

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.

**Volunteering Counts: Formal and Informal Contributions of Canadians in 2018** by Tara Hahmann, Statistics Canada, April 2021.

Using data from the 2018 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, this article presents information on the volunteer activities of Canadians, including volunteer rates and number of volunteer hours, the types of volunteering activities and the sectors benefiting from volunteerism.

- In 2018, over 24 million people volunteered, accounting for 79% of Canadians aged 15 and older
- Volunteers dedicated approximately 5 billion hours to their volunteer activities, a number of hours equivalent to over 2.5 million full-time year-round jobs
- [F]ormal volunteering, that is volunteering mediated by organizations, was more frequent among younger generations and less common among older generations
- iGens (78%) and Millennials (77%) were more likely to be informal volunteers, compared to the older generations of Baby Boomers (73%) and Matures (58%). However, the hours contributed by Matures (176 hours) and Baby Boomers (197 hours) nearly doubled the amount reported by iGens (99 hours)

Link to the report:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.pdf?st=ZtfZyrVb>

**Housing Market Insight: Secondary Units in Ontario** by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, June 2021.

As part of our commitment to address housing data gaps and to help Canadians make better-informed decisions, CMHC undertook a study of secondary units in Ontario. Secondary units are self-contained residential units within dwellings, predominantly single-family homes, or within structures ancillary to a dwelling, such as above a detached garage. They are commonly referred to as basement apartments, accessory apartments, in-law suites and laneway homes.

- Nearly one out of six ground-oriented homes in Toronto had a secondary unit, the highest ratio in Ontario, totalling an estimated 75,000 secondary units.
- Municipalities with low vacancy rates were more likely to have secondary units
- Basement apartments were the most common type of secondary unit

Link to the full report:

<https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/market-reports/housing-market/housing-market-insight/2021/housing-market-insight-ontario-68865-m06-en.pdf?rev=db0daf50-55e5-4f9c-b0de-3e64658670a5>

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**Toronto GTA April Rent Report 2021** by Ben Myers, TorontoRentals.com, April 2021.

After a tumultuous year of lockdowns that saw the average rental rate decrease by over 20% annually, March 2021 saw the first month-over-month increase in the average GTA rent level in over a year, suggesting that February might have been the market bottom.

- In the GTA, condominium units are the property type that has experienced the largest annual decrease in average rent, declining by 17%. By comparison, rental apartments decreased 11% year over year, while single-family homes decreased by 10% year over year
- Tenants looking for rental apartments will be saving nearly \$250 in rent in the first quarter of this year compared to Q1-2020, with rent falling from \$2,148 per month last year to \$1,902 per month in Q1-2021
- [Downtown] Toronto rents are down 20% annually to \$2,016 per month, while Etobicoke and East York both experienced declines of 18%. North York dropped 15%, as did Markham. Both Vaughan and Mississauga are down by around 11% year-over-year
- The most active postal code for rental activity in the GTA is M5V in Toronto's downtown west area.

Link to the report:

<https://www.torontorentals.com/blog/toronto-gta-april-rent-report-2021>

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**Global Storm: The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Responses Around the World** by Livio Di Matteo, Fraser Institute, May 2021.

This study examines the pandemic by comparing the performance of countries in terms of (1) infection rates and mortality rates; (2) the response to dealing with the pandemic in terms of the strategies employed—testing and restrictions; (3) the severity of the economic shock (changes in GDP); and (4) the economic and fiscal response by governments to the economic shock brought about by the pandemic.

- IMF35 advanced economies were harder hit, with estimates by early 2021 suggesting a 5.4% fall in real GDP while IMF-defined emerging market and developing economies saw a 2.6% contraction
- The highest frequency of COVID-19 deaths per million among these eight countries was in Belgium (1,784), the United States (1,229), and Spain (1,177), while Australia (36), Canada (498), and Germany (615) fared the best
- As for other institutional and regional factors, it would appear that federations had a particularly tough time when it came to economic performance during the pandemic, with significantly larger drops in real GDP compared to non-federations
- Aside from measures enacted early on in the pandemic, levels of stringency or a ramping up of stringency do not appear to have significantly reduced COVID-19 cases per million population though high rates of testing do seem to have been a factor in eventually reducing the number of cases. Moreover, increased testing also appears a factor in mitigating the death toll

Link to the report:

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/global-storm-effects-of-COVID-19-pandemic-and-response-around-world.pdf>

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**Research Report to Support the Launch of Skills for Success: Structure, Evidence, and Recommendations** by Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, May 2021.

In light of the evolving Canadian labour market and the modernization of workplaces, the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) has updated its Essential Skills Framework. Rebranded as Skills for Success, this new framework reflects changing skill needs and is designed to be more sustainable over time. The key objective of this project is to support the launch and roll-out of Skills for Success by providing the necessary structure, evidence, and recommendations that could help inform the development of measures and learning materials aligned with the framework in the longer-run.

- Skills for Success include skills that are foundational for building new skills and knowledge and important for effective social interaction: Reading, Writing, Numeracy, Digital, Problem Solving, Communication, Collaboration, Adaptability, Creativity and Innovation
- A key characteristic of skills, as we conceptualize them in this report, is that they are amenable to growth via targeted interventions of the range of lengths and formats that employment training programs typically follow
- In addition to defining each skill in terms of repeatable processes, we also aimed to conceptualize the constructs within each skill – i.e., important sub-processes or behaviours that make up each skill – in the same way

Link to the report:

<https://www.srdc.org/media/553148/sfs-srdc-final-report-en.pdf>

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**Assessing Cash-for-Care Benefits to Support Aging at Home in Canada** by Colleen M. Flood et al., Institute for Research on Public Policy, April 2021.

Canada's long-term care (LTC) system needs an overhaul. Most older Canadians have only limited access to care that is often of poor quality and fragmented. In this study, a group of leading scholars led by Colleen Flood argue that the challenge facing Canada's policy-makers is to not only adequately meet the growing needs for LTC services, but also to ensure that those services are delivered where people want to receive them, most often at home.

- Just over half of all OECD countries offer cash benefits to LTC recipients. These benefits give them more control over how their care is organized and provided, and hence more autonomy
- The authors conclude that cash benefits hold promise as part of the solution for enhancing supports for home care in Canada. But they are not sufficient on their own: they must be part of a suite of initiatives that includes investing in the quality and safety of care in LTC institutions, improving access to formal home care, and better supporting informal home care

Link to the report:

<https://irpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Assessing-Cash-for-Care-Benefits-to-Support-Aging-at-Home-in-Canada.pdf>

Previous issues of the SPAR Monitor can be viewed online at: <https://bit.ly/3h42Zob>

Wellbeing Toronto: [www.toronto.ca/wellbeing](http://www.toronto.ca/wellbeing)

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