



Population Health Snapshot Backgrounder

The **New Brunswick Health Council** (NBHC) has created the **Population Health Snapshot**, a tool that leverages available data and is a representation of the health of the population of New Brunswick at a given point in time. The data in the Snapshot can easily be obtained. The value of the tool is in how the information is organized and validated. It is also the first attempt at having a provincial population health picture.

The information is available on one page and presented in language that is easy to read and understand. This format also helps people quickly identify areas which require attention and influence the state of population health on New Brunswickers. Moreover, the NBHC web link allows people with a greater interest to delve even deeper.

The NBHC is also committed to updating the Snapshot regularly, as information becomes available. The Snapshot has already been shared with many working in the health system, helping them understand health outcomes and the various determinants of health which interact and influence the health of the population. Future releases of the Snapshot should highlight progress made on areas requiring attention and help determine where efforts should be channeled to tackle continuing or new areas of concern. Indeed, the NBHC is studying a number of possibilities to expand the tool by looking at specific age categories, such as youth or seniors.

Over 500 individuals were asked for their input on the **Population Health Snapshot**. These stakeholders include a variety of government departments and agencies and their input played a role in developing the tool available today. The NBHC is encouraged by the amount of interest being shown in the tool by community groups and it is being leveraged by some academics as a teaching support tool. This is the NBHC's first attempt at painting the provincial population health picture. The tool will continue to evolve as we identify additional needs in the community and as data and indicators become available.

The quest towards a healthier New Brunswick extends beyond the hospitals and clinics. Indeed, health-care services account for merely 10% of what determines or influences a person's health. Individuals, organizations and communities need to coordinate their efforts alongside a variety of provincial departments when it comes to health and wellness promotion and for initiatives aimed at improving the health of New Brunswickers.

The NBHC has developed an appreciation for the importance of the determinants of health and this can be seen in the Snapshot. As mentioned, health-care services account for 10% of



what influences a person's health. Health behaviours, such as diet, exercise, and tobacco use, account for 40%. Socioeconomic factors, like level of education and level of income, account for another 40%. The remaining 10% is the physical environment and examples of this include exposure to second-hand smoke and a person's feeling of belonging to their community.

The NBHC envisions that the Snapshot will stimulate awareness among citizens, organizations, and communities about the health of the population and the interaction of the various determinants at the provincial and health-zone levels. The Snapshot is one of the tools the NBHC will be using in its continuing work to engage, evaluate, inform, and recommend.

Already, some major themes and concerns are emerging. For example:

- The Snapshot shows that New Brunswickers tend to die prematurely of breathing diseases, cancer, heart and stroke diseases, injuries, and suicides more often than the rest of Canadians.
- Some risk factors directly related to chronic disease (obesity, poor nutrition, smoking, and heavy drinking) are well above the national average. New Brunswick is one of the least healthy provinces in the country.
- New Brunswickers rank very poorly in terms of being hospitalized for unnecessary conditions. While they are not always avoidable, appropriate primary health care could potentially:
 - prevent or reduce the onset of chronic disease,
 - control an acute episodic illness, or
 - help manage a chronic disease condition.
- New Brunswick appears to have enough medical doctors based on the population, relative to Canada. However, New Brunswickers tend not to access them as often as people in other parts of the country access their doctors.

For more information on the Snapshot and other tools being developed by the NBHC, please visit the NBHC website at www.nbhc.ca.