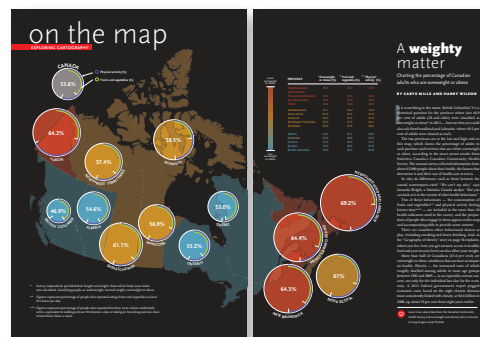


CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC IN THE CLASSROOM

Article: A Weighty Matter



The April 2015 issue of *Canadian Geographic* contains a map, “A Weighty Matter” (page 30), illustrating the spatial differentiation in the rates of overweight and obese citizens within Canada. The map also shows exercise participation rates and percentage of people eating at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day for each province and territory, providing additional stimulus material for discussions regarding patterns of obesity within Canada, and possible causes.

This map tends to get students thinking more in terms of a different branch of Geography that they might not realize even exists, that of **Medical Geography** or **Health Geography**. Medical geography is an extremely important field of geography, and one where geographers have a vital role to play in understanding and managing the diffusion of disease.

Here are 5 questions to get your students thinking about Medical or Health Geography when examining this map:

1. What do you find surprising? What did you expect and why? Which province/territory stands out most and why?
2. What patterns and trends do you see regarding the location of:
 - a. More overweight/ obese vs less overweight
 - b. More physical activity vs less physical activity
 - c. More fruits and vegetables vs less fruits and vegetables?
3. Which provinces and territories have similar data to your own?
4. What factors may not have been considered when collecting data for this map?
5. Think about the environmental, cultural, economic and recreational landscape of Canada. What interrelationships exist when you look at this map through those geographic lenses?

Here are 5 teaching ideas or questions about Medical or Health Geography for you to explore and extend your geographical thinking with your students:

1. Examine and discuss John Snow’s famous map of Cholera victims in London which led to the discovery of the source of the bacteria. (<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/mar/15/john-snow-cholera-map>)
2. Even though we have much greater medical knowledge and better treatments than we did a century ago, why is controlling the diffusion of disease so much more challenging today?
3. What roles do geographers play at the Centers for Disease Control? (<http://www.cdc.gov/>)
4. How important is the geography of a region to the susceptibility of residents to certain diseases? For example, use maps to compare the areas at risk of malaria throughout South America to temperature, precipitation, and elevation of the region.
5. Is global warming changing the areas where people are at risk of diseases such as malaria and West Nile virus?