

# As Canada's fertility rate tanks, is it time to reform parental leave?<sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Aziz, Saba & Previl, Sean

**Source:** Global News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 12 Oct 2024

## AVAILABILITY

Access online<sup>[2]</sup>

### Excerpts

...

#### Delaying parenthood

Heney is among many Canadians who have put off parenthood for financial or other reasons.

In a new Angus Reid survey released on Thursday, more than half of potential parents said they have delayed having children longer than they ideally would have liked, and this is largely due to the rising cost of living and other financial concerns.

"I think cost of living has become top of mind for a lot of people and kids are expensive," said Allison Venditti, founder of Moms at Work, an advocacy group that supports working mothers.

According to the Angus Reid poll, four in 10 (41 per cent) said that the delay was because of concerns about the job market and financial security.

One-third (33 per cent) are also worry about the cost and availability of childcare and a similar proportion (31 per cent) have concerns about the housing market.

Marina Adshade, assistant professor of teaching at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver School of Economics, told Global News the concerns of potential parents are not just about the availability or even affordability of childcare but their ability to work and have children — especially for potential mothers.

...

Four in 10 also said they will "definitely" not have or raise a kid in the future. The Angus Reid poll was conducted last month and included 1,300 Canadian adults.

It follows the news last month from Statistics Canada that Canada's fertility rate, which has been steadily declining, has hit a record low and the country is now among the "lowest-low" fertility nations.

A StatCan report published in January said Canada, like other countries, is riding the "fertility 'pandemic rollercoaster'" with more families putting off having children.

...

#### Is it time to raise parental benefits?

Don Kerr, a demographer at King's University College at Western University in London, Ont., said it's a challenge to raise a country's birth rate once it falls.

But Kerr added that government measures like increasing Employment Insurance benefits for maternity and paternity could help ease off some of the financial concerns that are holding Canadians back from having kids.

In Canada, those on maternity and parental leave get Employment Insurance benefits of up to 55 per cent of their salary, with a maximum weekly pay of up to \$668, which is taxed.

The birth parent is eligible for maternity leave for the first 15 weeks after the birth of a child. After that, it switches to parental leave, with up to 40 weeks that can be shared between both parents.

Parents are also eligible for extended benefits up to 61 weeks for one parent and 69 weeks shared between both. In that case, they get up to 33 per cent of their pay and a maximum of \$401 weekly.

Any money earned while on parental leave sees those benefits clawed back.

...

### How does Canada compare?

France, which saw the lowest number of births since World War Two last year, is planning to overhaul its parental benefits program so that it pays better.

Parents in Croatia are entitled to full pay from the Croatian Health Insurance Fund if they've paid into social security for at least nine consecutive months, with those that didn't pay in still eligible for 70 per cent of the "budget base."

New Zealand also provides weekly parental leave payments at 100 per cent of either your ordinary weekly pay or average weekly earnings at 100 per cent up, whichever is greater, to a maximum amount of \$754.87 gross pay per week.

Increasing the parental leave benefits in Canada would make a "huge difference" in easing some of the financial pressures parents are facing, Venditti said, adding that's only one part of the reform needed.

...

**Related link:** 20th international review of leave policies and research 2024 [3]

**Region:** Canada [4]

**Tags:** affordability [5]

family policy [6]

parental leave [7]

---

**Source URL (modified on 15 Oct 2024):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/10/canada%E2%80%99s-fertility-rate-tanks-it-time-reform-parental-leave>

#### Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/10/canada%E2%80%99s-fertility-rate-tanks-it-time-reform-parental-leave> [2]

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10807747/canada-parental-benefits-fertility-rate/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/24/10/20th-international-review-leave-policies-and-research-2024> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/family-policy> [7]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/parental-leave>