

Snapshots: Health Equity

Frequently asked questions

What is Snapshots?

Snapshots is a reporting tool that shows uninterpreted measures of health status at the provincial, public health unit (PHU), and Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) level in Ontario.

The Health Equity Snapshots describe differences in health across different levels of socioeconomic status. Specifically, rates of health status are calculated across five levels of marginalization for each of the four dimensions of the Ontario Marginalization Index (ON-Marg). The differences in rates across quintiles are then quantified using six summary measures of socioeconomic inequality.

What do these results mean?

Two different types of results are reported in the Health Equity Snapshots:

1. Rates of health status for each quintile of marginalization.
2. Summary measures of inequality that describe the differences in health across quintiles.

The quintile-specific rates often show a gradient effect, where there is a steady increase in poor health status as the level of marginalization increases. The summary measures of inequality quantify this gradient, where higher summary measure values indicate higher levels of health inequities.

What is the Ontario Marginalization Index?

The Ontario Marginalization Index (ON-Marg) uses data from 2001, 2006 and 2011 to illustrate levels of marginalization across the province. ON-Marg focuses on four dimensions that contribute to the process of marginalization:

- residential instability
- material deprivation
- dependency
- ethnic concentration

ON-Marg is an Ontario-specific cut of the Canadian Marginalization Index (CAN-Marg), which was developed in 2006 by researchers at the Centre for Urban Health Solutions (CUHS) at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and McMaster University in Hamilton. The 2011 version of ON-Marg was created through a collaboration between CUHS and Public Health Ontario.

How were the four dimensions of marginalization created? How were the indicators that make up the dimensions selected?

The dimensions that make up ON-Marg are the result of a data-driven method of analysis called 'factor analysis'. Initially, 42 different census variables based on past and present theoretical perspectives on inequality and marginalization in Canada were selected for consideration. The 'factor analysis' reduced the number of variables from 42 to 18, and categorized these variables into four dimensions of marginalization. Names for these dimensions were created to reflect the characteristics of the variables that make up each dimension.

What do the dimensions of ON-Marg represent?

Residential instability

This refers to area-level concentrations of people who experience high rates of family or housing instability. The indicators included in this dimension measure the types and density of residential accommodations, as well as certain family structure characteristics. Residential instability is important as it related to neighborhood quality, cohesiveness and supports.

Material deprivation

This measure is closely connected to poverty and it refers to inability for individuals and communities to access and attain basic material needs. The indicators included in this dimension measure income, quality of housing, educational attainment and family structure characteristics.

Dependency

This refers to area-level concentrations of people who don't have income from employment. It includes seniors, children and adults whose work may not be compensated. Adults included under this measure may be taking care of households, taking care of people in the community and/or unable to work due to disability.

Ethnic concentration

This refers to high area-level concentrations of recent immigrants *and* people belonging to a 'visible minority' group (defined by Statistics Canada as "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour").

Statistics Canada Aboriginal status indicators did not load on any of the factors during initial factor analysis. Research on immigration in Ontario shows that newcomers to Canada often have better overall health outcomes, a phenomenon commonly known as the “healthy immigrant effect.” At the same time, research is clear that both structural racism and anti-immigrant discrimination have profound impacts on individual, community and population health.

More on Ethnic concentration

'Ethnic concentration' was the label that was given to a group of two indicators that emerged as relevant to area-level marginalization: proportion of recent immigrants and proportion of people identifying as 'visible minorities'. Areas that score highly on this dimension may contain a high proportion of recent immigrants, or people (who may or may not be recent immigrants) identifying as 'visible minorities', or both. Generally speaking, this dimension is measuring populations who may experience marginalization related to racism and discrimination.

ON-Marg was created to measure marginalized populations, and not necessarily to understand how health varies across population groups. By using broadly defined indicators of ethnicity and immigration status, it is possible that certain sub-groups are combined in a way that may distort their association with health status. For example, association between ethnicity and a given health outcome might be different for people of Chinese or Black ethnicity, or for recent immigrants from wealthy or developing countries.

Is this a useful measure?

The 'ethnic concentration' dimension can provide useful insight into differences in health status related to immigration and ethnicity measured at the area-level. Further investigation may be required to more completely understand the complex relationship between immigration, ethnicity and population health.

Our aim is to ensure that we are providing the best available data, syntheses and evidence to ensure we contribute to the important work done in public health to advance health equity across Ontario. We are committed to exploring ways to communicate this work that do not stigmatize the populations that are the most marginalized.

Where can I look for more information?

More information on the Ontario Marginalization Index, including how it was created and where to download, can be found [here](#).

More information on the summary measures of inequality used in the Health Equity Snapshots can be found [here](#).

Technical details on the methodology used for the health equity analysis, and technical details on the health status indicators can be found by clicking on the “View technical notes” button on each Snapshot.

For any other questions or feedback, please email analytics@oahpp.ca

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