

South Riverdale & St. James Town Community Needs Assessment Report



**Centre for Community
Learning & Development**
Strong Communities Together

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Executive Summary

Current study is an integral part of the Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP) organized by Centre for Community Learning and Development (CCL&D). The questionnaire was prepared by a team of professionals in CCL&D. It aims to conduct community needs assessment through a series of surveys that were carried out in certain neighborhoods in Toronto including South Riverdale and St. James Town.

This report is an outcome of the analysis of the data collected from the survey conducted in December 2012 to the end of January 2013 and various other information sources on community development sector in South Riverdale and St. James Town in Toronto. The survey questionnaire was designed based on the Canadian Index of Well-being, consisting of the domains including Community vitality, Democratic engagement, Education, Environment, Healthy populations, Leisure & culture, Living standards and Time use.

Acknowledgement

This Community Resource and Needs Assessment for St. James Town and South Riverdale have been conducted by Laura Li, trainee of the Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP) of Centre for Community Learning and Development (CCL&D).

I would like to acknowledge all staff and all trainee women in IWIP who design this questionnaires survey.

Especially, Alfred Jean-Baptiste, Executive Director of CCL&D who contribute dramatically through the whole process. I greatly appreciate his dedication to the study.

I would like to thank Nancy Fan, who is one of the trainees in IWIP, for her passion and effort to collect the surveys data and impatient input online. Also, Jie Yu and Sherry Sui gave me encouragement and useful suggestions on the report writing.

I would like to thank Sureya who distributed the hard copies and book marks of the survey.

In particular, I want to thank Glynis Tabor, my mentor from University of Toronto, who contribute her precious time to give me detailed edit on the report.

In the end, I also want to thank all respondents to the series of surveys during the interview process for their cooperation which make this report possible.

Introduction

About CCL&D

The Centre for Community Learning & Development (CCL&D), formerly known as East End Literacy, was founded in 1979 as a community-based literacy organization serving downtown east Toronto. In 2006, the organization changed its name to reflect its growing initiatives and on-going commitment to community development and social inclusion.

Today, CCL&D delivers programs in adult literacy (academic upgrading), leadership development, immigrant integration, civic engagement, as well as skills development and volunteerism for youth. We equip individuals with tools for individual growth and empower them to promote positive change in their community.

The vision of Strong Communities Together is accomplished through programs designed for creating a strong culture of community engagement through capacity building, progressive learning and innovative training. (From TCCL&D website)

Introduction to the neighborhoods

St. James Town:



St. James Town has the densest population in Canada with around 17,000 residents living in the 19 high rise apartment buildings and surrounding low rises that were mostly built in the 1960s. It is comprised of mostly immigrants and visible minorities with 40% of residents not speaking English or French in the home. Tagalog (Filipino) followed by Chinese and Tamil are the 3 most non English or French speaking languages spoken in homes of residents.

South Riverdale:



As one of the city's most popular neighborhoods, Riverdale features older single and semi-detached family homes sitting on quiet tree-lined streets. In the southern part of Riverdale sits the small enclave of "South Riverdale".

The community is comprised of a number of even smaller neighborhoods and sits between the Don Valley Parkway to the west, Greenwood Avenue to the east, Gerrard Street East to the north and the Lakeshore on the south.

Living in South Riverdale definitely has its advantages. Greenwood Park and easy access to Riverdale Park as well as Cherry Beach and the Leslie Street Spit along Lake Ontario provide great recreational options for people of all ages. The TTC streetcars service the area – north and south along Broadview Avenue and east and west along Queen and King Streets.

There is a great mix of small locally owned shops complimented by some larger, well known stores. Starbucks has even discovered this pocket and are opening a location at the corner of Gerrard and Jones. Cafes, bars and restaurants offer a wide culinary experience at different price points.

Methodology

Survey for the Community Needs Assessment was conducted in South Riverdale and St. James Town from December, 2012 to the end of January, 2013. The questionnaires were available online and through hard copies. Copies of the survey were distributed to the residents of South Riverdale and St. James Town in different places such as the Toronto Public Library, Community Health Centers, LINC classes, Community Centres, after school programs and door-to-door visit to the residents, stores and service agencies. During the survey we interviewed with different key informants regarding the concern on Community Well-being which is also included in this report.

What is wellbeing?

The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture.

Why Canada needs the CIW?

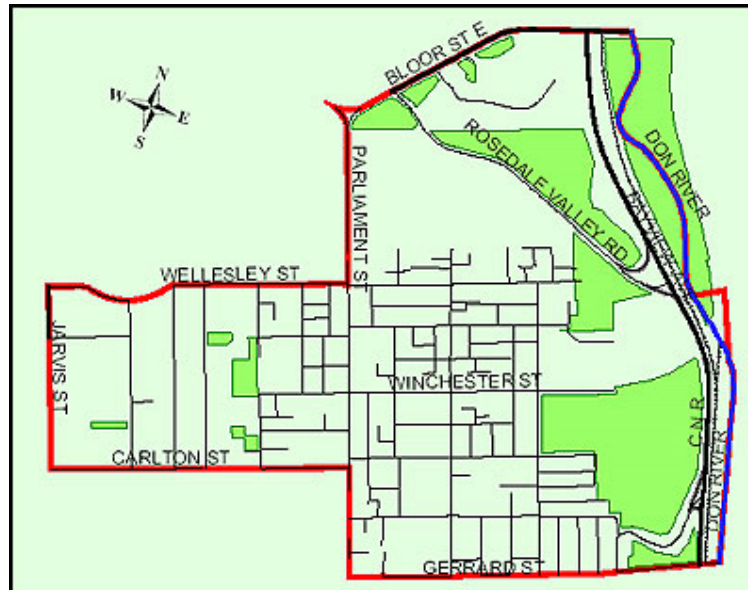
The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) will fill a large gap in the Canadian dialogue about public policy making. It will help build a dialogue that goes beyond what the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as a purely economic measure, can tell us about our wellbeing. The CIW adopts a completely different paradigm. It distinguishes between activities that are beneficial and those that are harmful to our overall wellbeing. It treats beneficial activities as assets and harmful ones as deficits – providing a more accurate accounting of the wellbeing of Canadians. Under the CIW paradigm, "less is often (though not always) better" – less crime, less pollution, less tobacco, and living longer and better all drive the CIW upwards. There are 8 indicators to measure the wellbeing in Canada, which are as follows:

- Community vitality
- Democratic engagement
- Education
- Environment
- Healthy populations
- Leisure & culture
- Living standards
- Time use

Neighborhoods Profiles

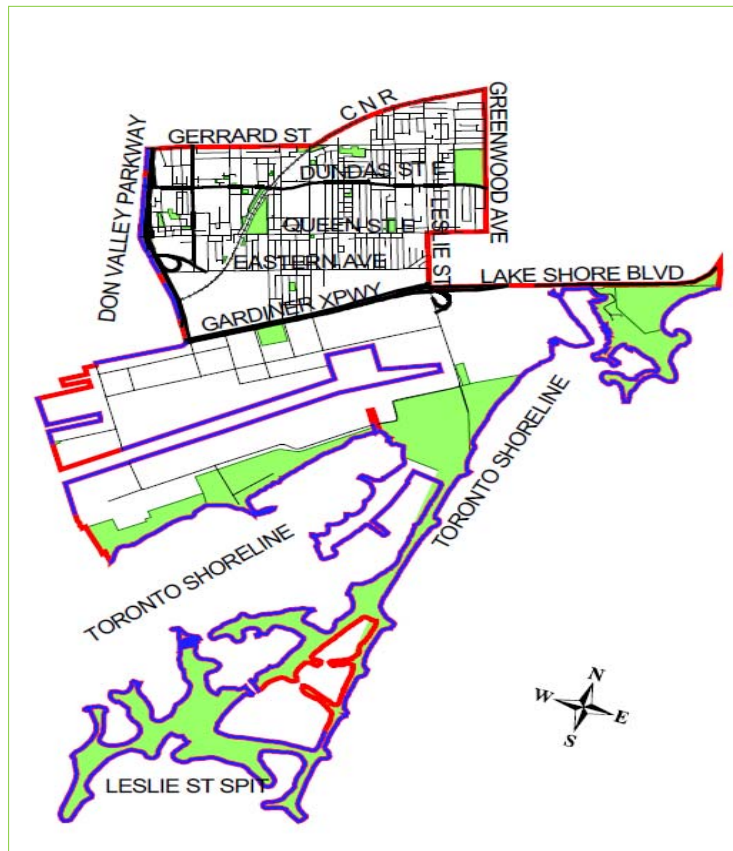
Geography and Demographics

Map of St James Town:



St. James Town is a neighborhood in downtown Toronto in the most north eastern part of the downtown core. It is bordered by Bloor Street East to the north, Wellesley Street to the south, Jarvis Street to the west and Parliament Street to the east. St. James Town is the largest high-rise community in Canada.

Map of South Riverdale:



South Riverdale is a downtown community in the eastern section of Toronto. It is bounded on the west by the Don River Valley, the east by Greenwood Avenue, the north by Gerrard St. east, and by Lake Ontario on the south. South Riverdale has a large low-income population and many recent immigrants and is a very diverse community in terms of ethnicity and social class.

Social History

St. James Town:

In the 1870's, St. James Town was popular for Toronto home buyers as a desirable upper middle class neighborhood. It was filled with Victorian Houses and remained popular until into 1900's. A turning point for St. James Town occurred in 1953 when the City of Toronto announced major zoning amendment for the downtown core.

It consists of 19 high-rise buildings. These massive residential towers were built in the 1960s. Approximately 17,000 people live in the neighborhoods' 19 apartment towers, making it Canada's most densely populated community and one of the most densely populated neighborhoods anywhere in North America. When constructed in the 1960's, the purpose of these residential buildings were oriented towards bachelors and young couple with no other dependents living at the residence. When the high-rise apartment buildings first replaced the Victorian houses, it was against the law for children to live in St. James Town. Perhaps, this

explains why city planners did not originally see the need for children's resources such as parks, playgrounds and local daycare centers. Due to the lack of facilities, St. James Town was not attractive enough for the middle class people so mostly new immigrants started living in the community.

South Riverdale:

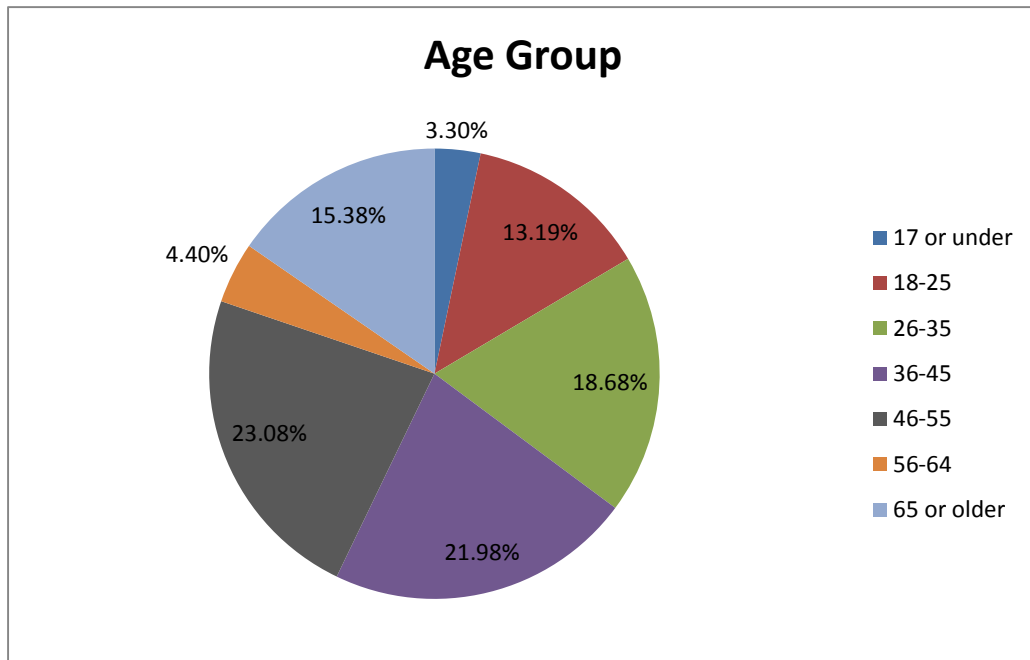
From the early part of this century until the 1960's South Riverdale had a strong industrial economy. Today much of the heavy industry has closed or moved except industries in the Port Industrial Area.

More recently, film studios have moved into the area along with related industries like catering. However, unemployment has been increasing. Environmentally, there have been many challenges. Within Toronto, South Riverdale has the largest concentration of pollution sources from industry, traffic, and waste disposal. Many citizen groups have been formed and work for better air, water, and soil quality.

Data analysis

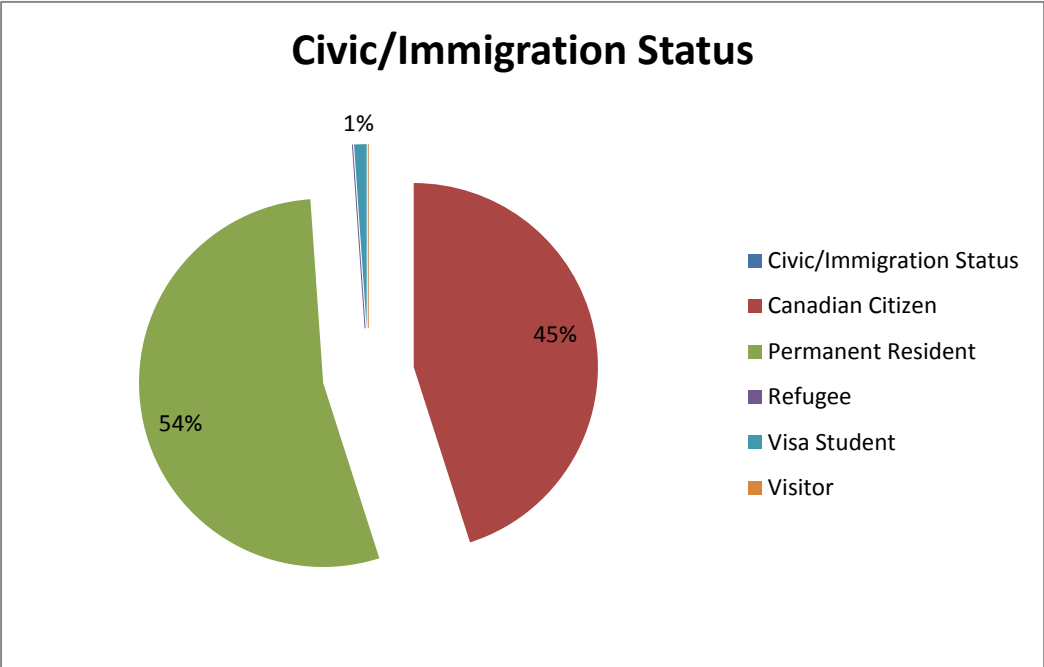
1. Demographic Analysis

1.1 Participants by Age Group



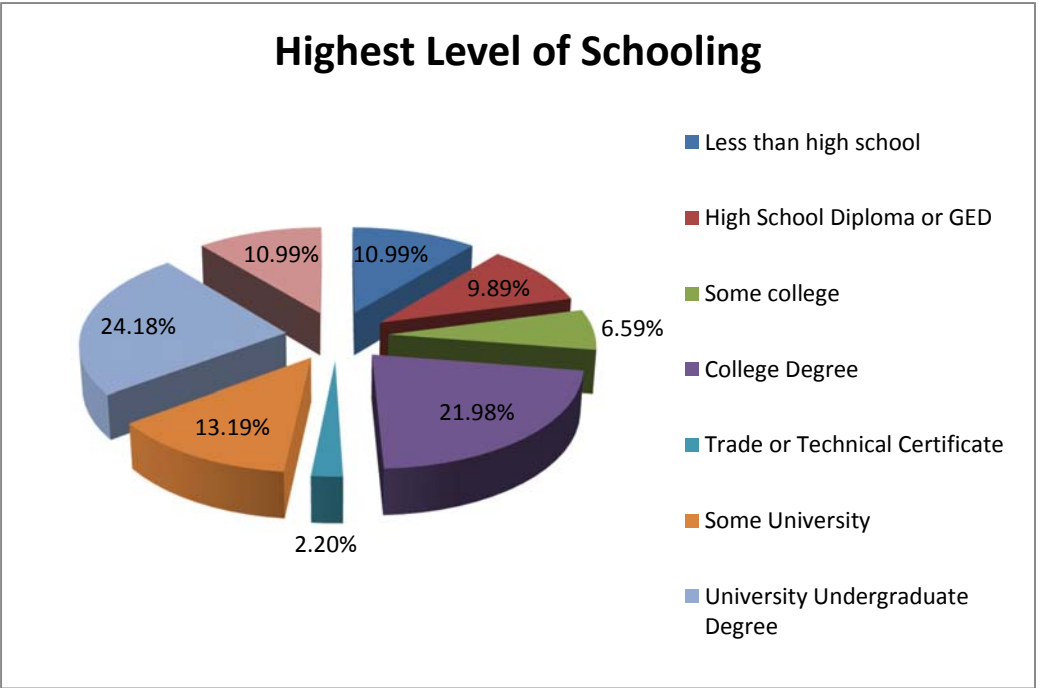
The 46-55 age group occupies 23.08% of the total respondents. Second comes 36-45 age group with 21.98% share that is followed by 26-35 age group with 18.68% among the respondents. Interesting indication of this age group analysis is that 65 or older age group remains more active in responding to the questionnaire than 18-25 age group that has 13.19% share.

1.2 Civic/Immigration Status



The pie above shows that more than half (54%) of reponses of the survey are permanent resident. Only 1% share is visa student.

1.3 Highest Level of Schooling



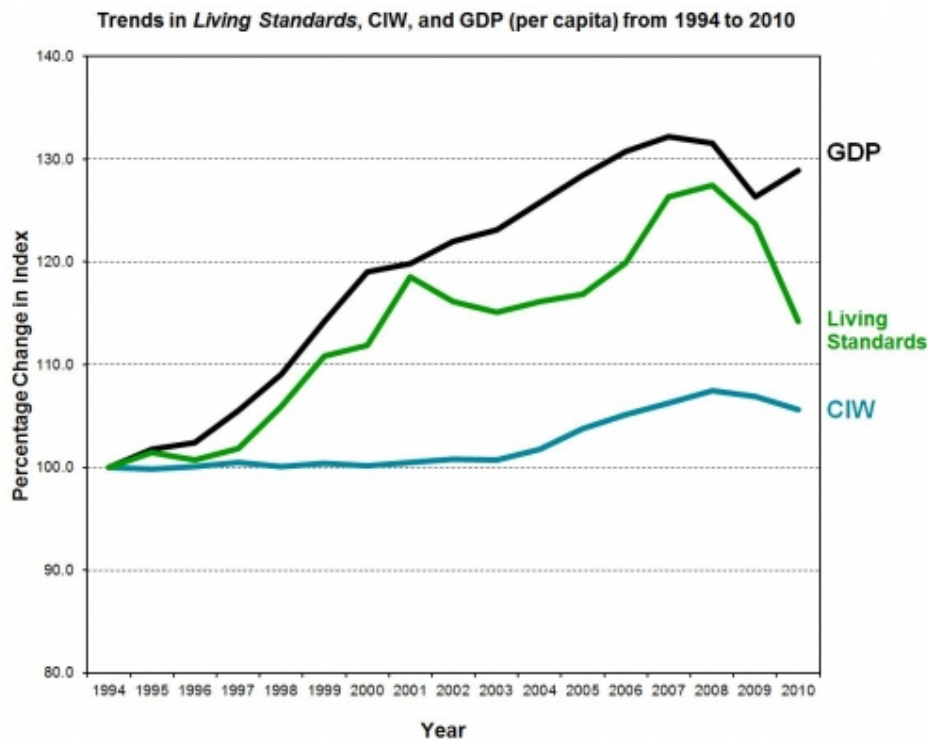
Education level of the respondents shows that the highest percentage of them have completed

university degree at 24.18 % of respondents, some college education 21.98% and Some University 13.19% and Post-Graduate Degree and Less than High School both 10.99%.

2. Living standards

Living Standards measures the level and distribution of income and wealth, including trends in poverty; income volatility; and economic security, including the security of jobs, food, housing and the social safety net.

The objective of the Living Standards domain is to track not only the capacity of the communities' economy to grow, but more importantly, its capacity to transform economic growth into stable current and future income streams for community residents. Economic growth does not automatically translate into better living standards for all people. A given level of income, for example, may be obtained at the cost of increased inequality or greater economic insecurity. It may be fuelled by poor quality job creation or fail to achieve basic economic outcomes, such as reducing poverty or providing basic housing to individuals and family.



The lines above are national based analysis, which show that although our living standards improved considerably between 1994 and 2008, there was a sharp drop in each of 2009 and 2010. The data covering 1994 to 2010 revealed the following mixed trends regarding the evolution of living standards in Canada:

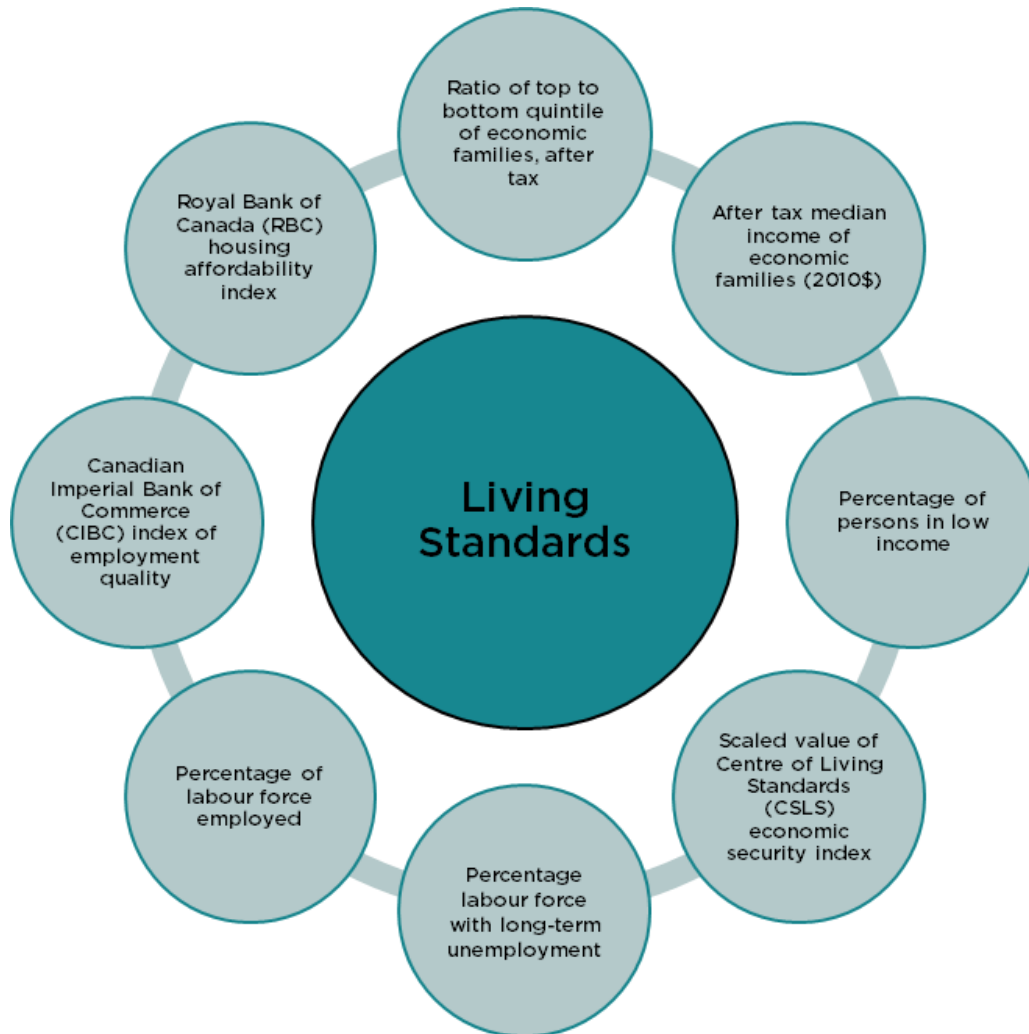
Canadians are, on average, better off in terms of income, but inequality has increased.

While some progress is being made in reducing poverty and long-term unemployment, economic security – that is, the risk imposed by long-term unemployment, illness, single parent poverty, and poverty in old age – is getting worse.

Labour market conditions are improving, but job quality is down.

(From Canadian Index Well-being website)

The indicators of Living Standards are as the picture below:

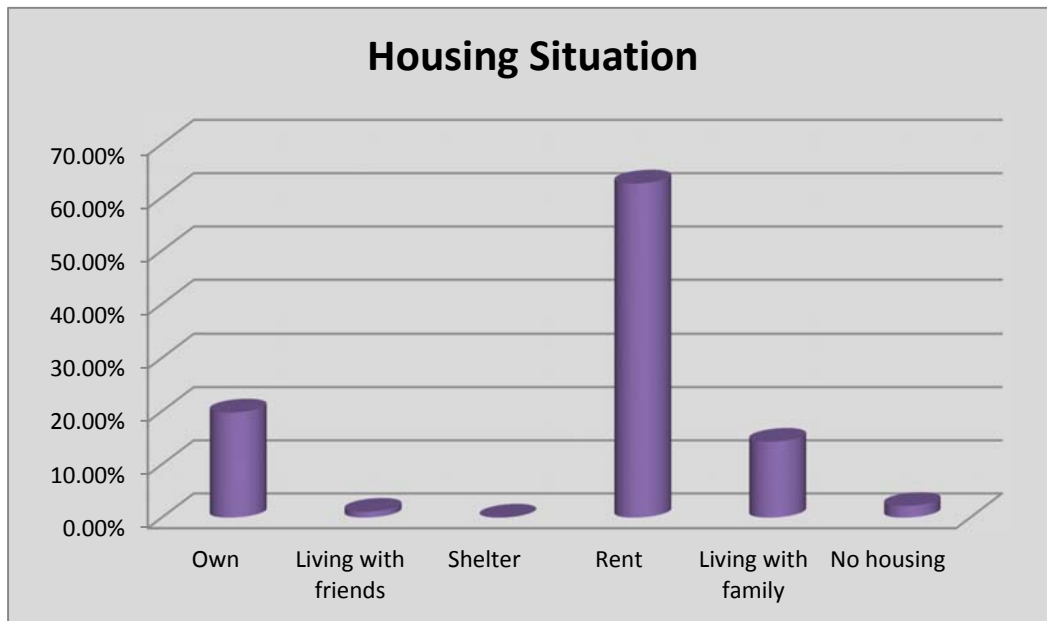


2.1 Housing situation

The bar chart below shows that:

- 19.78% of the respondents possess their own houses
- 1.10% of the respondents is living with friends
- 62.63% of the respondents has to rent

- 14.29% of the respondents is living with their families
- 14.29% of the respondents is living with their families
- 2.20% of those there is no house to live



2.1 Income & Satisfaction with standard of living



The bar chart above shows that people whose house income is above \$20,000 feel satisfied with their standard of living. Only 50% of those who earn above \$65,000 per year feel satisfied with their standard of living and 35.7% of the respondents whose income is lower than \$5,000 per year feel satisfied and same share of them feel somewhat satisfied with their standard of living.

These findings indicate that income level is not the only factor of satisfaction with standard of living.

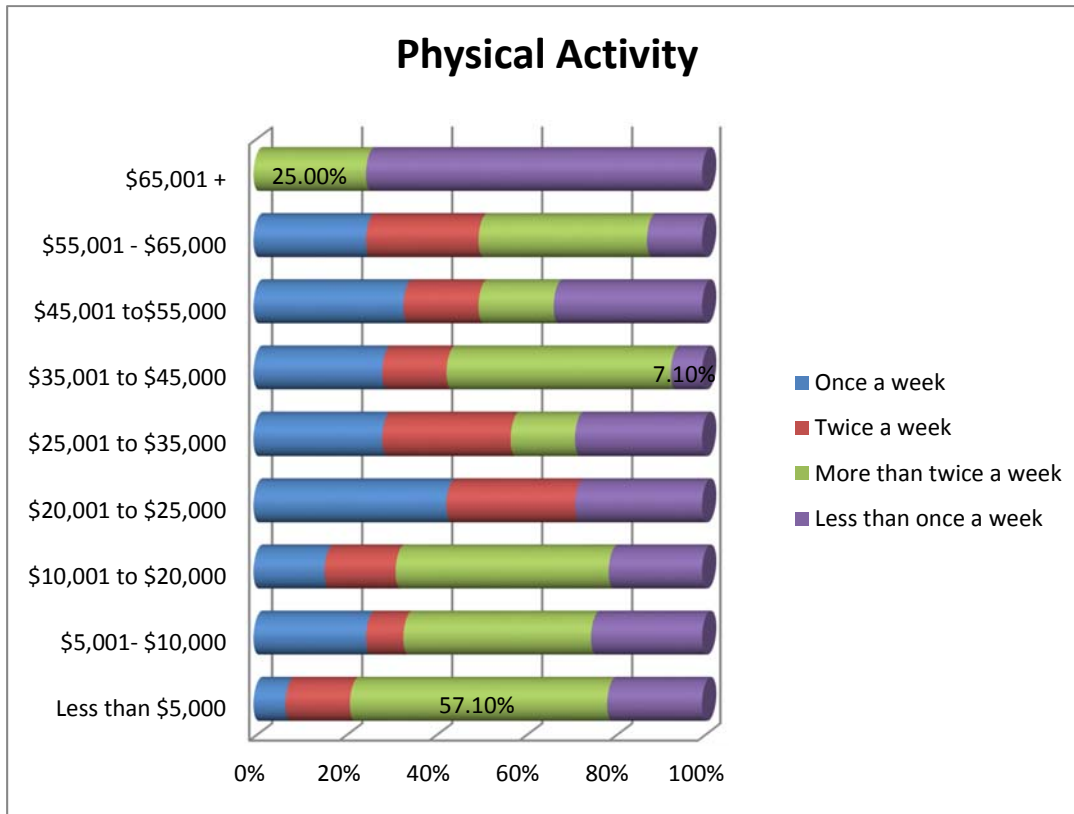
2.2 Income & Quality of Life



The chart above shows that the high percentage of good quality of life distribute between \$20,000-\$55,000 income level.

It indicates that people at both low income level under \$20,000 and high income level above \$55000 have lower quality of life.

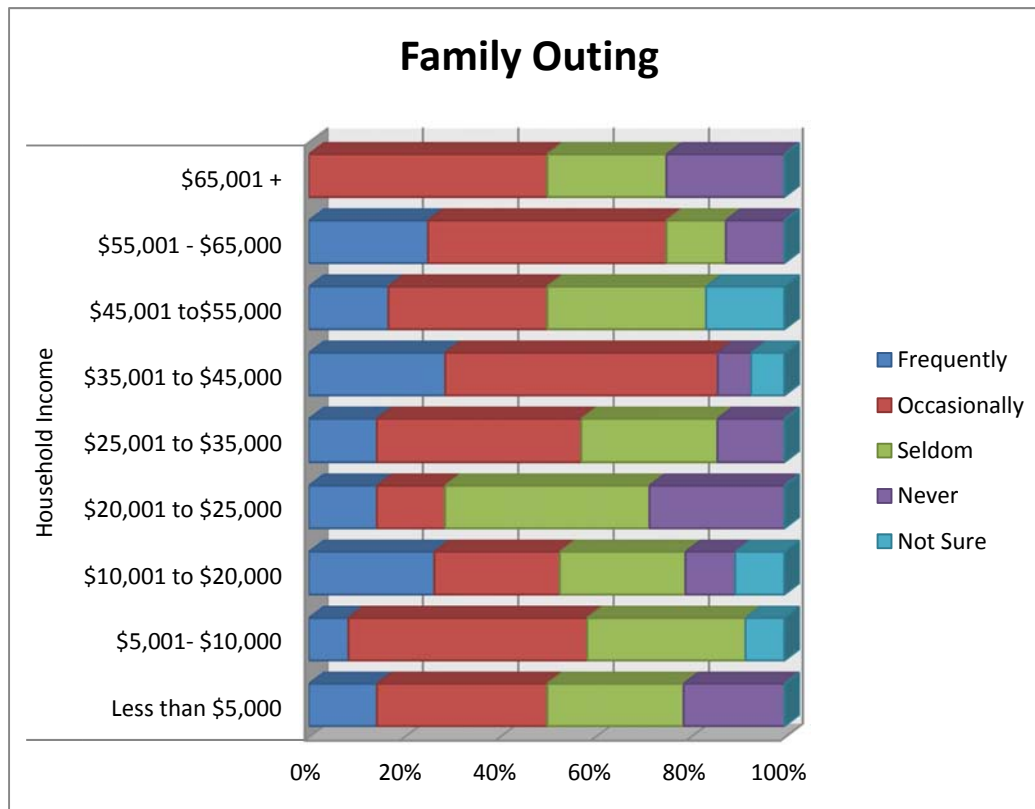
2.3 Income & Physical Activity



The bar chart above shows that:

- Around 75% of respondents whose income level is above \$65,000 take in physical activity less than once a week, only 25% exercise more than twice a week
- More half of those whose income level is under \$5,000 take in physical activity more than twice a week
- Nobody exercise more than twice a week whose income level is between 20,000 to 25,000 per year
- Respondents whose income level is between 35,000 to 45,000 per year exercise more often, only 7.10% of those exercise less than once a week

2.4 Income & Family Outing



The chart above shows that:

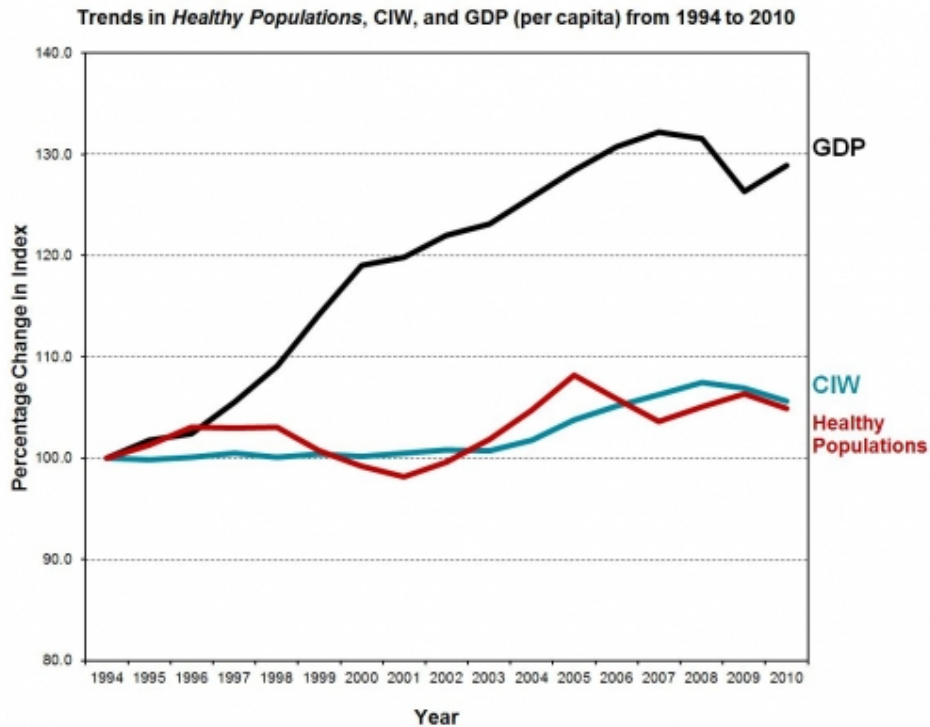
- Only 50% respondents whose income level is above \$65,000 go out with their family occasionally, the another 50% never or seldom go out with their family
- Respondents whose income level is between \$10,000 and \$20,000 and level between \$35,000 and \$45,000 frequently go out with their families
- Around ¼ of those whose income level is under \$5,000, between \$20,000 and \$25,000 and above \$65,000 never go out with their families
- Around ¼ of those whose income level is between \$10,000 and \$20,000, between \$35,000 and \$45,000 and between \$55,000 and \$65,000 frequently share their time to go out with their families

3. Health populations

Healthy Populations measures the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of the population by looking at different aspects of health status and certain determinants of health.

An individual's lifestyle and behaviour clearly affects his or her health. Good dietary practices, regular physical activity, and refraining from smoking are all linked to better health. However, individual choices and behaviours are constrained and shaped by broader social factors including how food is distributed and priced, how houses are constructed and

located, how urban transportation is designed, and how carefully humans interact with the planetary ecosystem.



While Canadians have generally high levels of health, there are discrepancies in health based on social groupings and gender, despite the availability of universal health services.

People with higher incomes and education live longer, are less likely to have diabetes and other chronic conditions, are more likely to be physically active, and report better levels of health overall.

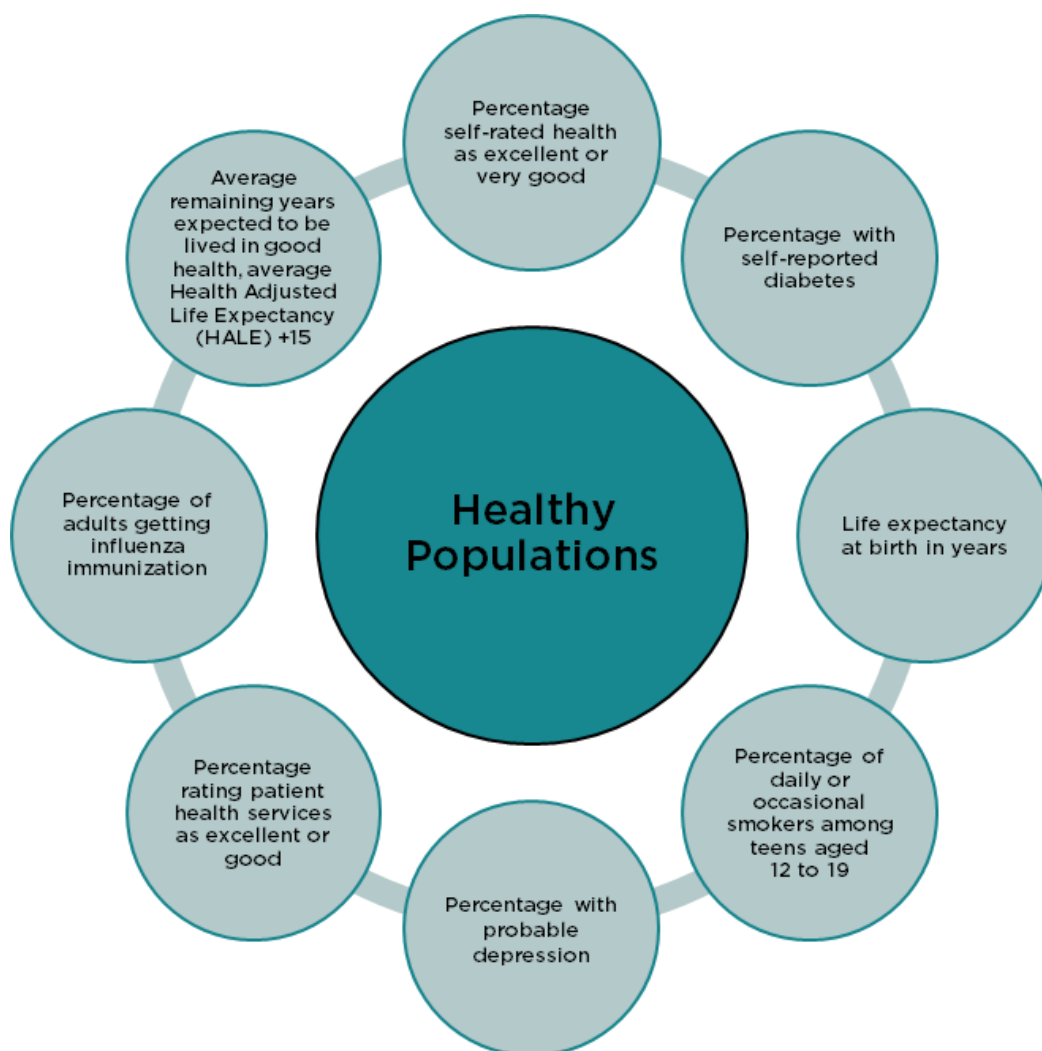
Canadians' rating of their health status has declined since the late 1990s, but has moved slightly up and down rather sporadically in more recent years. This trend runs across the population.

The decline in health status has been most marked among teenagers, which is a worrisome trend, given that this age group is generally considered healthier than most.

The majority of Canadians rate the quality of their health care system as high and most are satisfied with their health care services. The percentage of Canadians who feel this way has increased slightly each year since 2005.

(From Canadian Index Well-being website)

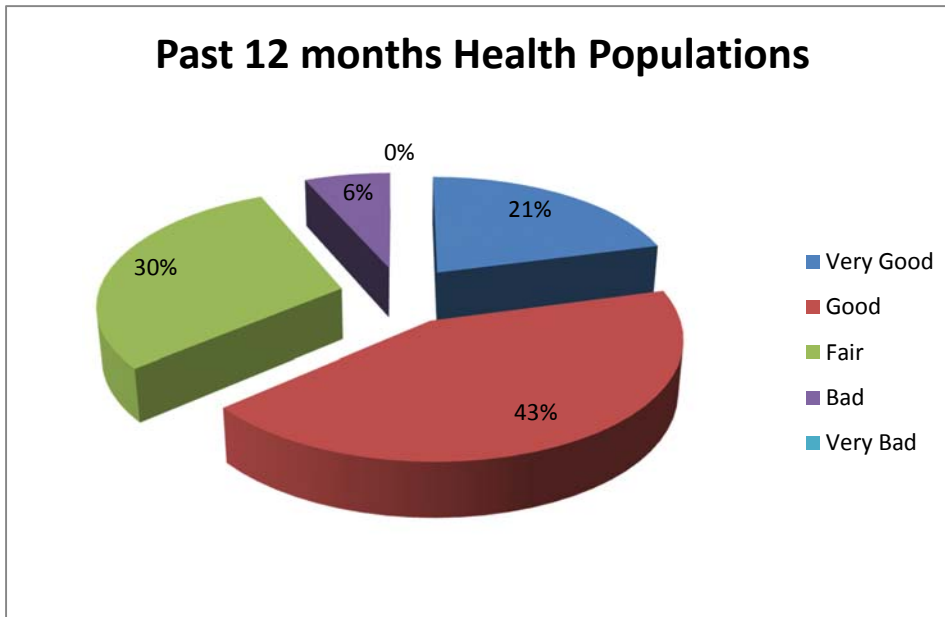
The indicators of Healthy Populations are as the picture below:



3.1 Past 12 months health populations

The graph below shows that over the past 12 months, how the survey representatives describe their health situation.

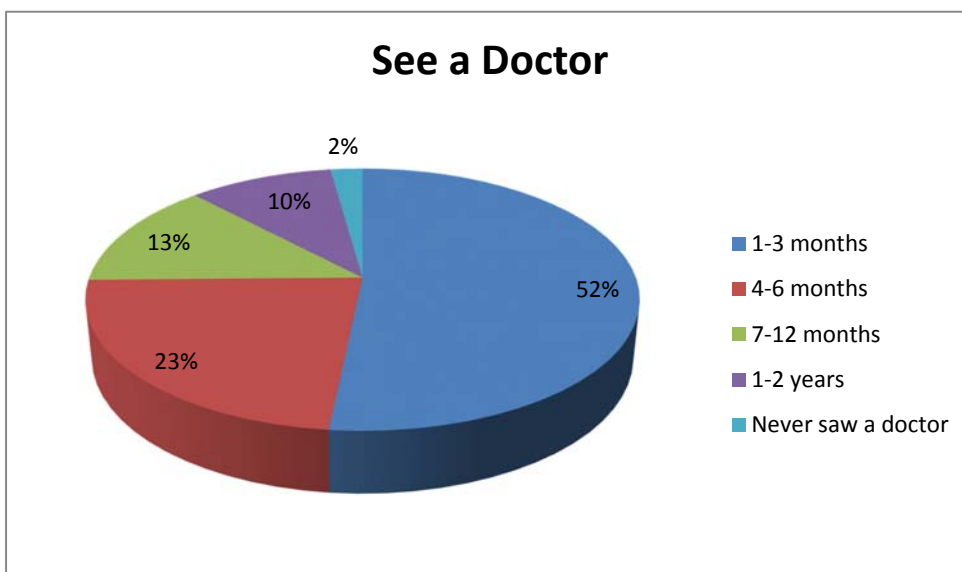
- 20.88% of the residents describe their health situation is “Very good”
- 42.86% of the residents describe their health situation is “Good”
- 29.67% of the residents describe their health situation is “Fair”
- 6.59% of the residents describe their health situation is “Bad”
- Nobody describe their health situation is “Very bad”



3.2 Visit to the doctor

The graph below shows that when was the last time the respondents saw a doctor.

- 51.64% of the respondents saw a doctor 1-3 months ago
- 23.08% of the respondents saw a doctor 4-6 months ago
- 13.19% of the respondents saw a doctor 7-12 months ago
- 9.89% of the respondents saw a doctor 1-2 years ago
- 2.20% of the respondents never saw a doctor



The graph indicates that the residents are not at good health situation during the past 2 years.

Recommendations

From the data analysis above we can see that we still have large gaps in increasing household income level, improving people's health situation and satisfaction with standard of living, etc. It will take long time to cover the gaps, however we still have something to do to make the situation better.

Training programs

- The community organizations develop more training and bridging programs to help new comers gain employment skills and communication skills and make them be aware of that further training is important to their adaption to a new environment
- Develop program or information sessions to help people start their own small business, such as opening childcare provider, buying a small convenience store, etc
- Build their awareness of learning for life

Workshops

- Deliver nutrition workshop to help people get knowledge and awareness of healthy food choices and healthy life habits
- Deliver workshops to improve budgeting skills & financial management skills
- Life skills like language skills, sport skills, stress management, time management skills and learning skills, and so on

Psychological Counseling Services

- Treat mental issues like anxiety, depression, stress and addiction, and help deal with relationship problems
- Treat domestic violence and abuse
- Inspiration and confidence building

Community events

- Help people take part in more physical exercises
- Organize community like Jane's walk and provide more creation and activities
- Information access: let people know what was available
- Any kinds of events and activities that can get people involved

Conclusions

Community people and neighbor's care about and help each other in many ways. They also support local agencies, and volunteer to help people in need.

Community agencies and resources work together to make life good for people in communities. Recreation and community centers bring people together, offer activities, and help when needed. The Community Health Centers provide medical care and other kinds of support.

More and more immigrant people settle down in these neighborhoods, making the neighborhoods more diverse and bringing more vitality. But as compared to Toronto as a whole, St. James Town and South Riverdale in particular, have a higher percentage of low-income families, persons with less education, and more people on social assistance.

If we have a sense of hope to solve these problems and work together with our communities organizations in a valuable way, we can build a stronger community and a better life environment.

References

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