



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

Community Health Status Report

Issue Number 5 - July 1996

Summary

This report is the fifth in an ongoing series produced by the Health Unit. The purpose of the series is to review and describe the health status of the population of Renfrew County and District so that we can better meet the health needs of local residents. Factors comprising the overall picture of health status include demographics, determinants of health such as income, employment, education, social support, and health behaviours, and health outcomes. All of these are reviewed and reported on in this series.

Previous reports in the series have shown that:

- income and education levels are lower than provincial averages
- death and disease rates are higher particularly rates of premature death from heart disease, cancer and injuries.
- smoking, high fat diets, physical inactivity and alcohol abuse contribute to higher than average mortality rates in Renfrew County and District

The current report looks at social support and self-reported health.

Social support comes in many forms and is an important factor that affects people's health.

There are health benefits associated with being married, and in Renfrew County a greater proportion of the population is married than in Ontario as a whole. Family structure also influences health. Single-parent families are subjected to more problems and stressors than families with two parents. In Renfrew County the proportion of single parent families is slightly lower than in Ontario. Seniors living alone is another type of household that can be associated with less than optimal social support. More seniors live alone in Renfrew County than in Ontario as a whole.

Family functioning also has an impact on health. Slightly more than 1 in 5 people in Renfrew County report living in dysfunctional families. Such families often suffer from inappropriate behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse, workaholism and sexual abuse.

On the positive side, a greater proportion of Renfrew County's population participates in a social support system. The volunteer participation rate is also higher here, which indicates a close-knit community. Renfrew County also compares favourably with other parts of Ontario on violent crime rates; rates are generally lower here.

Care of children was briefly reviewed, as it also is an important component of social support. Childcare services and factors placing children at risk for future problems such as abuse, family violence and poverty were highlighted. Renfrew County statistics were presented; comparisons with Ontario are not available.

People in Renfrew County tend to perceive their level of health and well-being more positively than their provincial counterparts. On an assessment of well-being, more Renfrew County residents scored high than Ontario residents. In the younger age groups, more Renfrew County residents than Ontario residents rate their health as excellent or very good; in the older age groups the opposite is true. Generally, people in Renfrew County describe their lives to be less stressful than people in Ontario. Finally, about two-thirds of the population in Renfrew County report that they are usually happy, and this is slightly higher than corresponding rates for Ontario.

The findings in this report are interesting in light of the fact that previous reports have shown that death rates and disease rates are higher here. The data presented in this report indicate that in spite of poorer health status generally, people in Renfrew County are happier, more socially-involved, less stressed and have a greater sense of well-being. Perhaps this is confirmation of the important contribution of social support and a rural lifestyle.



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

"Promoting Healthy People in a Healthy Environment"

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Clinics and Classes](#) | [Health Info](#) | [Community Health Status](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#)