

This bulletin is a quick inventory of recent social research information. Its purpose is to promptly disseminate the most current external and internal research relevant to social policy.

Moral Narratives and Mental Health: Rethinking Understandings of Distress and Healthcare Support in Contexts of Austerity and Welfare Reform by Felicity Thomas, Lorraine Hansford, Joseph Ford, Katrina Wyatt, Rosemarie McCabe & Richard Byng, Springer Nature, April 2018.

Associations between mental health and poverty are increasingly well established. Using the UK as a focus, this paper reviews and maps out key questions that require investigation in order to better understand the complex inter-relations between poverty and distress; explores how current paradigms might influence notions of individual responsibility and agency as well as health seeking behaviours; and examines the role of, and cultural and systemic expectations and constraints placed upon GPs as they respond to distress amongst patients from low-income communities.

- The provision of effective mental health support for all in society is now a firmly stated aim of the British Government
- At the heart of the mental health strategies being rolled out is a desire to decrease stigma and discrimination and to move towards parity of esteem between mental and physical health
- It is vital that research on mental health seeks better understanding of the ways that cultures of diagnosis and prescription become embedded within clinical practice,

Link to the paper:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-018-0091-y.pdf>

Pharmacare Now: Prescription Medicine Coverage for All Canadians by Bill Casey, Standing Committee on Health, April 2018.

Unlike most member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada does not have a national pharmacare program – that is, a single system of public insurance coverage for prescription drugs. Rather, Canadians obtain prescription drug coverage through a patchwork of public and private drug coverage plans. Within this current framework, it is estimated that more than one in five Canadians forgo taking their prescription drugs because of cost considerations.

- In 2015, Canada's per capita drug expenditure ranked third highest among 29 OECD countries, behind the United States and Switzerland
- Critical issues that need addressing include gaps in prescription drug coverage and variation among drug formularies both across the country and between public and private drug plans

- The Committee believes that the best way to move forward in establishing a universal single payer public prescription drug coverage program is by expanding the Canada Health Act to include prescription drugs dispensed outside of hospitals as an insured service under the Act

For link to the report:

http://www.ourcommons.ca/content/Committee/421/HESA/Reports/RP9762464/421_HESA_Rpt14_PDF/421_HESA_Rpt14-e.pdf

World Happiness Report 2018 by Helliwell, J., Layard, R., & Sachs, J. (2018). World Happiness Report 2018, New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

The World Happiness Report is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness. This report ranks 156 countries by their happiness levels, and 117 countries by the happiness of their immigrants. Increasingly, with globalisation, the people of the world are on the move; and most of these migrants are seeking a happier life. But do they achieve it? That is the central issue considered in this 2018 World Happiness Report.

- The most striking finding of the whole report is that a ranking of countries according to the happiness of their immigrant populations is almost exactly the same as for the rest of the population.
- The countries with the happiest immigrants are not the richest countries, but instead the countries with a more balanced set of social and institutional supports for better lives
- In the happiest countries immigrants are significantly less happy than locals, while the reverse is true in the least happy countries

For link to the report:

<http://worldhappiness.report/>

Still Hungry and Homeless in College by Sara Goldrick-Rab, Jed Richardson, Joel Schneider, Anthony Hernandez, and Clare Cady, Wisconsin HOPE Lab, Homeless Hub, April 2018.

This is the largest US-based national assessment of basic needs security among 4-year students, with participants from 66 colleges and universities, including 31 community colleges and 35 4-year colleges and universities from 20 states and Washington, D.C. The data show that basic needs insecurities disproportionately affect marginalized students and are associated with long work hours and higher risk of unemployment.

- 36% of university students were food insecure in the 30 days preceding the survey. This year's estimate for community college students is 42%, but our larger study last year found 56%
- 36% of university students were housing insecure in the last year. Housing insecurity affected 51% of community college students in last year's study, and 46% in this year's study

- 9% of university students were homeless in the last year. In comparison, 12% of community college students were homeless in this year's survey, and 14% in last year's survey

For link to the report:

<http://wihopelab.com/publications/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-Still-Hungry-and-Homeless.pdf>

Environmental Ranking for Canada and the OECD by Ross McKittrick, Elmira Aliakbari, and Ashley Stedman, Fraser Institute, 2018.

This report finds that Canada is a world leader in environmental performance and ranks in the top ten among the world's wealthiest, cleanest and most developed countries on a wide range of environmental indicators. Over the past few years, several reports have presented Canada as an environmental laggard, ranking it near the bottom of the list of OECD countries. The methodologies behind these studies is flawed: they unfairly represent Canada's environmental performance in some respects and do not always use the most meaningful and relevant performance measures.

- The Index of Environmental Performance shows that Canada ranks 10th out of the 33 high-income OECD countries and receives an overall score of 68.5
- The overall scores range from a low of 34.8 for South Korea to a high of 78.9 for Sweden, with an average of 62.9 across all 33 high-income countries
- For air quality Canada performs well and ranks 9th among the 33 high-income OECD countries, based on the two indicators—average exposure to fine particulate matter and exceedances of fine particulate matter

For link to the report:

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/environmental-ranking-for-canada-and-the-OECD.pdf>

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City of Toronto Data, Research & Maps: <https://web.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/>