

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Equity and Inequity

Equity understands, acknowledges and removes barriers that prevent the participation of any individual or group, making fair treatment, access, opportunity, advancement and outcomes possible for all individuals.

In the context of City of Toronto services, inequities refer to unfair and avoidable differences in service access, experiences, impacts and outcomes. Socio-demographic data is a critical tool to understand who our service users are and if any socio-demographic groups are disadvantaged or require additional supports.

Equity-seeking groups

Equity-seeking groups refers to communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society because of barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination, and actively seek social justice and reparation.

While Indigenous people and communities in Toronto face inequities, they are not considered to be an equity-seeking group. Indigenous people are the original inhabitants of what is today Toronto, and have unique status and rights recognized under Section 35 of the Constitution. More than equity, Indigenous communities seek prosperity that is characterized by economic and social well-being, inclusion and self-determination, which were eroded through historical and ongoing colonization.

While Black people in Toronto also face inequities and seek equity, they are recognised as unique and separate from other equity-seeking groups. People of African descent who commonly self-identify as Black people have a unique experience of centuries of enslavement in what is now Canada. The time period of legalized enslavement was longer than the period during which Black people have been legally free. The legacy of socio-economic enslavement continues to significantly impact Black communities in Toronto and across Canada through inequities in social and economic outcomes and well-being. As such, Black communities are more appropriately to be considered as freedom-seeking.

Socio-demographic data

Socio-demographic data describes personal characteristics and social identity. Characteristics such as age, language, race, First Nations, Inuit, Métis identity,

Canadian-born or immigrant, disability, gender, sexual orientation, income and place of residence are all examples of socio-demographic data.

Disaggregated data

Disaggregated data refers to data sets that are broken down into smaller units. In this report and the Data for Equity Strategy, disaggregated data refers to data that is broken down and examined by socio-demographic groups such as Indigenous communities, gender identities, racialized groups and neighbourhoods. Data that is broken down by socio-demographic groups can be used to identify and address differences between groups of Toronto residents. In order to disaggregate data by socio-demographic groups, data must include service users' and residents' socio-demographic data.

Population-level data

Population-level data provides information about all Toronto residents or specific groups of residents (e.g. children, seniors or low income people). This includes population-level census data, administrative, income, education and health datasets and survey data collected, analyzed, shared and reported by other levels of government or sectors. When population-level data is broken down by socio-demographic groups, it can help to understand who lives in the city, current needs and living conditions of specific groups of residents, and differences between groups.

Program and service data

Program and service data provides information about the people accessing City services¹. When City programs and services collect socio-demographic data, and this data is broken down by socio-demographic groups, it can help to identify who is accessing a program, who is being left out, who is benefiting from a program and who is not.

Needs assessment and program evaluation data

Needs assessment and program evaluation data are often collected through surveys, individual conversations and group discussions. Needs assessments may also use existing population-level data sets. Needs assessment data can provide an understanding of the issues, needs and barriers faced by specific socio-demographic groups so that services can be designed to meet their needs and reach those groups who need a service most. Program evaluation data that is broken down by socio-demographic groups can inform service planning by providing insight into who is benefitting from specific services, who is being left out, who is having positive experiences in a program, what a positive experience looks like, and whether community-specific programs are reaching the intended socio-demographic groups.

¹ City of Toronto program and service data may also be referred to as "administrative data".

Public consultation data

Public consultations may use public meetings, group discussions and public surveys to gain insight into the needs, barriers, preferences and values of Toronto residents. This information is used to inform policies, projects and services. Socio-demographic information about participants attending public meetings and group discussions can be used to understand whether the voices being heard are representative of Indigenous, Black and equity-seeking groups, as well as those groups impacted by the issue being discussed. When public consultation survey data is broken down by socio-demographic groups, it can help City staff understand how different groups are impacted by an issue and their different needs, barriers and preferences.

Data for Equity

Data for Equity refers to the use of disaggregated data that is broken down by socio-demographic groups to understand needs, identify equity and prosperity goals, develop programs and policies that serve all residents more equitably, monitor progress, and assess equity impacts. This includes:

- The use of existing population-level data that provides information about the socio-demographic characteristics, social and economic circumstances and experiences of all Toronto residents
- The collection and use of data through City of Toronto programs and services, which provides information about the people who access those services
- The collection and use of needs assessment and program evaluation data, which provides an understanding of service needs, barriers, experiences and impacts to help inform service planning
- The collection and use of public consultation data that provides insights into the needs, barriers, preferences and values of Toronto residents to help inform policies, projects and services

Intersectional approach

Intersectionality is the way in which people's lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations which, together, can produce a unique and distinct life experience for that individual or group. For example, a Black woman living in poverty may experience more barriers and greater discrimination when accessing services than a white man who also lives in poverty, due to her race and gender. Both face barriers, but it is important to consider how sexism, racism and poverty interact to shape how people uniquely experience discrimination. Using an intersectional approach is essential to gaining a strong understanding of who is most affected by a program or service, who is facing service barriers and who is not benefiting from a program. An intersectional approach to data analysis includes breaking down data by more than one socio-demographic characteristic.