

## **Disparity in early childhood development vulnerability in British Columbia**

### **Background (Optional):**

Inequities in early childhood development may translate into vastly different life chances.

### **Objectives:**

This project aimed to examine sex and socioeconomic factors associated with increased risk of developmental vulnerability among kindergarten school children in British Columbia (B.C.), by applying an equity lens.

### **Methods:**

B.C.'s individual-level Early Development Instrument data (2011/12-2012/13) and census subdivision (or census tract, where available) level socioeconomic status data from the National Household Survey (2011) were linked to examine each of three indicators (proportion of children vulnerable in physical health & well-being area, proportion of children vulnerable in language & cognitive development area, and proportion of children ever vulnerable) by three equity dimensions: child's sex, neighbourhood unemployment rate, and neighbourhood-level family income. Relative disparity was calculated as ratios in rates between males vs females, provincial average neighbourhood unemployment rate or higher vs lower, and lowest vs highest income quintiles.

### **Results:**

A significantly higher proportion of boys, children living in neighbourhoods with provincial average neighbourhood unemployment rate or higher, and children living in neighbourhoods in the lowest income quintile were vulnerable in all three indicators compared to the respective reference groups. The greatest relative disparity along all three equity dimensions was observed for the language & cognitive development area. Specifically, 1.7 times higher proportion of boys were vulnerable (11.3%) compared to girls (6.6%) and more than twice higher vulnerability proportion was observed among those from the poorest neighbourhoods (15.3%) compared to those from the wealthiest (6.5%), a relative disparity of 2.4.

### **Conclusions:**

Sex and socioeconomic status are associated with developmental vulnerability among B.C. children.

### **What are the implications of your research on practice or policy?**

These results will provide baseline information about inequity in early childhood development and inform the development of policy, programs, and services aimed at improving the lives of children in B.C.