



Not all rental housing is equal for health

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Datasets used

Canadian Housing
Survey

Policy areas this research can inform

Government

Health

Housing

Income, pensions,
spending and wealth

Society and community

Context

The current study fills a gap in understanding how different types of rental housing in Canada, namely, government, not-for-profit, cooperative, and privately owned, are linked to tenants' self-reported health and mental health, especially among equity-seeking populations. Using data from over 26,000 renters in the 2018–2019 Canadian Housing Survey, the study employs advanced statistical techniques (multivariable logistic regression with interaction terms) to explore how disparities vary by income, age, household composition, and racial identity. These findings challenge the assumption that all forms of affordable rental housing provide equal health benefits, offering valuable insights for designing more equitable, health-informed housing policies.

Key finding

Health disparities across rental housing types among the renters in Canada are especially pronounced among equity-seeking groups, such as low-income, racialised, and lone-parent households, highlighting the importance of equity-focused housing and health policy.

Policy implications

This study suggests that rental housing policy must go beyond affordability to integrate health-supportive infrastructure and social services, particularly in not-for-profit and government housing. It highlights significant disparities in mental health and self-reported health among vulnerable groups, including low-income, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), and lone-parent households. The findings of this study challenge the idea that all affordable housing is equally health beneficial. Instead, it points to urgent policies that integrate mental health support, improve housing quality, and enhance neighbourhood safety, emphasising the need for equity-driven interventions for residents of subsidised housing to reduce health risks.

Read the full article here

Kader, S. B., Ahmed, M. S., Desjarlais-deKlerk, K., Leloup, X., Simard, L., Leviten-Reid, C., & Muhajarine, N. (2024). Rental housing type and self-reported general health and mental health status: Evidence from the Canadian Housing Survey 2018–2019. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21(9), 1181. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21091181>

Citation

Kader, S. B. & Muhajarine, N. (2025). Not all rental housing is equal for health. *CRDCN Research-Policy Snapshots*, 4(2), 8-9.



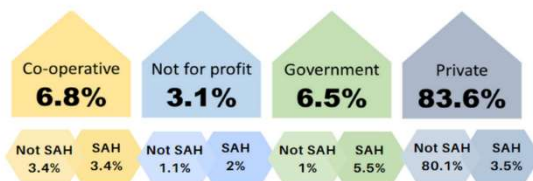


RENTAL HOUSING TYPES & GENERAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG CANADIANS A SNAPSHOT FROM THE 2018-2019 CANADIAN HOUSING SURVEY

ARTICLE LINK



Renters living in different types of housing



SAH= subsidized affordable housing



14.3% renters live in subsidized rental house

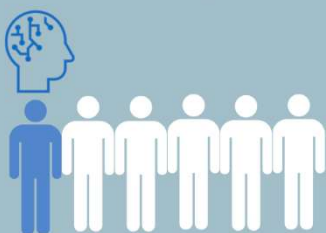
General and mental health were assessed using self-rated responses from a Likert scale (poor, fair, good, very good, excellent) and later dichotomized into Good (good, very good, excellent) and Poor (poor or fair).



GENERAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF RENTERS



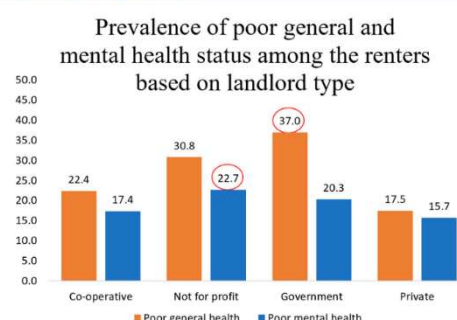
Approximately 1 in 5
(19.5%) renters
reported **poor**
general health



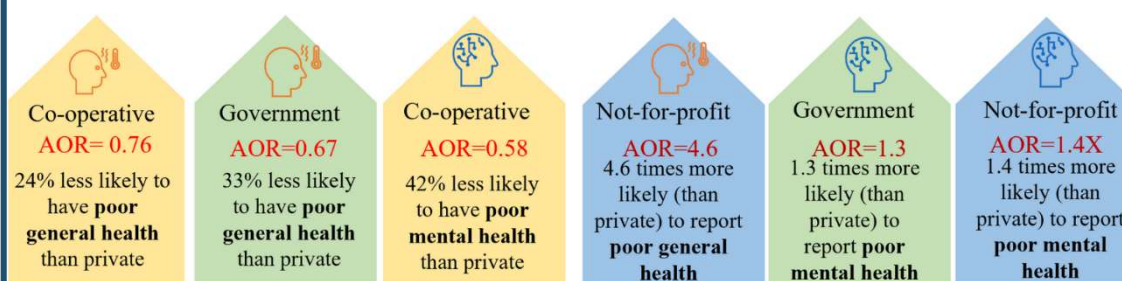
Approximately 1 in 6
(16.3%) renters
reported **poor** mental
health

HEALTH DISPARITIES BY HOUSING TYPES

Poor general health was highest in government housing (37.0%), while poor mental health peaked in not-for-profit housing (22.7%).



ASSOCIATIONS (ADJUSTED ODDS RATIOS) BETWEEN HOUSING TYPE AND GENERAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH STATUS



AOR=Adjusted Odds Ratio

Likelihood of General Health and Mental Health Decreased

Likelihood of General Health and Mental Health Increased

Citation

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