

# Support for Families and Kids

## Fact Sheet

---

### The Issue

Children in Canada are facing a polycrisis. Economic instability—driven by inflation, a weakening Canadian dollar, and escalating U.S. tariffs—is already having a significant impact on families and threatens to further impact access to essential goods like food, medicine, and healthcare supplies—especially for low- and middle-income families and those in remote areas.

Economic uncertainty is forcing families to make difficult choices between basic needs at a time when one in five children lives in a household with income below the poverty line. Compounding this reality, these tough choices are happening at a time when mental health supports, particularly for children, are severely under-resourced, unable to meet current demand let alone increasing demand.

The combination of economic strain and inadequate mental health resources has serious consequences for children, youth, and families. The untreated anxiety and stress resulting from economic uncertainty have a deep, lasting impact on the physical and emotional health, development, and overall wellbeing of an entire generation.

### Why It Matters

In uncertain economic times, the risks are significant. A 10% drop in the value of the Canadian dollar would add \$2,500 in annual expenses for middle-income families.<sup>i</sup> For lower-income families, the impact is even more severe, particularly regarding food security. Families experiencing food insecurity face higher risks of developmental and health challenges in children, including lifelong physical and mental health issues driven by stress and inadequate nutrition.<sup>ii</sup> These issues are particularly acute for families living in Canada's far north where costs of living are significantly augmented.

The rising costs of everyday essentials—such as groceries, transportation, and healthcare—are significantly squeezing family budgets. As these expenses grow, caregivers experience increased anxiety and financial stress, which directly affects children's emotional wellbeing. Recent polling indicates nearly half (42%) of Canadians reported increased anxiety in the past month, with notably higher rates among lower-income households and women.<sup>iii</sup>

Children living in homes burdened by ongoing economic stress face a heightened risk of physical and emotional abuse, developing serious mental health issues, physical health problems, and difficulties in academic achievement and social interactions. Substantial gaps in mental health services available for children and youth exacerbate these risks. Extended delays in accessing necessary mental health care can severely worsen health outcomes and leave families feeling isolated, overwhelmed, and unsupported.

## Policy Solutions for the Federal Government

Economic instability is not just a macroeconomic issue—it has a measurable impact on child, youth and family health. The federal government has the tools and opportunity to buffer families and healthcare providers from worsening economic shocks. Investments in child mental health offer a 5:1 economic return (Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, 2022),<sup>iv</sup> reducing long-term healthcare costs and increasing workforce productivity. By addressing mental health challenges early, we not only improve individual lives but also strengthen the foundation of our economy and society as a whole.

- In the face of increasing economic uncertainty, Children's Healthcare Canada calls on the next federal government to **increase the Canada Child Benefit (CCB)** by an average of 10% to help offset the rising costs of living, with a focus on lower-income households. This targeted support will ensure families can continue to meet their children's basic needs, including food, housing, and transportation.
- We also ask that the government **expand and increase the Youth Mental Health Fund** into a *Child and Youth Mental Health Action Fund*, with a \$5 billion investment over ten years. This expansion will address growing demand and ensure that all young people—including children under 12—have access to timely, culturally appropriate, and developmentally responsive mental health support.

### References

---

<sup>i</sup> Statistics Canada: Food insecurity among Canadian families; 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00013-eng.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Campaign 2000 and PROOF: The Canada Child Benefit as a Policy to Improve Children's Health; 2022. <https://utoronto.scholaris.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/a2e4dae3-32d1-41c7-a97b-c03496448d20/content>

<sup>iii</sup> Mental Health Research Canada: poll on the anxiety and stress caused by economic and political uncertainty; 2025. <https://www.mhrc.ca/omni-report>

<sup>iv</sup> Mental Health Commission of Canada: Supporting Early Childhood Mental Health; 2020. <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/resource/supporting-early-childhood-mental-health>