

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.

COVID-19 in Canada: A One-year Update on Social and Economic Impacts by Statistics Canada, March 2021.

[This report is] a snapshot of what our society and economy have faced this past year, in the form of this year-in-review compendium *COVID-19 in Canada: A One-year Update on Social and Economic Impacts*.

- During the first half of the pandemic, the majority of Canadians (90%) took precautions such as physical distancing and wearing masks to reduce cases of illness and to avoid overwhelming the health care system
- Compliance is higher among those who experienced symptoms
- Vaccination will be critical to protect essential health care workers, among whom visible minority groups are overrepresented
- One-third (33%) reported very good or excellent mental health and one-third (33%) reported fair or poor mental health

Link to the report:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2021001-eng.pdf>

The Minimum Wage, Lost Jobs, and Poverty in Canada by Philip Cross, Fraser Institute, 2021.

The goal of governments should not be increasing the share of employees earning the minimum wage. The goal should be creating labour-market conditions so robust that most employees are earning more than the minimum.

- Ontario saw the largest increase in its minimum wage, which rose 49.9% between 1981 and 2019 to \$14 an hour, second only to Alberta's \$15 an hour. After allowing inflation to erode the minimum wage in the 1980s, Ontario's newly elected NDP government in the early 1990s raised the minimum wage by \$2 an hour (or 22%) by 1994
- There is widespread agreement among economists that minimum wages dampen employment. A survey conducted by the Canadian Economics Association found that 85% of Canadian economists agreed a minimum wage lowers employment and has little impact on poverty
- In examining Ontario's proposed 32% hike in the minimum wage in 2018 and 2019, the Financial Accountability Office (FAO) of Ontario estimated that employment would fall by 50,000, but acknowledged that "there is evidence to suggest that the job losses could be larger than the FAO's estimate"

Link to the full paper:

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/minimum-wage-lost-jobs-and-poverty-in-canada.pdf>

City Budget Matters 101: Poverty Reduction by Social Planning Toronto, 2021.

Poverty rates in Toronto are extremely high: One in four children and one in five adults in Toronto experience poverty. Toronto's poverty rate is the highest in the GTHA, and higher than provincial and national levels. The rate of poverty among Indigenous people in Toronto is even more startling — almost 90 per cent experience poverty every day.

- The high costs of vital community services such as housing, public transit, and childcare make it difficult for many residents to enjoy a comfortable and financially secure life. From 2009 to 2015 the cost of childcare climbed by 30%, public transit by 36%, and rents by 13%
- Ontario's two main programs that provide financial assistance to people who cannot work or cannot find work, the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works, should guarantee a basic standard of living. Regretfully, benefit rates have been stagnant for decades, and recipients experience deeper poverty now than a generation ago
- The Fair Pass program provides a 33% discount on an adult single ride and a 21% discount on an adult monthly pass. Currently, only social assistance recipients and qualified residents who receive the childcare fee subsidy are eligible

Link to the full report:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/socialplanningtoronto/pages/2420/attachments/original/1610653940/backgrounders-poverty_FINAL.pdf?1610653940

Construction and Assessment of a Social Inclusion Index for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: Technical Report by Rubab Arim, Statistics Canada, January 2021.

This study had three objectives: to construct a measure of social inclusion using indicators identified by CMHC, to report a social inclusion score for each geographic stratum separately for dwellings that are and are not in social and affordable housing (SAH), and to examine associations between social inclusion and a set of economic, social and health variables. The Social Inclusion Index (SII) was designed and commissioned by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

- About 8 in 10 respondents reported that they were either very satisfied (36.8%) or satisfied (45.8%) with their dwelling. A slightly higher percentage of respondents reported that they were very satisfied (43.8%) or satisfied (41.7%) with their neighbourhood
- Regarding sense of safety, just under 3/4 of respondents reported feeling very safe (30.9%) or reasonably safe (42.9%) from crime when they were walking alone in their area after dark
- Five items were selected as indicators for the SII: dwelling satisfaction, neighbourhood satisfaction, satisfaction with feeling part of the community, sense of safety and economic hardship

Link to the paper:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-633-x/11-633-x2021001-eng.pdf?st=mDLwskoT>

Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2019 by Shana Conroy, Statistics Canada, March 2021.

Family violence, a serious public health issue, can take on many forms, including physical and sexual violence, and emotional and financial abuse (Public Health Agency of Canada 2014). It is an abuse of power within a relationship of trust and dependency. Family violence has immediate and long-term consequences for victims—including physical, mental, cognitive and financial—and recovery depends on the length and severity of abuse.

- In 2019, there were 399,846 victims of police-reported violence in Canada. Of these victims, one quarter (26%) were victimized by a family member, which represented 102,316 victims.
- While just over half (53%) of all victims of violence were female, two-thirds (67%) of family violence victims were female
- A larger proportion of female victims experienced violence from a current or former spouse (51% versus 29% of male victims) while family violence perpetrated by someone other than a spouse was more common for male victims (71% versus 49% of female victims)
- The most common type of family violence was physical assault (accounting for 71% of victims, a rate of 197 per 100,000) followed by other offences involving violence or the threat of violence (50) and sexual offences (28)

Link to the paper:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.pdf?st=6KoWSl1y>

Finding Unusual Suspects – Why Higher Social Assistance Rates Don’t Always Lead to Higher Caseloads

by John Stapleton & Yvonne Yuan, Open Policy Ontario for the Social Assistance Coalition of Scarborough, March 2021.

In the annals of social assistance analysis, there is a prevailing view that higher social assistance benefit levels (rates) invariably lead to high social assistance caseloads during recessions. Even though all recessions are characterized by high unemployment, higher social assistance rates are thought to spur higher than normal rates of social assistance reciprocity.

- Changes in caseloads are not only decided by social assistance and unemployment rates, they are also explained by two other influential factors: duration of unemployment and welfare income to minimum wage ratio
- Before Covid-19, we had entered a period with one of the shortest durations of unemployment (13.6 weeks) along with the lowest unemployment rate (5.6%) in decades.
- In 2009, the unemployment rate reached 9.1 per cent while the number of social assistance recipients represented 6.2 per cent of the Ontario population, even lower than 2019 (6.7 per cent) in advance of the pandemic

Link to paper:

<https://openpolicyontario.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021/03/culprits-20210219r-sacs.pdf>

Previous issues of the SPAR Monitor can be viewed online at: <https://bit.ly/3h42Zob>

Wellbeing Toronto: www.toronto.ca/wellbeing

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