

# Inequalities in Early Childhood Development in Canada



Children who experience disadvantaged conditions are more vulnerable in all areas of their early development. Developmental vulnerability is assessed by the Early Development Instrument and reflects children whose skills and behaviours are below the levels exhibited by most of their peers.

**1 in 4**

Canadian children are vulnerable in at least one of five developmental areas:



physical health and well-being



language and thinking skills



social competence



communication skills and general knowledge



understanding and managing emotions

Developmental vulnerabilities may lead to poorer health and social outcomes in later life, including:



chronic diseases and conditions



lower literacy and economic participation



addictions and poor mental health



violence and crime

**Boys are more developmentally vulnerable than girls.**

**Children in lower income communities or living in areas with lower material and social resources, experience the greatest inequalities.**

Vulnerability in early childhood development:

**2.2x HIGHER**

in materially and socially deprived communities\*

**1.8x HIGHER**

in the lowest-income communities

**2.0x HIGHER**

among Indigenous children than non-Indigenous children

Inequities experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations are anchored in colonial policies and practices that began with Residential Schools, loss of cultural continuity, territories and languages. Unaddressed intergenerational trauma adds to the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous peoples.

**Conditions that support early childhood development include:**



household income above the poverty line



safe housing and communities



ability to afford nutritious foods



supportive parenting and higher parental education

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\* Material deprivation is defined by higher % of people with no high school diploma, lower population/employment ratio, and lower average income (among aged 15 years and older). Social deprivation is defined by higher % of individuals living alone, higher % of individuals whose marital status is either separated, divorced, or widowed, and higher % of single-parent families (among aged 15 years and older).

Source: Early Development Instrument (McMaster University, Offord Centre for Child Studies; PE 2007/08; NB 2008/09; BC, MB, SK 2010/11; NT, ON, QC, YT 2011/12).

For more data on health inequalities in Canada, visit: <https://infobase.phac-aspc.gc.ca/health-inequalities/>

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