

Developing a housing profile of Ottawa using data from the Ottawa Research Data Centre

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Affordable housing is a crucial dimension for healthy cities, as it affects disease incidence, injury rates, and poverty. Escalating housing costs in Canada have disproportionately affected low to moderate-income individuals and marginalized populations, particularly in Ottawa. Data for Ottawa related to housing costs, core housing need, social and affordable housing units, housing experience, demographic characteristics, urban amenities, and population health are available from various data sources, but the siloed nature of these datasets makes it difficult for community stakeholders to get a holistic picture of housing, the built environment, and population health outcomes. This research has gathered, analyzed, and linked housing and population health data from the Ottawa Research Data Centre (ORDC) and other sources to develop housing profiles and indicators for Ottawa, its neighbourhoods, and marginalized population groups.

The Ottawa Neighbourhood Study (ONS) is an open-access data program that utilizes a participatory research framework to define "natural" neighbourhoods in Ottawa, going beyond arbitrary geographic units like census tracts. These neighbourhoods serve as a common reference point across sectors and are used as the primary level of geography whenever feasible. Additionally, data from the Canadian Housing Statistics Program (CHSP) at the ORDC have been aggregated based on neighbourhood quintiles of socioeconomic disadvantage. This approach enables a comprehensive examination of housing disparities across different socioeconomic groups.

The stratified information obtained from the ORDC and other sources has identified housing disparities across socioeconomic groups, highlighting their impact on community well-being. To disseminate these findings, the research team is employing various visual tools, including choropleth maps, dynamic dashboards, infographics, and a summary report.

This approach, which breaks down data silos and develops detailed housing profiles at the neighbourhood level, has implications beyond Ottawa. By highlighting the critical role of affordable and adequate housing in reducing disparities, this research contributes to the broader field of urban health. Moreover, the methodology can be replicated in other municipalities, facilitating evidence-informed policy decision-making and fostering meaningful collaborations between researchers, local communities, and policymakers. (We thank the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) via the Healthy Cities Research Initiative for their financial support.)

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