

ONTARIO WOMEN'S  
HEALTH EQUITY REPORT

# Volume 1

2009

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Project for an Ontario Women's Health Evidence-Based Report

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# A Guide to Reading Maps

Maps are the main visual representation of spatial patterns of data and analyses covered in this Report.

Ontario is difficult to map as a province, due to its vast areas in the North and detailed characteristics in the South. As such, all maps consist of three views—Northern Ontario, Toronto and surrounding areas, and Southern Ontario. The measures of distance and area on these views differ from one another.

There are two types of thematic maps in this Report that depict a magnitude of analyzed variables: 1) bar chart maps and 2) choropleth (shaded) maps. The following descriptions aim to help the reader correctly view and interpret these two map types.

## BAR CHART MAPS

Bar chart maps can depict a variety of numeric variables including counts and ratios across Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) in Ontario. In most of the maps in this Report, the bars show values of relative risks, odds ratios or rates (percentages).

The main feature to look for is the height of the bars, since it represents the value of the mapped attribute. The larger the attribute number (relative risk, odds ratio or rate), the taller the bar. The number at the top or beside each bar represents the actual value of the attribute.

If the attribute is presented in two subgroups (e.g., women and men) as in Figure 1, then each LHIN area on the map has two bars. When the attribute is presented in four subgroups (e.g., lower-education women, higher-education women, lower-education men, and higher-education men) as in Figure 2, then each LHIN area on the map has four bars. In all cases, the height of the bar is proportional to the value of the mapped attribute.

In the legend of the map the top set of bars reflects the highest observed value in the depicted data set. This can be used for visual comparison with the bars on the map.

The bottom set of bars shows the overall Ontario values of the depicted attributes and can be compared visually to the bars on the map.

## CHOROPLETH (SHADED) MAPS

Choropleth maps use different shades or colours to depict data values. Each colour generally represents a range of values, as shown in the map legend. In general, the darkness of the shade or colour is

proportional to a larger data value—the larger the data value, the darker the shade or colour on the map. Shaded maps usually represent rate or ratio variables rather than raw counts or amounts.

Figure 3: Example of a Choropleth Map

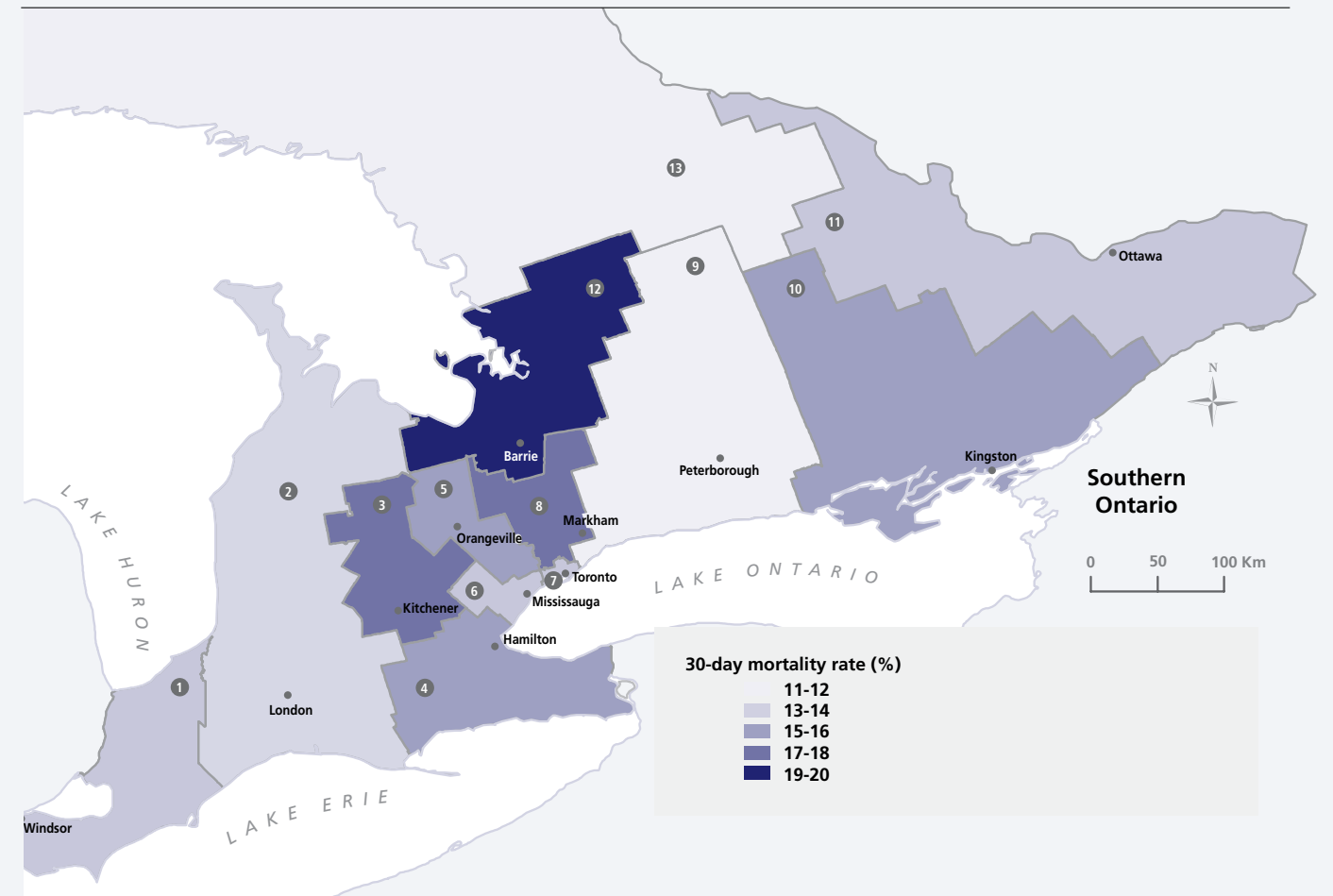


Figure 1: Example of a Two Bar Map

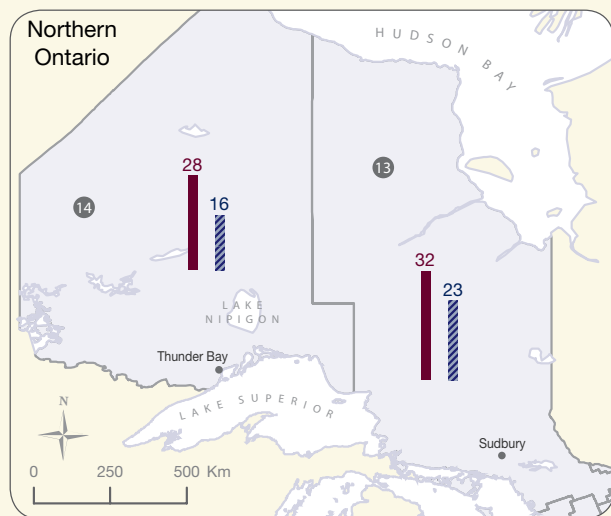


Figure 2: Example of a Four Bar Map

