

# The Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

**T**he *Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile, 3rd Edition*, is based on a comprehensive review of national and provincial data sources and extensive consultations 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.

The following information from the *CICH Profile* address the health and well-being of children and youth with disabilities. The primary source of data on children and youth with disabilities used in the *CICH Profile* was the 1996-97 National Population Health Survey (NPHS). When using data from the NPHS, the activity limitation variable was used to determine disability status.

### Demographics:

- According to the NPHS, there were approximately 564, 575 children and youth between birth and 19 years of age with disabilities in 1996-97. This accounted for 7.7% of that population and is similar to the 7.2% identified in the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey.
- The rate of reported disability varies somewhat by age group and gender. Male children from birth to 9 years of age had the highest rate (10%).
- Approximately one third of all children between the ages of 12 and 14 reported having a chronic condition. Chronic conditions include, among others, such diverse health problems as allergies, asthma, emotional disorders, neurological disorders and mobility disabilities.
- Approximately 10%-12% of all children have some degree of cognitive deficits and Learning Disabilities. Currently, there are no national or provincial statistics that indicate the proportion of children and youth who are medically or psychologically fragile or dependent on technology for their survival.

### Income inequity:

- 79% of children under the age of 12 with disabilities lived in households where the main source of income was employment, whereas 87% of children under the age of 12 with no disability did.
- Children with an activity limitation were more likely to live in lower income households than children without an activity limitation. 30% of children under the age of 12 years with disabilities lived in households that fell into the lower two income quintiles compared with 18% of children under 12 years of age with no activity limitation.
- Children from birth to 19 years of age with an activity limitation are at slightly elevated risk for experiencing food insecurity (defined as running out of money to buy food). 14% of children with an activity limitation lived in families that ran out of money to buy food compared to 9% of children without an activity limitation.

### Impact on families:

- The parents of children with disabilities experience challenges in the areas of employment and child care. 39% of respondents in a study by Irwin and Lero (1997) indicated that their own employment had been affected. 26% indicated that their choice of occupation had been constrained. 46% reported that their work schedule had been affected by their child's needs.
- 53% of respondents in the Irwin and Lero study (1997) indicated that child care programs could not accommodate their child. 54% indicated that the care was expensive to maintain. 69% reported that there were too few trained and committed caregivers for children with special needs. 71% indicated that they had experienced difficulty finding appropriate child care.

### Health behaviours:

- 68% of youth aged 12-19 years with an activity limitation reported exercising regularly. 72% of youth without an activity limitation reported regular exercise.
- Youth with an activity limitation were slightly more likely to report “ever” smoking than youth without an activity limitation (33% compared to 28%).
- Youth with an activity limitation were somewhat more likely to have consumed alcohol than youth with no activity limitation (61% compared with 54%).
- 40% of students in British Columbia with an activity limitation were involved in physical fights in 1992, compared to 29% of other students. 28% of the students with an activity limitation rode in a vehicle with a drunk driver, compared with 16% of other students.



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For 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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