

The Personal Security Index, 2002

by the Canadian Council on Social Development

Introduction

A wealth of information exists about the economic, health and physical safety of Canadians, from information on crime rates to data about waiting lists for surgery. These indicators – some positive and others negative – affect Canadians’ perceptions of their personal security.

But what do the facts reveal? Is the personal security of Canadians improving overall or is it deteriorating? Did the horrific terrorist attacks on Sept. 11th and subsequent fall-out affect how Canadians perceive their own security?

The fourth annual Personal Security Index (PSI) answers these questions and others with its analysis of hard data and glimpse into the Canadian psyche. Developed by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) with the support of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, Canadian Heritage, EKOS Research Associates Inc., Health Canada, the Canadian Labour Congress and Human Resources Development Canada, the PSI attempts to bridge the gap between real trends and perceptions.

What is the PSI?

The PSI is a tool to measure annual changes in the security of Canadians according to three key elements:

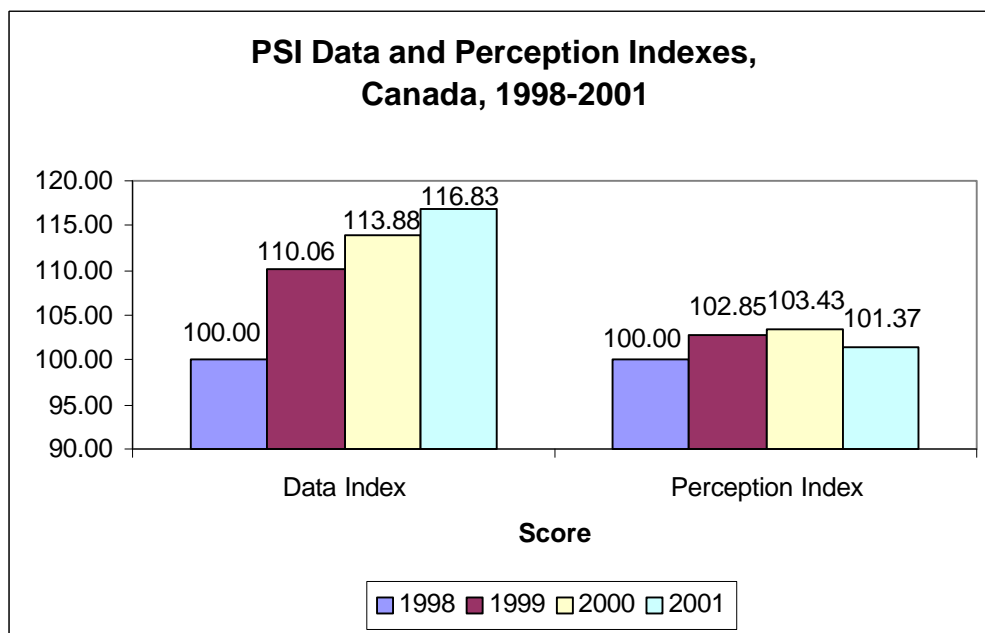
- ✓ Economic security in the broad sense of job and financial security;
- ✓ Health security in the sense of protection against the threats of disease and injury;
- ✓ Physical safety in the sense of feeling safe from violent crime and theft.

The PSI measures changes in both the numerical trends and in people’s perceptions of their personal security. It is a valuable addition to measuring well-being and is unique in combining both objective *and* subjective indicators.

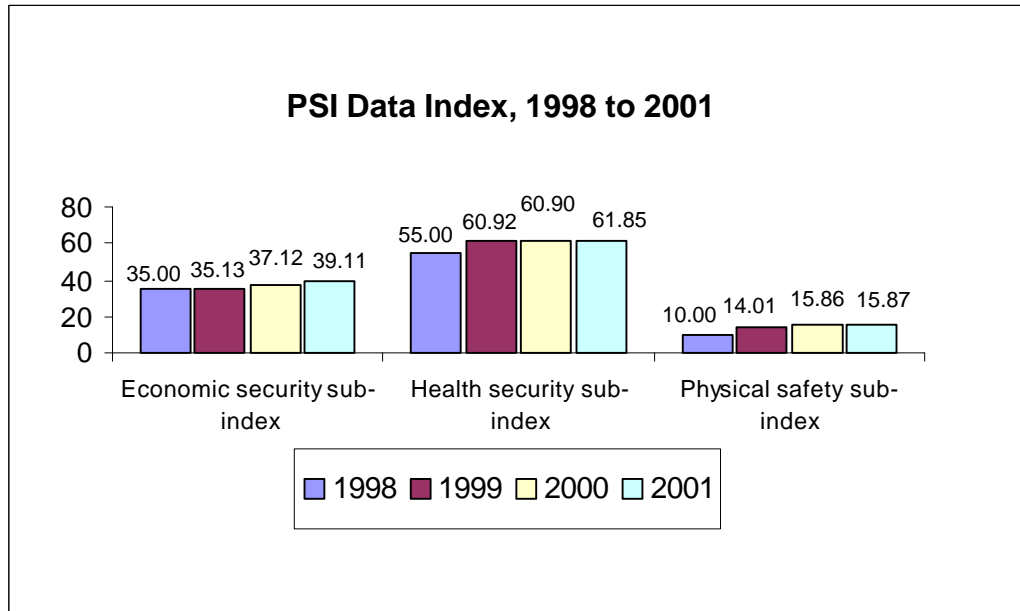
The PSI is composed of two indexes: a “Data Index” and a “Perception Index.” The Data Index, using many Statistics Canada databases, is designed to measure changes in “real” outcomes related to personal security, such as levels of income and debt, and rates of crime or poor health. The Perception Index is based on responses to a national survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates, which asked more than 3,000 Canadians how they rated several issues affecting their own personal security. This year’s PSI also illustrates changes in trends and perceptions between 1998 and 2001.

Overall Highlights of PSI 2002

- Overall, according to the objective data, the personal security of Canadians rose for the third year in a row (from 110.06 in 1999 to 116.83 in 2001). But the perception index fell between 2000 and 2001, meaning Canadians feel less secure despite improving economic and social conditions.
- Contrary to expectations, the events of Sept. 11th appear to have had minimal impact on Canadians' impressions of their personal safety, economic security and health.
- Particularly notable is the marked shift in feelings of security among BC residents. Although the objective data improved for economic, health security and physical safety, there was a rather dramatic decline in the overall perception index for the province, sparked in part by BC residents' greater fears of job loss and a sharp drop in their confidence over access to the health care system.
- The hard data show that Canadians' economic security rose in 2001 on almost every front. But interestingly, people's perceptions of their economic security moved in the opposite direction – downward.
- Unlike most other Canadians, Albertans felt more economically secure.
- Health indicators improved in 2001 but Canadians' perceptions of their health security fell for the third consecutive year. Canadians' confidence in their ability to access the health care system is clearly eroding.
- The statistics for Canadians' physical safety remained relatively unchanged with people's perceptions of their physical safety declining only slightly from the year before.



PSI Data Index:



PSI Perception Index:

