

# THE STATE OF YOUR CHILDREN

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## THE TOP FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN

This spring, UNICEF released Report Card 11 ranking the well-being of children in rich countries. Well-being is measured by a wide range of factors that make life better for children including healthy behaviours, positive relationships with peers and parents, high educational achievement and low levels of child poverty.

Here's how Canada's children rank:

**1 Our children are “stuck in the middle”**  
It may surprise you to learn that Canada ranks 17th out of the world's richest 29 countries in overall child well-being. We seem to be “stuck in the middle” since this overall ranking hasn't changed in a decade.

**2 We rank high for educational achievement**  
Canadian children rank second out of 29 countries when it comes to educational achievement.

**3 Canadian children know to say “no” to smoking cigarettes**  
Children in Canada have a very low rate of cigarette smoking; in fact, we rank third out of 29 countries. However, high levels of alcohol consumption and cannabis use remain a concern. Maintaining open lines of communication with children before and during the adolescent years about the risks associated with these behaviours can go a long way towards reducing detrimental choices.

**4 Our children are still not as healthy as they should be**  
When it comes to healthy weight, Canada continues to rank very poorly – 27th out of 29 countries. We can all promote the maintenance of healthy weight by choosing healthier food options, eating fresh, unprocessed foods packed with nutrients, and decreasing our intake of sugar and sodium.



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**5 Bullying is a serious issue for our children**  
The rate of bullying in Canada amongst children and youth is high and a cause for concern. In this area, we rank 21st out of 29 countries. There is more that governments can do to address this issue but there is also much we can do as individuals, communities, families and in school settings. Modelling kindness and good conflict resolution, speaking up when we see bullying, and demanding help for all concerned from responsible authorities are simple but powerful ways to curb bullying anywhere it occurs.

We all have a role to play in improving the lives of children and youth in Canada – our own and other children – and this includes listening to children and youth about what they think is needed to address the challenges they face.

To learn more about child well-being in Canada, including information about how to take action, please visit: [unicef.ca/irc11](http://unicef.ca/irc11)

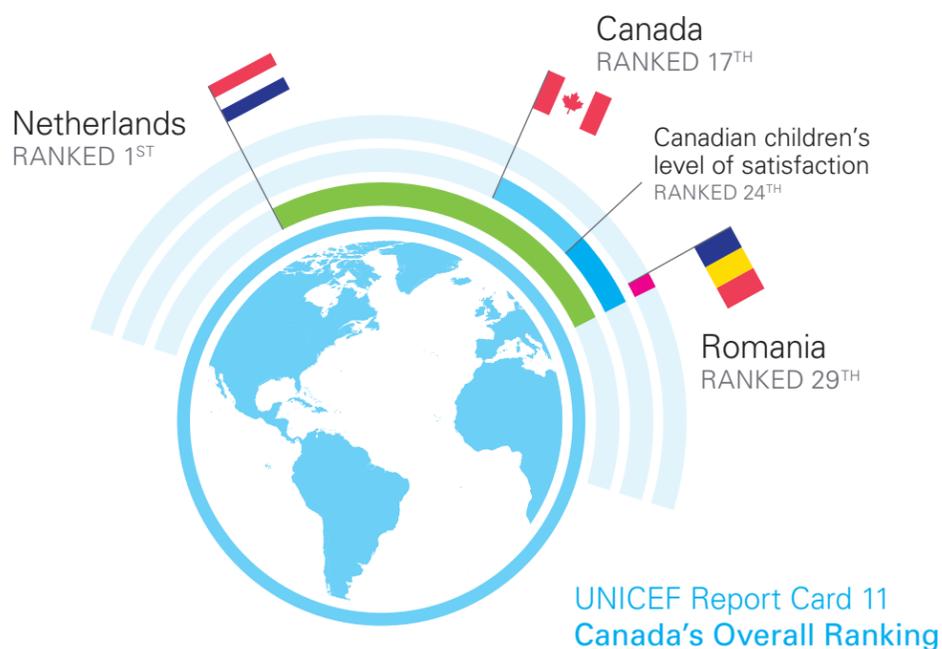
## The story of Canada in Report Card 11 is one of a country stuck in the middle.

The League Table of Child Well-Being ranks 29 affluent nations on 26 indicators across five dimensions: material well-being, health and safety, education, behaviours and risk, and housing and environment. Canada has a middle ranking in the League Table of Child Well-Being. **This position has not budged since we last measured it a decade ago.**

### What are children saying?

Canada's ranking drops by seven places (to number 24) when children's views of their life satisfaction are taken into account. It is also a concern that this level has fallen over the past decade.

### How does Canada stack up?



Category	Indicator	Trend
above average	Educational achievement by age 15	↑
	Eating fruit	↑
	Exercise	↑
	Smoking	↑
	Air pollution	↑
average	Child poverty gap	↑
	Low family affluence	↑
	Low birthweight	↑
	Eating breakfast daily	↑
	Teenage births	↑
	Alcohol use	↑
	Fighting	↑
below average	Relative child poverty	↑
	Infant mortality	↑
	Immunization	↑
	Participation in further education	↑
	NEET (not in education, employment or training)	↑
	Overweight	↓
	Cannabis use	↑
	Bullying	↑
	National homicides	↓
	Children's life satisfaction	↓

↑ Improved in past decade  
↓ Worsened in past decade

### Educational achievement by age 15

ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> of 29

A source of pride, Canada's children score at the very top in the average of international reading, math and science literacy test scores.



### Smoking

ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> of 29

Canada is one of only five countries where the smoking rate for young people is below five per cent.



### Participation in further education

ranked 24<sup>th</sup> of 29

This indicator is associated with the opportunities young people have at the beginning of their adult lives. Every young person left out is lost potential.



### Overweight

ranked 27<sup>th</sup> of 29

This is a serious concern for children today given the correlation between unhealthy weight and disease, including diabetes.



### Bullying

ranked 21<sup>st</sup> of 29

Canada's rate of bullying is slightly higher than the average among industrialized countries.

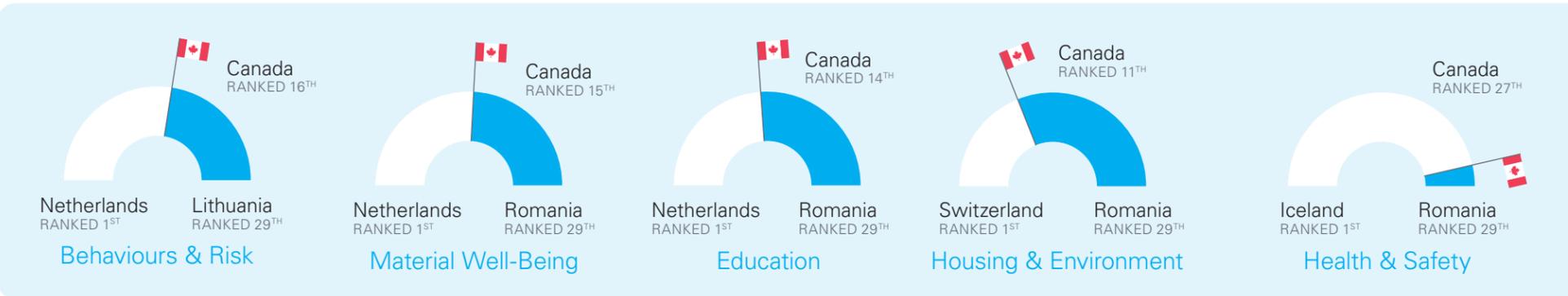


**Did you know?**  
Canada was the first country to introduce a survey of early childhood development indicators.

## Put children first!

Child well-being can be influenced by policy choices. In order to do that, the Canadian government needs to:

- Provide information on how much money is being spent on children
- Publish regular state-of-children reports to identify progress and emerging concerns
- Ensure the rights of children are prioritized in policy decisions
- Establish a National Children's Commissioner

CANADA'S RANKING IN FIVE DIMENSIONS



Learn about UNICEF Canada's work to improve the well-being of Canadian children by reading **UNICEF Report Card 11: Child Well-Being in Rich Countries**

[unicef.ca/irc11](http://unicef.ca/irc11)