

Frontline Health Facts

In 2000, life expectancy at birth for the First Nations population was estimated at 68.9 years for males and 76.6 years for females. That marks gaps of 7.4 years and 5.2 years, respectively, from the Canadian population's life expectancies. The size of these gaps has narrowed considerably since 1980, when they were estimated at 10.9 years and 11.0 years, respectively. This improvement can be attributed to gains in life expectancy – 13.1 per cent for males and 12.6 per cent for females – among First Nations people over the 20-year period, while the life expectancy gains in the Canadian population as a whole were smaller – 6.3 per cent for males and 3.5 per cent for females. Partly, too, it might be due to the number of women and children who regained status under Bill C-31.

- **First Nations men live, on average, seven fewer years than the average Canadian male.**

*Health Canada, A Statistical Profile on the Health of First Nations in Canada,
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnih-spni/pubs/gen/2003_stat_profil/3_demograph_e.html#figure2_3*

- **People living in lower socio-economic conditions are twice as likely to die prematurely as people at the top of the ladder.**

WHO, Social Determinates of Health, p.10

- **The unemployed are 50 per cent more likely to experience chronic illness than people in secure jobs.**

WHO, Social Determinates of Health, p.21

- **Low income earners are 2.5 times less likely to get complete diagnostic testing than high income earners.**

Discrepancy has less to do with need than with knowing how to work the system.

- **The poor get fewer diagnostic tests as they get sicker while the wealthy get more.**

*Dr. Sandor Demeter, published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal
as reported by Andre Picard, Globe and Mail, Nov. 8, 2005, p.A15*

Physicians, nurses and other health care providers are concentrated in urban centres, where the healthiest people in the country live. In 2000, only 17 per cent of family physicians, four percent of specialists, and 18 percent of registered nurses practised in rural, remote and northern communities, where up to 30 percent of Canadians lived.

- **Thirty per cent of Canadians live in rural and remote communities. Only eighteen percent of family doctors and nurses work in these places.**

Rural Health in Rural Hands: Strategic Directions for Rural, Remote, Northern and Aboriginal Communities was prepared by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Rural Health.

In 1996, infant mortality rates in rural areas were 30 per cent higher than the national average, while death rates from all causes were nine per cent higher than the national average.

- **Rural infant mortality rates are 30 per cent higher than the Canadian average**

Rural Health in Rural Hands: Strategic Directions for Rural, Remote, Northern and Aboriginal Communities was prepared by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Rural Health.

- **The incidence of low birth weight in northern BC is twice the provincial average.**

British Columbia Rural and Remote Health Conference. – 2000

- **Twenty-two per cent of Canadians live in towns with populations under 10,000 while only ten per cent of physicians work in these communities.**

Canadian Health Coalition Report on Health Care in Northern Territories

- **Two-thirds of residents in remote areas live more than 100 kilometres from a doctor.**
- **In the Arctic, patients may need to travel six hours by plane to access hospital services.**

<http://cranhr.laurentian.ca/hands.html>

In one study, street youth reported a cumulative incidence of sexually transmitted diseases of 22 per cent – more than twice the rate found in youth in school.

- **The incidence of STDs in street youth is twice that of youth in school.**

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/meas-haut/mu_ff_e.html

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- **Street youth attempt suicide at rates 100 times that of the national average; completed suicides are ten times the national rate.**
 - **The mortality rate of street youth is 40 times that of other youths their age.**

http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=v6n1_art_07

Relative poverty means being much poorer than most people in society and is often defined as living on less than 60 per cent of the national median income. It denies people access to decent housing, education, transport and other factors vital to full participation in life. Being excluded from the life of society and treated as less than equal leads to worse health and greater risks of premature death. The stresses of living in poverty are particularly harmful during pregnancy, to babies, children and old people. In some countries, as much as one quarter of the total population – and a higher proportion of children – live in relative poverty

- **Qualified Aboriginal health care workers represent less than one per cent of the Canadian health professionals yet account for four per cent of Canada's population.**
- **45 per cent of Aboriginals living off-reserve report chronic health care problems. (*StatsCan Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2001*)**
- **Only 56 per cent of non-reserve Aboriginals report excellent or very good health while 65 per cent of other Canadians claim that status (*Ibid*)**
- **Northern regions have higher unmet health care needs compared to the national average (*Stats Can Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin Catalogue no. 21-006-XIE Vol. 4, No. 6 (October 2003)*)**
- **There are half as many physicians per 1,000 population in rural and small town Canada compared to larger urban centres. (*Stats Can Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin Catalogue no. 21-006-XIE Vol. 1, No. 5 (March 1999)*)**
- **It is predicted that the per capita ratio of rural physicians will decrease by 33 per cent to 0.53 per 1000 by 2021.**

WHO, Social Determinates of Health, (Fig 3)