

Top 10 threats to childhood in Canada and the impact of COVID-19^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpts from Executive summary

For more than a decade, the state of childhood in Canada has been on the decline. Canada ranks 25th out of 41 affluent nations for protecting the well-being of children, according to UNICEF – a significant drop from 12th place in 2007. As a country, we have been going in the wrong direction for far too long.

The statistics are alarming: One-third of children in Canada do not enjoy a safe and healthy childhood, one in three Canadians report experiencing abuse before the age of 15, one in five children live in poverty, and suicide is now the leading cause of death for children aged 10 to 14.

Childhood is threatened for millions of children from all walks of life, but the odds are particularly stark for Black, Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) and other racialized children. Systemic racism impacts children in many ways: they are more likely to experience adverse childhood experiences such as poverty and abuse, are more likely to be overrepresented in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school.

In recent months, the harsh realities facing young Canadians have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and their families are now facing unprecedented challenges during the economic crisis and ongoing restrictions. Health services and surgeries for children have been cancelled or postponed, and access to social services has been limited. Daycare and school closures have impacted the education of children, and have also cut off their access to nutritional programs and safeguards against abuse. Throughout the pandemic, children have been disproportionately affected by lockdown restrictions. This sheds light on the inequity that exists within Canadian society.

Based on the findings of this report, most of the top 10 threats to childhood identified in Raising Canada 2019 show signs they may be increasing – or are in danger of increasing – because of the effects of COVID-19. This report also highlights new data related to these threats and points to emerging concerns.

Raising Canada 2020 is jointly published by Children First Canada, the University of Calgary's O'Brien Institute for Public Health and the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute. The report is also released with a joint call to action from the Council of Champions.

Related link: [Coronavirus pandemic taking its toll on children's overall safety and health: report](#)^[3]

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