

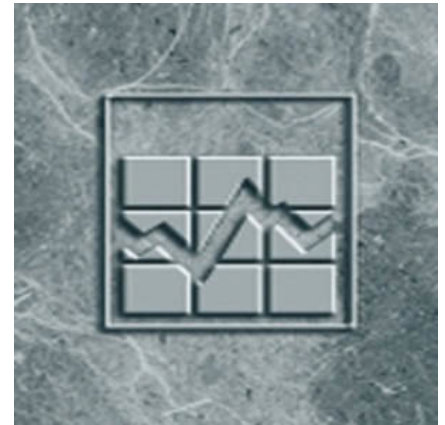
Catalogue no. 75F0002M  
ISSN 1707-2840  
ISBN 978-0-660-33062-4

## Income Research Paper Series

# Satisfaction of Canadian households with their neighbourhood: Highlights from the 2018 Canadian Housing Survey

by Jeannine Claveau

Release date: November 22, 2019



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# Satisfaction of Canadian households with their neighbourhood: Highlights from the 2018 Canadian Housing Survey

by Jeannine Claveau

## Introduction

*Location, Location, Location*—this familiar adage emphasizes the importance of neighbourhood. In real estate, the importance is focused primarily on price effects, but the neighbourhood is as important in meeting housing needs of Canadians.

The neighbourhood is often the place where households access services or facilities to meet their needs. A household's housing needs are affected by the neighbourhood when it facilitates or impedes access to items or services needed by the household. It can also affect a household's decision to move or stay.

This article examines neighbourhood satisfaction of Canadian households based on the results of the 2018 Canadian Housing Survey (CHS). The neighbourhood satisfaction level of the principal decision maker (the 'household reference person') is examined alongside satisfaction with selected neighbourhood items—such as neighbourhood disorder, safety and services—and socio-demographic and household characteristics.

This article provides a high-level overview of CHS results on neighbourhood satisfaction and as such does not include detailed comparisons at the neighbourhood level. The intent of this article is to provide new information as a starting point for further research using the CHS.

## Almost 9 in 10 Canadian households are very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood

Data from the 2018 CHS showed that the majority (85.6%) of households are very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood. The CHS found 43.0% of households are very satisfied with the neighbourhood and 41.0% are satisfied. About 9.8% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 3.7% of households are dissatisfied and 1.0% are very dissatisfied (Table 1).

## Among the largest 10 census metropolitan areas, the neighbourhood satisfaction rate is highest in Québec

Across the 10 largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs), the proportion of Canadians households reporting they are satisfied (satisfied or very satisfied) with their neighbourhood ranges from 82.2% in Toronto to a high of 92.5% in Québec (Table 2).

Residents of Québec (92.5%) and Montréal (88.2%) had neighbourhood satisfaction rates above the national average of 85.6%. While Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (85.5%), Ottawa-Gatineau (85.4%), Hamilton (85.4%), Winnipeg (83.8%), Calgary (82.5%), Edmonton (82.4%), Vancouver (82.3%), and Toronto (82.2%) had neighbourhood satisfaction rate below the national average.

## Lower population density is associated with higher neighbourhood satisfaction

Variations in neighbourhood satisfaction are associated with population density. Households living in rural areas were more satisfied with their neighbourhood at 91.4% than households living in small, medium and large urban population centres<sup>1</sup> of Canada. Moreover, households living in small population centres had a higher neighbourhood satisfaction rate (87.9%) than households living in medium (83.1%) and large urban population centres (83.8%) (Table 3).

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1. Population centre was defined as in the 2016 Census of Population. Population centres are classified into three groups, depending on the size of their population: • small population centres, with a population between 1,000 and 29,999 • medium population centres, with a population between 30,000 and 99,999 • large urban population centres, with a population of 100,000 or more. All areas outside population centres are classified as rural areas.

Even within CMAs and census agglomerations, households in neighbourhoods with a low population density were more satisfied with their neighbourhood than households in neighbourhoods with a high population density. For the top quarter of the households in the densest neighbourhoods, neighbourhood satisfaction was 80.8%—compared to 88.7% for bottom quarter of households.<sup>2</sup>

### **Households that do not feel safe or perceive issues in the neighbourhood have the lowest neighbourhood satisfaction**

Among the aspects of the neighbourhood captured in the 2018 CHS,<sup>3</sup> households that do not feel safe or perceive issues in the neighbourhood had the lowest neighbourhood satisfaction rate. About 13.7% of households indicated that they felt unsafe<sup>4</sup> from crime walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood (Table 4). Among these households, 62.0% were satisfied with their neighbourhood—compared to approximately 90% among other households.

Similar differences in neighbourhood satisfaction are also observed when households perceive issues in their neighbourhood. About 14% of households reported at least one neighbourhood issue as a “big problem”.<sup>5</sup> Among these households, 60.0% were satisfied with their neighbourhood compared to 89.9% for households that did not reported any big problems. These large differences in the neighbourhood satisfaction rate—of about 30 percentage points—are observed regardless of the type of problem reported.

### **Households in need of services that were not fulfilled in the neighbourhood have a lower neighbourhood satisfaction rate**

Differences in neighbourhood satisfaction were also observed when households’ need for services were not met. About one-third of Canadian households indicated that they needed a service that was not met in their neighbourhood.<sup>6</sup> (Table 5). Among these households, 79.0% were satisfied with their neighbourhood compared to 88.5% for other households.

Among the list of services enumerated in the 2018 CHS, medical services—such as community health centres and hospitals—were the services reported as unmet most often by Canadian households at 10.9%. Schools were the services reported least often by households as being unmet—with 1.9% of households reporting an unmet need for a school in their neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood satisfaction rate for households reporting an unmet need for a service ranges from 69.0% to 82.0%—which is consistently lower than the national neighbourhood satisfaction rate of 85.6% by about 17 percentage points or less depending on the service.

### **Sense of belonging to the community is related to satisfaction with neighbourhood**

About three quarters of households rated their satisfaction with feeling as part of their community at 6 or more on a scale of 0 to 10. These households had a higher neighbourhood satisfaction rate (91.4%) than households that provided a lower rating (70.0%) (Table 5).

2. Neighbourhood population density was defined using the 2016 Census tract (CT) population and 2016 CT land area. 2016 CTs are used to define the neighbourhood. For each household, population density was calculated as the 2016 CT population divided by the 2016 CT land area corresponding to the household’s CT. Unit of measure is number of persons per square kilometre.

3. The 2018 CHS captured the following aspects about the neighbourhood: neighbourhood satisfaction, need in services, neighbourhood services met within neighbourhood, neighbourhood safety and crime, neighbourhood issues, volunteering, and sense of belonging to the community.

4. Includes respondents that indicated they felt somewhat unsafe or very unsafe.

5. The 2018 CHS asked to the reference person of the household if noisy neighbours or loud parties, people hanging around on the streets, garbage or litter lying around, vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles, people being attacked or harassed because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion, people using or dealing drugs, people being drunk or rowdy in public places, abandoned buildings and smog or air pollution were big problems, moderate problems, small problems, or not problems at all.

6. The 2018 CHS asked to the reference person of the household if they have a high, moderate, low or no need of the following services: child care facilities, schools, employment services, medical services, community support services, parks, bike paths, playgrounds and other free or low-cost recreation facilities, public transportation, shops, stores or markets to buy things the households needs and cultural facilities. Then the reference person have to indicate if the need in the services was fully met, partially met or not met.

Interestingly, while a sense of belonging to the community is related to neighbourhood satisfaction, volunteering and participating in community groups were less related to neighbourhood satisfaction. About one-third of households reported doing volunteer work in the past 12 months and about 15% reported being a participant in a community group. However, these households did not have a neighbourhood satisfaction rate higher than the one for households that did not do volunteer work or were not participant in a community group in their neighbourhood. Households where the respondent did volunteering work in the past 12 months had a neighbourhood satisfaction rate of 87.1%—which is close to the rate of 84.8% for other households. Similarly, households where the respondent participated in a community group within the neighbourhood had a neighbourhood satisfaction rate of 89.0% versus a rate of 84.9% for other households.

### **Neighbourhood satisfaction is lower for renters younger than 55 years old in social and affordable housing**

Since homeownership is strongly related to age, housing tenure and age are generally considered jointly.

Data from the 2018 CHS showed that neighbourhood satisfaction varies across age groups and housing tenures, which is a reflection of different circumstances and needs at different stages of life.

In general, owner households have a higher neighbourhood satisfaction rate (87.9%) than renters (80.4%) (Table 3). Renters in social and affordable housing have a lower neighbourhood satisfaction rate than other renters (75.0% versus 81.2%; Table 3).

Small differences in neighbourhood satisfaction are also observed when looking at the age of the reference person. A notable exception occurs among households in social and affordable housing. The neighbourhood satisfaction rate among these households is lower when the reference person is younger than 55 years old—around 63% to 66% compared to about 80% or more in other age groups and housing tenures (Table 6).

### **Neighbourhood satisfaction is lower for renters in social and affordable housing who have children**

Among renter households, households with children have a lower neighbourhood satisfaction rate than other households. This is particularly true among households in social and affordable housing—where lone-parent households and couple households with children have a neighbourhood satisfaction rate of 65.0% and 64.0%, respectively (Table 6), which is about 16 percentage points lower compared to the neighbourhood satisfaction rate of renter households (80.4%).

### **Likelihood of being in a household that is satisfied with the neighbourhood is similar across most demographic groups**

In this section, the characteristics of all persons in households—not just the reference person—are examined to see if certain population groups are more likely to be living in housing where the reference person is satisfied with their neighbourhood rather than dissatisfied.

The likelihood of being in a household that is satisfied with the neighbourhood is similar across many demographic characteristics. To elaborate, across categories of gender, marital status, level of education, aboriginal identity and veteran status the proportion of people in households that are satisfied with their neighbourhood falls in the narrow range of 84.3% to 87.7% (Table 7).

However, there are exceptions where certain population groups are less likely to be in households that are satisfied with their neighbourhood, populations groups by age is one such exception. Across the different age groups, the proportion of households satisfied with their neighbourhood ranges from a low of 83.4% for persons aged 25 to 34 years and a high of 91.3% for persons aged 75 years and older.

Persons looking for a job are also less likely to be in households that are satisfied with their neighbourhood. Only 79.0% of them were in households that are satisfied with their neighbourhood.

Lastly, the likelihood of being in a household that is satisfied with their neighbourhood varied by visible minority status. About 80.8% of visible minorities were in a household that is satisfied with their neighbourhood—compared to 87.6% for persons that are not part of a visible minority.

It is important to note that while certain population groups are less likely to be in households that are satisfied with the neighbourhood, the relationship between the population group characteristics and the neighbourhood satisfaction is complex and can reflect many factors. For example, population groups where differences are observed tend also to be groups that may be in a period of housing transition. The lower neighbourhood satisfaction could be a reflection of housing instability or being new to a neighbourhood.

**Table 1**  
**Neighbourhood satisfaction, by Canada, 2018**

	Percentage of households <sup>1</sup>
Very satisfied or satisfied	85.6
Very satisfied	43.0
Satisfied	41.0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9.8
Dissatisfied	3.7
Very dissatisfied	1.0

1. In the calculation of percentages, the denominator includes households where neighbourhood satisfaction is not known.

Source: 2018 Canadian Housing Survey.

**Table 2**  
**Neighbourhood satisfaction, by Canada and selected census metropolitan areas, 2018**

	Neighbourhood satisfaction (%) <sup>1,2</sup>
Canada	85.6
<b>Census metropolitan area</b>	
Québec	92.5
Montréal	88.2
Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo	85.5
Ottawa-Gatineau	85.4
Hamilton	85.4
Winnipeg	83.8
Calgary	82.5
Edmonton	82.4
Vancouver	82.3
Toronto	82.2

1. Neighbourhood satisfaction corresponds to the proportion of Canadian households reporting they are very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood.

2. In the calculation of percentages, the denominator includes households where neighbourhood satisfaction is not known.

Source: 2018 Canadian Housing Survey.

**Table 3**  
**Neighbourhood satisfaction by population centre, neighbourhood population density, tenure and social and affordable housing status, Canada, 2018**

	Neighbourhood satisfaction (%) <sup>1,2</sup>
<b>Population centre</b>	
Rural	91.4
Small population centre	87.9
Medium population centre	83.1
Large urban population centre	83.8
<b>Neighbourhood population density (number of persons per square kilometre)<sup>3</sup></b>	
Lowest quartile of households (population density less than 1,344)	88.7
Second quartile of households (population density between 1,344 and 2,682)	86.0
Third quartile of households (population density between 2,682 and 4,699)	82.6
Highest quartile of households (population density greater than 4,699)	80.8
<b>Tenure</b>	
Owner	87.9
Renter	80.4
<b>Social and affordable housing status</b>	
Renter in social and affordable housing	75.0
Renter not in social and affordable housing	81.2

1. Neighbourhood satisfaction corresponds to the proportion of Canadian households reporting they are very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood.

2. In the calculation of percentages, the denominator includes households where neighbourhood satisfaction is not known.

3. Neighbourhood population density was defined using the 2016 Census tract (CT) population and 2016 CT land area. 2016 CTs are used to define the neighbourhood. For each household, population density was calculated as the 2016 CT population divided by the 2016 CT land area corresponding to the household's CT. Unit of measure is number of persons per square kilometre.

Source: 2018 Canadian Housing Survey.



**Table 4**  
**Percentage distribution of households and neighbourhood satisfaction rate by perception of safety, number and type of neighbourhood issues, Canada, 2018**

	Percentage of households <sup>2</sup>	Neighbourhood satisfaction (%) <sup>1,2</sup>
<b>Perception of safety<sup>3</sup></b>		
Unsafe	13.7	62.0
Safe	73.0	90.4
Do not walk alone	12.3	82.0
<b>Number of neighbourhood issues reported as a big problem<sup>4</sup></b>		
No neighbourhood issues	83.4	89.9
At least one neighbourhood issue	14.1	60.0
<b>Type of neighbourhood issues reported as big problem<sup>4</sup></b>		
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	3.0	51.0
People hanging around on the streets	3.2	47.0
Garbage or litter lying around	5.0	54.0
Vandalism, graffiti and other damage to property or vehicles	3.7	58.0
People attacked because of skin colour, ethnicity or religion	1.8	58.0
People using or dealing drugs	7.0	55.0
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	3.9	54.0
Abandoned buildings	1.7	66.0
Smog or air pollution	3.3	64.0

1. Neighbourhood satisfaction corresponds to the proportion of Canadian households reporting they are very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood.

2. In the calculation of percentages, the denominator includes households where neighbourhood satisfaction, perception of safety or number and type of neighbourhood issues are not known.

3. For perception of safety, the category "unsafe" includes respondents that indicated they felt somewhat unsafe or very unsafe from crime walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood. "Safe" includes respondents that indicated they felt very safe or reasonably safe from crime walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood.

4. Northwest Territories is excluded from calculation of the percentages for number and type of neighbourhood issues.

Source: 2018 Canadian Housing Survey.

**Table 5**  
**Percentage distribution of households and neighbourhood satisfaction rate by number and type of unmet services, volunteering, participation in a community group and sense of belonging to the community, Canada, 2018**

	Percentage of households <sup>2</sup>	Neighbourhood satisfaction (%) <sup>1,2</sup>
<b>Number of unmet services<sup>3</sup></b>		
No unmet need for services in the neighbourhood	67.0	88.5
At least one unmet need for services in the neighbourhood	29.0	79.0
<b>Type of unmet services<sup>3</sup></b>		
Child care facilities	2.9	73.0
Schools	1.9	75.0
Employment services	6.9	73.0
Medical services	10.9	79.0
Community support services	5.2	72.0
Parks, bike paths, playgrounds, other free or low-cost recreation facilities	4.4	69.0
Public transportation	8.4	82.0
Shops, stores or markets to buy things households need	6.8	77.0
Cultural facilities	10.0	77.0
<b>Volunteering</b>		
Did volunteer work in the past 12 months	32.0	87.1
Did not do volunteer work in the past 12 months	67.0	84.8
<b>Participation in a community group<sup>3</sup></b>		
Participant in a community group within the neighbourhood	16.2	89.0
Not a participant in a community group within the neighbourhood	83.8	84.9
<b>Sense of belonging to the community</b>		
Rating of 0 (very dissatisfied) to 5	27.0	70.0
Rating of 6 to 10 (very satisfied)	71.0	91.4

1. Neighbourhood satisfaction corresponds to the proportion of Canadian households reporting they are very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood.

2. In the calculation of percentages, the denominator includes households where neighbourhood satisfaction, number and type of unmet services, volunteering, participation in a community group or sense of belonging to the community are not known.

3. Northwest Territories is excluded from calculation of the percentages for number and type of unmet services and participation in a community group.

Source: 2018 Canadian Housing Survey.

**Table 6**  
**Neighbourhood satisfaction by tenure, age group and household type, Canada, 2018**

	Neighbourhood satisfaction (%) <sup>1,2</sup>			
	Owner	Renter	Renter in social and affordable	Renter not in social and affordable
<b>Age group of reference person of the household</b>				
Less than 35 years	84.2	78.0	63.0	79.0
35 to 54 years	86.2	77.0	66.0	78.0
55 to 64 years	88.7	80.3	80.3	80.3
65 years and older	91.3	87.4	85.3	88.0
<b>Household type</b>				
One couple household with children <sup>3</sup>	88.8	77.0	64.0	78.0
One couple household without children <sup>3</sup>	90.0	82.7	80.3	82.8
One lone-parent household <sup>3</sup>	84.5	72.0	65.0	75.0
One-person household	86.2	82.4	80.6	82.8
Other household type	85.2	80.2	73.0	80.7

1. Neighbourhood satisfaction corresponds to the proportion of Canadian households reporting they are very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood.

2. In the calculation of percentages, the denominator includes households where neighbourhood satisfaction is not known.

3. For household type, the categories "one couple household with children", "one couple household without children" and "one lone-parent household" do not include additional persons.

Source: 2018 Canadian Housing Survey.

**Table 7**  
**Neighbourhood satisfaction by gender, age group, marital status, highest level of education, main activity in the past 12 months, visible minority, aboriginal identity and veteran status, Canada, 2018**

Percentage of persons in households that are very satisfied or satisfied with the neighbourhood <sup>1,2</sup>	
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	85.7
Female	85.9
<b>Age group</b>	
0 to 14 years	85.3
15 to 24 years	84.2
25 to 34 years	83.4
35 to 44 years	84.5
45 to 54 years	84.5
55 to 64 years	87.2
65 to 74 years	89.2
75 years and older	91.3
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married	87.5
Living common law	85.8
Never married (not living common law)	84.3
Separated/divorced/widowed (not living common law)	85.0
<b>Highest level of education</b>	
Less than high school graduation	85.9
High school diploma or equivalent	85.3
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma and college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	85.5
University certificate, diploma or degree	86.5
<b>Main activity in the last 12 months</b>	
Working at a paid job or self-employed	85.7
Looking for job	79.0
Going to school	84.0
Keeping house, caring for other family members	85.0
Retired	90.1
Other	81.7
<b>Visible minority</b>	
Visible minority	80.8
Not a visible minority	87.6
<b>Aboriginal identity</b>	
Aboriginal	84.3
Non-Aboriginal	85.8
<b>Veteran status</b>	
Veteran	87.7
Currently a member of the Canadian Armed Forces	84.7
Never had Canadian military service	85.8

1. The percentage of persons very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood represents the percentage of persons living in housing where the reference person reported to be very satisfied or satisfied with their neighbourhood.

2. In the calculation of percentages, the denominator includes households where neighbourhood satisfaction is not known and persons where marital status, highest level of education, main activity in the past 12 months, visible minority, aboriginal identity or veteran status are not known.

Source: 2018 Canadian Housing Survey.

## Note to readers

### Neighbourhood satisfaction of the reference person

The 2018 CHS asked to household's respondent to rate their overall satisfaction on a five-point scale: "Very satisfied", "satisfied", "neither satisfied or dissatisfied", "dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied". One person ('the reference person' in each sampled household) was asked to complete the questionnaire. The reference person is the household member that is responsible for housing decisions. In cases where members share responsibility for housing decisions, one person was chosen to be the reference person. Therefore, answers to the neighbourhood satisfaction questions represent the perspective of the reference person and do not represent the neighbourhood satisfaction of all members of the household.

### Northwest Territories (N.W.T.)

The CHS data for N.W.T. is obtained through a partnership with NWT Bureau of Statistics. In lieu of collecting the CHS in N.W.T., data is obtained from the 2019 NWT Community Survey (NCS)—which collects housing information similar to the information collected on the CHS.

For some of the concepts used in this research paper, the survey questions were worded differently between the CHS and the NCS. Estimates related to these concepts use data from both sources to produce a Canada-level estimate, as the questions are similar and still capture the same concept. The affected concepts include:

- Neighbourhood satisfaction: The 2018 CHS asked the reference person "How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood?" The 2019 NCS asked the respondent "How satisfied are you with your community?"
- Perception of safety: The perception of safety was collected in the 2018 CHS by the question "How safe do you feel from crime walking alone in your area after dark?" The 2019 NCS asked "How safe do you feel from crime walking alone in your community?"
- Volunteering: The 2018 CHS asked the reference person "In the past 12 months, did you do unpaid volunteer work for any organization?" The 2019 NCS asked for each member of the household "In the past 12 months, did ... volunteer for any of the following activities without pay on behalf of a group or organization?"

Some concepts, while captured in both the CHS and NCS, were different enough that they are not comparable. Estimates related to these concepts use only data from the CHS to produce a Canada-level estimate. That is, Canada-level estimates for these concepts do not include N.W.T. The affected concepts include:

- Neighbourhood issues
- Neighbourhood services
- Participation in a community group