

An analysis of socioeconomic factors and fire inspection violations in Toronto highrises

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January 24, 2024

My abstract...

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Introduction

The Ontario Fire Code is a regulation under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act of 1997, and helps guide Toronto Fire Services and building fire safety requirements (Toronto, n.d.a). Since 2016, TFS Fire Inspectors conduct fire safety inspections on residential highrises yearly (Services 2017). Results of these fire inspections can be found on OpenDataToronto, making fire safety accessible to the public.

According to Statistics Canada, residential fires accounted for 3 of 4 fire-related deaths. Homes without a functional smoke alarm also accounted for 74% of deaths (StatCan 2023). Unfortunately, from 2015 to 2021, only 37% of residential fires had a working smoke alarm. Fire-related injuries were also higher in homes with a functioning smoke alarm but no sprinkler protection. Statistics Canada explains this may be due to attempts by the residents to control the fires. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, fires have increased and the rise in deaths among seniors was highest; from 2019 to 2020 fire-related deaths among seniors doubled. In a cross-sectional population-based study in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario, socioeconomic factors related to residential fire rates were investigated (Beaulieu et al. 2019). The report

found an association between higher educational attainment and unemployment with increased fire incidents. Smaller households were also found to be at higher risk for fire casualties, especially for children.

While high-rises are designed with fire safety as a priority, because of the number of residents and size, a fire has potential for major incidents and can be challenging to respond to (Toronto, n.d.b). This paper will examine the relationship between fire regulation violations in highrises, which requirements failed to be met, and various socio-economic factors by walking through the following sections: Data, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion. In Data, I will discuss the spreadsheets on fire inspection violations in highrises and socio-economic information by Ward Profiles. I also detail the cleaning and analyzing process of these datasets. Results will reveal trends found in the analyses and the Discussion section highlights additional insights. Finally, in the Conclusion, I will summarize key takeaways.

Data

The two datasets used in this paper are from the city of Toronto's OpenDataToronto database (Gelfand 2022). To investigate the various socioeconomic variables and investigation violations in relation to highrises, two datasets were used: "Highrise Residential Fire Inspection Results" (OpenDataToronto 2024a) and "Ward Profiles (25-ward model)" (OpenDataToronto 2024b). The data were cleaned and analyzed using open-source statistical programming language R (R Core Team 2023), alongside dplyr (Wickham, François, et al. 2023), tidyverse (Wickham 2023c), forcats (Wickham 2023a), ggplot2 (Wickham, Chang, et al. 2023), janitor (Firke 2023), knitr (Xie 2023), lubridate (Spinu, Grolemund, and Wickham 2023), purrr (Wickham and Henry 2023), readr (Wickham, Hester, and Bryan 2024), readxl (Wickham and Bryan 2023), stringr (Wickham 2023b), tibble (Müller and Wickham 2023), and tidyr (Wickham, Vaughan, and Girlich 2023).

Fire Inspection Results Data

The Highrise Residential Fire Inspection Results Data (OpenDataToronto 2024a) consists of properties with and without identified Ontario Fire Code violations. This dataset does not include ongoing inspections and only includes closed cases. The data includes building addresses, property wards, each fire code violated and a description, and the open and close date of each inspection.

To clean this data, I removed variables irrelevant to the intended scope of investigation. For example, date of inspections and buildings without fire code violations were removed (see (tbl?)-).

Table 1: Sample of Cleaned Fire Inspection Data

Property Address	Property Ward	Violation Fire Code	Violation Description	Number of Violations
90 Park Lawn Rd	3	2.2.3.2	2.2.3.2 Maintenance of closures	5
90 Park Lawn Rd	3	6.3.1.2	6.3.1.2 Monitoring	5
4 Elsinore Path	3	1.1.2.3	1.1.2.3 (Do Not Use)	9
4 Elsinore Path	3	1.1.2.3./2.7.3.3.(3)	1.1.2.3./2.7.3.3.(3) Records of Test (Emergency Lighting)	9
4 Elsinore Path	3	2.7.2.2	2.7.2.2 Requirements for locking, latching and fastening devices	9

Results

Conclusion

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