

# 2022 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia: Kids Can't Wait

Lesley Frank and Christine Saulnier





**CCPA**  
CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
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**ISBN 978-1-77125-635-3**

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We acknowledge that the CCPA-NS office is located in Kjiipuktuk in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded, unsundered ancestral land of the Mi'kmaq people. We recognize that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to each other and this land. We also recognize the 400+ years of history of communities of African descent and the 50 African Nova Scotian communities throughout the region today. We commit to actions that will move the work of truth, reconciliation, justice and equity forward.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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Dr. Christine Saulnier is the Nova Scotia Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and a member of the Steering Committee of Campaign 2000. She has been the co-author of this report card for many years. She leads the living wage calculations for communities in Atlantic Canada.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors would like to thank the National Steering Committee of Campaign 2000 for their expertise and support during the production of this report. Campaign 2000 is a cross-Canada public education movement to build Canadian awareness and support for the 1989 all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Campaign 2000 works to increase public awareness of the levels and consequences of child/family poverty by publishing research on the indicators of child poverty and developing public education resources. The authors also want to thank Acadia University Politics student Ruby Harrington for her help in the preparation of the data for this report. We also want to thank the many advocates, educators, and concerned community members that use the annual Child and Family Report Cards to both understand issues of family poverty and work for change in their local communities and beyond.

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# Executive Summary

NO ONE IN our province should be living in poverty. Poverty is damaging, first and foremost, for those struggling with it, but it is also bad for our communities and society. We all lose out when people cannot contribute to their fullest potential. The impact can be long-lasting for many generations when so many children live in poverty.

If only the federal House of Commons had kept its promise to end child poverty by 2000—we would have lifted a whole generation of kids. Instead, the probability of a child remaining in poverty increased. Not only was child poverty not eradicated, but almost 1 in 3 children are likely to be trapped in poverty their whole childhood.<sup>1</sup>

The data in this report card reveal that the entrapment is by design. Small incremental policy changes have yet to be enough to make much of a difference in the lives of a generation. Childhood is both too important and too short for anything other than bold actions and significant investments over a short period. Now we know this is possible.

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## Historic reduction

This report card shows that even under the worse conditions—a pandemic and an almost complete shutdown of the economy—the government can act

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<sup>1</sup> Connolly, M., Haec, C., & Papierre, D. (2021). *Trends in Intergenerational Income Mobility and Income Inequality in Canada*. Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11fo019m/11fo019m2021001-eng.htm>

quickly to support people to endure these shocks and help them to be shock resistant. **In just one year, the child poverty rate decreased in Nova Scotia by 24.3%.** This is the most significant single-year reduction on record. Government intervention worked to protect some families from poverty. Unfortunately, some governments helped more than others, and not everyone was helped.

In 2020, there were still 31,370 children living in low-income families (18.4%), or more than 1 in 6 children in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's child poverty rate is the fourth-highest in Canada and the highest in Atlantic Canada. This is the first time since 2000 that the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia has dropped below 24%, whereas it dipped below 24% in 2005 nationally and steadily declined.

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## Federal pandemic benefits made the difference

It is essential to understand the reasons for the reduction. **Nova Scotia continues to perform poorly in reducing child poverty.**

The reduction in Nova Scotia is almost entirely due to federal pandemic relief support and top-ups. In 2020, just over 569,000 Nova Scotians, representing 69.5% of those over 15, received COVID-related assistance. The total support to individuals in Nova Scotia in 2020 added up to \$2.088 billion, with only 0.3% coming from the Nova Scotia government. 99% of the support came from the federal government.<sup>2</sup> Only 4% of low-to-moderate income families with children received any provincial COVID-19 support.<sup>3</sup>

Without the temporary pandemic benefits 14,500 additional children in Nova Scotia would have been low income, and the child poverty rate would have increased from 2019 levels (24.3% to 27%). Combined, all government benefits reduced child poverty by 55.9%, lifting 26,810 children aged 0-17 out of poverty. Without those transfers, the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia would have been 41.4%. Nine other provinces and territories were more effective in reducing child poverty using government transfers than Nova Scotia.

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2 Statistics Canada. (2022). *Distribution of COVID-19 reliefs to Canadians: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions, Table 98-10-0093-01*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810009301>

3 Statistics Canada. Census of Population 2021. Percentage of families in bottom half of adjusted after-tax family income with children 0-17, receiving provincial benefits, 2020, cited in BC Report, p.35 [https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BC-Report-Card-First\\_Call-2022\\_Feb\\_14\\_web.pdf](https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BC-Report-Card-First_Call-2022_Feb_14_web.pdf)

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## Some families have higher child poverty

The provincial child poverty rate does hide that poverty rates are higher for some children. We show the poverty rate variance by the child's age, family size and family type every year. This year's card shows a higher incidence of poverty for children under six at 21.3% and children living in families with three or more children (21.4%). While the report card has always shown higher poverty rates for lone-parent families than couple families, we could further disaggregate that data this year. In this year's report card, lone mother-led families had higher rates of child poverty than sole father-led families (37.8% versus 28.7%), and these rates are much higher than for children living in families with two parents (9.9%).

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## Child poverty varies depending on where you live

Our annual reports are also able to show how the rates vary by geography, from large census areas to much smaller geographic units, which reveals that rates vary quite substantially in both urban and rural areas. The child poverty rates are highest in Digby (27.3%), Annapolis (25.7%), and Cape Breton (24.8%) when considering Census Areas. Twelve postal areas have child poverty rates of 30% and higher. The range of rates is quite significant, from a low of 5.1% in Upper Tantallon, part of the Halifax Regional Municipality, to a high of 60% in the postal area of Micmac, which includes part of the Sipekne'katik First Nations.

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## Higher incidence of poverty for racialized children, immigrant children and Indigenous children

This report card includes 2021 Census data and thus can provide some additional disaggregated poverty rates that underline systemic inequalities that are necessary to address. The poverty rate for racialized children in NS (29.5%) was almost double the rate for non-racialized children (15.8%). The highest poverty rate for racialized children is 56.9% of Korean children (23.5% in Canada), and the second highest was 55.2% of Arab children (26.3% of Arab children in Canada). The poverty rate for Black children in Nova Scotia was 27.6% (also higher than the Canadian rate of 18.6%).

The data also show that Indigenous children (living on and off First Nations reserves) are more at risk of poverty than others. Those living on

reserve in Nova Scotia had a child poverty rate of 43.5% compared to 16.5% of non-indigenous children. The rate for those living off reserve was 22.4%.

The poverty rate for immigrant children in Nova Scotia is 32.6%, more than double that of non-immigrant children (15.9%). This rate is significantly higher than the national average (18.8%), meaning they are more likely to live in poverty if they immigrate to Nova Scotia.

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## Urgency to end child poverty remains

We should celebrate the reduction in child poverty in 2020. However, by all accounts, poverty is worse today. The pandemic benefits that made the difference were temporary. In addition, since 2021, people have had to deal with the steep increase in prices for essentials, including housing, food, and heating. Even with the added temporary benefits, people living in poverty had total welfare incomes well below the poverty line.

The 2021 Nova Scotia Minister of Community Service’s mandate letter says they must “work across Departments to establish a five-year target for the reduction of childhood poverty in the Province.”<sup>4</sup> No government target to reduce child poverty has been announced. No child living in poverty should have to wait.

## Recommendations

Ending child poverty will require tackling all forms of poverty because children live in families who live in poverty. The federal government has a central role to play as the government with a much broader and deeper revenue base to invest in the support and services needed to support families with children to get out of poverty. Campaign 2000’s federal report card has detailed recommendations for the federal government.

1. Invest in a comprehensive, robust Poverty Elimination Plan incorporating an outcomes-based framework, with targets and timelines embedded in legislation, requiring regular reporting to the legislature.

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<sup>4</sup> Nova Scotia Government. (September 14, 2021). *Ministerial Mandate Letters, Minister of Community Services*. [https://novascotia.ca/exec\\_council/letters-2021/ministerial-mandate-letter-2021-DCS-OLA-SOW.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/exec_council/letters-2021/ministerial-mandate-letter-2021-DCS-OLA-SOW.pdf)

2. Remove “failure to provide to the child adequate food, clothing or shelter” from the Children and Family Services Act and invest in preventing child apprehension by enabling families to provide for what their children need.
3. Immediately end the practice of removing the Canada Child Benefit, Child Disability Benefit, and the Nova Scotia Child Benefit from families when a child is brought into temporary care and custody.
4. Ensure that the federal government ends pandemic payment clawback to the CCB and implements a full CERB Amnesty.<sup>5</sup>
5. Reform the Employment Supports and Income Assistance (ESIA) program incorporating the principles of social inclusion and respect for human dignity.
6. Substantially increase Employment Supports and Income Assistance, along with increases to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit, to ensure that the total federal-provincial income support is equal to the Market Basket Measure and is not eroded by inflation.
7. Implement a plan to increase the minimum wage to \$20.
8. Amend the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code to better protect all workers in the province, creating conditions for decent work to be the standard and improving working families’ lives.
9. Fund and build a high-quality, early learning and child care system that is child-centred, play-based, seamless (all day, full year), genuinely affordable, accessible, inclusive and quality, not-for-profit and publicly managed.
10. Invest in public and social infrastructure, including extended universal public health care (mental health care, pharmacare, dental care, vision care), strengthen inclusive public education, make post-secondary education more affordable, and invest to ensure essential costs are available and affordable (e.g., food, internet).

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<sup>5</sup> Campaign 2000. (2023, January 17). CERB Amnesty Campaign, End CCB Clawbacks. <https://campaign2000.ca/sign-today-cerb-amnesty-petition/>



11. Implement the Housing for All recommendations to ensure that all Nova Scotians have meaningful access to safe, permanently affordable, secure, supported, and adequate housing.
12. Strengthen the pay equity act and extend it to the private sector, race, and other equity-deserving groups.
13. While the government works to close the poverty gap for income assistance, it should invest in additional support for those that are pregnant, and for children during the first year of life, to support families when the cost of raising children is highest.
14. Institute provincial maternity and parental leave supplemental insurance modelled after Quebec's program.<sup>6</sup>
15. Invest in proactive strategies developed in collaboration with communities with exceptionally high poverty rates to ensure policies and programs meet their needs
16. Continue to support First Nations in Nova Scotia to assume self-governance over child and family services to ensure they meet their cultural, historical, and geographical needs and circumstances.
17. Commit to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous self-determination while decolonizing mainstream institutions, and policies.

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<sup>6</sup> Government of Quebec. Quebec Parental Insurance Plan. <https://www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca/en/what-is-the-quebec-parental-insurance-plan>

# The Record: Tracking Thirty-One Years of Child Poverty Data 1989-2020

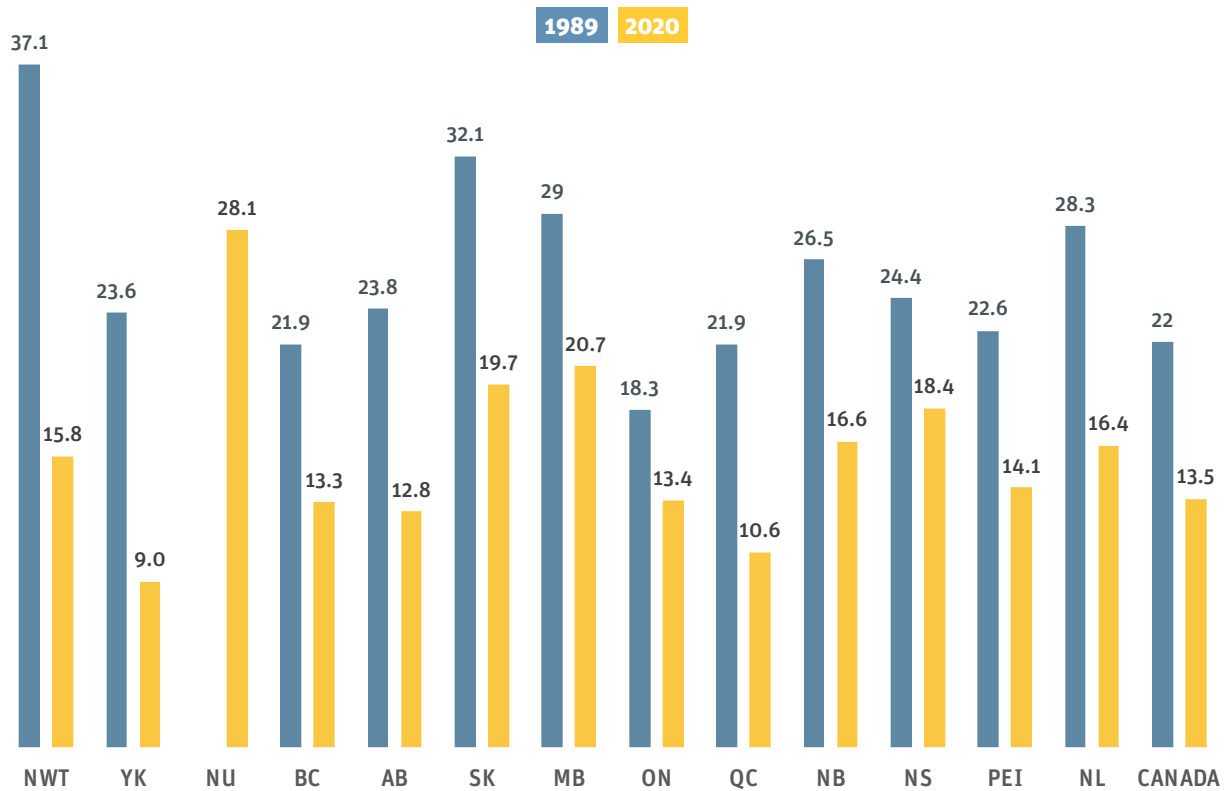
ON NOVEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>, 1989, a motion was passed in the House of Commons pledging to “*achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.*” In 1989, the child poverty rate was 24.4% (56,960 children) as measured by the Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure (CFLIM-AT).<sup>7</sup> Despite the promise of child poverty eradication by the year 2000, the incidence of child poverty in Nova Scotia in that year was 27.8%, much higher than in 1989, representing more than 1 in 4 Nova Scotian children (58,730 children). Thirty-one years later, in 2020, 31,370 children lived in low-income families (18.4%), or more than **1 in 6 children in Nova Scotia**.

*Figure 1* shows the overall change in child poverty rates between 1989 and 2020 in each province and territory in Canada. In 1989, Nova Scotia had the fifth-highest percentage of low-income children. In 2020, Nova Scotia had the fourth-highest **child poverty rate in Canada**, and the **highest rate in Atlantic Canada, consistent rankings over the last several years. Between 1989 and 2020, the child poverty rates decreased in every province and territory. Nova Scotia has performed the second worst in reducing child poverty from 1989 levels, reducing child poverty by 24.6%.**

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix C for a discussion of how poverty is measured.

**FIGURE 1** CHILD POVERTY RATES, BY PROVINCE, (CFLIM-AT), 1989 AND 2020, AGE 0-17



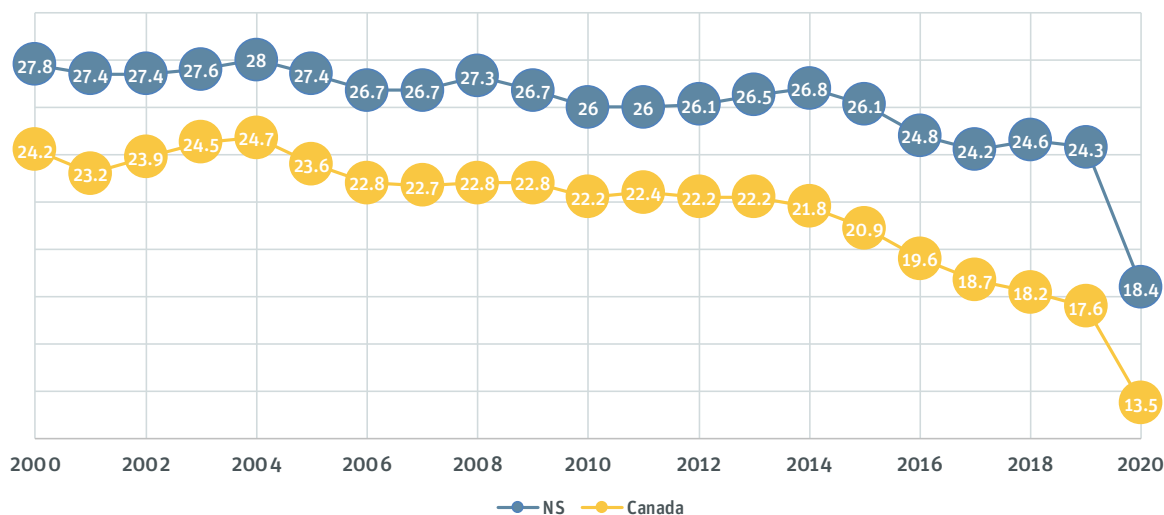
Source: Statistics Canada custom tabulation, T1 Family Files, 1989 and 2020

Figure 2 shows the trend of child poverty rates in Nova Scotia and Canada since 2000. Over that time, Nova Scotia recorded its highest child poverty rate in 2004 at 28%, as did Canada (24.7%). The Canadian average child poverty rate gradually declines after 2004, with periods of minor change or slight increases. Since 2014, there has been a steadier downward trend in child poverty in Canada, with a marked decline in 2020. The Canadian child poverty rate now sits at 13.5%. The trend in Nova Scotia mirrors the national trend to some extent; however, child poverty rates in Nova Scotia have persistently been higher. Between 2014 and 2019, there was a steady widening of difference (from 5% to 6.7% higher) between Nova Scotia rates and the Canadian rate of child poverty. Furthermore, the child poverty rates have shown more fluctuation in Nova Scotia since 2014, not mirroring the steady downward trend compared to the Canadian average. The rate in Nova Scotia did not go lower than 24% of children until 2020, whereas it dipped below 24% in 2005 nationally and steadily declined. Since our last

report card, which reported rates for 2019, the child poverty rate decreased by 24.3%, from 24.3% to 18.4% in one year.

Data from tax files (T1FF) demonstrates that while **Nova Scotia's child poverty rate declined in 2020, it remains high compared to the rest of Canada. Nova Scotia has performed relatively poorly in reducing child poverty.**

**FIGURE 2** NOVA SCOTIA, AND CANADA, CHILD POVERTY RATE, 2000-2020, CFLIM-AT



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family Files, 2000-2020

In 2018, the Federal government adopted the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as Canada's official measure of poverty.<sup>8</sup> The MBM is an absolute measure of material deprivation, which compares income to the cost of goods and services that would allow a family to meet their basic needs and have a modest standard of living.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the CFLIM-AT, a relative measure of poverty (capturing inequality) that compares income nationally, the MBM is sensitive to regional differences. When poverty rates are reported using the MBM annually, data from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) is used as it is not possible to calculate the MBM poverty rate with tax filer data. The

<sup>8</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018). *Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*. Retrieved November 27, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html#h2.1>

<sup>9</sup> The Market Basket Measure used in this report card is the new 2018 based MBM that was revised. See this report to understand what is included and how it was revised, Djidel, S., Gustajtis, B., Heisz, A., Lam, K., Marchand, I., & McDermott, S. (2020). *Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2020002-eng.pdf>

Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT) and the MBM are also calculated with Census data, both of which are available for 2020. Despite these additional sources, this report relies primarily on estimates using the CFLIM-AT calculated using the T1FF to allow reporting on small communities within Nova Scotia. This data has a 95.7% coverage of the Nova Scotian population. Using this data also makes it possible to make comparisons with previous report cards which use T1FF data in the years between Census reporting. 2021 Census data is used when examining poverty rates for identified groups of children—using the Census LIM-AT as the poverty indicator. In some instances, the MBM indicator of poverty is used to offer comparisons.

*Table 1* highlights the different estimates of child poverty from each available measure. The Census-based LIM-AT results in an estimated child poverty rate of 17.3%, compared to 18.4% using T1FF data and the CFLIM-AT. The discrepancy between measures is primarily driven by income calculated at the household level for the LIM-AT rather than the census family level for the CFLIM-AT. ‘Households’ are a broader concept that includes everyone living in a private dwelling unit, regardless of their relation, whereas the ‘census family’ is a concept that refers to married or common-law couples with or without children or lone parents with at least one child living in the dwelling with them.

The considerably lower poverty rates reported by the MBM are partly due to the different definitions of poverty and, in part, to a lack of inclusion of some groups of people. MBM measures exclude many people living in the deepest poverty, including those in the territories and on reserves.<sup>10</sup> Further, the MBM based on Canada Income Survey data excludes other Indigenous settlements, people living in institutions, and households in extremely remote areas with very low population density. In addition, the small sample size, particularly in the Atlantic provinces, often returns poor data quality ratings for MBM child poverty reporting using the Canadian Income Survey.<sup>11</sup>

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**10** Statistics Canada. (2022, November 9). *Disaggregated trends in poverty from the 2021 Census of Population*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021009/98-200-X2021009-eng.cfm>

**11** The data source used to calculate poverty rates using the Market Basket Measure is the Canadian Income Survey, which is a small sample-based survey that excludes everyone living on a First Nations Reserve, whereas tax filer data are used to calculate poverty rates based on the CFLIM-AT. The MBM rate is not comparable to the LIM rate because of the data source, and also because they are measuring different aspects of poverty. The LIM is a measure of relative poverty in relation to the Canadian median income, capturing income inequality, whereas the MBM is an absolute measure based on the cost of living regionally. Please see Appendix C for further explanation of low-income measures and data sources.

**TABLE 1 MEASURES OF CHILD POVERTY (AGED 0-17), NOVA SCOTIA, 2020**

Poverty Definition	CFLIM-AT	LIM-AT	MBM	LIM-AT*	MBM**
<b>Data Source</b>	T1 Family File	2021 Census	2021 Census	Canadian Income Survey	Canadian Income Survey
<b>Poverty Rate (%)</b>	18.40%	17.30%	11.40%	9.90%	5.50%
<b>Number of children in poverty</b>	31,370	28,510	18,350	16,000	9,000

\* Data quality D: use with caution

\*\* Data quality E: use with caution

Sources: CFLIM-AT data – Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0018-01, LIM-AT data – Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0100-01, MBM CIS data – Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0135-01, and MBM census data – Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0117-01.

# Child Poverty Rates Within Nova Scotia

## Child poverty rates by Census Division and Federal Electoral District

Some families with children face higher risks of poverty and greater depths of poverty than others. Poverty is uneven across geographic communities. *Table 2* shows the differences based on Statistics Canada's Census Divisions in Nova Scotia. The lowest child poverty rates are in Antigonish (15.2%) and Halifax (15.9%). The child poverty rates are highest in Digby (27.3%), Annapolis (25.7%), and Cape Breton (24.8%).

**TABLE 2** CHILD POVERTY RATE BY CENSUS DIVISIONS

Annapolis	25.7	Inverness	19.2
Antigonish	15.2	Kings	17.5
Cape Breton	24.8	Lunenburg	19.3
Colchester	18.5	Pictou	19.6
Cumberland	24.1	Queens	26.4
Digby	27.3	Richmond	19.6
Guysborough	19.6	Shelburne	20.5
Halifax	15.9	Victoria	21.6
Hants	17.2	Yarmouth	21.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2020

Reducing poverty requires leadership from all levels of government. *Table 3* shows child poverty rates by federal electoral boundaries to demonstrate how poverty rates vary across federal electoral districts. **The Sydney-Victoria riding has a child poverty rate of 26.1% (the 6th highest rate in federal riding in Canada) and seven additional ridings (Halifax, West Nova, Cape Breton-Canso, Cumberland-Colchester, Central Nova, and Kings-Hants, South Shore-St.Margarets) have rates that are represented in the highest quintile of child poverty rates nationally.**

**TABLE 3** CHILD POVERTY RATE BY FEDERAL ELECTORAL DISTRICT, 2020

Cape Breton-Canso	20.1
Central Nova	18
Cumberland-Colchester	20.3
Dartmouth-Cole Harbour	15.9
Halifax	22
Halifax West	16.3
Kings-Hants	17.7
Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook	11.3
South Shore-St.Margarets	17.7
Sydney-Victoria	26.1
West Nova	21.8

Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2020

## Child poverty rates by postal area

Appendix A (*Table 7*) provides available child poverty numbers and rates by Nova Scotia postal areas (cities<sup>i</sup> and rural routes<sup>ii</sup>).<sup>12</sup> These data show disparities in child poverty between areas throughout Nova Scotia that are hidden when poverty rates are calculated as provincial or regional aggregates (Census Divisions/Federal Electoral Districts). Twelve postal areas have child poverty rates of 30% and higher. The range of rates is quite significant, from

<sup>12</sup> Appendix A (Table 7) includes communities determined by postal cities and rural routes defined by the Canada Post Corporation (CPC) with at least 50 low-income children residing there. Postal cities are a collection of postal codes that begin with the same first three digits. Any given postal city is only loosely associated with a community and may not align with other understandings of community boundaries. A rural postal code has the numeral 0 (zero) in the second position of the first three digits of the code.



a low of 5.1% in Upper Tantallon, part of the Halifax Regional Municipality, to a high of 60% in the postal area of Micmac, which includes part of the Sipekne'katik First Nations.

It should also be noted that postal cities for urban areas of the province (Halifax and Dartmouth) reported in Appendix A are aggregates of several postal areas. Such totals disguise higher child poverty rates in certain areas of urban Nova Scotia. For example, child poverty rates based on smaller postal units (Forward Sortation Areas [FSA] - Appendix B, *Table 8*) within the Halifax postal city range from 15.4% (B3P codes - Armdale/Purcells Cove neighbourhoods) to 30.6% (B3J codes - Downtown Halifax) to a high of 32.8% in Spryfield (B3R codes).

Similarly, rates range in the Dartmouth postal city from 6.6% (B2V codes - Morris Lake/Cole Harbour) to 25.8% (B3A codes - North Dartmouth/North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park neighbourhoods). Postal Area data suggest that the province's rural and urban areas experience high rates of child poverty.

# Child Poverty Rates for Different Population Groups

THE CANADIAN CENSUS also reports low-income status (every five years), and the census is the only data source that reports child poverty rates by identified groups of children—racialized, immigrant, and Indigenous children (First Nations, Métis, Inuit and/or those who are Registered or Treaty Indians).

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## Racialized Children

*Figure 3* compares Nova Scotia child poverty rates to national rates for several racialized groups.<sup>13</sup> The child poverty rate in Nova Scotia for most racialized groups was higher than the national rates. For example, 56.9% of Korean children in Nova Scotia are low-income (23.5% in Canada), and 55.2% of Arab children in Nova Scotia, compared to 26.3% of Arab children in Canada, are low-income. These staggeringly high rates reveal the dynamics of racial and ethnic inequities. The poverty rate for Black children in Nova

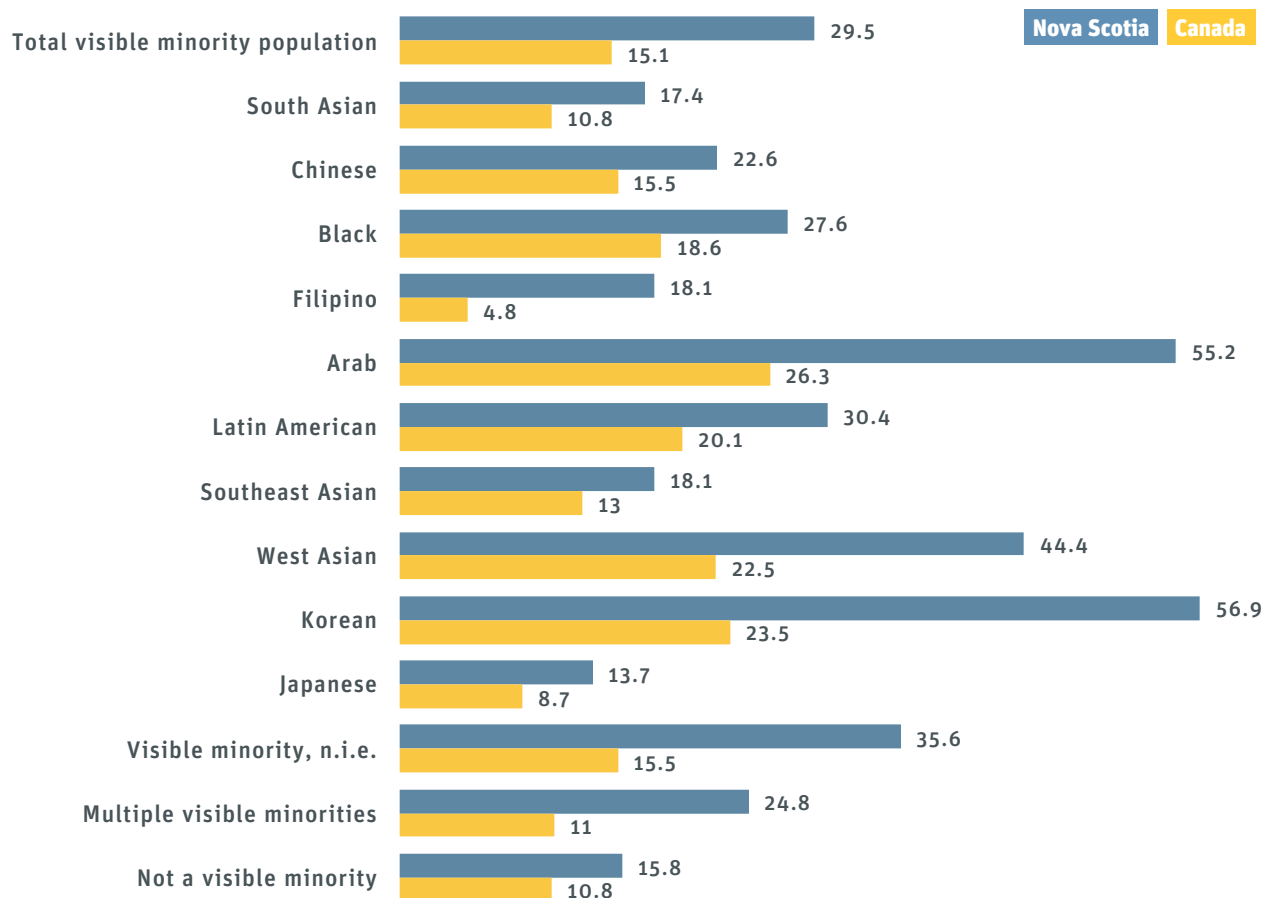
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<sup>13</sup> Visible minority is the term Statistics Canada uses based on the federal Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as ‘persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.’

Scotia was 27.6% (also higher than the Canadian rate of 18.6%). The poverty rates for these racialized children in Nova Scotia are all much higher than those for non-visible minority children in Nova Scotia (15.8%)—a category that includes children with Indigenous identity.

While it is not possible to disaggregate Tax filer data (T1FF) from 2020 by groups of children (as socio-demographic questions are not asked on tax returns), patterns of higher child poverty rates are evident in postal geographies where census profiles report higher populations of African Nova Scotian. For example, the child poverty rate in North Preston (postal city) was 35% in 2020. The FSA postal code B1N (Whitney Pier) has a child poverty rate of 33%, Rural Route BoV1Ao (Bay View/Digby) a rate of 32.9%, and 29% in the FSA postal code B3K (Halifax North End).

**FIGURE 3** CHILD POVERTY RATE BY VISIBLE MINORITY STATUS (LIM-AT), NOVA SCOTIA, 0-14 YEARS

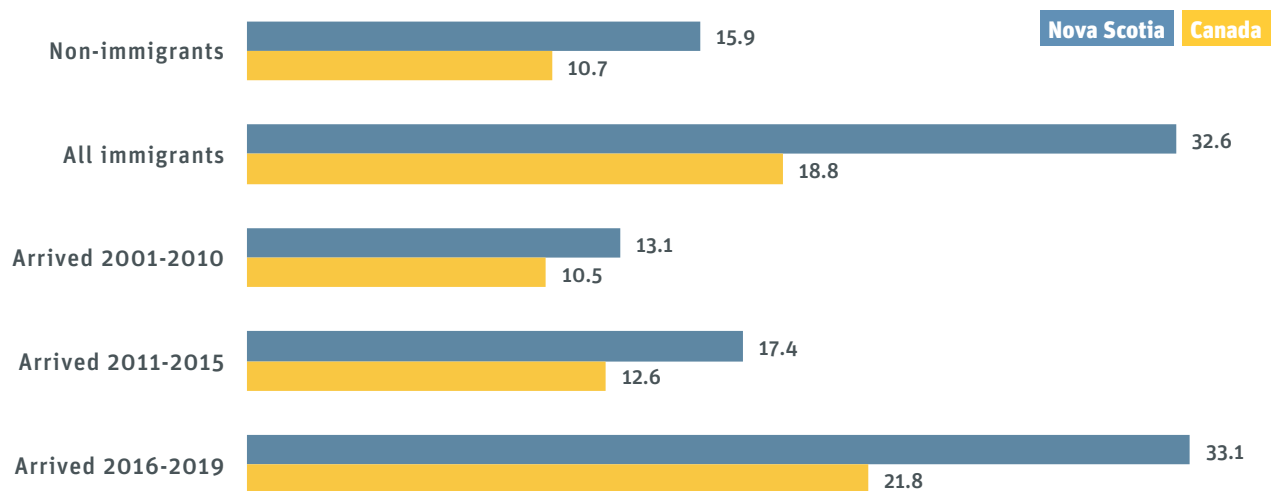


Source: Statistics Canada. (2022). 2021 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016211.

## Immigrant Children

Figure 4 shows a poverty rate of 32.6% for immigrant children in Nova Scotia and thus is far higher than non-immigrant children (15.9%) and higher than the Canadian rate for immigrant children (18.8%). A third (33.1%) of new immigrant children coming to Nova Scotia between 2016 and 2019 were in poverty compared to 21.8% throughout Canada. Nova Scotia children who immigrated between 2011-2015 and 2001-2010 had lower poverty rates than newer immigrants, but in all instances, they were higher than the Canadian rate.

**FIGURE 4** CHILD POVERTY RATE BY IMMIGRATION STATUS (LIM-AT), NOVA SCOTIA AND CANADA, 2020



Note: Only landed immigrants and permanent residents are included as immigrants in this figure. Statistics Canada did not report poverty rates for temporary residents or those without legal status.

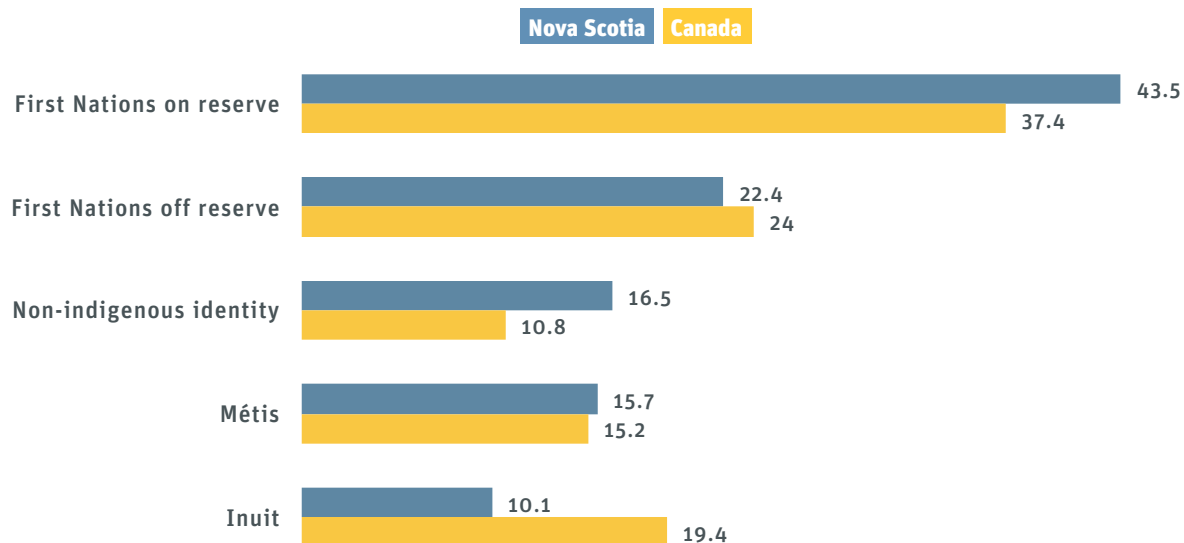
Source: Statistics Canada Table 98-1003-14-01. Individual low-income status by immigrant status and period of immigration (Census 2021).

## Indigenous Children

Figure 5 reports Census data that show First Nations children in Nova Scotia (both on and off reserve) continued to have high poverty rates compared to children without an Indigenous identity. **First Nations children living on reserve in Nova Scotia had a child poverty rate of 43.5% compared to 16.5% of non-indigenous children.** This rate is also higher than First Nations children living on reserves throughout Canada (37.4%). The rate for First Nations children living off reserve was 22.4% was also higher than non-indigenous children and slightly less than in Canada (24%). The child poverty rate for Inuit children in Nova Scotia (10.1%) and for Métis children (15.7%) was less than the rate for non-indigenous children (16.5%).

Tax filer data (T1FF) from 2020 shows that child poverty rates in postal areas that include reserves indicate much higher rates of income poverty for children. For example, the child poverty rate is as high as 60% in the Micmac rural route, 50.7% in the Eskasoni postal area, 46.7% in Wagmatcook, and 32.4% in Membertou, respectively.

**FIGURE 5 CHILD POVERTY IN FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS COMMUNITIES, NOVA SCOTIA, 2020**



Source: Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0283-01. Individual low-income status by Indigenous identity and residence by Indigenous geography.

## Rate of Child Poverty by Disability Status

People with disabilities experience disproportionately high rates of poverty.<sup>14</sup> While 22% of Canadians live with a disability, they make up 41% of those who live in poverty.<sup>15</sup> We also know that Nova Scotia has the highest disability rate in the country (30%), which is higher for women (32%) than men (28%).<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the 2021 census data does not report on the rate of child poverty by disability status. However, we know that children with disabilities are twice as likely to live in households relying on social assistance and that families

<sup>14</sup> Morris, S., Fawcett, G., Brisebois, L., & Hughes, J. (2018). *A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017*. Statistics Canada <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018002-eng.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Jackman, T. (2023). *Disabled people kept in a cycle of poverty*. Disability Without Poverty. <https://www.disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/disabled-people-kept-in-a-cycle-of-poverty/>

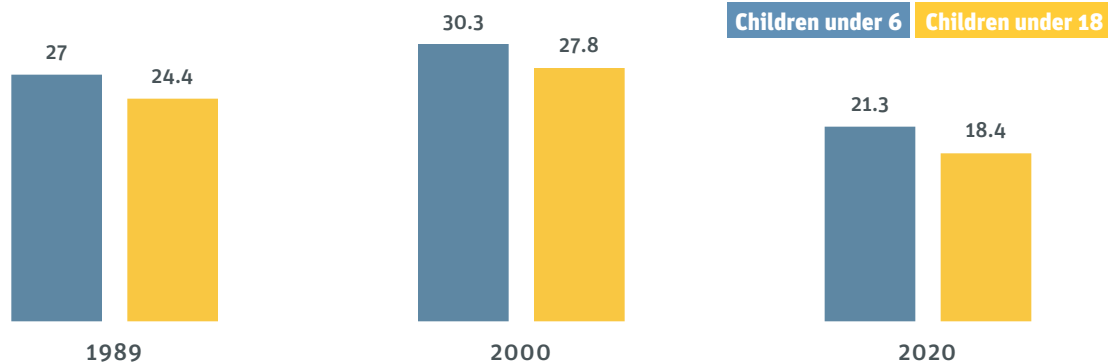
<sup>16</sup> Nova Scotia Government. *Prevalence of Disabilities in Nova Scotia. Referencing, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017, Statistics Canada*. <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/prevalence/>

with children who have disabilities are more likely to live in poverty due to increased time away from work.<sup>17</sup> The Longitudinal and International Study of Adults (2014) confirms that Canadians with disabilities face a higher risk (23%) of low-income status. Among persons with a disability, the low-income status was more than 50% for lone-parent families.<sup>18</sup> Official poverty rates do not fully capture the experiences of people with disabilities or parents and caregivers of children with disabilities and complex needs because poverty rates do not take into consideration their higher costs of living.<sup>19</sup>

## Child Poverty by Age

Figure 6 shows the child poverty rate for children under six in 1989, 2000, and 2020. It demonstrates that **poverty rates for younger Nova Scotian children were higher in all three years** than for all children under 18. In 2020, the child poverty rate for children under 6 was 21.3%, more than one in five young children, compared to 18.5% of all children (13.1% higher).

**FIGURE 6** CHILD POVERTY RATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 6 COMPARED TO ALL CHILDREN (CFLIM-AT), NOVA SCOTIA, 1989, 2000, 2020



Source: Statistic Canada, T1 Family File, 1989, 2000, and 2020, Custom Tabulation, Reference R22077

<sup>17</sup> Canadian Association for Community Living. (2013). *Assuring Income Security and Equality for Canadians with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families*. Retrieved November 27, 2020. [http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/Committee/411/FINA/WebDoc/WD6079428/411\\_FINA\\_IIC\\_Briefs/CanadianAssociationforCommunityLiving\\_E.pdf](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/Committee/411/FINA/WebDoc/WD6079428/411_FINA_IIC_Briefs/CanadianAssociationforCommunityLiving_E.pdf)

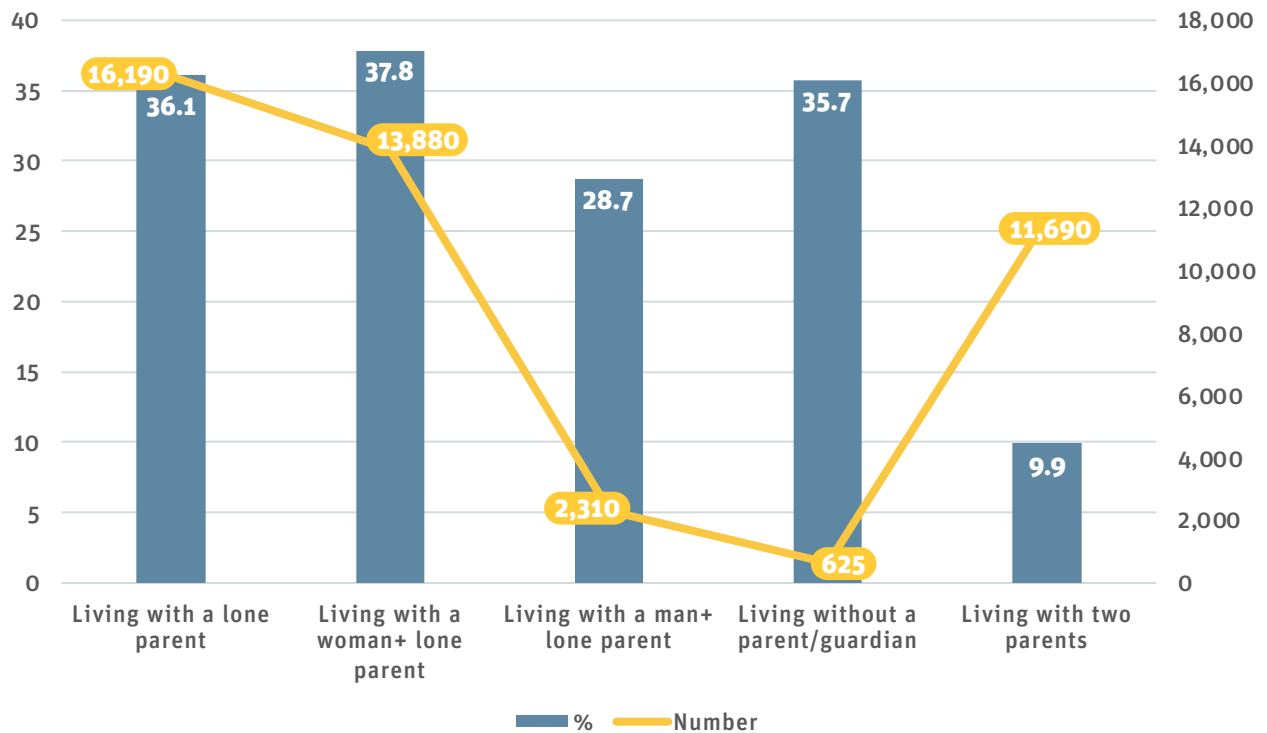
<sup>18</sup> Wall, K. 2017. (2017). *Low income among persons with a disability in Canada*. Statistics Canada. Retrieved November 15, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2017001/article/54854-eng.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Scott, C. W. M., Berrigan, P., Kneebone, R. D., & Zwicker, J. D. (2022). Disability Considerations for Measuring Poverty in Canada Using the Market Basket Measure. *Social Indicators Research*, 163(1), 389-407. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-022-02900-1>

## Child Poverty by Family Type

Figure 7 shows that children living in lone-parent families experience a much greater likelihood of living in poverty than children living in couple families. Stark differences in child poverty rates can be found by family type and gender. Based on the 2021 Census, the child poverty rate across family types was the lowest among children with two parents at 9.9%. Eighty-five percent of lone-parent families are mother-led, and mother-led families had higher rates of child poverty than father-led families (37.8% versus 28.7%, representing 13,880 and 2,310 children, respectively). This is a significant difference underscoring the gendered nature of poverty.

**FIGURE 7** PERCENT AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY ACCORDING TO THE LIM-AT BY FAMILY TYPE, 2020

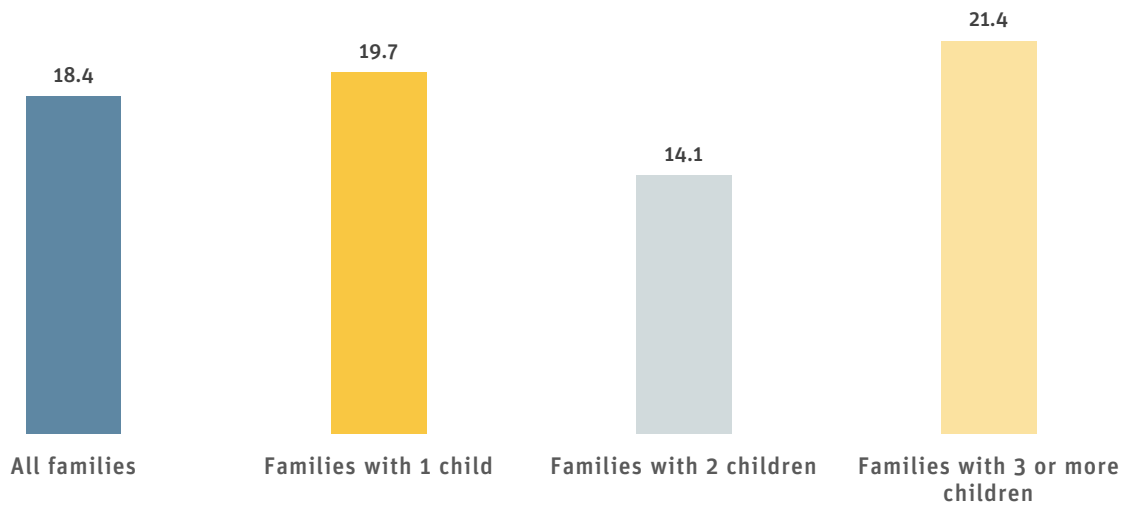


Note: "Man+" and "woman+" are terms used by Statistics Canada to denote that some gender-diverse people are included in these groups because the sample of gender-diverse people was too small to report separately.

Source: Statistics Canada. (2022). Table 98-10-0100-01: Low-income status by age, census family characteristics and household type, 2021 Census.

Nova Scotia children living in larger families also have higher poverty rates. *Figure 8* shows that the poverty rate for families with three or more children was 21.4%, compared to 19.7% for families with only one child and 14.1% for families with two children.

**FIGURE 8** CHILD POVERTY RATE (CFLIM-AT) BY FAMILY SIZE, NOVA SCOTIA, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0018-01



# Children in Families on Welfare

CHILDREN IN FAMILIES that depend on social and disability assistance benefits are poor by design. These benefits, also called welfare incomes, include income assistance payments, disability benefits, federal and provincial child tax credits, and other provincial government transfers. Maytree reports total welfare incomes in Canadian provinces and territories annually for unattached single people considered employable, unattached single people with a disability, and two different family types with children (a lone parent with one child aged two years and a couple family with two children aged 10 and 15). This report card uses data on welfare income for 2020.<sup>20</sup>

During the pandemic lockdown, the federal government set the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) at \$2000/month. In Nova Scotia, the CERB is nearly triple the monthly social assistance benefits of single parents with one child, who could receive \$10,444 per year in 2020. It is also almost \$800 more per month than basic social assistance for couples with two children at \$14,516 per year.<sup>21</sup>

*Figure 9* illustrates that total welfare incomes for a single-parent family with one child have remained relatively stagnant in Nova Scotia since 1989, with the lowest rates in the early 2000s. Between 2015 and 2017, incomes

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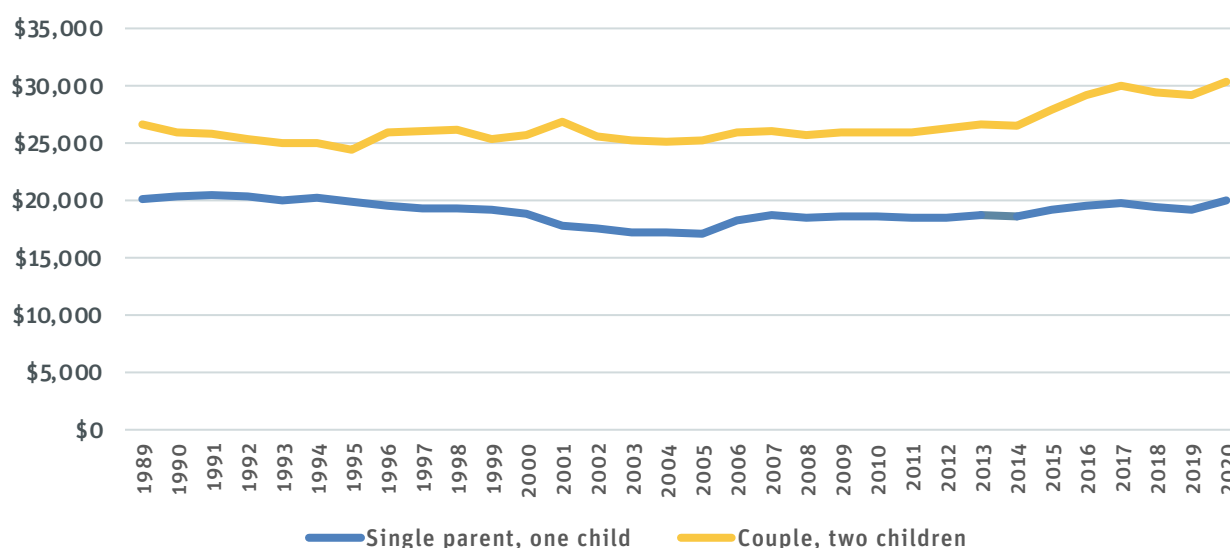
<sup>20</sup> Laidley, J., & Tabbara, M. (2021). *Welfare in Canada 2020*. [https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare\\_in\\_Canada\\_2020.pdf](https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2020.pdf). And *Welfare in Canada, 2021*. [https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare\\_in\\_Canada\\_2021.pdf](https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2021.pdf). Herein referred to as Maytree, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Maytree, 2021.

were trending upward for single parents and couple families. This coincided with increases to the federal child benefit (CCB) that began in July 2016, which, notably, was pegged to inflation in 2018. The data show, however, that the provincial government failed to leverage federal investment to improve welfare incomes. Welfare rates fell in Nova Scotia for both family types after 2017 until 2020.

In 2020, during a global pandemic, the maximum welfare income for both family types increased. However, the maximum welfare benefit for single-parent families with one child was \$20,009, the highest since 1989, but only \$57 more per year than in 1989 when adjusted for inflation, including pandemic benefits.<sup>22</sup> For the couple families, the total welfare benefit in 2020 was at an all-time high of \$31,349.<sup>23</sup>

**FIGURE 9** TOTAL ANNUAL WELFARE INCOME BY FAMILY TYPE, NOVA SCOTIA, 1989-2020



Source: Welfare in Canada 2021, Maytree (2022)

<sup>22</sup> Constant dollars factor out the effect of inflation in order to accurately compare dollar amounts over time.

<sup>23</sup> Laidley, J., & Tabbara, M. (2022). *Welfare in Canada 2021*. [https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare\\_in\\_Canada\\_2021.pdf](https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2021.pdf)

# Depth of Poverty

A HUNDRED PERCENT of families that rely on government support as their only source of income live in poverty in Nova Scotia; Total welfare incomes are well below the poverty line. As shown in *Table 4*, **Nova Scotia has the lowest welfare incomes in Canada for single-parent families with one child (only 61% of the Market Basket Measure poverty line) and the third lowest, after New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador, for couple families with two children (65% of the MBM).**<sup>24</sup> These household types are in **deep poverty** (officially defined as having an income less than 75 percent of the MBM).

**TABLE 4** ADEQUACY OF WELFARE INCOMES FOR TWO HOUSEHOLD TYPES, NS, 2020

Adequacy indicator	Single parent, one child	Couple, two children
<b>Total welfare income</b>	\$20,009	\$30,331
<b>MBM</b>		
<b>MBM threshold (Halifax)</b>	\$32,799	\$46,385
<b>Welfare income minus MBM threshold</b>	-\$12,790	-\$16,054
<b>Welfare income as % of MBM</b>	61%	65%
<b>LIM</b>		
<b>LIM threshold (Canada-wide)</b>	\$35,835	\$50,678
<b>Welfare income minus LIM threshold</b>	-\$15,826	-\$20,347
<b>Welfare income as % of LIM</b>	56%	60%

Go to: [www.maytree.com/welfare-in-canada](http://www.maytree.com/welfare-in-canada) for more information

<sup>24</sup> Maytree, 2021.

In 2020, there were permanent increases to social assistance that saw a 2% increase for couples with two children and 5% for single parents with one child. These increases were the result of the introduction of the Standard Household rate, which combined the personal allowance and shelter allowance into one. The Nova Scotia government also increased the NS Child Benefit from \$52.08 per month for the first child to \$77.08.<sup>25</sup> It also provided a one-time \$50 COVID assistance payment to all social assistance recipients. Social assistance recipients who were eligible for the CERB, were not allowed to be on social assistance, even though the federal government urged governments to allow them to receive supports from both programs. *Table 5* breaks down the welfare income by components, including basic social assistance and other income benefits. *Table 6* further disaggregates the COVID-19 temporary benefits that were paid automatically to income assistance recipients. Both tables show how much support was provided by the provincial government compared to the federal government.

**TABLE 5 WELFARE INCOME COMPONENT PARTS, NS, 2020**

Income component	Single parent, one child	Couple, two children
Basic social assistance	\$10,444	\$14,516
Additional social assistance	\$0	\$150
Federal child benefits	\$7,002	\$11,910
Provincial child benefits	\$775	\$1,600
Federal tax credits/benefits	\$1,473	\$1,780
Provincial tax credits/benefits	\$315	\$375
<b>Total 2020 income</b>	<b>\$20,009</b>	<b>\$30,331</b>

Source: Maytree (2021). Welfare In Canada, 2020.

**TABLE 6 COVID-19 PANDEMIC-RELATED PAYMENTS, FEDERAL AND NS, 2020**

Payments	Unattached single considered employable	Unattached single with a disability	Single parent, one child	Couple, two children
NS payments	\$50	\$50	\$100	\$200
Federal payments	\$290	\$290	\$1,033	\$1,486
<b>Total 2020 COVID-related payments</b>	<b>\$340</b>	<b>\$340</b>	<b>\$1,133</b>	<b>\$1,686</b>

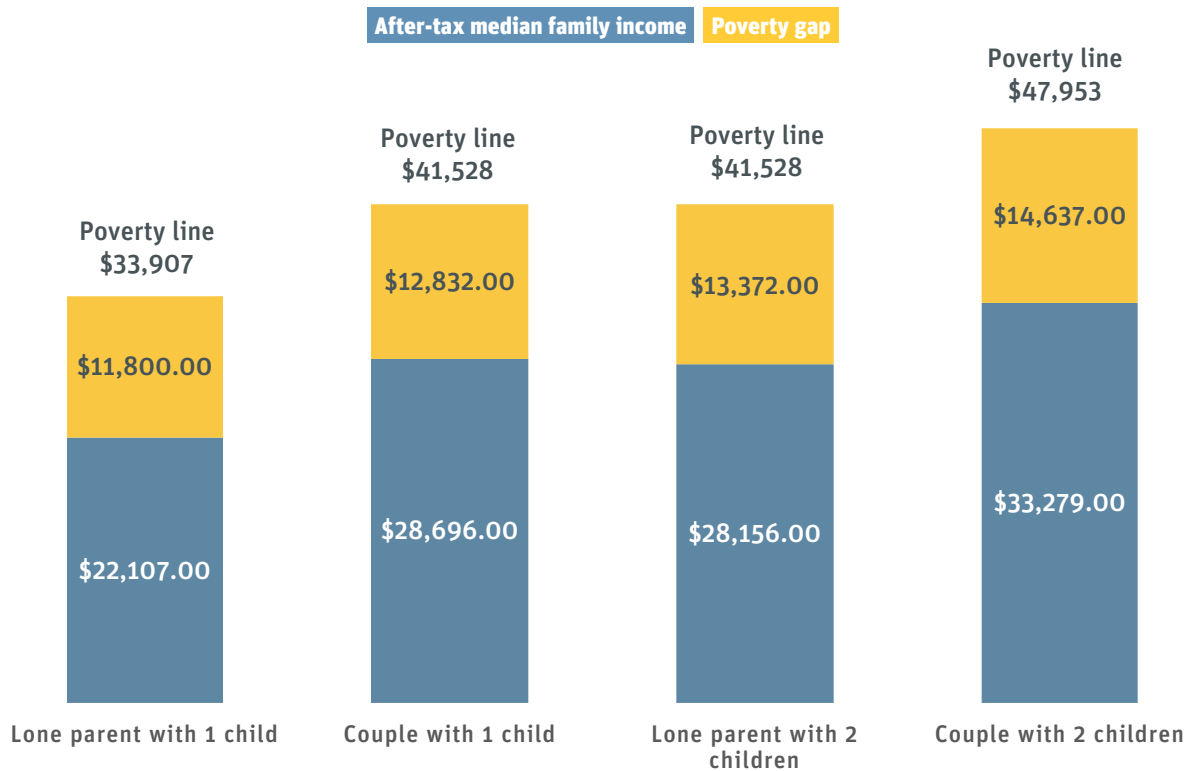
Source: Maytree (2021). Welfare In Canada, 2020.

Note: This table displays the breakdown of pandemic payments. These amounts are included in, and are not in addition to, the figures in Table 5.

25 Maytree, 2021.

Even those low-income families not solely relying on the government face huge income gaps to reach the poverty line. *Figure 10* shows that **many low-income families live far below the CFLIM-AT poverty threshold**. The average incomes of low-income families of differing sizes were significantly below the CFLIM-AT. For example, low-income couple families with two children in Nova Scotia had a median income of \$33,279 in 2020 (a decrease from 2019). This income left them \$14,637 below the CFLIM-AT poverty line (only with enough income to cover 66% of the poverty threshold). These families live in deep poverty and would need an extra \$1220/month to meet the poverty line. The median income of couple families with one child was \$28,696 (also a decrease from 2019), increasing their poverty gap as well (to \$12,832). Both lone-parent family types saw a decrease in their poverty gap between 2019 and 2020. Lone-parent families with one child and lone-parent families with two children had median incomes below the poverty line by \$12,275 and \$13,632, respectively.

**FIGURE 10** DEPTH OF LOW INCOME FOR FAMILIES IN NOVA SCOTIA WITH INCOME BELOW THE CFLIM-AT, 2020



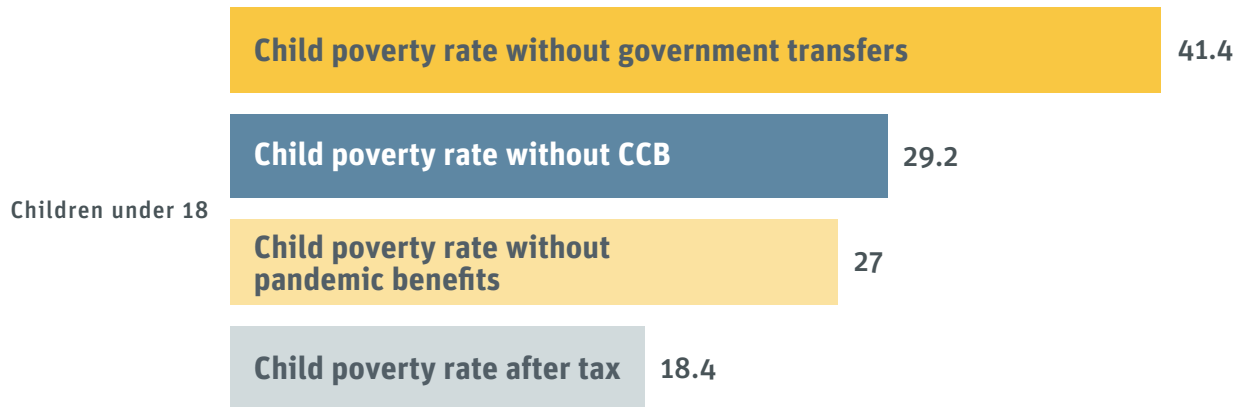
Source: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0018-01. After-tax income status of tax filers and dependents based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition, 2020.

# Government Benefits Lowered Child Poverty

GOVERNMENT INCOME BENEFITS to individuals and families are effective in reducing the rate of child poverty. These benefits are delivered by both the federal and provincial governments. They include children's benefits and benefits to other family members (Canada Child Benefit, the NS Child Benefit, the Goods and Services Tax credit, the Working Income Tax Benefit, Employment Insurance, Income Assistance, and the NS Affordable Living Tax Credit). During the COVID-19 pandemic, federal, provincial and territorial governments implemented a wide range of new and enhanced income supports to help people temporarily because of the pandemic.

*Figure 11* displays the poverty reduction resulting from income support for Nova Scotian families. **In 2020, government transfers reduced child poverty by 55.9%. Indeed, government benefits lifted 26,810 children aged 0-17 out of poverty, meaning the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia would have been 41.4% without them (39,060 children).** *Figure 11* also shows that the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia would have been 27% without pandemic related benefits. This is higher than the child poverty rate in 2019, which was 24.3%, indicating that in the absence of temporary pandemic transfers, child poverty would have increased in 2020. Pandemic benefits reduced poverty by 31.9% for children (from 27% to 18.4%). When the impact of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is isolated, it shows a reduction in child poverty by 37% (from 29.2% to 18.4%).

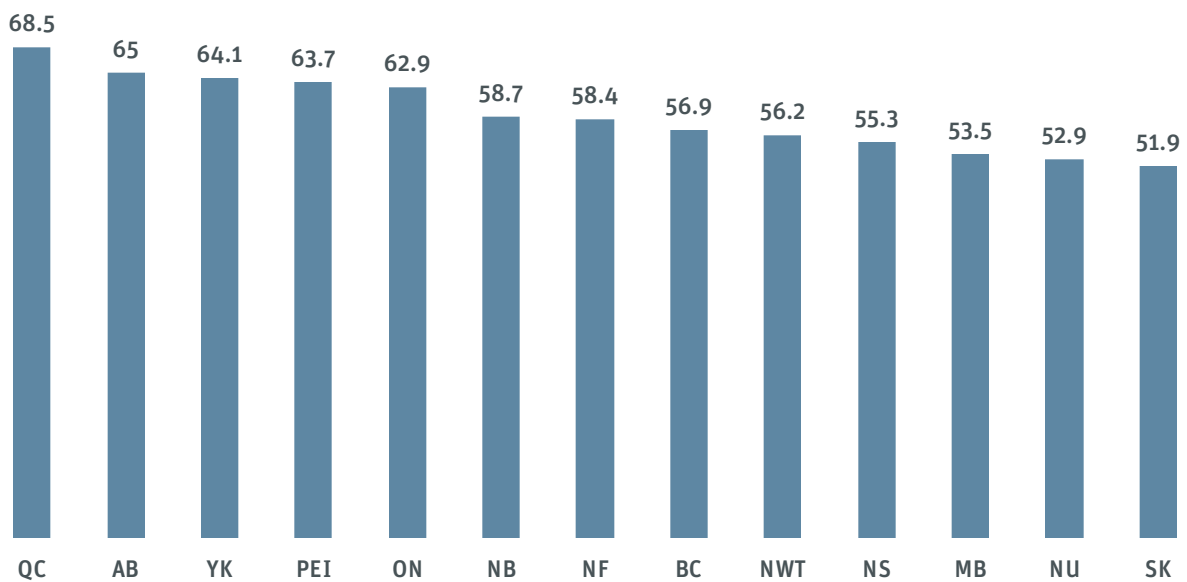
**FIGURE 11** IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS ON CHILD POVERTY RATE (CFLIM-AT), NOVA SCOTIA, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada, Centre of Income and Socioeconomic Well-Being Statistics, Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File), Custom Tabulation.

*Figure 12* demonstrates that nine other provinces/territories were more effective in reducing child poverty using government transfers. Nova Scotia's poverty reduction due to federal and provincial transfers was the least effective in the Atlantic provinces.

**FIGURE 12** PERCENT REDUCTION IN CHILD POVERTY DUE TO GOVERNMENT INCOME SUPPORTS, CFLIM-AT, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada, Centre of Income and Socioeconomic Well-Being Statistics, Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File), Custom Tabulation.

# Ending Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia Provincial Government Recommendations

ENDING CHILD POVERTY will require tackling all forms of poverty because children live in families who live in poverty. The government should develop a poverty elimination plan based on principles in the social policy framework published by CCPA-NS and the NS College of Social Workers.<sup>26</sup> A poverty elimination strategy must be evidence-based, employ an intersectional lens, and incorporate principles of universality, decolonization, social inclusion, anti-racism, decent work and well-being, as outlined below. There need to be specific legislated mechanisms for holding the government to account for this plan, with targets and timelines, and on the particular issues facing families and children. Along with the poverty indicators in this report card, the *One Chance to be a Child* report<sup>27</sup> provides a baseline for a range of well-

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**26** Findlay, T., Saulnier, C., & Stratford, A. (2020). *Are you with us? Covid-19 confirms the need to transform Nova Scotia's social safety net*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives- Nova Scotia (CCPA-NS Office). See also the Social Policy Framework workbook: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/facts-infographics/social-policy-framework-nova-scotia>

**27** Department of Pediatrics and Health Populations Institute. (2022). *One Chance to Be a Child: A data profile to inform a better future for child and youth well-being in Nova Scotia*. [https://www.onechancens.ca/\\_files/ugd/db246d\\_4b7d33da61c34333a7bc6d6f3dc546d3.pdf?index=true](https://www.onechancens.ca/_files/ugd/db246d_4b7d33da61c34333a7bc6d6f3dc546d3.pdf?index=true)



being indicators across dimensions of food and housing security, learning, physical and mental health, social belonging and healthy environments.

## **Recommendation 1**

**Invest in a comprehensive, robust Poverty Elimination Plan incorporating an outcomes-based framework, with targets and timelines embedded in legislation, requiring regular reporting to the legislature.**

The current provincial government has indicated that one of its priorities is to reduce child poverty. However, there has yet to be a release of a plan. The provincial budget tabled in a few weeks will be the actual test of its commitment. Will the budget include investments in any of the recommendations outlined below as necessary to get at the root causes of child and family poverty? Will it have funding for the new Child and Youth Commission<sup>28</sup> that might be empowered to monitor progress or lack of progress to end child poverty?

### **Child and Family Services Act**

In 2017, changes were made to the Children and Family Services Act, including expanding the definition of neglect to include: “*the chronic and serious failure to provide to the child adequate food, clothing or shelter, adequate supervision, affection or cognitive stimulation, or any other similar failure to provide care.*”<sup>29</sup> As the NS College of Social workers argues: “This provision opens up a punitive process for marginalized families for the failures of society.”<sup>30</sup> This change has expanded the reporting obligations of professionals, officials and others who work with children and families, contributing to the over-surveillance of racialized and vulnerable communities. The government does not provide sufficient income support, which ensnares people in

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28 Nova Scotia Government. (2022). *Government Seeking Public Input on New Child and Youth Commission*. Department of Community Services. <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20221004002>

29 Nova Scotia Government. (1990). *Children and Family Services Act*. <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/children%20and%20family%20services.pdf>

30 Nova Scotia College of Social Workers. (2021). *Children and Family Services Act: 4 Year Review Submission*. <https://nscsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CFSA-Review-Submission-Final.pdf>

poverty. Instead of addressing its responsibility for creating these problems, this change has led to the continued overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black families involved in the child welfare system. The entire system needs transforming with careful attention to “disentangling the issues of poverty and maltreatment, particularly neglect.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, “Being poor does not make someone a poor parent, though poverty can create conditions under which maltreatment is more likely to occur. Similarly, addressing economic risk and poverty is necessary but insufficient to end child maltreatment or the need for child protective services.”<sup>32</sup>

## **Recommendation 2**

**Remove “failure to provide to the child adequate food, clothing or shelter” from the Children and Family Services Act and invest in preventing child apprehension by enabling families to provide for what their children need.**

### **Government income support**

The data presented in this report card shows that government income support has a positive effect on reducing poverty. However, given the depth of poverty that continues to be faced by so many, these tax benefit/credit programs need to provide more reliable incomes to bridge the largest of gaps and lift people out of poverty.

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) has helped families and helped reduce child poverty. However, we know that there remain families who are still not receiving the benefit despite being eligible and families who experience disruptions related to the CRA’s administration of the CCB.<sup>33</sup> It is critical that both levels of government work to remove all barriers to receiving CCB as quickly as possible, recognizing that for some families this could make the difference between whether they keep custody of their children, can exit a domestic violence situation, or remain housed. One of these barriers is the

<sup>31</sup> Weiner, D.A., Anderson, C., & Thomas, K. (2021). *System transformation to support child and family well-being: The central role of economic and concrete supports*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

<sup>32</sup> Weiner et al. 2020. OpCit.

<sup>33</sup> Government of Canada, Taxpayers Ombudsman. (2020). *Transformation through Disruption: Annual Report 2019-2020*. Ottawa: Office of the Taxpayers’ Ombudsman [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/oto-boc/ar-2019-2020/5556\\_CRA\\_OTO\\_2019\\_Annual\\_EN\\_WEB.pdf#](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/oto-boc/ar-2019-2020/5556_CRA_OTO_2019_Annual_EN_WEB.pdf#)

practice of finding parents ineligible for the Canada Child Benefit, as well as the Nova Scotia Child Benefit or Child Disability Benefit, after their children have been placed in the temporary care and custody of the Nova Scotia Minister of Community Services, and before a final order of permanent care and custody has been made in favour of the Minister.<sup>34</sup> The removal of this income, which can be quite a significant portion of many families' monthly income, makes it extremely difficult for parents, leaving them often unable to afford to maintain adequate housing for the children's return.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Immediately end the practice of removing the Canada Child Benefit, Child Disability Benefit, and the Nova Scotia Child Benefit from families when a child is brought into temporary care and custody.**<sup>35</sup>

### **Recommendation 4**

**Ensure that the federal government ends pandemic payment clawback to the CCB and implements a full CERB Amnesty.**

The income support system of last resort in Nova Scotia is the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program is designed to ensure that people struggle to afford the basics. In addition to ESIA, the families have access to the CCB, the NSCCB, the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit and the GST credit. As can be seen in *Table 4* in this report card, the total amount of assistance provided in 2020 was far below the official poverty line (the Market Basket Measure), even when that income assistance is added to all other available government transfers and even when including the one-time COVID benefits. Nova Scotia has some of the lowest income support packages in the country, with the second amount for a single parent with one child (provided with 61% of the poverty line-the MBM). The increases in

<sup>34</sup> Culligan, M., & Osborne, A. (2021, March 29). *Voice of the People, Family double-whammy: Losing kids to foster care, plus one-third of income.* <https://www.saltwire.com/halifax/opinion/local-perspectives/voice-of-the-people-april-3-2021-569898/>

<sup>35</sup> Campaign 2000. (2023, January 17). CERB Amnesty Campaign, End CCB Clawbacks. <https://campaign2000.ca/sign-today-cerb-amnesty-petition/>

income assistance in 2020 still leave many families in deep poverty (officially defined as providing 75% or less of the MBM). As it stands, ESIA's income support is still not indexed to annual inflation, nor is the Nova Scotia Child Benefit or the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit. Any small gains made in one year are lost in the next without indexation. The government of Nova Scotia must reform the ESIA program incorporating the principles of social inclusion and respect for human dignity and ensure that everyone is provided with a level of support equal to the Market Basket Measure (Halifax).

## **Recommendation 5**

**Reform the Employment Supports and Income Assistance (ESIA) program incorporating the principles of social inclusion and respect for human dignity.**

## **Recommendation 6**

**Substantially increase Employment Supports and Income Assistance, along with increases to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit, to ensure that the total federal-provincial income support is equal to the Market Basket Measure and is not eroded by inflation.**

### **Decent work is a pathway out of poverty**

Although it is often assumed that working-full time is a pathway out of poverty, plenty of people who work at or around the minimum wage in Nova Scotia know a different reality. Working Nova Scotians make up almost half of the food insecure households, with 48.8% of them reliant on income from employment.<sup>36</sup> Improving the earned incomes for families with children is essential for ending poverty. Stable employment helps alleviate or reduce child poverty, but having a job, especially at minimum wage or part-time, does not solve the problem. While we applaud the provincial government for moving the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in October of 2023, it is time

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<sup>36</sup> Caron N, Plunkett-Latimer J. (2022). *Canadian Income Survey: Food insecurity and unmet health care needs, 2018 and 2019*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2021009-eng.htm>

to make a plan for a \$20 minimum wage especially given that the lowest living wage in the province is \$20.<sup>37</sup> There is evidence that a \$1 increase in the minimum wage reduces the odds of food insecurity by 5%.<sup>38</sup> Labour standards in Nova Scotia are among the weakest in the country. They need to be strengthened, including by removing employer incentives to keep workers at part-time pay and not pay overtime. These changes should include shortening the standard work week to 40 hours and incorporating paid family and sick leave provisions.<sup>39</sup>

## **Recommendation 7**

**Implement a plan to increase the minimum wage to \$20.**

## **Recommendation 8**

**Amend the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code to better protect workers in the province, creating conditions for decent work to be the standard and improving working families' lives.**

### **Universal public services**

A universally accessible, high-quality Early Learning and Child Care system is also essential for child poverty eradication. Much more must be done to address the lack of licensed care in many communities across the province and to retain and recruit Early Childhood Educators by urgently addressing low wages and lack of benefits.

While child care should be a priority to support families, other public services need investment. Investing to expand universal public health care and make post-secondary education more affordable is also critical. Programs like family pharmacare are not universal and are challenging to

<sup>37</sup> The living wage in 2022 ranges from \$23.50 per hour in Halifax to \$20 in Cape Breton. Saulnier, C. (2022). *Living Wages in Nova Scotia 2022*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/living-wages-nova-scotia-2021>

<sup>38</sup> PROOF. (2021). *Provincial Policy Levers to Reduce Household Food Insecurity*. [https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PROOF\\_FACTSHEET\\_Provincial-policies-052021.pdf](https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PROOF_FACTSHEET_Provincial-policies-052021.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Casey, R. (2019). *A rising tide to lift all boats*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/rising-tide-lift-all-boats>

access, including because of deductibles. Only 25.6% of current program spending on pharmacare in Nova Scotia goes to the lowest income quintile.<sup>40</sup>

## **Recommendation 9**

**Fund and build a high-quality, early learning and child care system that is child-centred, play-based, seamless (all day, full year), genuinely affordable, accessible, inclusive and quality, not-for-profit and publicly managed.**

## **Recommendation 10**

**Invest in public and social infrastructure, including extended universal public health care (mental health care, pharmacare, dental care, vision care), strengthen inclusive public education, make post-secondary education more affordable, and invest to ensure essential costs are available and affordable (e.g., food, internet).**

### **Address the affordable housing crisis**

Most parts of Nova Scotia face a housing crisis, with low vacancy rates and high and increasing rental rates, housing insecurity and homelessness.<sup>41</sup> As was outlined in the Housing for All report, there needs to be a significant investment to maintain and build public housing as well as other non-market housing (non-profit and cooperative), and there needs to be an investment in housing supports and services. The government must continue and strengthen the rent cap by tying it to the unit.

<sup>40</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). (2022). *Trends in public drug program spending in Canada*. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/trends-in-public-drug-program-spending-in-canada>

<sup>41</sup> Housing for All Working Group. (2021). *Keys to a housing secure future for all Nova Scotians*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/keys-housing-secure-future-all-nova-scotians>

## **Recommendation 11**

**Implement the Housing for All recommendations to ensure that all Nova Scotians have meaningful access to safe, permanently affordable, secure, supported, and adequate housing.**

### **Targeted measures for those who have been systematically marginalized**

The government must address the underlying causes of the high poverty rates for different groups to eradicate poverty. The highest poverty rates are in early childhood when considering the child's age. Research from Nova Scotia shows that maternity leave based on minimum wage employment and income assistance is inadequate to afford a basic nutritious diet throughout perinatal and early infancy, emphasizing the risk of food insecurity as a critical issue for families with young children in low-income circumstances.<sup>42</sup> This research points to the need to address low-waged work, particularly by increasing the minimum wage rate, providing additional provincial income support for those on maternity and parental leave, and increasing income assistance. Minimum wage and income assistance need to be increased, but there are also gendered roots of the cause of these high poverty rates that explicitly need to be addressed, including in the labour market.

### **Gendered Roots**

As the data in this report card has shown, low-income children in mother-led lone-parent families still face a higher poverty rate than those in father-led lone-parent families and the highest when considering poverty rates by family type. The median income for female-led lone-parent families in Nova Scotia in 2020 was \$48,870 compared to \$62,940 for male lead lone-parent families.<sup>43</sup> We know that 71.5% of mothers with children aged 0-5 worked outside the home in 2019.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Frank, L., Waddington, M., Sim, M., Rossiter, M., Grant, S. & Williams, P. (2020). "The Cost and Affordability of Growing and Feeding a Baby in Nova Scotia." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 111: 531-542. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-020-00306-5>.

<sup>43</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022). *CANSIM Table 111-0011: Family characteristics, by family type, family composition and characteristics of parents*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110001101>.

<sup>44</sup> Kbari, E., McCuaig, K., & Foster, D. (2021). *The Early Childhood Education Report 2020*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. [http://ecereport.ca/media/uploads/2021-profiles-en/nova\\_scotia\\_profile\\_2020.pdf](http://ecereport.ca/media/uploads/2021-profiles-en/nova_scotia_profile_2020.pdf).

High rates of child poverty in early childhood (under 6) can partly be explained by the fact that the earnings of mothers tend to drop after child-birth, referred to as the ‘motherhood pay gap.’<sup>45</sup> Maternity and parental leave entitlements amount to only 55% of earned wages, should you indeed be eligible for them. We know that women’s access to employment insurance and maternity leave has declined over time because women are more likely to have non-standard work arrangements, which makes meeting the eligibility criteria more challenging.<sup>46</sup> Research from Nova Scotia shows that both maternity leave based on minimum wage employment and income assistance are inadequate to afford a basic nutritious diet throughout perinatal and early infancy periods emphasizing the risk of food insecurity as a critical issue for families with young children in low-income circumstances.<sup>47</sup>

Women also continue to face a significant pay equity gap: The median hourly wage for all employees aged 15 and over in NS is \$24 (\$23 for women and \$25.37 for men) as of January 2023. The median hourly wage for full-time employees is \$24.28 and \$27.50.<sup>48</sup> Depending on the measure used, whether for all employees or whether average or median, the gender pay gap for women in Nova Scotia ranges from 9-13%. The most significant pay gap is for full-time median hourly wages, where women earn 87 cents for every dollar a man earns. We also know that racialized women face even more significant gaps.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, in many cases, child poverty is intricately linked to the dynamics of women’s poverty and the gender discrimination they face in the labour market, leaving them in low-wage and part-time work while facing the challenges of unpaid caregiving that falls disproportionately on women. In addition to investing in continuing to make child care more available, thus supporting women to enter, stay, or/and increase work hours in the labour market, the government should:

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45 Grimshaw, D. and J. Rubery. 2015. *The motherhood pay gap: Review of the issues, theory and international evidence*. Conditions of Work and Employment Series, No. 57. Geneva, Switzerland. International Labour Office.

46 Townsend, M. and K. Hayes. 2007. *Women and the employment insurance program*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved November 15, 2020 (<https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/women-and-employment-insurance-program>).

47 Frank, L., Waddington, M., Sim, M., Rossiter, M., Grant, S. & Williams, P. 2020.

48 Statistics Canada. (2023). *Employee wages by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality*. Table 14-10-0063-01. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410006301-eng>

49 Statistics Canada. (2016). *Census, Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016356*. <https://t.ly/StatsCan2016DataTables>



## **Recommendation 12**

**Strengthen the pay equity act and extend it to the private sector, race, and other equity-deserving groups.**

## **Recommendation 13**

**While the government works to close the poverty gap for income assistance, it should invest in additional support for those that are pregnant, and for children during the first year of life, to support families when the cost of raising children is highest.**

## **Recommendation 14**

**Institute provincial maternity and parental leave supplemental insurance modelled after Quebec’s program.<sup>50</sup>**

### **Intersecting Discrimination**

The highest poverty rates are experienced by those groups who face discrimination that is often overlapping, based on gender, but also Indigeneity, race, immigration status, disability and sexual orientation. Any solution to address family poverty must ensure that the income supports, policies and programs are responsive to the diversity of needs of all low-income people. For example, the provincial government should work with the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition and support the implementation of their priorities, which include “establishing a legislative framework for recognizing African Nova Scotians as a unique people that results in an Act that establishes a new relationship between all People of African Ancestry and the Government of Nova Scotia.”<sup>51</sup> The United Nations Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent concludes that “Canada’s history of enslavement, racial segregation and marginalization of African Canadians has left a legacy of anti-Black racism

<sup>50</sup> Government of Quebec. Quebec Parental Insurance Plan. <https://www.rqap.gouv.qc.ca/en/what-is-the-quebec-parental-insurance-plan>

<sup>51</sup> The African Nova Scotian DPAD Coalition responds to Count us in, Nova Scotia’s action plan for the rest of the decade, October 18, 2019, NS Advocate, <https://nsadvocate.org/2019/10/18/psa-the-african-nova-scotian-dpad-coalition-responds-to-count-us-in-nova-scotias-action-plan-for-the-rest-of-the-decade/>

and had a deleterious impact on people of African descent, which must be addressed in partnership with the affected communities.”<sup>52</sup> Given that 30.4% of Nova Scotia’s population has a disability (2018 data),<sup>53</sup> the highest percentage in the country and higher than the national average, it is critical that the needs of this population are urgently addressed. Much more must be done so all those facing additional barriers can fully and equally participate in all aspects of society.

## **Recommendation 15**

### **Invest in proactive strategies developed in collaboration with communities with exceptionally high poverty rates to ensure policies and programs meet their needs.**

It is primarily the federal government that must commit to supporting self-determination for First Nations, both financially and jurisdictionally, with an emphasis on revenue sharing. The provincial and municipal governments, and all public institutions, must also commit to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous self-determination while decolonizing mainstream institutions, and policies. The *Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Education Agreement* provides an important model to follow when considering how devolution can be handled.<sup>54</sup> Given the high poverty rates and underfunding of essential services that First Nations communities face, all levels of government should commit to fully implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action,<sup>55</sup> and Jordan’s Principle,<sup>56</sup> as well as the calls to justice in the final report of

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52 United Nations. (2017, 16 August). *Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Canada*. New York: United Nations General Assembly. <https://ansa.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/files/report-of-the-working-group-of-experts-on-people-of-african-descent-on-its-mission-to-canada.pdf>

53 Statistic Canada. (2018). *Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories*. Table: 13-10-0374-01 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310037401&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.5>

54 Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. (2020). *Strategic Plan 2020-25*. <https://kinu.ca/wp-content/uploads/MK-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025.pdf>

55 United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

56 First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. *Jordan's Principles*, accessed February, 2023. <https://fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle>

the inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.<sup>57</sup> The provincial government can also do its part to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.<sup>58</sup>

## **Recommendation 16**

**Continue to support First Nations in Nova Scotia to assume self-governance over child and family services to ensure they meet their cultural, historical, and geographical needs and circumstances.**

## **Recommendation 17**

**Commit to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous self-determination while decolonizing mainstream institutions, and policies, by doing the following:**

- a.** Honour the Peace and Friendship Treaties.
- b.** Fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.
- c.** Formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.
- d.** Fully implement the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' calls to justice.
- e.** Immediately mandate all provincial workers in the Child Welfare System to connect Indigenous Families with Jordan's Principle workers through the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaw, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society before any child apprehension.

<sup>57</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

<sup>58</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Calls to Action*. [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

# Recommendations for the Federal Government

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT has a central role to play as the government with a much broader and deeper revenue base to invest in the support and services needed to support families with children to get out of poverty. Campaign 2000's federal report card has more detailed recommendations for the federal government.<sup>59</sup> This year's national report card, *Pandemic Lessons: Ending Child and Family Poverty is Possible*, includes more than 50 recommendations on poverty reduction measures that cover inequality, income security, decent work, childcare, housing and public health.

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<sup>59</sup> Campaign 2000. (2022). *2022 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada*. <https://campaign2000.ca/pandemic-lessons-ending-child-and-family-poverty-is-possible/>

# Conclusion

TAKING PRIDE IN being a caring community cannot end with charity. Moving from charity to justice requires our government to use its power, and fiscal capacity, to make the necessary investments to end poverty in all its forms. Our focus on child poverty underlines the urgency because a failure to prevent it risks long-lasting impact. Put another way, the investments that would end child poverty are the best investments we can make as a society. We reap the benefits for generations because breaking the cycle of poverty early supports more people to reach their full potential and contributes to making Nova Scotia a place where everyone can thrive and not just survive.

It is time our government takes responsibility for the poverty in our province. Kids can't wait.

# Appendix A

**TABLE 7** CHILD POVERTY RATES BY POSTAL AREA

Postal areas 2020 ( <sup>i</sup> postal city; <sup>ii</sup> rural route)	Number of low-income children 0-17	Child poverty rate (%)
Aberdeen <sup>ii</sup>	130	27.7
Afton Station <sup>ii</sup>	100	32.3
Amherst <sup>i</sup>	440	25.3
Antigonish <sup>i</sup>	200	16.3
Arcadia <sup>i</sup>	50	14.7
Aylesford <sup>ii</sup>	100	15.4
Baddeck <sup>ii</sup>	100	22.2
Bay View <sup>ii</sup>	270	32.9
Beaverbank <sup>i</sup>	140	8.7
Bedford <sup>i</sup>	710	13
Beechville <sup>i</sup>	50	9.8
Berwick <sup>ii</sup>	180	20.9
Bible Hill <sup>i</sup>	180	22
Bridgetown <sup>ii</sup>	120	27.9
Bridgewater <sup>i</sup>	300	22.2
Brooklyn Corner <sup>i</sup>	50	25
Caledonia <sup>ii</sup>	50	27.8
Cambridge <sup>ii</sup>	80	18.6
Canning <sup>ii</sup>	90	15.3
Canso <sup>ii</sup>	50	26.3
Centreville <sup>ii</sup>	80	16.3
Chapel Island <sup>ii</sup>	100	21.7
Chester Basin <sup>ii</sup>	80	21.1
Clarks Harbour <sup>ii</sup>	60	20
Coldbrook <sup>i</sup>	60	11.3
Dartmouth <sup>i</sup>	2680	16.3
Debert <sup>ii</sup>	110	20
Dominion <sup>i</sup>	70	23.3
East Amherst <sup>i</sup>	50	14.3
East Preston <sup>i</sup>	50	23.8
Eastern Passage <sup>i</sup>	300	13
Elmsdale <sup>i</sup>	60	12.2
Enfield <sup>i</sup>	90	8.6
Eskasoni <sup>i</sup>	720	50.7
Fall River <sup>i</sup>	110	6.2

Postal areas 2020 ( <sup>i</sup> postal city; <sup>ii</sup> rural route)	Number of low-income children 0-17	Child poverty rate (%)
<b>Falmouth<sup>ii</sup></b>	50	8.5
<b>First South<sup>ii</sup></b>	130	17.3
<b>Florence<sup>i</sup></b>	60	25
<b>Glace Bay<sup>i</sup></b>	710	28.3
<b>Granville Ferry<sup>i</sup></b>	150	27.3
<b>Gulf Shore<sup>ii</sup></b>	50	23.8
<b>Halifax<sup>i</sup></b>	5420	23.3
<b>Hammonds Plains<sup>i</sup></b>	200	7
<b>Hantsport<sup>ii</sup></b>	90	20
<b>Hilden<sup>ii</sup></b>	130	17.6
<b>Hopewell<sup>ii</sup></b>	50	27.8
<b>Hubbards<sup>ii</sup></b>	90	13.8
<b>Hubley<sup>i</sup></b>	50	10.6
<b>Inverness<sup>ii</sup></b>	60	18.2
<b>Kennetcook<sup>ii</sup></b>	50	22.7
<b>Kentville<sup>i</sup></b>	400	21.7
<b>Kingston<sup>ii</sup></b>	290	15.4
<b>Lake Echo<sup>i</sup></b>	60	11.3
<b>Lakeside<sup>i</sup></b>	50	22.7
<b>Lantz<sup>i</sup></b>	60	12
<b>Lawrencetown<sup>i</sup> (Halifax County)</b>	50	9.4
<b>Lawrencetown<sup>ii</sup> (Annapolis County)</b>	70	26.9
<b>Liverpool<sup>ii</sup></b>	180	29
<b>Lower Sackville<sup>i</sup></b>	620	15.7
<b>Lyons Brook<sup>ii</sup></b>	200	19.8
<b>Mahone Bay<sup>ii</sup></b>	120	23.1
<b>Membertou<sup>i</sup></b>	120	32.4
<b>Merigomish<sup>ii</sup></b>	50	20.8
<b>Micmac<sup>i</sup></b>	60	60
<b>Middle Musquodoboit<sup>ii</sup></b>	50	22.7
<b>Middle Sackville<sup>i</sup></b>	210	6.8
<b>Milford<sup>ii</sup></b>	70	15.6
<b>Milton<sup>ii</sup></b>	50	31.3
<b>Mount Uniacke<sup>ii</sup></b>	110	12.8
<b>Musquodoboit Harbour<sup>ii</sup></b>	220	15.4
<b>New Germany<sup>ii</sup></b>	100	24.4
<b>New Glasgow<sup>i</sup></b>	360	20
<b>New Minas<sup>i</sup></b>	160	22.5
<b>New Ross<sup>ii</sup></b>	70	36.8
<b>New Waterford<sup>i</sup></b>	280	28.9
<b>Nictaux<sup>ii</sup></b>	220	26.2

Postal areas 2020 ( <sup>i</sup> postal city; <sup>ii</sup> rural route)	Number of low-income children 0-17	Child poverty rate (%)
North Preston <sup>i</sup>	70	35
North Sydney <sup>i</sup>	250	26
Oxford <sup>ii</sup>	90	22
Parrsboro <sup>ii</sup>	90	29
Port Hawkesbury <sup>i</sup>	130	22
Port Williams <sup>ii</sup>	90	21.4
Porters Lake <sup>i</sup>	60	8.6
Reserve Mines <sup>i</sup>	60	20
Salmon River <sup>i</sup>	70	17.1
Scotch Village <sup>ii</sup>	140	18.4
Scotchtown <sup>i</sup>	50	29.4
Scotsburn <sup>ii</sup>	50	18.5
Sheet Harbour <sup>ii</sup>	50	26.3
Shelburne <sup>ii</sup>	170	23.9
Shubenacadie <sup>ii</sup>	300	30.6
Springhill <sup>ii</sup>	210	29.6
Stellarton <sup>ii</sup>	140	15.2
Stewiacke <sup>ii</sup>	120	19
Sydney <sup>i</sup>	1150	21.4
Sydney Mines <sup>i</sup>	290	27.1
Tatamagouche <sup>ii</sup>	90	19.1
Three Mile Plains <sup>ii</sup>	320	20.4
Timberlea <sup>i</sup>	160	9
Trenton <sup>i</sup>	170	21.5
Truro Heights <sup>i</sup>	70	22.6
Truro <sup>i</sup>	510	23
Tusket <sup>ii</sup>	90	19.1
Upper Kennetcook <sup>ii</sup>	50	21.7
Upper Tantallon <sup>i</sup>	50	5.1
Valley <sup>i</sup>	50	6.9
Wagmatcook <sup>ii</sup>	70	46.7
Waterville <sup>ii</sup>	100	22.2
Westville <sup>ii</sup>	240	20.3
Weymouth <sup>ii</sup>	150	31.9
Wilmot <sup>ii</sup>	80	22.9
Windsor Road <sup>ii</sup>	90	22
Wolfville <sup>i</sup>	90	18.8
Yarmouth <sup>i</sup>	440	33.3

Prepared using Statistics Canada, (T1 Family Files, 2020)

\*Only communities with 50 or more low-income children are included in this table.



# Appendix B

**TABLE 8** CHILD POVERTY RATES BY POSTAL AREA (FSA), HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY URBAN CORE, 2020

Region	Postal area	Number of low-income children 0-17	Child poverty rate (%)
Bounded by Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail	B2X	450	19
Downtown Dartmouth south to Woodside	B2Y	390	17.8
North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park	B3A	840	25.8
Burnside	B3B	70	20.6
South End Peninsula	B3H	380	20.1
Downtown Halifax	B3J	110	30.6
North End Peninsula	B3K	810	29
West End Peninsula	B3L	630	21.2
Bedford Basin	B3M	1590	24.4
Fairview & south to Rotary	B3N	390	16.9
Armdale/Purcells Cove	B3P	320	15.4
Spryfield	B3R	660	32.8
Bayers Lake	B3S	440	21.5
Bedford	B4A	470	12.2

Prepared using Statistics Canada, T1 Family Files, 2020. Forward Sortation Area (FSA) is defined by the first three digits of a postal code. This table includes child poverty rates in /the Halifax Regional Municipality Urban core. Neighborhood place names are assigned to postal codes using prior research<sup>60</sup> or Google Maps data.

<sup>60</sup> Prouse, V., Grant, J.L., Radice, M, Ramos, H., Shakotko, P. (2014). *Neighbourhood Change in Halifax Regional Municipality, 1970 to 2010: Applying the “Three Cities” Model* (Dalhousie University and The Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership).

# Appendix C

## Data Sources and Measures of Poverty

There are three data sources that can be used to report on measures of poverty. The most comprehensive data source is the federal Census, which is a mandatory survey of the population conducted every five years. The last Census was conducted in 2021 and uses income data from 2020. Another source of data is the Canadian Income Survey (CIS), a yearly survey of a sample of Canadians that provides a portrait of income excluding residents of the territories, and persons living on reserves and other Aboriginal settlements. Third, is the T1 Family File (T1FF) which is collected every year from tax filers. According to Statistics Canada, the T1FF captures the income situation of 95.7% of families with children in Nova Scotia through child benefit records.<sup>61</sup> The T1FF is closer to the Census in that it captures data from most of the population of families, however some information available in the Census is not collected through tax-filer data, such as visible minority, immigration, or Aboriginal status. The T1FF collects income data from First Nations reserves, unlike the CIS.<sup>62</sup>

Along with these different data sources about Canadian incomes, there are different ways that poverty is measured. The CFLIM-AT (Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure) compares income of a census family to the rest of the population. The CFLIM-AT is a relative measure of poverty that determines poverty thresholds set at 50% of the median Canadian family income. After taking taxes and benefits into account and adjusting for family size, those with incomes below this threshold, are considered low-income. When calculating the CFLIM-AT with T1FF data, the unit of analysis is the census family. The Low-Income Measure After-Tax (LIM-AT) is also calculated using Census data and data from the CIS, however the unit of analysis is the household. Census families are members of a couple family, with or without children, and lone parents and their children. Households, in contrast, are any group of individuals who live in the same dwelling. The LIM is the most recognized measure of poverty internationally as it is the most strongly related to health status and developmental outcomes. It is used by UNICEF,

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<sup>61</sup> Statistics Canada. *Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2020*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/72-212-X>

<sup>62</sup> The Census also collects income data from those living on reserve however they do not make it publicly available.

the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the European Union. As UNICEF explains this poverty rate, it captures: **“the proportion of children who are to some significant extent excluded from the advantages and opportunities which most children in that particular society would consider normal.”**<sup>63</sup>

In 2018, Canada’s first federal government Poverty Reduction Strategy named the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as the official measure of poverty in Canada. The MBM is an absolute measure of material deprivation, which uses the cost of goods and services that would allow a family to meet their basic needs and have a modest standard of living.<sup>64</sup> The basket is costed in 50 regions across Canada<sup>65</sup> making it sensitive to regional differences, and includes the costs of specified qualities and quantities of food, clothing, footwear, transportation, shelter and other expenses. The current MBM calculations use the 2018 as the base year (updated from 2008) for what constitutes a ‘modest standard of living.’ In addition, the income data used in the calculation of the MBM is based on the Canadian Income Survey (CIS), and the Census, and not yearly T1FF data.

**TABLE 9 AFTER-TAX LOW-INCOME MEASURE THRESHOLDS**

Number of family members	Dollar amount
1	\$23,976
2	\$33,907
3	\$41,528
4	\$47,953
5	\$53,612
6	\$58,729
7	\$63,435
8	\$67,814
9	\$71,928
10	\$75,819

Source: Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2020. Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 72-212-X

\*The CFLIM-AT for any census family size can be calculated by multiplying \$23,976 by the square root of the family size. For example, the after-tax CFLIM for a family of 4 is \$47,952. This is calculated by multiplying \$23,976 by 2 (square root of 4).

<sup>63</sup> Leyland, A. (2014). *CFPC Report Card Issue Briefing – Child Poverty*. <https://www.cfpc.ca/CFPC/media/Resources/CFPC-Report-Card-Issue-Briefing-Child-Poverty.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Statistics Canada. (2017). *2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016147*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/98-400-X2016147>

<sup>65</sup> Wilkins, M., & Kneebone, R. (2018). “Social Policy Trends: Canada’s Official Poverty Line.” *The School of Public Policy Publications*, 11.

**TABLE 10 MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM) THRESHOLDS,  
2020 CONSTANT DOLLARS (2018 BASE YEAR)**

	Market Basket Measure Thresholds, dollar amounts				
	NS Rural	NS Population under 30,000	NS Population 30,000 to 99,999	Halifax, Nova Scotia	Cape Breton, Nova Scotia
<b>Number of Family Members</b>					
<b>1</b>	21,406.00	21,867.50	22,038.00	23,263.50	21,377.00
<b>2</b>	29,968.40	30,614.50	30,853.20	32,568.90	29,927.80
<b>3</b>	38,530.80	39,361.50	39,668.40	41,874.30	38,478.60
<b>4</b>	42,812.00	43,735.00	44,076.00	46,527.00	42,754.00
<b>5</b>	47,093.20	48,108.50	48,483.60	51,179.70	47,029.40
<b>6</b>	51,374.40	52,482.00	52,891.20	55,832.40	51,304.80

Source: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0066-01



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