# Stable housing and financial security crucial to preserving family support networks



Research highlights the crucial role of stable housing and financial security in enabling families to maintain strong social support networks, often referred to as the "village." While extended family—including grandparents and other relatives—forms the primary backbone of support for most families, the quality and availability of this network can be severely compromised by housing instability, financial pressures, and caregiving demands. Families living in private rental accommodations report notably lower satisfaction with their sense of belonging and reduced participation in community activities, underscoring the social cost of housing insecurity.

Lead researcher Dr Yuvisthi Naidoo emphasises the enduring centrality of extended family, noting that over 80% of surveyed families identified relatives as key sources of support. Friends also provide vital assistance, particularly for sole parents, 58% of whom rely most heavily on friendship networks. Interviewees expressed the emotional and cultural richness that comes from these village connections, with a First Nations father highlighting the importance of raising children on traditional lands to nurture cultural identity and language. The presence of trusted adults from multiple spheres, including teachers and community leaders, also contributes significantly to children's development.

Barriers to connection, however, are pronounced among families facing financial stress and housing instability. Those under financial strain are less likely to engage socially, with only 41% seeing friends or family weekly compared to 49% of families with minimal financial stress. Housing instability disrupts proximity to support networks, which is crucial for practical help such as childcare or sharing meals. Families compelled to move often lose these vital connections; nearly two-thirds of renters reported they did not participate in community activities. This aligns with findings from other research showing that frequent moves—sometimes called 'churning'—disrupt community bonds and family involvement in neighbourhoods and schools, potentially exacerbating social isolation.

Caregiving responsibilities further complicate social engagement. Families supporting members with disabilities or chronic illnesses face considerable challenges due to time constraints and emotional fatigue, compounded by often limited access to inclusive community options. Despite these stresses, many caregivers remain actively involved in volunteering and community life, demonstrating a strong desire to contribute despite their burdens. Studies on older unpaid caregivers reinforce this picture, highlighting that financial stress and depressive symptoms increase the risk of social disconnection, which in turn correlates with poorer health outcomes.

The consequences of housing instability extend beyond social disconnection. Research linking unstable housing to increased risk factors for child maltreatment reveals a concerning cycle where housing insecurity, strongly tied to poverty, heightens the risk of involvement with child protective services and foster care placement. Families experiencing homelessness or living in shelters face additional stressors, such as restrictive rules and surveillance, which can further disrupt family routines and undermine stability.

Addressing housing instability and financial stress is therefore critical not only for maintaining social support networks but also for safeguarding family health and wellbeing. Community-level interventions to improve housing affordability and reduce tenant turnover could help preserve these vital connections. Healthcare providers, in particular, are encouraged to consider social isolation indicators when assessing caregiver health, recognising the integral relationship between social participation and positive health outcomes.

Ultimately, sustaining the village around families requires a holistic approach that acknowledges the interplay of housing, financial stability, caregiving responsibilities, and cultural belonging. Efforts to support families must address these interconnected challenges to foster stronger, more resilient communities.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/stable-housing-income-critical-for-family-1528679/), [[5]](https://www.txhealthsteps.com/static/courses/housing-instability/sections/section-1-4.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/stable-housing-income-critical-for-family-1528679/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/stable-housing-income-critical-for-family-1528679/), [[5]](https://www.txhealthsteps.com/static/courses/housing-instability/sections/section-1-4.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/stable-housing-income-critical-for-family-1528679/), [[2]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC12069072/), [[3]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36205453/), [[7]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34409878/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6377199/), [[4]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24826832/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.txhealthsteps.com/static/courses/housing-instability/sections/section-1-4.html), [[2]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC12069072/), [[3]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36205453/), [[6]](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6377199/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/stable-housing-income-critical-for-family-1528679/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.miragenews.com/stable-housing-income-critical-for-family-1528679/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC12069072/> - This study examines factors contributing to social disconnectedness among older unpaid caregivers aged 60 and above. It identifies sociodemographic, health, financial, and social environmental factors that increase the risk of social isolation. Notably, the study highlights a strong association between depressive symptoms and increased risk of social disconnectedness. Financial stress is also a significant factor, as it can limit caregivers' ability to engage in social activities. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing these factors to mitigate social isolation among older caregivers.
3. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36205453/> - This cross-sectional study investigates the prevalence of social isolation among family caregivers of older adults and its association with self-reported health. The study finds that 24.74% of caregivers are more isolated, with younger caregivers being more isolated than older ones. It also reveals that less social isolation is linked to better self-reported health. Specifically, a lack of community participation is associated with worse health outcomes. The study suggests that healthcare providers should consider social isolation indicators in caregiver health assessments.
4. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24826832/> - This research analyzes in-depth interviews with 80 parents experiencing or recently experiencing homelessness. It compares challenges to family routines and rituals across various living situations, including shelters, transitional housing, doubled-up living, and independent housing. The study finds that rules in shelters and transitional housing impede family processes, leading to feelings of surveillance and threats of child protective services involvement. In doubled-up living situations, parents adapt their routines to those of the household, and parenting is influenced by opinions of friends and family members.
5. <https://www.txhealthsteps.com/static/courses/housing-instability/sections/section-1-4.html> - This resource discusses the community-level consequences of housing instability, including substandard housing and lack of affordable housing. It highlights how these issues can lead to inadequate medical care, forcing families and children to use emergency departments for primary care. The resource also notes that frequent moves, referred to as 'churning movers,' can disrupt community bonds and family involvement in neighborhoods or schools. Additionally, tenant turnover can affect rent prices, leading to increased rents for all tenants to recapture lost revenue from frequent vacancies.
6. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6377199/> - This article explores the link between housing instability and child maltreatment. It discusses how housing instability, intrinsically linked to poverty, strains families as caregivers, primarily single mothers, struggle to raise children in unstable or unaffordable conditions. The article highlights that housing instability contributes to the risk of foster care placement for one in six children under investigation for maltreatment. It also notes that addressing housing instability may alleviate systemic challenges in child welfare and promote family preservation.
7. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34409878/> - This study examines the psychological and social well-being of family caregivers during the Great Recession. It compares caregivers who provide care to older family members and those who care for both older and younger family members. The study finds that caregivers who care for both older and younger family members exhibit lower environmental mastery and positive relations with others. It also reveals that caregivers with fewer financial challenges exhibit lower social actualization than other family caregivers. The study underscores the need to support family caregivers' psychosocial well-being during financial disruptions.