Canadian Brain Economy Initiative

Brain Economy in Canada: Fact Sheet

What is Brain Capital and the Brain Economy?

Brain capital combines our lifelong brain health and brain skills.

Brain health encompasses our cognitive, emotional, social, and neurological well-being and provides the foundation throughout life, from pre-birth through healthy aging.

Brain skills include our knowledge, creativity, leadership and adaptability.

Together, **brain health** and **brain skills** form one of our greatest assets, enabling us to learn, innovate, lead, engage with others, solve problems and create. Put simply, when we are well and have the skills to navigate life's complexities, we can adapt, flourish and thrive.

The **brain economy** encompasses the systems, investments, policies and institutions that support the development, measurement and growth of brain capital. It extends beyond health care and education to include workplaces, communities and other sectors of society.

The Canadian Brain Economy Initiative (CBEI) is focused on advancing three interconnected and mutually reinforcing outcomes:

> **Human flourishing** — where people have the health, well-being, connection, agency and capabilities to learn, thrive and realize their full potential throughout life.
>
> **Economic prosperity** — where organizations and communities have the brain capital to be productive, innovative and competitive, expanding social and economic opportunities for individuals and communities.
>
> **National resilience** — where Canada has the human capacity to absorb shocks, adapt to disruption, maintain social cohesion and protect its ability to determine its own future.

Why the Brain Economy, Why Now?

Canada is experiencing heightened uncertainty. Geopolitical tensions, technological change, economic restructuring, affordability pressures and strains on public systems are creating new challenges across the country. The effects of these pressures can compound over time and ripple through our daily lives, including where we live and work. As pressures mount, many people in Canada of all ages are struggling to thrive. Trends in mental health, well-being and brain skills point to growing challenges.

Canadian Brain Economy Initiative

The Cost of Not Acting…and the Opportunity

500K	people in Canada miss work each week due to mental illness	**9x ROI**	in children's first 1,000 days of life
472M	hours of informal caregiving provided to people living with dementia in Canada	**45%**	of dementia risk could be prevented or delayed
3M	disability-adjusted life years lost due to brain-related conditions in Canada	**6 of 10**	desired workforce skills of the future are brain skills
All cases	identify that employers shoulder the largest economic cost	**$10.7B**	reduction in Canada's economic burden of dementia if onset is delayed by one year
$28B vs $23B	spent on responses to mental illness versus mental healthcare	**$10**	saved for every $1 invested in community-based youth mental health services in Canada

Brain health conditions carry an immense human and economic cost. While no single figure captures the full burden of neurological, mental health, neurodevelopmental and substance use disorders, dementia alone cost the Canadian economy more than $40 billion in 2020 and a 2026 estimate placed the economic burden of mental health conditions at $180 billion Investing in brain capital also presents a significant opportunity to lay the foundation for economic prosperity. By linking evidence and experience, sectors and regions, policy and practice, and investment with opportunities for action, the brain economy can help put knowledge and innovation into action, build on promising initiatives and achieve measurable results. Ultimately,

When people flourish, organizations and communities thrive.

When organizations and communities thrive, Canada prospers.

And when Canada prospers, more people can flourish.

Join the Movement

The CBEI is being built with and for partners across Canada. Its impact will depend on the people who help shape the CBEI's work. Governments, investors, businesses, researchers, health and social organizations, educators, communities, people with lived and living experience, and others all have a role to play. We invite you to join us.

Powered by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction and the Ontario Brain Institute.