

CANADA

Country Highlights



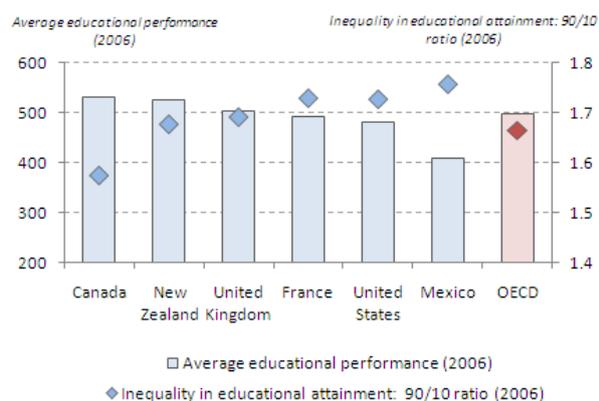
OECD (2009), *Doing Better for Children*

Canada receives solid marks in “Doing Better for Children”, the OECD’s first report on the well-being of children. But there are areas which may need policy attention to improve the lives of Canadian children, including reducing child poverty and youth risk-taking, and ensuring timely immunisations.

In terms of overall spending, the OECD concludes that all member countries should spend more for better starts in life for younger, disadvantaged children. Equally, governments should ensure that current high rates of spending on older children become more effective in meeting the needs of disadvantaged teenagers.

Child poverty rates in Canada in 2005 were at the higher end of the OECD, with 15% of children living in poor households versus an OECD average of 12.4%. However, educational outcomes for Canadian 15-year-olds are among the best in the OECD. Average performance is high and the gap between good and poorly performing students is small. In both cases, Canadian educational performance is bettered only by Finland and Korea.

Education outcomes for Canadian 15-year-olds are high in terms of average ability and low in terms of inequality



Timely immunisation rates for whooping cough/pertussis in Canada are the lowest in the OECD



With regards to comparative Canadian child health, two areas stand out: immunisations and suicide rates. Although the rates of timely immunisations for measles are higher than the OECD average, before the age of two, fewer children in Canada are immunised for whooping cough (pertussis) than anywhere else in the OECD. Only 4 in 5 infants receive a timely pertussis vaccination, for instance. Suicide rates for Canadian 15-19-year-olds also compare poorly, accounting for 14.7 suicides per 100 000 boys and 5.1 per 100 000 girls versus OECD averages of 10.2 and 3.4 respectively.

Risk-taking in Canada is a tale of two extremes. Smoking rates are half those of the OECD average with fewer than one in ten 15-year-olds regularly smoking. Canadian youth drunkenness is more of a problem. Around one in four Canadian youth report repeated drunkenness. Only the United Kingdom, Denmark and Finland have higher rates.