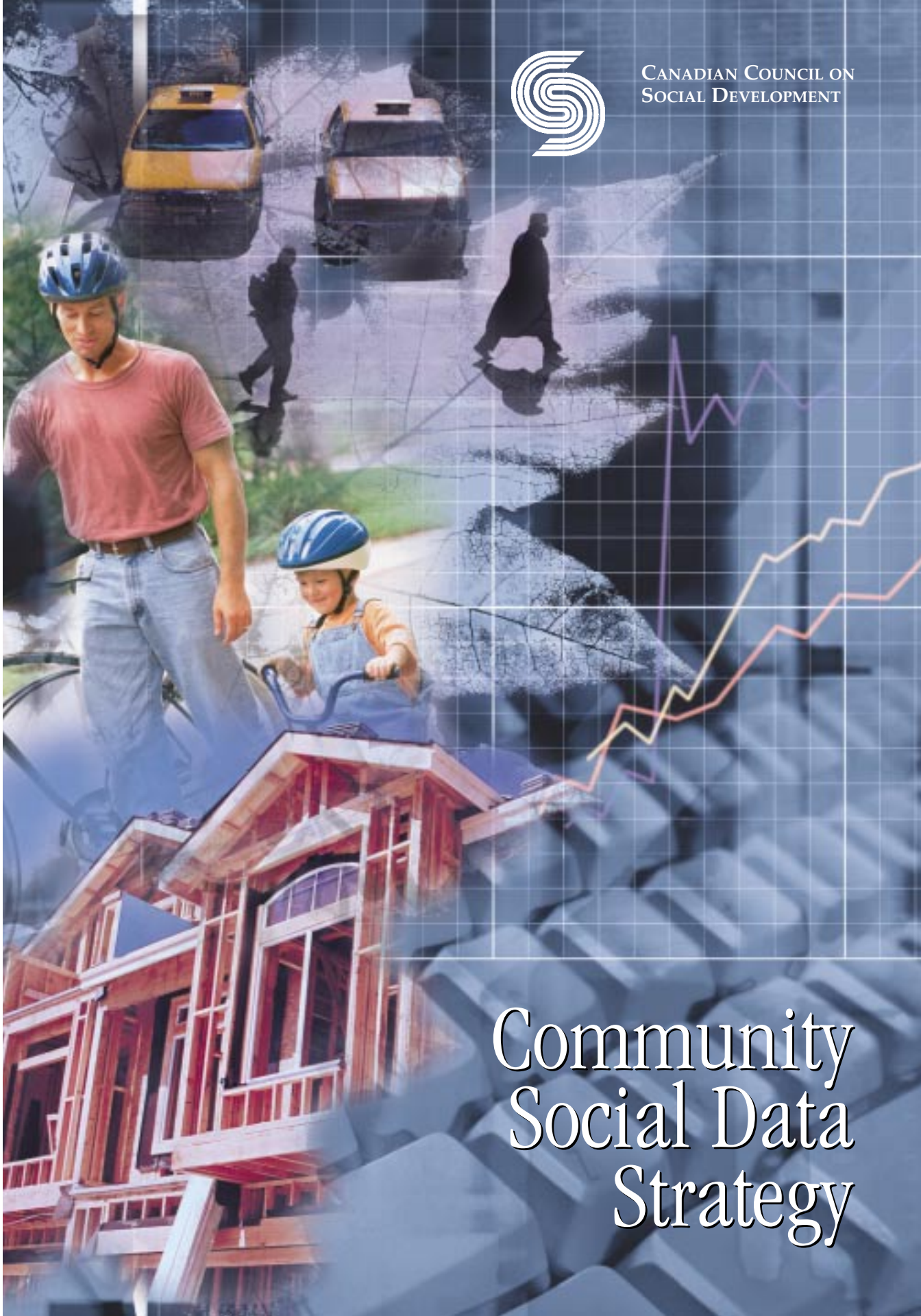




CANADIAN COUNCIL ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Community Social Data Strategy



*The Community Social
Data Strategy is a project
of the Canadian Council on
Social Development (CCSD),
in collaboration with
Statistics Canada and
with financial support
from Human Resources
Development Canada.*

The Canadian Council on Social Development
invites you to participate in the Community Social Data Strategy.

The Community Social Data Strategy:

Turning Information into Action

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There are many organizations which could benefit by having immediate access to social data, but they are not aware of what's available nor how to gain access.

What is the Community Social Data Strategy?

The Community Social Data Strategy is a work in progress.

When fully developed it will provide a gateway for municipalities and community-based organizations to access data from Statistics Canada in order to identify and better understand the social and economic trends within their individual communities.

Creating a gateway is important for a number of

reasons. There are many organizations which could benefit by having immediate access to social data, but they are not aware of what's available nor how to gain access. Data are expensive and the funds required to purchase data are often scarce. Equally scarce are trained personnel who can analyze and process the data for use by their organizations or municipalities. Moreover, the development of a network of partners who can share data and best practices is vital for organizations working with tight budgets.

The Community Social Data Strategy will address these needs using a three-pronged approach:

- purchasing data and facilitating access;
- building community capacity by training people to analyze and process social data;
- communicating and disseminating the results as widely as possible.

How can you benefit?

Purchasing Data and Facilitating Access

Organizations require social and economic data to make vital decisions about their planning needs, strategic forecasting and information delivery. The Community Social Data Strategy is being developed with this in mind.

Through the Community Social Data Strategy, the social data needs of municipalities and community-based organizations will be reviewed and appropriate sources of data identified. A data source could be, for example,

a recent Census from Statistics Canada, or the Canadian Community Health Survey, to name just two.

The CSDS would then bring together project partners with similar data needs in order to maximize their collective buying power and gain access to particular kinds of data that were previously unaffordable to the individual organizations.

Training People and Building Capacity

Obviously, raw data are just that – raw numbers. The information requires competent and thorough analysis and interpretation before it can be put to good use by organizations and communities. The Canadian Council on Social Development – working in collaboration with Statistics Canada – will develop training initiatives to build on the capacity of partner organizations to access data and to use it for their particular purposes.

This component of the CSDS will include reviewing, enhancing and creating the most thorough training programs available for individuals who will be handling and analyzing the data within those organizations.

Sharing the Results – Communicating and disseminating

The sharing of information and best practices among municipalities, community-based organizations and other partners in the Community Social Data Strategy will be an important ingredient in its success.

A variety of communications vehicles will be used to encourage partners to share the results of their data analysis.

These will include personal consultations, regular correspondence by mail and e-mail, the use of newsletters and the Internet, or other methods that will effectively support a strong communications network.



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Why is sharing social data so useful?

Data sharing under the Community Social Data Strategy will ensure that useful information is brought to the attention of all the project partners, so they can capitalize on their network connections to access the data and put it to work.

For example, under the CSDS, a monthly report from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey could be sent to municipalities and community-based organizations that had expressed an interest in accessing employment data on specific *metropolitan*

areas. These organizations would then be able to determine recent employment patterns in their communities and react to any changes in the trends. Similarly, detailed social and economic data from the Census could also be distributed in this way.

In addition, data on family type, individual and household income, low-income rates, labour force status, or the use of income support programs could be extracted from federal tax files, using small area databases for very specific localities based on Census districts or postal codes.

In fact, there are numerous sources of data that could be shared by a Community Social Data network, including the following:

- **2001 Census:** contains information on population groups, language, citizenship, labour force activity, education and religion;
- **Small Administrative Databank (1990–1999):** contains financial data, charitable donors and data on family and individuals;
- **Longitudinal Administrative Databank (1982–1998):** contains income and demographic variables, among others;
- **Labour Force Survey:** tracks labour market trends;

- **Canadian Community Health Survey:** provides detailed health care information for 136 regions across Canada;
- **Uniform Crime Reporting Survey:** contains reports on crime and traffic enforcement for different cities and for townships, districts and rural municipalities;
- **Financial Performance Indicators for Canadian Business:** measures the profitability, solvency and operating efficiency of businesses by industry;
- **Survey of Household Spending:** contains data on household characteristics and expenditures, characteristics on dwellings and household equipment.

The more individuals and organizations get involved in this initiative, the greater our collective success.

How can you get involved in the CSDS?

The Community Social Data Strategy will assist municipalities and community-based organizations to gain greater access to social data in order to strengthen the social policy debate in Canada. The more individuals and organizations get involved in this initiative, the greater our collective success will be in obtaining detailed and affordable data, training people in the analysis of that data, and sharing vital information and best practices.

Municipalities and community-based organizations that are concerned

about population changes, programs to reduce poverty, issues affecting children, Aboriginal peoples or ethno-cultural communities, and those that require data that reflect the realities of the labour market or statistics related to seniors, health and crime will all benefit from a partnership in the Community Social Data Strategy.

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Know Your Postal Code?

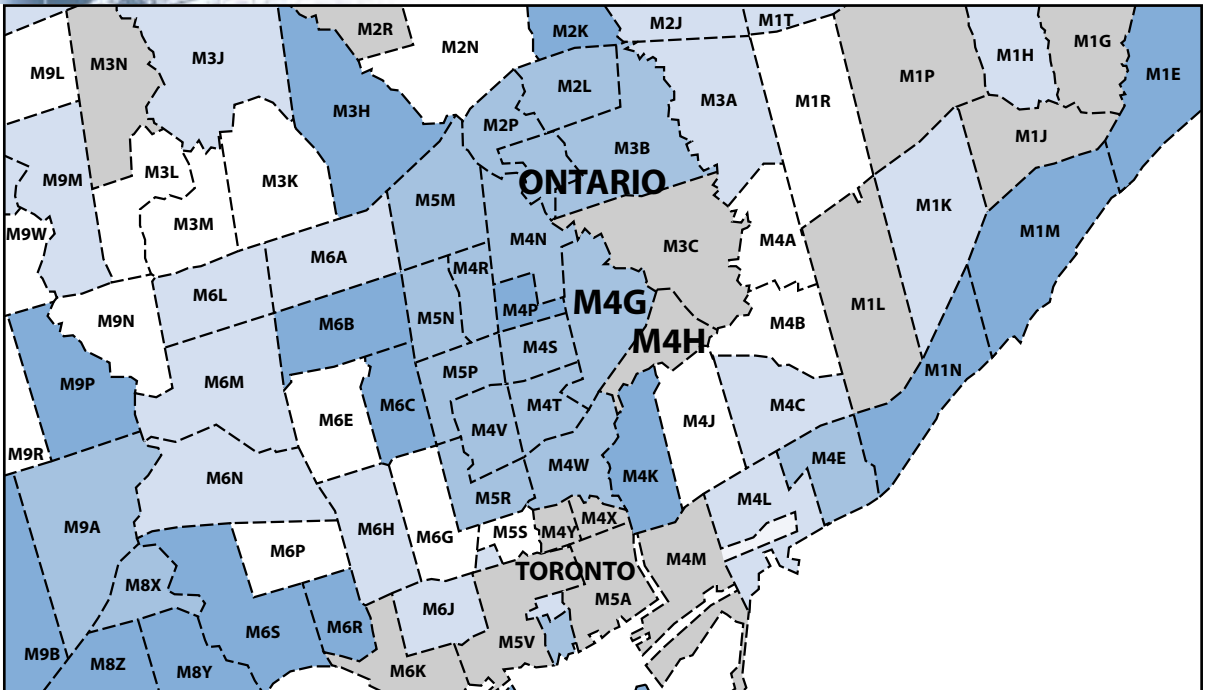
Learn About Your Neighbourhood

An example of community-level social data analysis

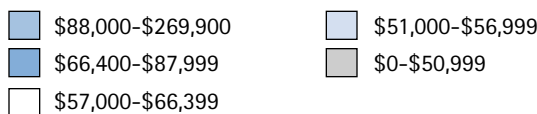
Statistics Canada, through its Census and Small Area Databases, provides a wealth of information on the socio-economic situation of Canadians in different geographic areas. These readily accessible databases provide information on a wide variety of population characteristics, such as breakdowns by age and gender; employment, immigration or disability status; sources and levels of income; family type and household composition; annual earnings; and many others.

By analyzing these data, municipalities, social planners and researchers can create unique profiles of their particular communities, they can determine changes in characteristics over time and make vital comparisons between particular neighbourhoods and the broader cities of which they are part.

The CCSD recently conducted a study for the United Way of Greater Toronto to do exactly that. Here is a small sample of some of the things we discovered about the community of



Median annual income for husband/wife families with two children, by FSA, 1999



Thorncliffe Park (postal code M4H on the map) and the larger City of Toronto, for the benefit of their community agencies, schools and social planners.

This map presents the annual median incomes for husband/wife families with two children in Toronto in 1999. (That is, half of all the families in that district had incomes higher than the median, while half had lower incomes.) The data are grouped by "Forward Sortation Areas" (or FSAs) according to the first three digits of the postal code. By doing so, we can see, for example, that there is a large difference in the median incomes of families living in postal code area M4G, compared to those living in area M4H.

And the data analysis can be much more detailed. Among the many

interesting discoveries revealed by our study, the following were of particular interest to Toronto area agencies, researchers and social planners:

In the community of Thorncliffe Park (M4H), the proportion of children rose from 14% in 1990 to 21% by 1999 – well above the average of 18% in the City of Toronto.

Children in this area were less likely to live in lone-parent families, and there were relatively few single people in the community.

The low-income rate among children jumped from 41% to 50% between 1995 and 1999 – again, well above the Toronto City average of 32% in 1999. (Low income is defined as having an income *less than half*

Table 1: Analysis of Thorncliffe Park Neighbourhood and the City of Toronto in the 1990s

	M4H			City of Toronto		
	1990	1995	1999	1990	1995	1999
POPULATION, BY AGE						
0-14 years	14.1%	17.3%	21.4%	16.7%	17.7%	18.0%
15-64 years	67.2%	67.1%	66.0%	71.2%	69.1%	68.3%
65+ years	18.8%	15.7%	12.5%	12.1%	13.2%	13.8%
Total	10,600	12,650	14,900	2,165,000	2,350,000	2,367,000
LONE-PARENT FAMILIES						
	6.6%	8.7%	8.8%	8.6%	10.2%	11.1%
% point change 1990-1995	2.1%			1.6%		
% point change 1995-1999		0.1%			0.9%	
MEDIAN INCOME (CONSTANT \$) OF HUSBAND/WIFE FAMILIES						
	\$48,800	\$34,000	\$31,800	\$59,000	\$48,600	\$51,300
Change 1990-1995	-\$14,800			-\$10,400		
% change	-30.3%			-17.6%		
Change 1995-1999		-\$2,200			\$2,700	
% change		-6.5%			5.6%	
Change 1990-1999	-\$17,000			-\$7,700		
% change	-34.8%			-13.1%		
HUSBAND/WIFE FAMILIES RECEIVING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE						
		21.2%	16.4%		12.2%	8.4%
% point change 1995-1999		-4.8%			-3.7%	

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using Statistics Canada's Small Area and Administrative Data, 1990, 1995, and 1999.



The CSDS will bring together project partners with similar data needs in order to maximize their collective buying power.

the median income of a family of the same size.)

In this community, the median incomes of families fell by much more than the City average during the 1990s recession, and they continued to fall during the economic recovery period from 1995 to 1999.

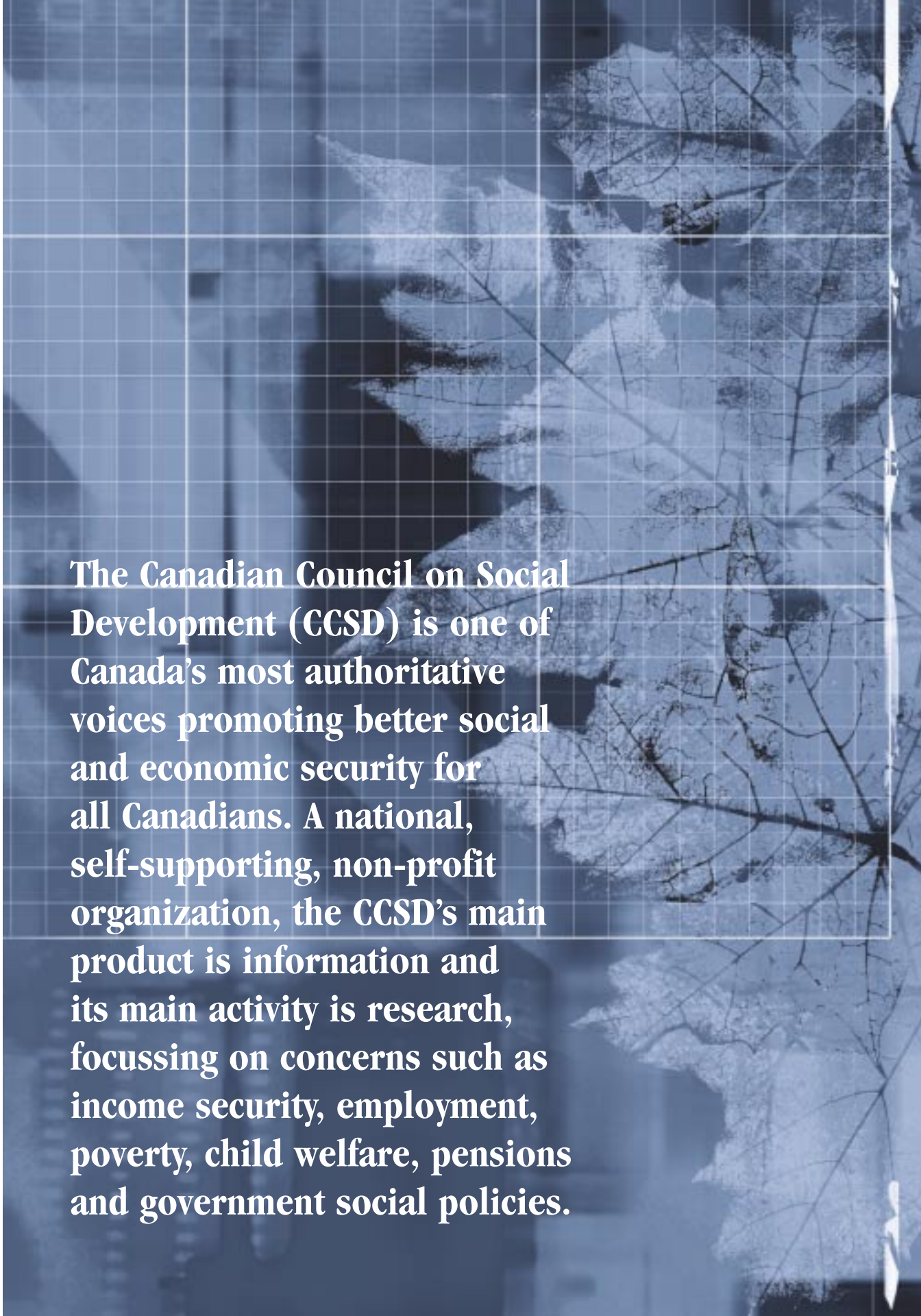
As can be seen in the table, median incomes in this community (after adjustment for inflation) fell by 30% in the first half of the 1990s, then dropped by another 6.5% in the last half of the decade. Over the entire period from 1990 to 1999, median family incomes in this area fell by \$17,000, compared to a drop of \$7,700 in the City of Toronto – which was itself a much steeper drop than the national average (-\$1,100 or -2.0%)!

Husband/wife families in Thorncliffe Park received social assistance benefits in 1999 at double the rate of City residents

16.4% compared to 8.4% – but this was down sharply from their rate of receipt in 1995. And the vast majority of families with children in this community were working.

As a result of these and other trends over the 1990s, there was a significant increase in social needs among residents of the Thorncliffe Park community – and particularly among children in the area – despite a period of strong economic recovery in the larger City and the nation. Another part of this study included consultations with staff of community organizations. The consultations revealed that schools and service agencies in the area had not been able to adequately respond to these rapid changes.

This very brief example illustrates "only the tip of the iceberg" in terms of what can be done when analyzing data at the local level. The Community Social Data Strategy should help increase project participants' access to a variety of very detailed data and thereby extend the scope of research and planning possibilities. Ultimately, we hope this will lead to broader discussion and action around social issues in Canada.



The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) is one of Canada's most authoritative voices promoting better social and economic security for all Canadians. A national, self-supporting, non-profit organization, the CCSD's main product is information and its main activity is research, focussing on concerns such as income security, employment, poverty, child welfare, pensions and government social policies.



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