



The Cost of Arthritis

Summary of "Economic and Social Value Burden of Arthritis in Canada Report"



ANNA, DIAGNOSED AT AGE 20

SEPTEMBER 2026



Pictured: Austra, Jameson, and Selena. All living with arthritis.

Summary

Although arthritis is the most common chronic disease in Canada, the top cause of disability in the country, and the driver of most joint replacement surgeries, it does not receive the resources, funding, or policy attention it warrants.

More than simply a driver of healthcare expenses, arthritis has multifaceted impacts, threatening economic growth and workforce productivity, while also diminishing the wellbeing of millions of people of all ages across the country.

Commissioned by Arthritis Society Canada, a first-of-its kind analysis by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) has now modeled the Canadian costs of arthritis from 2025 to 2055, including a method of putting a dollar value to the loss of people's wellbeing due to living with pain and disability associated with arthritis – a concept called social value loss.

The economic impact of arthritis stands at **\$46 billion** in 2025, rising to **\$71 billion** annually by 2055. This is compounded by the costs of wellbeing loss due to arthritis rising from more than **\$96 billion** in 2025 to **\$151 billion** annually by 2055.

Combining the economic impact and wellbeing loss results in total costs of arthritis of **\$142 billion** in 2025, rising to more than **\$222 billion** annually by 2055. These numbers are staggering and concerning, and they demand immediate action.



Arthritis: An Overlooked National Challenge

It is crucial to know the extent of the impact of arthritis on the Canadian economy and the social wellbeing of its population.

Without this knowledge, how can our governments, health care systems and institutions, academic and research enterprises, employers, and communities effectively prioritize, plan, and address the present and future challenges of this debilitating chronic disease? How can the public understand the significant need for concerted national, provincial, territorial, and local efforts to tackle arthritis head-on, to reduce the profound impact of arthritis on individuals, families, communities, and the Canadian economy as a whole?

The shocking reality is that we have not had a good accounting of the economic burden of arthritis in Canada, or of the impact it has on the wellbeing of people impacted. Due to these blind spots, it has been difficult to develop systems that can implement solutions, anticipate future challenges, and take action to manage and prevent arthritis-related problems.

Cost-of-illness studies to date have grossly underestimated the economic burden of arthritis. Many cost drivers have been excluded or incorporated incompletely, despite the research community's best efforts and best practices. This is often a reflection of the profound gaps in available arthritis-specific data in Canada – gaps for the very things that contribute to arthritis cost burden.

In 2026, Arthritis Society Canada commissioned world-leading analysts and experts to model both the economic and social wellbeing impacts of arthritis in Canada from 2025 to 2055. This comprehensive analysis is the most extensive examination of the impact of arthritis in Canada to date, and a first in the nationwide assessment of a chronic disease – fitting for the most common yet often most overlooked disease in Canada. Highlights are presented here, with the full report available for more extensive details.

A Unique Model

Most analyses of disease burden include estimates of disease prevalence and economic impacts. CANCEA's unique model adds a third essential layer: social value loss. The total costs of arthritis in Canada can be considered the sum of these two components.



Economic impact measured direct health costs, work productivity and caregiving impacts, and additional private disability costs such as private allied health care expenses.



Social value loss represents a dollar value equivalent to the loss of social wellbeing people experience due to pain, disability, reduced participation and independence in life, and ultimately life satisfaction.





Pictured: Patty with daughter Ariana, diagnosed with arthritis at 18 months old.

The Rising Tide of Arthritis in Canada

The CANCEA model predicts that, without action, the number of people with arthritis in Canada will rise from more than 6 million today to 10 million by 2055. About 500,000 new diagnoses of arthritis are expected to arise each year. These are stark and sobering numbers in the context of managing an aging population, often with multiple co-occurring health conditions and functional limitations.

The Economic Toll

The economic impact of arthritis in Canada in 2025 was estimated to be at least **\$46 billion**.

While direct health care costs (\$15 billion) and other private disability costs (\$6 billion) are substantial, half of the impact is driven by costs related to lost workforce productivity (\$25 billion). The direct health care costs are driven by drug expenses (\$6 billion), followed by hospitalization costs (\$3 billion) and health care professional costs (\$3 billion).

As our population ages, the annual cost of arthritis is expected to increase to **\$71 billion** by 2055.

For scale, the entire federal investment in the Canada Health Transfer to provinces and territories for 2026-2027 is estimated to be around **\$57 billion**.



Social Value Loss

The economic impact of arthritis is undeniably vast. Yet it still doesn’t capture the full picture of the cost of arthritis – one that considers how wellbeing is eroded through pain, disability, loss of independence, and lower life satisfaction. Social value loss allows us to put a price on this loss.

The social value loss associated with having arthritis in Canada greatly outweighs the economic impact. In 2025, the social wellbeing loss due to arthritis was more than **\$96 billion**. This is expected to climb to a shocking **\$151 billion** annually by 2055.

These are the hidden, intangible costs that people with arthritis face every day in addition to the financial toll.

Costs of Arthritis: Now and Future

	2025		2055
Economic Impact: Direct	Drugs	\$5.6 B	\$9.8 B
	Hospitalizations	\$3.3 B	\$5.7 B
	Health care professionals	\$3.1 B	\$5.4 B
	Other health care	\$2.8 B	\$4.4 B
	Private disability costs	\$5.9 B	\$10.7 B
Economic Impact: Indirect	Workforce productivity and related impacts	\$25.2 B	\$35.3 B
Economic Impact: Total		\$45.9 B	\$71.3 B
Social Value Loss		\$96.5 B	\$151.1 B
Total Cost		\$142.4 B	\$222.3 B

B, billions.



Variations across Populations

Both the economic and social wellbeing impacts of arthritis vary across provinces, sexes, ages, and arthritis types. While detailed data are available with the full report, some notable highlights include:

- The economic and social wellbeing impacts of arthritis increase with age. Multibillion dollar annual total costs are seen in age groups as young as people in their 20s and 30s.
- Social value loss disproportionately impacts females, with estimated double that in males in 2025 (\$64 billion vs. \$32 billion, respectively). Available data limited the ability to analyze additional sexes and genders.
- As the most common form of arthritis, osteoarthritis contributes the most to the economic impact, with \$25 billion in 2025 rising to \$40 billion in 2055. Similar rising trends are seen in social value loss.
- Economic impact of inflammatory arthritis is driven by rheumatoid arthritis (\$11 billion in 2055) and by gout (\$14 billion in 2055). Similar trends are seen in social value loss.
- Rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) have relatively high levels of social value loss on a per-person basis, demonstrating the deep impact of these autoimmune diseases on quality of life.
- Ontario has the largest economic and social wellbeing impacts among the provinces, followed by Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta. Territories had insufficient data to be analysed in this report.
- Obesity or high BMI had a substantial impact on both economic and social value costs, as a risk factor for all modeled arthritis, and in particular, osteoarthritis.

Arthritis Cost by Sex

Sex	2025			2055		
	Economic Impact	Social Value Loss	Total Cost	Economic Impact	Social Value Loss	Total Cost
Females	\$24.4 B	\$64.3 B	\$88.7 B	\$37.0 B	\$99.3 B	\$136.3 B
Males	\$21.5 B	\$32.2 B	\$53.7 B	\$34.3 B	\$51.8 B	\$86.1 B

B, billions.

Arthritis In Women

Arthritis is more common in women than men, and women undergo about 60% of the knee and hip replacement surgeries in Canada, mostly for arthritis. Women are also at higher risk of developing autoimmune diseases, including many forms of inflammatory arthritis, as well as chronic pain conditions. Women with arthritis often report higher rates of pain, fatigue, sleep problems, stress, and mental health challenges than men with arthritis. All of these factors, among others, may influence the disproportional loss of wellbeing among women with arthritis in Canada.

The impacts of arthritis referenced here has largely been described in people assigned or recorded as female at birth and/or cisgender women. We recognize that many individuals impacted by arthritis do not identify within a sex and gender binary, and distinguishing the relationships between sex, gender, and arthritis is a priority area for research identified in *Arthritis Action Now: The Plan to End Arthritis in Canada*.



Arthritis Cost Across Provinces

Province	2025			2055		
	Economic Impact	Social Value Loss	Total Cost	Economic Impact	Social Value Loss	Total Cost
Alberta	\$5.1 B	\$10.3 B	\$15.4 B	\$9.2 B	\$20.6 B	\$29.8 B
British Columbia	\$6.5 B	\$14.0 B	\$20.5 B	\$10.8 B	\$23.9 B	\$34.7 B
Manitoba	\$1.5 B	\$3.1 B	\$4.6 B	\$2.4 B	\$4.7 B	\$7.1 B
New Brunswick	\$1.0 B	\$2.2 B	\$3.2 B	\$1.3 B	\$2.6 B	\$3.9 B
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$0.6 B	\$1.5 B	\$2.1 B	\$0.7 B	\$1.4 B	\$2.1 B
Nova Scotia	\$1.3 B	\$2.7 B	\$4.0 B	\$1.6 B	\$3.3 B	\$4.9 B
Ontario	\$17.8 B	\$38.2 B	\$56.0 B	\$28.3 B	\$61.3 B	\$89.6 B
Prince Edward Island	\$0.2 B	\$0.4 B	\$0.6 B	\$0.3 B	\$0.6 B	\$0.9 B
Quebec	\$10.5 B	\$21.4 B	\$31.9 B	\$14.4 B	\$28.3 B	\$42.7 B
Saskatchewan	\$1.4 B	\$2.7 B	\$4.1 B	\$2.2 B	\$4.3 B	\$6.5 B

B, billions.



What This Means for Canada

Taking the economic and social wellbeing impacts together, arthritis costs at least \$142 billion each year, projected to increase to a staggering \$222 billion annually by 2055.

This is not something that can continue to be ignored.

The scale of \$142 billion in costs today is shocking, equivalent to close to 5% of Canada's GDP, and more than one-quarter of the entire estimated federal budget for 2026-2027.

The costs of arthritis are not simply a health care problem. They feed into a major economic and productivity crisis. They showcase that the time for action is now, as the current trajectory of arthritis in Canada is simply not sustainable.

Who Are These Data Missing?

Despite best practices, data limitations result in underestimating of the true costs of arthritis. The reported estimates represent the “tip of the iceberg” – a conservative estimate of the impact of arthritis based on available data – one that we believe still misses the entirety of the impact of arthritis on **millions of additional people** in Canada.

In this report, data inputs are limited to who is represented in available data. For instance, expert opinion and research at the provincial level indicates that the number of people with osteoarthritis in Canada may be up to twice as high as health administrative data document, suggesting that **millions of people are missed** in our analysis. If people are unaware that they have arthritis or what type(s) they have, if clinicians do not recognize or diagnose the disease, or if barriers prevent individuals from interacting with the health system, they will not be captured in health system or population health survey data.

Available data may also miss consistently capturing the extent of the impact of arthritis on people's lives. Arthritis-related joint pain drives health care use and causes disability, compromises mental health, and interferes with people's abilities to perform valued activities. This includes not only participation in school, work, and social activities, but also physical activities that protect against cardiometabolic diseases. Having arthritis is also associated with increased risk for multiple other health conditions. While arthritis is known to increase the risk of all-cause mortality, rarely is arthritis recorded as a contributing cause in medical records, obscuring the true impact of arthritis.

These are only a few of the challenges faced when estimating the “true cost” of arthritis. In this report, while data from multiple sources were utilized to address as many of these limitations as possible and inform the estimates presented, we fully recognize and acknowledge that even these estimates continue to seriously undervalue the true costs of arthritis.





Pictured : Jameson, diagnosed at age 5, mother Amanda who also lives with arthritis and father Bruce.

Taking Action Now

Our hope, by drawing attention to the impact of arthritis in Canada, is that it motivates governments, health care systems, public and private institutions, employers, clinicians, researchers, and the public collectively, to confront the burden of arthritis in Canada.

We have solutions, presented comprehensively in [Arthritis Action Now: The Plan to End Arthritis in Canada](#). Now we have the economic and social value case to emphasize how imperative it is to take action on arthritis now.



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For More Information

Full report:

Arthritis Society Canada commissioned report: Smetanin P, Stiff D. Economic and Social Value Burden of Arthritis in Canada 2025-2055. A Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis and RiskAnalytica research study. 2026.

Arthritis Society Canada report: State of Arthritis in Canada Report Card. 2026. Available online: www.arthritis.ca/get-involved/take-action/arthritis-action-now/2026-state-of-arthritis-in-canada-report-card/

Arthritis Action Now: The Plan to End Arthritis. 2026. Available online: www.arthritis.ca/get-involved/take-action/arthritis-action-now/

