



SPNO statement on the National Household Survey

The voluntary National Household Survey (NHS) has produced lower quality data than the mandatory long-form Census it has replaced. The Social Planning Network of Ontario only uses NHS data when higher quality data is not available.

Statistics Canada has said their evaluations of NHS data “support the general reliability of the data at the national, provincial and territorial levels” but they have not extended this confidence to using NHS data at the community level. They have noted that “risk of error in NHS estimates increases for lower levels of geography and smaller population.” Due to the increase in error at the local level compared to previous Census data, Statistics Canada has released very few NHS data tables for smaller geographies like municipalities and neighbourhoods.

Statistics Canada has also cautioned against doing historical comparisons between NHS and Census data because the data was collected differently.

Good quality data about demographics, social and economic conditions at the local level is essential for social planning and research, including the design and delivery of public services. The cancellation of the mandatory long form Census has resulted in a significant loss of reliable data that will greatly reduce the ability of residents to understand their own communities. This critical data gap will also affect the quality and cost-effectiveness of the services residents use for years to come. The Social Planning Network of Ontario with its partners at the local, provincial and national levels will continue to bring attention to this major data gap and to call for the return of a full mandatory Census.

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