

Interpreting the Thematic Maps

2016 Census of Population

Context

A series of thematic maps were produced for United Way of Halifax (Nova Scotia, Canada) using Statistics Canada 2016 Census of Population. United Way of Halifax has partnered with the Regional Municipality of Halifax (HRM) to develop a strategy to eliminate poverty in the region. Statistical profiles have been developed for each of Canada, Nova Scotia, Halifax, and five economically challenged neighbourhoods in both urban and rural areas of HRM.

Approach

Selected indicators have been chosen to show thematic comparisons among the Halifax Census Tracts. Ninety-three of the ninety-eight Census Tracts (CTs) are included. Five of the Census Tracts (Indian Reserves) had the data suppressed to protect confidentiality. Except for six small ones the CTs range in size from 1300 to 9600 people.

Since the averaging effect of larger areas can mask sharp differences in smaller areas, thematic maps were also generated at the dissemination area (DA) level. HRM has 601 DAs with most ranging in size from about 200 to 3300 (one outlier has 6,800 people in the DA).

The following are noted to help in interpreting the maps.

- Three green, one yellow, and three red colours were used to represent seven custom ranges for each indicator. Green was used for those indicators generally associated with better socio-economic circumstances and red with those with lower socio-economic circumstances. Yellow was for the range around the HRM average value for that indicator.
- The ranges were selected to distribute the 584 non-suppressed data DAs across the seven groupings. Approximately one seventh of the DAs had a range established for either side of the HRM average. The groups that were above and below the average were then divided somewhat evenly in three ranges, with adjustments for natural breaks, where they existed. The same ranges were used for the CT level maps.

Red indicates increasing degrees of economic challenges while the greens represent those with more economic resources.

Low Income Measure (after tax) is a well recognized widely accepted measure of poverty. The DA and CT maps for this measure were used to determine which of two rural areas would be highlighted in the analytical planning. In doing this work the much lower cost of housing (shelter cost) in these areas was noted. As a result, a shelter cost index was developed, and thematic maps produced to compare with the LIM (AT) maps. Adequate and safe housing is a major and vital part of well-being. Annual shelter cost as a percentage of household income (shelter cost index) was thought to have good potential as an indicator to identify neighbourhoods that were more challenged than others. The preliminary results show this approach has promise and needs to be explored and discussed. The thematic maps demonstrate it in a way that raw statistical tables do not.

The above approach and use of the shelter cost index was developed by:

Dennis Pilkey
DWPilkey Consulting
58 Pleasant St.
Dartmouth NS B2Y 3P5
902-464-8877
pilkeydw@eastlink.ca

Comments, questions and suggestions for improvements are always welcome.

Using the Thematic Maps

The maps have been produced as a layered acrobat pdf with a lot of detail included. The quality allows zooming in to various areas to see more detail. At the same time, the amount of detail can obscure the underlying information. Layers can be turned off and on by clicking on the “eyes” in the navigation pane. If a “>”, symbol is present it can be clicked to show the underlying sub layers.

The maps are scaled for 11 x 17 paper, but also look good on large scale printouts, e.g. 3' x 4.5'