

Coastal Canadians living in high-risk neighborhoods in poorer health: study

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Canadians living in deprived neighbourhoods are twice as likely to have poor health if they live on the Atlantic or Pacific Coast, according to a new study by researchers at St. Michael's Hospital.

Past studies have shown that rates of illness and death are significantly higher in poorer neighbourhoods. "But this research shows where people live in Canada plays a big role in how strongly they are affected," said Heather White, a researcher at St. Michael's Centre for Research on Inner City Health.

On average, Canadians living in deprived neighbourhoods – those characterized by low income, low education, high unemployment and poor housing – were 10 per cent more likely to report [poor health](#) compared to their more affluent neighbours.

However, people living in deprived neighbourhoods on Canada's Atlantic coast were 20 per cent more likely to report poor health. The figure is 30 per cent on the Pacific coast – more than twice that in the Prairies and Central [Canada](#).

The study appeared in the February issue of *Health & Place* journal.

White said there were many possible explanations. People on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts have less access to health care and fresh and affordable food, and there is less funding to support places to exercise and promote good health.

Both these coasts also have higher rates of mental health disorders and addiction, which increase among residents of poorest neighbourhoods.

The study included data on 120,290 Canadians living in 3,668 urban neighbourhoods, and measured men and women's self-reports of "poor health." Self-reported health is a reflection of life expectancy, mortality rates and the prevalence of chronic diseases including heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

"These findings highlight that a one-shot national solution for reducing poverty and inequality may not work," White said. "Instead, health policies should target specific regions and [neighbourhoods](#) at greatest risk."

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital

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