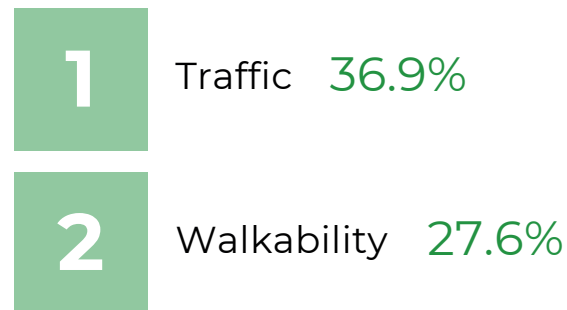
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Toronto Vital Signs survey measured the quality of and satisfaction with the environment of respondents in Toronto: highest levels of **satisfaction** were observed amongst 3 environmental indicators:



Among respondents there was most **dissatisfaction** with<sup>[97]</sup>:



TORONTO BOASTS MORE THAN  
**1,500 PARKS** AND A **28% TREE  
CANOPY**



More than half of Toronto's carbon emissions come from heating and cooling buildings

30% of carbon emissions come from transportation — mostly from personal vehicles burning gasoline<sup>[98]</sup>

**43%**

OF RESIDENTS,  
PRIMARILY IN LOWER-  
INCOME AND  
RACIALIZED AREAS,  
GRAPPLE WITH  
SCARCE GREENERY

Most residents (92%) can walk to parks, but park usage varies across the city, due to the functionality, facilities and programming offered in these spaces.

<sup>97</sup>. Toronto, Vital Signs 2021, 28

<sup>98</sup>. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city"



In 2019 the City of Toronto declared a climate emergency, but it will take time and money to swap out both high-carbon emitters with low-carbon technologies like heat pumps, electric vehicles, good transit, and safe biking options.<sup>[99]</sup>



The COVID-19 pandemic saw residents of multi-residential buildings producing more garbage. In one-year, single family households in Toronto throw away over 500 million pieces of single-use items. Almost half of Torontonians live in apartment buildings, where there are generally fewer options for recycling and organic waste.<sup>[100]</sup>

Cycling's popularity surged due to enhanced infrastructure, but suburban areas are still lagging. Bike Share Toronto trips notably jumped from 2.5 million in 2019 to 4.5 million in 2022.<sup>[101]</sup>



Although improvements have been made in Toronto's natural and built environment, climate change remains a significant and escalating health concern. Positive strides, such as reducing lead in drinking water and enhancing the swimmability of beaches, have been achieved. Additionally, there has been an increase in tree canopy cover. However, the city faces heightened health risks due to climate change, manifested in rising temperatures and a surge

in extreme weather occurrences. These changes pose threats to property and infrastructure and can worsen chronic health conditions through increased heat exposure and deteriorating air quality. Furthermore, climate change can facilitate the spread of climate-sensitive infectious diseases, compounding health challenges for Torontonians.<sup>[102]</sup>

In Toronto, there are several environmental programs aimed at promoting sustainability, reducing pollution, and protecting natural resources. These programs address various aspects of environmental conservation and sustainability. Here are some examples:

- **Live Green Toronto:** Live Green Toronto is a city-wide initiative that promotes sustainable living practices among residents, businesses, and communities. The program offers grants, incentives, and resources to support initiatives such as energy efficiency retrofits, waste reduction, active transportation, and green space enhancement.
- **City of Toronto's Climate Change Action Plan:** The City of Toronto has developed a comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan and net 0 strategy aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience to climate impacts. The plan includes initiatives such as energy conservation and renewable energy projects, green infrastructure development, and climate adaptation strategies.
- **Toronto Green Standard (TGS):** TGS is a set of sustainable building requirements and guidelines established by the City of Toronto to promote environmentally friendly development practices. The standard encourages the construction of energy-efficient buildings, green roofs, stormwater management systems, and other sustainable features.

99. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city"

100. Social Planning Toronto, "Livable city"

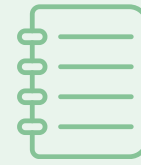
101. Toronto, Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, 14

Toronto Public Health. Toronto's Population Health Profile





- **Tree Planting and Urban Forestry Initiatives:** The City of Toronto operates tree planting and urban forestry programs to increase tree canopy cover, enhance biodiversity, and improve air quality. These initiatives involve planting trees in parks, streets, and other public spaces, as well as providing education and outreach on the importance of urban trees.
- **Water Conservation and Watershed Protection:** Toronto Water implements programs to conserve water resources and protect the city's watersheds. These programs include water efficiency initiatives, stormwater management projects, and pollution prevention measures to safeguard rivers, lakes, and groundwater sources.
- **Community Environmental Groups:** Numerous community-based organizations and environmental groups in Toronto run programs and initiatives to address local environmental issues, such as waste reduction, green transportation, urban agriculture, and wildlife conservation. These groups often collaborate with the city government and other interest-holders to implement grassroots environmental projects.



## Reflections

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# PATTERNS OF MARGINALIZATION

Public Health Ontario produces [maps](#) visualizing four dimensions of marginalization based on social determinants of health factors. This section of the report provides background on the different dimensions, lists the SDOH factors incorporated in each dimension and shows the patterns of marginalization across Toronto for each dimension. The maps are images produced from the Ontario Marginalization Index tool.

Dimensions of marginalization include:

- **Material Resources:** closely related to poverty
- **Racialized and Newcomer Populations:** areas with high concentrations may experience discrimination and xenophobia
- **Age and Labour Force:** these are areas with high concentration of people without income from employment due to age, disability and/or not participating in the labour force
- **Households and Dwellings:** relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness

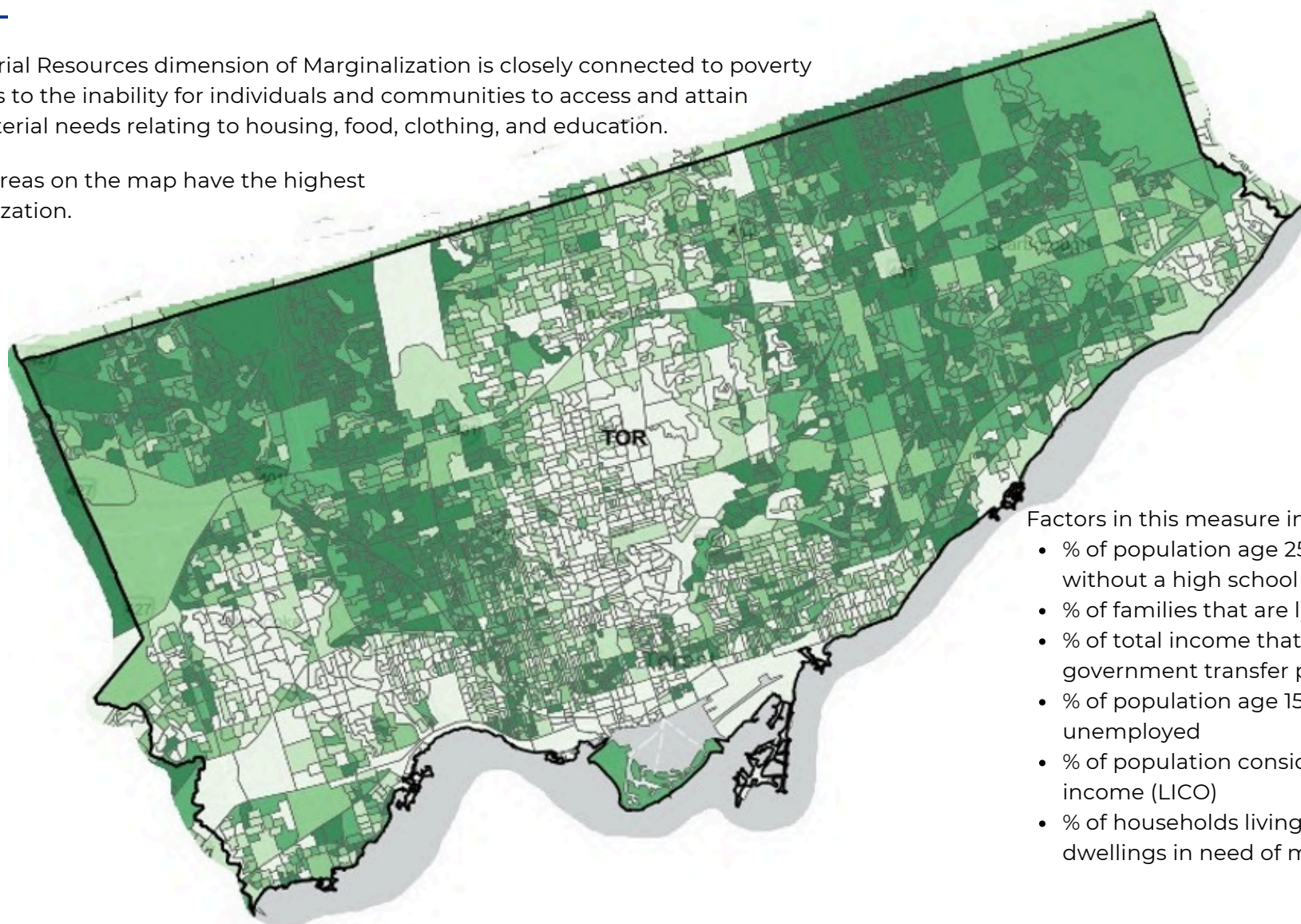




# Material Resources

The Material Resources dimension of Marginalization is closely connected to poverty and refers to the inability for individuals and communities to access and attain basic material needs relating to housing, food, clothing, and education.

Darkest areas on the map have the highest marginalization.



Factors in this measure include:

- % of population age 25 to 64 without a high school diploma
- % of families that are lone parent
- % of total income that is from government transfer payments
- % of population age 15+ who are unemployed
- % of population considered low-income (LICO)
- % of households living in dwellings in need of major repair

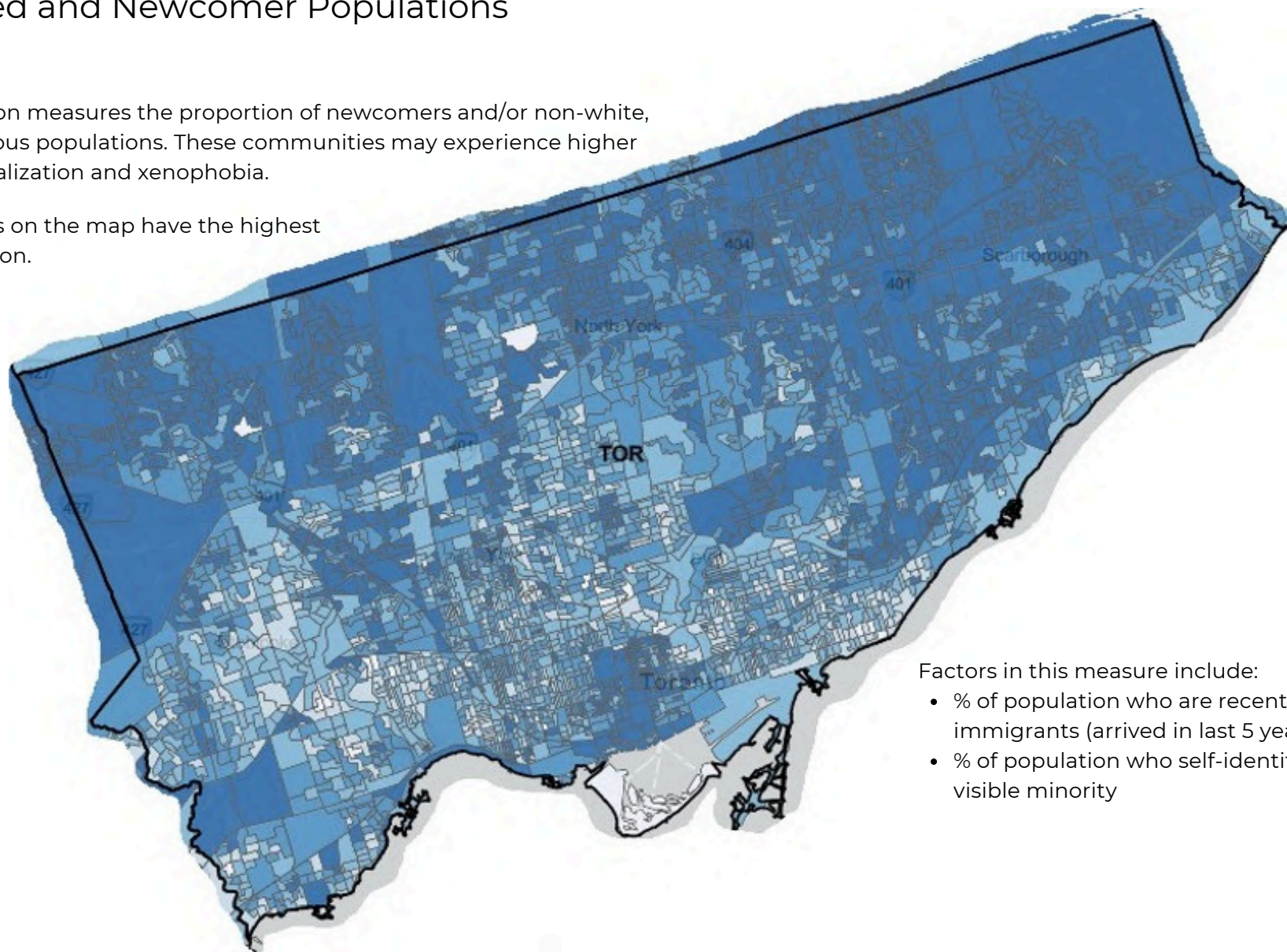
26% of Toronto neighbourhoods (986) are ranked as the most marginalized across Ontario for this dimension. Another 837 neighbourhoods rank in the second highest marginalization quintile. Most marginalized areas are largely found to the east and west of the central area and occur more frequently as you move north away from Lake Ontario. On the west, there is a narrow band of neighbourhoods with high marginalization whereas high marginalization is more widespread on the east.



## Racialized and Newcomer Populations

This dimension measures the proportion of newcomers and/or non-white, non-Indigenous populations. These communities may experience higher levels of racialization and xenophobia.

Darkest areas on the map have the highest marginalization.



Factors in this measure include:

- % of population who are recent immigrants (arrived in last 5 years)
- % of population who self-identify as a visible minority

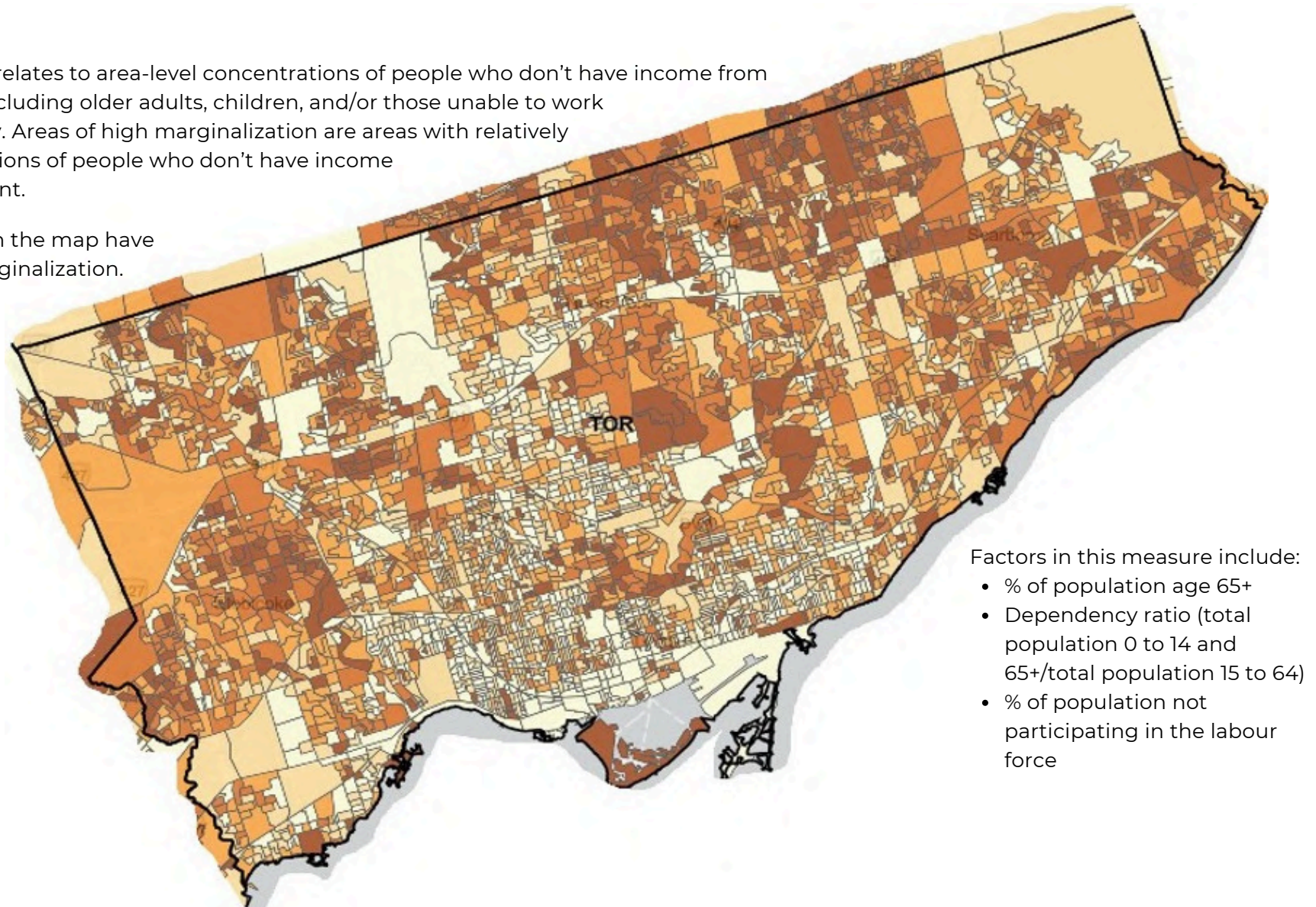
40% of Toronto neighbourhoods (1,500) are ranked as the most marginalized across Ontario for this dimension. Another 1,100 neighbourhoods rank in the second highest marginalization quintile. Areas of highest marginalization with respect to this dimension are largely found to the east and to the north of the city. Smaller pockets of high concentrations of racialized and newcomer residents are found on the west side of the city.



## Age and Labour Force

This dimension relates to area-level concentrations of people who don't have income from employment, including older adults, children, and/or those unable to work due to disability. Areas of high marginalization are areas with relatively high concentrations of people who don't have income from employment.

Darkest areas on the map have the highest marginalization.



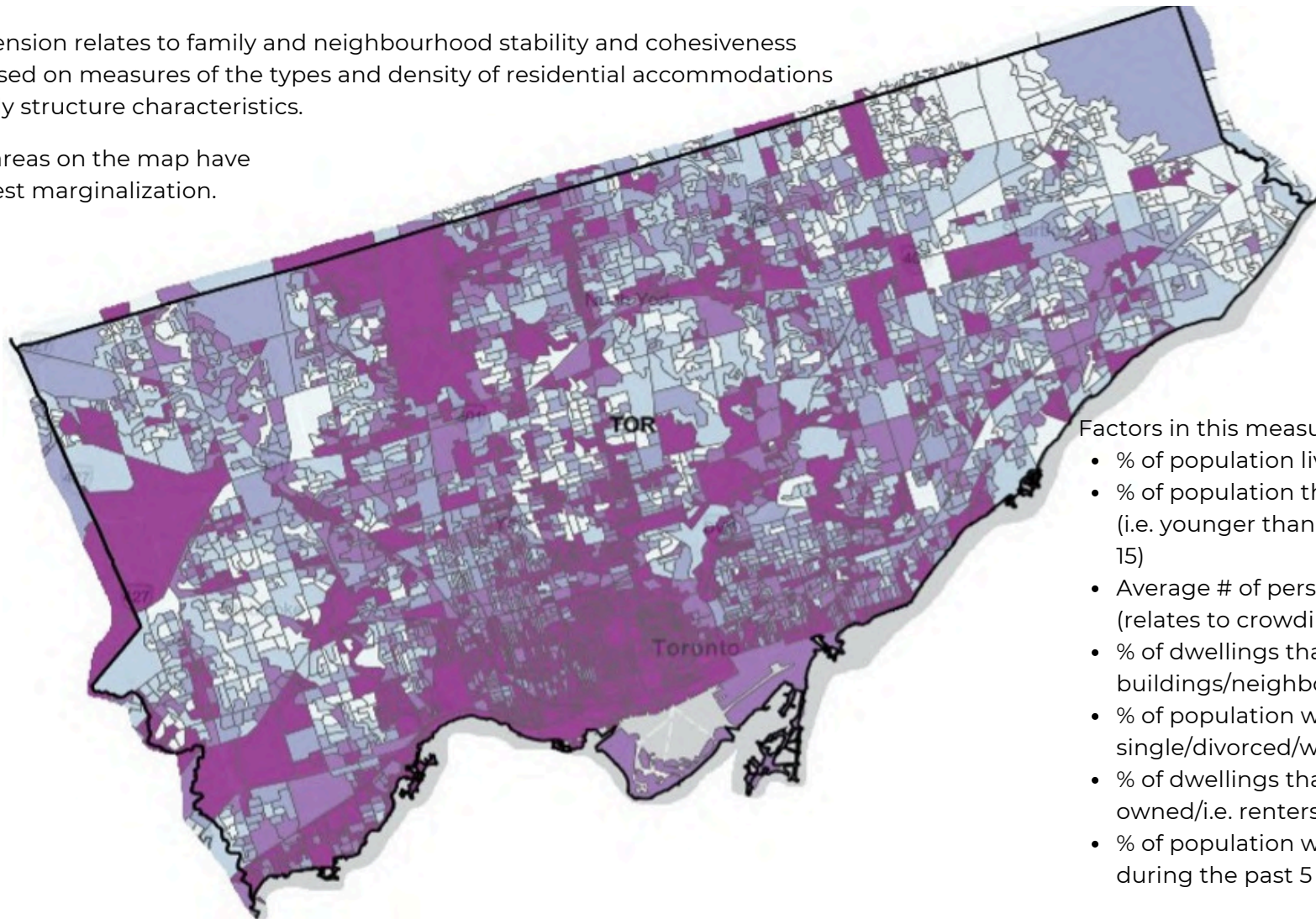
13% of Toronto neighbourhoods (496) are ranked as the most marginalized across Ontario for this dimension. Another 709 neighbourhoods rank in the second highest marginalization quintile. Overall, this indicates that most neighbourhoods in Toronto have higher concentrations of people with income from employment (i.e. lower marginalization). Areas that have higher proportions of people without income from employment are scattered throughout the city with larger pockets found in the north to northeast boundary, southeast corner and south/southwest side.



# Households and Dwellings

This dimension relates to family and neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness and is based on measures of the types and density of residential accommodations and family structure characteristics.

Darkest areas on the map have the highest marginalization.



Factors in this measure include:

- % of population living alone
- % of population that are not youth (i.e. younger than 5 and older than 15)
- Average # of persons per dwelling (relates to crowding)
- % of dwellings that are apartment buildings/neighbourhood density
- % of population who are single/divorced/widowed
- % of dwellings that are not owned/i.e. renters
- % of population who moved during the past 5 years (mobility)

32% of Toronto neighbourhoods (1,200) are ranked as the most marginalized across Ontario for this dimension. Another 767 neighbourhoods rank in the second highest marginalization quintile. Areas of high marginalization with respect to this dimension are largely found on the southwest side of the city with pockets scattered throughout the city.

These neighbourhoods may have less neighbourhood stability and cohesiveness, which could impact sense of belonging.



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