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The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation: User Guide, 2021

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Additionally, CCJCSS also acknowledges the contributions of several divisions at Statistics Canada, including the Social Statistics Methods Division, the International Cooperation and Methodology Innovation Centre, the Dissemination Division, the Standards Division, the Centre for Indigenous Statistics and Partnerships, and the Census Operations Division.

The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation: User Guide

Background of the Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation

By their very nature, measures of deprivation and marginalization can be difficult to analyze through traditional administrative data sources simply because certain populations of interest may not be well-represented. The use of area-based, geographically-derived indexes, however, have a long history and are increasingly used in social population research (e.g., health, education and justice). One of the benefits of these indexes is that they can provide information for even the most marginalized populations.

One such index, developed by the research team led by Dr. Flora Matheson at St. Michael's Hospital, is the 2006 Canadian Marginalization Index (CAN-Marg) (Matheson et al., 2012a, Matheson et al., 2012b). Having used the 2006 CAN-Marg to inform research concerning issues of overrepresentation in the justice system, the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics (CCJCSS) at Statistics Canada worked in collaboration with Dr. Matheson and her team to develop a revised index using the most recent microdata from the 2016 Census of Population.

As part of the 2016 index, it was decided to develop both national and provincial/regional indexes. As a result of the change in scope to include these sub-national indexes, the methodology employed in the process varied from that used for the 2006 CAN-Marg. Given the nature and extent of the changes relative to the 2006 CAN-Marg, the 2016 index was renamed the "Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation" (CIMD). In addition, the four associated dimensions of deprivation were also revised and re-named to ensure a better reflection of the data included within each dimension. The new dimensions of deprivation included in the CIMD are as follows: residential instability, economic dependency, ethno-cultural composition and situational vulnerability.

It should be noted that as the CAN-Marg and the CIMD share a similar foundation, they should be viewed as complementary data sources. Whereas the CAN-Marg is longitudinal in nature, using the same census variables across iterations of the index to allow for comparisons across time, the CIMD accounts for the evolving nature of the variables associated with marginalization and provides users with a dynamic cross-sectional view of deprivation. In particular, because the CIMD is designed to be a snapshot of deprivation in Canada, it can take into account changes in the availability of census demographic and sociodemographic indicators (i.e., new indicators can be considered for inclusion in the index at every census year), and also reflects current census geography (i.e., any revisions to boundary delineations). Moreover, the CIMD is constructed based on variables taken directly from the Census, prior to any rounding or suppression that occurs for publication, thereby increasing the precision in the findings.

Given the uptake of the CIMD among researchers and government agencies for summarizing area-level deprivation and assessing its relationship with other social phenomena, Statistics Canada has produced another iteration of the measure using the 2021 Census data, which will provide researchers and policy makers with the most up-to-date demographic and socioeconomic information available. This version, CIMD 2021, follows the work done on CAN-Marg and CIMD 2016.

The information in this user guide outlines uses for the index as well as a brief description of the methodology behind the development of all included indexes. This user guide also provides instructions on how to use the index, considerations when using the CIMD data, as well as instructions for citing the index.

Uses for the index

The CIMD allows for an understanding of inequalities through various measures of social well-being, including health, education and justice. Although it is a geographically-based index of deprivation and marginalization, it can also be used as a proxy for an individual.¹ When coupled with a research file, the CIMD can be used for comparisons by geographical location or by selected sub-groups (e.g., males versus females, those having contact with the justice system versus those who have not, etc.). As a result, the CIMD has the potential to be widely used by researchers on a variety of topics related to socio-economic research. Other uses for the index include:

1. **Policy planning and evaluation.** The CIMD serves as an area-based measure of socio-economic conditions and, as such, it can help to better understand social inequalities by region, especially outside major urban centres for which data may not be as readily available. For example, if the objective is to better understand neighbourhoods requiring a need for more affordable housing, the CIMD could help identify neighbourhoods in need of additional resources.
2. **Research and analysis.** The CIMD can be used as a proxy for individual-level information, meaning that information is available for various populations of interest. As a result, the CIMD could be used to analyze various issues, such as the socio-economic inequalities between people who have one contact with the criminal justice system versus those who have repeated contact.
3. **Resource allocation.** As a geographical measure of health and social well-being, the CIMD can be used to identify marginalized communities and allow for better allocation of resources. For instance, in light of the recent opioid crisis in many areas of Canada, the CIMD could be used to better understand characteristics of areas in which overdoses appear to be highest, and therefore assist in the planning and allocating of resources that are required and help reduce the number of instances.

Methodology

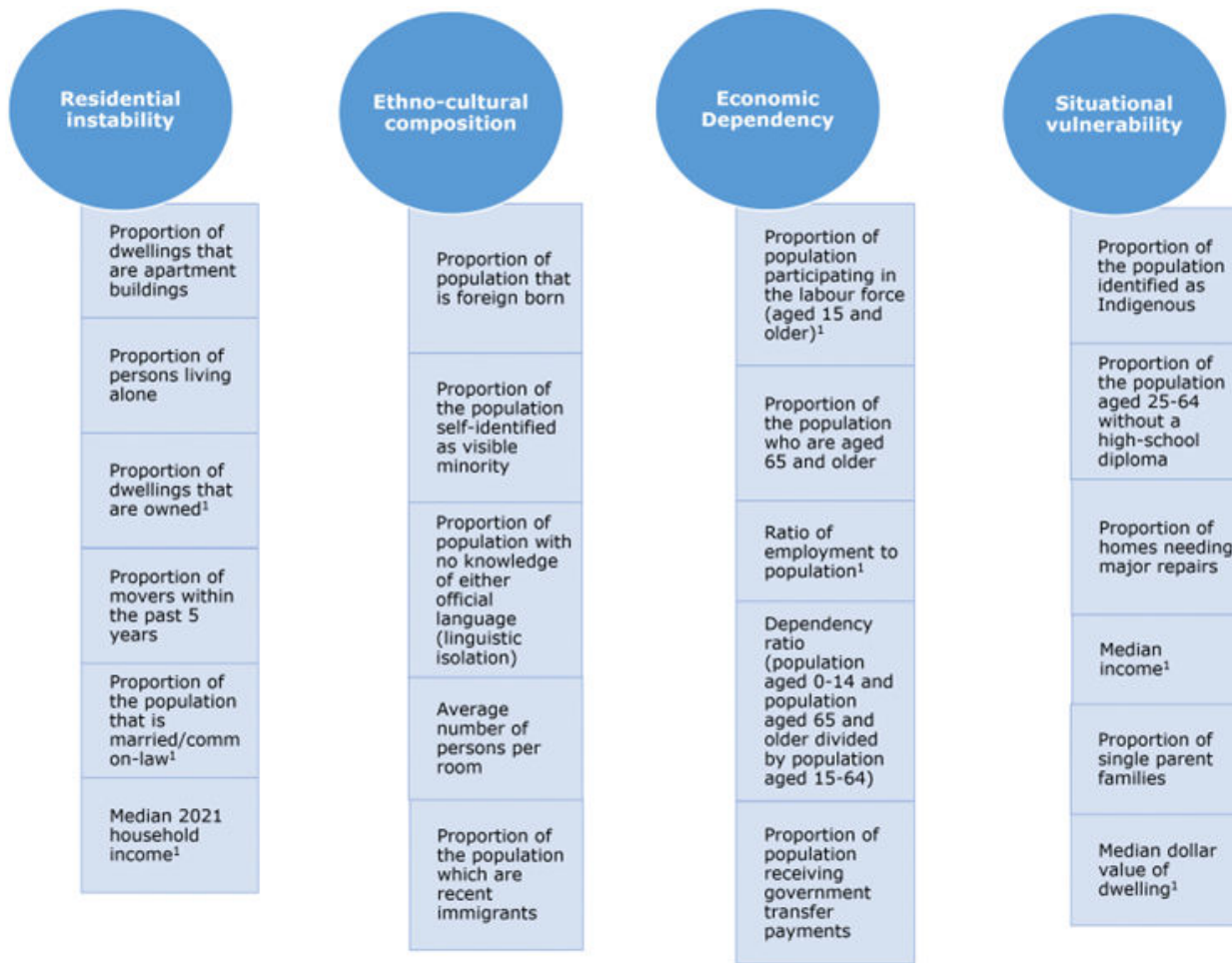
To create CIMD 2021, microdata from the 2021 Census of Population were used to derive indicators at the dissemination area (DA) level. A DA is a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more adjacent dissemination blocks² where populations generally range from 400 to 700 persons. DAs cover all the territory of Canada and are the smallest standard geographic area for which all census data are disseminated. Using data from the provinces, the index provides information for 55,850 DAs. For more information on the Census of Population, see Statistics Canada, 2021.

Creating the 2021 dimensions of deprivation

Principal component analysis, which summarizes data so that relationships and patterns can be easily interpreted and understood, was used for CIMD 2021. This statistical technique reduces a large number of variables into a few numbers of components by grouping variables into distinct themes. It allows researchers to investigate concepts that are not easily measured by collapsing a large number of variables into a few interpretable components. In component analysis, each component captures a certain amount of overall variation in the observed variables. The components that explain the least amount of variance are typically discarded.³

For the purpose of constructing CIMD 2021, thirty-nine variables were chosen for the preliminary model. These variables were selected because of their known association with deprivation and marginalization, as established by the CAN-Marg and through consultations with subject matter experts. Some variables were conceptually similar to others, so a preliminary principal component analysis was conducted to identify variables that were found to be related to multiple themes. The variables that were conceptually redundant with others were subsequently removed, resulting in 32 initial input variables (Appendix A). The next step was to remove variables that were not significantly correlated with any components. This resulted in 22 variables contributing to four dimensions of deprivation for the national index (Figure 1).

Figure 1
The four dimensions of multiple deprivation and their corresponding indicators, Canada, 2021



1. This indicator was reverse-coded, meaning it was coded opposite of the measure. For example, proportion of the population that is married or common-law becomes proportion of population that is single, divorced, separated or widowed.

Note: The dimensions are ordered such that the dimension on the left explains the highest percentage of the variance of the data and the dimension on the right explains the lowest percentage. Excludes the territories.

Source: Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation 2021, based on the 2021 Census of Population Long-Form.

Dimensions and corresponding indicators

As with CIMD 2016, the four dimensions of deprivation included in CIMD 2021 are: residential instability, economic dependency, ethno-cultural composition and situational vulnerability. Each dimension, as described below, encapsulates a comprehensive range of concepts, providing the user with multi-faceted data to examine different aspects of deprivation.

The first dimension of deprivation, **residential instability**, speaks to the tendency of neighbourhood inhabitants to fluctuate over time, taking into consideration both housing and familial characteristics. For example, the indicators in this dimension at the national-level measure concepts such as the proportion of the population who have moved in the past five years, the proportion of persons living alone, and the proportion of occupied units that are rented rather than owned.

Economic dependency, the second dimension of deprivation, relates to reliance on the workforce, or a dependence on sources of income other than employment income. For example, the indicators included in this dimension, at the national-level, measure concepts such as the proportion of the population aged 65 and older, the dependency ratio (the population aged 0-14 and population aged 65 and older divided by the population aged 15-64), and the proportion of the population not participating in the labour force.

The third dimension of deprivation is **ethno-cultural composition**. This dimension refers to the community make-up of immigrant populations, and at the national-level, for example, takes into consideration indicators such as the proportion of population who are recent immigrants, the proportion of the population who self-identified as visible minority,⁴ the proportion of the population born outside of Canada, and the proportion of the population with no knowledge of either official language (linguistic isolation).

Situational vulnerability, the fourth dimension, speaks to variations in socio-demographic conditions in the areas of housing and education, while taking into account other demographic characteristics. For example, the indicators in this dimension at the national-level measure concepts such as the proportion of the population aged 25 to 64 without a high-school diploma, the proportion of the population identifying as Indigenous, and the proportion of dwellings needing major repairs.

A separate principal component analysis was conducted for the national index and each of the provincial/regional indexes. The following section provides specifics regarding the composition of each index for each province/region.

Provincial and regional indexes

In addition to the national index, three provincial and two regional indexes were developed. The provincial indexes were developed for Québec, Ontario and British Columbia. Given confidentiality and data quality considerations, data for the Atlantic provinces, and the Prairie provinces were grouped to create indexes at the regional level. Specifically, CIMD 2021 is available for the Atlantic region (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) and the Prairie region (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta). The Territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut) were excluded from the analysis, as the components which were found to be relevant in the provinces were not found to be applicable in the territorial context.

In order to create the provincial and regional indexes, the 32 initial input variables that were associated with the four dimensions of deprivation at the national level were used as the starting point. From there, the same process of principal component analysis that was used for the national index was performed using the corresponding microdata for each of the three provinces and two regions.

The composition of the provincial and regional indexes varies as a result of different indicator variables loading within the four dimensions of deprivation for each province and region. For example, the variable related to single parent families is an indicator of deprivation within the dimension of situational vulnerability for British Columbia, but not at the national-level. These individual indexes, therefore, better illustrate differences of deprivation—as well as inequalities in various measures of socio-economic characteristics—within the different provinces and regions.

When to use the national or provincial and regional indexes

It is important to note that provincial and regional indexes should not be directly compared, as the variables included within each of the four dimensions vary depending on the index. For comparability across provinces and regions, the national-level CIMD should be used.

Defining the area of study can help determine which index to use—the national index or a specific provincial or regional index. For example, if the objective is to compare areas of deprivation between provinces or regions, or between Canada and a selected province or region, then the national index should be used, because the variables included in each dimension of deprivation are constant for all areas. Although DAs and provincial/regional scores appear in both the national index as well as the respective provincial and regional index, component scores, quintile values and indicator variables will differ depending on the index in question.

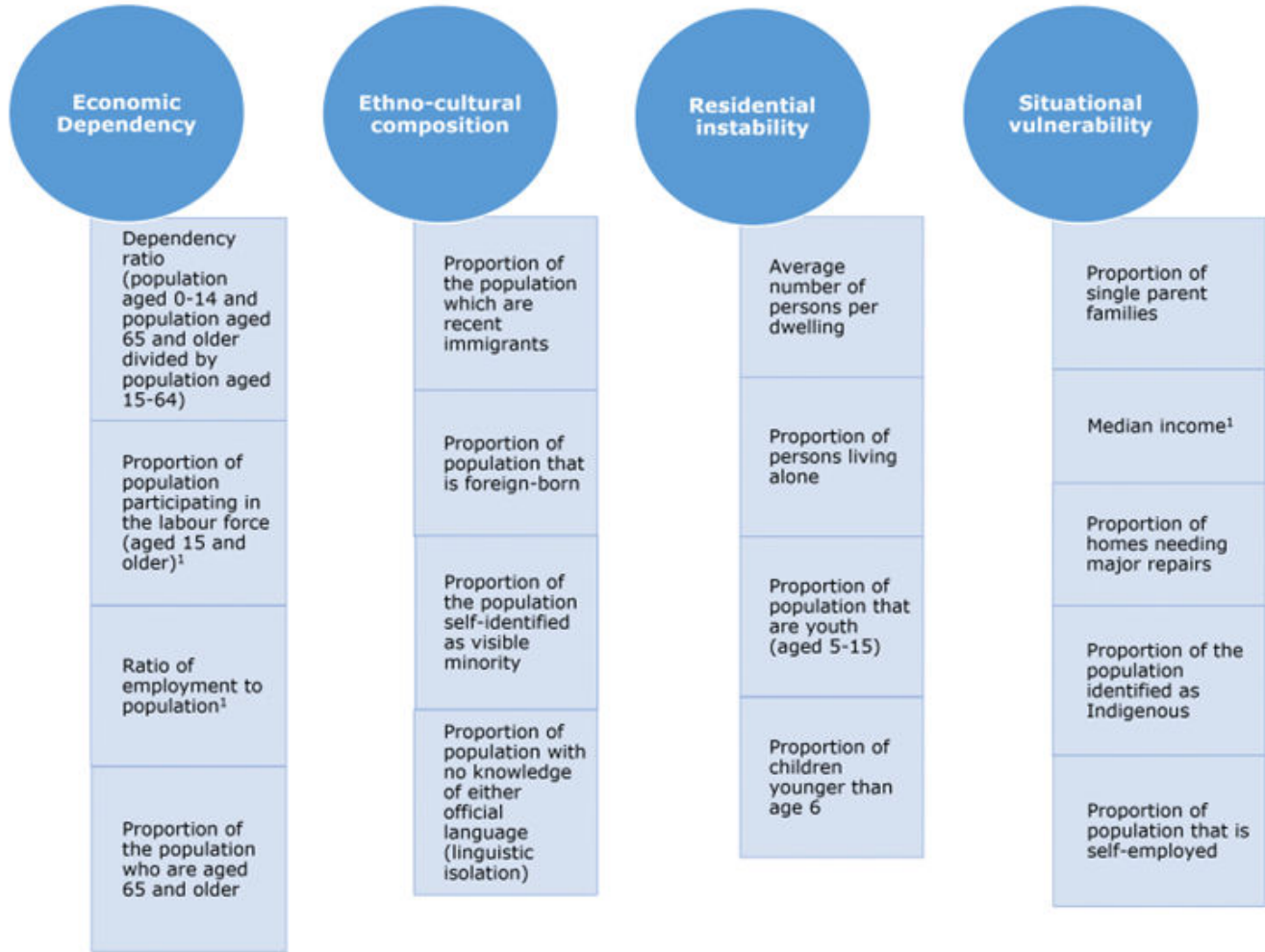
The provincial and regional indexes should be used when users are interested in comparing levels of deprivation for DAs **within** a certain province or region, as they provide a finer level of granularity. For instance, to compare residential instabilities within major cities in a specific province, then the index for that specific province should be used. For information specific to a province included in a regional index, the province variable within the CIMD file can be used to isolate the requisite DAs for the selected province.

The figures that follow illustrate the variables that loaded into the four dimensions of deprivation for each of the provincial and regional indexes.

The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation: Atlantic region

In the Atlantic region, which includes Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 19 of the 32 input variables were found to be associated with the four dimensions of deprivation (Figure 2). In total, data are available for 4,423 DAs in the Atlantic region.

Figure 2
The four dimensions of multiple deprivation and their corresponding indicators, Atlantic region, 2021



1. This indicator was reverse-coded, meaning it was coded opposite of the measure. For example, proportion of the population that is married or common-law becomes proportion of population that is single, divorced, separated or widowed.

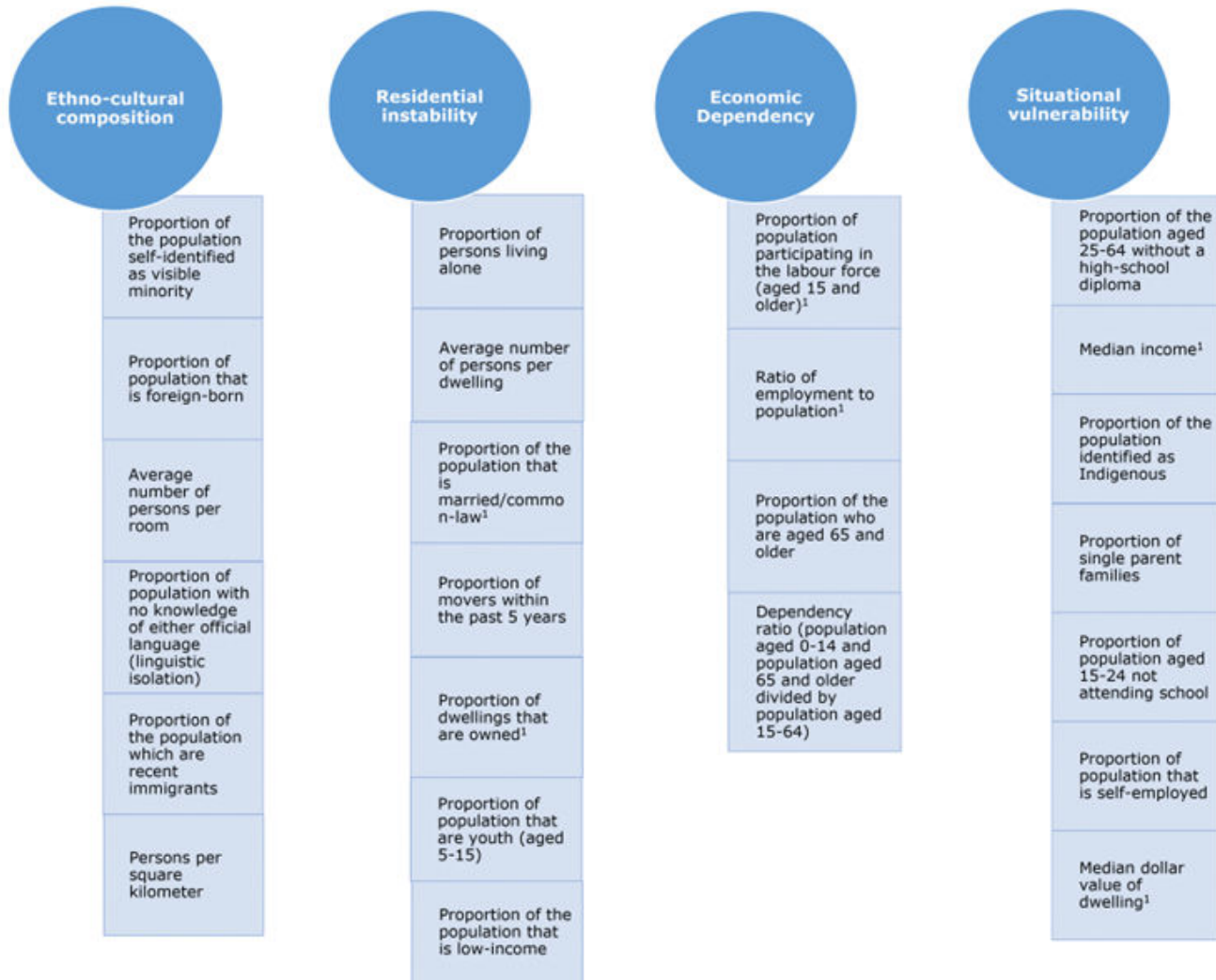
Note: The Atlantic region includes the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The dimensions are ordered such that the dimension on the left explains the highest percentage of the variance of the data and the dimension on the right explains the lowest percentage.

Source: Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation 2021, based on the 2021 Census of Population Long-Form.

The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation: Québec

In Québec, 24 of the 32 input variables were found to be associated with the four dimensions of deprivation (Figure 3). Data are available for 13,542 DAs in Québec.

Figure 3
The four dimensions of multiple deprivation and their corresponding indicators, Québec, 2021



1. This indicator was reverse-coded, meaning it was coded opposite of the measure. For example, proportion of the population that is married or common-law becomes proportion of population that is single, divorced, separated or widowed.

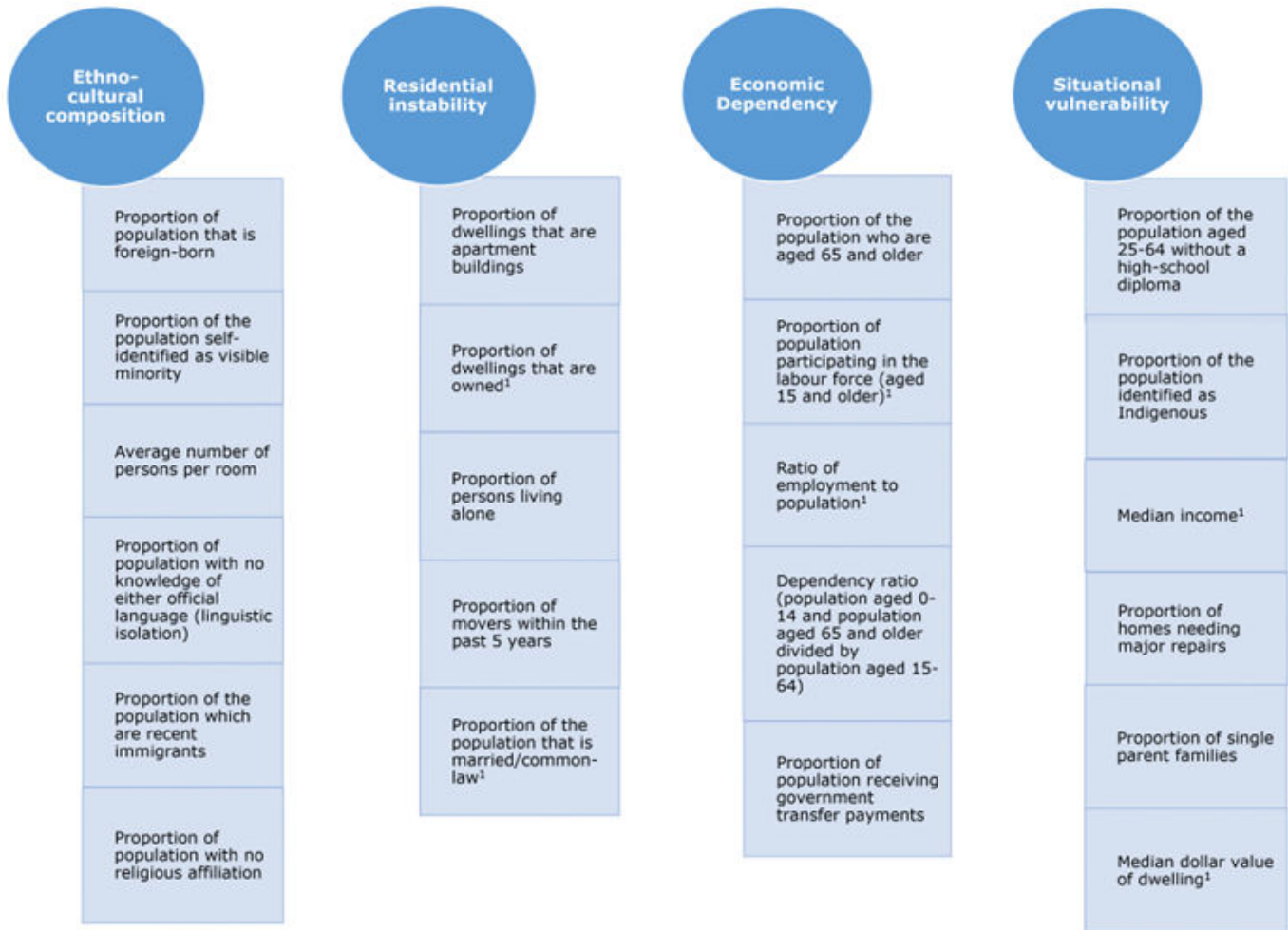
Note: The dimensions are ordered such that the dimension on the left explains the highest percentage of the variance of the data and the dimension on the right explains the lowest percentage.

Source: Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation 2021, based on the 2021 Census of Population Long-Form.

The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation: Ontario

In Ontario, 23 of the 32 input variables were found to be associated with the four dimensions of deprivation (Figure 4). Data are available for 20,175 DAs in Ontario.

Figure 4
The four dimensions of multiple deprivation and their corresponding indicators, Ontario, 2021



1. This indicator was reverse-coded, meaning it was coded opposite of the measure. For example, proportion of the population that is married or common-law becomes proportion of population that is single, divorced, separated or widowed.

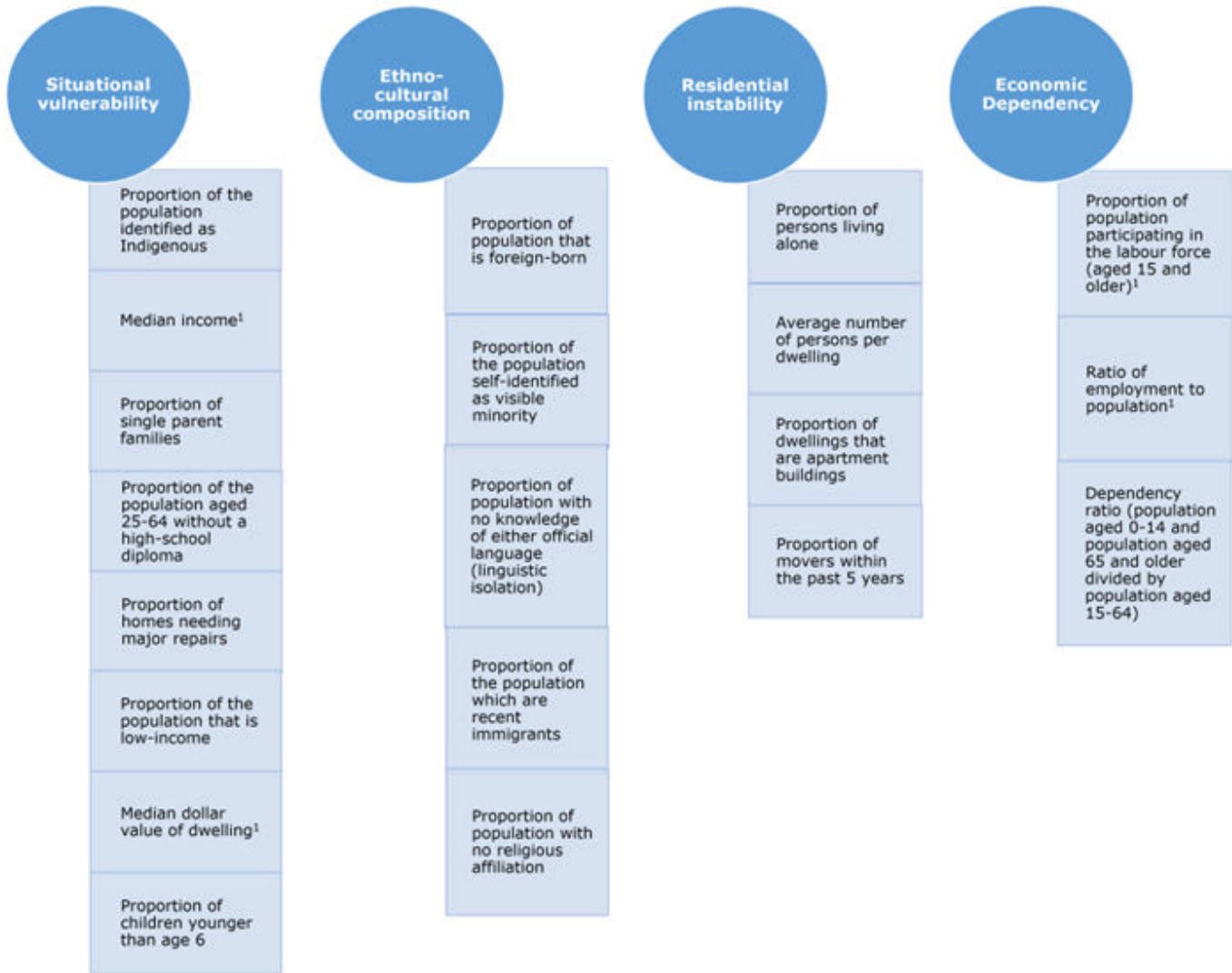
Note: The dimensions are ordered such that the dimension on the left explains the highest percentage of the variance of the data and the dimension on the right explains the lowest percentage.

Source: Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation 2021, based on the 2021 Census of Population Long-Form.

The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation: Prairie region

In the Prairie region, which includes Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, 23 of the 32 input variables were found to be associated with the four dimensions of deprivation (Figure 5). In total, data are available for 10,302 DAs in the Prairie region.

Figure 5
The four dimensions of multiple deprivation and their corresponding indicators, Prairie region, 2021



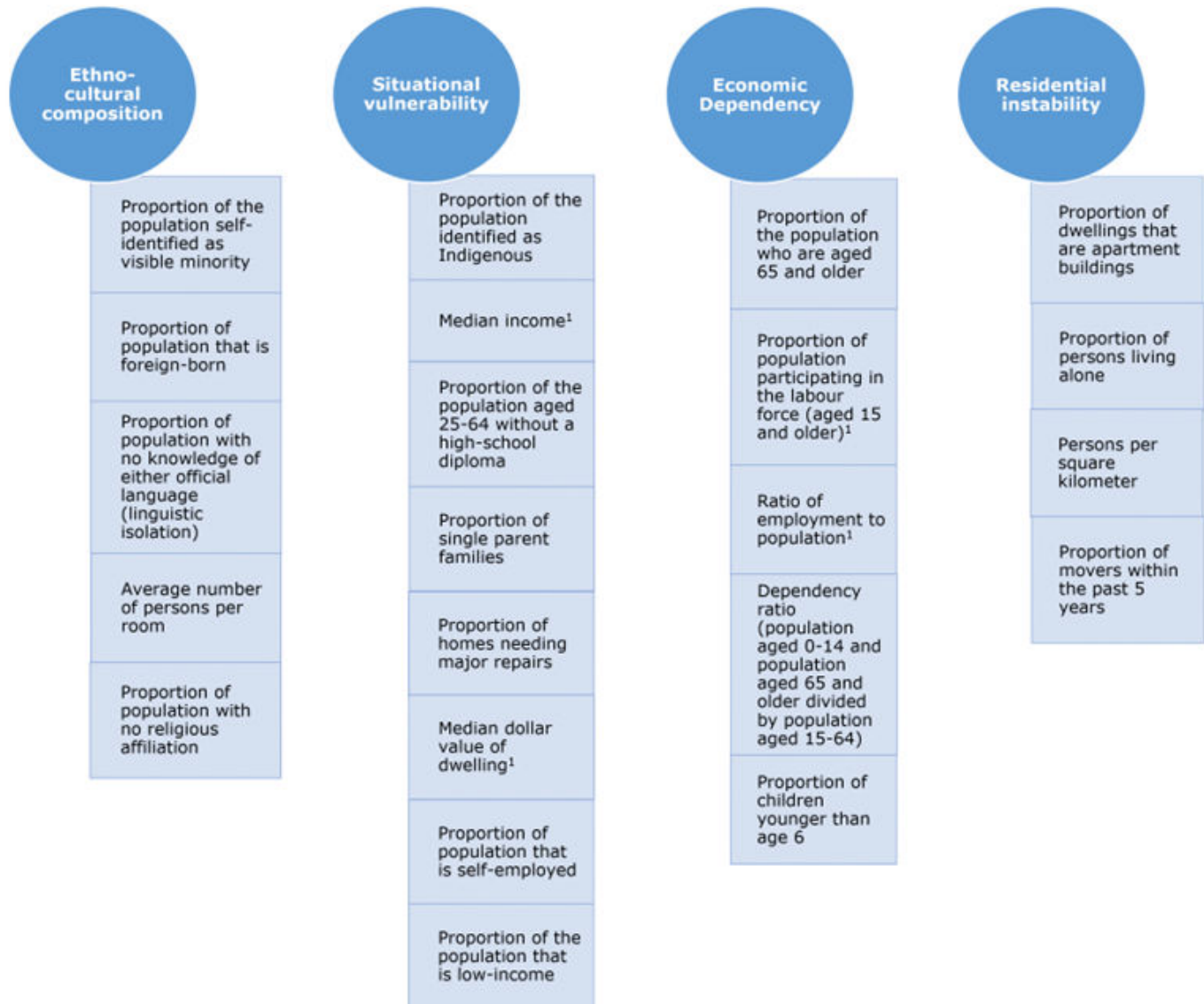
1. This indicator was reverse-coded, meaning it was coded opposite of the measure. For example, proportion of the population that is married or common-law becomes proportion of population that is single, divorced, separated or widowed.
Note: The Prairie region includes the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The dimensions are ordered such that the dimension on the left explains the highest percentage of the variance of the data and the dimension on the right explains the lowest percentage.

Source: Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation 2021, based on the 2021 Census of Population Long-Form.

The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation: British Columbia

In British Columbia, 22 of the 32 input variables were found to be associated with the four dimensions of deprivation (Figure 6). Data are available for 7,408 DAs in British Columbia.

Figure 6
The four dimensions of multiple deprivation and their corresponding indicators, British Columbia, 2021



1. This indicator was reverse-coded, meaning it was coded opposite of the measure. For example, proportion of the population that is married or common-law becomes proportion of population that is single, divorced, separated or widowed.
Note: The dimensions are ordered such that the dimension on the left explains the highest percentage of the variance of the data and the dimension on the right explains the lowest percentage.
Source: Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation 2021, based on the 2021 Census of Population Long-Form.

Analytical guidelines

For each dimension, CIMD is provided in two forms: component scores⁵ and quintiles.

Component scores were constructed from the component analysis process. Lower scores for each dimension correspond to areas that are the least marginalized, while higher scores for each dimension relate to areas that are the most marginalized.

For ease of use, CIMD also provides users with **quintile rankings**. Within each dimension, the component scores were ordered from smallest to largest and then divided into five equally sized groups, or quintiles, and categorized from 1 through 5. A value of 1 corresponds to DAs that were the least deprived for that dimension, and a value of 5 corresponds to DAs that were the most deprived. Note that depending on a DA's characteristics, it could be the most deprived for one dimension and the least deprived for another.

Creating a composite dimension of deprivation

Depending on the research question and the geographical area of interest, it may be possible to create a composite dimension, or summary score, of deprivation using the quintile scales provided in the CIMD. In order to create a composite index, correlations between individual dimensions and the outcome would first need to be compared to determine if the associations are in the equivalent direction. If all of the dimensions are moving in the same direction, then a composite score of deprivation may be generated by summing the quintile scores across each of the dimensions, and dividing by 4. This will produce a summary score from 1 to 5, with 1 representing the least deprived and 5 representing the most deprived.

Using the index as an individual-level proxy

While the original intent of the CIMD was to act as a geographical indicator, the index can also be used as a proxy for individual-level (i.e., person-level) information.⁶ For example, CCJCSS originally created a 2006 version of the CIMD specific to Saskatchewan in order to better understand factors that contribute to initial, as well as repeated contact, with the criminal justice system. This analysis looked at the various dimensions of deprivation (e.g., residential instability) and compared them across sub-groups of individuals with contact with the justice system, highlighting differences of deprivation among individuals with one contact, and those with frequent and repeated contacts (Boyce et al., 2018). In order to facilitate this analysis, postal codes of individuals within the cohort of interest were mapped to corresponding DAs.

It should be noted that if the CIMD data will be merged with another data file where DA information is not available, clean postal code information is required. The recommended tool is the Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF)⁷ which links six character postal codes to standard geographic areas such as DAs (Statistics Canada, 2017). By linking postal codes to DAs, the conversion file facilitates the extraction of subsequent aggregation of data for selected DAs. As such, when postal code information is available, it is possible to link special extracts of data to various sources. For more information on the Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF), see Statistics Canada, 2017.

Data considerations

Total non-response rate

For reasons of data quality, DAs with a total non-response rate equal to or greater than 50% were excluded from the component analysis (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Dissemination area suppression

All provincial DAs from the 2021 Census of Population were used in the creation of the CIMD 2021 indexes. However, for reasons of confidentiality, component scores and quintiles were suppressed for 545 DAs with populations of less than 40 (Statistics Canada, 2021). Stated otherwise, while CIMD 2021 data are available for nearly all of the provincial DAs, there is a small subset for which data are not available.

Cross-sectional data

CIMD 2021 is based on 2021 Census of Population microdata and, as such, should not be compared with the 2006, 2011, or 2016 CAN-Marg for trend analysis. As mentioned, the CIMD is a cross-sectional index which allows users to observe the levels of deprivation and marginalization at one point in time while the CAN-Marg is longitudinal in nature, allowing for comparisons across time.

Grouping Atlantic and Prairie regions

As indicated earlier, it was necessary to group certain provinces into the Atlantic and Prairie regions for data quality reasons. As such, a unique index is not available for these provinces. However, as discussed, it is possible to use data from a specific province by separating specific provincial DAs within those regions.⁸

Instructions for citing the data

In referencing the Index, please use the following citation:

Statistics Canada. (2023). *The Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2021*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 45-20-0001.

For additional information on the foundations of the original Canadian Marginalization Index, the seminal work of Matheson et al. can also be referenced:

Matheson, F.I., et al. (2012). Development of the Canadian Marginalization Index: a new tool for the study of inequality. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, S12-S16.

Matheson, F.I., et al. (2011). *Ontario Marginalization Index (ON-Marg): User Guide*. St. Michael's Hospital.

Appendix A

Appendix A

Variables from the 2021 Census of Population that were selected for inclusion in the indexes

Variable description	Component analysis status
Proportion of persons living alone	Included
Average number of persons per dwelling	Included
Proportion of dwellings that are apartment buildings	Included
Proportion of population that is married or common-law	Included
Proportion of dwellings that are owned	Included
Proportion of population who moved within the past five years	Included
Proportion of population aged 25-64 without high school diploma	Included
Proportion of single parent families	Included
Proportion of population receiving government transfer payments	Included
Proportion of population that is low-income	Included
Proportion of dwellings needing major repairs	Included
Proportion of population aged 65 and older	Included
Dependency ratio (population aged 0-14 and population aged 65 and older divided by population aged 15-64)	Included
Proportion of population participating in the labour force (aged 15 and older)	Included
Proportion of population who are recent immigrants (arrived in five years prior to Census)	Included
Proportion of population who self-identify as visible minority	Included
Proportion of population that identifies as Indigenous	Included
Proportion of population that is foreign-born	Included
Proportion of population with no knowledge of either official language (linguistic isolation)	Included
Proportion of population aged 15-24 not attending school	Included
Proportion of population that is self-employed	Included
Proportion of population that is female	Included
Ratio of employment to population	Included
Proportion of children younger than age 6	Included
Proportion of population that are youth (aged 5-15)	Included
2016 population count	Included
Average number of persons per room	Included
Median income of individuals	Included
Proportion of persons per square kilometer	Included
Median household income	Included
Median dollar value of dwelling	Included

Appendix A**Variables from the 2021 Census of Population that were selected for inclusion in the indexes**

Variable description	Component analysis status
Proportion of population that is unemployed (aged 15 and older)	Removed
Residential mobility (different house as 1 year ago)	Removed
Average household income	Removed
Average dollar value of dwelling	Removed
Proportion of occupied units that are rentals	Removed
Average income of individuals	Removed
Proportion of persons separated, divorced or widowed	Removed
Proportion of population with no religious affiliation	Not available ¹
Proportion of owner households spending 30% or more of household income on major payments	Not available ¹
Proportion of tenant household spending 30% or more of household income on rent	Not available ¹
Proportion of population at least 15 years old and doing unpaid housework	Not available ¹
Proportion of population at least 15 years old looking after children without pay	Not available ¹
Proportion of population at least 15 years old and providing unpaid care or assistance to seniors	Not available ¹
Unemployment rate in private households with children younger than age 6	Not available ¹

1. The 2006 Census of Population variables used to derive this variable were not available for the 2021 Census of Population.

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Notes

1. This area-based index has the potential for ecological fallacy since not everyone who lives in a DA identified as being deprived is necessarily deprived. That said, where no comprehensive individual information is readily available, the index can provide coverage for the population and can add contextual information for analysis.
2. A dissemination block is an area bounded on all sides by roads and/or boundaries of standard geographic areas. Dissemination blocks cover all of Canada.
3. For more in-depth information on component analysis, refer to (Kim & Mueller, 1978a), (Kim & Mueller, 1978b) and (O'Rourke & Hatcher, 2014).
4. As per the standard Statistics Canada definition, the *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.”
5. See section “Methodology” for additional information.
6. Where no comprehensive individual information is readily available, the index can provide coverage for the population and can add contextual information for analysis.
7. Postal code is an official mark of Canada Post Corporation. The Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF) is a digital file which provides a link between the Canada Post Corporation six-character postal code and Statistics Canada’s standard geographic areas for which census data and other statistics are produced. Through the link between postal codes and standard geographic areas, the PCCF permits the integration of data from various sources.
8. See section on “When to use the national or provincial/regional indexes” for additional information.