

2021 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia

Worst Provincial Performance over 30 Years

Lesley Frank, Laura Fisher and Christine Saulnier





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2021 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia

5	Summary
10	Introduction
13	Reporting on poverty
15	The record
18	Child poverty rates within Nova Scotia
21	Child poverty rates for different population groups
26	Families who depend on welfare for household income
28	Depth of poverty
30	Income inequality
32	The effect of government benefits
34	Recommendations for the Nova Scotia government to end child and family poverty
45	Recommendations for the Federal Government
46	Conclusion
47	Appendix A
53	Appendix B
54	Appendix C
57	Notes

Summary

2021 report card on child and family poverty in Nova Scotia

THIS SUMMARY OF child and family poverty in Nova Scotia uses the Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure and tax-filer data for 2019, the most recent data available.

Between 1989 and 2019, child poverty rates decreased in every province and territory. However, **Nova Scotia has performed the worst in reducing child poverty from 1989 levels.** Nova Scotia has the highest rate in Atlantic Canada and the third-highest provincial child poverty rate in Canada, a consistent ranking over the last several years. As the report card details:

- Nova Scotia's child poverty rate in 2019 was 24.3%, down from 24.6% in 2018 (a 1.2% decrease).
- 41,230 children are living in poverty in Nova Scotia
- Almost 1 in 4 children in Nova Scotia live in poverty.
- 24.4% was the child poverty rate in 1989, when the promise was made to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000, which means poverty has only been reduced by 0.1 of a percentage point in Nova Scotia over 30 years.

- 27.8% was the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia in the year 2000, when it was supposed to be eradicated.

The 2019 data show that **government income support makes a difference**; government income benefits lifted 26, 810 children aged 0–17 out of poverty. The Canada Child Benefit is responsible for 87% of this reduction overall. There is still a long way to go: Nova Scotia has some of the lowest social assistance rates in the country. Low-income lone parent families with two children had a depth of poverty of \$13,432 per year (only 66% of the poverty threshold)—meaning they are in deep poverty and would need an extra \$1119/month to just bring them up to the poverty line.

While both rural and urban areas in the province experience high rates of child poverty, **the rates vary within the province**:

- The child poverty rates are highest in Digby (34.7%) and Annapolis (33.7%) Census Divisions, now higher than the Cape Breton (33.5%) Census Areas which for several years has reported the highest level of child poverty. In all three areas however, more than 1 in 3 children lived below the CFLIM-AT.
- The lowest rate of child poverty is 4.8% in Stillwater Lake in Upper Tantallon part of the Halifax Regional Municipality, and the highest rate is 73.3% in the postal code of Micmac, which includes part of the Sipekne'katik First Nations.

Poverty rates also vary by age and family type:

- The child poverty rate for children under 6 is 27.9%, close to one in three young children, compared to 24.3% of all children.
- 25,970 children or more than half (51.7 %) of those living in lone parent families in Nova Scotia live in poverty compared with 11.9% of children living in couple families (14,070 children).

Poverty rates vary by race as well; while there was no race-based data available for 2019; using previous Census data (2015) and the Low Income Measure After Tax, we know that while the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia for all children was 22.2%, over one-third (37.4%) of visible minority (Statistics Canada's term) children were low-income. For example, the census shows that 67.8% of Arab children, 50.6% of Korean children, and 39.6% of Black children were low-income compared to 20.3% of non-visible minority children. Census data also shows higher rates of low-income among new immigrant

children (56.8.%) compared to non-immigrant children (21.2%) and higher rates for off-reserve children of Aboriginal status (25.6%).

Poverty rates also vary by disability, and though there is no current data specific to children in Nova Scotia, the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability revealed that almost one third of working aged people with disabilities lived in poverty in Canada as measured by the Market Basket Measure and they were more likely to be in female lone parent families or living alone.

What is not captured in this data is **the intersectionality of poverty** and how many families and children experience multiple barriers preventing them from achieving their full potential and trapping them in the vicious cycle of poverty.

Getting at the root causes of poverty will require addressing income and wealth inequality. Nova Scotian families with children under 18 in the lowest income decile, have an average income of only \$13,192 in 2019 and held only 1.4% of the income share in Nova Scotia versus 26.6% for the highest income decile which had an average income of \$247,571.

Provincial government recommendations (summary)

The new provincial government has indicated that one of its priorities is to reduce child poverty. Child poverty and indeed poverty in all its forms needs to be *eradicated*. The final section of the report provides detailed recommendations. This is a summary of the key elements that a comprehensive approach to eradicating poverty must include:

1. Use the CCPA-NS social policy framework to develop a comprehensive, robust Poverty Eradication Plan, that incorporates an outcomes-based framework, including targets and timelines that are embedded in legislation.
2. Create a Child and Youth Advocate office to protect and promote the rights of Nova Scotia's children and youth.
3. Institute regular public reporting to the legislature on progress towards achieving goals to eradicate poverty, as well as specifically reporting on outcomes relating to children and youth well-being and support.
4. Address the root causes of women's higher poverty rates, including pay inequity by extending the pay equity act to apply to the private sector.

5. Invest in proactive strategies developed in collaboration with communities that have particularly high poverty rates to ensure policies and programs meet their needs.
6. Undertake substantive reform of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission to address all forms of discrimination.
7. 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.
8. Commit to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous self-determination, while decolonizing mainstream institutions, and policies.
9. Remove “failure to provide to the child adequate food, clothing or shelter” from the Children and Family Services Act.
10. 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.
11. Ensure that the federal government recalculates the CCB payments issued in July 2021 to exclude the CERB from the calculation of income; and that it return the lost benefits to families, and use the readjusted benefit amount until July 2022.
12. Reform the Employment Supports and Income Assistance (ESIA) program incorporating the principles of social inclusion and respect for human dignity. The ESIA’s benefit level must include regular cost of living increases taking into account housing/rental inflation and food inflation in particular. In combination with an enhancement of current income supports namely, the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, and the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit, the Poverty Reduction Credit, the government must ensure that the total federal-provincial income support meets and even surpasses a recognized low-income level.
13. Fund and build a high quality, early learning and child care system that is child-centred, play-based, seamless (all day, full year), truly affordable, accessible, inclusive and quality, not-for-profit and publicly managed.

14. 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).
15. Implement the 95 recommendations in the Housing for All report to ensure that all Nova Scotians have meaningful access to safe, permanently affordable, secure, supported, and adequate housing.
16. Increase the minimum wage to \$15 in the next year with a plan to make it a living wage.¹
17. Amend the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code to better protect workers in the province and improve the lives of working families, including providing at least 10 paid sick days.

Introduction

Living in poverty is a vicious cycle that is difficult to break. We struggle every day, for ourselves and for our children. But can we do it alone? Can we manage to break this vicious cycle without being taken into consideration, without being listened to and heard?²

THE 2021 REPORT *Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia* adds to a growing list of prior report cards that mostly tell the same story. Children's poverty is family poverty. For many years there has been close to 1 in 4 children living in families with incomes below the Low-Income Measure poverty line in Nova Scotia. For many years Nova Scotia has had the highest rate of child poverty in Atlantic Canada, and the third-highest provincial rate in Canada. For decades welfare rates remained stuck in time—stagnant despite the evidence that they have left people, families, and children, living in deep poverty. Behind these numbers are real people: parents choosing between paying rent, buying groceries, and heating homes; precarious employment that puts stress on families; the inability to engage in community life through opportunities that make life worthwhile.

In 1989, there was an all-parties resolution in the House of Commons that promised to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Eradication did not happen. Child poverty rates were even higher in 2000 across Canada and in Nova Scotia.

This report marks 30 years of data since the promise. Child poverty has only decreased by 0.1 of a percentage point in Nova Scotia. This is the worst

performance of any province on the work toward eradication. We can barely claim a reduction at all.

Study after study describes the profound effect poverty has on child development. The impact of poverty on our collective health, wellness and quality of life is overwhelming. The conditions that create poverty are not neutral. There are systemic pathways to it, and systemic entrapments. We know that family and child poverty is racialized, gendered, and rooted in long standing colonial relations. We recognize that poverty is first and foremost about a lack of income to meet basic needs, but poverty is also about social and economic exclusion. Poverty is shaped by multiple and intersecting experiences of discrimination, including those based on sex, disability, race, ethnicity, migration status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Thus, rather than poverty being an individual failing, it is important to recognize that it has been legislated into existence through chosen policy approaches to social welfare followed by a refusal to fix social programs we know are inadequate to bring families and people above the poverty line. We know that ending poverty in this province would have a considerable return on investment, with government inaction on poverty costing Nova Scotia \$2 billion per year in economic loss, \$279 million in excess public services cost, and \$231 million in foregone revenue.³

The pre-pandemic level of child and family poverty in the province should worry us about how families are doing now. While the outcome of the pandemic is yet to be realized in income statistics, the impacts will only deepen existing disparities in income, social supports, and access to healthcare. As Findlay, Saulnier and Stratford said of the impact of the pandemic, “The many individuals who were already falling through the gaps in the social safety net, were not caught.”⁴ The pandemic federal benefits caught many but not those individuals who were outside of the workforce before March 15th 2020 and not eligible for EI, who were not students, and, not those living in the deepest poverty on social assistance (who only received an extra \$50 one-time payment).

Community organizations are overrun. There is a housing crisis. Closures of schools, childcare centres, and the impact on female-dominated sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic put mothers and female-headed households at a higher risk for poverty as they earn less income and take on more childcare and household tasks than fathers.⁵ More women and racialized parents are employed in low-waged jobs and sectors that were disproportionately impacted by COVID public health restrictions, which means more of them

lost their jobs than higher-income earners and those in male-dominated sectors.⁶ New data has confirmed higher rates of food insecurity during the pandemic for households with children (19.2%) compared to households with no children (12.2%) than was the case previously.⁷ While income supports such as the Canada Child Benefit have been helpful in mitigating some of the economic impacts of the pandemic, higher costs related to raising a family, along with unemployment and rising costs of living, leave these households vulnerable to poverty and hunger. In Nova Scotia, food bank usage is up, with 29.8% of users being children.⁸

We know that government intervention, despite not having gone far enough, does work to reduce poverty. It can also eradicate poverty. While structures of inequality are persistent—they are not unmovable. If we agree that poverty is a problem, needs are unmet, and that our government has an obligation to its people, then the time is now to act swiftly on poverty eradication to prevent the harm currently felt by our families and children, indeed all people, and the burdens on our collective wellbeing in the province. The full impact of the pandemic will take many years to recover from in terms of damage to systems and structures. Governments need to explicitly support families as part of the recovery.

The new provincial government elected in August 2021 has an opportunity to act. It is encouraging that the ministerial mandate letter to the newly appointed Minister of Community Services, states that the minister is to “Work across Departments to establish a five-year target for the reduction of childhood poverty in the Province.”⁹ As we outline in our recommendations, it is possible to not just reduce poverty, but to end it, in all its forms, if a comprehensive approach is taken to address the root causes.

Reporting on poverty

THIS REPORT CARD provides the number and percentage of children living in poverty based on the most recent income-based statistics (2019). It provides analysis of how the rates differ by geography, social group, family type, and age. It also reports on the effect of government income support on the reduction of poverty amongst children.

Appendix C provides an overview of the data sources and measures of poverty (including poverty line thresholds) used in this report card.

There are a few critical points to understand about the data used:

- This report card is the 2021 report card, which uses 2019 data. The data have a two-year lag time, which is the shortest time period for the data to be cleaned, analyzed and prepared for public use by Statistics Canada. There are no data sets that are more up to date for measuring poverty.
- The data in this report card have not been collected by the authors. The federal government collects the data either using surveys done by Statistics Canada (including the Census) or by analyzing data from income tax filing. The data are public, though not all are available via the Statistics Canada website.

- This report primarily uses tax filer data available from Statistics Canada's T1 Family File (T1FF)—2019¹⁰ to report on low income for children (0–17 years of age). When doing so, it uses the CFLIM-AT (Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure) to indicate low-income status. The CFLIM-AT compares income of a census family¹¹ to the rest of the population of a similar family size. The CFLIM-AT is a relative measure of poverty that determines poverty thresholds set at 50% of the median Canadian family income, which means a family is considered to have a low-income if their income falls below the income amount that is positioned at the 25th percentile of all Canadian family incomes of the same size. This measure tracks changes in living standards and compares the living standard of low income individuals and families to that of the rest of society. Using tax filer data provides the most comprehensive accounting because anyone who files taxes is included. T1FF captures the income situation of 95.1% of families with children in Nova Scotia through child benefit records.
- When other data sources (Census, Canadian Income Survey, Welfare Incomes) and measures of poverty are used (Market Basket Measure (MBM)¹² in this report, they are referenced accordingly. An important caution about the data sources used to measure poverty according to the Market Basket Measure is that the Canadian Income Survey must be used and this survey uses a small sample size and excludes anyone living on reserve. Another note about the measure itself is that the baskets were not calculated for First Nation Reserves, leaving out communities with some of the highest rates of poverty. The most recent MBM data for Nova Scotia is also rated as an E, which means use with caution, as such that data does not appear in the main report. For more information see Appendix C.
- For the poverty thresholds based on the CFLIM-AT see Table 4 in Appendix C and Table 5 for thresholds based on the MBM. The authors have prepared all figures, tables and related calculations in this report. Sources used to produce figures and tables are noted.

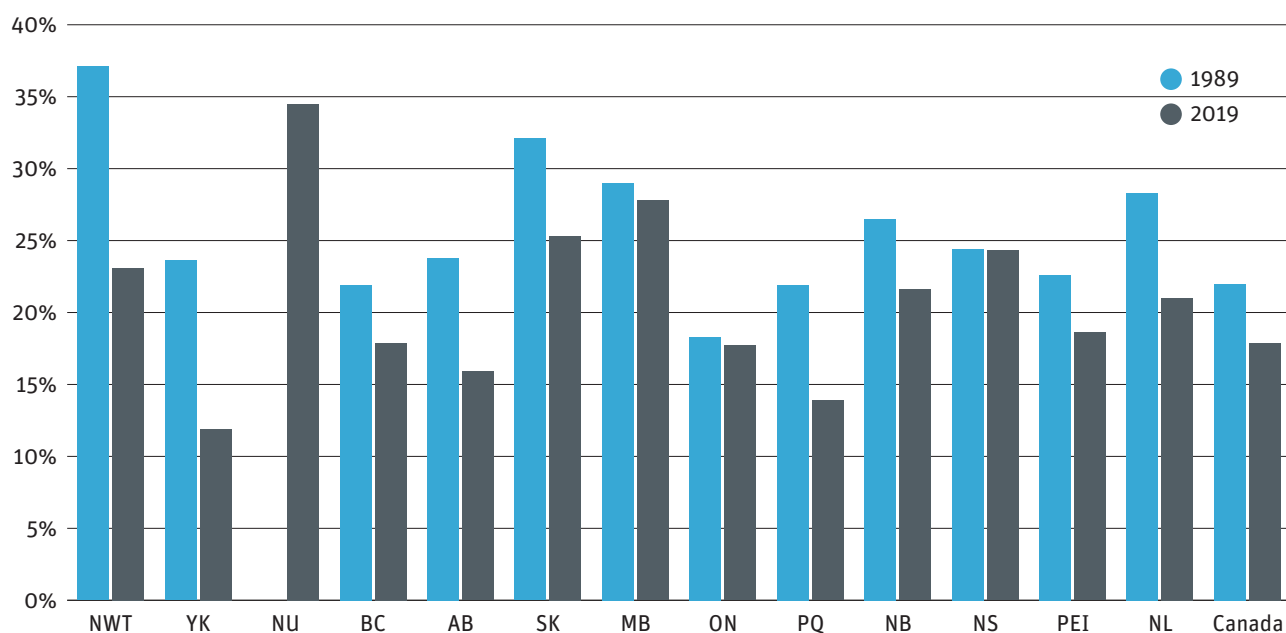
The record

Tracking thirty years of child poverty data
1989–2019

ON NOVEMBER 24TH, 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). Despite the promise of child poverty eradication by the year 2000, the incidence of child poverty in Nova Scotia in that year was in fact much higher than in 1989, when it rose to 27.8%, representing more than 1 in 4 Nova Scotian children (58,730 children). Thirty years later, with fewer children in the province overall, the 2019 rate of poverty for children was virtually the same at 24.3%. Looking at change from our last report card which reported rates for 2018, we saw a 1.2% decrease, down from 24.6%. In 2019, 41,230 children, **almost 1 in 4 children in Nova Scotia lived in poverty.**

Figure 1 shows the overall change in child poverty rates between 1989 and 2019 in each province and territory in Canada. In 1989, Nova Scotia had the fifth-highest percentage of low-income children. By 2019, Nova Scotia has the **third-highest provincial child poverty rate (fourth-highest in Canada when the territories are included)**, and the **highest rate in Atlantic Canada, a consistent ranking over the last several years. Between 1989 and 2019, the child poverty rates decreased in every province and territory with Nova Scotia showing the least progress.** While other provinces and one territory had higher rates to begin with, **Nova Scotia has**

FIGURE 1 Child Poverty Rates, By Province, (CFLIM-AT), 1989 and 2019, Age 0–17

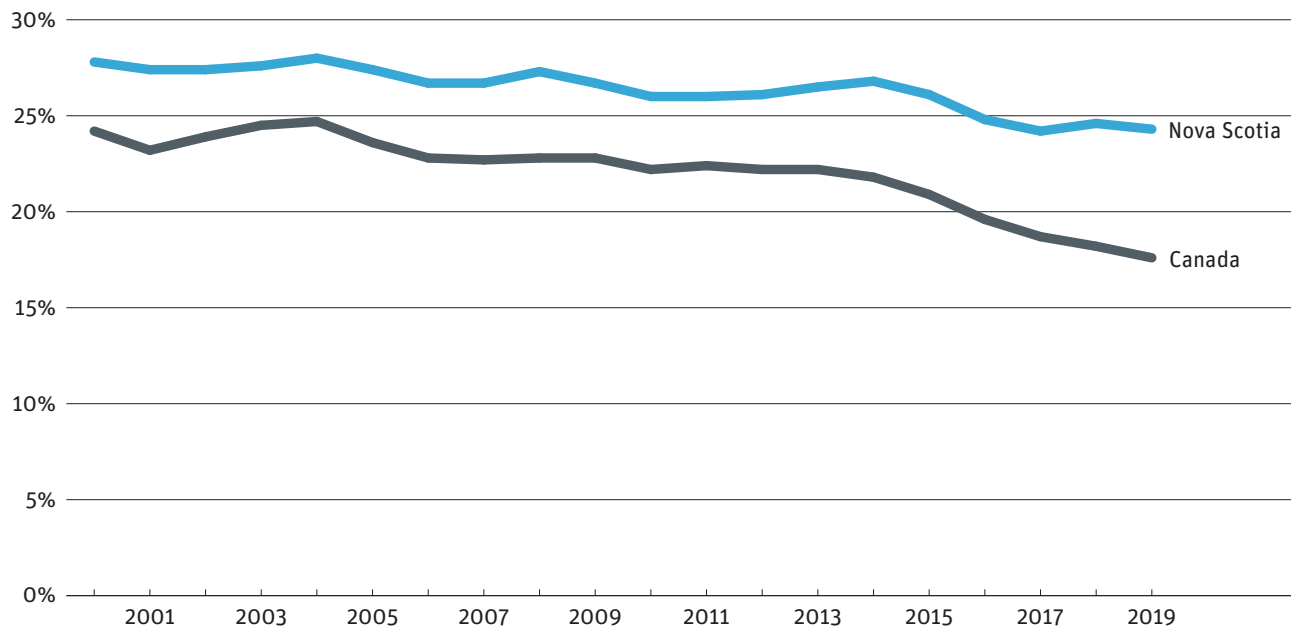


Source: Statistics Canada custom tabulation, T1 Family Files, 1989 and 2019

performed the worst in reducing child poverty from 1989 levels with very little real reduction at all.

Figure 2 shows the trend of child poverty rates in Nova Scotia and Canada since the year 2000. The highest child poverty rate in Nova Scotia (28%) and Canada (24.7%) were in 2004. In Canada the overall trend of child poverty since 2000 shows a decline after 2004, with periods of little change or slight increases. Since 2014, there has been a downward trend in child poverty in Canada which now sits at 17.6%, still far from eradication. The trend in Nova Scotia to some extent mirrors the national trend; however, Nova Scotia child poverty rates have persistently been higher. Since 2014 there has been a steady widening of difference (from 5% to now 6.7% higher) between Nova Scotia rates and the Canadian rate of child poverty. Furthermore, the child poverty rates show more fluctuation in Nova Scotia since 2014, not mirroring the steady downward trend in Canada and never achieving anything lower than 24% of children since the year 2000. **Nova Scotia's child poverty rate remains high in relation to the rest of Canada, and Nova Scotia has performed relatively poorly in reducing child poverty.**

FIGURE 2 Nova Scotia, and Canada, Child Poverty Rate, (CFLIM-AT), 2000–2019, Age 0–17



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family Files, 2000–2019

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 compared to others. Poverty is not evenly distributed across geographic communities. Table 1 shows the differences based on Statistics Canada's Census Divisions in Nova Scotia. The lowest rates of child poverty are in the Antigonish (19.9%) and Halifax (20.8%) Census Divisions. **The child poverty rates are highest in Digby (34.7%), Annapolis (33.7%), and Cape Breton (33.5%) where more than 1 in 3 children lived below the CFLIM-AT.**

Ending poverty requires leadership from all levels of government. As is shown by the impact of the Canada Child Benefit on reducing poverty, the federal government has the capacity to make significant investments to eradicate poverty. Table 2 shows how **poverty rates vary across federal electoral districts. The Sydney-Victoria riding has a child poverty rate of 35% and six additional ridings (Halifax, West Nova, Cape Breton-Canso, Cumberland-Colchester, Central Nova, and Kings-Hants) have rates that are represented in the highest quintile of child poverty rates nationally.**

TABLE 1 Child poverty rate by census divisions

Census Division	Child Poverty Rate
Annapolis	33.7
Antigonish	19.9
Cape Breton	33.5
Colchester	24.3
Cumberland	29.4
Digby	34.7
Guysborough	25.5
Halifax	20.8
Hants	22.7
Inverness	24.4
Kings	23.6
Lunenburg	24.7
Pictou	26.7
Queens	29.3
Richmond	31.7
Shelburne	26.6
Victoria	29.8
Yarmouth	28.6

Source Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2019

TABLE 2 Child poverty rate by federal electoral district, 2019

Federal Electoral District	Child Poverty Rate
Cape Breton Canso	26.8
Central Nova	24.1
Cumberland-Colchester	25.9
Dartmouth-Cole Harbour	22.5
Halifax	28.4
Halifax West	21.8
Kings-Hants	23.6
Sackville-Preston—Chezzetcook	14.0
South Shore-St. Margaret's	22.4
Sydney-Victoria	35.0
West Nova	28.7

Source Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2019

Child poverty rates by postal area

Appendix A provides available child poverty numbers and rates by Nova Scotia postal areas (citiesⁱ as well as rural routesⁱⁱ).¹³ These data show disparities of 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). Of those included, **Sixty-eight postal areas have child poverty rates at 30% and higher (32% of those reported)**. The range of rates is quite significant from a low of 4.8% in Stillwater Lake in Upper Tantallon part of the Halifax Regional Municipality, to a high of 73.3% 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 aggregates 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) within the Halifax postal city, range from 19% (B3P codes—Armdale/Purcells Cove neighborhoods) to 41.2% (B3J codes—Spryfield) to a high of 45.5% in Downtown Halifax (B3J codes). Similarly, rates range in the Dartmouth postal city from 9% (B2V codes—Morris Lake/Cole Harbour) to 36.1% (B3A codes—North Dartmouth/ North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield Park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park neighborhoods). **Postal Area data suggest that both rural and urban areas in the province experience high rates of child poverty.**

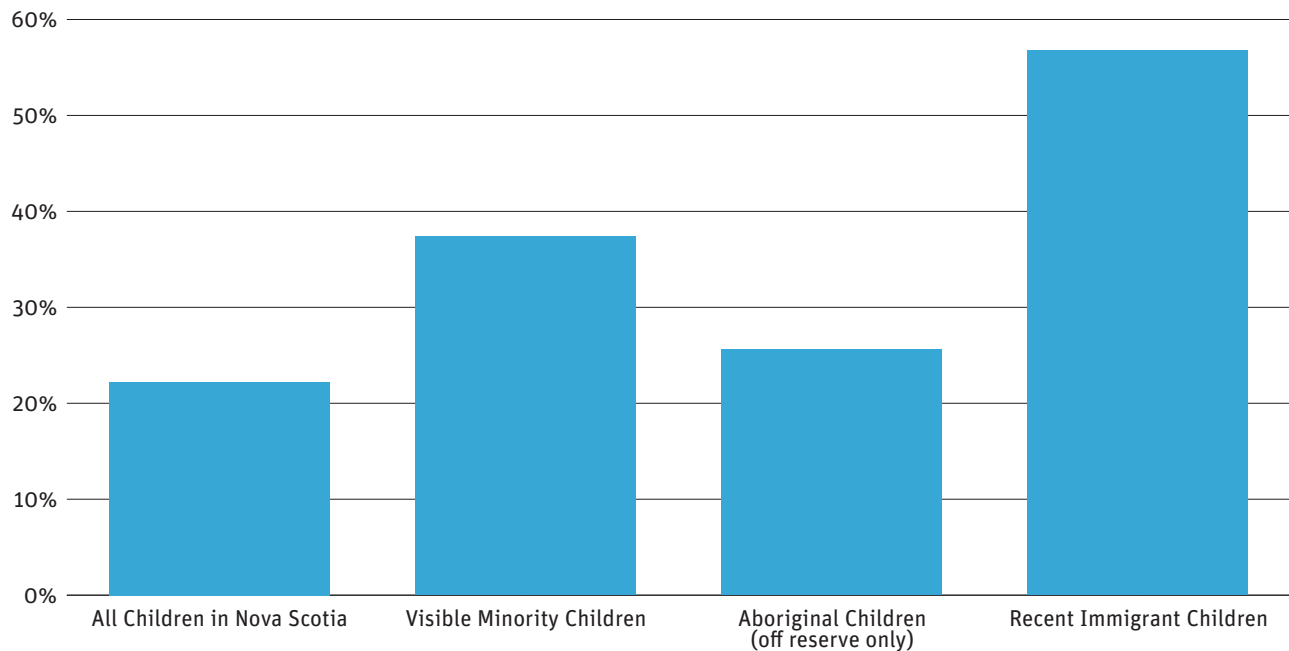
Child poverty rates for different population groups

Visible minority, immigrant, and Indigenous children

The only data source that captures child poverty rates by identified groups of children is the 2016 Canadian Census, thus the most recent applicable data reports 2015 incomes. Figure 3 report Census data that shows higher rates of poverty for children of visible minority status (Statistics Canada's term), and children who are new immigrants and of Aboriginal¹⁴ status. While the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia based on the same Census data for all children using the LIM-AT was 22.2%, over one-third (37.4%) of visible minority children were low-income. For example, the census shows that 67.8% of Arab children, 50.6% of Korean children, and 39.6% of Black children were low-income compared to 20.3% of non-visible minority children. Census data also shows higher rates of low-income among new immigrant children (56.8.%) compared to non-immigrant children (21.2%) and higher rates for off-reserve children of Aboriginal status (25.6%).

While it is not possible to disaggregate Tax filer data (T1FF) 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 and**

FIGURE 3 Child Poverty rates for different population groups, Nova Scotia, LIM-AT, 2016 Census



Source Statistics Canada—2016 Census. Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016211.

Aboriginal children (including those that live on reserve). For example, the child poverty rate in **North Preston (postal city)** was **50%** in 2019. The FSA postal codes B1N (Whitney Pier) child poverty rate was 43.6%, the Rural Route BoV1Ao (Bay View/Digby) reported a rate of 44%, and the FSA postal codes B3K (Halifax North End) was 38.6%.

T1FF data from 2019, also shows low-income rates well over 50% in postal areas that include reserve communities. It is important to note that income measures of poverty such as the CFLIM-AT may not reflect the complexity of poverty and well-being experienced by Indigenous communities. As is outlined in the report by the First Nations Poverty Action Research Project, the First Nations communities involved “rejected the concept of poverty as defined in the mainstream society with an emphasis on income, employment and related measures. Instead, they approached the task from a much wider, holistic, perspective seeking to achieve the good life, one that included dimensions such as spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health and well-being; that stressed the idea of balance and harmony among the dimensions, and that showed a preference for “building our community together” rather than focusing on a disadvantaged subset

of the community.¹⁵ Indeed, “poverty was not a concept with which they felt comfortable, and indeed there is no term in Indigenous languages to express this idea.”¹⁶ Poverty, as a narrow concept of material deprivation focuses solutions on individual welfare instead of on the need to decolonize and to support rebuilding First Nation economies and societies.¹⁷ As part of the federal poverty reduction strategy, the Opportunity for All distinctions-based approach, and based on the principles of reconciliation, the federal government has committed to work with National Indigenous Organizations and others to identify and co-develop indicators of poverty and well-being, including non-income-based measures of poverty, that reflect the multiple dimensions of poverty and well-being experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis.¹⁸

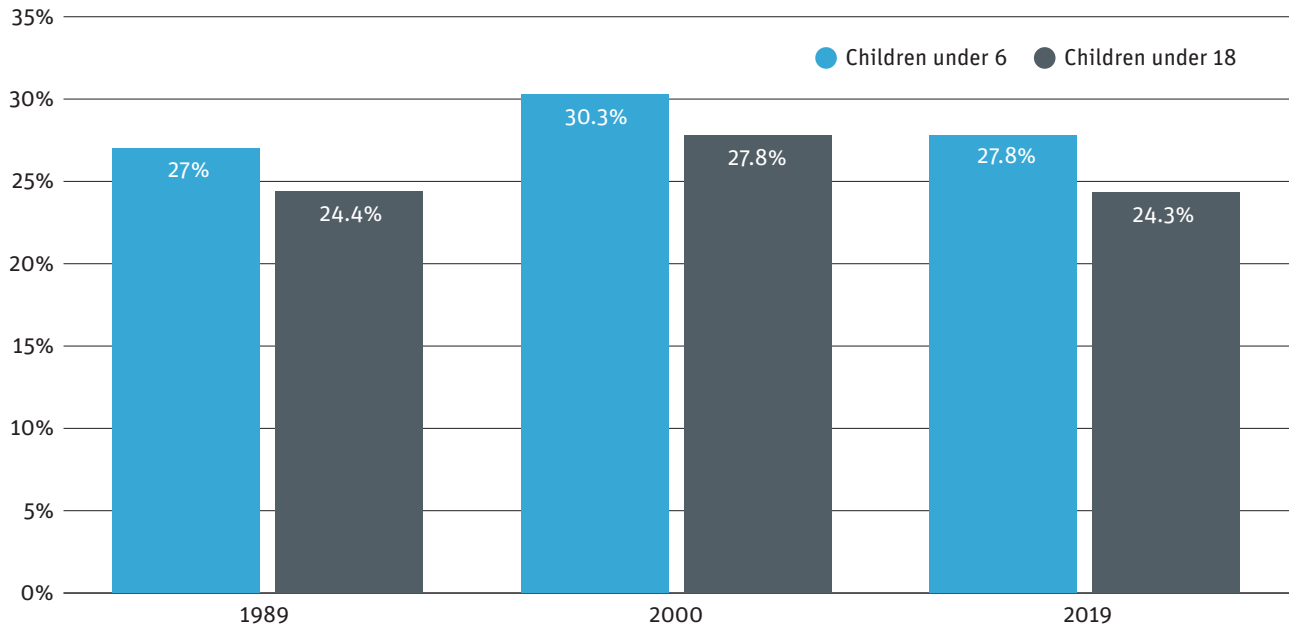
Rate of child poverty by disability status

Unfortunately, the 2016 census data does not report on the rate of child poverty by disability status. However, the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability revealed that almost one third of working aged people with disabilities lived in poverty in Canada as measured by the Market Basket Measure and were more likely to be in female lone parent families or living alone.¹⁹ This same data tells us that Nova Scotia has the highest percent of disabled people of any province.²⁰ We also know that children with disabilities are twice as likely to live in households relying on social assistance and families of children with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty due to increased time away from work.²¹ The Longitudinal and International Study of Adults (2014) confirms that Canadians with disabilities face higher risk (23%) of low-income status. Among persons with a disability, the low-income status was more than 50% for lone-parent families.²²

Child poverty by age

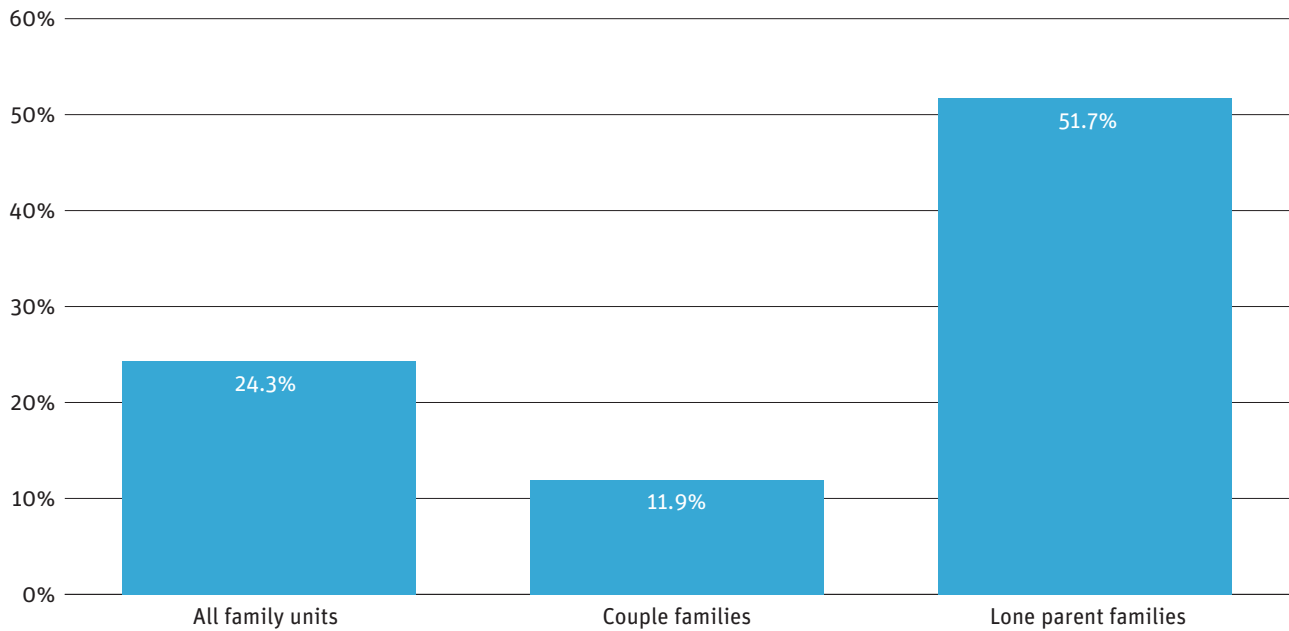
Figure 4 shows the child poverty rate for children under six in 1989, 2000, and 2019. It demonstrates that **poverty rates for younger Nova Scotian children were higher in all three years** than they were for all children under 18. In 2019, the child poverty rate for children under 6 was 27.9%, close to one in three young children, compared to 24.3% of all children (14.8% higher).

FIGURE 4 Child poverty rate for children under 6 compared to all children (CFLIM-AT), Nova Scotia, 1989, 2000, 2019



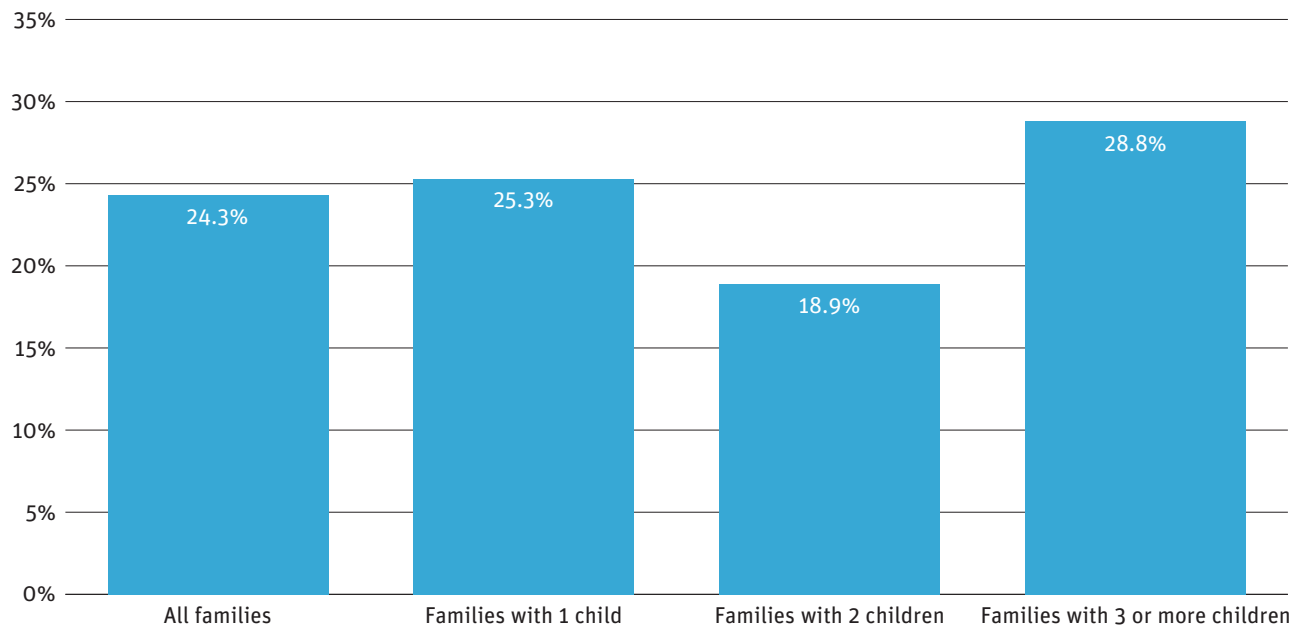
Source: Statistic Canada, T1 Family File, 1989, 2000, and 2019, Custom Tabulation

FIGURE 5 Child poverty rate by family type, (CFLIM-AT), Nova Scotia, 2019



Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2019

FIGURE 6 Child poverty rate by family size, (CFLIM-AT), Nova Scotia, 2019



Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2019

Child poverty by family type

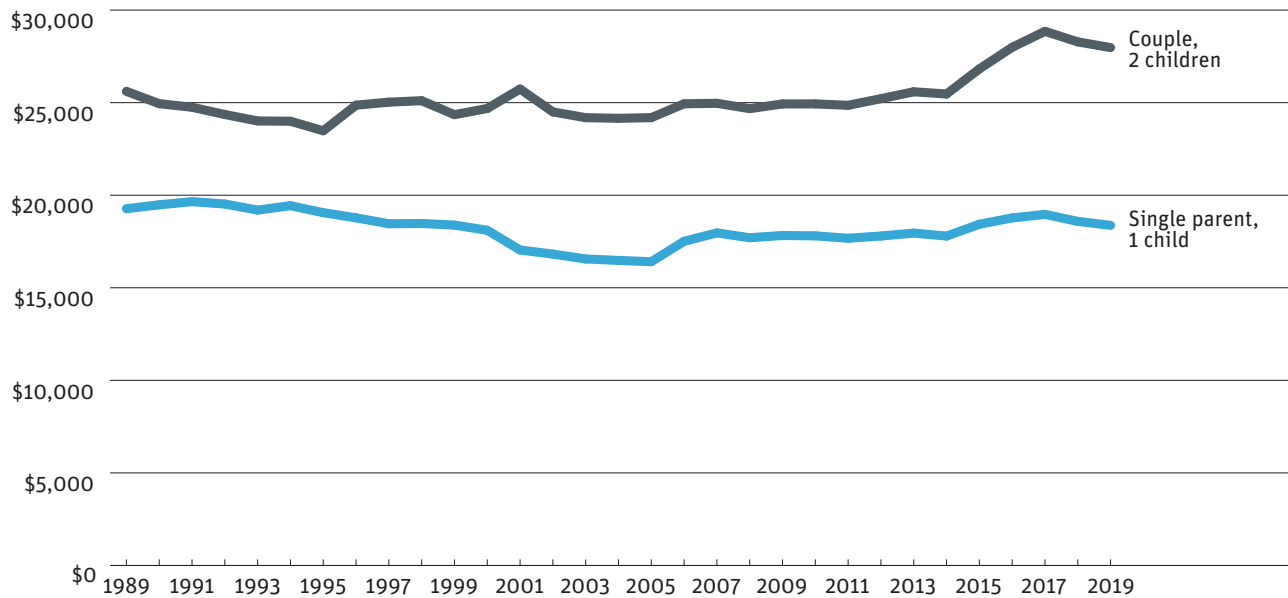
Figure 5 shows that children living in lone-parent families experience a much greater likelihood of living in poverty than children living in couple families. In 2019, **about half** (51.7 %) of the children living in lone parent families in Nova Scotia lived below the CFLIM-AT (25,970 children) compared with 11.9% of children living in couple families (14,070 children).

Nova Scotia children living in larger families also have higher rates of poverty. Figure 6 shows that the poverty rate for children in families with three or more children was 28.8%; compared to 25.3% for families with only one child, and 18.9% for families with two children.

Families who depend on welfare for household income

CHILDREN IN FAMILIES that depend on welfare are poor by design. *Maytree* (2020) reports total welfare incomes in Canadian provinces and territories annually for two different family types with children (a lone parent with one child aged 2 years, and a couple family with two children aged 10 and 15).²³ Welfare incomes include income assistance payments, federal and provincial child tax credits, and other provincial government transfers. Figure 7 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. In 2019, the maximum welfare income for this family type was \$18,372 which is \$900 less per year than in 1989 when adjusted for inflation.²⁴ Between 2015 and 2017 incomes were trending upwards for both single parents and couple families, when maximum welfare incomes reached a 31-year high of \$28,852. This coincided with increases to the federal child benefit (CCB) that began in July 2016, which importantly was pegged to inflation in 2018.

FIGURE 7 Total annual welfare income by family type, Nova Scotia, 1989–2019



Source Welfare in Canada 2019, Maytree (2020)

The data show, however, that the provincial government failed to leverage the federal investment to improve welfare incomes. In fact, between 2018 and 2019, total welfare incomes have fallen for both family types as the province of Nova Scotia does not even index income assistance rates or the Nova Scotia Child Benefit or the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit, to the cost of living. Failing to do so means that families are worse off over time as rents rise and prices for goods and services increase.

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, as the amount of support falls far below the poverty line. Maytree reports (see Table 3) that **Nova Scotia has the lowest welfare incomes in Canada for single parent families with one child (only 57% of the Market Basket Measure poverty line), and the second lowest, after New Brunswick, for couple families with two children (61% of the MBM).**²⁵ These household types are in **deep poverty** (having an income less than 75 per cent of the MBM).

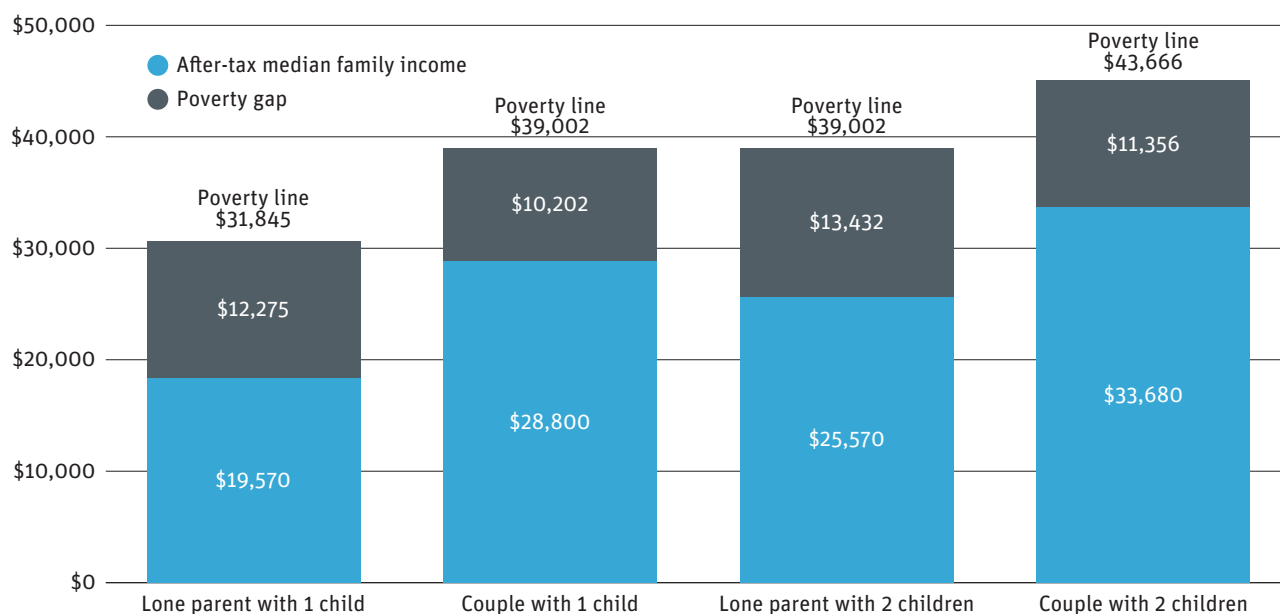
Depth of poverty can also be accessed by comparing the median after-tax incomes of families that are classified low-income to the poverty threshold (CFLIM-AT). Figure 8 shows that **many low-income families live far below this poverty threshold.** Median incomes of low-income families were significantly below the CFLIM-AT for both couple and lone-parent families of different family size. For example, low-income couple families with two children in Nova Scotia had a median income of \$33,680 in 2019 (a decrease from 2018), leaving them now \$11,356 below the CFLIM-AT poverty line. The median income of couple families with one child, and lone-parent families with one child, was \$10,202 and \$12,275 respectively below the poverty line. **Low-income lone parent families with two children had a depth of poverty of \$13,432 per year (only 66% of the poverty threshold)—meaning they are in deep poverty and would need an extra \$1119/month to bring them up to the poverty line.** The gap between the median income of low-income families and the CFLIM-AT widened in Nova Scotia between

TABLE 3 Adequacy of welfare incomes, Nova Scotia, 2019

Adequacy indicator	Single parent, one child	Couple, two children
Total welfare income	\$18,372	\$27,974
MBM threshold (Halifax)	\$32,436	\$45,872
Welfare income minus MBM threshold	-\$14,064	-\$17,898
Welfare income as % of MBM	57%	61%
LIM threshold (Canada-wide)	\$34,850	\$49,285
Welfare income minus LIM threshold	-\$16,477	-\$21,311
Welfare income as % of LIM	53%	57%

Source: Welfare in Canada 2019, Maytree (2020)

FIGURE 8 Depth of low income for families in Nova Scotia with income below the CFLIM-AT, 2019



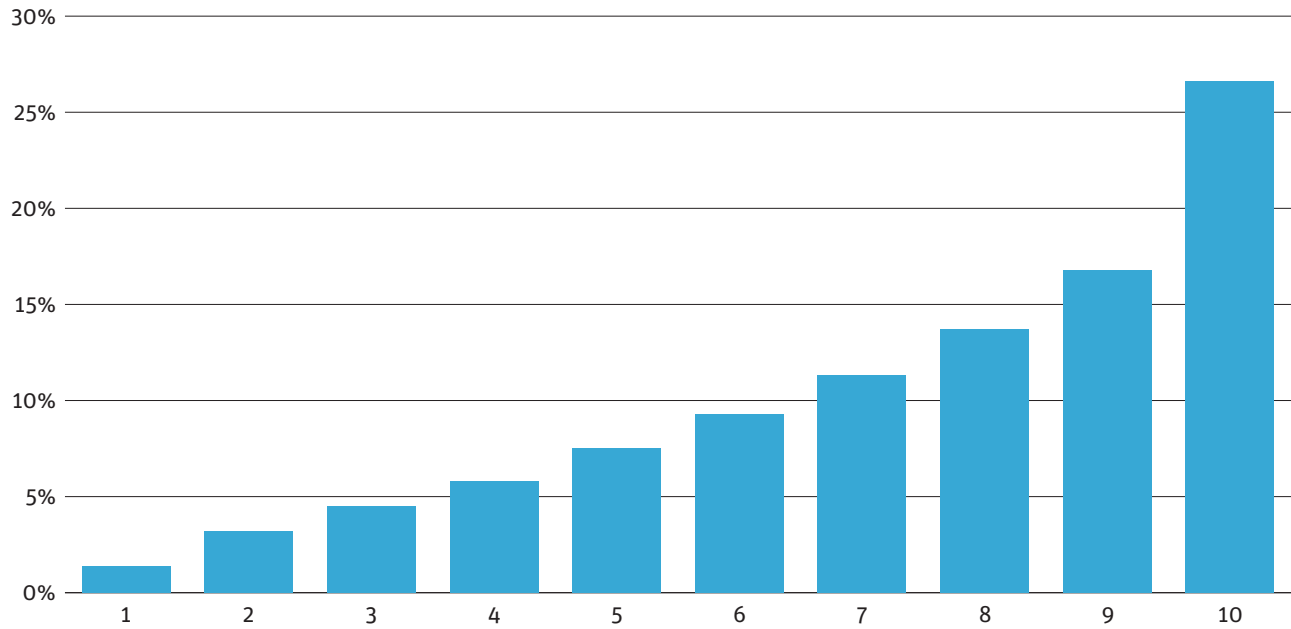
Source: Statistic Canada, T1 Family File, 2019

2017 and 2018 for all family types displayed in Figure 8 except couple families with two children. Between 2018 and 2019, the gap widened further for these family types, and also for couple families with two children.

Income inequality

THE IMBALANCE IN income distribution can be seen in Figure 9 which shows the distribution of income across Nova Scotian families. In 2019, census families with children under 18 in the highest income decile accounted for 26.6% of total income in the province, more than 1.5 times the share of income in all deciles below the median combined. Nova Scotian families with incomes in the lowest income decile only had 1.4% of the income share in Nova Scotia. They had an average income of only \$13,192 in 2019 compared to families in the highest income decile who had an average income of \$247,571.

FIGURE 9 Percent Share of Income by Decile, Census Families (with children under 18), Nova Scotia, 2019



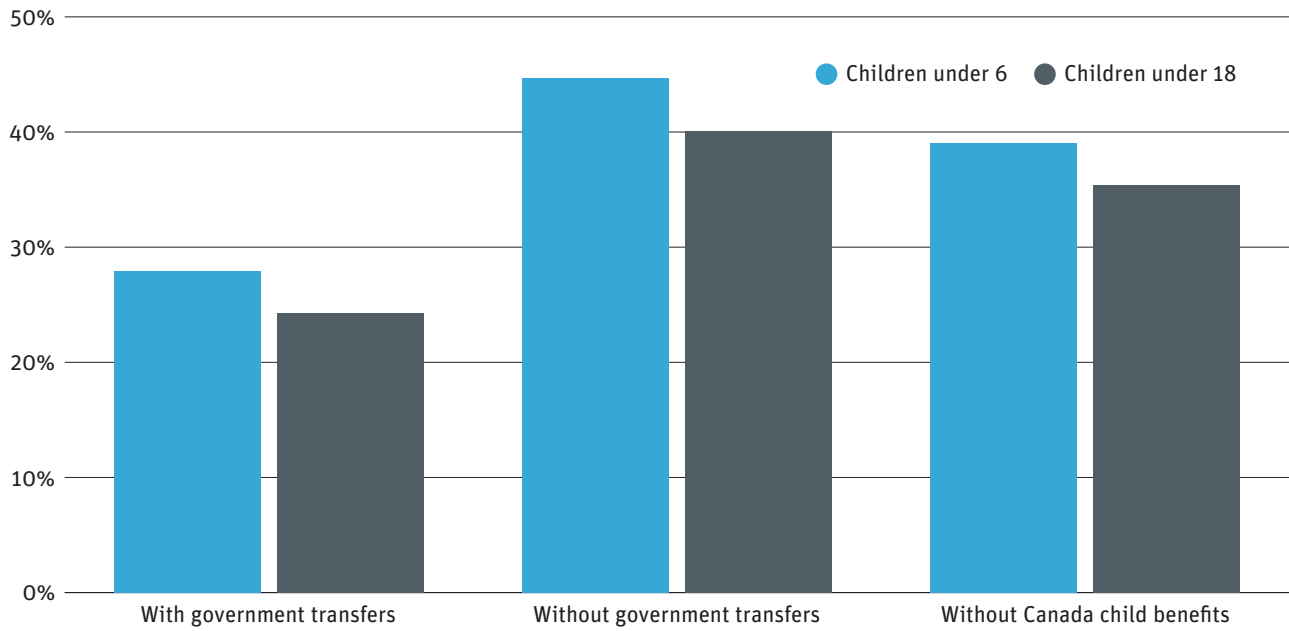
Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, 2019, Custom Tabulation, reference# R21052

The effect of government benefits

FIGURE 10 DEMONSTRATES that 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 government and include children's benefits and benefits to other family members (federal and provincial Child Benefits, the Goods and Services Tax credit, the Working Income Tax Benefit, Employment Insurance, Income Assistance, and the Affordable Living Tax Credit). The graph displays the level of poverty reduction that results from income supports to Nova Scotian families. **In 2019, we saw a 39.4% reduction in child poverty due to all government transfers (a lesser amount of 37.6% reduction for children under 6). Indeed, government benefits lifted 26, 810 children aged 0–17 out of poverty, meaning the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia would have been 44.7% without them (68,110 children).** The Canada Child Benefit is responsible for 87% of this reduction overall, demonstrating that a large proportion of the effect of government transfers in reducing child poverty in Nova Scotia can be attributed to the federal government.

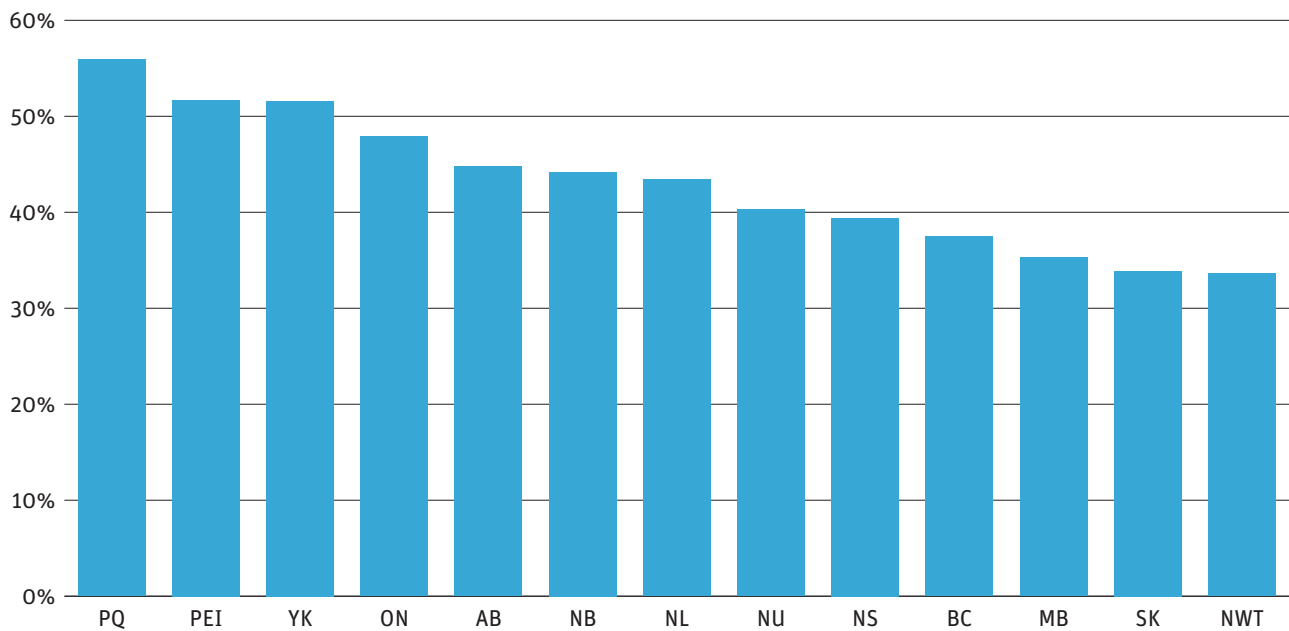
Figure 11 demonstrates that eight other provinces/territories were more effective in reducing child poverty through government transfers and that Nova Scotia's poverty reduction due to both federal and provincial transfers were the least effective in the Atlantic provinces.

FIGURE 10 Impact of government transfers on child poverty rate, Nova Scotia, 2019



Source: Statistic Canada, T1 Family File, 2019, Custom Tabulation

FIGURE 11 Percent reduction in child poverty in 2019 in Canada due to government income supports (CFLIM-AT)



Source: Statistic Canada, T1 Family File, 2019, Custom Tabulation

Recommendations for the Nova Scotia government to end child and family poverty

THE NEW PROVINCIAL government has indicated that one of its priorities is to reduce child poverty. Child poverty and indeed poverty in all its forms needs to be *eradicated*. This section outlines what a comprehensive approach to eradicating poverty must include.

The Social Policy Framework (SPF) released by the CCPA-NS should be used to develop a poverty eradication plan based on principles in the framework and aligned with a vision that will create a province that “leaves no one behind, that builds a green economy and prioritizes climate justice and investments in taking care of each other, so we can all live in security, enjoy good health, and participate fully in society.”²⁶ A robust social safety net that is evidence-based, employs an intersectional lens, and incorporates principles of universality, decolonization, social inclusion, decent work and well-being, is what is needed as we move into the pandemic recovery period.

There needs to be specific mechanisms for holding the government to account for this plan, with targets and timelines, and on the specific issues facing families and children. For example, Nova Scotia is one of the only provinces without a Child and Youth Advocate office. As the Nova Scotia

College of Social Workers explains, “In other provinces these offices are involved in right-based public education, conflict resolution, conducting independent reviews and making recommendations to governments on programs and services delivered to children and youth.”²⁷ Moreover, it is critical that they are a voice for children based on individual advocacy, and that they play a role for policy and system advocacy. While the Premier has indicated that they will proceed to set up an office, we urge him to consult with stakeholders to ensure the office will be positioned and funded to achieve what is required to uphold the rights of Nova Scotia’s children and youth. Part of this process should be developing a shared outcomes framework based on the social determinants of health, as outlined in the Final Report of the Restorative Inquiry—Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children, the development of which should begin “by engaging with youth, their families, and communities to understand what well-being means to them.” As the Inquiry further recommends, it will be important for all partners involved “to agree to data collection, analysis, and information-sharing approaches that facilitate wrap-around services and contribute to achieving shared outcomes.”²⁸

Recommendation 1. Use the CCPA-NS social policy framework to develop a comprehensive, robust Poverty Eradication Plan, that incorporates an outcomes-based framework, includes targets and timelines that are embedded in legislation.

Recommendation 2. Create a Child and Youth Advocate office to protect and promote the rights of Nova Scotia’s children and youth.

Recommendation 3. Institute regular public reporting to the legislature on progress towards achieving goals to eradicate poverty, as well as specifically reporting on outcomes relating to children and youth well-being and support.

Getting at the root causes of poverty

The poverty eradication plan must address the underlying causes of the high rates of poverty for different groups. When considering the age of the child, the highest rates of poverty are in early childhood. 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 risk of food insecurity as a critical issue for families with young children in low-income circumstances.²⁹

As we outline below, 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. We know that 71.5% of mothers with children aged 0–5 worked outside the home in 2019.³⁰ Women’s labour market participation is 85.8% (October 2021) and has not quite returned to pre-pandemic levels (87.4% in October 2019). There are some troubling changes, with a 4.4% decrease in women’s full-time employment and an increase of 20.4% in part-time employment.³¹

Women also continue to face a significant pay equity gap: the hourly full-time average wage for females in 2019 was \$24.33 compared to \$26.18 for males, which is a gap of 9% meaning that for every dollar a man earns, a woman earns 90 cents.³² The gap is larger when considering average wages because women are less likely than men to be employed full time.³³ We also know racialized women face even larger gaps.³⁴

Nova Scotian children living in female-led lone parent families had a poverty rate (LIM-AT) of 48.9% in 2015 compared to 30.4% in male-led lone parent families.³⁵ We also know that 87.8% of lone parent census families in Nova Scotia in 2019 with children 0–17 were female-led.³⁶

The median income for female led lone-parent families in Nova Scotia in 2019 was \$41,890 compared to \$57,540 for male lead lone-parent families.³⁷ 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-waged and part-time work, while facing the challenges of unpaid caregiving that falls disproportionately to women.

Recommendation 4. Address the root causes of women’s higher poverty rates, including pay inequity by extending the pay equity act to apply to the private sector.

Targeted measures for those who have been systematically marginalized

The highest poverty rates are experienced by those groups who face discrimination based on Indigeneity, race, gender, 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 those living in low-income. 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.”³⁸ 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 and had a deleterious impact on people of African descent, which must be addressed in partnership with the affected communities.”³⁹ Given that 30.4% of Nova Scotia’s population has a disability (2018 data),⁴⁰ 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 needs to be done so all those who face additional barriers, can fully and equally participate in all aspects of society.

Recommendation 5. Invest in proactive strategies developed in collaboration with communities that have particularly high poverty rates to ensure policies and programs meet their needs.

Recommendation 6. Undertake substantive reform of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission to address all forms of discrimination. The Commission should be structured and funded to deal with “policy matters and public education and in bringing forward complex issues, like systemic discrimination”, and an independent Human Rights Tribunal needs to be set up to deal with complaints and adjudication, as well as a Human Rights Legal Support Centre that “provides legal advice to applicants, assists them in framing their complaints and can act for clients before the Tribunal.”⁴¹

Address the legacy of colonialism

It is primarily the federal government which must commit to supporting self-determination for First Nations, both financially and jurisdictionally, with an emphasis on revenue sharing. The provincial, 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.⁴² Given the high poverty rates and underfunding of basic services that First Nations communities face, all levels of government should commit to fully implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action,⁴³

and Jordan's Principle,⁴⁴ as well as the calls to justice in the final report of the inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶

Recommendation 7. **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 8. **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.
- f. End birth alerts.⁴⁷

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.*⁴⁸ As the NS College of Social workers argues: "This provision opens up a punitive process for marginalized families for the failures of society."⁴⁹ 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 is itself responsible for providing inadequate income supports that ensnare people in poverty and instead of addressing its own responsibility 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.”⁵⁰ 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 not sufficient to end child maltreatment or the need for child protective services.”⁵¹

Recommendation 9. Remove “failure to provide to the child adequate food, clothing or shelter” from the Children and Family Services Act.

Government income support

The data presented in this report card shows the positive effect of government transfers to reduce poverty. Given the depth of poverty faced by so many, none of these tax benefit/credit programs provide reliable incomes sufficient 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.⁵² 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 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.⁵³ The removal of this income makes it extremely difficult for parents to make changes in their lives and maintain adequate housing for the children’s return.

Recommendation 10. 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.

Recommendation 11. Ensure that the federal government recalculates the CCB payments issued in July 2021 to exclude the CERB from the

calculation of income; and that it return the lost benefits to families, and use the readjusted benefit amount until July 2022.

The income support system of last resort in Nova Scotia is the Employment Support and Income Assistance program, which in 2019 provided \$10,140 per year for a single parent with one child and \$14,040 for a couple family with two children.⁵⁴ The families also have access to the CCB, the NSCCB, the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit and the GST credit. As can be seen in Table 3 in this report card, the total amount of assistance provided in 2019 was far below the official poverty line (the Market Basket Measure), even when that income assistance is added to all other available government transfers. For example, single parent families with one child only receive 57% of the Market Basket Measure poverty line and couple families with two children receive 61% of the MBM.⁵⁵ The changes to ESIA in 2020, including the move to a single household rate, and the \$100 increase in income assistance in 2021 will not significantly address this gap, especially given past and projected increases in the cost of housing and food. 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, thus any small gains made in one year are lost in the next.

After years of government work to transform the Employment Support and Income Assistance program, the system's fundamental design remains in place keeping families and individuals in deep poverty. The system is one that was built on surveillance, based on assumptions that poverty is a moral failure and that people need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps even if they don't have any. The social isolation that has been heightened for some by COVID-19 has long been a reality for those receiving income assistance because some essential costs are not deemed basic, but 'special' thus requiring justification, paperwork and needless stress to receive. Adequate income support must cover all household essentials, including the costs of transportation where bus passes are not available, and money for communications (internet and telephone). The amount of support provided must also be sufficient to cover the diversity of needs, whether for families with children, for those with disabilities, or for those who require other kinds of additional support.

The government of Nova Scotia must ensure that everyone who is struggling to afford the essentials of life is provided with enough income support to make ends meet. **It must reform the Employment Supports and Income Assistance (ESIA) program incorporating the principles of social inclusion and respect for human dignity. The ESIA's benefit**

level must include regular cost of living increases taking into account housing/rental inflation and food inflation in particular. In combination with an enhancement of current income supports namely, the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, and the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit, the Poverty Reduction Credit, the government must ensure that the total federal-provincial income support meets and even surpasses a recognized low-income level.

Recommendation 12. **Reform the Employment Supports and Income Assistance (ESIA) program incorporating the principles of social inclusion and respect for human dignity. The ESIA's benefit level must include regular cost of living increases taking into account housing/rental inflation and food inflation in particular. In combination with an enhancement of current income supports namely, the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, and the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit, the Poverty Reduction Credit, the government must ensure that the total federal-provincial income support meets and even surpasses a recognized low-income level.**

Universal public services

A universally accessible, high-quality Early Learning and Child Care system is also essential for child poverty eradication. Apart from facilitating work, and strengthening women's equality, early childhood education and care also supports healthy child development, school readiness and overall child well-being.⁵⁶ The most recent Statistics Canada Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements found that in 2019 57% of families found it hard to find care in their community and 38.4% cited affordability as a barrier. In 2020, 60.6% expressed finding it difficult and 46.3% cited affordability as a barrier.⁵⁷

A lack of affordable childcare is likely to impede paid work in families with pre-school aged children, impacting the incomes of young families when families are forced to seek part-time employment or give up paid work entirely. We know that access to affordable, high quality early learning and child care facilitates paid employment. In Halifax the median pre-school aged child care fee in 2019 was \$861/month.⁵⁸ For many low-income families, such fees are out of reach, particularly for families with more than one pre-school child. Even though there are subsidies available, subsidies do not create spaces.

The previous Nova Scotia government is to be commended for introducing a universal pre-primary program for four-year-olds. The new bilateral federal-provincial agreement on child care should set the province on the path to building a truly affordable, accessible, inclusive and quality, not-for-profit and publicly managed early learning and child care system, that will address the high fees, lack of spaces and low wages.⁵⁹ We know that these systems can pay for themselves⁶⁰ and that child care is an essential part of the care economy, and needs to be supported as being critical to post-Covid recovery.

While child care should be a priority to support families, it is not the only public service that needs investment. Investing to expand universal public health care, and in making post-secondary education more affordable is also critical. Programs like family pharmacare are not universal, and are difficult to access including because of deductibles.

Recommendation 13. Fund and build a high quality, early learning and child care system that is child-centred, play-based, seamless (all day, full year), truly affordable, accessible, inclusive and quality, not-for-profit and publicly managed.

Recommendation 14. 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

Many parts of Nova Scotia face a housing crisis, with low vacancy rates and high and increasing rental rates, increasing housing insecurity and homelessness.⁶¹ We know that many current renters have low income and struggle with housing affordability: 24% have household income below \$20,000 (versus 6% for homeowners), the median annual income of renters is \$39,550 (versus \$75,939 for homeowners) and 28% of renters are in core housing need.⁶²

As was outlined in the Housing for All report, there needs to be 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. While the government has agreed to extend the current rent cap, rent control tied to the unit must be permanently implemented. More can be done to address the current crisis,

while also addressing its root causes and planning for a future where all Nova Scotians have meaningful access to safe, permanently affordable, secure, supported, and adequate housing.⁶³ Housing must be reframed as a right and not a commodity.

Recommendation 15. Implement the 95 recommendations in the Housing for All report to ensure that all Nova Scotians have meaningful access to safe, permanently affordable, secure, supported, and adequate housing.

Make work pay so it lifts people 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 a majority of food insecure households with 60% of them reliant on income from employment.⁶⁴ Improving the earned incomes for families with children is essential for ending poverty. Stable employment helps to alleviate or reduce child poverty, but having a job, especially if it is at minimum wage or part time does not solve the problem.

During this pandemic, the lack of health and safety protection for workers in low-waged jobs providing critical services to our community, tells us our government does not do enough to support them. Prior to the pandemic, only 46% of Nova Scotia workers had paid sick leave provided by their employers and 69% of workers who earn \$25,000 annually do not have access to paid sick leave.⁶⁵ As a new CCPA-NS report outlines, for it to be effective, paid sick leave must be universal, paid, adequate, permanent, accessible and employer-provided. Employers should be legislated to provide 10 paid days per year to allow workers time to access preventative health services or to recover from common illnesses. During a pandemic, workers should have access to up to 14 days.⁶⁶

In addition, families who had to self-isolate should they test positive or if their child has symptoms of COVID, or should public health close their child's school, should not have had to worry about losing their jobs or losing wages. Labour standards need to be strengthened and should include additional family leave provisions.⁶⁷

Recommendation 16. Increase the minimum wage to \$15 in the next year with a plan to make it a living wage.⁶⁸

Recommendation 17. **Amend the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code to better protect workers in the province and improve the lives of working families, including providing at least 10 paid sick days.**

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 supports 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,⁶⁹ which include recommendations to strengthen the federal government's poverty reduction efforts and remove systemic barriers for marginalized communities with more strategic investments in income supports (including the Canada Child Benefit) and housing, to create employment opportunities, and expand universal public services (including child care, and pharmacare), as well as increasing funding to the provinces and territories, in order to meet more ambitious poverty reduction targets. Campaign 2000 recognizes these federal investments must seek to implement the Spirit Bear Plan, and properly implement Jordan's Principle, among other actions to address child and family poverty in Indigenous communities.

Conclusion

WE NEED SOCIAL policies that get at the root causes of poverty. Part of the answer to eradicating poverty is to deal with income and wealth inequality, which requires both a focus on fostering a labour market that provides good jobs and economic security, as well as transforming social policy.⁷⁰ Income inequality tears at the fabric of society because it undermines social cohesion. To truly tackle inequality, we must embrace systems that more effectively redistribute wealth and constrain income and wealth concentration, ensure living wages and pay equity, increase social housing and other public infrastructure, and consider targeted measures for marginalized groups being responsive to the diversity of needs of all those living in low-income. Both Nova Scotia and Canada must take action to fulfill our international commitments to ensure the right to adequate income security, housing, and food security for all people, to be valued and treated with respect, and to be able to participate fully in the life of our community. This is the path forward for increasing our collective prosperity.

Appendix A

Child poverty rates by postal area
(ⁱpostal city; ⁱⁱrural route)

Postal areas 2019	Number of low-income children 0–17	Child poverty rate
Aberdeen ⁱⁱ	240	38.8
Afton Station ⁱⁱ	170	45.5
Amherst ⁱ	1310	32.0
Antigonish ⁱ	900	21.3
Arcadia ⁱⁱ	200	16.7
Arisaig ⁱ	70	15.8
Arichat ⁱⁱ	100	27.8
Aylesford ⁱⁱ	390	26.9
Baddeck ⁱⁱ	280	35.6
Barrington ⁱⁱ	110	23.1
Barrington Passage ⁱⁱ	110	30.8
Barss Corner ⁱⁱ	90	23.1
Barton ⁱⁱ	80	27.3
Bass River ⁱⁱ	70	42.1
Bay View ⁱⁱ (Digby)	780	44.0
Bear River ⁱⁱ	220	42.1
Beaverbank ⁱ	430	11.4
Bedford ⁱ	2080	17.0
Beechville ⁱ	100	13.7
Belmont	70	22.2
Berwick ⁱⁱ	550	25.6
Biblehill ⁱ	540	26.6

Postal areas 2019	Number of low-income children 0–17	Child poverty rate
Blockhouse ⁱⁱ	130	11.5
Boylston ⁱⁱ	60	20.0
Bridgetown ⁱⁱ	360	31.7
Bridgewater ⁱ	1160	29.6
Brooklyn ⁱⁱ (Queens County)	90	20.0
Brooklyn Corner ⁱ (Kings County)	170	38.1
Caledonia ⁱⁱ	140	38.9
Cambridge ⁱⁱ	230	23.8
Canning ⁱⁱ	490	28.3
Canso ⁱⁱ	100	38.9
Centreville ⁱⁱ	220	21.3
Chapel Island ⁱⁱ	260	33.3
Chester Basin ⁱⁱ	230	24.4
Cheticamp ⁱⁱ	150	14.8
Clementsvalle ⁱⁱ	50	42.9
Church Point ⁱⁱ	210	31.6
Clarks Harbour ⁱⁱ	150	30.0
Cleveland ⁱⁱ	80	25.0
Coldbrook ⁱ	170	12.7
Cornwallis Park ⁱⁱ	60	50.0
Dartmouth ⁱ	9930	22.8
Debert ⁱⁱ	220	23.6
Deep Brook ⁱⁱ	70	28.6
D'escousse ⁱⁱ	80	22.2
Digby		See Bay View
Dominion ⁱ	210	31.3
East Amherst ⁱ	110	18.8
East Chester ⁱⁱ	270	25.0
East Preston ⁱ	130	28.6
Eastern Passage ⁱ	680	15.0
Ellershouse ⁱⁱ	130	13.8
Elmsdale ⁱ	140	13.5
Enfield ⁱ	310	13.6
Eskasoni ⁱ	1160	66.9
Eureka ⁱⁱ	90	26.1
Fall River ⁱ	270	5.7
Falmouth ⁱⁱ	190	13.6
First South ⁱⁱ (Lunenburg/Blue Rocks)	400	18.7
Florence ⁱ	150	36.0
Forest Hill ⁱ	130	26.1

Postal areas 2019	Number of low-income children 0–17	Child poverty rate
Glace Bay ⁱ	2420	38.4
Granville Ferry ⁱ	510	31.5
Great Village ⁱⁱ	80	23.5
Greenwood ⁱⁱ	100	12.7
Gulf Shore ⁱⁱ	190	31.6
Guysborough ⁱⁱ	120	28.6
Halifax ⁱ	23140	30.8
Hammonds Plains ⁱ	480	7.8
Hantsport ⁱⁱ	290	30.4
Havre Boucher ⁱⁱ	110	19.0
Head of Chezzetcook ⁱ	280	18.3
Head of St. Margarets Bay ⁱ	50	9.1
Head of Jeddore ⁱⁱ	80	22.2
Hebville ⁱ	80	33.3
Herbon ⁱ	60	21.4
Herring Cove ⁱ	130	19.4
Hilden ⁱⁱ	290	23.0
Hopewell ⁱⁱ	90	25.0
Hortonville ⁱ	70	16.7
Howie Corner ⁱ	70	28.6
Hubbards ⁱⁱ	320	20.3
Hubley ⁱ	130	10.9
Hunts Point ⁱⁱ	60	33.3
Inverness ⁱⁱ	190	20.6
Italy Cross ⁱ	70	40.0
Judique ⁱⁱ	50	14.3
Kennetcook ⁱⁱ	110	28.6
Kentville ⁱ	1270	29.0
Kingston ⁱⁱ	750	20.8
Lake Echo ⁱ	200	13.2
Lake Loon ⁱ	60	15.4
Lakeside ⁱ	150	26.1
Lantz ⁱ	130	9.6
LaHave ⁱⁱ	70	37.5
Lawrencetown (Annapolis County) ⁱⁱ	260	37.0
Lawrencetown (Halifax County) ⁱ	130	7.4
Liverpool ⁱⁱ	610	35.9
Linacy ⁱ	110	25.9
Lockeport ⁱⁱ	100	22.2
Lower Sackville ⁱ	1670	20.0

Postal areas 2019	Number of low-income children 0–17	Child poverty rate
Lower Woods Harbour ⁱⁱ	60	33.3
Lower South River ⁱ	150	12.5
Lunenburg ⁱⁱ		See First South
Louisdale ⁱⁱ	110	25.0
Lower East Pubnico ⁱⁱ	50	25.0
Lyons Brook ⁱⁱ	660	27.5
Mabou ⁱⁱ	70	25.0
Maccan ⁱⁱ	60	37.5
Mahone Bay ⁱⁱ	330	24.0
MacLellans Brook ⁱ	60	25.0
Meadowvale ⁱⁱ (Upper Stewiacke)	90	26.7
Meteghan ⁱⁱ	100	25.0
Membertou ⁱ	210	36.4
Merigomish ⁱⁱ	140	26.1
Micmac ⁱ	140	73.3
Middle Musquodoboit ⁱⁱ	140	28.6
Middle Sackville ⁱ	760	11.0
Milford ⁱⁱ	130	16.7
Millbrook ⁱ	60	54.5
Mill Village ⁱⁱ	130	28.6
Milton ⁱⁱ	170	33.3
Monastery ⁱⁱ	100	35.7
Moser River ⁱⁱ	80	37.5
Mount Uniacke ⁱⁱ	310	18.2
Mulgrave ⁱⁱ	90	20.0
New Germany ⁱⁱ	300	34.2
New Glasgow ⁱ	1290	29.1
New Minas ⁱ	610	28.2
Newport		See Scotch Village
New Ross ⁱⁱ	180	38.9
New Victoria ⁱ	60	37.5
New Waterford ⁱ	1010	41.7
Nictaux ⁱⁱ	690	35.4
North Alton ⁱ	130	24.0
North Preston ⁱ	170	50.0
North River ⁱ	110	20.0
North Sydney ⁱ	840	31.3
Oxford ⁱⁱ	290	30.0
Parrsboro ⁱⁱ	260	24.4
Pleasantville ⁱⁱ	100	25.0

Postal areas 2019	Number of low-income children 0–17	Child poverty rate
Plymouth ⁱ	60	13.3
Port Hawkesbury ⁱ	400	30.5
Port Hood ⁱⁱ	70	13.6
Port Williams ⁱⁱ	160	14.6
Porters Lake ⁱ	210	12.5
Reserve Mines ⁱ	220	33.3
River Denys ⁱⁱ	50	28.6
River Herbert ⁱⁱ	100	38.5
River John ⁱⁱ	160	35.3
River Ryan ⁱ	60	20.0
Salmon River ⁱ	190	23.3
Salt Springs ⁱⁱ	70	23.1
Saulnierville ⁱⁱ	100	20.0
Scotch Village ⁱⁱ	320	25.0
Scotchtown ⁱ	170	43.8
Scotsburn ⁱⁱ	130	19.2
Shag Harbour ⁱⁱ	50	20.0
Sheet Harbour ⁱⁱ	150	36.8
Shelburne ⁱⁱ	410	29.9
Sherbrooke ⁱⁱ	60	20.0
Shubenacadie ⁱⁱ	490	36.3
Smiths Cove ⁱⁱ	50	25.0
South Brookfield ⁱⁱ	60	28.6
South Locaber ⁱ	70	16.7
Southampton ⁱⁱ	50	33.3
South Ohio ⁱ	70	23.1
Springfield ⁱⁱ	80	37.1
Springhill ⁱⁱ	510	37.1
St. Andrews ⁱⁱ	60	12.0
Stellarton ⁱⁱ	640	24.2
Stewiake ⁱⁱ	250	25.4
Stillwater Lake ⁱ	60	4.8
Sydney ⁱ	6340	28.7
Sydney Mines ⁱ	810	36.6
Tangier ⁱⁱ	70	18.2
Tantallon ⁱ	60	15.4
Tatamagouche ⁱⁱ	360	27.7
Terence Bay ⁱ	60	18.2
Thornburn ⁱⁱ	120	22.2
Tidnish Cross Roads ⁱ	60	30.0

Postal areas 2019	Number of low-income children 0–17	Child poverty rate
Timberlea ⁱ	400	10.8
Trenton ⁱ	530	31.3
Truro ⁱ	2210	32.2
Truro Heights ⁱ	160	29.0
Tusket ⁱⁱ	200	19.6
Upper Kennetcook ⁱⁱ	110	30.4
Upper Musquodoboit ⁱⁱ	60	33.3
Upper Napan ⁱ	60	37.5
Upper Rawdon ⁱⁱ	70	29.4
Upper Sackville ¹	70	15.0
Upper Tantallon ¹	120	5.2
Valley ⁱ	140	9.5
Wagmatcook ⁱⁱ	90	71.4
Wallace Station ⁱⁱ	70	37.6
Walton ⁱⁱ	110	38.5
Waterville ⁱⁱ	360	24.4
Waverly ⁱ	100	10.0
Wellington ⁱ	70	10.3
Wedgeport ⁱⁱ	50	25.0
Wentworth ⁱⁱ	50	25.0
Westphal ⁱ	70	11.3
Western Shore ⁱⁱ	100	38.5
Westville ⁱⁱ	610	28.3
West Chezzetcook ⁱⁱ (Musquodoboit Harbour)	290	20.4
Weymouth ⁱⁱ	410	39.1
Whites Lake ⁱ	80	16.7
Wileville ⁱ	70	18.2
Williamswood ⁱ	100	16.2
Wilmot ⁱⁱ	230	32.4
Windsor Junction ⁱ	80	12.5
Windsor/Three Mile Plains ⁱⁱ	1030	28.9
Wolfville ¹	730	29.4
Yarmouth ⁱ	1290	42.1

Source Prepared using Statistics Canada, (T1 Family Files, 2019)

Appendix B

Child poverty rates by postal area (FSA),
Halifax regional municipality urban core, 2019

Postal areas (FSA)	Neighborhood description	Number of low-income children 0–17	Child poverty rate
B2V	Morris Lake/Cole Harbour	530	9.0
B2W	East Central Dartmouth	2190	17.3
B2X	Bounded by Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail	1320	26.5
B2Y	Downtown Dartmouth south to Woodside	2000	27.0
B3A	North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield park/ Albro Lake/Crichton Park	3520	36.1
B3B	Burnside	170	27.3
B3H	South End Peninsula	3170	20.8
B3J	Downtown Halifax	1730	41.2
B3K	North End Peninsula	3670	38.2
B3L	West End Peninsula	2730	26.5
B3M	Bedford Basin	5250	33.2
B3N	Fairview & south to Rotary	1730	22.9
B3P	Armdale/Purcells Cove	1030	19.0
B3R	Spryfield	1750	45.5
B3S	Bayers Lake	1450	31.3
B4A	Bedford	1540	16.9
B4B	Bedford	500	16.9

Source Prepared using Statistics Canada, T1 Family Files, 2019. 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 research⁷⁴ or Google Maps data.

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 2016 and uses income data from 2015. 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 95.1% of families with children in Nova Scotia through child benefit records.⁷¹ 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.⁷²

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

TABLE 4 2019 thresholds for after-tax census family low income measure*

Number of family members	After-tax low-income measure thresholds
1	\$22,528
2	\$31,845
3	\$39,002
4	\$45,036
5	\$50,352
6	\$55,158
7	\$59,577
8	\$63,691
9	\$67,554
10	\$71,208

Source Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors, T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2019. Statistics Canada—Catalogue no. 72-212-X

* The CFLIM-AT for any census family size can be calculated by multiplying \$22, 518 by the square root of the family size. For example, the after-tax CFLIM for a family of 4 is \$45, 036. This is calculated by multiplying \$22, 518 by 2 (square root of 4).

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.

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.⁷³ The basket is costed in 50 regions across Canada 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. Based on the MBM, Nova

TABLE 5 Market basket measure (MBM) thresholds for a reference family of 4, 2019 constant dollars (2018 base year)

	Market basket measure thresholds
Nova Scotia Rural	\$42,460
Nova Scotia, Population under 30,000	\$43,380
Nova Scotia, Population 30,000 to 99,999	\$43,705
Halifax, Nova Scotia	\$46,147
Cape Breton, Nova Scotia	\$42,405

Source Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0066-01

Scotia had the fifth highest rate of child poverty in Canada (11.7%), a 21% decrease from 2018 when it had the highest rate of child poverty in Canada. The same survey data using the CFLIM-AT measure of poverty, shows that Nova Scotia has the third highest rate of child poverty (16.9%), the same ranking observed when tax-filer data is used to calculate the rate. While the reduction in child poverty based on the MBM is promising, it is important to recognize that the Canadian Income Survey data exclude children living on First Nations reserves, and the small sample size, particularly in Atlantic provinces, results in a ‘use with caution’ data quality rating for both indicators of poverty (MBM and CFLIM-AT) using this data set.

Notes

- 1** The living wage 2021 ranges from \$22.05 per hour in Halifax to \$18.45 in Cape Breton, \$21.30 in the Annapolis valley, \$19.20 in Northern Nova Scotia and \$21.03 in Southern Nova Scotia. Saulnier, Christine. (2021). Living Wages in Nova Scotia 2021. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/living-wages-nova-scotia-2021>
- 2** Ms. A., Luxembourg quoted in a summary report of full report presented by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly. The summary report included quotes from the consultations held in preparation of the meeting. The full report is here: <https://undocs.org/A/76/177>
- 3** Saulnier, C., Plante, C. (2021). *The Cost of Poverty in the Atlantic Provinces*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/AtlanticPovertyCosts>
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- 6** Canadian Women's Foundation. (2020). *Resetting Normal: Women, Decent Work And Canada's Fractured Care Economy*. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Ontario Nonprofit Network, and Fay Faraday. <https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ResettingNormal-Women-Decent-Work-and-Care-EN.pdf>
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- 8** Food Banks Canada. 2021 Hunger Count Report. <https://hungercount.foodbankscanada.ca/>
- 9** 2021. Ministerial Mandate Letter, Department of Community Services. Retrieved from: https://novascotia.ca/exec_council/letters-2021/ministerial-mandate-letter-2021-DCS-OLA-SOW.pdf
- 10** Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2018. Statistics Canada—Catalogue no. 72-212-X

- 11** A census family lives in the same dwelling and is comprised of a married or common-law couple with or without children, or a lone-parent family.
- 12** The MBM poverty line is based on the cost of a basket of goods for a reference family of one male and one female adult aged 25–49 with two children (a girl aged 9 and a boy aged 13) in geographical areas within the ten provinces. It was rebased with an updated basket in 2018. Djidel, S., Gustajtis, B., Heisz, A., Lam, K., Marchand, I. and McDermott, S. (2020). *Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure*. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2020002-eng.pdf>
- 13** Appendix A includes communities (determined by postal cities and rural route defined by the Canada Post Corporation (CPC) with at least 60 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.
- 14** We name First Nations and use the term Aboriginal deliberately in order to be consistent with the language used in cited sources and to maintain the specificity of reported data. The umbrella term Indigenous includes the three primary groups with Aboriginal rights as outlined in Canada’s constitution. They are: First Nations, Métis and Inuit.
- 15** Poverty Action Research Project. 2018. *Pursuing Well-being: Lessons from the First Nation Poverty Action Research Project*, Halifax: Dalhousie University. <https://www.edo.ca/downloads/poverty-action-research-project-2.pdf>
- 16** Poverty Action Research Project, p. 2. OpCit.
- 17** The discussion in the First National Poverty Action Research report is based on the article by Jeffrey S. Denis, Gérard Duhaime, and David Newhouse. 2017. “Indigenous Conceptions of Well-Being: Rejecting Poverty, Pursuing Mino-Bimaadiziwin”, *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development*, Volume 10, Number 2, pp. 124–146.
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- 24** Constant dollars factor out the effect of inflation in order to accurately compare dollar amounts over time.
- 25** Maytree (2020). *Welfare in Canada 2019*. OpCit.

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- 33** Source: CANSIM Table: 282-0031.
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