



Canada's Vital Signs 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All signs indicate that the fallout from the global recession is far from over. The unemployment rate has not bounced back to pre-2008 norms. Households are carrying heavy debt loads and will be at risk should interest rates rise. And as a country, we have not fully integrated immigrants into the workforce even though they're playing an increasingly vital role in our nation's make-up and economic growth. In this, our 4th edition of Canada's Vital Signs, we revisit many of the national indicators that were first reported on in 2007. The 2010 findings reveal that poverty rates are on the rise, home ownership is becoming less affordable, well-educated immigrants are not faring well in the workforce, 1.5 million Canadians are out of work, and greenhouse gas emissions are rising. The news is not all negative though. On the plus side, more Canadians are graduating with post-secondary education credentials, property crime is down, the number of active physicians is growing at a faster rate than the total population, and the majority of Canadians feel a strong sense of community belonging. A brief snapshot of these findings is provided below. For more detail, please refer to our [Research Findings](#).

- ***The gap between the unemployment rates of recent immigrants (lived in Canada for 5 years or less) and non-immigrants widens as education level increases.*** In 2009, the unemployment rate of recent immigrants who have university degrees was 13.9% - 4.1 times the rate of 3.4% for Canadian-born workers who are university educated.¹ Given that Canada's net labour force growth will come from immigration as early as next year, more efforts must be made to eliminate the unemployment gaps between foreign- and Canadian-born workers.²
- ***Due to a period of low mortgage rates, many Canadians (who might not have otherwise) moved from renting to home ownership, and are now carrying a great deal of debt.***³ In 2008, the average price of a house in Canada was \$303,607 and the median family income was \$73,500, giving a housing price-to-income ratio of 4.13.⁴ That's compared to a national ratio of 3.20 just a decade ago.
- ***Since the early 1990s, greenhouse gas emissions from personal vehicles have risen by almost one-third.***⁵ Transportation currently produces a quarter of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, about half of which comes from personal vehicles.⁶ In 2007, personal vehicle operation accounted for 1,751 kilograms per capita of CO₂ equivalent in Canada.
- ***The supply of doctors is rising, and more are women.*** The physician supply rate (number of physicians per 1,000 persons) has increased 6.5% since 1997, the year for which data was first available. A recent study showed that women are becoming a larger proportion of the

¹ Statistics Canada (2010). Unpublished estimates from the Labour Force Survey Data.

² Statistics Canada (2007). [Study: Canada's Immigrant Labour Market](#). *The Daily*, Monday, September 10, 2007.

³ Statistics Canada (2007). [Study: Changes and Challenges for Canada's Residential Real Estate Landlords](#). *The Daily*, Friday, May 25, 2007.

⁴ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). [Appendix Table V-2-i: MLS Average Residential Prices \(\\$\) in Vital Signs Communities, 1995-2008](#).

⁵ Statistics Canada (2010). [Study: Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Private Vehicles](#). *The Daily*, Thursday, May 13, 2010.

⁶ Environment Canada (2010). [Canada's 2008 Greenhouse Gas Inventory. A Summary of Trends: 1990-2008](#).

physician workforce, accounting for more than half (52.1%) of new general practitioners and close to half (45.1%) of new specialists in 2008.⁷

- **Regardless of the measure used to assess poverty (Low Income Cut-off Measure, Low Income Measure, or Market Basket Measure), approximately 1 in 10 Canadians are considered to be poor – and that’s before the recession hit.**^{8 9 10} In other words, more than 3 million Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, having difficulty paying for basic necessities like housing, food, and clothing. What’s more, all three measures of poverty experienced increases in 2008, and with the economic downturn this trend is expected to increase.
- **Since the global economic downturn forced hundreds of thousands of Canadians into unemployment, the jobless rate has showed little sign of improvement.** Between 2008 and 2009, the national unemployment rate rose 2.2 percentage points, to stand at 8.3%. This represents 1.5 million people out of work.¹¹ More recent reports show that for the first half of 2010, the monthly unemployment rate has remained steady, hovering above 8%.¹²
- **More and more Canadians have post-secondary qualifications.** At present, one half of Canadians (aged 15 and over) have some form of post-secondary education (50.8% in 2009). The proportion of the population with post-secondary qualifications has increased 2.0 percentage points from 2006 (the figure used in our last report), and 18.1 percentage points since 1990, the first year for which comparable data are available.
- **Property crimes have declined nearly 30% in the past decade.** Police reported 4,081 property crime offences per 100,000 persons in Canada in 2009, a drop of 4% from the previous year. Except for a small increase in 2003, the nation’s property crime rate has fallen every year since 1998.
- **Nearly 350,000 Canadians were employed in cultural industries in 2009.** Although the number of people employed in this sector has increased 40.2% since 1987, the size of the industry relative to the total labour force (2.0%) has remained constant. This proportion is generally larger in big urban centres.
- **Close to two-thirds (65.4%) of Canadians, aged 12 and older, report a strong or somewhat strong sense of community belonging.** The percentage of the population that feels this way has been steadily increasing (1.5 percentage points) since it was first recorded in 2003.

⁷ Canadian Institute for Health Information (2009). [Number of physicians in Canada up 8% over five years](#). *Media Release*, November 26, 2009.

⁸ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table I-2-c-ii: [Overall Incidence of Poverty for All Persons Based on LICO in Vital Signs CMAs, After-Tax, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000-2008](#).

⁹ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table I-2-c-iii: [Overall Incidence of Poverty for All Persons Based on Low Income Measure \(LIM\) in Vital Signs CMAs, After-Tax, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000-2008](#).

¹⁰ Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table I-2-c-iv: [Overall Incidence of Poverty for All Persons Based on Market Basket Measure in Vital Signs CMAs, After-Tax, 2000-2008, 2008 base, Per Cent](#)

¹¹ Statistics Canada (2010). CANSIM, table 282-0002: [Labour force, employed and unemployed, numbers and rates, by province, 2009](#).

¹² Community Foundations of Canada (2010). Table IX-2-a-ii: [Unemployment Rate \(15+\) in Vital Signs CMAs and Economic Regions, Seasonally Unadjusted and Adjusted, Monthly, based on 3-month moving average, 2008-2009](#)

About Vital Signs

Vital Signs is an annual community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our cities, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in at least ten areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs coordinated nationally by [Community Foundations of Canada](#).

Community foundations use Vital Signs to increase the effectiveness of our grantmaking, better inform our donors about issues and opportunities in the community and assist us in making connections between individuals and groups to address those issues.

Related Research

Canada is home to a number of initiatives that measure wellbeing and quality of life. Each one plays an important role in helping us better understand our communities. Please see our Related Research section for more information on their important work.