

Health Fact Sheet

Primary health care providers, 2016

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Health Fact Sheets

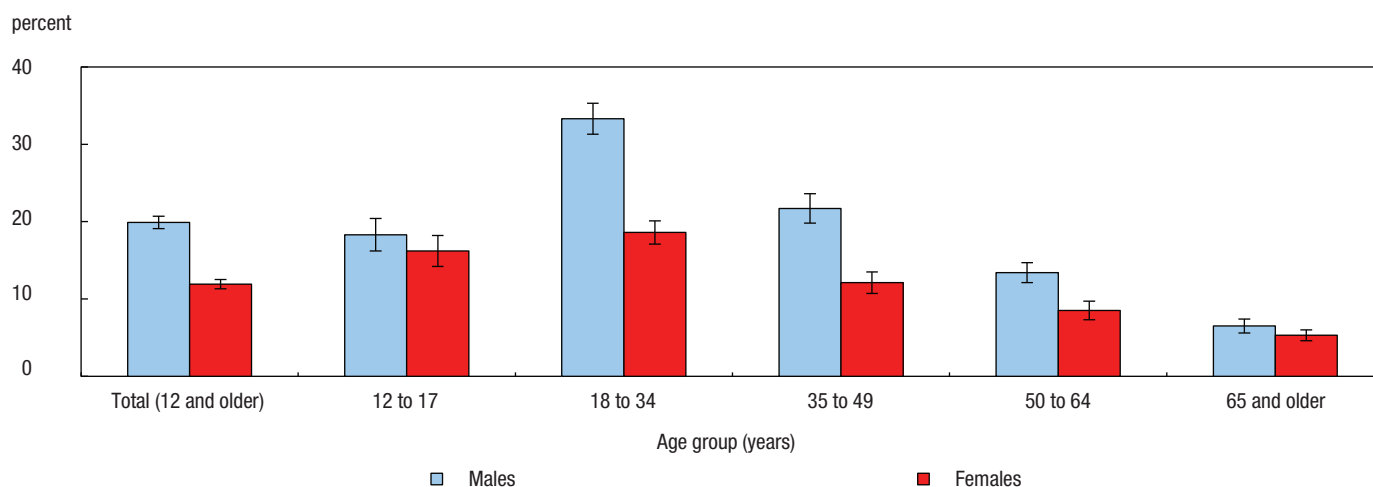
Statistics Canada, Catalogue no.82-625-X

Primary health care providers, 2016

In 2016, 15.8% of Canadians aged 12 and older (roughly 4.8 million people) reported that they did not have a regular health care provider they see or talk to when they need care or advice for their health.¹ The proportion of females without a regular health care provider declined between 2015 and 2016 (13.1 %, 11.9 %).² For males, there was no change between 2015 and 2016.

Significantly more males (19.9%) than females (11.9%) reported they were without a regular health care provider. Males aged 18 to 34 were more likely than any other age group to be without a regular health care provider. Among females, the rate was highest for those aged 12 to 17 and 18 to 34. The group that had the lowest proportion of people without a health care provider were Canadians aged 65 and older (6.5% for males and 5.3% for females; Chart 1).

Chart 1 Percentage without a regular health care provider, by age group and sex, household population aged 12 and older, Canada, 2016



Note: A regular health care provider is defined as a health professional that a person sees or talks to when they need care or advice about their health. This can include a family doctor or general practitioner, medical specialist, or nurse practitioner. 95% confidence intervals are denoted by vertical lines overlaid on the bars in this chart. They indicate the degree of variability in the estimates.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2016.

Of the 4.8 million people without a primary health care provider, the most commonly reported reasons were that they had not tried to find one (28.7%) or that they did not need one, but had a usual place of care (26.3%).³

The proportion of residents who were without a primary health care provider was **lower** than the national average (15.8%) in:

- Newfoundland and Labrador (9.9%)
- Prince Edward Island (10.8%)
- Nova Scotia (10.3%)
- New Brunswick (9.7%)
- Ontario (9.7%)

The proportion of residents who were without a primary health care provider was **higher** than the national average in:

- Quebec (25.6%)
- Saskatchewan (18.7%)
- Alberta (18.0%)

The proportion of residents who were without a primary health care provider was similar to the national average in Manitoba and British Columbia.

In 2016, Aboriginal peoples⁴ were more likely to report they did not have a primary health care provider (19.2%) compared to the non-Aboriginal population (15.8%).

About primary health care

For many Canadians, the first point of contact for medical care is their regular health care provider. Being without a regular health care provider is associated with fewer visits to general practitioners or specialists, who can play a role in the early screening and treatment of medical conditions.

A regular health care provider is defined as a health professional that a person sees or talks to when they need care or advice about their health. This can include a family doctor or general practitioner, medical specialist, or nurse practitioner.

Notes

1. Estimates in this article referring to the national average or Canada rate exclude the territories. This is because the coverage of CCHS in 2016 does not represent the entire population of the territories. Only half of the communities in the territories were visited in 2015, and the other half in 2016 so analyses based on the territories is only available for two year cycles of the CCHS (e.g. 2015–2016).
2. In this article when two estimates are said to be different this indicates that the difference was statistically significant at a 95% confidence level (p-value less than 5%).
3. Respondents could have reported more than one reason for not having a primary health care provider, so estimates are not exclusive within the population (they can add to more than 100%). Respondents could have also indicated: no providers were available in the area, no one in the area is taking patients, that their provider had left or retired, or other. Each of these four reasons was indicated by about 18.0% of respondents without a primary health care provider.
4. Aboriginal status is based on self-identification as First Nations, Métis, or Inuk (Inuit). The CCHS does not survey on reserve, therefore the numbers in this fact sheet reflect only Aboriginal peoples living off reserve.

References

- Nabalamba, A., and W. Millar. 2007. “Going to the doctor”. *Health Reports*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 82-003. Vol. 18 no. 1. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2006002/article/9569-eng.htm> (accessed January 11, 2017)
- Carrière, G. 2005. “Consultations with doctors and nurses”. *Health Reports*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 82-003. Vol. 16 no. 4. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2004004/article/8043-eng.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2017)

Data

Additional data from the Canadian Community Health Survey are available from CANSIM table 105–0508 <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=1050508>.

For more information on the Canadian Community Health Survey, please contact Statistics Canada's Statistical Information Service (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 613-951-8116; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats. STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats@STATCAN@canada.ca)).