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Promoting Mental Health In Ottawa

SUMMARY REPORT 2018

Based on the Status of Mental Health in Ottawa Report 2018

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Promoting Mental Health In Ottawa

SUMMARY REPORT 2018

This summary report reviews key local data from the **Status of Mental Health in Ottawa Report 2018**, highlighting four evidence-informed factors that have a significant impact on Ottawa residents' mental health, including:

- Resilience
- Family Relationships
- Social Connectedness
- Health Equity and Stigma

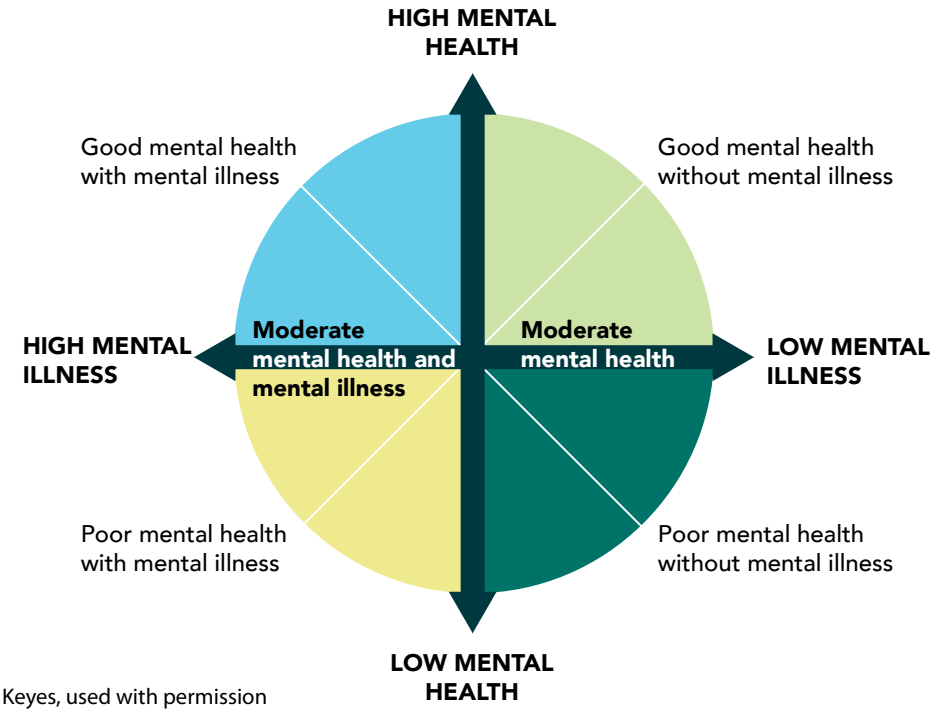


INTRODUCTION

Why is mental health important?

- Mental health is a state of well-being in which people can realize their own abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and contribute to their community[1]. Whereas, mental illness is a diagnosed disorder that affects the way a person thinks, feels and/or behaves[2].
- Mental health can change over a lifetime in the environments where we live, learn, work and play.
- People can experience positive (high) and poor (low) mental health at different times in their life with or without a mental illness (see Figure 1).
- Positive mental health protects people from the stress of everyday life, and can reduce the risk of developing poor mental health and mental illness[3]. Promoting positive mental health supports residents' resilience to face everyday challenges and research shows that people who are resilient are healthier, live longer, and are happier in their relationships.

FIGURE 1
The Two Continua Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness[4]



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Highlights for Ottawa[5]

- **Many Ottawa residents reported very good or excellent mental health** (69%), happiness (75%) and life satisfaction (91%).
- Fewer Ottawa residents (63%) **reported high levels of strong community belonging** compared to the rest of Ontario (66%). Ottawa residents aged 20 to 44 years reported lowest levels of strong community belonging, whereas youth aged 12 to 19 years reported the highest levels of strong community belonging.
- **Fewer Ottawa residents** (64%) aged 15 years and older **reported high psychological well-being** compared to the rest of Ontario (70%).

Key points to consider

- Promoting positive mental health can contribute to residents' psychological well-being and strong connections within their communities.
- Increasing resilience skills, supporting positive family relationships, improving social connectedness, addressing health inequity and reducing stigma can help build positive mental health and contribute to a more resilient community.



BUILDING RESILIENCE

Why is resilience important?

- Building resilience begins at birth and continues throughout our lives as we face and overcome challenges[6].
- Resilience skills include confidence in one's abilities, problem solving, making realistic plans and managing strong feelings[7].
- Early childhood, especially in the first 5 years[8], is an important time to develop strong physical, social, emotional and communication skills. As the child develops these skills, they learn to manage their emotions, gain confidence to explore their environment, problem solve and learn to get along with others. These skills are key to building resilience.
- The teenage years can be stressful, with transitions from elementary to high school, and the physical and emotional changes of puberty. It is a time when resilience skills are essential to face these challenges.
- Youth are more resilient when they have purpose in life, a sense of control over their environment, independence, personal growth, positive relationships with others and self-acceptance. The teenage years are an important time to build resilience and contribute to psychological well being.





Highlights for Ottawa[5]

- One in four (26%) Ottawa senior kindergarten children are vulnerable in one or more area of development, including **social skills** (9%) and **emotional maturity** (12%). Children who live in lower socio-economic neighborhoods are at greater risk of poor development.
- **Many** (93%) grade 7 to 12 students reported **moderate to high self-esteem**;
- **Over one third** of grade 7 to 12 students (35%) reported symptoms of **moderate to serious psychological distress** over the past month.

Key Points to Consider

- Ottawa children need a solid foundation of mental health and resilience to start school. However, some children are starting with less than solid foundations. Promoting healthy child development helps build resilience and can promote success in school and later in life.
- While most Ottawa students have a healthy view of themselves, a positive outlook, a sense of self-worth, and feel satisfied with themselves, it is important to explore the impacts of psychological distress on their lives, and the need for resilience skills to cope with life challenges.
- While resilience is learned over a lifetime, the foundations of resilience are established from infancy through to adolescence. Building on current efforts to develop resilience in children and youth is a priority for our community.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Why are family relationships important?

- Family relationships are the relationships between parents, guardians or caregivers, children, siblings and other family members. Family relationships are influenced by parenting styles, role modelling, attachments, and relationships between family members[9].
- The parent-child relationship is the primary experience of early childhood and the foundation of mental health. It shapes the brain's architecture[8], builds secure attachment, healthy development and future relationships with others[10]. This relationship continues to be important to the development of older children and youth[11].
- Parents' mental health and well-being is important to build secure and nurturing family relationships, and family resilience. In addition to caring for their children, parents often have many demands such as caring for others and managing their job.
- Living with mental illness, parenting alone, living on a low income, unstable housing, unemployment and family violence, can place added stress on relationships and family resilience.





Highlights for Ottawa[5]

- Many (84%) grade 7 to 8 and grade 9 to 12 (74%) students got along with at least one parent.
- **Only one-third (34%) of students usually or always talked about their problems with a parent.** Boys (29%) and grade 11 to 12 students (25%) were less likely to talk about their problems with a parent.
- **32% of grade 7 to 12 students wanted to talk to someone** about a mental health or emotional problem in the past year **but did not know where to turn**.
- 16% of families in Ottawa were single parents.
- 16% of mothers reported a **mental health concern during their pregnancy**.
- 18% of families screened through the Healthy Growth and Development program reported that the mother or parenting partner had a history of depression, anxiety or other mental illness.

Key points to consider

- Effective policy development recognizes the significance of children's relationship with their families, caregivers and communities by supporting them to create environments that promote secure attachment and the mental health of children[12].
- Early investment in prenatal education, childcare, preschool programs and school have the best return on positive mental health[13].
- With the many children and youth services available in Ottawa, it is important to continue to increase awareness of the programs available to support children, youth and their families.

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Why is social connectedness important?

- Socially connected communities are places where people have a sense of belonging and trust. They are places with strong social networks, positive support, strong attachments to school and workplaces, and community involvement.
- Social connectedness fosters mental health and community resilience, providing the resources and supports needed to buffer the impact of stress on mental health.
- Workplaces, schools and communities are places where residents build social connections, trust and sense of belonging. They may also expose residents to stress and bullying.
- Social media is a form of social networking, but it is not fully known how it impacts mental health. However, students who spend a lot of time on social networking sites more often report unmet needs for mental health support, high levels of emotional distress and suicidal thoughts[14].
- The design and safety of communities and gathering places is important to social connectedness. Poorly designed and unsafe communities can create barriers to social connections.





Highlights for Ottawa[5]

- **Many grade 7 to 12 Ottawa students felt their school is a safe place** (91%), felt part of their school (83%), and felt close to people at their school (84%).
- **One in ten** (12%) students were **worried about being harmed or threatened at school**.
- **One in five** (18%) students reported being **bullied at school** in the past year and one in five (18%) reported being cyber bullied.
- Grade 7 to 12 students living with **poor mental health** and **lower family socio-economic status** were **less likely** to report **feeling a part of the school** or **feeling close to people at school**.
- **Many (82%) grade 9 to 12 students use electronic devices** for more than two hours each day and **almost half** (48%) **show signs of problematic use**. For example, not being able to control their time spent on the devices, neglecting homework, losing sleep, feeling anxious about not using them.
- One quarter (26%) of adults felt that most days at work were quite a bit or extremely stressful.
- One in ten (11%) residents felt the crime rate in their neighbourhood made it unsafe to go on walks at night.

Key points to consider

- Public health policies in the workplace help promote the mental health and safety of employees and create a positive work environment. To learn more about mental health in the workplace, check out the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.
- Community features such as access to green spaces, walkable destinations, places to gather and socialize, and access to public transportation systems help reduce stress, increase social support and community belonging[15,16].
- It is important to address social isolation and the social determinants of health that can marginalize populations.

HEALTH EQUITY AND STIGMA

Why are health equity and stigma important?

- Social and economic disadvantages or inequities throughout a person's life may lead to poor mental health and increased risk of mental illness[17]. Examples of inequities include poverty, food insecurity, unstable housing and unemployment. In addition, a person may experience stigma and discrimination because of their mental health, gender, race, sexual orientation or disability.
- For example, First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of Canada, experience the cumulative effect of long-term inequities, combined with the impacts of colonization, systemic racism, discrimination and social exclusion[18].
- People impacted by these inequities are more likely to experience poor mental health and mental illness[19,20].
- Addressing health equity and reducing stigma promotes and protects mental health[21].
- Stigma are the negative stereotypes that individuals and society share about other people, such as those living with mental illness. Discrimination are the behaviours that lead to social isolation and unfair treatment[22]. Both stigma and discrimination prevents people from reaching out for help, limiting the support they receive from others.



Highlights for Ottawa[5]

Social determinants of health[i] impact residents' mental health. For instance, residents with:

LOWER INCOME

- Report lower self-rated mental health, happiness and life satisfaction.
- Are **three times** more likely to report food insecurity
- More often talk to a health professional about mental health.

LOWER EDUCATION LEVEL

- Report lower self-rated mental health, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being.

INCREASING AGE AND OLDER ADULTS OVER 65 YEARS

- Report lower happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being.

HOME RENTERS

- Report lower self-rated mental health, and life satisfaction.
- Are **three times** more likely to report food insecurity.

UNEMPLOYED/UNABLE TO WORK

- Report lower self-rated mental health, and life satisfaction
- More often talk to a health professional about mental health.



IMMIGRANTS ≤ 10 YEARS IN CANADA

- Report lower happiness and psychological well-being

LIVING ALONE

- Report lower social well-being

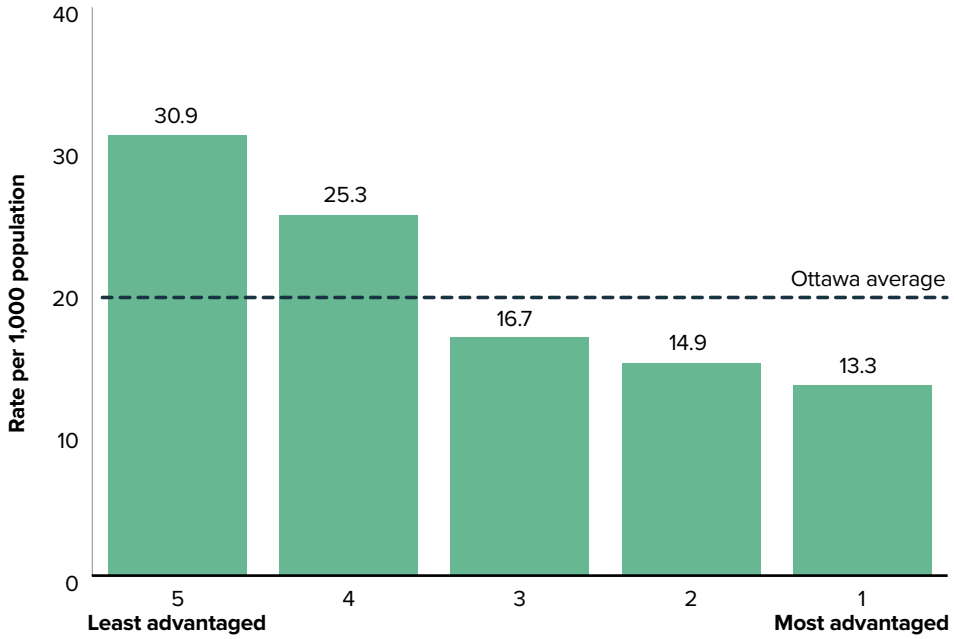
LESS ADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

- Have **more than twice** the rate of emergency department visits for mental health and addictions (Figure 2)

i The social determinants of health are the social, political and economic factors that impact where people live, learn, work and play. Over time, these interrelated factors such as income, education and employment impacts the health of individuals, populations and communities in different ways. (National Collaborating Centre for the determinants of Health. Glossary of Essential Health Equity Terms. (November 2014).)

FIGURE 2

Crude rate (per 1,000 population) of emergency department visits for any mental health or addictions condition, by Ottawa neighbourhood socio-economic advantage[ii], ages 10 years and older, 2014–2016



Source: Unscheduled ED visits for any mental health or addictions condition, NACRS Dataset [2014–2016]. Ontario MOHLTC, IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO. Extracted February 15, 2018 by Ottawa Public Health. Any mental health or addictions condition definition from ICES, 2017 [23]. Neighbourhood and socioeconomic status classification from the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study[24].

Key Points to Consider

- A health equity approach and strategies to address the impacts of the social determinants of health are critical to promote the mental health and resilience of residents.
- Continued efforts to increase access to and awareness of culturally based services and programs is vital.
- Reducing stigma and discrimination continues to be an important aspect to promote positive mental health, increase social support, and encourage early help seeking behaviours.

ii Socio-economic advantage is based on the education and income level of residents, unemployment rate, and the percentage of families that are lone-parent within a neighbourhood. (Ottawa Neighbourhood Study. Ottawa Neighbourhood Study 2018 [Available from: https://www.neighbourhoodstudy.ca/])

CONCLUSION

In general, many residents in Ottawa reported very good or excellent mental health, happiness and life satisfaction. At the same time, there are also populations who have poorer mental health, including those with fewer social connections to their family and community, and those facing inequities and stigma.

Using the data from this report, Ottawa Public Health will seek to work with its partners to focus on positive mental health promotion, mental illness prevention and stigma reduction efforts across the lifespan and for those who have poorer mental health. By using this data to inform programs, policies, data collection and research, we aim to positively impact the lives of all Ottawa residents and strive toward a mentally healthy city for all.

To learn more about the **Status of Mental Health in Ottawa Report**, please visit **ottawapublichealth.ca**.

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NOTES

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