

## Health Security

*Being in good physical and mental health, having access to adequate medical care in times of need, and feeling safe from accidents and disease are all basic elements that contribute to a person's sense of health security and that we monitor in the PSI.*

### Highlights:

*Health security increased in 2001 according to the objective data, mainly due to an increase in life expectancy. But perceptions of health security fell for the second year in a row. In fact, Canadians' concerns over their access to health care rose sharply in 2001.*

### Rate of premature death continues to drop

*Every year, thousands of Canadians die prematurely from injuries or disease. One way to measure the impact of these causes of death is by calculating the "potential years of life lost" or PYLL. (The latest PYLL data are from 1998 sources.)*

#### DATA:

- PYLL rates continued to decrease, suggesting that premature mortality is declining. In 1998, the potential years of life lost were 54 years per 1,000 persons compared to 63 years in 1990. This represents a 14% reduction.
- Regionally, Ontario (-7.5%) and BC (-6.9%) recorded the greatest reduction among the eight provinces with declining PYLL rates between 1996 and 1998. Prince Edward Island experienced the largest PYLL rate increase, going from 57 years per 1,000 in 1996 to 61 years per 1,000 in 1998. (In 1997, however, PEI reported a substantial drop in its PYLL rate to 51 years per 1,000).

### Do Canadians lead stressful lives?

*The strains and insecurities of a changing labor market along with the family obligations of working parents are making life more stressful for an increasing number of Canadians.*

#### DATA:

- The majority of Canadians (60%) reported that their lives were moderately stressful in 2001, down from 62% in 2000.

- Meanwhile, 22% of Canadians described their lives as extremely stressful and 17% said their lives were not stressful.
- Overall, women were slightly more likely than men to describe their lives as being stressful: 84% of women said their lives were extremely or moderately stressful, compared to 82% of men.
- Stress levels are generally high in early adulthood, peak around middle age, and decline during old age. In 2001, Canadians aged 25 to 44 reported the highest stress levels of all age groups.
- High-income earners reported higher levels of extreme stress than did respondents from middle- and lower-income households. 27% of people with household incomes over \$80,000 and 24% of those with incomes under \$20,000 said they led extremely stressful lives.
- Regionally, there was little variation in stress levels, although Atlantic Canadians were somewhat less likely to feel extremely stressed.

**PERCEPTION:      How do Canadians rate their own health?**

*Research shows that one of the most reliable indicators of a person's health status is their own assessment of their health. With that in mind, we asked Canadians to rate their health.*

- The vast majority of respondents (69%) claimed they were in very good or excellent health, the same percentage as in 2000. However, this number has fallen regularly from 78% in 1997, 76% in 1998 and 73% in 1999. This shift in perception seems to be mainly the result of a shift in self-reported health from very good to average.
- Women and men were about equally likely to report their health as being excellent. But men were far more likely than women to describe their health as good or very good, while women were more likely to say their health was average.
- Quebec residents were far more likely than other Canadians to rate their health as excellent (34%). Only 20% of Prairie residents and 15% of Atlantic residents described their health as excellent.

## Health Care Spending

**DATA:**

- The private sector share of total health care spending was forecast to decline in 2001 to 27.4% from a forecasted drop of 28% in 2000 and 29.2% in 1999. Meanwhile, the growth in the public sector share of health care spending dropped from a forecasted 8.9% in 2000 to 7.4% in 2001, which brought it back to 1998-99 levels.
- Hospital care remains the largest category of health expenditures. Drugs now rank second and physician services third. In 2001, drugs are expected to maintain the same ranking with a share of 15.2% of total health care expenditures.
- Regionally, health care spending varies considerably for a number of reasons. In 1999, all provinces experienced increases in their health expenditures per capita. Manitoba, BC and Ontario spent the most per capita on health, and Quebec, New Brunswick and PEI spent the least.
- The biggest spending changes between 1998 and 1999 occurred in Alberta (+11.5%), Manitoba (+11.2%) and Newfoundland (+10.6%).

## Access to Health Services

*Government cuts in health care spending and media attention over problems in the health care system have caused many Canadians to worry that they will not have access to affordable and adequate health services.*

### **PERCEPTION: Are Canadians worried about access to health care services?**

- The proportion of Canadians who felt confident they would be able to access health care services if they became ill fell rather sharply in 2001 to 55 %, down from 60% in the three previous years.
- The proportion that felt “not confident” rose from 23% in 2000 to 26% in 2001.
- While seniors and young people under 25 felt the most sanguine about the health care system in 2001, the proportion of seniors who felt confident dropped from 68% to 62% in 2001.
- As in previous years, women expressed less confidence than men (29% compared to 23%).
- Residents of Alberta (61%), Ontario (59%) and the Atlantic Provinces (58%) were the most confident, while people in BC (48%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (52%) were the least confident.

## Safety at work

*The PSI tracks the incidence of workplace injuries by reporting on the number of injuries per 100,000 workers that result in lost work time. Unfortunately, only very limited data are available on psychological stress and strain at work.*

### **DATA:**

- In 1999, the highest workplace injury rates were recorded in British Columbia, Quebec, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island, where rates exceeded 4,000 per 100,000 workers.
- NB and Ontario posted the lowest rates at about 2,100 or less per 100,000 workers.

## Traffic accidents

*To evaluate the safety of Canadians on the road, the PSI tracks the number of people who are injured as a result of traffic accidents, as a proportion of the overall Canadian population.*

### **DATA:**

- Traffic injuries rose from 720 injuries per 100,000 people in 1999 to 739 injuries per 100,000 in 2000.
- The number of Canadians injured increased by 4.5% over the two-year span of 1998-2000.
- Consistent with previous years, injury rates in 2000 were highest among individuals aged 15 to 19 (1,431.5 per 100,000) and among those aged 20 to 24 (1,450.1 per 100,000).