

# Mental Health and Well-being in Northern Ontario, 2002-3

Connie H. Nelson, Ph.D.  
Lakehead University  
Jungwee Park, Ph.D.  
Statistics Canada

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## Abstract

Relying on data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) cycles 1.2 and 2.1 this research attempts to explain mental health in Northern Ontario. Examined are subjectively perceived mental health, depression, distress, and mental health service use. Multiple logistic regressions are conducted to study the association between mental health, and socio-demographic conditions and other health-related factors. Results show that the mental health and well-being of North Ontarians is significantly related with employment status, sense of community belonging, and social support. For men's mental health, employment is especially important while for women's mental health, community belonging is important.

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## Research Objectives

- To extract selected characteristics of mental health data for Northern Ontario from the CCHS
- To investigate gender differences in selected characteristics of mental health in Northern Ontario
- To examine associations between mental health and socio-demographic conditions
- To examine associations between mental health and social and psychological support
- To profile mental health service use in Northern Ontario by gender

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## Introduction

- Regional identities are made and transformed by social processes across time and space.
- Northern Ontario's identity emerges from its unique natural resources and is continually shaped by international forces attracted to the extraction and utilization of these natural resources.
- Northern Ontario's 'mono' economic culture with its historic emphasis on routine, low skilled jobs increases its fragility, lowers its resilience and hinders the robustness needed for a fluid response to international economic and political forces and a transformation to a knowledge-based economy.
- The intermittent reinforcement of 'yo-yo' cycles of growth and decline build passive hope and impede efforts to tackle structural changes to diversify the economic base.
- Many factors such as the finite life of many resource-based communities and the out-migration of youth lower opportunities for family based social and psychological supports.

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## Background

- Gender differences are found in mental health status.
- Changing economic status, both community and individual, have an important impact on mental health status.
- Social and psychological supports affect mental health status.
- Regional studies attest to the heterogeneity of place, space and time and acknowledge that past universal standardized programs have a limited impact.

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### Data Source 1

- Data from the Canadian Community Health Survey – Mental Health and Well-being (Cycle 1.2), 2002
- Men and Women aged 15 or older who reside in North Ontario
- 1,820 (846 men, 974 women) unweighted, 673,216 weighted

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### Data Source 2

- Data from the Canadian Community Health Survey – Mental Health and Well-being (Cycle 2.1), 2003
- Men and Women aged 12 or older who reside in North Ontario
- 6,474 (3,022 men, 3,452 women) unweighted, 708,590 weighted

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### Analysis

- Weighted cross-tabulation
- Multiple logistic regression
- Multiple linear regression

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### Independent variables

- Socio-demographic variables
  - Age, sex, household income, education, marital status
- Employment status
- Psychological support
  - Emotional and informational support
  - Community belonging
  - Positive social interaction

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### Dependent variables

- Self-perceived mental health
- Distress level
- Depression
- Mental disorder and problems
- Mental health service use

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### Selected characteristics of mental health in Ontario (%)

	N. Ontario	Other Ont
<b>Negative self-perceived mental health</b>	<b>5.9*</b>	<b>4.8</b>
<b>Diagnosed mental disorders</b>	<b>9.2*</b>	<b>7.8</b>

\*significantly different from other parts of Ontario

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## Selected characteristics of mental health in N. Ontario (%)

	Men	Women
• Negative self-perceived mental health	5.7	6.1
• Depression	2.9	3.1
• Any mental diseases	12.3	14.0
• Diagnosed mental disorders	6.8	11.6*
• Mental health service use	8.4	13.5*

\*significantly different from men

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## Negative self-perceived mental health

	Men		Women	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Unemployed	1.16	0.66,2.03	1.93*	1.15,3.24
Community belonging	0.38*	0.25,0.59	0.33*	0.21,0.51

\*p<0.05  
Adjusted for age, income, education, marital status

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## Self-perceived distress

### Regression Coefficients

	Men	Women
Unemployed	1.35*	0.67
Community belonging	-0.57*	-0.72*
Emotional support	-0.03	-0.14*
Positive social interaction	-0.37*	-0.22*

\*p<0.05  
Adjusted for age, income, education, marital status

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## Prevalence of depression

	Men		Women	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Unemployed	8.63*	1.63,45.62	1.31	0.54,3.21
Community belonging	2.01	0.71,5.70	0.34*	0.16,0.71
Emotional support	0.99	0.89,1.09	0.97	0.90,1.04
Positive social interaction	0.79*	0.64,0.99	0.85*	0.74,0.96

\*p<0.05  
Adjusted for age, income, education, marital status

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## Any mental disorder & problems

	Men		Women	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Unemployed	2.09	0.78,5.62	0.84	0.39,1.81
Community belonging	1.12	0.58,2.16	0.53*	0.31,0.92
Emotional support	1.01	0.92,1.10	0.93*	0.87,0.99
Positive social interaction	0.83	0.68,1.00	0.94	0.85,1.05

\*p<0.05  
Adjusted for age, income, education, marital status

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## Diagnosed mental disorder

	Men		Women	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Unemployed	4.45*	1.73,11.45	2.16*	1.37,3.40
Community belonging	0.59	0.27,1.30	0.45*	0.32,0.61

\*p<0.05  
Adjusted for age, income, education, marital status

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## Mental health service use

	Men		Women	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Unemployed	4.45*	1.73,11.45	2.02	0.87,4.67
Community belonging	0.59	0.27,1.30	1.02	0.60,1.72
Emotional support	0.91*	0.82,0.99	1.06	0.97,1.15
Positive social interaction	1.19	0.96, 1.46	0.83*	0.70,0.97

\*p<0.05 Adjusted for age, income, education, marital status, mental disorder

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## Limitations

- The CCHS data are cross-sectional and associations observed between variables cannot be inferred to be casual.
- The data can not capture all aspects of Northern Ontario in terms of 'imagined reality', social interactions and social and psychological processes.
- Mental health service data are limited to service utilization only in the twelve months prior to the interview.

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## Conclusions

- Gender has an impact in Northern Ontario on both mental health status and mental health service use.
- Employment status impacts mental health for men.
- Social and psychological supports may act as a buffer against mental health disease, especially for women.
- Employment and emotional support are associated with mental health service usage by men.
- Positive social and psychological support have a strong association for women in lowering mental health service usage.

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## Implications

- Employment transition programs need to consider the impacts of employment status on mental health.
- Programs that address mental health issues must consider social and psychological supports.
- Programs that focus exclusively on individual transformation can only have limited effectiveness given the impact of external forces of employment and social-psychological support.
- Healthy communities are a positive buffer for mental well-being.

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## For more information:

**Connie H. Nelson**  
**Lakehead University**  
[cnelson@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:cnelson@lakeheadu.ca)

**Jungwee Park**  
**Statistics Canada**  
[jungwee.park@statcan.ca](mailto:jungwee.park@statcan.ca)

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