

TOP 10 Threats to Childhood in Canada



Canada ranks 81st among 193 countries on the Global Kids Rights Index, down significantly from 48th in 2022.

Threat 1: Unintentional and Preventable Injuries

Unintentional injuries are the **leading cause of death for children aged 1 to 14**.

Rates of hospitalizations are **higher among Indigenous children and youth** who consist of 3.3% of the pediatric population yet comprise **30.9% of fatalities**.



Threat 6: Poverty

Child poverty rates have increased sharply; **15.6% of children** aged 0-17 (over 1.1 million children across Canada) live in **low-income households** – up from 13.5% in 2020, according to the most recent data from the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax.

Approximately **60% of families with low incomes say they feel 'very concerned' about meeting day-to-day needs**, especially with the rising prices of essential needs, such as housing and food.

Threat 2: Poor Mental Health

51% of youth aged 12 to 18 **experienced depression** and **39% experienced anxiety** during the pandemic.

There was a **7.4% increase in self-harm injuries** amongst youth aged 11 to 18 in 2020, compared with 2018-2019.



Threat 7: Infant Mortality

Canada's **infant mortality rate has been persistently high** compared to other OECD countries; notably the rates declined in the last year. According to the UN, Canada's current infant mortality rate in 2023 is **3.943 deaths per 1000 live births**, a 2.76% decline from 2022.

Rates of infant mortality are **higher for Indigenous infants and immigrant infants** from **low socioeconomic status**.

Threat 3: Violence Against Children and Youth

60% of Canadians report **experiencing some form of child abuse** before the age of 15.

Internet sexual luring of children has **increased by 815%** in the past five years.



Threat 8: Bullying

Approximately **7 in 10 youth aged 15-17 years old** in Canada **experience bullying**.

Evidence shows that Indigenous youth, adolescents from low socioeconomic status, and sexually and gender-diverse youth are **more often the target of identity-based bullying**.



Threat 4: Vaccine-preventable Illnesses

Vaccination coverage for all vaccinations for 2-, 7-, and 14-year-olds **remains below the 95% coverage standard** to prevent outbreaks, based on analyses of the 2021 Childhood National Immunization Coverage Survey, released by Statistics Canada in June 2023.



Threat 9: Limited Physical Activity and Play

Only **2.3%** of youth meet the **24-hour movement guidelines**.

Children aged 8-12 from **middle-class or high-income households averaged 1180 more steps a day** than those from low socio-economic status.

Threat 5: Systemic Racism and Discrimination

The disproportionate and pervasive overrepresentation of **Indigenous children in the child welfare system** remains a major concern.

There was a **286% increase in reports of racist and discriminatory actions** against Asian children in 2021 compared with data from 2020.



Threat 10: Climate Change

Half of Canadian youth (48%) aged 16-25 expressed feeling high levels of **anxiety about air pollution and climate change**, while three-quarters (73%) expressed **fear for their future**.

In the summer of 2023 there have been multiple reports of **child deaths due to extreme weather** and pollution associated with climate change, and **thousands of children have been displaced** or had their daily activities disrupted due to wildfires and poor air quality.

CALLS TO ACTION

The following Calls to Action are a direct response to the findings in the Raising Canada report. They have been endorsed by Children First Canada's Council of Champions, and developed with the input of children and youth from the Young Canadians' Parliament:

- 1. Lead For and With Kids:** Establish a Federal Commissioner for Children and Youth, develop a National Strategy for Children and Youth, and develop a national Data Strategy on the health and well-being of young Canadians.
- 2. Invest in Kids:** Launch a Catalytic Investment Fund for Children over the next 4 years and publish a Children's Budget.
- 3. Raise Them With Rights:** Support child rights education and provide children and youth with a platform to exercise their rights as leaders of today and tomorrow.

"When the pandemic ended, we expected life for our kids to get better. It didn't. **The research shows that children's wellbeing has continued to deteriorate**, and far too many kids are in a state of crisis. We cannot continue to ignore the serious threats that put children's lives in jeopardy. Experts and advocates all agree that a better life for our kids is possible and we're imploring all levels of government to take action now," says Austin.

About Children First Canada:

Children First Canada (CFC) is a national charitable organization with a bold and ambitious vision that together we can make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up. We are a strong, effective and independent voice for all 8 million children in Canada. CFC is harnessing the strength of many organizations that are committed to improving the lives of children in Canada, including children's charities and hospitals, research centres, government, corporations, community leaders, and children themselves.