

TECHNICAL NOTES

Early Development Instrument (EDI) Snapshot

Updated: November 2025

Introduction

This Snapshot captures childhood vulnerabilities measured by the Early Development Instrument (EDI) provided by the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University.¹ Data is collected provincially every 3 years for all children attending Senior Kindergarten (ages 5-6) and is reported here by EDI cycle (cycle 4 – 2015, cycle 5 – 2018, and cycle 6 – 2023) and by local Public Health Units (PHUs) and other geographic comparators in Ontario.²

Specific Indicators

- Vulnerability on one or more domains
- Vulnerability on two or more domains
- Vulnerable on Physical Health and Well-Being
- Vulnerable on Social Competence
- Vulnerable on Emotional Maturity
- Vulnerable on Language and Cognitive Development
- Vulnerable on Communication Skills and General Knowledge

Data Collection

- EDI data for Cycles 4 and 5 were collected under the Ministry of Education (MEDU). Previously, the implementations had fallen under the Ministry of Child and Youth Services. Data are collected for the entire province during the February/March timeframe, and collections occur every 3 years (Note: The Cycle 6 collection originally scheduled for 2021, was collected in 2023 due to the pandemic).
- The Ontario Baseline was the first full Provincial EDI collection that occurred over a 3 year time period from 2004 - 2006. Scores used from the baseline collection have been used to create cut-off scores that categorize children's scores.³
- Vulnerable describes the children who score below the 10th percentile cut-off of the Ontario Baseline population. It captures the children who are struggling, but not only those who are doing so visibly to have already been identified.
- Teachers complete questionnaires for each child in their classroom. In order for a questionnaire to be used in analyses, there are some inclusion criteria. The first is that a child has to be in Senior Kindergarten (Year 2). The child or teacher must be in the class for at least one month prior to completion. The teacher must complete approximately 75% of the questionnaire. Children with Special Needs are reported on separately from typically developing children. Lastly, children and demographics were validated through the MEDU. Children that meet all five of these criteria are considered valid for analyses. This is what is used for the denominator.

Measures

- Vulnerability on 1 or more domains: Scoring below the 10th percentile cut-off on 1 or more domains.
- Vulnerability on 2 or more domains: Scoring below the 10th percentile cut-off on 2 or more domains.
- Vulnerable on Physical Health and Well-Being: Scoring below the 10th percentile cut-off on the Physical Health and Well-being domain. Includes gross and fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil, running on the playground, motor coordination), adequate energy levels for classroom activities, independence in looking after own needs, and daily living skills.
- Vulnerable on Social Competence: Scoring below the 10th percentile cut-off on the Social Competence domain. Includes curiosity about the world, eagerness to try new experiences, knowledge of standards of acceptable public behaviour, ability to control own behaviour, appropriate respect for adult authority, cooperation with others, following rules, and ability to play and work with other children.
- Vulnerable on Emotional Maturity: Scoring below the 10th percentile cut-off on the Emotional Maturity domain. Includes the ability to think before acting, a balance between too fearful and too impulsive, an ability to deal with feelings at the age-appropriate level, and empathetic response to other people's feelings.
- Vulnerable on Language and Cognitive Development: Scoring below the 10th percentile cut-off on the on Language and Cognitive Development domain. Includes reading awareness, age-appropriate reading and writing skills, age-appropriate numeracy skills, ability to understand similarities and differences, and ability to recite back specific pieces of information from memory.
- Vulnerable on Communication Skills and General Knowledge: Scoring below the 10th percentile cut-off on the Communication Skills and General Knowledge domain. Includes skills to communicate needs and wants in socially appropriate ways, symbolic use of language, storytelling, and age-appropriate knowledge about the life and world around.
- For more information see: <https://edi-offordcentre.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2019/03/EDI-interpretation-toolkit.pdf>

Metrics

Percent

- Numerator: Number of children below the 10th percentile in each domain
- Denominator: Number of children valid for analyses. All children that meet all five inclusion criteria are considered valid for analyses and represent the denominator

% Females

- Numerator: Number of girls
- Denominator: Number of children valid for analyses

% E/FSL

- Numerator: Number of children identified 'Yes' as ELL, ALF, PANA

In most school boards, children are identified as having the ELL or ALF (English Language Learner or Actualisation linguistique en français) status if they are not fluent enough in the language of instruction to easily follow the classroom educational activities (See table below).

ELL (Anglophone schools): Child for whom English is not their first language AND who needs additional instruction in English. English language learners are students in provincially funded English language schools whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the variety used for instruction in Ontario's schools. These students may be Canadian born or recently arrived from other countries.

ALF (Francophone schools): The Actualisation linguistique en français (ALF) program is designed to meet the needs of students attending French-language schools for whom French is not their first language and for whom English may or may not be their language of communication. These students may be Canadian born or recent immigrants. The program is also intended to improve their proficiency in French to ensure their well-being and their long-term academic success.

PANA (Francophone Schools): The Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants (PANA) is designed to help students from abroad with limited prior schooling, drastically different schooling or who have experienced interruptions in their education. It is also designed to help students familiarize themselves with their new sociocultural environment over a period of time and support their integration into Canadian society. If needed, it also provides supports for learners to enhance their knowledge in a variety of curriculum areas to ensure they succeed in the regular program.

Denominator: Number of children valid for analyses. A 'No' response means the language of instructions is the first language, child who is able to speak another language apart from the language of instruction but is fluent in the language of instruction, or child whose first language (developmentally) is not the language of instruction but is fluent in the language of instruction

Mean age: Children's mean age

Geographic Comparison

- Ontario
- PHU regions. Table 1 shows the mapping between PHUs and the PHU regions

Table 1: Mapping Between PHU Regions and PHUs

Region	PHU
North West	• Northwestern Health Unit • Thunder Bay District Health Unit
North East	• Algoma Public Health • North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit • Northeastern Public Health (merged January 1, 2025: Porcupine Health Unit and Timiskaming Health Unit) • Public Health Sudbury & Districts

Region	PHU
South West	• Chatham-Kent Public Health • Grey Bruce Public Health • Huron Perth Public Health (merged January 1, 2020: Huron County Health Unit and Perth District Health Unit) • Lambton Public Health • Middlesex-London Health Unit • Southwestern Public Health (merged May 1, 2018: Elgin St. Thomas Public Health and Oxford County Public Health Unit) • Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
Central West	• City of Hamilton Public Health Services • Grand Erie Public Health (merged January 1, 2025: Brant County Health Unit and Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit) • Halton Region Public Health • Niagara Region Public Health • Region of Waterloo Public Health and Paramedic Services • Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
Toronto	• Toronto Public Health
Central East	• Durham Region Health Department • Lakelands Public Health (merged January 1, 2025: Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit and Peterborough Public Health) • Peel Public Health • Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit • York Region Public Health
East	• Eastern Ontario Health Unit • Ottawa Public Health • Renfrew County and District Health Unit • Southeast Public Health (merged January 1, 2025: Hastings Prince Edward Public Health; Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health; and Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit)

Considerations

- In 2023, five school boards did not participate in the Ontario EDI Cycle 6 data collection. These boards are Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Peel District School Board, Thames Valley District School Board, Toronto District School Board, and Wellington District School Board. Table 2 shows the sample size changes for Cycle 6 for those public health units where some school boards that did not participate in the 2023 data collection.

Table 2: School Boards That Did Not Participate in Cycle 6 Data Collection of the EDI and the Public Health Units it Affects

School Board	Public Health Unit	Cycle 4 N	Cycle 5 N	Cycle 6 N
Ottawa-Carleton DSB	City of Ottawa Health Unit	8963	9228	4485
Peel DSB	Peel Regional Health unit	14567	14662	3410
Thames Valley DSB	Middlesex-London Health Unit	4263	3891	830
Thames Valley DSB	Southwestern Health Unit	1930	1666	234
Toronto DSB	City of Toronto Health Unit	22752	22852	4922
Wellington CDSB	Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit	2739	2787	2270

Other Methodological Notes

- EDI in Ontario: <https://edi.offordcentre.com/partners/canada/edi-in-ontario-2004-2018/>
- EDI Interpretation Toolkit: <https://edi-offordcentre.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2019/03/EDI-interpretation-toolkit.pdf>
- Calculated indicators for merged PHUs by summing case counts and population counts from their component PHUs (see Table 1 for more details on PHU mergers).

Data Sources

Early Development Instrument Cycles 4 (2015), 5 (2018), and 6 (2023). Offord Centre for Child Studies.

How to Cite This Snapshot

Generic Citation

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References

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2. Equity from the Start. Early development instrument (EDI) [Internet]. Hamilton, ON: Offord Centre for Child Studies; c2025 [cited 2025 Nov 10]. Available from: <https://efts.offordcentre.com/>
3. Equity from the Start. Early development instrument: interpretation toolkit [Internet]. Hamilton, ON: Offord Centre for Child Studies; c2025 [cited 2025 Nov 10]. Available from: <https://edi-offordcentre.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2019/03/EDI-interpretation-toolkit.pdf>

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