

research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



Top Reasons for Unmet Healthcare Need in Canada

What is this research about?

In a developed country like Canada with a publicly funded health care system, there are more cases of unmet healthcare need than might be expected. This research is about some of the causes of unmet healthcare needs. Several factors such as gender, income and housing tenure have shown to impact healthcare. Unmet healthcare need may be reduced by investing more resources in the healthcare system, and by providing more social supports such as affordable child care.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers analysed a number of factors that could affect healthcare: income, age, gender, housing tenure, waiting times for treatment, community network and social support, and lifestyle risks such as smoking. They surveyed 2536 households in British Columbia to find out which of these factors have a strong relationship with healthcare. They also reviewed past research to explain their results.

What you need to know:

Women, individuals with low income, and home renters are more likely to have unmet healthcare needs in Canada.

What did the researchers find?

The researchers found that individuals with income lower than \$40 000 may be less likely to seek care from specialists. This may be because they have more unstable jobs that are low-paying, with few or no benefits, which make it difficult to schedule and attend doctors' appointments.

The researchers found that gender is a particularly relevant predictor of unmet health need. This is so because women were more likely to report unmet health needs than men. It might be because women who work full-time and take care of their family at home have difficulty finding time to care for their own health. Those in unstable jobs may risk losing income if they take time out for medical appointments.

Housing tenure is another related influence and the researchers found that renters were more likely than homeowners to report an unmet healthcare need. Canadians renting rather than owning their homes have experienced decreasing income. Much of this has to do with rising rental costs, making it harder for renters to keep up.

How can you use this research?

This research may be used by policy makers to provide public day care services for children, as well as health and social services for seniors. This may help women manage their time to care for their own medical needs.

About the Researchers

Toba Bryant is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Ontario Institute of Technology. She previously taught in Health Studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and in the Department of Sociology at York University.

toba.bryant@sympatico.ca

Chad Leaver is Research Manager at the Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Studies.

James Dunn is Research Scientist, Centre for Research on Inner City Health, St. Michael's Hospital.

Citation

Bryant, T., Leaver, C., & Dunn, J. (2009). Unmet healthcare need, gender, and health inequalities in Canada. *Health Policy*, 91(1), 24-32. Available online at bit.ly/1jrZdSn

Keywords

Unmet healthcare need, Healthcare policy, Women, Health inequalities

Knowledge Mobilization at York

York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit provides services for faculty, graduate students, community and government seeking to maximize the impact of academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice. This summary has been supported by the Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation at York and project funding from SSHRC and CIHR.

kmbunit@yorku.ca

www.researchimpact.ca

