



# CHILD VULNERABILITY IN SOUTH BURNABY WITH A FOCUS ON AGGRESSION

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## WHAT MAKES KIDS VULNERABLE?

Many Things.

Kids are probably one of the most vulnerable beings on planet earth. Not only can they get physically injured very easily, but they're basically little sponges that can absorb any information that's available to them, whether good or bad.

Genetic risk factors for vulnerability come from gene transmission. A child gets their genetic makeup from their parents. For a specific trait, we get one allele from our mom and one from our dad; if they are alike, we will display that trait (Berk, 2021). If the alleles are not alike, most of the time we will display the dominant one, the other one (the recessive one) will have no effect (Berk, 2021).

However, there are times when the two different alleles affect a trait and aspects of both are displayed. This is an Incomplete-Dominance pattern and an example would be the sickle cell anemia, a condition that comes from inheriting two recessive alleles (Berk, 2021).

Males and Females are equally likely to inherit recessive disorders (Berk, 2021). However, males are more likely to be **AFFECTED** by them because their sex chromosomes don't match (male sex chromosome = XY, female sex chromosomes = XX) (Berk, 2021).

Children born with certain conditions are more likely to experience neglect from their family and peers (Berk, 2021). Accordingly, environmental risk factors for vulnerability can include, negative behaviors shown by parents, financial instability, household instability, food insecurity, schools where instructors don't care about the kids, and a surrounding area with negative properties. (Berk, 2021).

Using the sickle cell allele as an example, it is more common to find carriers in regions where malaria is present because carriers of this trait are more resistant to malaria than people with normal red blood cells (Berk, 2021). It is less likely to find individuals with this trait in environments where malaria is uncommon (Berk, 2021).

Emotional vulnerability is also affected by gene-environment correlations (Berk, 2021). A child's temperament upon birth is a result of their genetic makeup (Berk, 2021). However, as soon as they are exposed to different environments and parenting styles, their temperament can change (Berk, 2021). This project looks at the emotional vulnerability of children in the South Burnaby neighborhood, paying particular attention to aggression, as provided by the EDI data provided by UBC.



## EDI SUMMARY FOR SOUTH BURNABY

### SUBSCALES

(These are the behaviors that fall under the emotional maturity category)

Aggressive

Anxious & Fearful

Hyperactive & Inattentive

Prosocial & Helping

**Vulnerability Level for Emotional Maturity in South Burnaby is at 19%, just above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of 17%.**

South Burnaby has more kids that show lower levels of emotional maturity.

The level of emotional maturity is just below average when compared to the rest of the province.

**All subscales have shown meaningful short-term increase.**

Between 2013-2019, more kids have shown lower levels of emotional maturity in every subscale.

**South Burnaby's vulnerability for Emotional Maturity has shown a meaningful long-term increase. Levels are getting worse in the short term (wave 6-7) and long term (wave 2-7).**

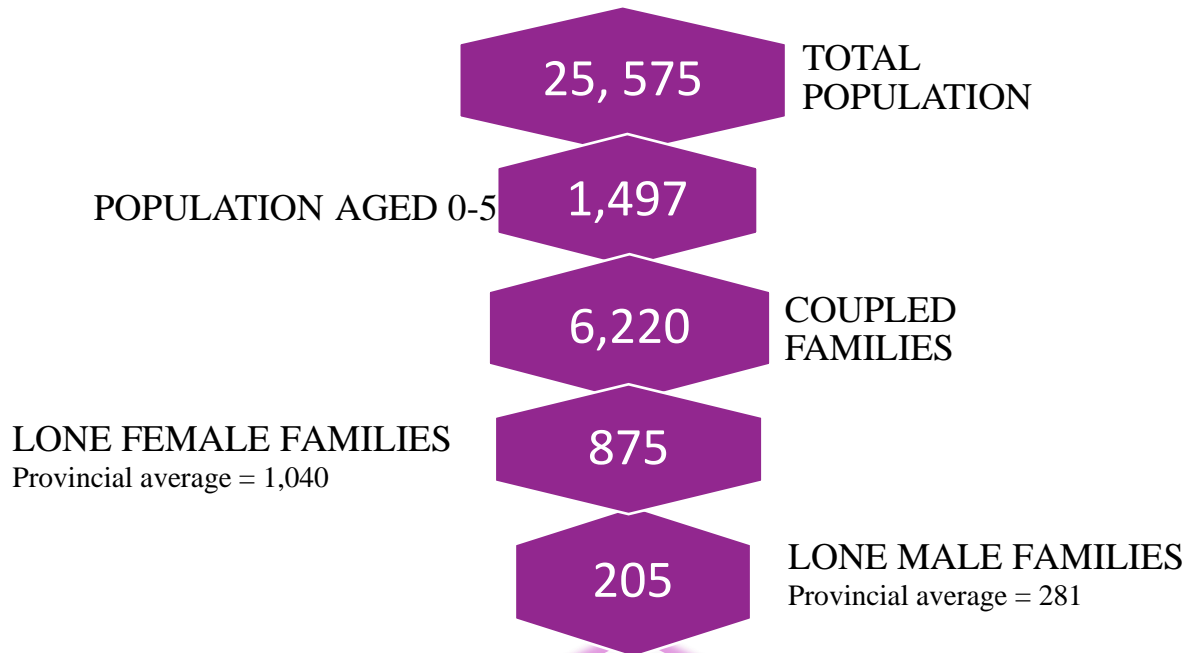
In general, between 2009-2019 children have been showing a decrease in emotional maturity.

**The Prosocial and Helping subscale is the only subscale to see long-term improvement (meaningful long-term decrease). The rest show the opposite (meaningful long-term increase).**

Between 2009-2019, kids are steadily showing an increase in prosocial and helping behaviors (like showing empathy and sharing toys)!

- Why might children be showing lower levels of emotional maturity?

# SOUTH BURNABY DEMOGRAPHICS



2016 Census (NH) South Burnaby (N4109), 2018

MEDIAN COUPLE FAMILY INCOME = \$88,383  
Provincial Average - \$89,015

MEDIAN LONE PARENT INCOME = \$59,478  
Provincial Average - \$51,715

NUMBER OF LOW-INCOME KIDS (After tax) = 255  
Provincial Average - 310



Parents are responsible for the development of emotional maturity, including the development of assertive behaviors, through direct positive interaction (Berk, 2021).

Single parents may not have a lot of time to spend with their child due to the need to make ends meet, and quality time is a necessity when fostering emotional maturity (Berk, 2021).

Financial struggles can cause a lot of stress to the parent(s). They may end up developing high stress levels that may cause them to project onto and negatively affect their child's emotional maturity (Berk, 2021). Kids who are exposed to aggressive behaviors are more likely to showcase the same behaviors through imitation (Berk, 2021).

What can emotionally vulnerable children look like?

## Vulnerable Behaviors for Emotional Maturity

### Hyperactivity and Attention

Regularly shows hyperactive behaviors.

Is not able to concentrate and settle down.

Don't wait their turn and don't think before they act.

### Prosocial and Helping Behaviors

Does not help someone when they are hurt/sick.

**Does not show helping behaviors:** Doesn't share toys. Doesn't offer to help spontaneously.

### Anxiety and Fear

Regularly showcases anxious behaviors: is not happy and isn't able to enjoy school almost everyday.

Is not comfortable being left alone and may throw a tantrum when their caregiver is leaving.

## Vulnerable Behaviors for Aggression

Young children (kindergarten aged) may be regularly mean to other children, adults, and animals for no reason.

They may regularly rely on aggressive tactics as a means to solve their problems: throwing tantrums/ hitting to get what they want.

Without intervention, as children grow, these behaviors:



May turn into a bully: shows no empathy and looks forward to causing pain.

May turn to fighting as an outlet and will not be able to control their anger outbursts: they may start breaking things to show displeasure.

What can be done for children who show aggressive behaviors so they don't worsen as the child grows?



# Intervention Plan for Aggressive Behaviors

**Integrative Approach First**  
identify what the exact behaviors are (Berk, 2021).

Exact Behavior = Hitting

## 1 Therapy: CBT

### Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Children learn how to regulate and improve skills with professional guidance (Berk, 2021).

## 2 Classroom Intervention

Provide attention and praise to the child when they display assertive behaviors instead of aggressive behaviors (talking instead of hitting) (Berk, 2021).

Let the child engage in regular playtime but under constant supervision so that intervention can take place when necessary (Berk, 2021).

Provide controlled opportunities for the child to apply what they are learning in therapy and at home (Berk, 2021).

## 3 Parental Intervention

### Follow the advice of Medical Professionals

Engage in role play that shows how to use assertive behaviors instead of aggressive ones (talking instead of hitting) (Berk, 2021).

Eliminate triggers or provide access to things that create those behaviors (don't let them hit you) (Berk, 2021).

Don't give in to temper tantrums but let the child know that they're understood. Don't enable. They will learn that they need to use different behaviors to get what they want (Berk, 2021).

## Key Take Away

When it comes to child development, environmental factors are just as important as genetic factors.

It's important to recognize that kids are in constant need of positive interaction with adults especially their parents/ guardians (Berk, 2021). This is probably the best way to reduce vulnerability levels.

## References

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