

research snapshot

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The York Region Infrastructure Project: An Analysis of Human Services

What is this research about?

Human services, like housing, education, employment and settlement services, are vital for social and economic integration. These services taken together can be thought of as the soft infrastructure of a city or region. The increasing suburbanization of the Greater Toronto Area has led to a rise in demand for these services out of the downtown area where human services were traditionally and are still primarily located. There are some groups that are seen as in greater need of social services in order to facilitate social connections and maintain a good quality of life. The researchers have identified three groups with important needs: seniors, newcomers to Canada, and persons with low incomes.

What did the researcher do?

The researcher used multiple methods to analyse the accessibility of services to the designated groups in York Region. First, they created a geographic information system which used the locations of the services and the distribution of the vulnerable groups. The researchers then looked at the accessibility of these services, taking into consideration the street grids, transit routes, as well as information

What you need to know:

York Region requires a greater number of accessible human services to ensure social and economic integration of the region's growing population.

on travel speeds. Second, the researchers conducted a two-phase telephone survey to determine the awareness, use, and satisfaction of services in the region.

What did the researcher find?

The researcher found that most newcomers in York Region were concentrated in the most southern municipalities of Markham, Vaughan, and Richmond Hill. Those living in poverty, and seniors were spread throughout the region. Their access to different human services varied. Markham and Vaughan, which house most recent immigrants and low income people in the region, were found to be underserved. Only a few respondents to the survey used the services that were described. However, those who had used employment, education, housing and/or settlement services reported satisfaction with the

services. Most users of the services used public transit, and this was seen as a major barrier in terms of getting access to services.

How can you use this research?

The results of this research highlight the locations where future services can be located to best serve the needs of the diverse communities in York Region. The connections between the community groups and the researchers have helped to build policy recommendations that are detailed in the extensive report.

About the Researcher

Lucia Lo is the principal investigator and primary contact for this project. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at York University. This project was funded by Infrastructure Canada, Citizenship and Immigration – Ontario Region, and the Office of Vice-President Research and Innovation, York University.

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