



Worlds Apart:

Canadian Summary of UNICEF Report Card 16

UNICEF Report Cards measure the state of children and youth under age 18 in wealthy countries. Report Card 16 shows that Canada is worlds apart from other rich countries in providing healthy, happy childhoods for every child. Canada ranks among the countries with the best economic, environmental and social conditions for growing up, but the poorest outcomes for children and youth.

CANADA RANKS 30TH AMONG 38 RICH COUNTRIES IN THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH UNDER AGE 18.

Netherlands
RANKED 1ST



Canada
RANKED 30TH



Chile
RANKED 38TH



League table of child well-being outcomes

Overall rank	Country	Well-being dimensions:		
		Mental	Physical	Learning/ skills
1	Netherlands	1	9	3
2	Denmark	5	4	7
3	Norway	11	8	1
4	Switzerland	13	3	12
5	Finland	12	6	9
6	Spain	3	23	4
7	France	7	18	5
8	Belgium	17	7	8
9	Slovenia	23	11	2
10	Sweden	22	5	14
11	Croatia	10	25	10
12	Ireland	26	17	6
13	Luxembourg	19	2	28
14	Germany	16	10	21
15	Hungary	15	21	13
16	Austria	21	12	17
17	Portugal	6	26	20
18	Cyprus	2	29	24
19	Italy	9	31	15
20	Japan	37	1	27
21	Republic of Korea	34	13	11
22	Czechia	24	14	22
23	Estonia	33	15	16
24	Iceland	20	16	34
25	Romania	4	34	30
26	Slovakia	14	27	36
27	United Kingdom	29	19	26
28	Latvia	25	24	29
29	Greece	8	35	31
30	Canada	31	30	18
31	Poland	30	22	25
32	Australia	35	28	19
33	Lithuania	36	20	33
34	Malta	28	32	35
35	New Zealand	38	33	23
36	United States	32	38	32
37	Bulgaria	18	37	37
38	Chile	27	36	38

RANKING: TOP THIRD MIDDLE THIRD BOTTOM THIRD

Canada’s children are worlds apart from each other due to wide inequalities, and worlds apart from the happiest, healthiest children in rich countries. After twenty years of UNICEF Report Cards, we know that we must act boldly to get better results.

DAVID MORLEY, PRESIDENT AND CEO, UNICEF CANADA

Being young right now is hard. It feels like we’re constantly being reminded that nobody cares about our futures: not our government, not the generations that came before us and definitely not our political system. We’re fighting tooth and nail to get a chance at a future.

RAYNE, AGE 18

How do the children and youth of Canada stand?

MENTAL HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

A striking number of children in Canada are unhappy:

OVERALL RANK: 31st

Almost 1 in 4 children has low life satisfaction.

CANADA RANK: 28th

Canada has one of the highest rates of adolescent suicide.

CANADA RANK: 35th

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND SURVIVAL

Canada is falling behind in fundamental aspects of child health:

OVERALL RANK: 30th

Canada’s rate of infant mortality is 0.98 child deaths per 1,000 births.

CANADA RANK: 28th

Almost 1 in 3 children is overweight or obese.

CANADA RANK: 29th

EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Many young people in Canada get good grades, but school is not always a place of support and inclusion:

OVERALL RANK: 18th

Almost 1 in 3 young people does not have basic reading and math skills by age 15.

CANADA RANK: 13th

26% of young people have difficulty making friends.

CANADA RANK: 23rd



CANADA IS NOT USING ITS GREATER WEALTH FOR GREATER CHILDHOODS

Canada ranks 23rd in the conditions for good childhoods but 30th in children’s outcomes. Canada is one of only a handful of countries (including Australia, New Zealand and Malta) that have better economic, environmental and social conditions but worse child well-being.

Conditions for good childhoods



Children’s outcomes



League table of child well-being conditions

Rank		POLICIES			CONTEXT		
		Social	Education	Health	Economy	Society	Environment
1	Norway	6	9	8	1	2	7
2	Iceland	10	19	1	6	1	4
3	Finland	5	12	5	22	3	2
4	Germany	9	6	19	7	25	16
5	Denmark	12	16	12	9	4	17
6	Sweden	18	17	2	15	22	3
7	Luxembourg	23	1	24	2	15	11
8	Ireland	26	14	10	5	6	9
9	Netherlands	21	3	23	8	10	15
10	Slovenia	3	11	15	25	11	26
11	Switzerland	30	8	26	3	8	22
12	Estonia	1	33	11	27	18	14
13	Poland	8	5	13	23	26	33
14	Austria	13	13	33	10	21	20
15	Lithuania	15	2	9	30	30	30
16	Latvia	11	4	4	36	31	25
17	Japan	7	23	34	11	29	18
18	Australia	28	32	18	13	7	8
19	Czechia	4	22	36	14	13	28
20	New Zealand	37	20	22	21	5	1
21	Malta	32	15	21	20	12	23
22	Portugal	22	7	27	29	27	13
23	Canada	27	25	29	19	23	5
24	Belgium	29	10	32	17	20	19
25	Republic of Korea	17	21	6	16	38	38
26	Hungary	2	34	17	24	32	36
27	United Kingdom	35	24	30	12	9	10
28	Slovakia	16	38	14	31	19	29
29	United States	41	30	28	4	33	6
30	Croatia	20	27	7	37	36	37
31	Israel	39	26	20	18	28	34
32	France	25	18	39	28	24	21
33	Spain	36	31	25	40	17	12
34	Italy	34	35	31	33	16	31
35	Bulgaria	19	39	37	34	14	32
36	Chile	33	37	16	38	34	35
37	Cyprus	24	28	38	35	37	27
38	Romania	14	40	40	26	39	39
39	Greece	31	29	41	41	40	24
40	Mexico	38	36	3	32	41	40
41	Turkey	40	41	35	39	35	41

RANKING:

TOP THIRD

MIDDLE THIRD

BOTTOM THIRD

Bolder policies for better childhoods

To get better outcomes, Canada needs bolder public policies that protect the right to a childhood during changing economic, social and environmental conditions.

Canada’s governments spend less on families and children than most wealthy countries.

CANADA RANK:
(OUT OF 36 COUNTRIES)

28th

RESOURCES AND MATERIAL SECURITY

Canada has abundant national wealth, but does not protect children from poverty and exclusion.

Canada has better air and water quality than most countries.



Almost 1 in 5 children lives in poverty, though the rate for Black children can reach as high as 1 in 3 in some places, and the rate for Status First Nations children can reach above 1 in 2.



6% of young people age 15-19 are not in work, school or training.



SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Children view good relationships as crucial to their well-being, but many experience stress and violence instead:

Canada ranks 33rd in the homicide rate, a marker of a violent society for children.



26% of children report low support from their families.



EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Early childhood policies are great equalizers, but still leave too many children out:

Canada ranks 24th in the adequacy of parental leave.



Canada ranks 19th in the number of children in preschool one year before primary education begins.



HEALTHY CONDITIONS

Progress to reduce low birthweight and boost immunization has stalled:

87% of children are immunized against measles, below the 95% threshold for protection.



7% of infants are born with low birthweight.



Summary of Canadian indicators of children's outcomes, conditions and policies

Child outcomes, conditions and policies	Indicator	Canada rank	Canada value	Top value	Average value	Canada change in value	Likely direction of COVID-19 impacts
Environment	Air pollution	4	6.4 PM2.5 µ	5.9 PM2.5 µ	13.7	(-)2.0	
Skills	Academic proficiency	13	68%	79%	62%	(-)1.0	
Economy	National income	15	\$47,590	\$72,200	\$42,925		
Relationships	Belonging at school	15	-0.11	0.47	0		
Society	Social support	17	93%	98%	91%	(-) 1.0	
Environment	Water supply quality	18	98.9%	100%	96.0%	(+) 0.4	
Education	Early child education	19	97%	100%	94.7%		
Education	Exclusion from school and work	20	5.9%	1.5%	6.3	(-) 2.3	
Health	Low birthweight	21	6.5%	3.8%	6.7%	(+) 0.3	
Skills	Social skills	23	74%	83%	76%	(-) 4.0	
Relationships	Bullying	23	20%	9%	19%		
Social	Parental leave	24	26.6 weeks FPE	97.1 weeks FPE	35.9		
Social	Child poverty	26	21.0%	10.4%	19.9%	(-) 1.2	
Economy	Unemployment	26	6.1%	2.4%	6.0%	(+) 0.1	
Relationships	Family support	27	26%	6%	14%		
Budget	Spending on children and families	28	1.68% GDP	3.68% GDP	2.38		
Mental well-being	Life satisfaction	28	77%	90%	79%	(-) 4.0	
Physical health	Child mortality	28	0.98 per 1,000	0.36 per 1,000	1.0	(-) 0.05	
Physical health	Overweight/obesity	29	32%	14%	29%	(+) 1.0	
Health	Immunization	33	87%	99%	91%		
Society	Violence (homicide)	33	1.8 per 100,000	0.2 per 100,000	2.0	(+)0.2	
Mental well-being	Teen suicide	35	9.0 per 100,000	1.4 per 100,000	6.5		

INDICATOR CATEGORY:

- OUTCOMES
- POLICIES
- CONTEXT
- SECONDARY OUTCOMES (RELATIONSHIPS)

CANADA RANKING:

- TOP THIRD
- MIDDLE THIRD
- BOTTOM THIRD

VALUE OVER TIME:

- ABOVE AVERAGE VALUE/BETTER OVER TIME
- SAME AS AVERAGE VALUE/STABLE OVER TIME
- BELOW AVERAGE VALUE/WORSE OVER TIME
- DATA NOT AVAILABLE

What will improve childhoods?



BE BOLD

Protect children and youth from austerity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and invest more in equalizing public policies that support families and children, including income benefits, early child care and education, school nutrition, parental leave and the Spirit Bear Plan for First Nations children.



LISTEN TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Start a pan-Canadian dialogue to understand their lives, worries and aspirations; involve them in decision-making; and co-design solutions with them. A National Commissioner for Children and Youth and a lower voting age are mechanisms to support their participation.



BE ACCOUNTABLE

Set a baseline for Parliament and legislatures to measure progress for all children and close disparities; ensure they are given priority consideration in decisions through child impact assessment; and publish a “children’s budget” that tracks spending on children and its outcomes.

Every child has the right to a childhood. One Youth is a campaign to elevate the rights and well-being of children and youth in Canada. Please join us.



@OneYouthCanada



@OneYouthCanada



@OneYouthCanada



BETTER OR WORSE?

Canada ranks highest in children’s academic achievement and exposure to air pollution, the only two indicators in which Canada is in the top third.

Canada ranks lowest in child survival (including teen suicide and child mortality), health (including immunization and unhealthy weight) and children’s overall life satisfaction.

Canada falls below average in more than half the measures of child well-being.

Canada has been making the most progress in reducing child poverty and the number of young people excluded from education, employment and training, though there are wide disparities.

Canada has been making little to no progress in reducing child mortality, obesity or bullying.

Canada has been falling backward in children’s sense of well-being and mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to worsen many of these indicators and widen the gaps between children.

ONE 
YOUTH

VS 
ԾԱԽՆ

ՎԾԴԻՅԵ
ԼԵԾԵՅԵ 

ՄՎՏ.ԵԵ 
ԾՆԻՈՒԴՁ

UNE 
JEUNESSE ^{MD}