Canada 2025 G7 Brain Economy Summit: Call to Action

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Canada 2025 G7 Brain Economy Summit: Call to Action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

The future of economic growth depends on optimizing **brain capital,** a form of human capital that encompasses brain health with cognitive, emotional, and social skills that drive innovation, productivity, and resilience. Today, underinvestment in brain health is leaving trillions in economic potential untapped.

G7 economies are at a critical inflection point:

- The global economy is losing **$2.5 - $8.5 trillion annually** due to lost productivity from brain disorders.
- The **knowledge economy** requires peak cognitive performance to sustain workforce adaptability in the face of technological innovation and AI.
- **Aging populations and rising mental and neurodegenerative diseases** risk impacting worker stress, retention and hurting productivity and increasing healthcare and social costs.
- **Geopolitical uncertainty and digital misinformation** highlight the need for cognitive resilience as a **national security asset**.
- **B7 business leaders** are calling for policies that strengthen workforce resilience, innovation, and sustainable growth—all of which depend on brain capital.

Proposed Solution

To adapt to the evolving global landscape, the G7 must recognize brain capital as a core economic asset and take steps to optimize it, including:

- **Establishing a G7-plus Brain Economy working group** under the G7 Finance-Health Ministerial Working group to develop a strategic plan and funding approach.
- **Hosting an exploratory first-ever G7 Brain Economy Conference in 2025**, culminating in a G7 Declaration on the brain economy.
- **Aligning the brain economy with the B7's business agenda** by encouraging corporate investments in brain health, workforce productivity, and cognitive resilience.

By taking leadership on the brain economy, the G7 can drive sustainable economic growth by improving workforce productivity, align business and policy agendas by integrating brain capital investment into G7/B7 strategies, and avoid trillions in lost economic potential by proactively addressing cognitive health and workforce retention.

This is an important piece of novel and optimistic Canadian economic leadership and diplomacy.

Canada 2025 G7 Brain Economy Summit: Call to Action

"Productivity isn't everything, but, in the long run, it is almost everything. A country's ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker." – Paul Krugman

"The brain economy is a new economic paradigm that prioritizes brain capital, encompassing brain health and brain skills, as its core asset. Driven by a neuroscience renaissance, it responds to the growing demand for brain skills — cognitive, emotional, and social — in the modern workforce" – World Economic Forum and McKinsey Health Institute

"Our brains are in the red, right when we need them in the black" - Eric Mullins, Immediate Past Chair, Greater Houston Partnership and CEO, Lime Rock Resources

We write this concept note in honor of the late Honorable Ambassador Michael Wilson - former Canadian Ambassador to the US, former Canadian Finance Minister and Minister for International Trade, and business person - who first coined the phrase "Brain Capital = Brain Health + Brain Skills in the Brain Economy" in 2010. Building on this initial Canadian inspiration, we have constructed and refined an economic and financial framework and advanced a global strategy to drive investment in the brain economy.

I. Issue

The purpose of this concept note is to **formally recognize the critical importance of the brain economy for economic health and prosperity**, for consideration by Canada for its Finance and other tracks under its 2025 G7 Presidency. We (coauthors and signatories noted in Appendix 1) call on the G7 to take action to reverse the decline in brain health and skills worldwide, positioning brain capital as a core pillar of economic growth, workforce resilience, and global competitiveness.

In an era defined by rapid technological, demographic, and geopolitical shifts, economic resilience requires **brain capital**, a concept that integrates:

- **Brain health**: According to the World Economic Forum and the McKinsey Health Institute, brain health is an evolving concept that encompasses mental health, substance use, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, and other neurological conditions across the lifespan, focusing on preventing disease and promoting optimal brain function to enable individuals to thrive.
- **Brain skills**: Cognitive, emotional, and social abilities—such as analytical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and empathy—that are essential for modern economies.

Brain capital is increasingly being recognized as a global economic priority. At **the 2025 World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, brain health was identified as a priority issue,** as noted by Forbes Magazine, for global policymakers, business leaders, and wider civil society. As technology and AI reshape the workplace, brain skills like creativity, resilience, and curiosity are becoming increasingly vital. The World Economic Forum's 2025 Future of Jobs Report highlights that half of the top skills on the rise are brain-related. According to the McKinsey Health Institute, employers who invest in employee brain health and

well-being can enhance performance and potentially boost global GDP by up to 12%. Brain health has been noted as foundational to smooth brain skill-based economic transitions such as the energy transition and digital transition.

Brain capital is not merely a public health issue, it is a core economic asset that must be integrated into Finance Ministries, labor and productivity policies, and international economic frameworks. Sustained investment in brain research and innovation will also be critical to developing new strategies that mitigate cognitive decline, enhance workforce productivity, and drive long-term economic resilience, previously noted via the Canadian Science Policy Centre. By positioning brain capital as an economic imperative, the G7 can unlock economic potential and drive long-term resilience.

II. Context

Productivity Decline and Economic Stagnation

The G7, the IMF, and the OECD have long identified **productivity stagnation** as one of the most pressing economic challenges. Since 2010, productivity growth has slowed across advanced economies including Canada, Japan, the UK, and Italy, a trend that deepened in the wake of both the financial crisis and the COVID pandemic. Productivity stagnation has led to weakened economic growth and competitiveness, increased governmental fiscal pressures due to rising social and healthcare costs, and declining workforce efficiency despite technological advancements.

Brain health has been largely overlooked as a key factor in productivity decline. Its impact extends beyond the aging population, whose growing care needs place direct strains on workforce participation and fiscal sustainability, to the broader effects of brain disorders across the lifespan on employment, earnings, creativity, innovation, and overall economic growth. While economists have attributed declining productivity in Canada and other advanced economies over the past 20–25 years to factors such as slow technological diffusion, structural rigidities, and demographic shifts, the role of brain health in shaping workforce efficiency and economic resilience remains under-examined, despite its critical importance.

Traditional solutions in the form of "structural reforms" on the supply-side of the economy and large-scale macroeconomic support on the demand side have failed to reverse this trend. A new approach is needed, one that prioritizes **investment in brain capital as a key driver of economic resilience**.

Impacts of Brain Health

Brain health challenges are pervasive, affecting individuals, economies, and societies at large:

- **1 in 5 Canadians (8 million people)** live with a brain condition, including neurological disorders, brain injuries, mental illnesses, and addictions (Canadian Brain Research Strategy).
- **1 in 3 people across the West** will develop a brain disorder in their lifetime, directly or indirectly impacting every segment of society (Ontario Brain Institute).
- The **global cost of brain disorders** is estimated at **$2.5 – $8.5 trillion annually** in **lost productivity**, alongside trillions more in direct and indirect fiscal costs, such as rising healthcare expenditures and reduced workforce participation.

Brain disorders impose both direct and indirect economic costs across the lifespan:

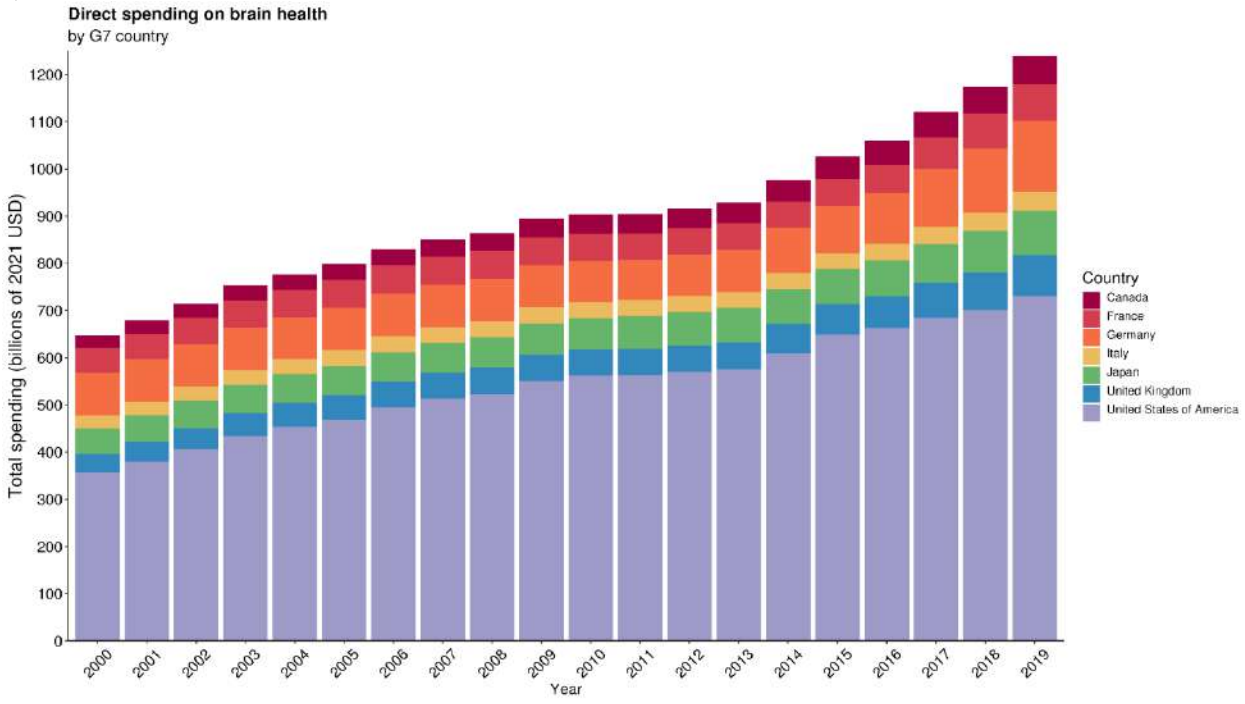
- Direct costs: Medical expenses for professional care, hospitalizations, and long-term treatment.
- Indirect costs include factors such as:
    - Lost income from individuals affected by brain disorders.
    - Lost income from, or hours worked by, caregivers.
    - Lost tax revenue due to lower workforce participation.
    - Long-term care costs, including residential care facilities, home care support, and associated social services

According to novel estimates previewed by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), in the G7 in 2019, these disorders cost $1.2 trillion (2021 USD) in direct healthcare spending. In the same year, $894 billion in income was lost by people living with brain disorders. Global numbers and trends are shown in Figure 1. Unmitigated, IHME expects these numbers to continue increasing as we see steady increase in age-related neurodegenerative diseases associated with aging populations. As seen in Figure 1c, projections for Canada highlight these trends, underscoring the urgency of action across G7 economies. At the same time, mental disorders among working-age populations are another significant driver of economic losses in lost income and untapped productivity.

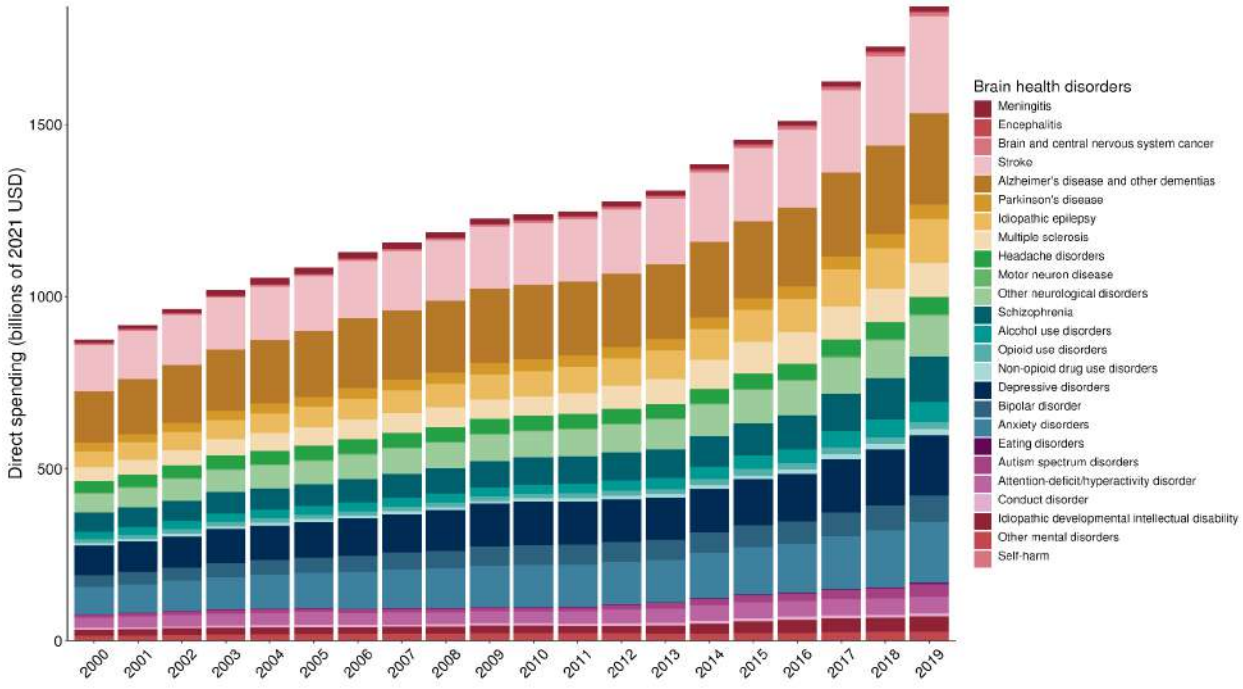
While the economic burden continues to grow, investments in brain research and innovation offer a pathway to mitigate these rising costs—advancing prevention, early intervention, and workforce support strategies.

Figure 1: Costs of Brain Health Disorders, 2019
Preliminary estimates courtesy of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). Pictured here are direct health spending among G7 countries and globally (a, b); patient lost income among G7 countries and globally (c, d); and population age structure in Canada in 2000 and 2100 (e, f).

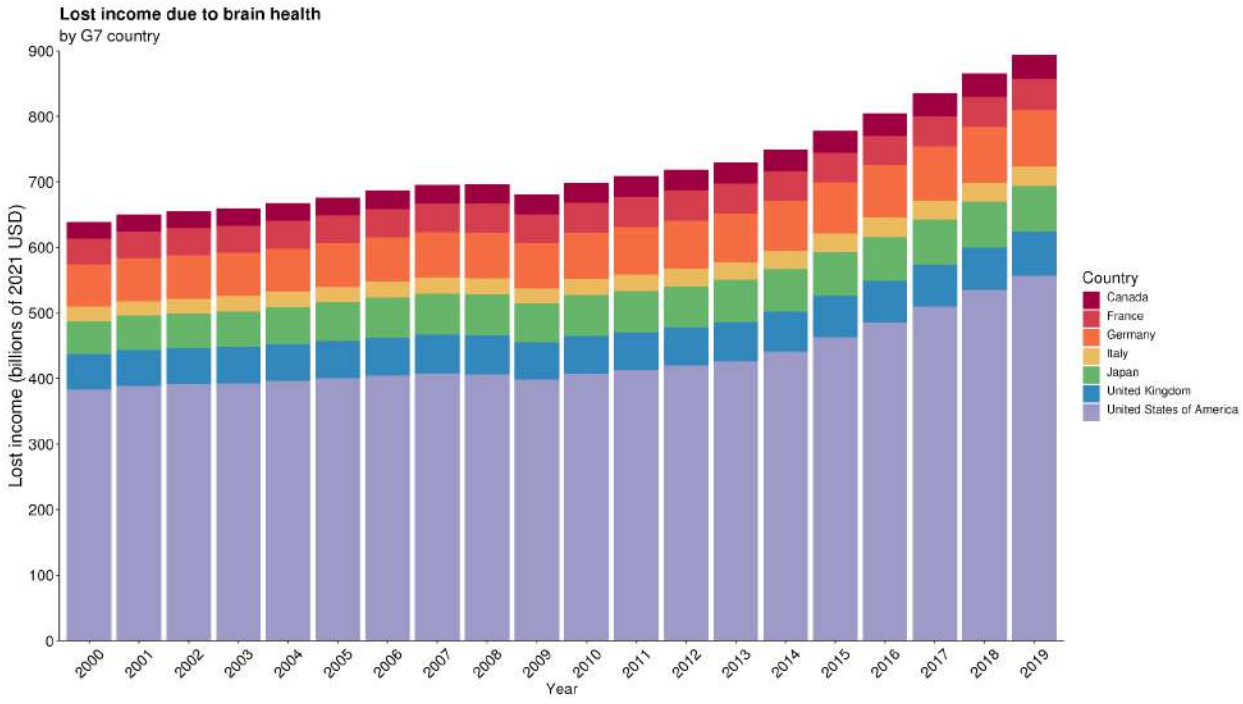
a)



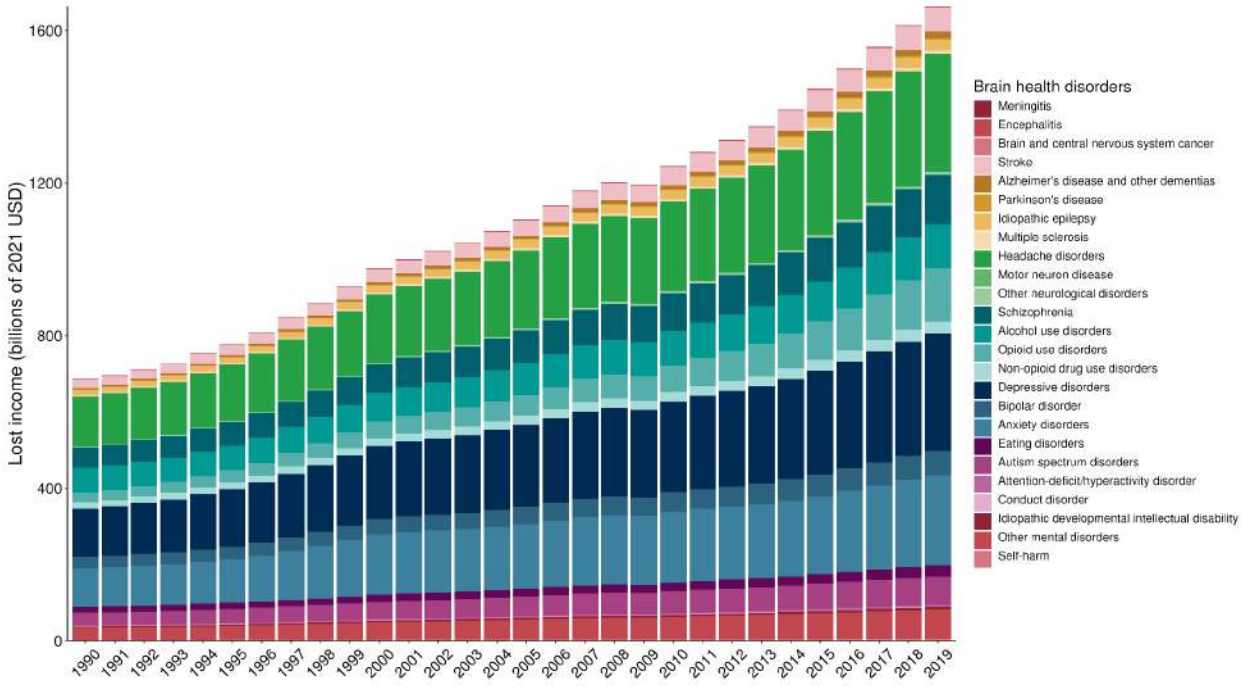
b)


Direct spending (billions of 2021 USD)
0
500
1000
1500
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
Brain health disorders
Meningitis
Encephalitis
Brain and central nervous system cancer
Stroke
Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
Parkinson's disease
Idiopathic epilepsy
Multiple sclerosis
Headache disorders
Motor neuron disease
Other neurological disorders
Schizophrenia
Alcohol use disorders
Opioid use disorders
Non-opioid drug use disorders
Depressive disorders
Bipolar disorder
Anxiety disorders
Eating disorders
Autism spectrum disorders
Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
Conduct disorder
Idiopathic developmental intellectual disability
Other mental disorders
Self-harm

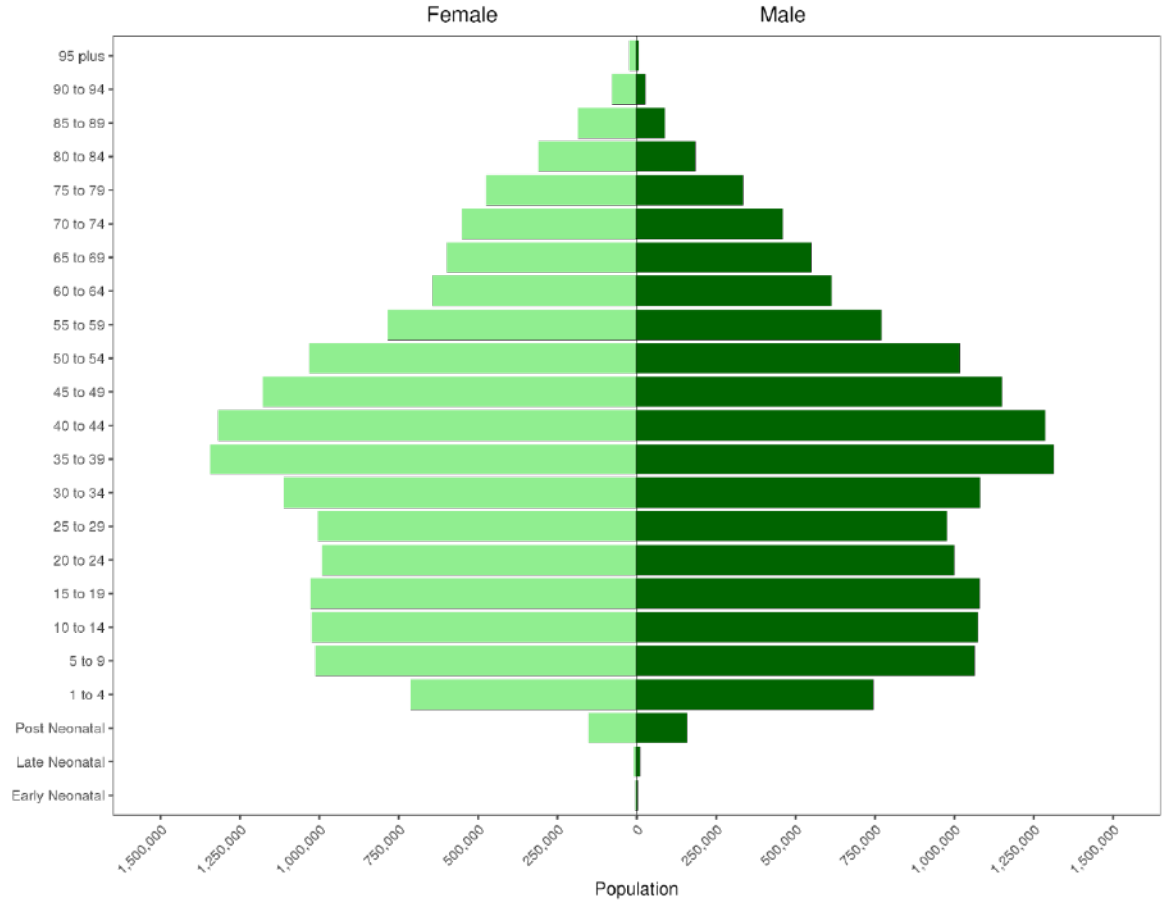
c)


Lost income due to brain health
by G7 country
Lost income (billions of 2021 USD)
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
800
900
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
Year
Country
Canada
France
Germany
Italy
Japan
United Kingdom
United States of America

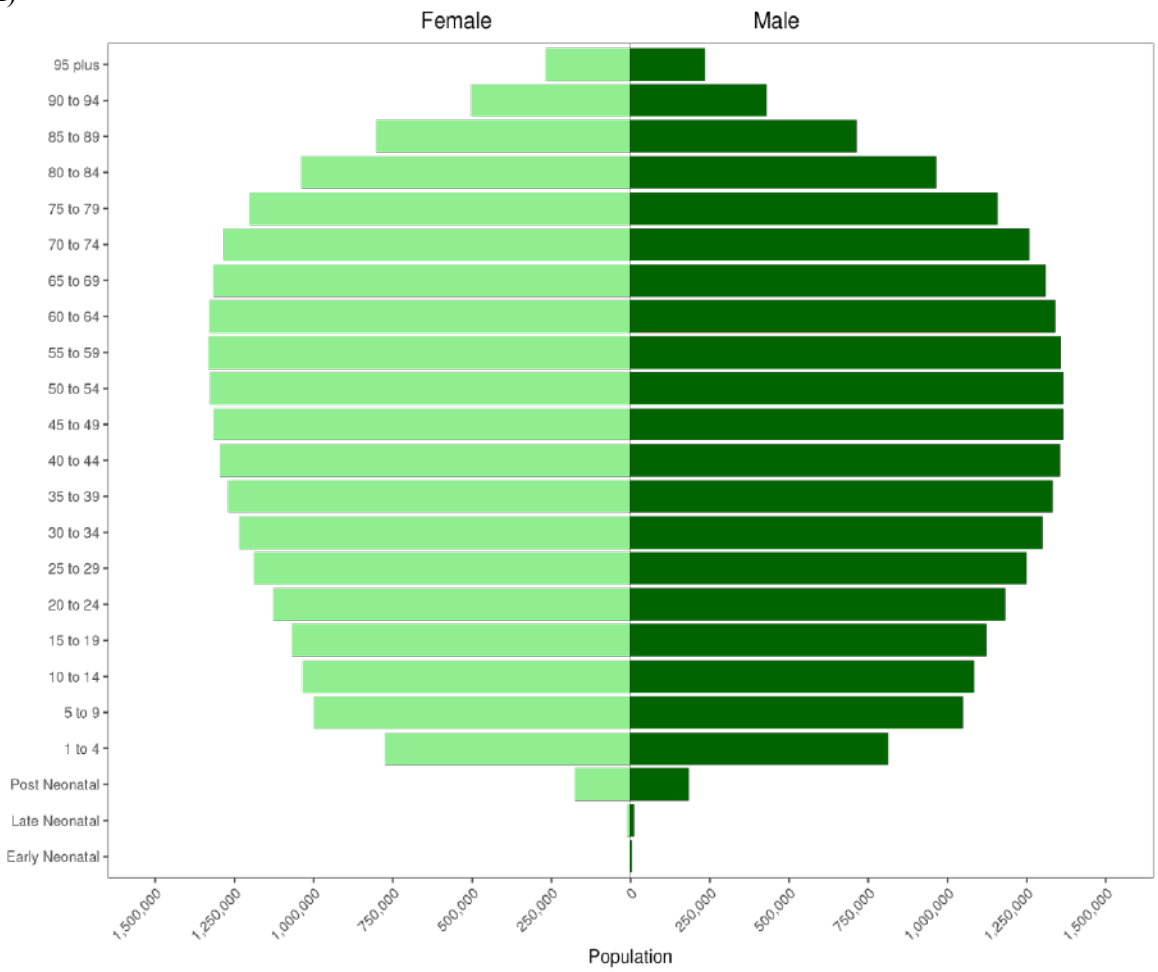
d)


Lost income (billions of 2021 USD)
1600
1200
800
400
0
1990
1991
1992
1993
1994
1995
1996
1997
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
Brain health disorders
Meningitis
Encephalitis
Brain and central nervous system cancer
Stroke
Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
Parkinson's disease
Idiopathic epilepsy
Multiple sclerosis
Headache disorders
Motor neuron disease
Other neurological disorders
Schizophrenia
Alcohol use disorders
Opioid use disorders
Non-opioid drug use disorders
Depressive disorders
Bipolar disorder
Anxiety disorders
Eating disorders
Autism spectrum disorders
Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
Conduct disorder
Idiopathic developmental intellectual disability
Other mental disorders
Self-harm

e)


Female
Male
95 plus
90 to 94
85 to 89
80 to 84
75 to 79
70 to 74
65 to 69
60 to 64
55 to 59
50 to 54
45 to 49
40 to 44
35 to 39
30 to 34
25 to 29
20 to 24
15 to 19
10 to 14
5 to 9
1 to 4
Post Neonatal
Late Neonatal
Early Neonatal
1,500,000
1,250,000
1,000,000
750,000
500,000
250,000
0
250,000
500,000
750,000
1,000,000
1,250,000
1,500,000
Population

f)



While the economic burden continues to grow, investments in brain research and innovation offer a pathway to mitigate these rising costs—advancing prevention, early intervention, and workforce support strategies. At the same time, strengthening brain capital is not just about reducing burdens; it is also a driver of economic growth, innovation, and resilience.

In today's economy, brain skills—cognitive, emotional, and social abilities—are more critical than ever. The World Economic Forum's 2025 Future of Jobs Report highlights that half of the top skills on the rise—including analytical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and leadership—are brain-related. As AI and automation reshape industries, cognitive resilience is becoming the foundation of workforce adaptability, economic competitiveness, and long-term prosperity.

Entrepreneurs, in particular, play a critical role in economic growth, creating 80% of net new jobs within their first five years. However, they are also highly vulnerable to burnout, cognitive strain, and mental health challenges, which can limit their ability to innovate and sustain businesses. Recognizing this, the BDC Entrepreneur Wellbeing Program supports entrepreneurs through research, awareness initiatives, and direct access to mental health resources. This model highlights the importance of integrating brain capital strategies into economic development policies.

Investing in brain health is not just about reducing burdens—it is about maximizing economic potential. Strengthening cognitive resilience in the workforce, particularly among high-impact groups like entrepreneurs, can enhance economic productivity, job creation, and long-term economic stability.

Current Global Context

The large and growing incidence of brain disorders comes at a time of great change – political, geopolitical, technological, economic, and environmental. While these major policy challenges bring forth new opportunities for growth and prosperity, they are also adding to individual and societal anxiety, as well as limiting the economic potential of the advanced economic world. The G7 must prioritize investments in brain capital to sustain scientific leadership, drive breakthroughs in brain health, and strengthen workforce resilience at a critical economic juncture.

Optimizing brain health and cognitive resilience is essential for future-proofing societies against emerging crises, including pandemics and the spread of misinformation, which threaten economic stability, workforce productivity, and national security. Strengthening global collaboration in brain research and innovation will be key to ensuring that advances in neuroscience translate into economic and workforce benefits. Now is the time for bold commitment to a brain-positive economy—one that fosters global cooperation between public, private and philanthropic sectors, ensures research ecosystems remain diverse and collaborative, and strengthens economic resilience through sustained investment in brain capital.

To remain globally competitive, G7 nations must take a unified approach to investing in brain capital, ensuring that scientific breakthroughs translate into workforce productivity, economic growth, and long-term resilience.

G7 actors and stakeholders have made notable strides in **laying the groundwork for expanded global action to advance brain health**:

- **2013 G8 Dementia Summit** (full G8 summit declaration and communique here): Brought together policymakers, researchers, pharmaceutical companies, and charities to stimulate greater investment and innovation in dementia research, improve the prevention and treatment of dementia, and enhance the quality of life for individuals affected by dementia.
- **2016 G-Science Academies Statement, "Understanding, Protecting, and Developing Global Brain Resources"**: Highlighted the critical role of brain science in economic and societal development. It called for global collaboration on fundamental brain research, brain disorder prevention and treatment, brain-based AI, and integrating neuroscience with social sciences to improve education and well-being.
- **2018 G20 Initiative for Early Childhood Development:** Recognized the foundational role of early brain development in economic growth and workforce resilience, encouraging investments in brain health, education, and early intervention strategies.
- **2024 G7 Health Ministers' meeting side event in Ancona, Italy**: Hosted the "Prioritizing Brain Health: A Global Imperative for Public Health" side event, which underscored the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration in brain health, public awareness and communication on brain capital, and strategic integration of brain health into national economic agendas.
- **The Davos Alzheimer's Collaborative (DAC)**: Launched in 2021 as a public-private partnership to accelerate progress on the discovery, testing, and delivery of precision interventions for Alzheimer's disease. DAC was incubated in the World Economic Forum and modelled on the

Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), then The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).

- **Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT)**: Texas Lieutenant Governor, Dan Patrick, on the 18th of November, 2024, launched a major legislative initiative to secure a USD $3 billion Dementia Prevention Research Institute of Texas. This is based on a highly successful Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) which has yielded a 4:1 return on investment. There is increasing evidence that dementia prevention is vital in young adulthood, 18 to 39 years.
- **The American Brain Economy: An Economic and National Security Dialogue**: This August 27, 2024 event held at Rice University, Houston, Texas, examined the role of the human brain in the wider economy, which is drawing increased attention; and brain capital is becoming a priority for business and individuals. Key participants included Congressman Morgan Luttrell (R, TX), Co-Chair of the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus, Texas State Representative Greg Bonnen MD, neurosurgeon, Colonel Geoffrey F. L. Ling MD, Founding Director of DARPA Biological Division, Dr Greg Witkop MD, Distinguished DARPA Program Manager, Eric Mullins, Then Chair of the Greater Houston Partnership, and Dr Leanne Young, Division Manager of ARA.
- **Brain Capital United Kingdom Summit:** This October 9, 2024 event held in London, UK, explored the importance of the brain economy to the United Kingdom context. Key speakers included Sir Norman Lamb (Event Chair) Former Government Minister for Health and Chair of South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Lord James Bethell of Business for Health, Jamie Broderick of Impact Investing Institute, Jules Chappell OBE of Kokoro Change, Professor Quazi Haque of Elysium Healthcare, Dr Sandeep Ranote of Mental Health at Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, Professor Tim Kendall CBE of Mental Health Care NHS England, Lynne Green, Dr Chief Clinical Officer of Kooth, Professor Andrew Welchman, Professor of Neuroscience at Cambridge University
- **Brain Health for Society: Insights from Brain Capital**: On January 25th, 2024, in Basel, Switzerland, the European Brain Council, in partnership with Roche and Rice University Baker Institute for Public Policy, hosted a full-day event. This event included invited speakers and stakeholders and hosted panel discussions to motivate conversations about brain health and a shift towards a brain economy.
- **International G7 Canada Brain Health Workshop**: Hosted by the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, and co-led by Professors Vladimir Hachinski, Gul Rouleau and John Kirton, the event gathered more than 70 leading experts in neuroscience, public health and policy, both in person and virtually, to define integral brain health and develop a framework to position it as a global priority at the upcoming G7 countries summit in Canada.
- **United Nations Brain Days**: As a plenary session of the UN General Assembly Science Summit, September 18, 19, 20, 2024, neuroscience experts from government, business, finance, banking and philanthropy came together. They discussed how the role of the human brain in the wider economy is drawing increased attention and that brain capital is becoming a priority for nations, businesses and individuals. Speakers included New York Governor Kathy Hochul and European Investment Bank Institute Dean Shiva Dustdar
- **The Yaounde Declaration for the Brain Economy, Brain Health, and Brain Capital**: The Declaration for the Brain Economy, Brain Health, and Brain Capital has received support from the President of Cameroon. It provides a platform for radical, cross-sectoral innovation in global brain health, led by Africa. The goal is to boost African and Global South economic productivity and well-being. This declaration is timely given that Cameroon is the “Chair” of the 79th United Nations General Assembly.

- **The Global Plastics Treaty:** Given the concerning new data on the impacts of micro- and nano-plastics on our brains, more research is urgently required and advancement of the Global Plastics Treaty. We note recent G7 work advocating for the Treaty. Plastic toxicity to our brains may be an emerging challenge to the brain economy.

III. Policy Implications for the G7

In view of the secular decline in productivity and economic performance, and the vital importance of brain health and skills for prosperity in a 21st-century *knowledge economy*, advancing the brain economy will require coordinated efforts across research, innovation, and policy. The G7 under Canada's 2025 Presidency should undertake a call to action to optimize the brain economy by:

1. Recognizing the importance of the brain economy in the G7 and broader advanced democratic world.

2. Establishing a G7-plus working group to determine the economic implications of the brain economy. This could be convened under the auspices of the G7 Finance-Health Ministerial Working group with the objective of developing a strategic plan and funding approach, with multilateral donors such as regional development banks by 2026. A multiple-stakeholder group of representatives from academia, think tanks, and the private sector would support this working group.

3. An exploratory conference would be held during 2025 to provide recommendations for taking this agenda forward. Such an event could engage and find common ground between the B7, C7, L7, S7, T7, W7, and Y7.

Canada is well-positioned to play a leadership role in promoting the brain economy, not only in view of its G7 Presidency over the course of 2025, but also because Canada boasts leading experts in multiple fields of neuroscience and medicine. Moreover, Canada – along with other G7 countries such as the UK and non-G7 countries including Australia and Korea – face the challenge of finding new sources of growth and prosperity in a world increasingly dominated by economies of scale, the knowledge economy, and geopolitical fragmentation. The development of the brain economy has become a leading economic policy issue whose importance extends far beyond national borders, and thus requires collective action as a central component of economic renewal.

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Appendix 1: Signatories to this Concept Note

Name and title	Organization	Country representation
Claudio Bassetti, Chair	Swiss Brain Health Plan	Switzerland and Europe
Jonathan Behr, Partner	Dementia Discovery Fund	United States and United Kingdom
Michael Freeman, Founder	ECONA	United States
Zul Merali, Founding Director	Brain and Mind Institute, Aga Khan University	Africa and Canada
Morris Freedman, Head	Division of Neurology, Baycrest	Canada
Jennifer Dotchin, Senior Manager, Innovation, Partnerships and Strategy	University of Calgary Hotchkiss Brain Institute	Canada
William Heisel, Executive Director, Client Services	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation	United States and Global
Jochen Reiser, President and CEO	University of Texas Medical Branch	United States
Rajinder Dhamija, Chair	Indian Government Brain Health Taskforce	India
Lawrence Jones	Fellow of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences	United States
Jacob T. Robinson, Founder & CEO, Professor	Motif Neurotech, Inc. Rice University	United States
Elena Moro, Professor and Chair of Neurology & President	University of Grenoble, Alps & European Academy of Neurology	France
Dan Mannix, Advisor & former CEO	Brain Capital Alliance & RWC Partners	United Kingdom
Prof Dr Jafri Malin ABDULLAH MD, PhD, FASc Chairman & Fellow and Council Member	Brain Behaviour Cluster, Universiti Sains Malaysia & Academy of Sciences, Malaysia	Malaysia

Ronel Golden, Vice Chair	Rice University Tapia Center	United States
Andrea S. Winkler, Professor & Specialist Neurologist	Techncal University of Munich & University of Oslo & Harvard-TUM Global Brain Health Partnership	Europe, Africa, United States
Agustin Ibanez, Director & Professor	Latin American Brain Health Institute & Trinity College Dublin	Latin America and Europe
Helen Lavretsky, Professor & Past President	University of California, Los Angeles & American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry	United States
Facundo Manes, Congressman	Argentine Congress	Latin America
James T. Hackett, Co-founder	The Hackett Center for Mental Health Policy	United States
Jo-An Occhipinti, Co-Director	Mental Wealth Initiative, The University of Sydney	Australia
Burcin Ikiz, Chair	Neuro Climate Working Group, Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education, Columbia University	United States
Michael Berk, Director	Institute for Mental and Physical Health and Clinical Translation (IMPACT), Deakin University	Australia
Ben Rein, Chief Science Officer	Mind Science Foundation	United States

Sameer A. Sheth, MD, PhD, Co-founder, Professor	Motif Neurotech, Inc. Baylor College of Medicine	United States
Rajiv Ahuja, JD Executive Director	American Society on Aging (ASA)	United States
Irene Pujol Chica, Founder and President	Generación Kintsugi	Spain
Raquel Loga, Vice-President	Generación Kintsugi	Spain
Michael Koenig, Associate Dean & Executive Director	Innovation Initiatives & Executive Education, Jones School of Business, Rice University	United States
Antonella Santuccione Chadha	Women's Brain Foundation	Switzerland and Europe
Upali Nanda, Executive Vice President & Professor of Practice	Innovation, HKS Inc & University of Michigan	United States
Ben Hamley, Director of Innovation	JLL	Singapore and United States
Viviane Poupon, President and Chief Executive Officer & Vice President	Brain Canada & Alzheimer Society of Montreal	Canada
Adrián Noriega de la Colina, Senior Scientist & Clinical Lead	McGill University & Perceiv AI	Canada
Paolo Vitali, Neurologist – Neuropsychologist	McGill University Research Centre for Studies on Aging, Douglas Mental Health University Institute; McGill	Canada

	University Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, Faculty of Medicine	
Ziad Nasreddine, CEO	MoCA Cognition	Canada
Guy Lacombe, Professeur titulaire, Interniste gériatre	FMSS de Sherbrooke	Canada
Thomas TANNOU, Gériatre-chercheur,	CIUSS Centre-Sud de l'île de Montréal, Institut Universitaire de Gériatrie de Montréal et son Centre de Recherche (CR-IUGM)	Canada
Simon Duchesne, Co-Director	Réseau Québécois de recherche sur le vieillissement	Canada
Saskia Sivananthan, CEO	The Brainwell Institute	Canada
Anouk Coxon, Chair of Board	Alzheimer Society of Montreal	Canada
Quazi Haque, Cofounder & CMO, Professor	Elysium Healthcare, Ramsay HCG	United Kingdom and Global
Ryan Abbott, Professor	Health Law, University of Surrey & UCLA Geffen School of Medicine	United Kingdom and United States