

Health Fact Sheets

Primary health care providers, 2019

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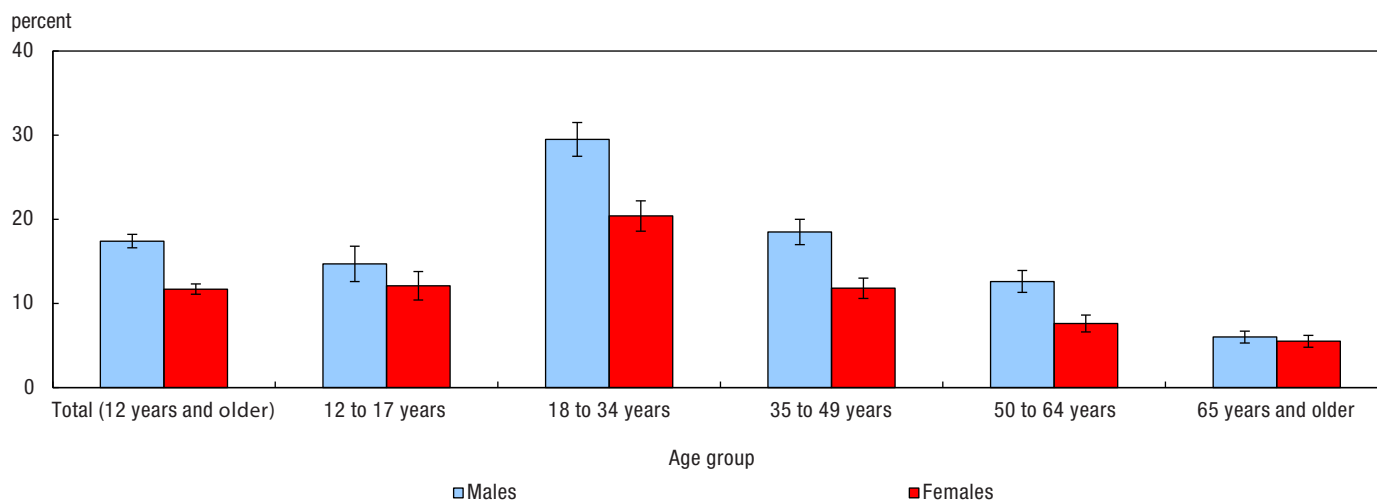
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Primary health care providers, 2019

In 2019, 14.5% of Canadians aged 12 and older (roughly 4.6 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

Significantly more males (17.4%) than females (11.7%) reported they were without a regular health care provider in 2019.² Among both males and females, compared to all age groups, those aged 18 to 34 were most likely to be without a regular health care provider. Comparatively, Canadians aged 65 and older were the least likely (6.0% for males and 5.5% for females; Chart 1).

Chart 1 Percentage without a regular health care provider, by age group and sex, population aged 12 and older, Canada, 2019



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.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2019.

Access to a regular health care provider is very important for preventative health care and the management of ongoing medical conditions. Since 2015, the proportion of Canadians reporting that they did not have a regular health care provider decreased from 16.8% in 2015 to 14.5% in 2019. Among the provinces, there were differences in this trend. Between 2015 and 2019, Quebec and Alberta saw a decrease in the proportion of residents without a regular health care provider, whereas Nova Scotia saw an increase (Table 1).

Table 1
Percentage of Canadians without a regular health care provider, by province, 2015 compared to 2019

	2015	2019
	percent (%)	
Canada	16.8	14.5*
Newfoundland and Labrador	11.9	12.5
Prince Edward Island	11.3	14.9
Nova Scotia	11.3	14.4*
New Brunswick	9.2	10.2
Quebec	27.8	21.5*
Ontario	10.4	9.4
Manitoba	18.2	15.8
Saskatchewan	19.1	17.2
Alberta	19.5	14.9*
British Columbia	16.2	17.7

* Significantly different compared to the rate from 2015 (p-value less than 0.05)

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2015 & 2019.

Compared to the national average (14.5%), Quebec (21.5%), Saskatchewan (17.2%) and British Columbia (17.7%) all had a higher proportion of residents without a regular health care provider. New Brunswick (10.2%) and Ontario (9.4%) both had a lower proportion of residents who did not have a regular health care provider, and all other provinces had a rate that was similar to the national average.

Nova Scotians were more likely to report their regular care provider retired or left

In 2019, the main reasons as to why an individual did not have a regular health care provider differed based on their province of residence. Compared to all other provinces, residents in Nova Scotia were most likely to report that the reason they did not have a regular health care provider was because they had one who had retired or left (Table 2).³ Residents living in Prairie Provinces were more likely to report that they had not tried to find a primary care provider or they did not need one but had a usual place of care.

Table 2
Percentage distribution of reasons for not having a primary health care provider, by province, population aged 12 and older who did not have a primary health care provider, Canada, 2019

	Felt they did not need one but had a usual place of care, or have not tried to find one	No one available in the area or no one in the area was taking new patients	Had one who left or retired	Other reason
	percent (%)			
Newfoundland and Labrador	47.4	40.0	30.2	5.8 ^F
Prince Edward Island	38.4 ^E	38.4	25.7 ^E	12.8 ^E
Nova Scotia	23.9	45.8	41.3	15.5 ^E
New Brunswick	31.4	43.9	25.3 ^E	15.2 ^E
Quebec	44.6	34.8	23.2	16.2
Ontario	46.8	24.1	25.4	22.0
Manitoba	61.7	12.7 ^E	24.5	19.8 ^E
Saskatchewan	67.8	12.3 ^E	26.4	16.7 ^E
Alberta	65.9	12.7	18.2	18.9
British Columbia	46.8	36.5	19.6	14.1

^F coefficient of variation between 15.1% and 35.0%; interpret with caution.

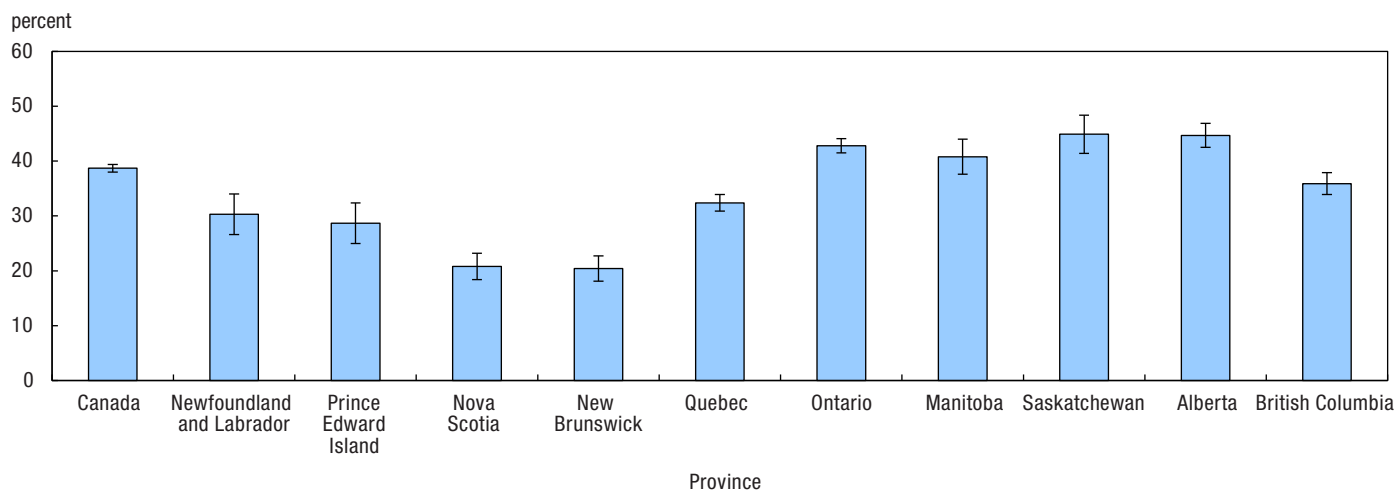
Note: Respondents could have reported more than one reason for not having a primary health care provider, so estimates are not exclusive within the population (they can add to more than 100%).

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2019.

Just over 1 in 3 people indicated they can receive a same day or next day appointment

In addition to having a regular health care provider, it is important to have timely access to health care. Among Canadians who had a regular health care provider, 38.7% indicated they could receive a same day or next day appointment with someone from their regular healthcare provider's office when they needed immediate care for a minor health problem. Canadians living in Nova Scotia (20.8%) and New Brunswick (20.4%) were the least likely to receive care within two days (Chart 2).

Chart 2 Proportion of people reporting they can have a same day/next day appointment from their regular health care provider's office for a minor health problem, by province, population aged 12 and older who have a regular health care provider, Canada, 2019



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.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2019.

About regular 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.

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References

- Carrière, G. 2005. [Consultations with doctors and nurses](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2004004/article/8043-eng.pdf). Health Reports. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 82-003. Vol. 16 no. 4. (accessed October 1, 2020). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2004004/article/8043-eng.pdf>.
- Nabalamba, A. and W. Millar. 2007. [Going to the doctor](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2006002/article/9569-eng.htm). Health Reports. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 82-003. Vol. 18 no. 16. (accessed October 1, 2020). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2006002/article/9569-eng.htm>.

Data

Additional data from the Canadian Community Health Survey are available from table [13-10-0096-01](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310009601). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310009601>.

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 2019 does not represent the entire population of the territories. Only half of the communities in the territories were visited in 2019, and the other half in 2020 so analyses based on the territories are only available for two year cycles of the CCHS (e.g. 2019-2020).
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 regular health care provider, so estimates are not exclusive within the population (they can add to more than 100%).

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@canada.ca)).