

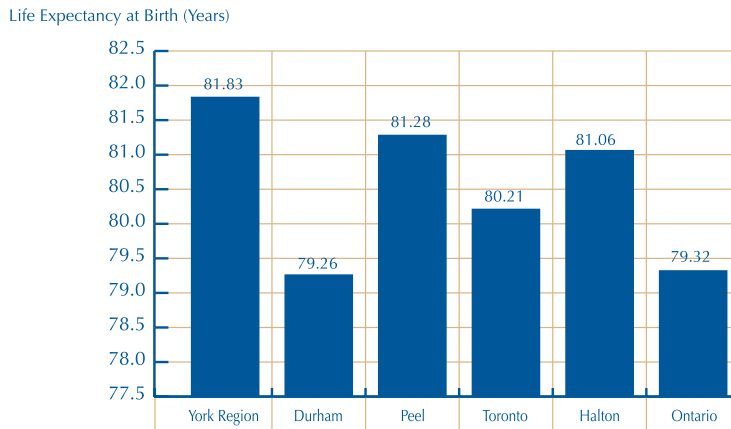
# Health-related Quality of Life

*Indicators based on deaths and the use of hospital services (see chapters 7 and 12) are important measures of the health status of the population. However, they only represent the most severe disease outcomes in the population. To obtain a more complete picture of the health of the population it is necessary to investigate different aspects of health and health-related quality of life. Indicators such as self-rated health status and disability-free life expectancy can be used to provide more information about the population's health status.*

## Life Expectancy

Life expectancy at birth is a widely used indicator of the health of a population. The longer the life expectancy at birth, the better the general health status of the population. York Region residents had an estimated life expectancy in 1999 of 81.8 years (79.9 for males and 83.6 years for females), which was the highest in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the province (Figure 4.1). Higher life expectancy is associated with better socio-economic status and health conditions. Life expectancy increases as the rate of unemployment decreases and the level of education increases.<sup>43</sup>

Figure 4.1 Life Expectancy at Birth  
Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Ontario, 1999



Source: Provincial Health Planning Database, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2002.

## At a Glance

In 2001/02, 93% of York Region residents aged 18 and over rated their own general health status as excellent, very good, or good.

Average disability-free life expectancy, for residents of York Region (71.1 years) is the highest in Ontario, tied with Halton Region.

The prevalence of long-term disability among York Region residents age 12 to 64 was lower than the provincial average.



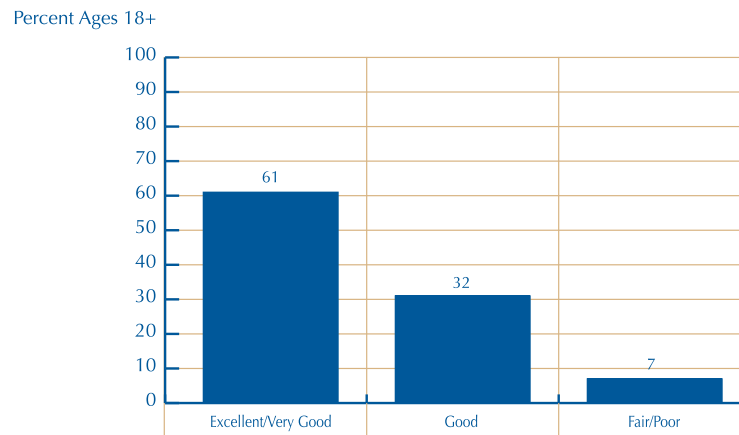


## Self-perceived Health

One way of assessing the health of a population is to ask people to rate their own health. Self-perceived (or self-rated) health has been shown to have a high degree of correlation with other more "objective" measures of health status, such as disease states or the presence of functional limitations (such as long-term disability). York Region residents were asked about their health status as part of the 2001/02 Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System.

Overall in 2001/02, 61% of the York Region population age 18 and over reported that they were in excellent or very good health (Figure 4.2). This distribution did not differ between males and females. The proportion of persons who reported excellent or very good health status decreased with age, from 67% among persons age 25 to 44 to 43% among persons age 65 and over (Figure 4.3). Overall 93% of York Region residents age 18 years and over reported their health status as excellent, very good or good.

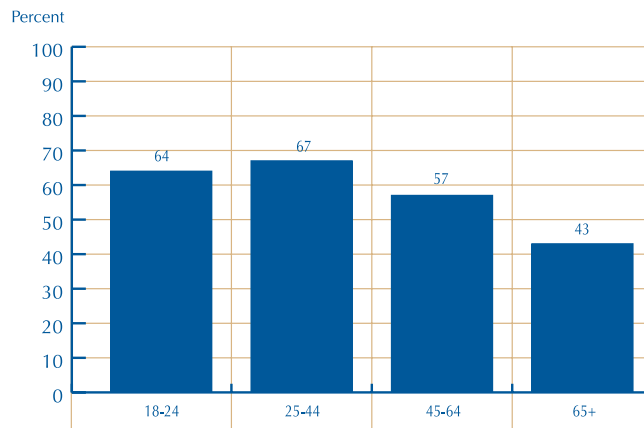
Figure 4.2 Self-reported Health Status, Ages 18 Years and Over  
York Region, 2001/02



Source: Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System Feb 2001-July 2002, York Region Health Services Department, 2002.



Figure 4.3 Self-reported Excellent/Very Good Health Status by Age  
York Region, 2001/02



Source: Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System Feb. 2001-July 2002, York Region Health Services Department, 2002.

## Prevalence of Disability

The prevalence of self-reported disability or handicap lasting at least six months is another general indicator of the health status of a population. In 1996/97, about 7% of the York Region population age 12 and over reported having a long-term disability, with the overall proportions among men and women nearly identical. The prevalence of long-term disability rose with age, from a low of 4% among those 12 to 44, to 7% among those 45 to 64, and to 24% among those 65 and over. The prevalence of long-term disability among York Region residents age 12 to 64 was lower than the Ontario average (5% versus 8%, respectively). Among York Region residents 65 and over, the prevalence of long-term disability (24%) was higher than the Ontario average (21%).

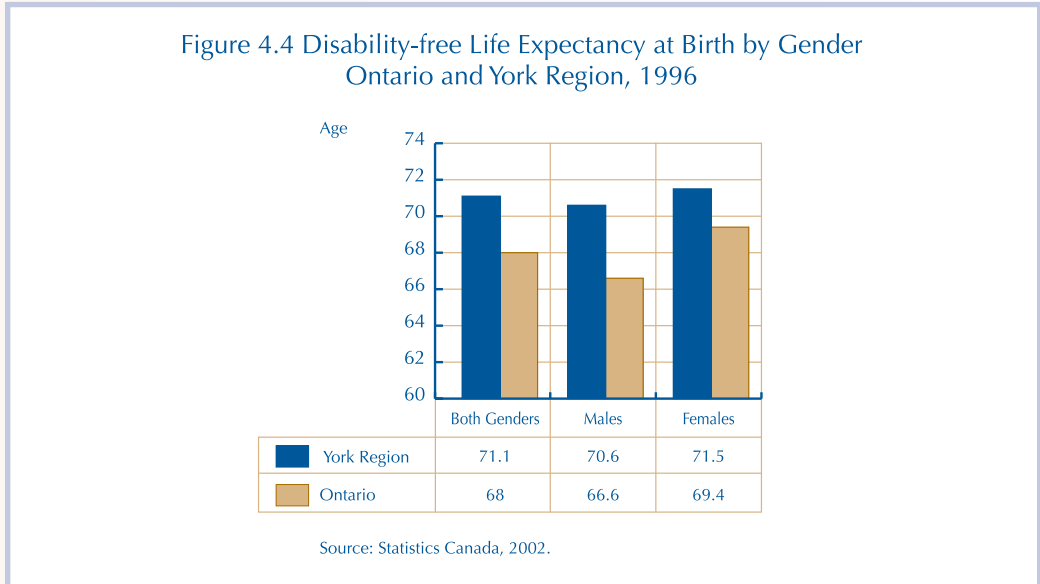
## Disability-free Life Expectancy

Disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) is a measure of population health that is closely linked to the concept of quality of life. It is used to distinguish between years of life free of any activity limitation and years experienced with at least one activity limitation. The emphasis of DFLE is not on the length of life but on the quality of life.





The 1996 disability-free life expectancy at birth for York Region was 71.1 years for both genders combined; 70.6 years for males and 71.5 years for females (Figure 4.4).<sup>44</sup>



York Region males have an additional four years of disability-free life, compared to Ontario males (66.6 years) and York Region females have two extra years without disability compared to Ontario females (69.4 years).

There are wide variations in DFLE across the province, ranging from 63.3 years in a northern health region to a high of 71.1 years in York Region and Halton Region.

The latest life expectancy figures reveal that females outlive males by nearly four years. In terms of disability-free life expectancy, however, years free from disabilities are nearly equal for males and females - there is less than one year of difference. Therefore, women may live longer but they live more years with disabilities.

*This chapter outlines several measures of the health status of a population. The key one is life expectancy, but also important are how healthy people perceive themselves to be and the years of disability-free life that they can expect to enjoy. The health status of a population is closely linked to the determinants of health, which are discussed in Chapter 2 (Our Social Environment), Chapter 3 (Our Physical Environment) and Chapter 5 (Lifestyle Behaviours and Health). Related measures of the health status of a population are discussed in Chapters 6 through 11.*