



5.1.1 Economic Security

Fig. 5.1.1 Child poverty, children 0 to 17 years of age, economically advanced countries, 2009

| Country | % | Country | % |
|----------------|------|----------------|-------------|
| Iceland | 4.7 | Australia | 10.9 |
| Finland | 5.3 | Slovakia | 11.2 |
| Cyprus | 6.1 | New Zealand | 11.7 |
| Netherlands | 6.1 | Estonia | 11.9 |
| Norway | 6.1 | United Kingdom | 12.1 |
| Slovenia | 6.3 | Luxembourg | 12.3 |
| Denmark | 6.5 | Canada | 13.3 |
| Sweden | 7.3 | Poland | 14.5 |
| Austria | 7.3 | Portugal | 14.7 |
| Czech Republic | 7.4 | Japan | 14.9 |
| Switzerland | 8.1 | Lithuania | 15.4 |
| Ireland | 8.4 | Italy | 15.9 |
| Germany | 8.5 | Greece | 16 |
| France | 8.8 | Spain | 17.1 |
| Malta | 8.9 | Bulgaria | 17.8 |
| Belgium | 10.2 | Latvia | 18.8 |
| Hungary | 10.3 | USA | 23.1 |
| | | Romania | 25.5 |

Percent of children in households with income lower than 50% of national median

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. "Measuring Child Poverty." Available at: http://www.unicef.gr/pdfs/RC10_report.pdf. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

In a report released by UNICEF in 2012 on child poverty in 35 industrialized countries, Canada lies in the bottom half of the group (24 of 35) despite the government's 1989 pledge to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000. At 13.3%, Canada's child poverty rate is almost 2 percentage points higher than the national average and twice as high as that for seniors. Canada's tax-transfer programs more effectively lower poverty rates among the elderly than among the young.¹

¹ UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. "Measuring Child Poverty." Available at: http://www.unicef.gr/pdfs/RC10_report.pdf. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Implications

Although the UNICEF Innocenti Report Card has met with some criticism (see Miles Corak), the main point to be taken from this report is that Canada's child poverty rate is where it was five years ago. Miles Corak stresses that even though cross-country comparisons help us monitor governmental progress, what is really needed in this report is an indicator measuring changes in poverty over time for each country.²

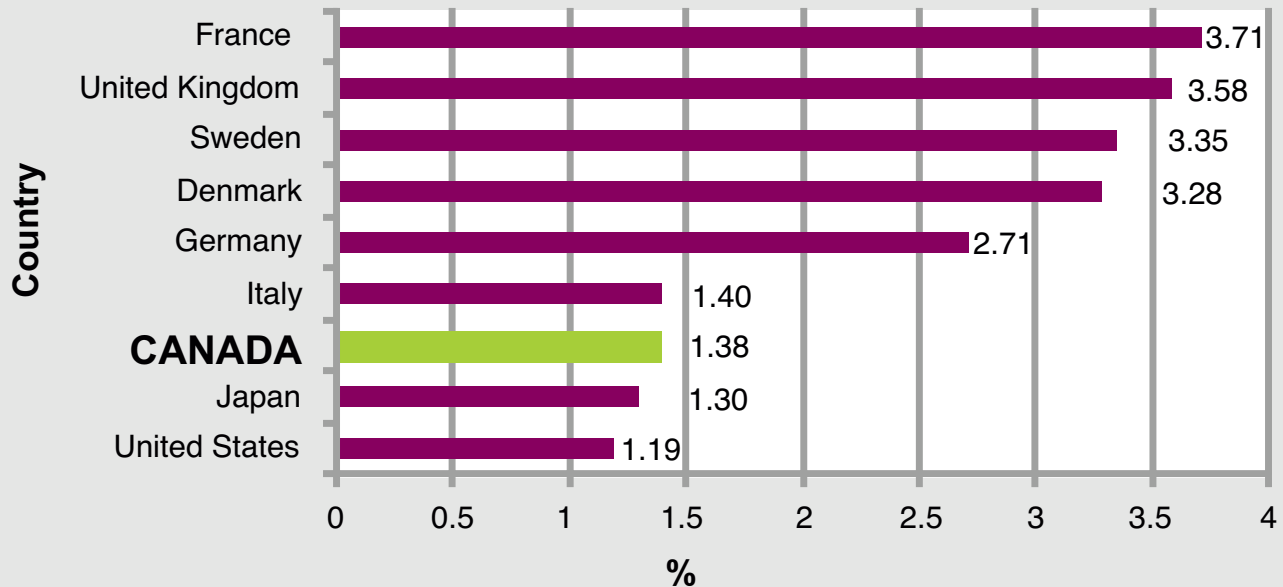
² Corak M. "The Sad, Sad Story of the UNICEF Child Poverty Report and Its Critics." Available at: <http://mileskorak.com/2012/05/29/the-sad-sad-story-of-the-unicef-child-poverty-report-and-its-critics/>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.1.2 Economic Security

Fig. 5.1.2 Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures, in per cent GDP, 2007



OECD (2011). *OECD Family Database*. OECD Paris. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/els/socialpoliciesanddata/37864391.pdf>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Public spending on family benefits includes financial support that is exclusively for families and children. The OECD* family database includes three types of public spending on family benefits.

- 1) **Child-related cash transfers to families with children.** For example, public income support payments during periods of parental leave.
- 2) **Public spending on services for families with children.** For example, direct financing and subsidizing of providers of child care and early education facilities.
- 3) **Financial support for families provided through the tax system.** For example, child tax allowances.

Public spending on family benefits is an indicator of a government's commitment to children. OECD countries spend on average 2.2% of their GDP on family benefits. In 2007, France, the United Kingdom, and Sweden spent the highest percentage of GDP, followed by Denmark. These countries spent between 3.2% and 3.7% of GDP on children and families, more than twice as much as Canada at 1.3%.

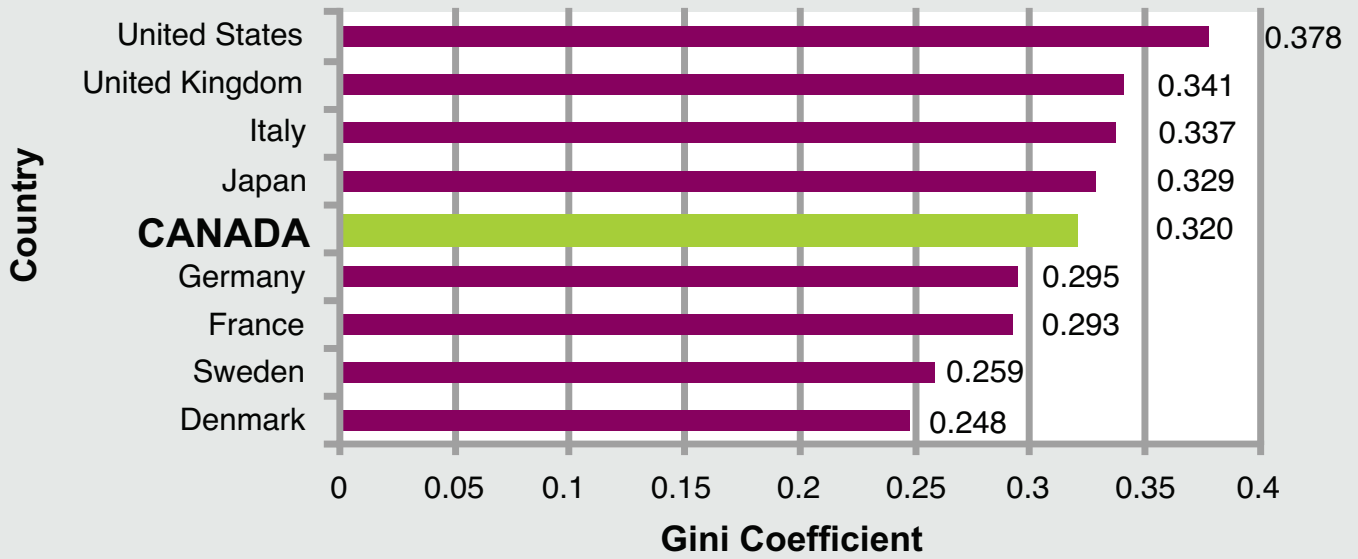
* OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is an organization that acts as a meeting ground for 30 countries that believe strongly in the free market system.





5.1.3 Economic Security

Fig. 5.1.3 World income inequality*, Canada and select countries, late-2000s



*Income distribution: Inequality measured by the Gini index (after taxes and transfers). The Gini index, which ranges from a coefficient of 0 to 1, calculates the extent to which the distribution of income deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini coefficient of 0 represents exact equality (i.e., everybody has the same amount of income); a Gini coefficient of 1 represents total inequality (i.e., one person has all the income and the rest of the society has none).

Adapted from OECD StatExtracts. Available at: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=INEQUALITY#>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

The Gini index is a measure of income inequality — the higher the coefficient, the greater the inequality. Among the selected OECD countries,¹ Canada has a lower Gini coefficient than the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Japan but a higher coefficient than Germany, France, Sweden, and Denmark.

¹ OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is an organization that acts as a meeting ground for 30 countries that believe strongly in the free market system.

Implications

A nation's income inequality has a profound impact on children's health. In a systematic review contrasting and combining results from different studies, investigators concluded that people living in places with high income inequality (a higher Gini coefficient) had an increased risk of premature death, independent of socioeconomic status, age, and gender.²

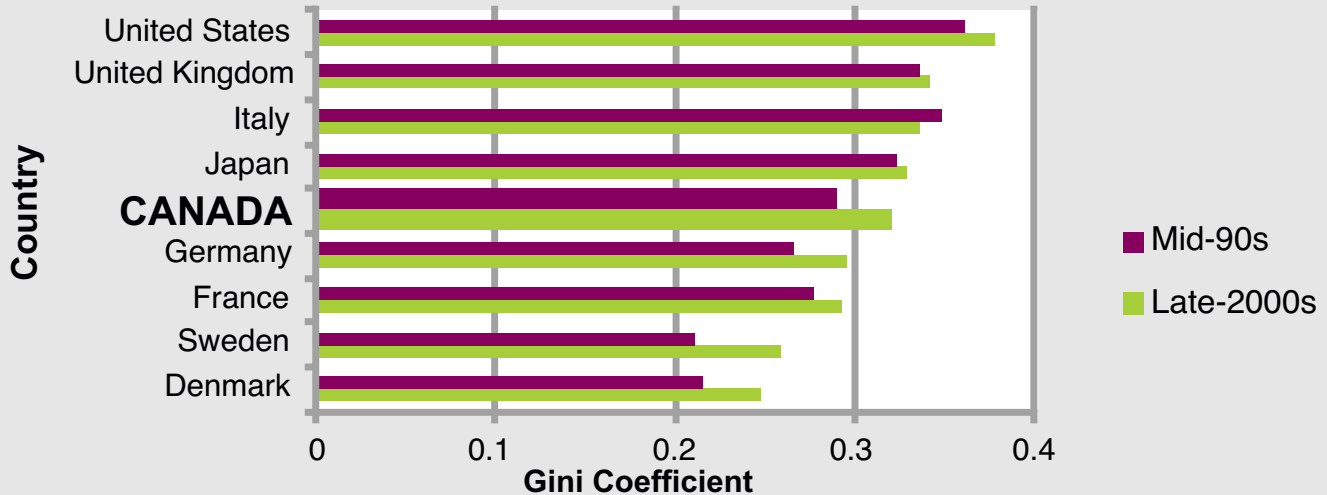
² Kondo N, et al. (2009). Income Inequality, Mortality, and Self-Rated Health: Meta-analysis of Multilevel Studies. British Medical Journal. Available at: http://www.bmj.com/highwire/filestream/398332/field_highwire_article_pdf/0/bmj.b4471. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.1.4 Economic Security

Fig. 5.1.4 Income inequality*, Canada and select countries, mid-90s and late-2000s



| | Denmark | Sweden | France | Germany | CANADA | Japan | Italy | United Kingdom | United States |
|-------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------------|-------|-------|----------------|---------------|
| Mid-90s | 0.225 | 0.211 | 0.277 | 0.266 | 0.289 | 0.323 | 0.348 | 0.336 | 0.361 |
| Late-2000s | 0.248 | 0.259 | 0.293 | 0.295 | 0.320 | 0.329 | 0.337 | 0.341 | 0.378 |

*Income distribution: Inequality measured by the Gini index (after taxes and transfers). The Gini index, which ranges from a coefficient of 0 to 1, calculates the extent to which the distribution of income deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini coefficient of 0 represents exact equality (i.e., everybody has the same amount of income); a Gini coefficient of 1 represents total inequality (i.e., one person has all the income and the rest of the society has none).

Adapted from OECD StatExtracts. Available at: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=INEQUALITY#>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s, the Gini coefficient for all G8 countries increased. This trend demonstrates a growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Implications

There are a number of factors that have caused income inequality to grow in Canada and its peer countries. Changes in the structure of the population—mainly the rise in the number of lone-parent households—is one factor that has driven the increase in income inequality.¹

In Canada, 80% of all lone-parent homes are headed by women. “In 2010, almost 22% of children living in female headed lone-parent families experienced low income, whereas just fewer than 6% of children living in two parent families were in low income homes.”²

¹ OECD. (2008). “Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries.” Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/els/socialpoliciesanddata/41527936.pdf>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

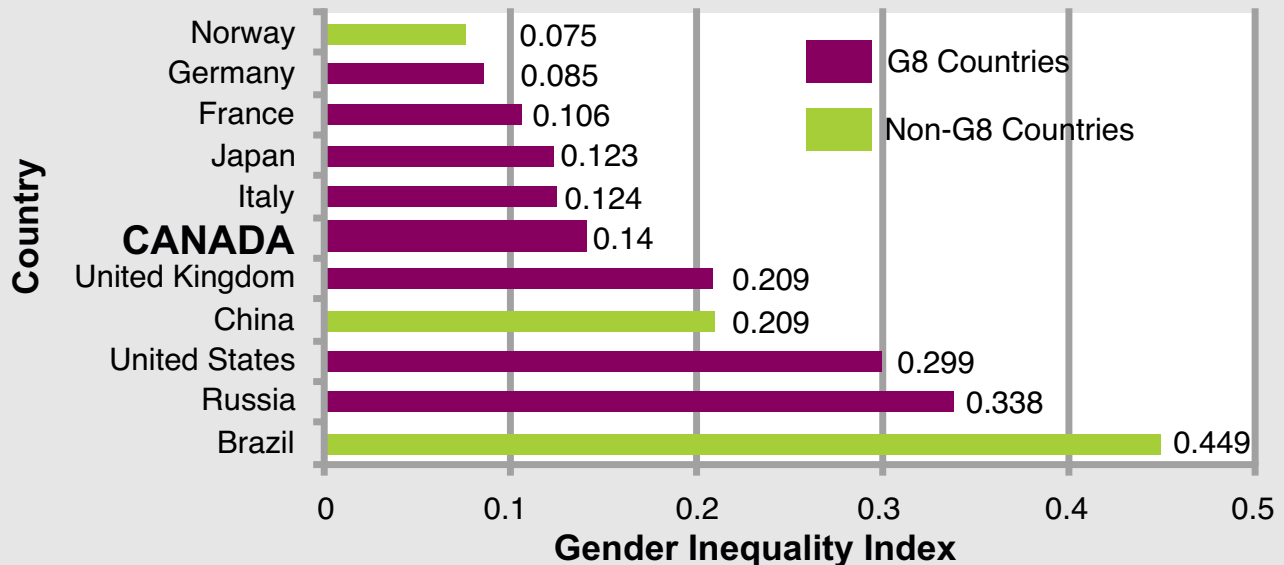
² Mitchell P. (2012). Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. “Marriage and Poverty in Canada.” Available at: http://www.imfcanada.org/sites/default/files/ereview_September28_12_0.pdf. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.2.5 Gender Inequities

Fig. 5.2.5 Gender Inequality Index*, G8† and selected countries, 2011



*The Gender Inequality Index, which ranges from 0 to 1, is a composite measure of inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. A Gender Inequality value of 0 indicates perfect equality between the sexes; a value of 1 indicates the worst inequality in all three areas.

†G8 (Group of Eight) refers to the forum of governmental leaders of eight large, industrialized nations: the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, and Russia.

UNDP Human Development Reports. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii/>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Among the G8 countries, Canada has a lower Gender Inequality Index value than the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom but higher than Germany, Japan, France, and Italy. For 2011, Canada ranks favourably on a worldwide basis. For 2011, some countries had values above 0.6, such as Afghanistan with a value of 0.707 and the Congo at 0.710. Canada ranked 19th out of 146 countries for which there are values for 2011.

Implications

"Gender equality and the well-being of children are inextricably linked. When women are empowered to lead full and productive lives, children and families prosper."

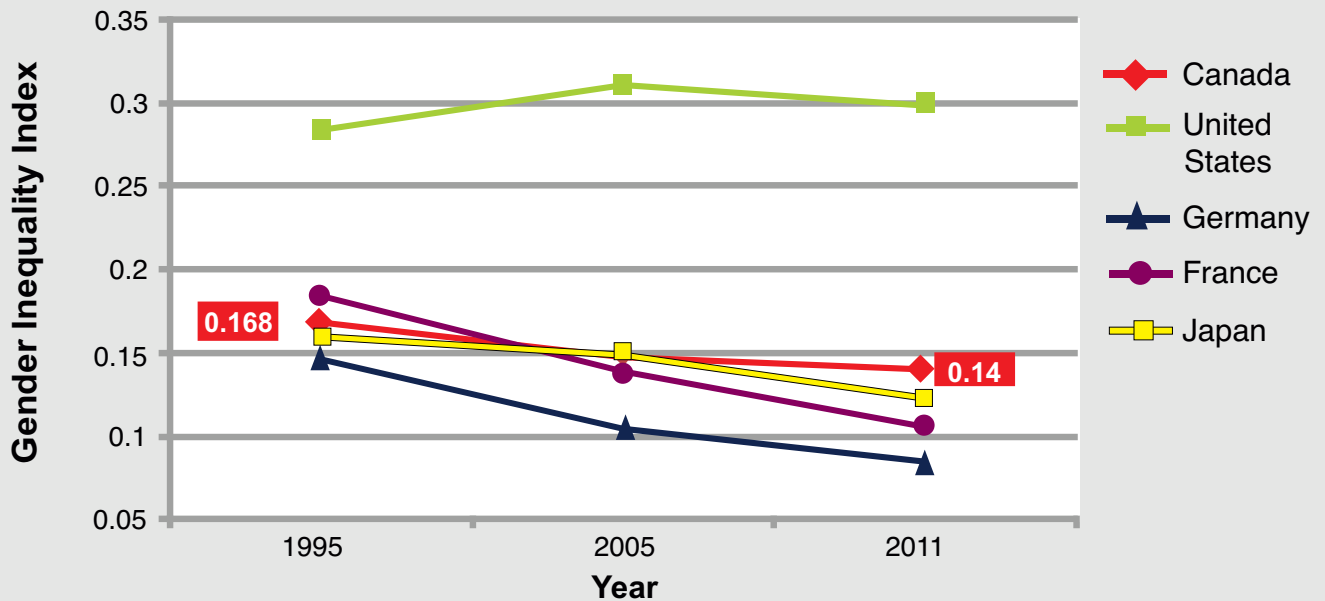
— UNICEF





5.2.6 Gender Inequities

Fig. 5.2.6 Gender Inequality Index*, Canada and select countries, 1995–2011



*The Gender Inequality Index, which ranges from 0 to 1, is a composite measure of inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. A Gender Inequality value of 0 indicates perfect equality between the sexes; a value of 1 indicates the worst inequality in all three areas.

UNDP Human Development Reports. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii/>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Worldwide, gender inequality improved from 1995 to 2011. Over that time, Canada's index value improved slightly, from 0.168 to 0.140. In comparison, in the United States, gender inequality worsened between 1995 and 2011.

Implications

Although women's participation in the labour force has been increasing, women continue to earn less than men in Canada. Given that the majority of lone-parent families are headed by females, it is problematic that women are still earning less than men. Female lone parents are also less likely to be employed than mothers in two-parent families. In 2009, 68.9% of female lone parents with children less than age 16 living at home were employed compared with 73.8% of their counterparts in two-parent families.¹

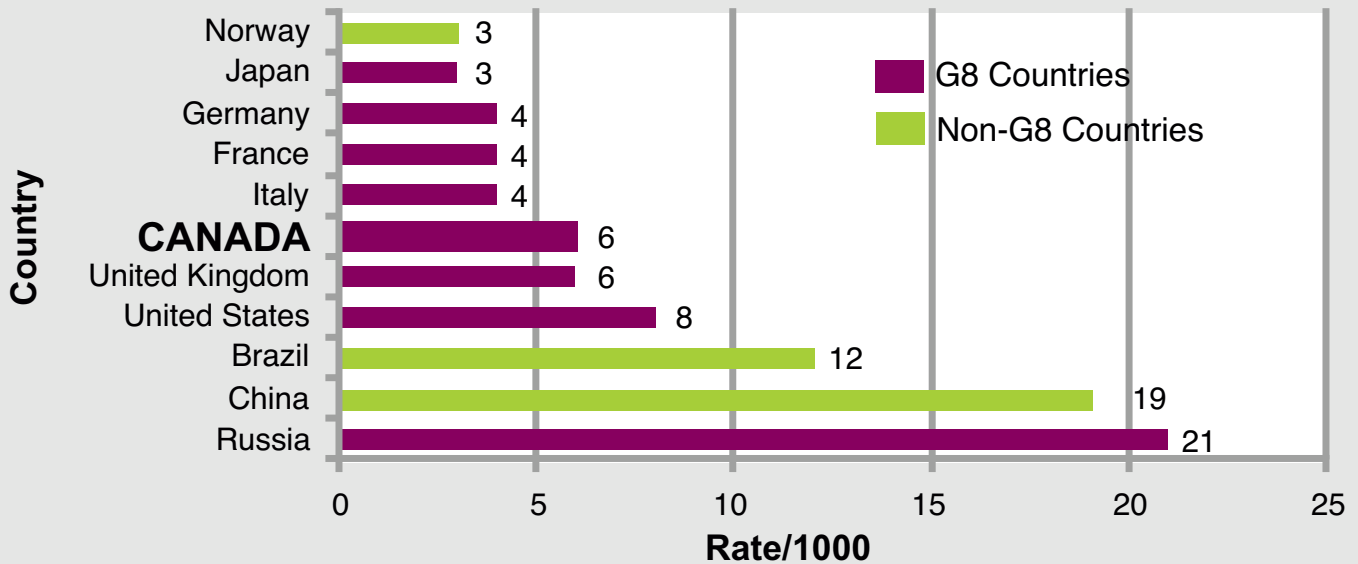
¹ Ferrao V. (2010). "Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report: Paid Work." Statistics Canada. Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11387-eng.pdf>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.3.7 Deaths

Fig. 5.3.7 Death rates, children under 5 years of age*, G8[†] and selected countries, 2009



*Probability of dying between birth and exactly age 5, expressed per 1,000 live births.

[†]G8 (Group of Eight) refers to the forum of governmental leaders of eight large, industrialized nations: the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, and Russia.

UNDP, *International Human Development Indicators*, as of May 15, 2011. Available at: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/57506.html>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Among the G8 countries, Canada's death rate for children less than five years ranks 5th behind Japan, Germany, France, and Italy. The rate is lower than that of the United States and significantly lower than Russia's death rate for this age group.

Implications

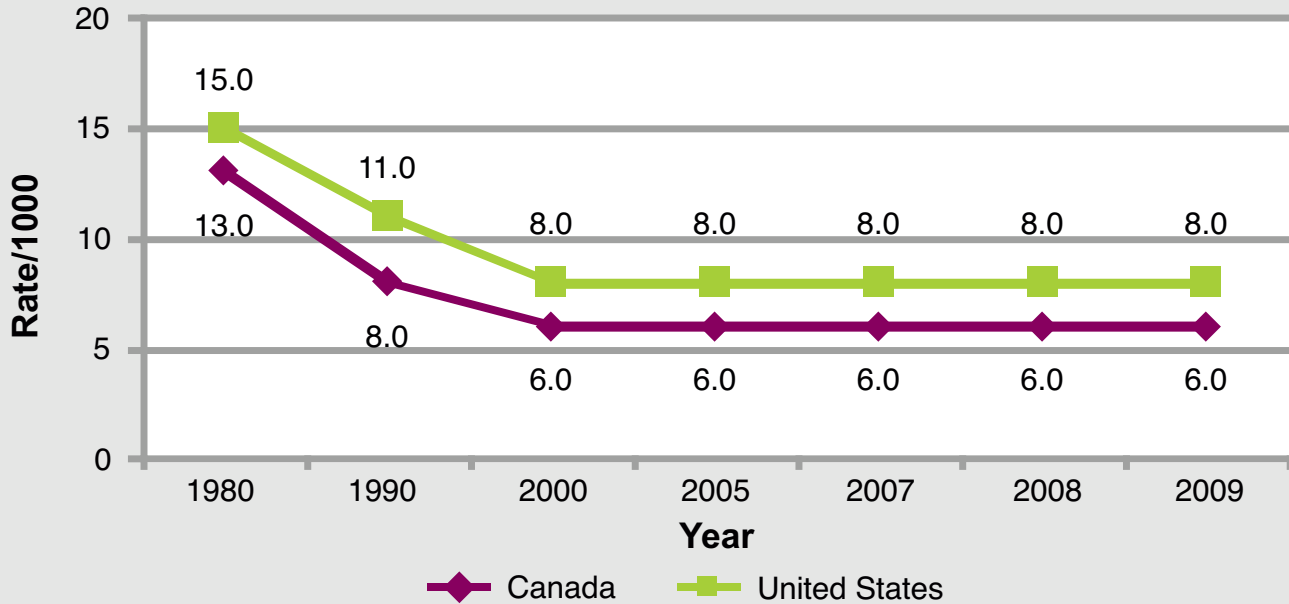
In Canada, many children under five lead healthy and happy lives. However, barriers to access and social and economic deprivation for some populations in Canada make providing a good start to life a daunting task.





5.3.8 Deaths

Fig. 5.3.8 Death rates, children under 5 years of age*, Canada and the United States, 1980–2009



* Probability of dying between birth and exactly age 5, expressed per 1,000 live births.

UNDP, *International Human Development Indicators*, as of May 15, 2011. Available at: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/57506.html>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

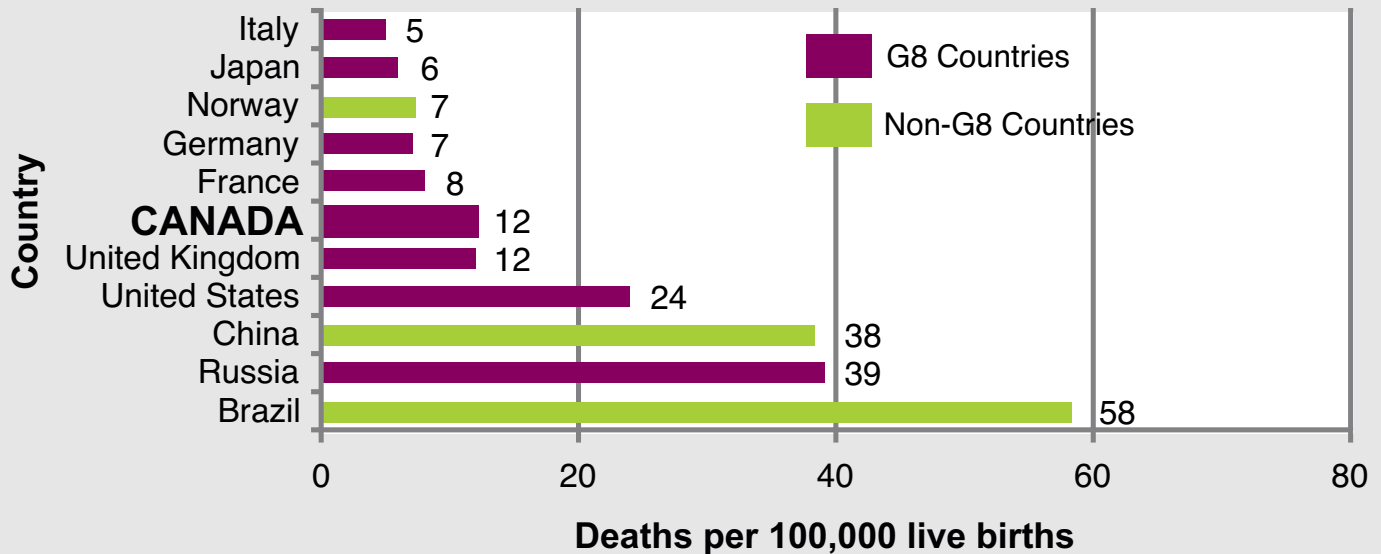
In Canada, the death rate for children less than five years of age dropped from 13 per 1,000 live births in 1980 to 6 in 2000; from the year 2000 to 2009, this death rate remained stable. The death rate for children less than five years of age living in the United States followed a similar trend as that in Canada; however, the rate in 2009 was higher, at 8 per 1,000 live births.





5.3.9 Deaths

Fig. 5.3.9 Maternal death rates*, G8[†] and selected countries, 2008



*Ratio of the number of maternal deaths to the number of live births in a given year, expressed per 100,000 live births.

[†]G8 (Group of Eight) refers to the forum of governmental leaders of eight large, industrialized nations: the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, and Russia.

UNDP, *International Human Development Indicators*, as of May 15, 2011. Available at: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/89006.html>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

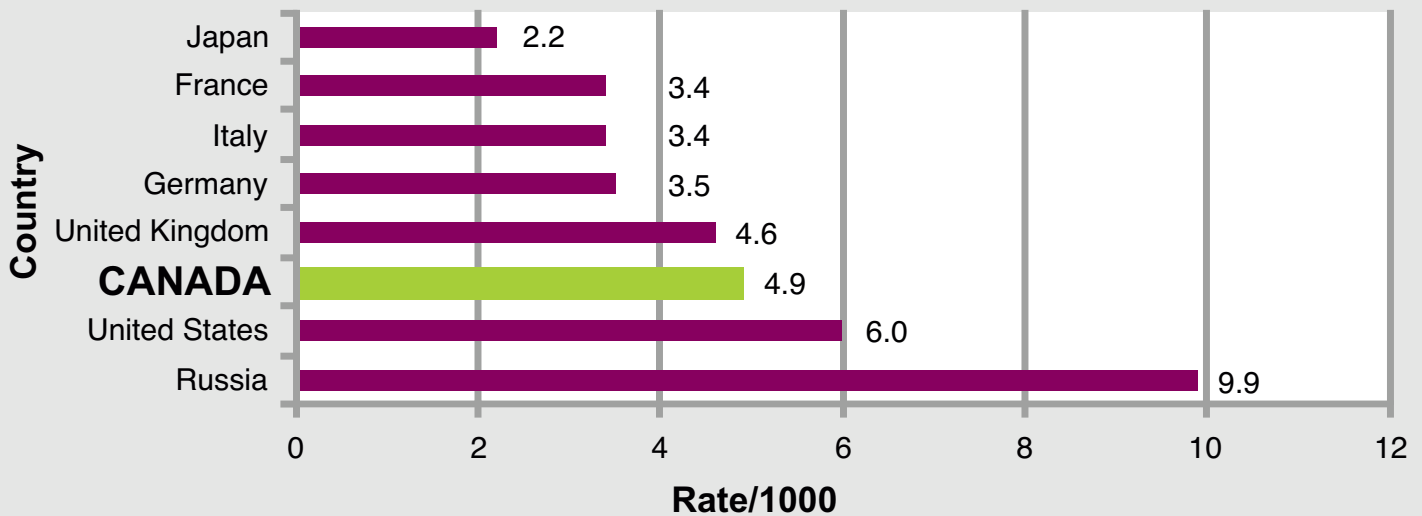
In 2008, there were 12 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births in Canada. Among G8 countries, Canada's rate was higher than those of Italy, Japan, Germany, and France, and the same as that of the United Kingdom. Canada's rate was lower than that of the United States and Russia for the same year.





5.3.10 Deaths

Fig. 5.3.10 Infant death rates, Canada and other G8* countries, 2012



*G8 (Group of Eight) refers to the forum of governmental leaders of eight large, industrialized nations: the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, and Russia.

Adapted from *The World Fact Book*. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2091rank.html>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

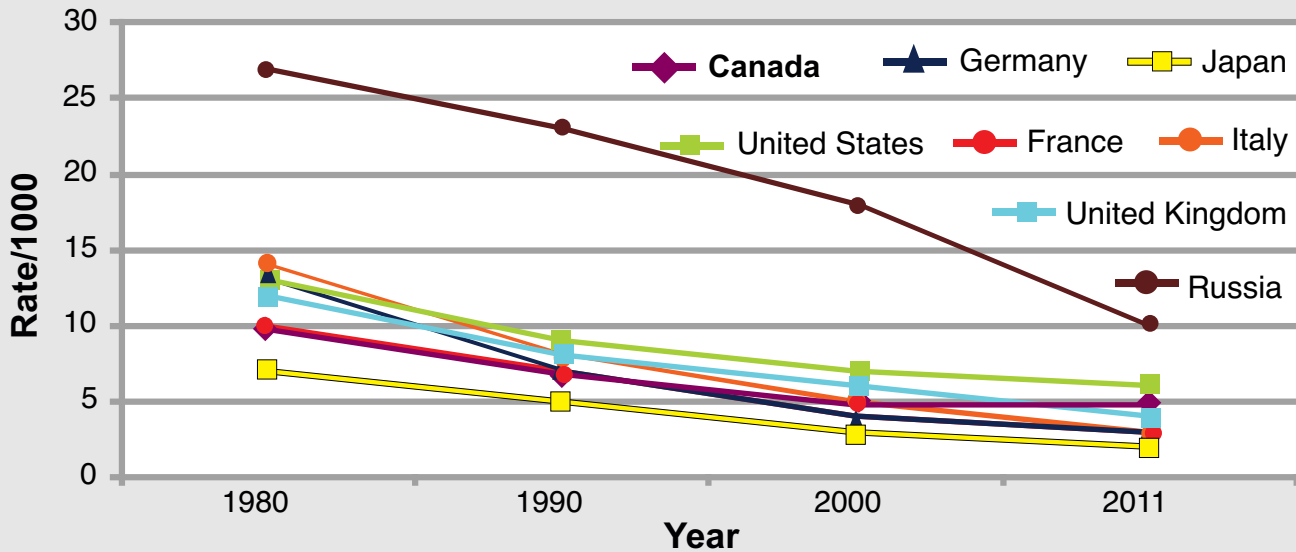
In 2012, among the G8 countries, Canada has a lower infant death rate (4.9/1,000) than the United States (6.0/1,000) and Russia (9.9/1,000) and a higher infant death rate than the United Kingdom (4.6/1,000), Germany (3.5/1,000), Italy and France (3.4/1,000), and Japan (2.2/1,000). On a worldwide basis, Canada ranks favourably. Some countries have very high infant death rates. For example, currently Afghanistan had the highest infant mortality rate, at 121.6 per 1,000 live births.





5.3.11 Deaths

Fig. 5.3.11 Infant death rates, Canada and other G8* countries, 1980–2011



| | Japan | France | Italy | Germany | U.K. | CANADA | United States | Russia |
|------|-------|--------|-------|---------|------|--------|---------------|--------|
| 1980 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 27 |
| 1990 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 23 |
| 2000 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 18 |
| 2011 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 10 |

*G8 (Group of Eight) refers to the forum of governmental leaders of eight large, industrialized nations: the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, and Russia.

Adapted from the World Bank. Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN>. Accessed June 29, 2012.

In 1980, Canada tied for the second lowest (10/1,000) infant death rate compared to other G8 countries. In Canada, infant mortality decreased to 5 per 1,000 live births in 2011 from 10 per 1,000 live births in 1980.

Implications

Although Canada has decreased its infant mortality rate over the past few decades, other countries have done better. According to the Conference Board of Canada, Canada's infant mortality rate is shockingly high for a country with this level of socio-demographic development.¹

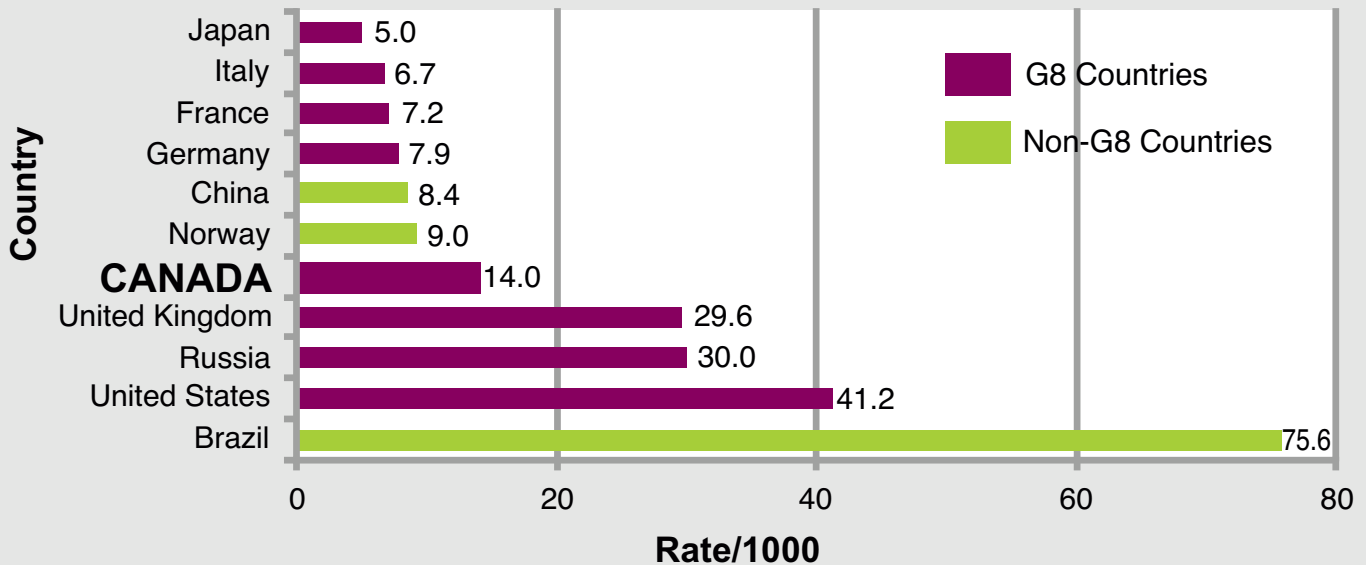
¹ Conference Board of Canada. "Infant Mortality." Available at: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/health/infant-mortality-rate.aspx>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.4.12 Reproductive Health

Fig. 5.4.12 Adolescent fertility rates*, G8[†] and selected countries, 2010



* Births to women 15 to 19 years of age per 1,000.

[†] G8 (Group of eight) refers to the forum of governmental leaders of eight large, industrialized nations: the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, and Russia

UNDP, *International Human Development Indicators*, as of May 15, 2011. Available at: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/36806.html>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

In Canada, 14 out of every 1,000 young women age 15 to 19 years gave birth in 2010. Among G8 countries, Canada's adolescent fertility rate was higher than Japan, Italy, France, and Germany but lower than the United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States. Countries with growing economies, such as Brazil (75.6/1,000) and India (86.3/1,000), still have very high rates of teen pregnancies. Non-G8 countries with stable, highly developed social systems, such as Norway (9.0/1,000) and Switzerland (4.6/1,000), have low adolescent fertility rates.

Implications

"National trends can mask a number of realities that exist in one country. Teen birth rates from specific sub-populations reveal a more complex picture of teen pregnancy within a society and can be important indicators of social and economic inequity. In Canada, the 2003 fertility rate, or live birth rate, for females 15 to 19 years of age, ranged from a low of 10.8 births per 1,000 in British Columbia and 11.4 in Ontario, to a high of 117.4 per 1,000 in Nunavut."¹

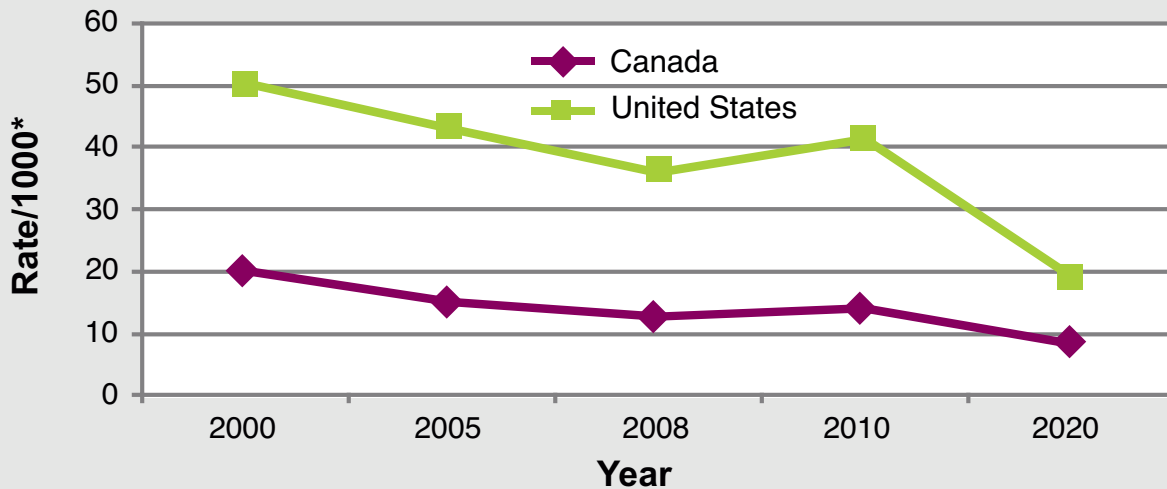
¹ "Best Start: Ontario's Maternal Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre and the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada." (2007). Available at: http://www.beststart.org/resources/rep_health/pdf/teen_pregnancy.pdf. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.4.13 Reproductive Health

Fig. 5.4.13 Adolescent fertility rates*, Canada and the United States, 2000–2020



| | 2000 | 2005 | 2008 | 2010 | 2020 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Canada | 20.1 | 15 | 12.8 | 14 | 8.4 |
| United States | 50.5 | 43.1 | 35.9 | 41.2 | 19.1 |

* Births to women 15 to 19 years of age per 1000.

UNDP, *International Human Development Indicators*, as of May 15, 2011. Available at: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/36806.html>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Adolescent fertility rates in Canada declined to 14.0 in 2010 per 1,000 from 20.1 in 2000. The fertility rate for Canadian teens is projected to decline further, to below 10 per 1,000 by 2020.

Implications

In the U.S., “shifts in racial and ethnic composition of the population, increases in poverty, the growth of abstinence-only sex education programs at the expense of comprehensive programs, and changes in public perception and attitudes toward both teenage and unintended pregnancy,”¹ are all suggested reasons for the sudden increase in teen pregnancies.

The teen pregnancy rate in Canada has dropped, declining 36.9% between 1996 and 2006 (McKay and Barrett) and is projected to decline further. This data suggests that young women are better informed and have greater access to contraception than ever before.²

¹ Guttmacher Institute. (2010). “U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions: National and State Trends by Race and Ethnicity.” Available at: <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends.pdf>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

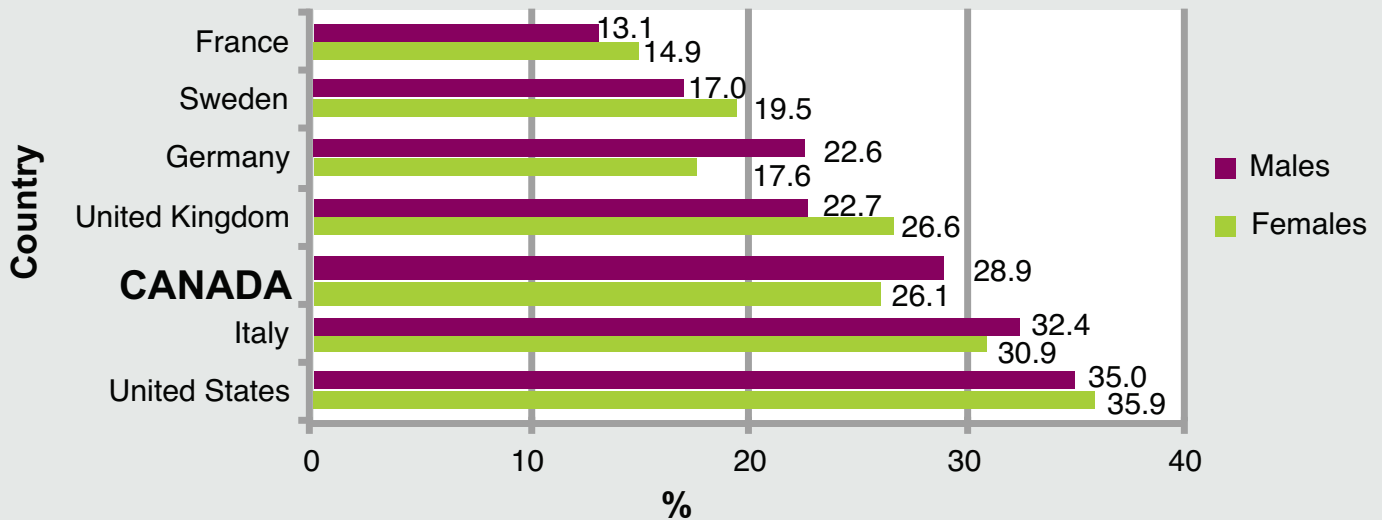
² McKay A, Barrett M. “Trends in Teen Pregnancy Rates from 1996-2006: A Comparison of Canada, Sweden, U.S.A., and England/Wales.” *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*. 19.1-2 (Toronto: Sex Information and Education Council of Canada [SIECCAN], 2010): 43–52.





5.5.14 Health Issues

Fig. 5.5.14 Children 5 to 17 years who are overweight (including obese), Canada and select OECD* countries, 2011 estimates



*OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is an organization that acts as a meeting ground for 30 countries that believe strongly in the free market system.

Adapted from OECD StatExtracts. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932523994>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Compared to children in a number of other OECD countries, Canadian children are more likely to be overweight or obese. Only the United States and Italy have higher rates of overweight/obesity among children 5 to 17 years of age. According to the 2011 Health at a Glance report, across most OECD countries, one in five children is affected by excess body weight.¹

¹ OECD. (2011). Health at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators. OECD Publishing. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2011-en. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

Implications

“Research has demonstrated that excess weight puts children at risk for a range of preventable health problems, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, joint problems, and mental health issues.”² Increases in sedentary lifestyles, lack of access to healthy food, and decreases in physical activity levels are all contributing factors to the growing obesity epidemic in Canada.

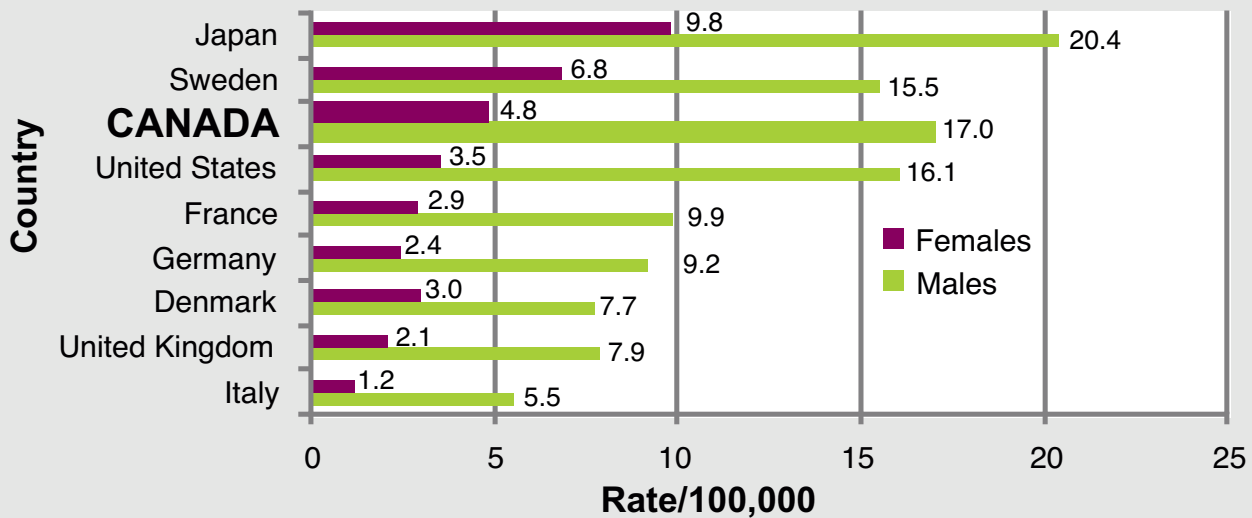
² Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2011. Available at: <http://dvqdas9jty7g6.cloudfront.net/reportcard2011/ahkcreportcard20110429final.pdf>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.5.15 Health Issues

Fig. 5.5.15 International suicide rates of youth 15 to 24 years of age, Canada and other OECD* countries, mid/late 2000s



| | Italy | U.K. | Denmark | Germany | France | USA | CANADA | Sweden | Japan |
|----------------|-------|------|---------|---------|--------|------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Males | 5.5 | 7.9 | 7.7 | 9.2 | 9.9 | 16.1 | 17.0 | 15.5 | 20.4 |
| Females | 1.2 | 2.1 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 4.8 | 6.8 | 9.8 |

*OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is an organization that acts as a meeting ground for 30 countries that believe strongly in the free market system.

Adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO). Available at: http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/country_reports/en/index.html. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

In OECD countries, suicide rates are higher among young men aged 15 to 24 years than among young women. Japan has the highest suicide rate for both genders at 20.4/100,000 for young men and 9.8/100,000 for young women. Compared to the other OECD countries, Canada has the second highest suicide rate among young men (17/100,000) and the third highest among young women (4.8/100,000).

Implications

National data can hide differences that exist in one country. A new study released by Statistics Canada's health analysis division found that the suicide rate among children and teens in the Inuit homelands was 30 times that of youth in the rest of Canada between 2004 and 2008. For Inuit boys and young men, the rate was 101.6 /100,000, while the rate among boys and young men in the rest of the population was 6.1/100, 000.¹

¹ Oliver LN, Peters PA, Kohen DE. (2012). "Mortality Rates Among Children and Teenagers Living in Inuit Nunangat, 1994 to 2008." Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2012003/article/11695-eng.pdf>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.5.16 Health Issues

Fig. 5.5.16 Children aged 11, 13, and 15 years doing moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily in the past week, 2005–2006

| Country | % | Country | % |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|------|
| Slovak Republic | 42.1 | Belgium | 19.1 |
| Ireland | 31.1 | United Kingdom | 18.7 |
| United States | 26.8 | Mexico | 18.1 |
| Finland | 24.8 | Poland | 17.3 |
| Canada | 23.6 | Germany | 17.0 |
| Denmark | 22.7 | Sweden | 16.4 |
| Czech Republic | 22.0 | Norway | 15.6 |
| Netherlands | 21.2 | Greece | 15.5 |
| Iceland | 20.6 | Luxembourg | 15.2 |
| Spain | 20.3 | Italy | 15.1 |
| OECD | 20.2 | Portugal | 14.6 |
| Turkey | 20.0 | France | 13.5 |
| Austria | 19.6 | Switzerland | 13.1 |
| Hungary | 19.5 | | |

Currie C, et al. (eds.) (2008). "Inequalities in Young People's Health: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children." International Report from the 2005/2006 Survey. WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen. Available at: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/53852/E91416.pdf; data available at www.oecd.org/social/familiesandchildren/48968008.xls. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

For 2005–06, compared to other OECD* countries, Canada's school-aged children — aged 11, 13, and 15 years — rank fairly well with regards to their level of physical activity. For example, only 13.1% of children aged 11 to 15 years participate in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week in Switzerland, whereas in Canada the rate is almost double that number (23.6%).

* OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is an organization that acts as a meeting ground for 30 countries that believe strongly in the free market system.

Implications

Between countries, there are large differences between levels of reported daily physical activity for children aged 11, 13, and 15 years. In almost all countries, however, boys and younger children are more active.¹

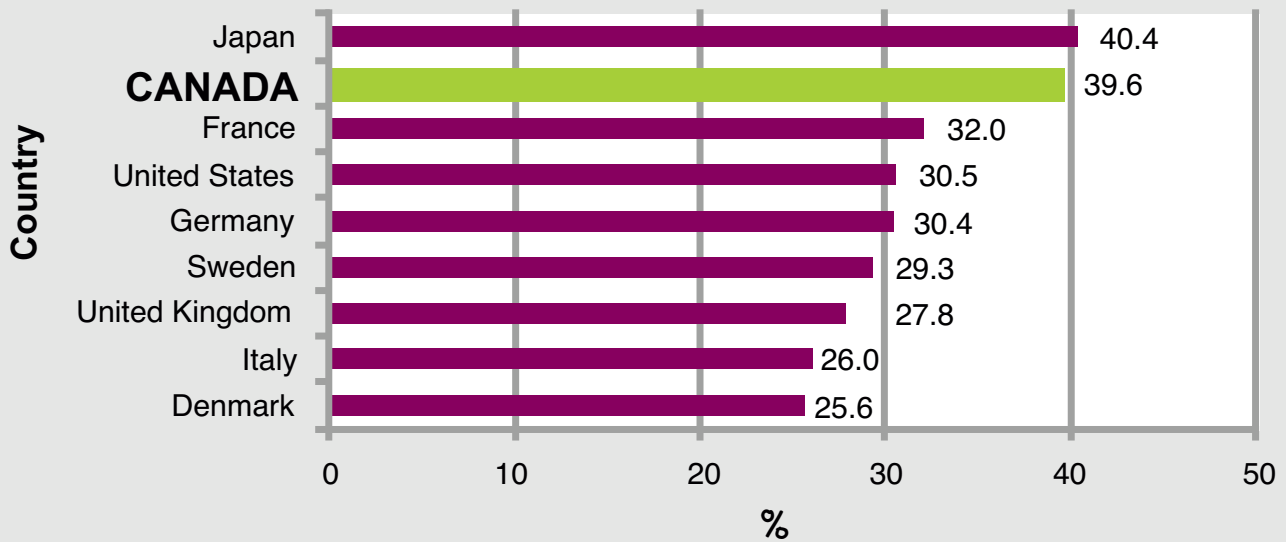
¹ Currie C, et al. (eds.) (2008). "Inequalities in Young People's Health: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children." International Report from the 2005/2006 Survey. WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen. Available at: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/53852/E91416.pdf. Accessed on June 29, 2012.





5.6.17 Education

Fig. 5.6.17 Percent of students at level 4 or above for combined reading sources, Canada and select countries, 2009



Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). (2009). Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-590-x/2010001/tbl/tblb1.13-eng.htm>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a tool that seeks to measure the extent to which youth at age 15 have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in modern societies. "Sixty-five countries and economies participated in PISA 2009, including all 33 OECD* countries. Between 5,000 and 10,000 students aged 15 years from at least 150 schools were typically tested in each country. In Canada, approximately 23,000 15-year-olds from about 1,000 schools participated across the 10 provinces."¹

Overall, Canadian students continue to perform well compared with students in most other countries. On the higher end of the reading scale, students proficient at Level 4 or above have acquired the level of literacy that is required to participate effectively and productively in life and are also capable of the moderately difficult reading tasks in PISA 2009.² Forty percent of Canadian students achieved Level 4 or above, compared to the OECD average of 29%.

* OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is an organization that acts as a meeting ground for 30 countries that believe strongly in the free market system.

¹ Statistics Canada. "The Performance of Canada's Youth in Reading, Mathematics and Science." Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-590-x/81-590-x2010001-eng.pdf>. Accessed on June 29, 2012.

² OECD. (2010). "Volume 5: Learning Curves, From PISA 2000 to PISA 2009." Paris: OECD.

