

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Social Determinants of Health

Objective

To describe the self-reported impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic and psychological social determinants of health (SDH) in Canada (CA) and Newfoundland and Labrador (NL).

Practice Points

- SDH are specific social and economic factors that impact individuals' health. They include factors such as income and employment, as well as social supports and coping skills, among others.
- The COVID-19 pandemic, and the public health measures implemented in response, affected SDH, as lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings impacted opportunities for employment or social support.

Data

Provincial and Canadian data for economic metrics and stress were obtained from Statistics Canada. Self-reported data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic were obtained from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) from the Commonwealth Fund survey of adults, 2020 and the Commonwealth Fund survey of older adults, 2021.

Results

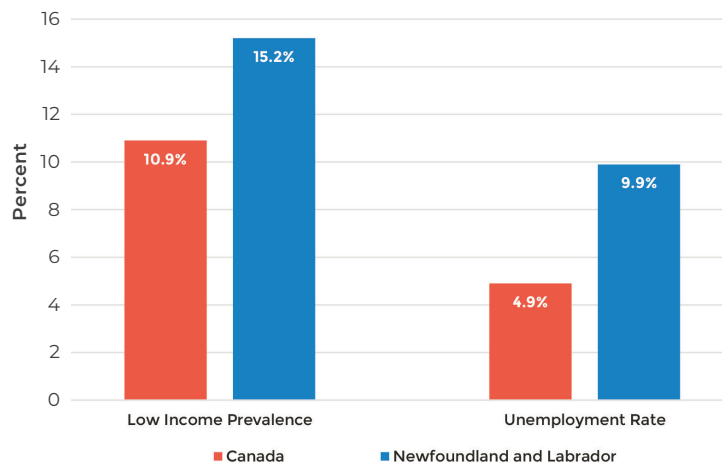


Figure 1. Prevalence of Low Income (After Tax) Status Among Adults Aged 18+ Years and Unemployment Rate for Individuals Aged 15+ Years in CA and NL, 2021

- The low income prevalence in NL is almost 50% higher than the Canadian average and the unemployment rate in NL is double the Canadian average.

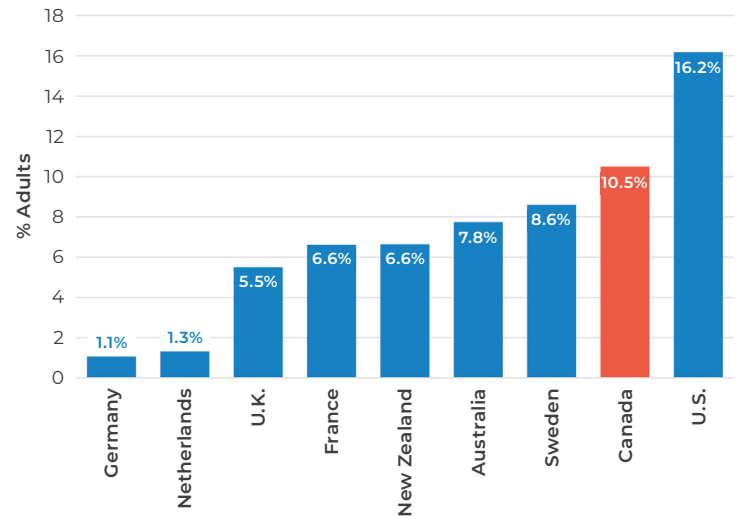


Figure 2. Percent of Adults Unable to Pay For Basic Necessities Like Food, Heat, or Rent Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Compared to peer countries, Canadians reported the second worst impact of the pandemic on their ability to pay for basic necessities.

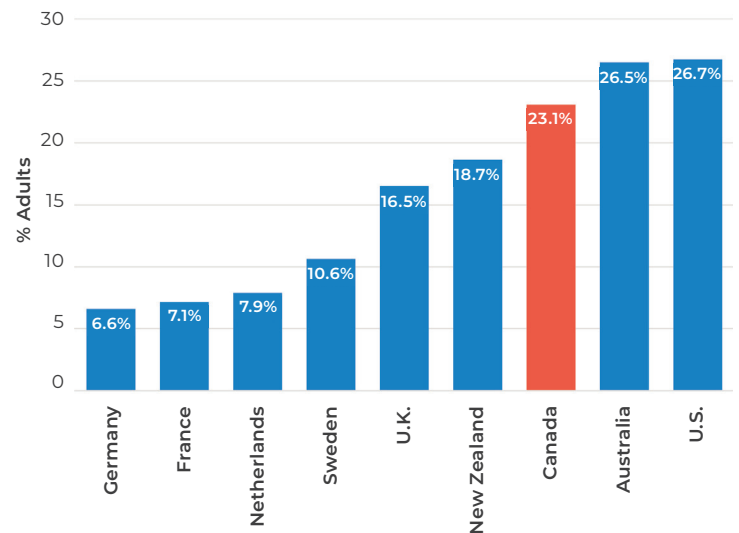


Figure 3. Percent of Adults Who Lost A Job or Source of Income Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Compared to peer countries, Canadians reported the third worst impact of the pandemic on their income and employment.

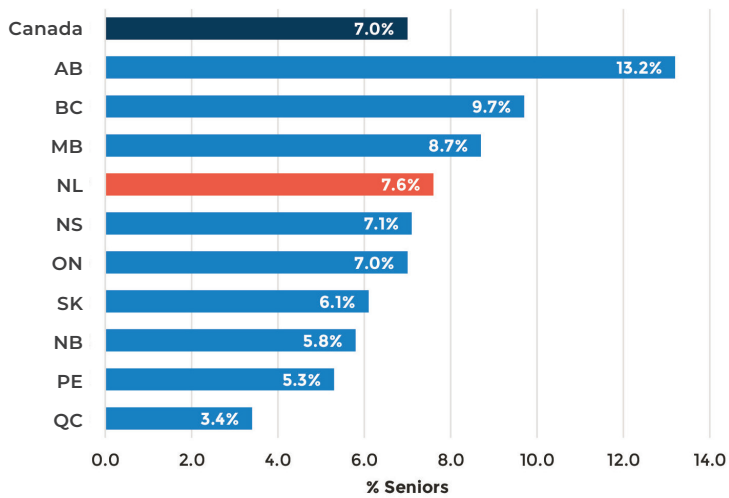


Figure 4. Percent of Seniors Who Lost a Job or Source of Income (Including a Reduction in Retirement or Pension Payment) Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Compared to the Canadian average, slightly more seniors in NL reported a loss of a job or income due to the pandemic.

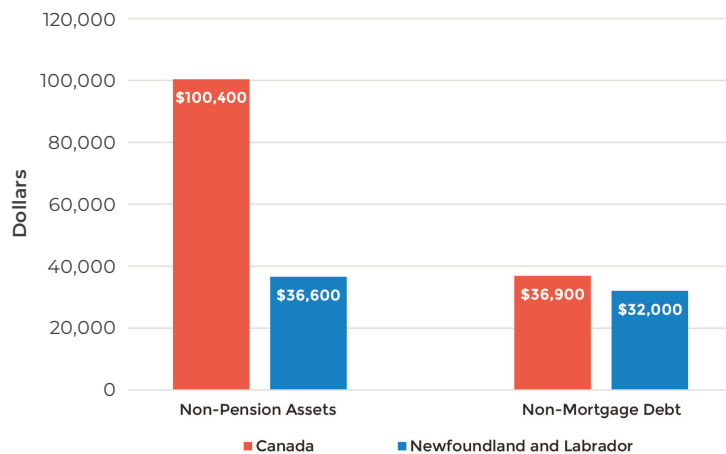


Figure 5. Average Individual Non-Pension Financial Assets and Average Individual Non-Mortgage Debt In CA and NL

- Individuals in NL report more limited savings than the rest of CA with average financial assets in NL being just over a third of the Canadian average. Individual debt in NL is slightly lower than the Canadian average.

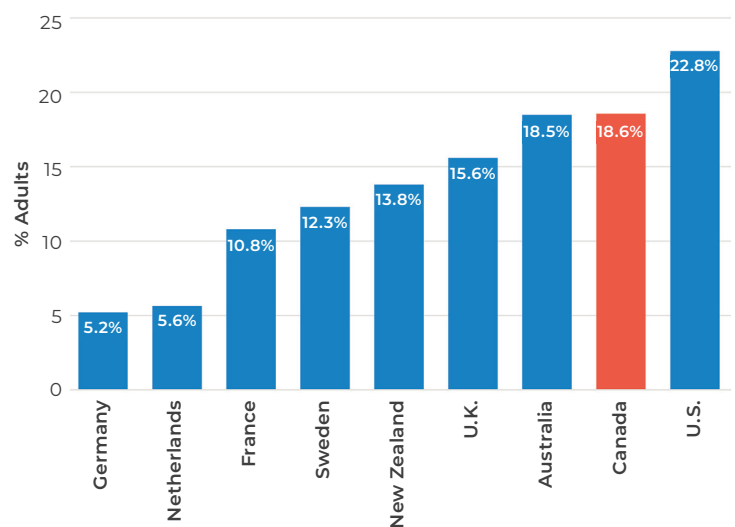


Figure 6. Percent of Adults Who Used Up All or Most of Their Savings Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- More Canadians reported using up their savings because of the COVID-19 pandemic than in any other peer country except the US.

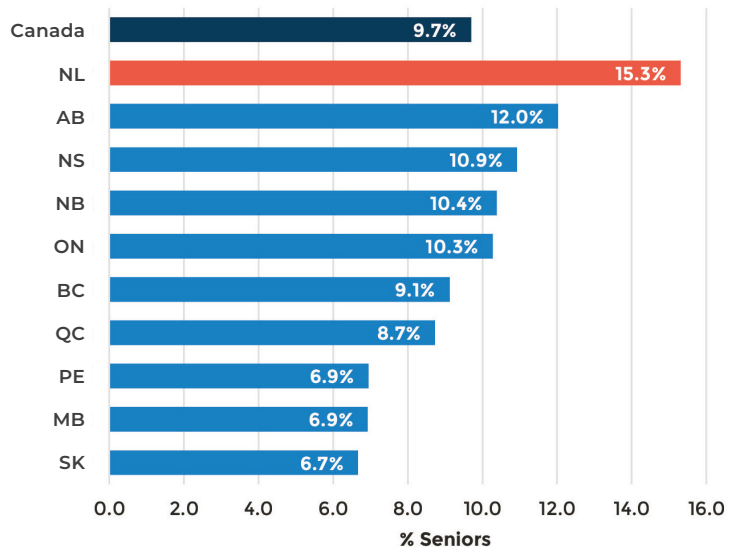


Figure 7. Percent of Seniors Who Used Up All or Most of Their Savings Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Seniors in NL reported the worst financial impact of the pandemic in CA, with 58% more seniors in NL reporting using up their savings than the Canadian average.

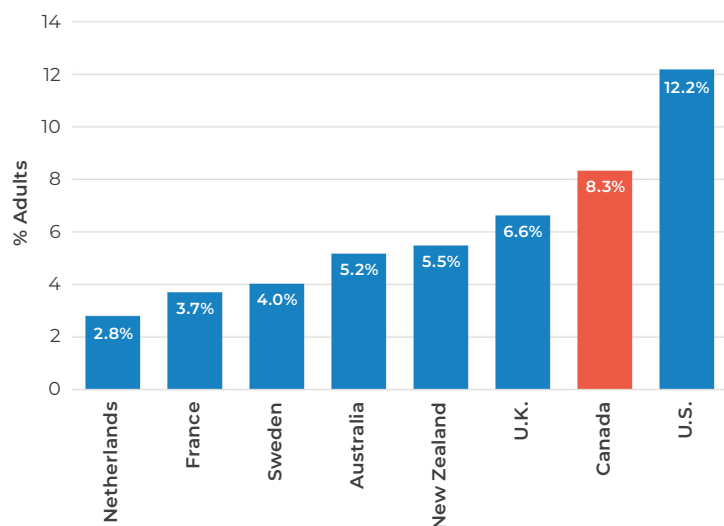


Figure 8. Percent of Adults Who Borrowed Money or Took Out a Loan Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- More Canadians reported needing to borrow money because of the COVID-19 pandemic than in any other peer country except the US.

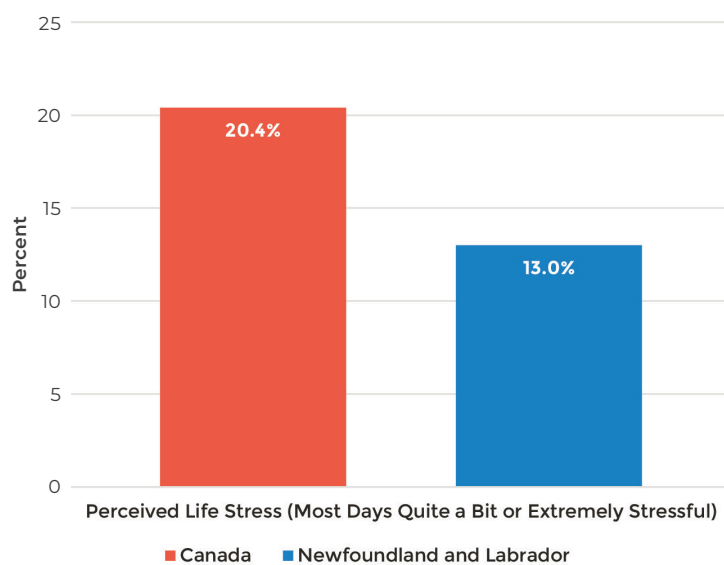


Figure 9. Percent of Individuals 12+ Years in Canada and NL Reporting They Perceive Most Days To Be Quite a Bit or Extremely Stressful, 2020

- Individuals in NL report lower levels of stress than the Canadian average.

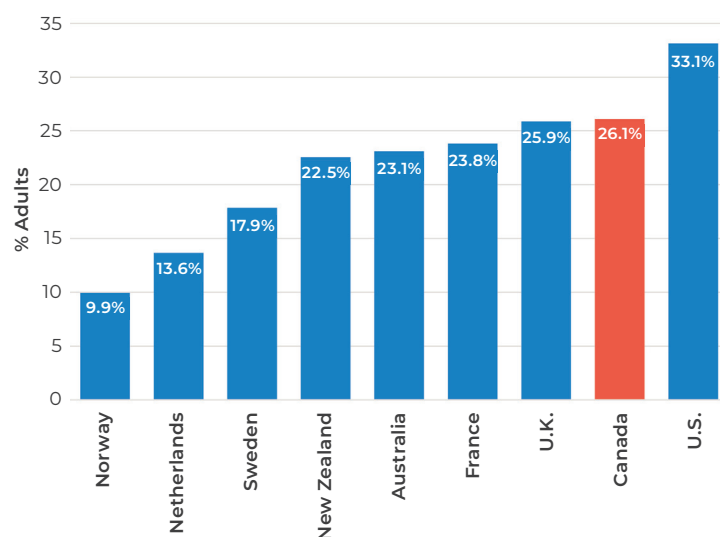


Figure 10. Percent of Adults Who Experienced Stress, Anxiety, or Great Sadness They Found Difficult to Cope With by Themselves, Since the COVID-19 Outbreak Started

- More Canadians reported difficulty coping with stress, anxiety, or sadness since the COVID-19 pandemic than in any other country except the US.

Conclusions

1. Individuals in NL experience worse outcomes on most economic measures than the Canadian average.
2. Individuals in NL experience better outcomes related to some aspects of psychological well-being than the Canadian average, including experiencing less stress.
3. CA performed poorly in terms of negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on adults' economic and psychological well-being, with only the US faring worse overall among peer countries surveyed. If national trends in economic and psychological well-being observed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are mirrored in NL, then these SDH will have deteriorated for adults in this province as well, although they may not have changed relative to the Canadian average.
4. Seniors in NL report a greater economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic than seniors in CA overall, with a greater proportion of seniors in NL using up their savings than any other province in the country and a greater proportion of seniors in NL losing a job or source of income than the Canadian average.