

The Health and Well Being of Children - Does it Contribute to the Bottom Line?

The *Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile, 3rd Edition*, is based on a comprehensive review of national and provincial data sources and extensive consultation with experts from many fields. The *CICH Profile* contains ten chapters and 398 charts pertaining to the health and well-being of children and youth. It provides a relevant and clear picture of children today, and gives some direction for assisting them as they explore their futures.

Who is in the Labour Force?

- 45% of the labour force is comprised of parents. These parents must balance the needs of their children with the demands of their jobs.
- Between 1975 and 1995, the proportion of live births to mothers in their thirties increased. 41% of live births were to mothers 30 - 39 years of age in 1995 as opposed to 27% in 1985 and 18% in 1975. More women are having their first child after the age of thirty (31% in 1997 compared with 19% in 1987). Many women are choosing to wait to have children until they have met personal goals in areas such as education, employment and leisure. In other words, many women are having children mid-career.
- Work and family are best understood as complementary, interdependent domains. Problems in one domain affect the other domain.

Who is Caring for Children While Their Parents Work?

- In 1995, there were regulated child care spaces for 8% of children in Canada. In 1998, there were regulated child care spaces for 10% of children. This still leaves an enormous shortfall in regulated child care spaces.
- 73% of children between birth and 11 years of age in non-parental care in Canada were in some form of unregulated child care in 1994-95.

- Increasing numbers of children between 5 and 12 years of age are at home alone because working parents cannot establish a stable care arrangement. Parents may not be able to find or afford a regulated space. They may have difficulty making satisfactory arrangements in the unregulated sector.
- Children who care for themselves are at increased risk of injury, loneliness and unhealthy eating habits.
- Because almost half the labour force are parents with children, child care issues are best understood as work place issues.

How Are Parents Affected?

- Women reported higher levels of time stress than men and married women with children reported the highest levels of all (33%).
- According to one study, 93% of parents of children with special needs reported moderate and high tension as a result of juggling work and family responsibilities.
- Time stress and tension can have an effect on employee productivity.

How are Children Faring?

- Numerous studies have demonstrated that having a positive, open relationship with at least one caring adult is an important contributing factor to resiliency.
- Most youth in school found it easy to talk with their mother about things that bothered them, although students in grade 6 (83% of both boys and girls) were somewhat more likely than students in grades 8 and 10.
- Fathers are important contributors to the healthy development of their children. Researchers have found a strong connection between "fatherly affirmation" and girls' positive self-esteem. Communication between girls and fathers was quite low. 33% of grade 10 girls, compared with 51% of grade 10 boys, reported finding it easy to talk to their fathers about things that really bother them.

- A significant proportion of children between 6 and 11 years of age were inadequately served by the arts, recreation and community programs in 1994-95. Yet research strongly suggests that participation in these kinds of programs contributes to children's resiliency and mental health.
- Although the rate of youth charged with property offences decreased steadily between 1993 and 1997.
- The rate of youth charged with violent crimes doubled between 1987 and 1997. The violent crime rate for girls increased by 179%. The violent crime rate for boys increased by 85%. The actual number of girls charged with violent crime is still much lower than the rate for boys.
- Although very poor children are clearly at risk for psychosocial problems, the majority of children with psychosocial problems are not from very poor families. This is because very poor families account for a relatively small proportion of the population.
- Although children from lone parent families are at elevated risk of these problems, the majority of children with these problems will come from two parent families. 15.7% of children live in lone parent families.
- All children are potentially at risk in today's fast-paced society. All sectors of society have a role to play in supporting families so that they can raise healthy, happy children. All sectors of society benefit when this task is done well.

Which Children Have Problems?

- Children with symptoms of hyperactivity, emotional disorders and conduct disorders are found in all income groups. Among children 4 to 11 years of age, 24% of boys and 17% of girls were reported to have one or more problems.



For further information about the sources of the data, please refer to *The Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile, 3rd Edition*. To order your copy of the *CICH Profile*, please contact:



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