

This bulletin is a quick inventory of recent social research information. Its purpose is to promptly disseminate the most current external and internal research relevant to social policy.

Rethinking Municipal Finance for the New Economy by Sunil Johal, Kiran Alwani, Jordann Thirgood & Peter Spiro, Mowat Centre, April 2019.

This study begins with an overview of the context of municipal governance and taxation in Ontario, the primary revenue sources available to municipal governments, as well as the key characteristics of the Regional Municipality of Peel. A number of key macro-level economic and social trends and drivers are explored, with consideration of how these trends are reflected in Peel and other municipalities. In addition, the implications of these trends and resulting potential threats to the revenue base are analyzed using a scenario-testing exercise.

- Explore options for introducing progressive property-tax rates, modelled on experience in international jurisdictions such as Singapore, including rebates or exemptions for low-income households and higher rates for non-owner-occupied residences
- Explore the option of the “Toronto Act” toolkit with the province, including road pricing, alcoholic beverage tax, entertainment and amusement tax, tobacco tax (as well as potentially a share of cannabis-tax revenues)
- Explore options for taxing newly emerging digital services such as Airbnb and Uber, in line with actions by other jurisdictions in Canada and abroad

For link to the paper:

https://mowatcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/189_rethinking_municipal_finance_for_the_new_economy.pdf

Debt and Assets Among Senior Canadian Families by Sharanjit Uppal, Statistics Canada, April 2019.

Using data from the Survey of Financial Security (SFS), this article looks at changes in debt, assets and net worth among senior Canadian families over the period from 1999 to 2016. It also examines changes in the debt-to-income ratio and the debt-to-asset ratio of senior families with debt.

- In 2016, the proportion of senior families with debt was 42%, up from 27% in 1999.
- The proportion with mortgage debt almost doubled from 8% to 14%, and the share of those with consumer debt increased from 24% to 37%
- Around two-thirds of the total increase in the debt of seniors was attributable to an increase in mortgage debt
- Between 1999 and 2016, the median debt-to-income ratio for senior families with debt more than doubled from 0.24 to 0.52. However, the debt-to-asset ratio changed little, from 0.05 in 1999 to 0.06 in 2016

For link to the paper:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00005-eng.pdf>

Drug Use Among Ontario Students - Highlights from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey
by The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, January 2017.

This report describes the past year use of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, nonmedical (NM) use of prescription drugs, and other substances of concern, and changes since 1977. Also examined are harms related to drug use, perceptions and attitudes, and exposure to drugs.

- In 2017, among students in grades 7–12, the drug perceived to be most readily available is alcohol (63% report that it would be “fairly easy” or “very easy” to obtain), followed by tobacco cigarettes (51%), and cannabis (43%)
- One-in-seven (14%) students (an estimated 109,7 00in grades 9–12) report symptoms of a drug use problem, as measured by the CRAFFT screener
- The percentage of students in grades 7–12 reporting first-time drug use during the past year is as follows: 5% for tobacco cigarettes, 14% for electronic cigarettes, 20% for alcohol, 9% for cannabis, and 3% for illicit drugs other than cannabis

For link to the paper:

<https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdf---osduhs/summary-drug-use-report---2017-osduhs.pdf>

Do Youth from Lower- and Higher-income Families Benefit Equally from Postsecondary Education? by Marc Frenette, Statistics Canada, April 2019.

Using postsecondary administrative records and income tax records, this study bridges this information gap by estimating the association between earnings and PSE (post-secondary education) by level of parental income among a cohort of Ontario postsecondary graduates and a comparison group of Ontario youth who did not enroll in a postsecondary institution. The results suggest that the estimated earnings premiums associated with PSE are large and positive for youth from families across the income distribution.

- The results suggest that the estimated earnings premiums associated with PSE are large and positive for youth from families across the distribution of income
- In relative terms, the premium is considerably larger for youth from the bottom income quintile than for their counterparts from the top income quintile
- Using data from the PSIS–T1FF file, the study also demonstrates that the earnings results are not likely due to differences in the choice of field of study between youth from different levels of parental income

For link to the paper:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019012-eng.pdf>

Life in the GTA: A Window on Well-Being by YMCA of Greater Toronto and Wellesley Institute, May 2019

In this report, we explore the well-being of GTA residents using initial baseline data from the YMCA of Greater Toronto - Wellesley Institute Well-Being Monitor. The GTA Well-Being Monitor is a long-term research initiative established by the YMCA of Greater Toronto and the Wellesley Institute to track neighbourhood level trends and patterns in well-being across the GTA. It incorporates 41 specific neighbourhood level well-being indicators organized within eight broad domains of well-being.

- [T]hose groups in the GTA that face challenges with social and economic inclusion (e.g., low income, unemployed, LGBTQ2S+, and racialized groups) are more likely than others to report low levels of well-being and accompanying low levels of general health, mental health and sense of belonging.
- [O]ur findings show the importance of positive health behaviours – as people who exercise, volunteer, abstain from smoking, and eat more fruits and vegetables also tend to have better well-being
- [T]hose GTA neighbourhoods that have relatively large percentages of people with low levels of well-being also have, among other things, higher levels of chronic disease, premature mortality, and children at risk

For link to the paper:

https://ymcagta.org/-/media/pdfs/about_us/ymcalifeinthegtaonline.pdf

The Characteristics of Shelter Residents by Sarah McDermott, Adriene Harding, and Jeff Randle, Statistics Canada, May 2019.

The objective of this paper is to provide a picture of Canadians living at shelters, using the 2016 Census of Population to understand the characteristics of these individuals. This report will also discuss Census properties and attributes particular to shelters and collective dwellings in order to develop an understanding of the Census' role in the analysis of homelessness.

- The 2016 Census counted 995 shelters with a population of 22,1903 usual residents
- Almost one quarter (5,365) of the population in shelters were counted at shelters for abused women and their children
- 20.9% of the total number of usual residents in shelters were in Alberta, which is almost double the share of the total population that lives in Alberta, 11.6%

For link to the paper:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2019004-eng.pdf>

Previous issues of the SPAR Monitor can be viewed online at: <http://bit.ly/2iltgRQ>

Social Policy, Analysis and Research Information Resources:

Wellbeing Toronto: www.toronto.ca/wellbeing

City of Toronto Data, Research & Maps: <https://web.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/>