

The Personal Security Index, 2003

by the Canadian Council on Social Development

Health Security Highlights

The Romanow Report, released in November 2002, failed to convince Canadians that long waiting lists for health care would soon be a thing of the past. Just a few months after its release, Canadians reported increasing dissatisfaction with their access to health care – and strong scepticism about whether any level of government could effectively address the problem within the next two years. They also rated their health a little less positively than they had five years ago, even though Canadians are living longer and suffering less serious injuries. These results were obtained in the early months of 2003, before the outbreak of SARS or the summertime worries about West Nile Virus.

- 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.
- 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.
- The self-reported health of Canadians declined slightly between 1998 and 2002, although both premature mortality and injury rates decreased. In 2002, 69% of Canadians said they were in very good or excellent health, down from 77% in 1998.
- The number of Canadians who reported that they did *not* feel stressed has gradually increased, from 16% in 1999, to 19% by 2002. However, the majority of Canadians surveyed (59%) continue to report that their lives are moderately stressful, and the number who feel that their lives are extremely stressful has remained constant at 22%.
- Across Canada, slightly less than a quarter (23%) of Canadians feel that they could always balance their personal, family and work needs, while 9% felt that they could rarely or never balance these different aspects of their lives.
- Stress is linked to a person’s ability to balance the various demands in their lives – personal, family and work needs. Overall, only 14% of Canadians who said they could always balance their commitments reported that they were extremely stressed, whereas 53% of those who said they were rarely or never able to balance their commitments reported being under extreme stress.