



Gender Inequalities in Access to Health Care among Adults in British Columbia, Canada

Background

Equitable access to health care is recognized as a key determinant of individual and population health. Under the Canada Health Act, health care should be granted to all Canadians, independent of their ability to pay, socioeconomic status, and place of residence. However, research has shown that many Canadians face barriers in access to healthcare.

The Question

Is gender associated with perceived unmet health care needs among adults in BC??

The Study

Using data from the 2011/2012 Canadian Community Health Survey, an ongoing, annual, cross-sectional survey that collects information regarding health status, health care utilization, and health determinants of the Canadian population. The CCHS is representative of approximately 98% of the Canadian population at the level of age and sex groups within provincial health regions. All questionnaires are administered using in-person or telephone computer-assisted interviewing. The study sample was restricted to adults over the age of 18 living in British Columbia and after exclusions, included 12,252 participants.

The Results

Of 12,252 British Columbian adults who participated:

- 51.9% were female;
- The overall prevalence of **perceived unmet health care needs** was **12%**, or **1 in 8 adults**;
- The prevalence of perceived unmet health care needs was significantly **higher among women, 13.7%, than among men, 10.1%**.

In this study, adult women in BC were found to be more likely to have perceived unmet health care needs than men.

Gender-specific barriers may contribute to differences between men and women in the rates of perceived unmet health care needs, including:

- Women bearing the burden of household labour, including caregiving;
- Women being overrepresented in precarious, part-time, or temporary work;
- Women subsequently lacking extended health insurance, and having less job flexibility.

The Policy Implications

- There is a need for policies and programs within the health care system that take into account the differential health needs of men and women, at all levels of care.
- Beyond health care, affordable and high quality childcare and increased opportunities for women to engage in full time employment might improve their health outcomes.

Socias ME, Koehoom M, Shoveller J. Gender Inequalities in Access to Health Care among Adults Living in British Columbia, Canada. *Women's Health Issues*. 26-1 (2016) 74-79.