

Background - Health Security – PSI 2003

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. They are the indicators monitored in the PSI.

Health security increased in 2002 according to the objective data: there was an increase in life expectancy, a decrease in motor vehicle traffic injuries, and a decrease in time-loss work injuries. But perceptions of health security fell for the third year in a row. The self-rated health of Canadians has declined, and their concerns over their access to health care continued to rise in 2002. Despite prescriptions found in the Romanow report, and the federal and provincial government agreement (in principle) to fix health care, Canadians are sceptical that federal or provincial governments will improve the health care system in the near future.*

Access to health services

More and more Canadians 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 that they would be able to access health care services if they became ill continued to fall. It dropped to 53% in 2002, down from 55% a year earlier, and well below the 59% recorded in 1998.
- The proportion who said they were “not confident” rose sharply to 31% in 2002, compared to only 27% five years earlier.
- Similar to previous years, women were somewhat more likely than men to feel that they would not have access to health care services when needed: 32% for women compared to 29% for men.
- Interestingly, people over age 65 gained confidence in their access to the health care system – 65% in 2002 compared to 62% in 2001 – while those under age 25 lost confidence, the proportion falling from 67% to 64% over the same period.
- Residents of the Atlantic region (61%) and Ontario (57%) were the most confident about their access to health care services, while people in BC (43%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (47%) were the least confident.

* Data for the health Perception Index were gathered prior to the outbreak of SARS, concerns about Mad Cow disease, and public mobilization efforts against the West Nile virus.



New

Are Canadians confident that their governments (federal/provincial) can fix problems in the health care system?

Many Canadians are worried that neither the federal nor provincial governments can improve the health care system in the near future.

Approximately 40% of Canadians surveyed were not confident that the federal government could improve the health care system in the next two years, while just over 34% expressed confidence. About 43% also said they lacked confidence in the ability of their provincial government to improve the health care system in the next two years.

Health care spending

DATA:

- Total health care expenditures in Canada were estimated at \$97.4 billion in 2000, or \$3,164 per person (in constant dollars). The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) forecasts that these expenditures would reach \$105.6 billion by 2001 and \$112.2 billion by 2002, representing annual increases of 8.4% and 6.3%, respectively.
- Public sector spending on health care has been increasing, growing by almost two full percentage points – by 7.3% in 1998, 7% in 1999 and 9.1% in 2000.
- One of the fastest growing expenses in Canada's health care system is drugs. Between 1975 and 2000, the cost of drugs nearly doubled as a percentage of total health care expenditures, rising from 8.8% in 1975 to 16.2% by 2000. Drugs now constitute the 2nd largest health care expenditure.
- The largest category of health care expenses continues to be hospitals. Over the past 25 years, however, the percentage of total expenditures on hospitals has been shrinking compared to other expenses in the system. It fell from 44.7% of all health care expenses in 1975, to 32.1% in 2000. Hospital expenditures are forecast to rise to \$33.1 billion in 2001 and to \$35.2 billion by 2002, increases of 5.9% and 6.3%, respectively.
- Private sector funding on health care has also grown – by 4.3% in 1998, 8.2% in 1999 and 7.0% in 2000. CIHI has forecast that private sector funding would grow by 8.5% in 2001 and 6.5% in 2002.

Do Canadians lead stressful lives?

The strains and insecurities of a changing labour market and the family obligations of working parents are continuing to make life stressful for Canadians.

DATA:

- The majority of Canadians surveyed (59%) reported that their lives were moderately stressful, down slightly from 60% in 2001, and continuing a four-year trend of modest declines.
- The number who feel that their lives are extremely stressful has remained fairly constant at 22%.
- The number of Canadians who reported that they did not feel stressed has gradually increased, from 16% in 1999, to 17% in 2001, and 19% in 2002.

- Women were slightly more likely than men to say their lives were stressful: 82% of women said their lives were extremely or moderately stressful compared to 79% among men.
- Not surprisingly, household income also seems to influence the amount of stress Canadians report, with the highest levels of stress found among those in the lowest income groups. Canadians with household incomes between \$20,000 and \$29,000 reported the highest levels of stress (25%), followed by those with household incomes under \$20,000.
- There were some variations by region, with more residents of Ontario and Alberta (24%) reporting extremely stressful lives and fewer residents of Quebec (17%).

Self-rated health

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 health of Canadians appears to have declined over the last five years, according to self-reports. In 2002, 68.6% of Canadians said they were in very good or excellent health, down from 69.1% in 2001 and 76.8% in 1998. In 1998, only 5.6% of Canadians said they were in terrible or poor health, but by 2002, this had risen to 8%.
- Men were slightly more likely than women to rate their health as very good or excellent in 2002 – 69.6% compared to 67.7% – while women were more likely to report their health as poor or terrible (8.9% among women and 7.0% among men).
- Perceptions of good health decline with age. Among Canadians under age 25, 81.4% rated their health as good or excellent, whereas only 58.2% of people over age 65 gave their health as good a rating.
- There is also a clear relationship between household income and positive reports of health. As household incomes rise, so too does the proportion of Canadians who say they are in very good or excellent health: 80.9% of those with household incomes of \$80,000 or more rated their health so positively, compared to only 54.1% of those earning less than \$20,000.
- Residents of Alberta and Quebec were the most likely to say they were in very good or excellent health (73.7% and 73.1%, respectively), while residents in the Atlantic region and the Prairies were the least likely (59% and 59.4%, respectively).

Additional information about other indicators of health security – such as data on potential years of life lost, safety at work, and traffic accidents – is available in the full report on this project, *The Personal Security Index, 2003*. The report can be obtained free of charge on the CCSD's website at www.ccsd.ca.