Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Health Indicators

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Canadian Institute for Health Information
Institut canadien d' information sur la santé

Health Indicators – overview

Background

In 1998, over 500 people - health administrators, researchers, caregivers, government officials, health advocacy groups, and consumers – were brought together to identify health information needs. One of their priorities was comparable quality data on key health indicators for health and health services.

In response to the consultations, CIHI and Statistics Canada have launched a collaborative process to identify what measures should be used to report on health and the health system – and then to share this information with Canadians from coast to coast.

Health indicators are:

- relevant to established health goals
- based on standard (comparable) definitions and methods
- broadly available – disseminated electronically across Canada at the regional, provincial and national level

The primary goal of the Health Indicators project is to support health regions in monitoring progress in improving and maintaining the health of the population and the functioning of the health system for which they are responsible through the provision of quality, comparative information on:

- The overall health of the population served, how it compares to other regions in the province and country and how it is changing over time;
- The major non-medical determinants of health in the region;
- The health services received by the region's residents; and
- Characteristics of the community or the health system that provide useful contextual information.

Consultations continue with provincial and regional health authorities to refine and expand the initial list of indicators confirmed at the consensus conference of May 1999. As data are compiled, the provincial and regional authorities are also involved in the verification process. This collaborative process is intended to ensure relevant data and consistent methods.

Regional health indicators

The core list of health indicators is presented in the following table, within the Indicators Framework. The indicators included in this publication (underlined) are available at the health region level and represent a subset of this core list of indicators. Subsequent releases will add indicators and time series as these data are developed at the regional level, and new health data are collected.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Health Status</th></tr>
<tr><th>Well-Being</th><th>Health Conditions</th><th>Human Function</th><th>Deaths</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-rated health
• Self-rated ‘excellent’ health for 2 consecutive survey cycles
• Self-esteem
• Mastery</td>
<td>• Low birth weight
• Overweight
• Arthritis
• Diabetes
• Asthma
• High blood pressure
• Cancer incidence
• Chronic pain
• Depression
• Injury hospitalizations
• Food and waterborne diseases</td>
<td>• Functional health
• Disability-days
• Activity limitation</td>
<td>• Infant mortality
• Perinatal deaths
• Life expectancy
• Total mortality
• Circulatory deaths
• Cancer deaths
• Respiratory deaths
• Suicide
• Unintentional injury deaths
• AIDS deaths
• Potential Years of Life Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr><th colspan="4">Non-Medical Determinants of Health</th></tr>
<tr><th>Health Behaviours</th><th>Living and Working Conditions</th><th>Personal Resources</th><th>Environmental Factors</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>• Smoking rate
• Youth smoking rate
• Smoking initiation (average age)
• Quitting smoking
• Regular heavy drinking
• Physical activity
• Breastfeeding</td>
<td>• High school and post-secondary graduation
• Unemployment rate
• Long-term and youth unemployment
• Low income rate
• Children in low income families
• Average personal income
• Income inequality
• Housing affordability
• Crime rate and youth crime rate
• Decision-latitude at work</td>
<td>• School readiness
• Social support
• Life stress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr><th colspan="4">Health System Performance</th></tr>
<tr><th>Acceptability</th><th>Accessibility</th><th>Appropriateness</th><th>Competence</th></tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Influenza immunization, 65+
• Screening mammography, women age 50-69
• Pap smears, age 18-69
• Childhood immunizations</td>
<td>• Vaginal birth after caesarean
• Breast-conserving surgery
• Caesarean sections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr><th>Continuity</th><th>Effectiveness</th><th>Efficiency</th><th>Safety</th></tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pertussis
• Measles
• Tuberculosis
• HIV
• Chlamydia
• Pneumonia and influenza hospitalisations
• Deaths due to medically-treatable diseases
• Ambulatory care sensitive conditions</td>
<td>• Surgical day case rates
• May not require hospitalization
• % Alternate level of care days
• Expected compared to actual stay</td>
<td>• Hip fractures</td>
</tr>
<tr><th colspan="4">Community and Health System Characteristics</th></tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">• Population count
• Percent population age 65 or older
• Percent ‘urban’ population
• Percent aboriginal population
• Percent immigrant population
• Teen pregnancy/teen births
• Expenditures per capita
• Doctors (FP/GP and Specialists)
• Nurses per capita</td>
<td colspan="2">• CABG rates
• Hip replacement
• Knee replacement
• Hysterectomy
• Myringotomy</td>
</tr>
</table>

Health Regions

Health regions are defined by provincial governments as the areas of responsibility for regional health boards (i.e., legislated) or as regions of interest to health care authorities.

The following table presents an overview of health regions in Canada, by province and territory and links to maps (jpeg or pdf) for viewing current boundaries.

Health regions in Canada

Province	Health regions[1]	Units	Maps
Newfoundland	Community Health Regions	6	
Prince Edward Island	Health Regions (Health Survey)	2	
Nova Scotia	Health Regions (Zones)	6	
New Brunswick	Health (Hospital) Regions	7	
Quebec	Régions socio-sanitaires (RSS)	18	
Ontario [2]	Public Health Units (PHU)	37	
	District Health Councils (DHC)	16	
Manitoba	Health Regions	12	
Saskatchewan	Service Areas	11	
Alberta	Health Regions	17	
British Columbia	Health Regions	20	
Yukon Territory	Entire territory	1	
Northwest Territories	Entire territory	1	
Nunavut	Entire territory	1	

Links to jpeg and pdf map images are available from html version of 'Overview' (health regions)

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[1] In PEI, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, the legislated health regions have relatively small populations. In order to produce reliable and comparable health indicators, these provinces have defined health regions for statistical purposes. In PEI, the two health regions divide the province into an 'urban' and 'rural' component. In Nova Scotia, these are known as 'health zones' and relate to the province's administrative health region boundaries. In Saskatchewan, 'service areas' have been created from groupings of the 33 health districts.

[2] Public health units (PHU) administer health promotion and disease prevention programs. District health councils (DHC) are advisory, health planning organizations that make recommendations on resource distribution and provide advice on integration of health services in their community.