Canadian children are vulnerable in at least one of five developmental areas:

- Physical health and well-being
- Language and thinking skills
- Social competence
- Communication skills and general knowledge
- Understanding and managing emotions

Boys are more developmentally vulnerable than girls.

Vulnerability in early childhood development:

- 2.2x Higher in materially and socially deprived communities*
- 1.8x Higher in the lowest-income communities
- 2.0x Higher among Indigenous children than non-Indigenous children

Children who experience disadvantaged conditions are more vulnerable in all areas of their early development. Developmental vulnerability is assessed by the Early Development Instrument and reflects children whose skills and behaviours are below the levels exhibited by most of their peers.

Developmental vulnerabilities may lead to poorer health and social outcomes in later life, including:

- Chronic diseases and conditions
- Lower literacy and economic participation
- Addictions and poor mental health
- Violence and crime

Conditions that support early childhood development include:

- Household income above the poverty line
- Safe housing and communities
- Ability to afford nutritious foods
- Supportive parenting and higher parental education