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CHILD WELL-BEING IN RICH COUNTRIES

HOW DOES CANADA MEASURE UP?

UNICEF Report Card 11

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UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (Office of Research)

- Florence, Italy [www.unicef-irc.org](http://www.unicef-irc.org)
- UNICEF lead researchers & external experts
- Fresh ways of looking at children’s rights
  - New ways of crunching existing data
  - Hold up the mirror – cross-country comparison
  - Generate debate
Overview

1. League Table of Child Well-being
2. What children say about their well-being
3. Looking back
4. What now?

www.unicef.ca/irc11
LEAGUE TABLE OF CHILD WELL-BEING
Kids in 360 degrees

Material Well-being

Housing and Environment

Health and Safety

Behaviours and Risks

Education

26 indicators across 29 countries
So how does Canada stack up?

- Netherlands ranked 1st
- Canada ranked 17th
- Romanian children's level of satisfaction ranked 24th
- Romania ranked 29th

Innocenti Report Card 11, Canada's Overall Ranking
How we stack up

Overall child well-being: rank 17th of 29 industrialized nations.

This position has not budged since we last measured it a decade ago.
How Canada measures in each dimension

- Behaviours & Risk
  - Netherlands RANKED 1st
  - Lithuania RANKED 29th
- Material Well-being
  - Netherlands RANKED 1st
  - Romania RANKED 29th
- Education
  - Netherlands RANKED 1st
  - Romania RANKED 29th
- Housing & Environment
  - Switzerland RANKED 1st
  - Romania RANKED 29th
- Health & Safety
  - Iceland RANKED 1st
  - Romania RANKED 29th
Canada at the top

- Educational achievement by age 15 (2)
- Eating fruit (2)
- Smoking (3)
- Exercise (7)
- Air pollution (7)
Canada in the middle

- Low birthweight (10)
- Low family affluence (12)
- Child poverty gap (13)
- Fighting (15)
- Eating breakfast daily (16)
- Teenage births (16)
- Alcohol use (18)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canada at the bottom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative child poverty (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEET: not in education, employment or training (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National homicides (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in further education (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunization (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis use - last place (29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT CHILDREN SAY ABOUT THEIR WELL-BEING
League Table of Children’s Life Satisfaction

Canada’s rank falls 7 places to 24th of 29 countries when children are asked about their level of life satisfaction.
### What children think about their relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Average of 3 scores</th>
<th>% of children who find classmates kind and helpful</th>
<th>% of children who find it easy to talk to their mothers</th>
<th>% of children who find it easy to talk to their fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Netherlands is the top performer.
LOOKING BACK
A decade of progress

Canada has improved in all areas measured over the past decade except for:

- Obesity
- Children’s self-reported life satisfaction
- NEET (not in education, employment or training)
- Low birthweight
- Immunization
What’s missing

- Many indicators of other childhood conditions
- Distribution and inequity
- Influences and correlations (e.g., gender)
- Canadian survey data for some indicators (e.g., preschool education, housing)
- Full impacts of financial crisis
WHAT NOW?
Put children first!

Child well-being can be influenced by policy choices, and in order to do that, the Canadian government needs to:

- Provide information on how much money is being spent on children
- Publish regular state-of-children reports to identify progress and emerging concerns
- Ensure the rights of children are prioritized in policy decisions
- Establish a National Children’s Commissioner

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Other child-sensitive governance initiatives

Children’s Charters

- One of a constellation of child-sensitive governance tools - works with these interdependently
- Sets out **guiding principles** for all actions affecting children, implemented through the other governance tools and mechanisms (e.g., children’s strategy, Child Rights Impact Assessment)
- Principles should include the Guiding Principles in the Convention: best interests, non-discrimination, etc.
- Often include aspirational statements in domains such as health, protection, etc.: these can be detailed in a children’s strategy or plan
Other child-sensitive governance initiatives

Child-Friendly Cities

- LISTENING TO CHILDREN
- CHILD-FRIENDLY LAWS
- CHILDREN’S STRATEGY
- COORDINATING UNIT FOR CHILDREN
- CHILDREN’S ADVOCATE
- CHILD IMPACT ASSESSMENTS
- STATE OF CHILDREN REPORT
- CHILDREN’S BUDGET
- AWARENESS & TRAINING

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Canada
A Children’s Budget: indicators of implementation

Is a children’s budget published regularly?

Is there a “First Call for Children” principle to guide budget decisions?

Is there a process to monitor budget allocations for children?
Thank you